5-1-2010

# Critical multicultural education for social action

Jan Ricketts Ferrari
*University of Northern Colorado*

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO

Greeley, Colorado

The Graduate School

# CRITICAL MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION FOR SOCIAL ACTION

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

Jan Ricketts Ferrari

College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
School of Psychological Sciences
Program of Educational Psychology

May, 2010

This Dissertation by: Jan Ricketts Ferrari

Entitled: *Critical Multicultural Education for Social Action*

has been approved as meeting the requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Psychology in College of Education and Behavioral Sciences in School of Psychological Sciences, Program of Educational Psychology

Accepted by the Doctoral Committee

_____
Kathryn Cochran, Ph.D., Chair

_____
Teresa McDevitt, Ph.D., Committee Member

_____
Eric Peterson, Ph.D., Committee Member

_____
Maria Lahman, Ph.D., Faculty Representative

Date of Dissertation Defense ____February 26, 2010_____

Accepted by the Graduate School

_____
Robbyn R. Wacker, Ph.D.
Assistant Vice President for Research
Dean of the Graduate School & International Admissions

# ABSTRACT

Ferrari, Jan Ricketts. *Critical multicultural education for social action.* Published Doctor of Philosophy dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, 2010.

Given the opportunity of increased diversity in the U.S. educational systems in 2010, the time was ripe for providing an advanced pedagogy of multicultural education in which teachers could expand their knowledge of critical theory perspectives and examine their own life histories and teaching practices. This dissertation describes the creation, implementation, and outcomes of a critical multicultural education (CME) class in which teachers directly addressed both personal and systemic issues of privilege, oppression, and injustice. I studied the effects of the CME constructivist pedagogy with six participants through a hybrid teaching structure including both face-to-face and online class time. The outcomes of the CME course indicated that the cycles of action research model--including investigation, self-reflection, dialogue, and planning action--were appropriate in moving participants to new levels of understanding implicit to advanced multicultural education ideals. While it was difficult for participants to recognize their own biases, they were able to accomplish this and also to reflect about how such biases were impacting equity in their classrooms and in educational settings. The learning of the participants--revealed through transcriptions of video and audio recordings, interviews, and writing activities--emerged as stories that fell naturally into a narrative analysis of critical events and critical incidents. Participants expressed appreciation for the more

advanced pedagogy of critical multicultural education, indicating a need for more coursework of this nature.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to recognize the following individuals for their contributions to this dissertation. First the participants: I have found deep affection and compassion for each person in the Critical Multicultural Education for Social Action class. I discovered Pam's amazing grace, quiet voice, compassionate nature, and encouragement that others also share their emotions and voices. I appreciated Saxon's sense of humor, working knowledge, honesty, and comfort. I learned from Tiana's stories, her willingness to use her voice, and for her search to find a softer, gentler way to express her truth. I am grateful for Leann's honesty, straightforward approach, and willingness to stand up for herself. I enjoyed Elana's wisdom, humility, acceptance, and for the hope she gave us for the future.

I especially wish to thank Dr. Kathryn Cochran for being the kind of dissertation committee chair who becomes a part of a research project and for her unfailing support in the years she has served as my teacher, mentor, and friend. I also thank my committee members, Dr. Maria Lahman, Dr. Eric Peterson, and Dr. Teresa McDevitt. I often bragged to others about my "dream committee team" and will continue to hold fond memories of my defense meetings and our conversations. Each of these faculty members represents the best of college teaching in his or her scholarly focus, educational approaches, and ongoing curiosity.

I want to thank my transcriptionist, Karen Thomason. Her sense of humor and willingness to help me with this project were essential to it. I also want to thank my typist, Constance Beard. I feel quite sure that I would have lost my mind without her calm demeanor and her highly organized and professional work.

Finally, I thank my many friends who were willing to lend an ear and voice to conversations around issues of equity, the opportunities of diversity, and the constraints of our sociocultural and individual biases. A special thanks to Andy for his efforts to keep me sane, happy, and organized through these past six years. For those who trudge the road of happy destiny, and especially to Sam and Gerg, thank you.

# DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my parents, Bob and Jane Ricketts, in appreciation for their unfaltering support and love throughout my life. I especially recognize the importance of my mother's insistence that I know and honor my cultural heritage and our ancestors. I also dedicate this dissertation to my daughter, Kristi. Her encouragement of my continuing educational endeavors, as well as her choice of teaching as a career, provided me with the incentive to continue and with hope for the future.

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# CHAPTER I

# INTRODUCTION

> Multiculturalism without a transformative political agenda can be just another form of accommodation to the larger social order. (Peter McLaren, as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 53)

## Background

In 2006, I had the eye-opening experience of living in Cuenca, Ecuador for five months. For several years before the Ecuador adventure, I was engaged in doctoral coursework in diversity, cognition, and learning. My knowledge about and passion for issues of diversity, prejudice and bias, and education exploded because of these lived and academic experiences. My knowledge and passion continued to evolve through my work in a doctoral program, through my teaching practices with students, and through conversations with family, friends, and colleagues.

At the same time, the facts of my personal history and a burgeoning self-awareness of my continuing biases created an implosion along this path of perceived enlightenment. The discomfort and unease precipitated by the uncovering of previously unrealized biases and generalized stereotyping had been an elephant in the middle of my consciousness and conscience. I realized I could not talk-the-talk of anti-racism and bias reduction without walking the painful path of self-disclosure. Recognizing the weight and size of my acculturated bias and sense of privilege opened me to insights that led inexorably to the need for some type of action.

What perfect timing to commit to action in educational systems. To place the Critical Multicultural Education for Social Action (CME) project into historic perspective, as I wrote, January 19, 2009, was the United States' celebration of Martin Luther King's birthday.

> In a sense, we have come to our nation's capital to cash a check. When the architects of our republic wrote the magnificent words of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, they were signing a promissory note to which every American was to fall heir. This note was a promise that all men would be guaranteed the inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. It is obvious today that America has defaulted on this promissory note insofar as her citizens of color are concerned. (King, 1963, para. 4)

The day after, January 20, 2009 at 10 a.m. M.S.T., Barack Obama, our first African American President, was inaugurated in Washington, DC. Some may have assumed that this fact ensured the reality of our colorblindness and the illusion that racism was a thing of the past.

> But race is an issue that I believe this nation cannot afford to ignore right now… The fact is that the comments that have been made and the issues that have surfaced over the last few weeks reflect the complexities of race in this country that we've never really worked through. (Obama, 2008, para. 28)

> Segregated schools were, and are, inferior schools; we still haven't fixed them, fifty years after *Brown v. Board of Education*, and the inferior education they provided, then and now, help explain the pervasive achievement gap between today's black and white students. But I have asserted a firm conviction … that working together we can move beyond some of our old racial wounds, and that in fact we have no choice if we are to continue on the path of a more perfect union. (Obama, para. 31)

I believed that many of us did desire a *more perfect union* along with equity in our educational systems, but I also believed that we, as individuals, could not act on that without a conscious effort of self- reflective analysis, dialogue with others, and an uncovering and confrontation of our biases. I self-identify as a teacher; I believe that educational systems provide an ideal setting for purposeful self-reflection and dialogue

that may release teachers (and students) from their individual and acculturated biases. Public school systems could certainly be seen as the practice field for the near future "when today's children become adults, (and) we will be a multiracial society with no majority group, where all groups will have to learn to live and work successfully together" (Orfield & Lee, 2007, p. 4).

## Rationale for the Study

Jonathan Kozol (2005), a prolific researcher in the realm of educational inequity, noted the segregation rates in 1997 in South Bronx P.S. 66: "Two tenths of one percentage point now marked the difference between legally enforced apartheid in the South of 1954 and socially and economically enforced apartheid in this New York City neighborhood" (p. 9). "Rapidly growing populations of Latino and Black students are more segregated than they have been since the l960s and we are going backward faster in the areas where integration was most far-reaching" (Orfield & Lee, 2007, p. 4).

These statistics along with White flight, private school opportunities afforded to the middle class, and a refusal to see the poor as part of the same community have led to separate and wildly disparate educational systems in the United States (McLaren, 2003). Continuing on the current path would appear to guarantee that nearly half of the population of the United States will be undereducated (Kozol, 2005; McLaren, 2003).

European American and middle class teachers represent the majority of staff in schools serving diverse populations (Banks & Banks, 2007; Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 1999; Garmon, 2004; Sleeter, 2001). Students of color, it was projected, would comprise 48% of the enrollment numbers in public elementary and secondary schools by 2020 (Banks & Banks). Of the new teachers entering the field, 86% are European-

American and only 3% can speak a second language. In addition, the majority of professors teaching education classes--88% of 35,000--are White and 81% of them are between the ages of 45 and 60 or more years (Brandon, 2003).

In response to such statistics, multicultural education became a critical component of teacher training. Banks (2004) defined the goal of multicultural education: “To reform the schools and other educational institutions so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality” (p. 3). This complex goal was further complicated by the fact that political and legal systems in the United States continued to isolate and stigmatize the growing populations of students of color.

The literature concerning the impact of structural racism on teacher’s attitudes and practices toward students was prolific (Artiles, 2003; Connor & Boskin, 2001; Katz, 1978; Ladson-Billings, 2004; May, 1999; Milner, 2005; Taylor & Sobel, 2001; Thomas, 2000) and clearly indicated that anti-racism training was essential for all teachers (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997). Unfortunately, multicultural education classes typically focused more on content integration and a superficial study of other cultures rather than the “impact of structural racism on students’ lives” (May, p. 2). In addition, successful outcomes such as prejudice reduction for the teachers enrolled in multicultural education classes were mixed (Garmon, 2004; Swartz, 2003); some participants even show a decreased tolerance for diversity (Lynch & Hanson, 1992) as a result of the training.

It was obvious that a more advanced multicultural education class was needed to move students to more personalized recognition of bias along with a willingness to directly address the racism and other biases that may be uncovered. When teachers are

provided the opportunity to develop flexibility, critical thinking skills, perspective taking, and effective methods of dialogue around their own biases, they can use that self-knowledge and power to also engender change within our students and consequently within educational systems and society.

Teachers are ordinary persons. We are mainly women, European American, and middle class. As one of the goals of education in the United States is to empower students to become skilled citizens in a pluralistic society (Banks, 2003), we teachers must rise above the ordinary to see ourselves as capable of personal practices that reflect the very real power we wield in the classroom. The United States appears poised for profound societal awakenings in this area. Students and teachers need a place to practice critical thinking and a process for working within each of our individual sets of embedded biases. Only then can public education continue to provide the "unique power to contribute equality of opportunity" (Miliband, 2003, p. 224) as is reflected in its history. I believed the timing was good for a course such as the CME course, which was taught for this dissertation.

## Statement of the Problem

We have a problem when the statistics emerging from our public schools continue to support the reality that the educational systems in the United States are not working for all of its citizens (Kozol, 2005; McLaren, 2003). The problem is that schools and teachers in the United States perpetuate inequity.

> Schools are institutions that respond to and reflect the larger society…Racism and other forms of discrimination, particularly sexism, classism, ethnocentrism, and linguicism have a long history in our schools. Each of these forms of discrimination is based on the perception that one ethnic group, class, gender, or language is superior to all others. In the United States, the norm generally used to

> measure all others is European American, upper-middle class, English-speaking, and male. (Nieto, 1996, p. 35)

It is imperative that teachers and administrators work to dislodge notions carried through their practice that practically guarantee that certain children will not learn in our public schools. The tenacity with which individuals hold to embedded beliefs and dispositions is strong; to imagine that these beliefs can change through attendance in a one-semester course in multiculturalism or pluralism is overly optimistic (Causey et al., 1999). It is essential, therefore, that a more advanced pedagogy of multicultural education coursework be available to those who have accomplished the goal of entry-level multicultural understanding. The explicit purpose of the CME class was to provide a forum through which each participant could uncover and confront his or her own bias in an environment that was safe and supported. This dissertation describes the creation, implementation, and outcomes of the CME class.

## Research Question

The CME class offered a more advanced and challenging multicultural curriculum for those who were seeking it; the course included a pedagogy of self-reflection and dialogue to explore the dimensions of critical multicultural educational issues with content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, inequity in education, and social action as the necessary result of such exploration (Banks, 2004). The student-participants and I, as researcher-participant, explored critical issues within a hybrid-learning environment (including both face-to-face and on-line components).

I studied the effects of the pedagogy of the CME course for participants through the qualitative methodology of action research. Action research is “a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the

rationality and justice of their own practices" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 162) and is constructed within a spiral of iterative cycles: investigation, self-reflection, dialogue, planning action, acting, investigation, and so forth (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005).

For the CME project, it was assumed that participants voluntarily committed to the coursework as a means of social action in the educational system within which they worked. There was also an assumption that participants were seeking clarity, dialogue, and information for enhancing their knowledge of the larger political, social, and educational systems. The following research question was addressed:

Q1 What transformations did participants experience, i.e., what shifts occurred in their repertoires of meaning, of culture, and of social action as a result of the pedagogy of the CME class?

## Assumptions

I assumed current events and realities in the United States would provide impetus for participants to join the CME class. I also assumed participants would be willing to engage in *conscientization*, a term Freire (1970/2006) describes as "to render conscious…. (within) a methodology that requires that the investigators and the people (who normally be considered objects of that investigation) should act as co-investigators" (p. 106). In honoring that, I assumed one should not explore his or her biases alone or in a homogeneous group. Allport (1954/1986) provided clear rationale that culturally diverse groups working toward common goals can reduce the prejudice of the participants. The assumption that the CME class would consist of a culturally diverse group was realized in the class taught for this dissertation.

A second assumption of the CME project was that the professional practices of participants would be transformed through the critical tactics of multicultural education:

content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, inequity in education, and social action (Banks, 2004). It was revealed through the participants' stories and dialogue that there was a need for teachers and other educational support staff to engage in dialogue and social action project planning together. Transformations occurred as a result.

Finally, I assumed that participants were voluntarily committing to the CME coursework as a means to social action in the educational system within which they worked. The action research for the CME project not only oriented itself toward shared ownership of the research problems but also provided a cyclical process of investigation, self-reflection, dialogue, and planning that ultimately led to some type of individual and/or group action (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

## Significance of the Study

Four significant ideas emerged from the CME project. First, there was a need for a class based on CME, that is, a more advanced multicultural education pedagogy. The narrative analysis which follows displays both the need for the course and the outcomes of the work of the participants.

Second, and arguably the most significant part of the CME study, was the struggle of each participant to identify her own biases. The critical literature in the class was central to uncovering and confronting bias. The participants' written and verbal responses to the tenets of critical theory provided the impetus for dialogue around issues of diversity, prejudice, and inequity. Also, within the reduction of prejudice piece, the presentation of the epistemology of constructionism and its bifurcation into socially constructed knowledge and individually constructed knowledge (Crotty, 2003) was

significant in that it provided a theoretical base through which the participants could separate themselves individually from their socially constructed biases and confront them intellectually as well as emotionally.

The third significant idea of the CME project was the use of the cycles of action research as a forum through which individuals moved toward new planes and phases of understanding essential for critical multicultural education. The cycles of action research purposefully led participants to read and reflect about critical theory and then to engage in dialogue with others about their thinking. At the same time, participants engaged in self-reflective writing or critical autobiography; the uncovering and confrontation of biases were also shared in dialogue. The cycles of investigation, self-reflection, and dialogue led to potential social action plans. These created new arenas for investigation, self-reflection, etc.

Finally, the analysis of the CME class fell into obvious domains of *critical events* and *critical incidents* often used in narrative research. Critical events are defined as those that "reveal a change in understanding or worldview by the storyteller" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 73). For example, in the CME class, the curriculum required that each participant relate her life story through a critical autobiography; thus, she was a storyteller. The life histories, even when obviously known to the participant, became a vehicle for transformation when viewed through the newly critical lens of the writer. The criticality did not "relate so much to the context (though that might be extraordinary), as to the profound effects it has on the people involved" (Woods, 1993, p. 356). "It is almost always a change experience and it can only ever be identified after" (Webster & Mertova, p. 74). As my autoethnography revealed, I was so changed by the experiences and

learning of a period of my life that an action was required. I, therefore, modeled the transformation that may occur as we wrote our life histories. The critical autobiography or life history was a planned critical event.

Critical incidents, on the other hand, are the "unplanned, unanticipated, and uncontrolled" (Woods, 1993, p. 357) occurrences of a learning event. An example from the CME class was the group decision that we would engage in the social action of *graceful conflict*. Through the story shared by one of the participants about a colleague who cordially but directly addressed a biased remark, our *ah-ha moment* was that each of us might also be able to do so.

The ju*x*taposition of the critical events, or the planned transformative learning experiences with the critical incidents, or the unplanned transformations had the potential to be significant for all teaching. Teachers seek ah-ha moments; however, those moments do not always, or perhaps often, come in expected ways. Teachers must observe and assess unplanned transformations as well and learn to include the propellant for those critical incidents in their teaching.

## Definition of Terms

*Accommodation*. Strategy for achieving equilibration that occurs in two forms: the creation of "new schema or the modification of old schema. Both actions result in a change in, or development of, cognitive structures (schemata)" (Wadsworth, 1989, p. 14).

*Action research.* A qualitative methodology constructed within a spiral of iterative cycles: investigation, self-reflection, dialogue, planning action, acting, investigation, and so forth, "the purpose of which is order to improve the rationality and justice of [participant] practices" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 162).

*Authentic participation.* Occurs when researchers and participants work together to define the most practical ways for them to participate in research.

*Authentic self.* That which "stands against the inauthentic self, which is distorted by social forces" (Tennant, 2005, p. 104).

*Autoethnography*.

> Writing that seeks to unite ethnographic (looking outward at a world beyond one's own) and autobiographical (gazing inward for a story of ones' self) intentions. The aim in composing an autoethnographic account is to keep both the subject (knower) and object (that which is being examined) in simultaneous view. (Schwandt, 2001, p. 13)

*Catalytic authenticity*. "Refers to the ability of a given inquiry to prompt action on the part of research participants" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 207).

*Collaborative action research.* Purposeful intersection of the research with the participants and the researcher which results in the "shared ownership of research projects, community-based analysis of social problems, and an orientation toward community action" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 560).

*Color blindness*. The myth that teachers are able to see each student as an individual without regard for his or her race.

*Conscientization*. "Learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1970/2006, p. 35).

*Critical action research.* Research with the stated intention that participants and the researcher-participant will "evaluate social issues so that results can be used for social change" (Hendricks, 2009, p. 10).

*Critical autobiography*. Critically reflective investigation of an individual's own "life and of family and local community histories" (Banks & Banks, 2007, p. 48).

*Critical autobiography reflection (CAR).* Provides opportunities for participants to connect their personal histories within a "cultural and historical specificity" (McLaren, 2003, p. 245) and to be critically reflexive about those histories.

*Critical events*. Those that "reveal a change in understanding or worldview by the storyteller" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 73).

*Critical incidents*. "Unplanned, unanticipated, and uncontrolled" occurrences of a learning event (Woods, 1993, p. 357).

*Critical pedagogy*. Pedagogy that deals "directly and explicitly with issues of injustice and oppression and the privileging of mainstream knowledge and perspectives" (Banks & Banks, 2007, p. 51).

*Critical pedagogue*. One who teaches from the belief that "all forms of education are contextual and political whether or not teachers and students are consciously aware of these processes" (Weimer, 2002, p. 9).

*Critical reading*.

> The opposite of naivety in reading. It is a form of skepticism that does not take a text at face value, but involves an examination of claims put forward in the text as well as implicit bias in the texts framing and selection of the information presented. The ability to read critically is an ability assumed to be present in scholars and to be learned in academic institutions. (Critical Reading, n.d.)

*Dialogue circle (DC).* The term created for the discussion groupings in the CME class.

*Disequilibrium*. "Out of balance state that occurs when a person realizes that his or her current ways of thinking are not working to solve a problem or understand a situation" (Woolfolk, 2010, p. 38)

*Educative authenticity*. Critical of authenticity that provides indications of "a raised level of awareness by individual research participants" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 207).

*Equilibration*. The search "for mental balance between cognitive schemes and information from the environment" (Woolfolk, 2010, p. 38).

*Equity pedagogy*. A pedagogy that requires that teachers use "a variety of teaching styles and approaches that are consistent with the wide range of learning styles within various cultural and ethnic groups" (Banks, 2004).

*Fairness*. Criteria of authenticity related to providing a balance of "views, perspectives, claims, concerns, and voices" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 207) of the participants included in a study.

*Ideology critique*. A learning task within critical multicultural efforts that helps people recognize how unjust dominant ideologies that "justify and maintain economic and political inequity" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 13).

*Graceful conflict*. A term created by the participants of the CME class to define our willingness to learn to disrupt culturally biased remarks as a part of our social action.

*Marxophobia*. A sociopolitical bias emanating from the Cold War and an "association of Marxism with Stalinist centralization in particular and Soviet society in general" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 19).

*Narrative analysis*. Refers to the "variety of procedures for interpreting the narratives or stories generated in research" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 169).

*Narrative inquiry*. The broad term for the "interdisciplinary study of the activities involved in generating and analyzing stories of life experiences and reporting that kind of research" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 171).

*Othering*. A way of defining and securing one's own positive identity through the stigmatization of others (Banks & Banks, 2007).

*Praxis*. "Reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1970/2006, p. 51).

*Self-reflexive*. A deliberate strategy "through which people aim to transform their practices through a spiral of cycles of critical and self-critical action and reflection" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 567).

*Social praxis.* "Guided by an image of the wise man aiming to act appropriately, truly and justly in a social-political situation" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 17).

*Storied self*. "Not the true or authentic self that is discovered through reflection on one's life experiences; instead, experience is viewed as a story that can be reinterpreted and reassessed" (Tennant, 2005, p. 106).

*Tourism approach*. Overemphasis on visible or explicit cultural practices that reduce them to a set of static facts which "trivialize(s) them in superficiality and … it seem(s) as if culture were necessarily unchanging" (Banks & Banks, 2007, p. 48).

*Transformative critical pedagogies*. Those designed to "emphasize education for a more democratic just society" (Jennings & Smith, 2002, p. 457).

*Triangulation*. Related to authenticity as a "means of checking the integrity of the inferences one draws" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 257) through the inclusion of multiple perspectives and using multiple data sources to get at those perspectives.

*Trustworthiness*. "That quality of an investigation (and its findings) that made it noteworthy to audiences" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 258).

## Summary

The intention of the CME class was to purposefully and directly challenge issues of inequity in the United States and in education systems, thereby offering a more advanced and challenging multicultural curriculum for those seeking it. The thesis of this CME project was that there were others seeking the collegiality and support of commingled self-reflection and community dialogue. As it happened, there were others like me willing to share their individualized and messy personal journeys and self-discovery about issues of acculturated bias and generalizations. I designed the CME class as a social action project; I believe that the transformations and learning that emerged from the efforts of self-reflection and dialogue served as a model project that will benefit both individuals and communities.

# CHAPTER II

# REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

## Introduction: The Opportunity of Diversity

*We must become the change we want to see. Gandhi*

The Critical Multicultural Education for Social Action (CME) class was created to give participants the opportunity to uncover and confront their biases in order to improve their effectiveness in educational systems. Content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture are the dimensions of multicultural education (Banks & Banks, 2007) that provided the foundation for the review of literature that guided the construction of the CME's curriculum.

Given the opportunity of increased diversity in the educational systems of the United States in 2009, the time was ripe for providing an advanced pedagogy of multicultural education in which teachers, staff, and administrators had the opportunity to uncover and confront their own biases and recognize systemic inequities. Statistics from the past decade indicate that educational systems in the United States are becoming more diverse in their student populations. "The shift in ethnic demographics has important implications for schools and, more importantly, classroom teachers" (Milner, 2003, p. 174); there are expanding cultural gaps between the children and families served in

educational programs and their teachers (Causey et al., 1999; Garmon, 2004; Sleeter, 2001). Some pertinent key trends include the following:

- In more than one-third (38%) of America's public schools, there is not a single teacher of color on staff.
- Nationally, about 17% of public school students are African American and 6% of teachers are African American. Likewise, about 17% of public school students are Hispanic and 5% of teachers are Hispanic.
- Students of color tend to perform better--academically, personally, and socially--when taught by teachers from their own ethnic groups. (National Education Association, 2005)

European American and middle class teachers make up the majority of staff in schools serving diverse populations (Banks & Banks, 2007; Causey et al., 1999; Garmon, 2004; Sleeter, 2001). Of the new teachers entering the field, 86% are White and only 3% can speak a second language. While it is critical that teachers of color are recruited into educational systems, European American teachers already employed in educational systems can do much to improve their work with children from cultural backgrounds different from their own (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2006; McIntyre, 1997; Paley, 1979).

> Multicultural education efforts were designed in the sixties as a means to
>
> reform the schools and other educational institutions so that students from diverse racial, ethnic, and social-class groups will experience educational equality … (as well as) to give male and female students an equal chance to experience educational success and mobility. (Banks, 2004, p. 3)

In the decades following the sixties, however, statistics continue to support the reality that schools in the United States are failing their diverse populations (Darling-Hammond, 2006; Kozol, 2005; McLaren, 2003).

> Of all the ways urban schoolchildren are being left behind, their experiences in large, factory-model high schools are arguably the most egregious. In fact, in

> many such schools, young people are not only left behind but are actively thrown overboard. (Darling-Hammond, p. 2)

Continued White flight, private school opportunities afforded to the middle class, and a refusal to see the poor as part of the same community have led to separate and wildly disparate educational systems in the United States. As the political and legal systems of the United States continue to isolate and stigmatize the growing populations of students of color, the "rapidly growing populations of Latino and Black students are more segregated than they have been since the l960s and we are going backward faster in the areas where integration was most far-reaching" (Orfield & Lee, 2007, p. 4). Continuing on the current path of segregation would appear to guarantee that nearly half of the population of the United States will be undereducated (Kozol, 2005; McLaren, 2003).

It is imperative that teachers, administers, and support staff work to dislodge notions carried through their practice that practically guarantee that certain children will not learn in our public schools. All teachers must be encouraged to increase their own awareness and acceptance of other cultures in order to be effective in increasingly diverse school systems.

Unfortunately, but predictably, successful outcomes such as prejudice reduction for teachers enrolled in multicultural education classes are mixed (Garmon, 2004; Swartz, 2003). Some participants even show a decreased tolerance for diversity (Lynch & Hanson, 1992) as a result of multicultural education training. The tenacity with which individuals hold to embedded beliefs and dispositions is strong (Causey et al., 1999). In the following sections, I present research that suggests that the outcomes of multicultural education can be improved through *critical pedagogy*, which deals "directly and

explicitly with issues of injustice and oppression and the privileging of mainstream knowledge and perspectives" (Banks & Banks, 2007, p. 51).

The CME class was constructed with the intention of providing content and classroom structure that would encourage the engagement of those students who had seen the glimmer of light under the door of White privilege in educational practices and were eager to find ways to push against it and open it. Bank's (2004) five dimensions of multicultural education provided the framework for the construction of the curriculum and acted as the springboard to the critical and activist-oriented literature and research for the CME project. Figure 1 shows the extension of the Banks and Banks (2007) dimensions for the CME.

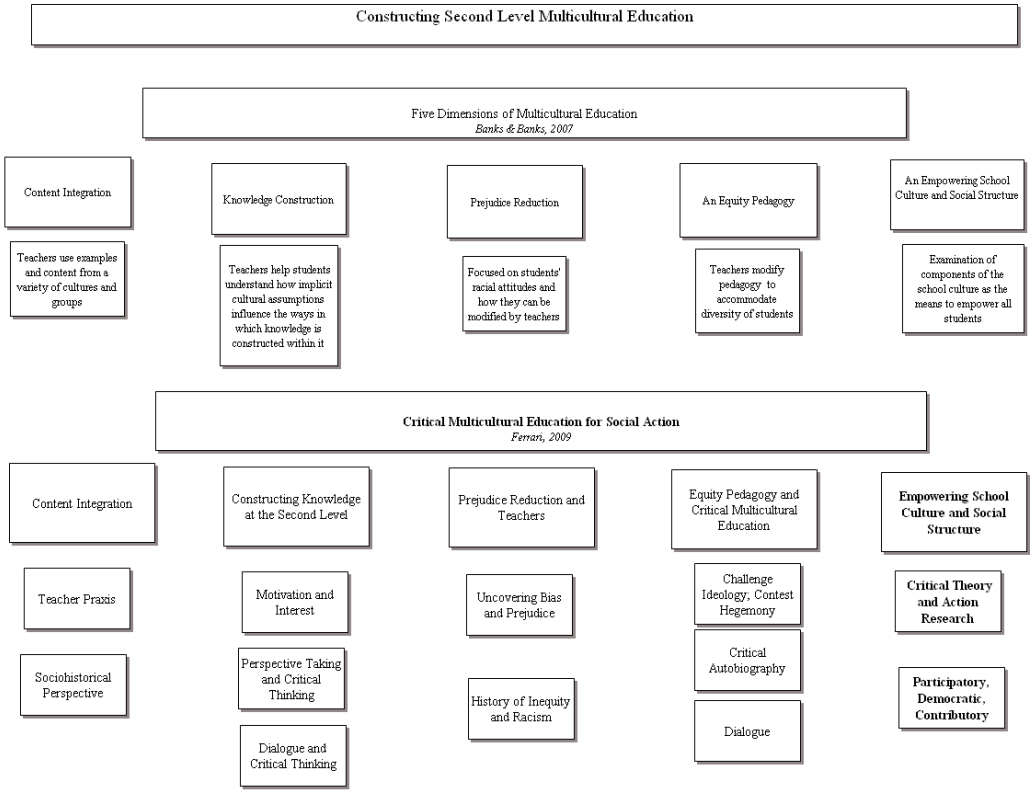


*Figure 1.* Extension of dimensions of multicultural education for CME class.

## Content Integration

> From early in its history, the notion of "culture," like the notion of "cultivate" to which it is closely linked, has had a second meaning which connotes a positive value to "being cultured/civilized." In England the term was also used to indicate "worshipful homage" among Christians, who, within a few centuries, would seek to "bring culture" to the "uncultivated peoples" of the world.
>
> When we turn to the term "education," which entered English from Latin at about the same time as "culture", we find a similar duality. Resorting to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED), we find that the primary meaning of education is "the process of nourishing or rearing a child, a young person, an animal" (OED, 1971, p. 833). The similarity between education, so interpreted, and culture, is obvious. (Cole, 2005, p. 196)

Content integration, the first dimension of multicultural education, requires that teachers use materials, activities, and examples from a variety of cultures and groups to "illustrate key concepts, principles, generalization…in their subject area or discipline" (Banks, 2004, p. 4). Because of the work in the 1960s and 1970s geared toward curricular awareness and change through content integration, most scholars, researchers, and educators focus on this component.

While this is a pertinent first step to providing more pluralistic methods of teaching, Banks (2004) writes that "in many school districts…multicultural education is viewed only, or primarily, as content integration" (p. 4). In this manner, it serves only a superficial purpose, which some multicultural experts call a *tourism approach* (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997). An overemphasis on visible or explicit cultural practices reduces them to a set of static facts that "trivialize(s) them in superficiality and … it seem(s) as if culture were necessarily unchanging" (Banks & Banks, 2007, p. 48).

In contrast, critical multicultural theorists contend that, historically, scholars have promoted self-interests or the interests of a dominant society by claiming that their

knowledge is objective and neutral, i.e., the true vehicle in which to engage the people for the "good" of the society. Cole (2005) elegantly writes:

> I find it more helpful to think of education as a particular form of schooling and schooling as a particular form of institutionalized enculturation. Consideration of the process of education "broadly understood" in different kinds of societies can serve to concretize this ordering from enculturation (induction into the cultural order of the society), to schooling (deliberate instruction for specific skills) to education (in the sense of an organized effort to "bring out" (educe) the full potential of the individual. (p. 198)

Content integration from a critical theory perspective, therefore, requires deconstruction of presumed knowledge and truth while using culture as the medium. The tourism approach to content integration often does not include an examination and definition of culture itself. This is an obvious problem as "culture is at the heart of all we do in the name of education, whether that is curriculum, instruction, administration, or performance assessment" (Gay, 2000, p. 8). In addition, we are so immersed in our culture that it is difficult to examine our assumptions "that are based on confident and unquestioned assumptions stemming from one's own community's practices" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 11).

The cultural reality of schools in the United States is that they remain typically grounded in the deeply ingrained structures of European and middle class origins (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 1996); a cognitive nod to diversity by presenting shallow artifacts from other cultures is not sufficient. It is imperative to recognize that the omission and/or negation of the historical background and profound accomplishments of cultures other than Euro-American diminishes the learning and understanding of *all* students, not just those of the ignored cultures.

> Schools are institutions that respond to and reflect the larger society…. Racism and other forms of discrimination, particularly sexism, classism, ethnocentrism,

> and "linguicism" have a long history in our schools. Each of these forms of discrimination is based on the perception that one ethnic group, class, gender, or language is superior to all others. In the United States, the norm generally used to measure all others is European American, upper-middle class, English-speaking, and male. (Nieto, 1996, p. 35)

In critical multicultural education, teachers help students to see that many of their conceptions, biases, etc. come from a sociohistorical perspective and are founded within the curricular materials provided to U.S. students over the past 100 years. Looking at the textbooks, learning materials and activities, and assessment practices from a sociohistorical perspective help students to understand that "individual development must be understood in, and cannot be separated from, its social and cultural-historical content (alternately called sociocultural or sociohistorical)" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 50). This sets the stage for students to come to understand that "higher-level mental phenomena as entities [are] given form by the language, myths, and social practices in which an individual lives…Since higher mental processes are formed by culture, they differ from one society to the next" (Cole, 1996, p. xii). One culture is not necessarily better or more highly evolved or advanced than the other, it is simply different.

> The first step in developing a non-essentialist conception of cultural differences is to unmask and deconstruct the apparent neutrality of civism--that is, the supposedly universal, neutral set of cultural values and practices that underpin the public sphere of the nation-state. Civism, as constructed within the so-called "pluralistic dilemma," is *not* neutral, and never has been. (May, 1999, p. 30)

Understanding culture as the framework through which power and inequality can be observed sets the stage for political and conflicting dialogue that can only occur in an environment of trust and free intellectual curiosity. Teachers and education faculty who have begun the arduous and painful work of uncovering and confronting their individualized and acculturated biases may find that a critical multicultural education class

will provide the continuing opportunity for dialogue within the confine of a safe environment so that they may again establish equilibration in their thinking and become better multicultural educators themselves. One of the primary functions of critical multicultural education is to provide support for teacher *praxis* or "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1970/2006, p. 51).

## Constructing Knowledge through Critical Multicultural Education

> But there is all the difference in the world whether the acquisition of information is treated as an end in itself, or is made an integral portion of the training of thought. The assumption that information which has been accumulated apart from use in the recognition and solution of a problem may later on be freely employed at will by thought is quite false. Because their knowledge has been achieved in connection with the needs of specific situations, men of little book-learning are often able to put to effective use every ounce of knowledge they possess; while men of vast erudition are often swamped by the mere bulk of their learning, because memory, rather than thinking, has been operative in obtaining it. (Dewey, 1910/1997, p. 53)

As students in multicultural education classes experience the cognitive dissonance revealed by historical understanding of the content of education in the United States and the reality of their own biases and prejudices, the topic of knowledge deconstruction and reconstruction is pivotal. The second of Banks' (2004) dimensions of multicultural education is the knowledge construction process, defined as the manner in which teachers come to terms with their new understandings about how cultural assumptions and biases may "influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed within it" (p. 5). Ladson-Billings (2004) writes that "culturally centered research (here the term cultural refers to a variety of human groupings: race, ethnicity, gender, social class, ability, sexuality, and religion) argues against the claims of universality and objectivity of knowledge that mainstream research presumes" (p. 53).

For the purposes of studying current issues of education in the United States, it is useful for teachers to understand that many "truths" have come into existence through cultural conventions. For example, the historical explanations by nineteenth-century scholars for the differences among people in the world were constructed upon an assumption of a "close affinity between the level of sociocultural development and the level of mental development of the people constituting various social groups" (Cole, 1996, p. 13). These "scientific truths" were purposefully embedded within educational materials and into legislative mandates during the time when "European societies were manifestly vanquishing other people" (Cole, p. 14). These ideas provided a Eurocentric standard against which others could be unfavorably judged and therefore eliminated or abused. This is only one example of the firmly embedded notions of cultural superiority covered in the research in Cole's *Cultural Psychology*, Gould's (1996) *Mismeasure of Man*, and Tavris' (1992) *Mismeasure of Woman*, as well as other texts.

Critical multicultural education may best serve participants who have experienced enough dissonance through typical multicultural education information to disrupt their perceptions of the world around them and their practices with children. Participants who are comfortable with the idea that knowledge "is always constructed on the basis of interests that have developed out of the natural needs of the human species and that have been shaped by historical and social conditions" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 134) may be those best suited for enrollment in a critical multicultural education course such as the CME.

*Motivation and Interest*

There appears some consensus about the mission and philosophy of multicultural education; however, there is still a "tremendous gap between theory and practice in the field" (Gay, as cited in Banks, 2004, p. 3). The outcomes of multicultural education classes are mixed. They often have not produced teachers who have acted upon and acknowledged the realities of the teaching methodologies promoted by these classes (Garmon, 2004; Swartz, 2003).

While education programs often require that teacher education students enroll in at least one class in multicultural education, it is unlikely that any teacher or student can be convinced through extrinsic motivation or reinforcement to sincerely and effectively explore the research and writing around this topic of knowledge construction. On the other hand, when individuals invite themselves to the work and exhibit an intrinsic motivation to have more information about others in their worlds, they are "engaged in the ontological and historical vocation of becoming more fully human" (Freire, 1970/2006, p. 66). This self-proclaimed vocation would intuitively be a necessary and pertinent first step to enable educators to propel themselves toward real equity in their teaching (Curry-Stevens, 2007).

While many teachers pay lip service to the doctrines of multicultural education, sincerity or understanding may be lacking. This, of course, is understandable. To overcome centuries of cultural indoctrination and the complexly embedded layers of Eurocentric and middle class privilege will most likely require more than 15 weeks in a retraining environment. Motivation and interest are prerequisites for moving into deeper cultural understandings. In order to discuss knowledge construction from a new

perspective, teachers must view diversity as an asset and as an opportunity for the learning and development of their students and themselves.

### *Perspective Taking and Critical Thinking*

In critical multicultural education classes, self-reflection and dialogue around the concept of education as an acculturation tool provide the opportunity for a conceptual shift in understanding. Through this type of critical pedagogy, students can start to question the textbooks they have read and the context in which history has been reported. They can become more open in their attitudes toward people of cultures different from their own as they practice taking the perspective of these others.

> People with experience in only one community often assume that the way things are done in their own community is the only reasonable way. This is such a deep assumption that we are often unaware of our own practices unless we have the opportunity to see that others do things differently. (Rogoff, 2003, p. 28)

Derman-Sparks and Phillips (1997), Gay (2000), Howard (2003), Ladson-Billings (2004), and McIntyre (1997) provide concrete information and examples that may enable teachers to better respond to issues of diversity in their classrooms. By exposure to these examples, teachers may be motivated to find ways to integrate the ideas into their own curricular practices. As the roles and responsibilities of teachers in diverse classrooms continue to evolve, they would benefit by situating their teaching from the perspective of teacher-as-researcher. As Rogoff (2003) points out, “The process of carefully testing assumptions and open-mindedly revising one’s understanding in the light of new information is essential for learning about cultural ways” (p. 30).

Teachers in the United States, when coming to new understanding about implementing a true multicultural classroom, may approach their work from a cultural anthropological perspective. As Rogoff (2003) writes,

> It may be helpful to think of the starting point of any attempt to understand something new as stemming from an imposed etic approach, defined as a generalization about human functioning across communities based on imposing a culturally inappropriate understanding. (p. 30)

Educators who seek more clarity will attempt to add emic research--an in-depth analysis of a community (Lynch & Hanson, 1992). If and when this is accomplished, individuals may move closer to a derived etic research approach--"questioning, observing, and interpreting" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 31) adapted to fit the perspectives of the participants. "But derived etic understanding is a continually moving target: The new understanding becomes the current imposed etic understanding that forms the starting point of the next line of study, in a process of continual refinement and revision" (Rogoff, p. 31).

Maher and Tetreault (1997) provide a provocative example of this growth process as they explored a profound shift in cultural perspective realized in the years after their book *The Feminist Classroom* (1994) was published:

> In our self-defined role as champions of suppressed voices, we missed Morrison's invitation to Whites to examine what it means to be "White." Instead, we considered ourselves feminist researchers sharing a common perspective with the women of color that we studied, all of us being feminists resisting a male-centered academy. While we sought to acknowledge and understand our own position as White researchers, we did not fully interrogate our social position of privilege, which made us, vis à vis our subjects, oppressors as well as feminist allies.
>
> Positionality is the concept advanced by postmodern and other feminist thinkers that validates knowledge only when it includes attention to the knower's position in any specific context… a thorough "pedagogy of positionality" must entail an excavation of Whiteness in its many dimensions and complexities. (p. 2)

Maher and Tetreault (1997), through their self-reflection and humanness, reveal that any researcher, from scholar to classroom teacher, can only view themselves and their "truths" as a work-in-progress that begs to be refined and redefined as the researcher's knowledge and perspective of any culture grows and develops. Therefore, in this framework, critical multicultural education provides students with opportunities to "investigate and determine how cultural assumptions, frames of references, perspectives, and the biases within a discipline influence the ways knowledge is constructed" (Banks, 2004, p. 10) in an ongoing manner. From this vantage point, the goal would be to develop an ability to empathize with and to value those perspectives different from one's own and, thus, to view *any* variety of diversity in the classroom as an asset and resource and not as a problem (Taylor & Sobel, 2001).

Because of the "multiplicities of differences within and among students, it seems obviously impossible to simultaneously teach to all those differences" (Elder, 2004, p. 9). Therefore, teaching critical thinking skills to teachers may be more beneficial than attempting to teach to the myriad forms of diversity. Critical thinking requires that individuals move from their egocentric and sociocentric thinking. This is not as simple as it sounds as we are biologically predisposed to our clan, to the belief system that we are not only different from them, but also right, privileged, and special (Elder).

In addition, there are tremendous cultural differences that exist among seemingly similar ethnic or racial groups (diversity within diversity). Within-group differences of a cultural group are often as great or greater than across-group differences (LeRoux, 2002). Awareness of the reality that we cannot place "special emphasis on every dimension of diversity" (Elder, 2004, p. 9) helps us see that we would do better to teach critical

thinking with an emphasis on perspective taking. Too often multicultural education is simply mono-cultural curriculum with little bits of facts from other cultures mixed in (Thomas, 2000). The motivation described above, the innate curiosity of an individual, and the disposition of teaching as an art may serve as a set of requirements for the pursuit of this exciting, but difficult work of perspective taking.

*Dialogue and Critical Thinking*

There is a "Vygotskian principle that in human development the interpsychological (transactions between people) precedes and sets the stage for intrapsychological (complex mental processes)" (Cole, 1996, p. xv). In order to disrupt bias, many students need a forum or a stage upon which they may act out and talk about new information to enable cognitive equilibration. The definition of dialogue for the construction of the CME class is reflected in these words from Freire (1970/2006):

> Dialogue characterizes an epistemological relationship…I engage in dialogue because I recognize the social and not merely the individualistic character of the process of knowing. In this sense, dialogue presents itself as an indispensable component of the process of both learning and knowing. (p. 17)

In the introduction to Freire's (1970/2006) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Macedo cautioned educators about the danger of becoming "psudocritical [sic] educators … who mistakenly transform Freire's notion of dialogue into a method" (p. 17). How do middle-aged, middle-class, and European American faculty instruct the students in their education classes? Do they talk with the predominately young, middle-class women in their classrooms? Do they attempt to *hear* how these individuals view the world? If not, they are not engaging in a dialogue that will lead these teachers to also practice that kind of praxis-oriented teaching with their own students. "They must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of human beings in

their relations with the world…. Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information" (Freire, 1970/2006, p. 79).

"Educators who misinterpret (the) notion of dialogical teaching also refuse to link experiences to the politics of culture and critical democracy, thus reducing their pedagogy to a form of middle-class narcissism" (Freire, 1970/2006, p. 18). The curriculum and teaching styles in our classrooms, as in the classrooms of every society, are founded on political principles. It is imperative to study differing education models within their historical, political, and economic realities, but also to study them without those constraining boundaries. Conversations with self-actualized and cross-culturally competent educators can occur between those lines drawn above. The study of epistemology frees us to have these dialogues by giving us distance from the fears perpetrated upon and within us.

> The radical, committed to human liberation, does not become the prisoner of a "circle of certainty" within which reality is also imprisoned….This person is not afraid to meet the people or to enter into dialogue with them. This person does not consider himself or herself the proprietor of history or all people… The teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teaches…. In this way, the problem-posing educator constantly re-forms his reflections in the reflection of the students. The students--no longer docile listeners--are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. (Freire, 1970/2006, pp. 80-81)

## Prejudice Reduction through Critical Multicultural Education

> What we now call multicultural education is a composite. It is no longer solely race, or class, or gender. Rather, it is the infinite permutations that come about as a result of the dazzling array of combinations human beings recruit to organize and fulfill themselves. (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 50)

Prejudice reduction is one of the five dimensions of Banks' (2004) multicultural education model. The uncovering and confrontation of the steadfastness of bias and

prejudice is likely one of the most difficult pieces for instructors to present in any level of multicultural education class (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997; McIntyre, 1997).

Ben Harper, an eclectic and insightful musician and songwriter, contends that racism is a thing of the past (Clinch, 2002). This juxtaposed against the YWCA of Boulder County Newsletter (2007) whose headline read "Think Racism No Longer Exists? Think Again" provides a succinct synopsis of the confusion many of us are experiencing in the United States in the early 21st century.

> A key weakness historically of multicultural education theory and practice has been an overemphasis on the significance of curricular change and an under-emphasis and at times, disavowal, of the impact of structural racism on students' lives. (May, 1999, p. 2)

Racism must be a core component in diversity and multicultural coursework even as (or maybe because) this is a difficult topic for teachers. *Color blindness*, the myth that teachers are able to see each student as an individual without regard for his or her race, is especially problematic.

> Racism is an excruciatingly difficult issue for most of us. Given our history of exclusion and discrimination, this is not surprising. Nevertheless, I believe it is only through a thorough investigation of discrimination based on race and other differences related to it that we can understand the genesis as well as the rationale for multicultural education. (Nieto, cited in McIntyre, 1997, p. 11)

*Uncovering Bias and Prejudice*

"As far back as the 1920s, prejudice has been a major topic of study in the social sciences" (Oskamp, 2000, p. vii.). Allport (1954/1986) defines prejudice as an "aversive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group" (p. 7). The important point that Allport teaches us is that prejudice "has existed in all ages in every country. It constitutes a bona fide psychological problem" (p. 12).

Organization, “the tendency of all individuals to systematize or combine processes into coherent (logically interrelated) systems” (Snowman & Biehler, 2006, p. 33), is an important cognitive process. If we were not able to classify and categorize, we would be victims of chaos. There would be no rational thought. Most educational theories, at both cognitive and psychological levels of analysis, include descriptions of the process by which new information is assimilated into long-term memory through categorization and/or generalization (Snowman & Biehler). However, “irrational categories are formed as easily as rational categories… perhaps more easily, for intense emotional feelings have a property of acting like sponges” (Allport, 1954/1986, p. 22).

Medin (as cited in Keller, 2005) introduced the notion of psychological essentialism: an individual’s “representation of things [that] reflects a belief that these things have essences or underlying natures that make them what they are” (p. 686). Keller, with reference to the work of Allport (1954/1986), writes about the role of essentialist beliefs in strengthening group stereotyping and the underlying reality that “rationalization (and group stereotyping) is best served by an essentialist approach to social categories” (p. 687). Yzerbyt and Rocher (as cited in Keller) outline five central features of essentialism.

> First, essentialist social categorization is based on the assumption that social categories have a specific ontological status; that is, all category members are seen as having an essential feature in common. Second, category membership is seen as immutable. Third, essentialist categories allow a host of inferences about the category members (inductive potential). Fourth, the various features of essentialist categorization are interconnected; that is, the features of the category members are interpreted in light of one unifying theme. Fifth, and final, essentialist categorization is exclusive, such that members of one category cannot easily be thought of as members of another. (pp. 686-687)

The paradox in the construction of the critical multicultural education class lies between the goal of helping teachers to confront their racism while at the same time balancing the idea that to concentrate exclusively on race is "both reductive and essentialist" (May, 1999, p. 3). To focus on either side of this paradox produces research that may understate the realities of racism and its complex interconnections with other forms of inequality. On the other hand, to confound the issue of working to uncover bias,

> it is now almost de rigueur in this post-modern age to dismiss any articulation of group-based identity as essentialist--a totalizing discourse that excludes and silences as much as it includes and empowers. Viewed in this way, multiculturalism's advocacy of group-based identities, and any educational recognition attached to them, appears to be brought into serious question. (May, p. 13)

The paradox of viewing essentialism as a strength or deficit may be revealed through the following example in which advocacy groups on some university campuses are separated into essentialist groupings.

> Thus most campuses offer programs and activities directed at African Americans, Latinas/os, Asian Americans, Native Americans, women, gays, lesbians, the disabled, and other identified groups. However, these programs and groups operate in isolation from each other, and the campus community rarely calls into question the way White middle-class norms prevail. (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 53)

These separations dilute the strength and power of each group to confront the realities of the dominant culture as "current academy relations treat identity politics as monolithic and essentialized" (Ladson-Billings, p. 54). Individuals cannot become cross-culturally competent educators when they do not have the opportunities for self-reflection as well as dialogue with those who offer differences from themselves. To exclude members of the dominant culture from these opportunities does not serve equity educational efforts. Individuals are motivated to uncover and confront the biases within the dominant culture

only if they accept the tenets of White privilege as being part of the problem with the current educational system. Teachers who do not believe that White privilege is an issue in our educational system will not be motivated to explore these tough dialogues.

The struggle to integrate all individuals into the public school system in spite of the nature of their diversity is difficult and challenging. Many administrators of educational systems give lip service to improving school performance for all learners; in fact, it appears that diversity is merely tolerated as shown through the failure of certain populations to succeed in school and from the over-identification of minority students into special education programs (Artiles, 2003; Connor & Boskin, 2001; Coutinho, Oswald, & Best, 2002; Fletcher & Navarette, 2003). Deficit theories or perspectives are ones in which teachers tend to focus on any group (gender, ethnic, ability) in a historically stereotypic manner (Milner, 2005). Teachers need to understand where they may hold deficit theories toward certain cultural groups. Sleeter (as cited in McIntyre, 1997) writes, "White people have grown up learning racial stereotypes that inform their thinking whether they consciously like it or not, and usually lack an awareness of the institutional racism in which they participate everyday" (p. xi). There is substantial research that reveals teachers have different beliefs about students that lead to different expectations based on race/ethnicity, social class, and gender differences (Brandon, 2003; Connor & Boskin, 2001; Fletcher & Navarette, 2003; Lynch & Hanson, 1992; Roberson, Kulik, & Pepper, 2002) and often are unaware of their biases.

It would seem, therefore, that understanding racism must be a central theme in critical multicultural education classes; however, it must also be included within a spectrum of a variety of prejudices. For the individual, recognizing that racism, sexism,

classism, and other pervasive biases are implicit and often unknown is difficult and sensitive work. Within the framework of the CME class on which this study is based, the students were expected to explore the realities of the construction of knowledge from both cognitive and psychological perspectives. This groundwork allowed the student to explore the biases of others before delving into the difficult and complex conversations about their own bias and prejudice. "Multiculturalism without a transformative political agenda can be just another form of accommodation to the larger social order" (McLaren, as cited in Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 53).

*A Short History of Inequity and Racism*

Equity is defined by the *Oxford Educational Dictionary* (1971) as "the quality of being equal or fair; the recourse to general principles of justice to correct or supplement the provisions of the law" (p. 262). It could be said that idea of equity in education was born in the United States with the 14th Amendment, enacted shortly after the Civil War in 1868, and whose "primary goal was to secure free and equal treatment for ex-slaves" (Eckes, 2004, p. 219). However, it was not until 1954 that "the United States Supreme Court held that state-imposed racial segregation of public schools deprived Black students equal protection of the laws" (Eckes, p. 219). Interestingly, 1954 is the same year that Gordon W. Allport (1954/1986) wrote *The Nature of Prejudice*, which is arguably one of the most commonly cited books on the topic of prejudice. In his preface to the 1958 edition of this book, Allport wrote:

> In this country an integrated racial situation (in employment, in the armed services, in schools) comes about most easily in response to a firmly enforced executive order…Following this line of reasoning, it probably would have been psychologically sounder for the Supreme Court to have insisted upon prompt acquiescence with its ruling of 1954. (p. xxi)

Allport wrote this in response to the defiance exhibited by southern communities as they sought ways in which they could exclude Blacks from White schools. While the Eckes study provided a clear outline of the types, causes, and outcomes of litigation from the 1950s (and I recommend this reading for anyone interested in the topic of educational equity), the most pertinent to this study is the exploration of U.S. schools' return to segregation--called resegregation.

> American schools, resegregating gradually for almost two decades, are now experiencing accelerating isolation and this will doubtless be intensified by a June 2007 Supreme Court ruling handed down in its first major decision on school desegregation in 12 years in the Louisville and Seattle cases. A majority of a divided Court told the nation both that the goal of integrated schools remained of compelling importance but that most of the means now used voluntarily by school districts are unconstitutional. As a result, most voluntary desegregation actions by school districts must now be changed or abandoned. (Orfield & Lee, 2007, p. 3)

As the political and legal systems of the United States continue to isolate and stigmatize the growing populations of students of color, the country's "rapidly growing populations of Latino and black students are more segregated than they have been since the l960s and we are going backward faster in the areas where integration was most far-reaching" (Orfield & Lee, p. 4). Under the June 2007 Supreme Court ruling, local and state educators have far less freedom, and perhaps less impetus, to foster integration.

It is evident from the work of scholars like Eckes (2004) and Orfield and Lee (2007) that educational systems could be the practice field for the near future "when today's children become adults, [and] we will be a multiracial society with no majority group, where all groups will have to learn to live and work successfully together" (Orfield & Lee, p. 4). The current reality of the educational system, however, does not provide this. Kozol (2005) writes:

> Only 15% of the intensely segregated White schools in the nation have student populations in which more than half are poor enough to be receiving free meals or reduced price meals. By contrast, a staggering 86% of intensely segregated Black and Latino schools have student enrollments in which more than half are poor by the same standards. (p. 20)

As a final insult (and also paying tribute to the fitting title of this book, *Shame of the Nation*), Kozol writes:

> Schools in which as few as 3 or 4% percent of students may be White or Southeast Asian or of Middle Eastern origin, for instance--and where every other child in the building is Black or Hispanic--are referred to, in a commonly misleading usage, as "diverse." (p. 21)

Allport (1954/1986) listed the variety of ways in which acts of racism showed themselves in the 1950s: segregated schools, separate drinking fountains and restrooms. In the 21st century, it could appear that most citizens in the United States have made real progress on this front. As a result of this illusion of progress, many citizens, including teachers, profess color blindness in their work with children and families (Katz, 1978; McIntyre, 1997). Milner (2005) defines color blindness as "a set of belief systems based on the assumption that all people are created equally and experience the world equitably" (p. 770).

In truth, however, racism has simply gone underground, lost in guilt, shame, and/or unexplored psychological dimensions, while still reified in institutional practices, media presentations, and educational systems (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997). "There is no comfort zone for White people when it comes to discussing White racism" (McIntyre, 1997, p. 43). The lack of comfort stifles the discussion; however, if racism is not discussed, there can be no critique of it or recovery from it. The Katz (1978) model of anti-racism training includes confrontation and reeducation that allow European Americans to "more easily own their racism and develop ways to combat it" (p. 22). The

willingness to explore personal issues around prejudice and bias is a prerequisite for students entering a critical multicultural education class.

## Equity Pedagogy and Critical Multicultural Education

> For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other. (Freire, 1970/2006, p. 72)

Teachers practice *equity pedagogy*, one of Banks' (2004) dimensions of multicultural education, when they use "a variety of teaching styles and approaches that are consistent with the wide range of learning styles within various cultural and ethnic groups" (p. 22) in their classrooms. There is no research clearly defining the means to achieve transformative equity pedagogy (Greenman & Dieckmann, 2004); at the same time, what is clear is that current educational systems are not producing successful students from segregated systems (Kozol, 2005; McLaren, 2003). "Many educators make the argument today that …our only realistic goal should be the nurturing of strong, empowered, and well-funded schools in segregated neighborhoods" (Kozol, p. 33). Whether segregated or not, equity pedagogy exists when teachers personalize their teaching strategies and activities to fit each individual in their classrooms.

According to many multicultural theorists, typical multicultural education provides only a cursory nod to the broadening problem of segregation and disempowerment in our public school system (Middleton, 2002; Milner, 2005; Sleeter, 2001). "A good deal of what occurs within the arena of multicultural education today does not address power relations critically, particularly racism" (Sleeter & Bernal, 2004, p. 240). Critical pedagogy intends to "finish what *Brown v. Board of Education* started:

i.e., to ensure that marginalized students have educational opportunities that are equal in quality to those of individuals in mainstream society" (Gay, 2004, p. 198).

McLaren (2003) introduced the notion of critical multiculturalism to "interrupt the diversity discourse that emerged to supplant and subvert the original intentions of theorists who set out to create a pedagogy of liberation and social justice" (Ladson-Billings, 2004, p. 52). Critical theorists have as "their objectives: to empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices" (McLaren, p. 186).

### *Theoretical Background of Critical Multiculturalism*

The roots of critical multiculturalism can be traced to the theorists of the Frankfort School of the 1930s (Crotty, 2003). The Institute for Social Research in Frankfort, often referred to as the Frankfort School (Schwandt, 2001), was comprised of a group of men united by "the critical approach to existing society" (Crotty, p. 127). They fled Nazi Germany when the Gestapo targeted their Institute, citing both their Marxism and their Judaism as culpable. Noted researchers such as Max Horkheimer, Theodore Adorno, and Jurgen Habermas sought asylum in the United States and settled at Columbia University (Crotty; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Schwandt). During this traumatic time, these men resumed their research activities but worked in isolation from their U.S. counterparts whom they perceived as accepting of existing societal conditions and thus not critical researchers (Crotty). They were "shocked by American culture and offended by the taken-for-granted empirical practices of American social science researchers and their belief that this research could describe and accurately measure any dimension of human behavior" (Kincheloe & McLaren, p. 280).

While "Marx is the towering intellectual figure…for the writers who fall into the category of what most people now call critical theory" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 18), Marxist theory is little referenced in U.S. coursework. Therefore, most reviews of critical theory emanate from the perspective of the work of Jurgen Habermas and Paulo Freire (Sleeter & Bernal, 2004). It is certainly worthwhile to note that the exclusion of Marx's ideas and philosophy from the educational systems of the United States reflects a sociopolitical bias emanating from the Cold War and an "association of Marxism with Stalinist centralization in particular and Soviet society in general" (Brookfield, p. 19). McLaren (2003) is credited with coining the word *marxophobia* to describe this fear.

"The brilliant and ethically illuminated" (McLaren, 2003, p. 185) writings of Erich Fromm, probably the Frankfort School theorist who "was read by the largest number of readers…were grounded explicitly in a Marxist analysis of capitalism, particularly the alienated nature of work and learning" (Brookfield, 2005, pp. 150-151). Fromm, however, moved beyond the focus on economic systems to the general humanism portrayed in Marx's work that Brookfield then adapts to his discussion about adult education and the tenets of critical theory.

> It is not an enormous stretch to see in Fromm's vision…a larger sketch of the processes that would be observable in adult education classrooms striving to realize some principles of participatory democracy. In such classrooms the object would be to make adult education serve the true needs of learners instead of satisfying their false needs. (p. 157)

Teachers, when coming to new understanding about implementing a true multicultural classroom, may benefit if they approach their work through critical theory learning strategies such as challenging ideology and contesting hegemony through self-reflection and dialogue with others (Brookfield; Curry-Stevens, 2007).

*Challenging Ideology and Contesting Hegemony*

Ideology is defined as "ideas at the basis of an economic or political theory" or "the manner of thinking characteristic of a class or an individual" (Oxford Desk Dictionary, 1997, p. 385). It is "embedded in language, social habits, and cultural forms that combine to shape the way we think about the world" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 41). Challenging existing ideologies is the first, and "arguably the preeminent, learning task embedded in critical theory" (Brookfield, p. 40) and returns multicultural education to its roots of the 1960s when "challenges to racism in education" (Sleeter & Bernal, 2004, p. 240) was a central curricular piece. "A major task of critical pedagogy has been to disclose and challenge the role that schools play in our political and cultural life" (McLaren, 2003, p. 186). *Ideology critique*, as a learning task within critical multicultural efforts, helps people recognize how unjust dominant ideologies that "justify and maintain economic and political inequity" (Brookfield, p. 13) are embedded in everyday situations and practices. Self-reflection, couched in a critique of current ideology, can be seen as self-liberating as well as a means to social justice for others.

Contesting hegemony is a second major learning task of critical theory (Brookfield, 2005). Cultural hegemony, "a commonsense view of what is and why things happen that serve the interests of those people already privileged in a society" (Banks & Banks, 2007, p. 51), provides acknowledgement that experiences of oppression do, in truth, exist. Contesting hegemony is essential in increasingly diverse educational systems. Substantial research reveals teachers have different beliefs about students that lead to different expectations based on race/ethnicity, social class, and gender differences

(Brandon, 2003; Connor & Boskin, 2001; Fletcher & Navarette, 2003; Lynch & Hanson, 1992; Roberson et al., 2002); they are often unaware of their biases.

As teachers recognize that the ability to do their work appropriately may be impacted by socially constructed and politically derived perspectives, they may be released from a weight of potential guilt by engaging in critically reflexive autobiography. Experiences of discomfort are an essential part of the learning process, which indicates that "counterhegemonic learning is not simply being deflected by the learner" (Curry-Stevens, 2007, p. 43). Separating the individual from the guilt and shame of a culture's perpetuating myths is healing when it leads to self-examination that creates more open-minded and thus more effective teaching practices (Milner, 2003).

*Critical Autobiography*

The techniques of *critical autobiography* and *autoethnography* combine to provide a strategy through which individuals were encouraged to challenge ideology and confront hegemony (Brookfield, 2005) in the CME course. Autoethnography is

> writing that seeks to unite ethnographic (looking outward at a world beyond one's own) and autobiographical (gazing inward for a story of ones' self) intentions. The aim in composing an autoethnographic account is to keep both the subject (knower) and object (that which is being examined) in simultaneous view. (Schwandt, 2001, p. 13)

Critical autobiography is a "critically reflective investigation of their own lives and of family and local community histories" (Banks & Banks, 2007, p. 48) and is the term utilized in the current CME class project. However, the intention of the CME pedagogy is to stay conscious of the tension implicit in the definition of autoenthnography above, i.e., participants are not simply recounting their life histories, they are consciously

juxtaposing their stories within an individualized and sociohistorical perspective within the light of critical theoretical insights.

Combining these definitions to ensure that the autobiography is critical emphasizes the intention of these writing genres to uncover the ideologies of the systems and beliefs that envelop us. When participants are guided to explore the visible and invisible cultures that define their daily functioning, they are provided the opportunity to confront both ideologies or "expressions of specific groups" as well as hegemony, which refers more to those "conventions and constructs that are shared and naturalized throughout a political community" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 330). Critical autobiography provides dual opportunities for teachers. First is the opportunity to move from "individualistic or victim-blaming explanations of racism to a critique of institutional structures and acceptance of responsibility of racism as a White problem" (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997, p. 32).

The second opportunity of critical autobiography is the process of guided self-reflection around issues of equity to enable participants to begin to establish a new equilibration in their thinking and in their self-concept about power relations in their work and lives. Therefore, in this framework, critical autobiography gives participants the forum to "investigate and determine how the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of references, perspectives, and the biases within a discipline influence the ways [his or her] knowledge is constructed" (Banks, 2004, p. 5) in an ongoing manner. Time and guided facilitation for self-reflection on political and economic social constraints enable practitioners to come to terms with their histories, their biases, and the changes in their thinking that may occur as a result of this work (Middleton, 2002). In other words,

critical autobiography allows participants to see how their distorted self-understandings may be overcome by analyzing the way their own practices and understandings are shaped by broader ideological conditions.

Research from a critical perspective rejects positivist notions and sees truth as historically and socially embedded, not as "standing above or outside history and the concerns of participants in real social situations" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 149). Uncovering personal bias and stereotyped thinking and behaviors within a framework of ongoing investigation can be seen as a basic tenet to critical autobiography. The CME class was concerned with *social praxis*.

> The more genuine practicality identified by the Greeks as praxis (guided by an image of the wise man aiming to act appropriately, truly and justly in a social-political situation) had always allowed….a choice about right action in a given situation. (Carr & Kemmis, p. 17)

*Dialogue*

In a critical multicultural education class, a goal is to bring about *conscientisation*: "to render conscious…The methodology proposed requires that the investigators and the people (who normally are considered objects of that investigation) should act as co-investigators" (Freire, 1970/2006, p. 106). "Critical social science is about social praxis (informed doing, or strategic action) and … is carried out by self-reflective groups concerned to organize their own practice in the light of their organized self-reflection" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 149). In this way, participants become researchers of themselves and their own lives and practices. The self-reflection, essential to praxis, leads to dialogue with others also engaged in the process.

Dialogue in the classroom acts to counter the "banking concept of education" (Freire & Macedo, 2001, p. 67) or the idea that the job of the teacher is to fill up the

brains of their students with the knowledge needed for their success in the working world and so prevalent in educational systems. Dialogue, on the other hand, characterizes an epistemological relationship and changes the way any classroom looks. Thus, in this sense:

> Dialogue is a way of knowing and should never be viewed as a mere tactic to involve students in a particular task…. I engage in dialogue because I recognize the social and not merely the individualistic character of the process of knowing. In this sense, dialogue presents itself as an indispensable component of the process of both learning and knowing. (Freire, 1970/2006, p. 27)

Committing to the idea that students have voices that must be heard is crucial given the reality that their voices are so little heard that they seem not able to find them in a classroom when given the opportunity (Weimer, 2002).

> They [teachers] must abandon the educational goal of deposit-making and replace it with the posing of the problems of human beings in their relations with the world…. Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information.... The teacher is no longer merely the one-who-teaches, but one who is himself taught in dialogue with the students, who in turn while being taught also teaches….. In this way, the problem-posing educator constantly re-forms his reflections in the reflection of the students. The students--no longer docile listeners--are now critical co-investigators in dialogue with the teacher. (Freire, 1970/2006, pp. 79-81)

The idea of the co-constructed classroom is essential to the teaching strategies of constructivism; dialogue is essential to that. Vygotsky's (1934/1986) theory of cognitive development implies that interaction and conversation are critical to learning. The sociocultural perspective is founded on the belief that communication, both social and educational, differs between and among cultural groups; therefore, an aura of cultural openness and awareness in the CME class is intended to lead to a "more dynamic process of mutual accommodation between the cultures of home and school" (May, 1999, p. 32)

and among individuals. As individuals evolve in their cultural and sociopolitical self-awareness, they require even more dialogue with others.

> A critical perspective involves the ability to criticize the ideological frames used to make sense of the world and can be learned only in the Deweyan sense - by doing it…researchers practice the art by grappling with the text to be understood, telling its story in relation to its contextual dynamics first to themselves and then to a public audience. (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 286)

## Empowering School Culture and Social Structure through Action Research

Various types of action research have been identified and utilized in educational and social research (Hendricks, 2009; Herr & Anderson, 2005). For the CME project, *critical action research*, the goal of which "is to evaluate social issues so that results can be used for social change" (Hendricks, p. 10), provides the optimal methodology. The intention of a critical action research design is to confront the "disempowerment and injustice created in industrialized societies" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p. 569); it can "be understood best in the context of the empowerment of individuals" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 305). Kurt Lewin, cited as the source for the broader term *action research* (Carr & Kemmis, 1986), described three major characteristics of action research that are also integral to critical action research: a participatory framework, democratic principles, and a "simultaneous contribution to social science and social change" (Carr & Kemmis, p. 164).

The participatory framework for the CME project is exhibited through the shared ownership of the research and its orientation toward community action (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). Shared ownership of the research, or *authentic participation*, for McIntryre (2008) occurs when "researchers and participants work together to define the most practical and doable ways for them to participate" (p. 15). "People can only do

action research ‘on’ themselves, either individually or collectively. It is *not* research done ‘on’ others” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 567). Action research is a social process; community action, and the means to accomplish action, will evolve through that social process. The intention of the CME class was to address inequity in educational systems. “Participatory researchers make no pretense of detached observation. Their purpose is to help adults research their own communities with a view to changing them in directions they (the adult citizens concerned) determine” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 26). The participants in the CME class had the opportunity to practice their ideals of social action with one another.

Democratic principles are revealed through the intent of critical action research to document the voice of each participant. When all voices are recognized as valid and real, questions are posed to create meaningful dialogue around any issue, but certainly those of economics, power, ethics, and knowledge. In many classrooms, teachers act as pedagogues. A pedagogue has been defined as “a man whose occupation is the instruction of children or youth (now usually in a hostile or contemptuous sense) with implications of pedantry, dogmatism, or severity” (OED, 1971, p. 604). This definition supports Freire’s (1970/2006) concerns about the banking concept of education while also adding the pertinent arrogance of the teacher. This type of educational practice produces dull and dependent thinkers (Dewey, 1910/1977).

A *critical pedagogue*, on the other hand, has a foundational stance that “all forms of education are contextual and political whether or not teachers and students are consciously aware of these processes” (Weimer, 2002, p. 9). Politics requires social cooperation between student and teacher; arrogance is not a choice for the educator

steeped in critical tradition. Critical theorists are “dedicated to the emancipatory imperatives of self-empowerment and social transformations” (McLaren, 2003, p. 189). The CME pedagogy for the current study was designed to function within the bounds of the democratic principles of critical pedagogy. The demonstration of and commitment to full participation in the class and research project by every participant (including the researcher participant) provided documentation of the effectiveness of such pedagogy for those who attended the CME course.

The third characteristic of action research is a contribution to social science and social change. Critical action research is *self-reflexive*; “it is a deliberate process through which people aim to transform their practices through a spiral of cycles of critical and self-critical action and reflection” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 567). It is not an “armchair view of theorizing; rather, it is a process of learning, with others, by doing--changing the ways in which we interact in a shared social world” (Kemmis & McTaggart, p. 568). The goal of action research is to “foster an ongoing, automatic criticality linked to an action-taking protocol” (Greenman & Dieckmann, 2004, p. 241). For this CME project, it was assumed that participants were voluntarily committing to the coursework as a means to social action in the educational system within which they work. There was also an assumption that participants were seeking clarity, dialogue, and information that may enhance their knowledge of the larger political, social, and educational systems that will serve their individual and professional interests.

## Summary

This literature review documented the relevant resources utilized to create a critical multicultural education class that provided practitioners with content and

pedagogy so they might experience new understandings about diversity and education. The intention of the CME class was to purposefully and directly challenge issues of inequity in the United States and in education systems, thereby offering a more advanced and challenging multicultural curriculum for those who may be seeking it. The exploration of Banks' (2004) five dimensions of multicultural education within a critical multicultural education class served as a springboard to engage those who were willing to embrace the dialogues of White privilege, inequity in education, prejudice, and teaching practices.

The theoretical approach of critical inquiry for the CME course was designed to provide the kind of self-reflective analysis that propels individuals to explain why the conditions under which they operate are frustrating and to design action plans to eliminate those sources of frustration. The methodology of action research provided a solid framework to answer the following research question of the CME project:

Q1 What transformations do participants experience, i.e., what shifts occurred in their repertoires of meaning, of culture, and of social action as a result of the pedagogy of the CME class?

# CHAPTER III

# METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH DESIGN

## Introduction and Personal Research Stance

My lived experiences in both the United States and Ecuador and my doctoral educational experiences--including critical theory perspectives and constructivist teaching strategies--provided me with the motivation and interest to find ways to engage in social action about issues of inequity. I needed to complement and strengthen my ideas about inequity within educational systems through dialogue with others; as a White multicultural educator, I needed a group of individual from diverse backgrounds with whom to practice those ideas and conversation. I developed the Critical Multicultural Education (CME) class because I could not find such a pedagogy and purpose in any other coursework in the college and university programs I searched.

In order to study the effects of group processing about issues of educational inequity, I utilized the methodology of action research and the spiral of cycles--investigation, self-reflection, dialogue, planning action, and action--inherent to that methodology. The study of critical theory literature, self-reflection, collaboration with others, and the investigation of social action plans provided a forum for topics not typically addressed in multicultural education classes. The CME project utilized self-reflection and dialogue within a hybrid learning environment (including both face-to-face

and on-line components). We (the research-participant and the student-participants) explored the five dimensions of critical multicultural educational issues: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture (Banks & Banks, 2007).

In the following sections, I discuss how and why the epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods were chosen. I provide information about the participants, the setting, the collection and analysis of the data, and the CME class structure. Finally, I provide a discussion of research trustworthiness and ethical considerations as well as limitations of the study.

## Epistemology

I designed the methodology for the CME project based on the epistemology of constructionism; the intention was to move beyond the dualism of empiricist and rationalist schools of thought and focus instead on the interaction between subject and object (not one that is apart from the other) and "to place knowledge within the process of social interchange" (Gergen, 1985, p. 266). This interdependence between the individual and the world is further refined through the bifurcation of constructionism into the concepts of *constructivism* and *social constructionism* (Crotty, 2003; Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Schwandt, 2000; Tobin & Tippins, 1993; Williamson, 2006). Constructivism focuses on the meaning of the individual, i.e., the unique experience of each of us. "It suggests that each one's way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other" (Crotty, p. 58). Social constructionism, on the other hand, "emphasizes the hold our culture has on us: it shapes the way in which we see things and gives us a quite definite view of the world" (Crotty, p. 58).

The focus on the interaction between individual and society is mirrored in the theoretical perspective of the "critical tradition, encountered today most markedly in what we know as critical theory" (Crotty, 2003, p. 59). Research from a critical theory perspective rejects positivist notions and sees truth as historically and socially embedded, not as "standing above or outside history and the concerns of participants in real social situations" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 149). At the same time, research that is critical is also dependent upon the meanings and interpretations of each individual participant.

In critical multicultural pedagogy, addressing epistemology provides a safe, less personalized entry to dialogues about power, privilege, and equity in educational systems. I believed that critical dialogue could result in a freedom to observe and understand inequity and prejudicial educational practices from a distance and with compassion for ourselves as well as others. "When a theoretical insight concerning hegemony helps us to understand our practice in a new way, it often takes a great weight of potential guilt off our shoulders" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 5). Couching our individualized learning within the larger socio-cultural realities of our lives released us to study both our cultural and our individualized schemes as we practiced becoming observers or researchers of ourselves, both individually and as a part of our society. The CME class provided the opportunity for practicing such research.

Utilizing the methodology of action research as bounded by the theoretical perspective of critical theory (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Crotty, 2003; Kemmis and McTaggart, 2000) was integral to the CME project; the intention was to provide a critical, multicultural, and educational foundation for individuals so that they may improve their work within educational systems. I used McLaren's (2003) separation of the parts of

pedagogy --“curriculum content and design, classroom strategies and techniques, and evaluation, purpose, and methods” (p. 187)--to describe the CME curriculum construction in this chapter. The content and design of the CME class is included in the Theoretical Perspective section as it embraces critical theory research. The classroom strategies and techniques, constructed within an action research methodology, are contained in the Methodology section. Finally, the evaluation, purpose, and methods pieces of the pedagogy of the CME class are included in the Procedures and Data Collection section.

## Theoretical Perspective and the CME Class Content and Design

The theoretical perspective of critical theory is “centrally concerned with releasing people from falsely created needs and helping them make their own free choices regarding how they wish to think and live” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 364). Research from the critical theory perspective begins with the following idea:

> All thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are social and historically constituted….and that certain groups in any society and particular societies are privileged…and finally, that mainstream research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression. (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 304)

The CME class was designed from a critical view and focused not only on the individual participant’s commitment to “self-critical reflection on their educational aims and values … (but also on) social matters requiring collective or common action if they are to be satisfactorily resolved” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 31). The CME class provided a format and curricular design in which participants could actively challenge their ideologies and biases.

Participants were provided with choices of curricular material that enabled exploration of the influences of broader social and economic forces on individual experiences (Brookfield, 2005). Banks and Banks' (2007) *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspective* served as the foundational text and the five dimensions of multicultural education outlined by Banks (2004) served as the curricular framework for the CME class. Content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture served as the topics within which participants began to unravel the perceptions of "truths" contained within their ideologies and their professional assumptions and biases. In addition to the textbook, several research articles were provided in an online discussion format. Discussion threads were designed so that participants would reflect on their reading and their experiences in the classroom and share their thoughts and questions with others. The participants were also encouraged to produce a growing list of resources for critical pedagogy. Critical autobiography reflections, dialogue transcriptions, online discussions, and a research notebook provided the evidence of participant progress through the curricular content; each of these was employed as a data source.

Within the critical theory perspective, individuals, when faced with structures that reinforce systems of inequity, must seek an equilibration process or some action deemed appropriate by that individual in order to move forward from the despair implicit in the uncovering of such understandings. The democratic process of learning, central to the CME class design, included an assumption that participants would be engaged in self reflection as well as dialogue and would go forward to plan choices of action based on the rich diversity of understandings presented through interactions among the group of

participants. The assumption of participant engagement, within the democratic process of learning, requires that students take responsibility. I presented the materials and activities for the CME class in a way I hoped would be motivating, but the participants held the key to the success of their learning. The CME course was graded on a pass/fail basis. I believed this to be essential for true democratic functioning as the idea of competition was removed. The work was intended to become personal, not teacher-pleasing.

Transformative learning is a term that describes a process of becoming critically aware of one's assumptions and expectations through reflection and critique. “Reflective learning becomes transformative whenever assumptions or premises are found to be distorting, inauthentic, or otherwise invalid” (Mezirow, 1991, p. 6). The major theorists of the transformational learning theory are Mezirow and Freire (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999). However, Mezirow also draws heavily on Piagetian cognitive theory and his ideas of accommodation and assimilation. This is evidenced in the manner in which Mezirow contrasts the ideas of transformative learning against other learning, which he describes as simply “adding knowledge to our meaning schemes or learning new meaning schemes” (p. 223). This corresponds with Piaget’s concept of assimilation. Learning new schemes, on the other hand, is accommodation.

In addition, transformational learning theory, “especially as presented by Mezirow, focuses on both the individual and social construction of meaning” (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 263). The literature concerning transformational learning theory and transformative learning is large and beyond the scope of this dissertation; however, I found the resonance of the concepts with my intentions for the outcomes of the course to be exciting and affirming. The three phases of transformative learning are critical

reflection, reflective discourse, and action (Merriam & Caffarella). These are encompassed by the iterative cycles of action research: investigation, self reflection, dialogue, planning action, and action (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Therefore, I felt confident that utilizing the cycles of action research as the framework for exhibiting the transformative learning that emerged from the CME project was theoretically sound.

I decided to use a transformative learning model to analyze the effectiveness of the CME class after reading an article by Woods (1993); he wrote that learning is critical, and thus transformative, when participants find "they are in times of outstanding advance, be it in terms of attitudes towards learning, understanding of the self, relationships with others, acquisition of knowledge, or development of skills" (p. 357). Woods' organization of transformative learning as critical events, the planned opportunities for *outstanding advance* and critical incidents, those that happened spontaneously but were also opportunities for social and cognitive growth spurts, was foundational to answering the research question for this dissertation. Chapter VI is devoted to the ways in which participants viewed their transformative learning through the variety of curricular activities of the CME class.

## Methodology and CME Strategies and Techniques

I developed the pedagogy for the CME class using the methodology of critical action research (Hendricks, 2009; Herr & Anderson, 2005), the goal of which was "to evaluate social issues so that results can be used for social change" (Hendricks, p. 10). The intention of a critical action research design is to confront the "disempowerment and injustice created in industrialized societies" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p. 569) and can "be understood best in the context of the empowerment of individuals" (Kincheloe &

McLaren, 2005, p. 305). “To participate effectively in democratic social change, participants must be taught social criticism and helped to understand the inconsistency between our ideals and social realities” (Banks & Banks, 2007, p. 258).

The strategies and techniques for the CME class were embedded within iterative cycles of investigation, self-reflection, dialogue, planning action, and action that are integral to all action research projects (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). Educational systems need thoughtful and collaborative reworking; planning and acting without investigation, self-reflection, or dialogue is not likely to elicit positive social change through action plans. The first cycles in the CME action research--investigation and critical reflection--provided the strategies through which the inconsistencies between the ideals of participants and the social realities of participants were uncovered. Students in the CME class were asked to participate in “critical self-reflection on [their] biases, theoretical predispositions, preferences, and so forth” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 224). Issues of perceived color blindness, of White privilege, and implicit bias were addressed through self reflections and dialogue (Banks & Banks, 2007).

Ideology critique provided the closest rendering for understanding the importance of critical self-reflective investigation in the CME class. Ideology critique is a Marxist concept that “draws heavily on the methodological procedures of psychoanalysis... [and] in particular…the method of self-reflection as a way of bringing to consciousness those distortions…. (as well as) correct understanding of [individuals] and their actions” (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 138). Studies of critical autobiography have shown “how personal text can move writers and readers, subject and objects, tellers and listeners into this space of dialogue, debate, and change.  It does not speak alone” (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 764).

Self-reflection in critical autobiography works well within an approach of critical action research as it

> frequently emerges in situations where people want to make changes thoughtfully – that is, after critical reflection. It emerges when people want to think 'realistically' about where they are now, how things came to be that way, and, from these starting points, how, in practice, things might be changed. (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000, p. 573)

Critical autobiography reflections (CARs) provided the forum for each participant to convey her voice. "The term *voice* refers to the cultural grammar and background knowledge that individuals use to interpret and articulate experience" (McLaren, 2003, p. 245). Each week, participants in the CME course were given a specific topic for the CAR assignment. The topics included examinations of individual culture and life history, self-reflections on personal experiences of implicit and explicit bias, analysis of individual perceptions of transformative curriculum, etc. The technique of CAR in the CME project provided opportunities for participants to connect their personal histories within a "cultural and historical specificity" (McLaren, p. 245) and to be critically reflective about those histories.

Dialogue was the crucial next cycle in our action research and in the construction of the CME pedagogy. Jurgen Habermas, a theorist central to critical learning theory, sketched out two broad forms of adult learning (Brookfield, 2005). One is non-reflective learning--theoretical claims are accepted without discourse. Reflective learning, on the other hand, is communicative and social. "It involves comparing our experiences and opinions with those of other adults, and considering with them the merits of the evidence proposed to justify different beliefs or courses of action" (Brookfield, p. 249). Freire (cited in Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005) "insisted on involving, as partners in the research

process, the people he studied as subjects…and encouraged them all along to begin thinking about their own thinking" (p. 305) to better enable dialogue. Dialogue, viewed as reflective communicative practice, acts as a technique through which participants explore

> how their aims and purposes may have been distorted or repressed … (and) will provide the kind of self-reflective understanding that will permit individuals to explain why the conditions under which they operate are frustrating and will suggest the sort of action that is required if the sources of these frustrations are to be eliminated. (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 136)

For the CME class, Dialogue Circle (DCs) was the name given to the strategy of conscientization, a term Freire (1970/2006) utilized to refer to "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions and to take action again the oppressive elements of reality" (p. 36). Reflective dialogue, embedded in the technique of DCs in the CME class, followed Freire and Macedo's (2001) ideal of a problem-posing education in which dialogue is seen as "indispensable to the acts of cognition which unveil reality" (p. 77). Dialogue with others was essential to uncovering and confronting what participants learned about themselves and their social and cultural backgrounds through the CARs. Participants, when engaged in the dialogue necessary for action research, "can expect that their work will contribute to their sense of being-in-the world, to their praxis, and to the larger conversation regarding the topic under study as well as the process of inquiry" (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 70).

In the CME class, the practice of democratic principles was exposed through the discussions, both in class and online. "True democratic discussion represents the freest, least restricted communication possible" (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005, p. 263). I believe participants found the freedom to separate themselves from the typical demands and

patterns of a classroom environment and were able to “view society in a newly critical way” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 353). Lecture was included in the class, but discussion in small groups and as a whole group dominated the time of the participants in the class. There was also time in class for participants to engage in self reflection and writing.

Ideas about social action and planning action were integral to the CME class. Participants had the opportunity to write about their backgrounds in community involvement and current work ideals in the CARs. Questions about the evolution of their social action plans were included in several of the class sessions as self-reflection assignments and as dialogue topics.

## Procedures and Data Collection

### *Participants and Setting*

It was essential that the participants in the CME class came from a diverse array of backgrounds; therefore, I recruited participants through a variety of sources. The class was offered through the University of Northern Colorado (UNC) as a graduate-level extended studies class. The face-to-face portion of the class (approximately 50%) was offered in Denver at the UNC Lowry Campus during the summer of 2009. The online portion of the class (approximately 50%) was conducted through UNC’s Blackboard system. Flyers were distributed through the College of Education and Behavioral Sciences and through the Office of Multicultural Affairs at UNC. Flyers were also distributed to the general educational population at Denver Public Schools and through the Colorado Community College Early Childhood Faculty listserv.

We were fortunate in the individuals who chose to enroll in the class  I believed it was important that participants had previous classes or workshops in multicultural

education. I conducted a short, introductory interview with each participant via email (see Appendix C) so that I could ascertain the appropriateness of the materials and activities I had designed in the CME curriculum. I provide more specific information in the following chapters, but the final group for the CME class consisted of six women of mixed ethnicity and age. Bringing together individuals from varied educational backgrounds and from a variety of communities served the important outcome of a self-selecting and diverse group of participants for this action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). There was an assumption that participants were voluntarily committing to the CME project as a means to social action in the educational system within which they worked. There was also an assumption that participants were seeking clarity, dialogue, and information that might enhance their knowledge of the larger political, social, and educational systems and that would serve their individual and professional interests.

My intention to help "the group move from working as isolated individuals toward a collaborative community" (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 37) reflected my own need for such a community. I conceptualized the CME project as a social action response to my previous self-study or insider research, defined as "a focus on one's own personal and professional self" (Herr & Anderson, p. 32). The insider research was documented through an autoethnography (see Appendix H) in which I researched my own learning and educational practices. My position in the CME project, on the other hand, was "insider in collaboration with other insiders" (Herr & Anderson, p. 36). Insider in collaboration with other insiders "not only might have a greater impact on the setting, but is also more democratic" (Herr & Anderson, p. 36). An indication of the democratic

nature of the CME project was the fact that I also included myself within the participant pool and shared both my experiences and my autoethnography. “In the research process, power is unmasked and engaged through solidarity as a researched-researcher team” (Christians, 2005, p. 156).

*CME Class Structure*

The CME class was constructed as a six-week course and we met for 3.5 hours each week. Participants were expected to attend a majority of the classes and also to take part in the online Discussion Board for an estimated 2-3 hours a week. Participants were informed that the course was pass/fail; the only criterion for grading was the completion of the required activities. Each participant responded to an introductory interview through email; I also spoke with each individual by phone prior to the class. In both, participants were asked about their previous experiences in multicultural education classes or diversity workshops, their reasons for enrolling in the CME class, and a brief review about their pertinent life/work histories. Table 1 provides an overview of the class structure for each week.

Table 1

*Class Structure*

| Week | Instructional Strategies<br><br>Powerpoints (PP)<br>Dialogue Circles (DC) | Participant Tasks<br><br>Critical Autobiography Reflections (CAR) | Critical Events (CE) and Resulting Critical Incidents (CI) |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Week 1 June 10***<br><br>***Who we are*** | PP: Components of class; critical theory; critical action research; data collection<br><br>DC 1 : Self-identification<br><br>DC 2: A Cultural Journey | In class: DC participation<br><br>Online discussion: Debrief Week 1; Tennant (2005) article – authentic self; Bank & Banks - cultural boundaries and cultural borders<br><br>Assignment: Introductory Interview | CE: Realization that participants have freedom of choice of self-identification<br><br>Realization that participants have a variety of expressions of self-identification<br><br>Realization that we each have culture<br><br>CI: Stereotyped expectations of others' self-identification |
| ***June 17***<br><br>***What we know*** | PP: Dimension of ME: content integration; knowledge construction; authentic self constructivism/social constructionism<br><br>DC1: A Cultural Journey<br>DC 2: Authentic Self | In class:<br>DC participation<br><br>Online discussion: Debrief Week 2; Brookfield (1985) – critical practice in adult education; Banks & Banks –inequity in educational systems and recommendations for action. | CE: Realization of the effect of sociocultural realities on the construction of the sense of self<br><br>Realization that what we are taught is not always "truth"<br><br>CI: Online participation as a cultural border |

(table continues)

| Week | Instructional Strategies<br><br>Powerpoints (PP)<br>Dialogue Circles (DC) | Participant Tasks<br><br>Critical Autobiography Reflections (CAR) | Critical Events (CE) and Resulting Critical Incidents (CI) |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Week 2 June 17***<br><br>***What we know*** | | Assignment: CAR 1: A Cultural Journey and a reflection on the writing of it and the DC experiences in talking about it | |
| ***Week 3 June 24***<br><br>***How we see*** | PP: Dimension of ME: Prejudice Reduction;; macroculture and microcultures; critical social constructionist; current ideas about social action<br><br>DC: Struggle with socially constructed reality and micro- and macroculture; strategy of paired listening; perspective taking | In class: DC participation and construction of concept map<br><br>Online discussion: Debrief Week 3; Smith-Maddox – colorblindness and dysconscious racism; Banks & Banks – culturally relevant teaching.<br>CAR 2: Life Stories – cultural upbringing and its influence; significant life events; family involvement in the community; current personal involvement | CE: Realization of in-group and resulting out-group and visual demonstration of this<br><br>Realization that each of us struggle against socially constructed reality in one way or another<br><br>Realization of frustration of cultural borders<br><br>Realization of power of reflective listening especially as it relates to perspective taking<br><br>CI: cultural borders show up in unexpected places – i.e., online format |
| ***Week 4 July 1 How we change*** | Dimension of ME: Prejudice Reduction; prejudice, stereotype threat, bias; racism; transformative leaning; social action planning<br><br>DC: uncovering own bias with use of bias weblink | In class: DC participation<br><br>Online discussion: Debrief Week 4 and continuation of uncovering own biases; social action plans; Banks & Banks the colorblind<br><br>perspective; Banks & Banks – gender inequity | CE: Each of us has bias.<br><br>CI: It is difficult to uncover our own bias; it takes a lot of time for self-reflection and for dialogue.<br><br>(table continues) |

| Week | Instructional Strategies<br><br>Powerpoints (PP)<br>Dialogue Circles (DC) | Participant Tasks<br><br>Critical Autobiography Reflections (CAR) | Critical Events (CE) and Resulting Critical Incidents (CI) |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***Week 4 July 1 How we change*** | | CAR 3: Life Stories- continued through responding to individualized questions, intention of which were to enlarge the scope of the stories for each participant | |
| ***Week 5 July 8 How we change*** | Dimension of ME: Prejudice Reduction<br><br>CD: role playing with strategy of "critical debate" | In class: DC participation<br><br>Online discussion: Debrief Week 5; Pfeifer, Brown, & Juvonen – approaches to reducing prejudice; Banks & Banks – gender bias.<br><br>CAR 4: transformative learning and where it occurred in different phases of the participant's life; uncovering and confronting bias as transformative learning | CE: Each of us has bias<br><br>CI: Uncovering our own bias might leads to disequilibrium and discomfort. Equilibration takes place both self-reflectively and in dialogue with others. |
| ***Week 6 July 13 How we can do it*** | Dimension of ME: Equity in Education Transformations: Past, Present, and Future | In class: participation<br><br>Online discussion: Debrief Week 6; final comments on any thread<br><br>Car 5: experiences of disequilibrium and transformative learning through each of the | CE: When we uncover and confront our own biases, we are better able to help our students also uncover and confront their biases, too.<br><br>CI: We can do this work together |

In Week 1, participants received information about the research process and, in particular, the video taping and recording; each individual signed a consent form (see Appendix B). I also presented the components of the class including expectations for the reading assignments. I reviewed the written requirements of the class including the Critical Autobiography Reflection (CAR) assignments and the online Discussion Board in Blackboard. I presented our classroom discussions as Dialogue Circles (DC) and gave participants information about some of the discussion strategies we would be utilizing. I described the overarching democratic principle of the CME class, defined as the commitment to the ideal of each participant's full participation. Finally, I asked them to start a research notebook in which they would gather on-going personal and professional reflections, descriptions of cognitive and emotional responses to classroom dialogue, transformations in thinking/living/working/self-perceptions/perceptions of others, as well as social action planning notes. We reviewed the online portion of the class and spent some time in the computer lab at the college ensuring that each participant could log in, locate and use the online Discussion Board format, and download articles. I distributed the syllabus (see Appendix C).

I conducted the class introductions after the course components were explained. I wanted participants to understand the course functioning before I introduced the first DC --a self-identification activity that included a strategy called *snowballing*. In the snowballing strategy, students first have time to think individually about a question or problem. When each individual in the group is ready, they move into a dialogue with one other student and then on to progressively larger groups. In the CME self-identification activity (the first DC activity), the following specific questions were asked: how do you

want to be addressed as an individual; what cultural groups and classes do you identify with; what name(s) do you prefer for that group? In the CME class, we worked on the questions individually, then in a dyad, then a trio of individuals, and then finally each person shared with the whole group.

In Week 1, I also provided a lecture and power point presentation (see Appendix G) about the history of critical theory, action research, critical multicultural education, and the intentions of our CME class: to confront ideologies, contest hegemony, critique institutional structures, and establish new equilibration in thinking and self-concept about power relations. Finally in Week 1, we began our first CAR assignment in class (see Appendix F). This assignment focused on A Cultural Journey (Lynch & Hanson, 1992; see Appendix E), which is a set of questions designed to assist individuals in recognizing that "culture is not just something that someone else has. All of us have a cultural, ethnic, and linguistic heritage that influences our current beliefs, values, and behaviors" (p. 60). The questions included three topics, the first of which was about the individual's origins, e.g., familial roots and ancestry, cultural celebrations, food, and languages. The second topic was a short examination of an individual's cultural beliefs, biases, and behaviors. The third topic was called "Imagine" in which individuals write about their perceptions of other cultures in both positive and negative ways. Participants wrote their responses to these questions and we had a short DC in self-selected dyads before the class ended. Each participant chose to work with the individual sitting next to her. In the first CAR, participants were asked to respond to these questions and to also provide a reflection on the DC exercise. The transformative learning of the participants in this work is documented in Chapter VI.

In the days between our weekly meetings, participants were asked to work in the online Discussion Board. Each week, the Discussion Board included a thread for debriefing the learning from the previous class. Two content review threads were also included every week. In Week 1, one thread was concerned with the Tennant (2005) journal article about authentic self; another thread addressed Chapter II in the Banks and Banks (2007) text about cultural boundaries versus borders.

In the Week 2 face-to-face class, we reviewed the online aspects of the course in the computer lab; this proved to be difficult and frustrating for some students. We were able to use the difficulty as an example of how a cultural boundary, which "refers to the presence of some kind of cultural difference" (Banks & Banks, 2007, p. 43), can become a cultural border "in which differences in rights and obligations are powerfully attached to the presence or absence of certain kinds of cultural knowledge" (Banks & Banks, pp. 43-44). One of the participants identified her online learning struggle as a cultural border in our discussion of this topic in class. "When one arrives at a cultural border, one's cultural knowledge may be held up for scrutiny--stopped and frisked" (Banks & Banks, p. 44). One of the students verbalized her inability to function smoothly in the online portion of the class:

> I've never done online before, so it's part discussion here and then it's online. So it's been a learning challenge I guess to me, because I am struggling with the online aspect of this. I am still struggling with the online aspect of it, but it has been for me a huge, learning experience. I have to say that in my research notebook, I did say that the online part was a barrier. I was really gungho [sic] to try and do that, and I just kept medium frustration. So then I wrote that it was no longer a barrier, it is now a boundary and is extremely frustrating. At one point, I thought that it could actually become a border in my own personal - because I know that a border has to do with the political aspect of it. To me, it was almost the same thing. I will never, ever take another online course, ever! But now I am changing that a little bit, now that I am a little bit more comfortable with the online aspect. (Leann: 6/24/09: T1)

By the end of Week 2, all participants were proficiently active in the online forum of the CME course. After we resolved the online learning issues, we spent time in class talking about the participants' experiences with the cultural journey exercise. Later in the class, I asked participants to form self-selected dyads for a DC in which they were to discuss the following question: To what extent can there be an *authentic self* that can be seen as completely separate from social forces (Tennant, 2005)? The conversations and outcomes from this exercise are presented in Chapter IV.

The lecture items for Week 2 included background information on two of the dimensions of multicultural education: content integration and knowledge construction (Banks & Banks, 2007). The lecture and power point presentation (see Appendix G) on these dimensions included information about the manner in which we include all cultures in our teaching and also about beliefs about how knowledge is created and shared in a culture. The articles in the Week 2 online Discussion Board included inequity and educational systems (Banks & Banks) and the principles of critical practice in adult education (Brookfield, 2005).

In the Week 3 class, we began our conversations with the topics of national macroculture--"the larger shared core culture" (Banks & Banks, 2007, p. 7) and our various microcultures--"the smaller cultures, which are a part of the core culture" (Banks & Banks, p. 7). After referencing the information in Banks and Banks about the manner in which one might visually describe the intersections of national macroculture and individual microcultures, I asked participants to construct a concept map or Venn diagram that might express their cultural configurations. I pointed out that their maps might provide a visual illustration of each individual's socially constructed and individual

constructed reality. Participants brought these graphics to the DC which followed and which was constructed as a one-on-one discussion. For this dyad, I asked participants to attempt to work with a new DC partner. The question for the DC was: what are some examples of where you had to fight or struggle with socially constructed reality to construct an individual reality, or where have you seen others confront socially constructed knowledge? We began to understand that the work of critical multiculturalist is to confront that which is social constructionism, both in our personal lives and in our professional worlds.

For this DC, we practiced a strategy called *paired listening* (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005). In paired listening, the first individual shared her thoughts on the topic for approximately five minutes while the other listened, making no verbal comments. The participants reversed positions and practiced the strategy again. This was a good beginning to our conversations around the importance of perspective taking on the part of those who are trying to uncover and confront their own biases. Perspective taking and how that relates to carefully listening to another in order to further discussion is an important segment of the principles of democracy that Brookfield and Preskill promoted for constructivist teaching. This also allowed us to begin conversations about uncovering our own biases as these affect our perceptions about the people around us in our worlds. After class, we followed up on the online Discussion Board and focused on the item about Recommendations for Action (Banks & Banks, 2007, pp. 100-101) in our assigned reading. Participants' ideas about social action as well as the transformative learning and narratives from the DC activity are included in Chapter V.

In the Week 4 class, we continued conversations about bias and racism. The participants were having a difficult time coming up with their own biases. Most of the conversations in this week's class were concerned with the manner in which each participant had experienced bias in her own world. To place the conversation more directly on our own biases, I provided a website from the internet that listed a wide variety of types of biases [Bias (n.d.) retrieved January 25, 2010 from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bias]. Participants worked in self-selected pairs and discussed several items from the list of biases: religion, political orientation, gender, race, ability, etc. I asked them to compare the bias list with the concept maps they had constructed of their micro-and macroculture to see if this might help them uncover their own biases. These narratives are described in Chapter V.

In the Week 4 online Discussion Board, the topic of uncovering our biases was continued in our weekly debriefing thread. A participant had discovered one of her biases and wrote the history of it including her memory of some family members' comments that had precipitated this bias, which was still active in her current observations of her world. Only one other participant read the item before our class met the following day, but she responded to the post with a positive attitude. During the first part of the Week 5 class, the participant who had written about her bias on Blackboard recounted her experience in the class. Another member of the class took the comment personally and became quite upset. The resulting confrontation and disequilibrium among class members is documented in Chapter V.

At the end of our Week 5 class, and after the important critical incident described above, we tried some role playing using a strategy that Brookfield and Preskill (2005)

call a *critical debate* (Brookfield, 2005, pp. 111-112). Each of us took on the persona of an individual who represented one of our uncovered biases and argued an assigned role for the debate. Participants were asked to be prepared to engage in graceful conflict, a term that we had created earlier in our work together to define our willingness to learn to disrupt culturally biased remarks as a part of our social action. Participants were also asked to take the perspective of those we *otherise*. Otherising is a way of defining and securing one's own positive identity through the stigmatization of others (Banks & Banks 2007).

In Week 5, we also began to watch the video, *Racism: The Power of an Illusion* (Alderman, 2003) until the time when class was supposed to end. None of the participants left, however, and we engaged in conversations about the parts of the film that most outraged or intrigued us for at least another hour. We shared our questions as well as the additional information that many participants were able to bring to the conversation. The transformative learning that occurred after viewing the video and as a result of the conversations among participants is included in Chapter VI.

In the Week 6 class (intended to be the final class session), we watched more of the video, *Racism: The Power of an Illusion* (Alderman, 2003) and continued our conversations about it. We covered topics of evolution, cultural anthropology, African American history, and personal observations about cognitive and emotional responses to the video. We spent the entire class time in whole-group discussion. We talked about planning action and how individuals were seeing themselves going forward. We talked about lessons learned from the class. We agreed to meet again the next week; there was a consensus that we were not ready for the class to end. There was also an agreement that

we should participate in some type of closing ceremony; the sense of community that had developed in the class was so strong that it needed to be honored in some way.

*Data Collection*

Data were collected from the participants in a variety of ways. An introductory interview was conducted before the CME class met (see Appendix C). The participants' CARs, research notebooks, and their posted entries in the online Discussion Board provided evidence of participant progress through the curricular content; each of these was employed as a data source. All of the class sessions were recorded using audio equipment and the six planned sessions that are included in this dissertation were transcribed. Five of the six classes were recorded using video equipment. Transcriptions and video recordings were utilized as data sources (see Table 2).

Table 2

*Data Sources and Abbreviations Used in Text*

| Week | Data Source Name | Text Abbreviation |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Introductory Interview | II |
| | Video, Part 1 | 6/10/09: Video 1 |
| | Video, Part 2 | 6/10/09: Video 2 |
| | Audio Recorder Transcripts | 6/10/09: T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6 |
| | Discussion Submissions on BlackBoard (Threads a, b, c) | 6/10/09: D1a, D1b, D1c |
| | Critical Autobiographical Reflection | 6/10/09: CAR 1 |
| | Research Notebook | RN |
| 2 | Video, Part 3 | 6/17/09: Video 3 |
| | Video, Part 4 | 6/17/09: Video 4 |
| | Audio Recorder Transcripts (3 recorders) | 6/17/09: T1, T2a, T2b, T3 |
| | Discussion Submissions on BlackBoard (Threads a, b, c) | 6/17/09: D2a, D2b, D2c |
| | Critical Autobiographical Reflection | 6/17/09: CAR 2 |
| 3 | Video, Part 5 | 6/24/09: Video 5 |
| | Video, Part 6 | 6/24/09: Video 6 |
| | Audio Recorder Transcripts | 6/24/09: T1, T2a, T2b, T3 |
| | Discussion Submissions on BlackBoard (Threads a, b, c) | 6/24/09: D3a, D3b, D3c |
| | Critical Autobiographical Reflection | 6/24/09: CAR 3 |

(table continues)

| Week | Data Source Name | Text Abbreviation |
|---|---|---|
| 4 | Video, Part 7 | 7/1/09: Video 7 |
| | Video, Part 8 | 7/1/09: Video 8 |
| | Audio Recorder Transcripts | 7/1/09: T1, T2 |
| | Discussion Submissions on BlackBoard (Threads a, b, c) | 7/1/09: D4a, D4b, D4c |
| | Critical Autobiographical Reflection | 7/1/09: CAR 4 |
| 5 | Video, Part 9 | 7/8/09: Video 9 |
| | Video, Part 10 | 7/8/09: Video 10 |
| | Video, Part 11 | 7/8//09: Video 11 |
| | Audio Recorder Transcripts | 7/8/09: T1, T2, T3 |
| | Discussion Submissions on BlackBoard (Threads a, b, c) | 7/8/09: D5a, D5b, D5c |
| | Critical Autobiographical Reflection | 7/8/09: CAR 5 |
| 6 | Audio Recorder Transcripts | 7/15/09: T1, T2 |
| | Discussion Submissions on BlackBoard | 7/15/09: D6 |

*Narrative Inquiry*

Narrative inquiry is a broad term for the "interdisciplinary study of the activities involved in generating and analyzing stories of life experiences and reporting that kind of research" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 171). I chose narrative inquiry to investigate the results of the CME class for two reasons. The first reason for choosing narrative inquiry was that this was the manner in which my own transformative learning was documented in *Construction of a Critical Multiculturalist: An Autoethnography* (Ferrari, 2008; see

Appendix H). “Narrative is an event-driven tool of research. The identification of key events and the details surrounding these are recognized forces in adequately describing the matter under research” (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 71). The conceptualization of the CME class was built on the key events as explored through my autoethnography.

The second reason I chose narrative inquiry was that I had never experienced the sense of community and caring that permeated our CME class. My hope was that through narrative inquiry, I could appropriately represent that connection through the participants’ voices. Narrative inquiry provides a method of study as well as a “phenomena under study” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 5). The participants were aware that their writing and their voices were being recorded so that their stories and their learning could be studied. In this way, the process of narrative inquiry itself was examined; we studied the effects of narrative inquiry and of specific critical events as a curricular tool. We were also studying ourselves as individuals and as products of our sociocultural backgrounds; we were studying the effects of the critical literature, self-reflection, dialogue, and action planning on our personal and professional lives.

In my opinion, when a class is taught from the perspective of the students’ life histories, narrative inquiry could arguably be the only accurate representation of the experiences of such a class. I knew I must organize these stories so that the transformative learning of the participants would be revealed in a way that honored the experiences of those participants. All of this helps to set the stage, I hope, for my presentation of the participants’ stories in the following chapters in such a way that the humanness, compassion, and depth of each individual are adequately exposed.

*Narrative Analysis of the Critical Events and the Critical Incidents*

Narrative analysis (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) refers to the "variety of procedures for interpreting the narratives or stories generated in research" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 169). I chose narrative analysis specifically for my method of analysis because I believed that a story-based reporting style would work particularly well in exploring how the theoretical perspective of critical theory transformed the ways in which participants interpreted their life histories. Transformative critical pedagogies, such as those used in the CME class, are designed to "emphasize education for a more democratic, just society" (Jennings & Smith, 2002, p. 457). Narrative analysis provided a framework to document the experiences of the participants and "how the discourse of the social and theoretical contexts" (Clandinin & Connelly, p. 124) shaped those realities before, during, and even after the CME class.

What I did not realize until after the CME class was completed and I began to sift through the substantial data sources was that the stories were falling quite naturally into an analysis of the key events as they were revealed through the life history of the participants as well as through classroom curriculum. In my study of narrative inquiry as a research method, I learned that my key events were often called critical events in narrative research and were, in fact, an appropriate means of organizing data. Critical events are defined as those that "reveal a change in understanding or worldview by the storyteller" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 73). A critical event is critical because of the impact on the storyteller, i.e., the criticality does not "relate so much to the context (though that might be extraordinary), as to the profound effects it has on the people involved" (Woods, 1993, p. 356). "It is almost always a change experience and it can

only ever be identified after" (Webster & Mertova, p. 74). The critical events approach to narrative "involves the exploration of events that have occurred in the past, using qualitative, naturalistic methods that aim to explore meaning and understanding" (Woods, p. 356).

As my autoethnography revealed, I was so changed by the experiences and learning of a certain period of my life that an action was required. The CME class became my social action and my intention was to create the same series of opportunities for the occurrence of critical events or "change experiences" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 74) for the participants of the CME class (and perhaps for all my classes hereafter). The critical events in the CME class were the planned curricular pieces designed to disrupt socially-embedded thinking and to allow room for new individually-realized thinking to occur. Using critical theory as a theoretical perspective framework for a multicultural education class set the stage for advanced thinking for students such as those in the CME class who had uncovered basic untruths in their educational backgrounds and in their teaching or professional lives.

The first planned critical event was the slow uncovering of the participants' life histories. The CARs, online Discussion Board entries, and transcripts from the DCs revealed many things from these histories including the purpose and the circumstances that brought each individual to the CME class. Interviews and audio transcripts of class dialogue provided data that revealed that the CME class met the needs of the participating individuals in ways that they might not have been aware of as they registered for the class. The needs that were met were not always capable of being articulated until the end of the course. The uncovering of self in society was a critical event.

Critical incidents, unlike critical events, are the "unplanned, unanticipated, and uncontrolled" (Woods, 1993, p. 357) occurrences of a learning event. While some narrative researchers do not differentiate between critical events and critical incidents (Webster & Mertova, 2007), I felt this distinction was integral to the analysis of the data from the CME class, especially in the uncovering and confronting of individual bias. The critical incidents were, in some ways, more exciting (and uncomfortable) to explore; they created discomfort for each of the participants, both inside and outside of the classroom. These were the true *ah-ha moments* of the class in which each individual shared and participated. A major critical incident in the uncovering of life histories and perceptions of authentic self occurred in the first two class sessions as we worked on our self-identities and on our cultural backgrounds (see Chapter IV).

The second planned critical event was the struggle of each participant to identify his or her own biases. I believed I was ready to facilitate anti-bias conversations because of my experience of living in Ecuador and the self-reflective work that had brought me to my figurative knees as far as uncovering and confronting bias. I became convinced that such work was useful and perhaps even critical for teachers. I knew that reading critical literature and engaging in dialogue around issues of bias, prejudice, and inequity would increase each participant's knowledge base. The epistemology of constructionism and its bifurcation into socially constructed knowledge and individually constructed knowledge (Crotty, 2003) provided a theoretical base through which we could separate ourselves from our socially constructed biases and confront them intellectually as well as emotionally. This was the groundwork for the critical event of uncovering and confronting bias that I intended for the students. A critical incident arising from this

planned event was a confrontation that occurred between two of the participants. This work is documented in Chapter V.

The third critical event for the CME project was the use of the cycles of action research (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005) as a forum through which individuals could achieve transformative learning. The cycles of action research purposefully led participants to read and reflect about critical theory and then to engage in dialogue with others about their thinking. The cycles of investigation, self-reflection, and dialogue led to planning social action. These created new arenas for further cycles of investigation, self-reflection, etc. The critical events were documented through the interviews, dialogues, critical autobiographies, and written online correspondence of the participants. I searched the data for "the conditions which give rise to [them], the context in which [they were] embedded, the strategies by which it is handled, and the consequences of those strategies" (Woods, 1993, p. 356).

The planned critical events for the CME course were concerned with self-reflective analysis, inequity in educational systems in the United States, the implicit and explicit bias of each individual and the uncovering and confronting of such, and the accompanying social action as the means to recovering equilibration from the previous critical events meant to cause cognitive dissonance. In the following chapters, I provide a narrative of the three major critical events and accompanying critical incidents as they occurred within the six weeks of the Summer 2009 CME course. Life histories and self-identification, uncovering and confronting bias, and the spiral of cycles of action research as it led to transformative learning provided the framework for the narratives.

## Trustworthiness

The trustworthiness--or "that quality of an investigation (and its findings) that made it noteworthy to audiences" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 258)--of the CME project was essential to determining the success of the methodology and methods of the project. I found it interesting that qualitative researchers continue to try to match quantitative ideas of validity to qualitative research. Validity "is an epistemic criterion: To say that the findings of social scientific investigations are (or must be) valid is to argue that the findings are in fact (or must be) true and certain" (Schwandt, p. 267). From the beginning of the CME research project and, in truth, from the beginning of my training as a teacher, I have come to believe that perceptions and goals for truth and certainty are less than optimal conditions for learning and for living and acting. Therefore, I put the idea of validity as truth as an outcome for the CME project behind; instead, I focused on the idea of each participant exploring his or her life story as a means to flexible and malleable snapshots of his or her cultural reality and the manner in which these snapshots reveal transformative learning.

In preparing to study the effects of a critical multicultural education class on its participants, including myself, I became aware that my focus audience was the members of the class. While my dissertation committee members were certainly interested in the outcomes of the CME project, I was not compelled to convince any other audience of its noteworthiness. To honor the participants of the CME project, however, I offer the following documentation of the manner in which I attempted to ensure that the CME project was trustworthy to each of those participants.

I found the authenticity criteria presented by Guba and Lincoln (2005) to be most pertinent to the CME project, especially the following three criteria: fairness, educative authenticity, and catalytic authenticity. Fairness relates to providing a balance of "views, perspectives, claims, concerns, and voices" (Guba & Lincoln, p. 207) of the participants included in a study. "A major trustworthiness criterion is credibility in the eyes of the information sources" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 213).

Two pieces of the CME project were related to the concept of fairness. The first was the explicit inclusion of a framework of democratic principles for the classroom process (Brookfield, 1987). The classroom structure, including the strong focus on discussion, kept the ideal of constructivist learning (i.e., facilitator and students in partnership in a classroom) in the forefront of the project. Including myself as a participant in the action research methodological design or as an "insider in collaboration with other insiders" (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 31) provided a sense of cooperation and inclusion with the other participants. Providing my own autoethnography leveled the playing field; I was as exposed as any other participant.

The second aspect of the CME project that related to the concept of fairness was the simultaneous collection and analysis of data by all participants. The use of narrative analysis required that each participant had input and choices about which of her stories would be included as documentation of the CME action research project. Although participants did not request any elimination of stories, they were provided opportunities to do so, especially in Chapter V, although other chapters were also submitted to participants for review.

Educative authenticity, the second criterion, demands that there be indications of "a raised level of awareness by individual research participants" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 207). The research question for the CME project was focused on the transformative learning that participants experienced through the created pedagogy for the course and how such transformations led to social action projects. In narrative analysis, it is particularly critical to use the data to tell the story as accurately as possible to reflect the realities of the participants (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000).

Authenticity is also supported by triangulation as a "means of checking the integrity of the inferences one draws" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 257) through the inclusion of multiple perspectives and through using multiple data sources to get at those perspectives. For the CME project, interviews, autobiography entries, discussion transcriptions, and research notebooks of participants and the participant researcher provided multiple data sources and perspectives. Bias and subjectivity "are natural and acceptable in action research as long as they are critically examined rather than ignored" (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 60). The self-reflectivity implicit to action research provided such on-going critical examination; in the CME class, critical examination was implicit in the CARs. An advantage of conducting action research as a dissertation project is the availability of critical *friends* (i.e., committee members) to act as devil's advocates to help me gain distance from my own taken-for-granted understandings of my practice and assumptions. Conferences with my dissertation committee chair and the committee members served as "validation meetings in which ongoing findings are defended" (Herr & Anderson, p. 60).

Catalytic authenticity, the third criterion, "refers to the ability of a given inquiry to prompt action on the part of research participants" (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 207). "Action researchers must be competent at both research procedures and moving participants toward successful action outcomes" (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 55). Catalytic authenticity was an important outcome of the CME project and resonated with Freire's (1970/2006) notion of "praxis: reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 51). Individual participant movement to social action in the six months following the CME project is reported in Chapter VI--Summary, Conclusion, and Recommendations.

## Ethical Considerations

An ethical consideration in the CME project was democratic validity or the "extent to which research is done in collaboration with all parties who have a stake in the problem under investigation" (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p. 56). While the concept of fairness discussed above in the Trustworthiness section depends on the inclusion of multiple voices for triangulation, democratic validity views such triangulation "as an ethical and social justice issue" (Herr & Anderson, p. 56). However, it is important to acknowledge that there remains an inherent tension between the autobiographical nature of narrative reporting and the commitment to honor the voices of the participants. With this in mind, I committed myself as closely as possible to the ideal of ethicist William May (1980, cited in Schwandt, 2001) and took seriously the researcher's

> duties to respect confidences, to communicate…the aims of the research, to protect anonymity, to safeguard rights, interests, and sensitivities, to give fair return for services rendered, to anticipate the consequences of publication, to share the results of research with affected parties, and to be sensitive to the diversity of values and interests of those studied. (p. 75)

Clearly stating this commitment in the approved Institutional Review Board documentation (see Appendix A) and the Informed Consent (see Appendix B) provided documentation of the seriousness of ethical considerations for those participants willing to uncover and confront bias and to engage in dialogue in order to become effective social activists in their work and lives.

Confidentiality was another central concern for the CME project, specifically, and for narrative inquiry, generally, as the "landscape and persons with whom we are engaging as participants may be shifting and changing" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 175). Who owns the stories created in narrative analysis? On one hand, as all information has the potential to be part of my published dissertation, it may appear that I have ownership. However, in action research, it is the responsibility of all participants to have a voice in what will be included in the final published document. If any piece of any story is viewed as harmful to any participant, it must be disallowed as data. It was made clear to participants that they could have, at any time, blacked out those topics or stories that became problematic in the sharing of them.

## Limitations of the Study

I did not intend for the CME research project to serve as a model for creating and dispensing critical multicultural education. I simply intended to present the data from the CME project as a set of stories from the classroom that included a particular group of individuals and the critical events and critical incidents that emerged from those individual stories. The CME classroom experiences, the life stories created by the participants, and the described learning of the participants will not be possible to

duplicate. Instead, I presented, through the CME study, the story of our class as it unfolded. I leave it to the reader to determine the effects.

## Summary

"Narrative inquiries are always strongly autobiographical" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 121). The CME project emerged from my own autoethnography and the learning and travel that created it. My critical self-reflection led seemingly and inexorably to social action. The social action of creating and facilitating a critical multicultural education class for other interested educators was a natural response to the discomfort I experienced in uncovering and confronting my own socio-cultural and individual biases. The spiral of cycles implicit to action research provided an obvious framework for the types of data to be collected from the participants in the CME course. Narrative analysis provided a comfortable and interesting mode of revealing the outcomes for participants; our stories interwove and built upon each other to reveal the outcomes of our time together.

"For narrative inquirers it is crucial to be able to articulate a relationship between one's personal interests and larger social concerns expressed in the works and lives of others" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 122). Overarching the data, the participants, and the stories is the epistemological bifurcation of constructionism, reminding us to hold our two realities in focus as we fight our socially constructed realities to become individuated, mature adults capable of drawing ourselves to new planes of thinking outside our cultural cages.

# CHAPTER IV

# THE PARTICIPANTS AND SELF IDENTIFICATION

## The Participants Arrive

As the participants began to filter into the room, I reflected on what I already knew of them. Saxon is a former co-worker; she and I both worked for a non-profit consulting agency housed in a local university located in a large western city. When I left that agency, she took my job. Over the years, we had met several times a year to hike, snowshoe, have lunch, and shop. She had been a willing partner in several years of conversation about issue of diversity and multicultural education. Her boss (my former boss) had given her the time from work (with pay) to attend the class. Saxon is a European American woman, former teacher, married to a retired elementary teacher with two grown children and three grandchildren. She has a strong interest in the quality of before and after school care as well as knowledge about education at a state level.

I also knew Tiana before the class began. She and I had been enrolled in the same graduate course in qualitative research a few years ago. Tiana is an African American woman from Louisiana. She has a strong background in African American history as well a history of racist experiences that she is comfortable sharing. In a class we had taken together, she provided new insights for me about living as a Southern African American in a mainly European American environment in the western United States. I met her

again at a diversity conference at our university when I provided a presentation about my plans for the CME class.

Pam was new to me. We had talked on the phone and sent emails back and forth about the class. She had a strong interest in exploring a specific topic about the children with whom she worked in a large western city as was indicated in the following that Pam wrote in her introductory interview.

> I see so many children who are entering the classroom with behavior issues that I have not seen before. I would like to learn new techniques on how to address and meet the social and emotional needs of these children and their families. I am hoping that this class will offer me some opportunities to gain some research and understanding about these new behaviors. I think that this class will help me improve my classroom management skills and knowledge. (Pam: 6/1/09: II)

I knew that Pam would bring a strong background in multicultural education to the CME class.

> I have attended several classes on multicultural education and diversity workshops. At Metro State College, I took several classes in Black History and Latino History and Women's studies. I also attended classes at the University of Denver on Multicultural and Diversity. This school year, our staff participated in an in-school year- long workshop on diversity that was presented by the C.U.R.E. Center (University of Colorado at Denver) at a local elementary school. (Pam: 6/1/09: II)

When Pam arrived for the class, I observed an African American woman, middle-aged, dressed casually, and with a hesitant smile. She was soft-spoken and friendly as she entered the room.

Leann was also unknown by me. We had talked on the phone briefly. She found the course through the university's online extended studies classes. She chose the class because she was getting ready for a new year at her school where she would have more children from diverse backgrounds. She needed continuing education classes for her state teaching license renewal. Leann taught kindergarten at a private children's center in the

same small town where I live. The children's center is run by a nationally known corporation. She arrived a bit late for the class, having become lost finding her way through the city. She was a European American woman who appeared to be in her 30s. She was harried, apologetic, and laughing at herself.

Elana, a teacher in a bilingual, private preschool in Boulder, joined us because she was interested in topics of multicultural education and especially bilingual early education. As she entered the room, we saw a young European American woman who appeared to be in her 20s. She seemed poised and confident and was an articulate speaker. She also came to the class with a myriad of experience and education.

> I grew up in a multi-cultural family, which I believe is the root of my passionate interest in cross-cultural, inter-cultural relationships and social justice. I have also traveled extensively, and am interested in social justice issues on a global scale. As I teacher, I am most interested in working in a bilingual/multicultural environment. My experiences working with children include working in an alternative school for children with learning disabilities in Bangalore, India; working in a child care center and health clinic in San Jose, Costa Rica; and two and a half years as the assistant bilingual teacher at New Horizons/Nuevos Horizontes Cooperative Preschool in Boulder, Colorado. In my work, I find myself constantly wrestling with issues related to social justice, equality and diversity in education. (Elana: 6/3/09: II)

I remember wondering what a "multi-cultural" family was and thinking that this woman would be an interesting addition to our group.

Kathy, my doctoral committee chair, participated in all but one of the classes. She had a personal interest in the topic of critical multicultural education and social action and contributed openly and honestly throughout the class sections. Kathy was a participant in all of the Dialogue Circles and took part in each of the strategies and topics. While Kathy participated in the online Discussion Board, she purposefully did not involve herself too much in the conversation as this was seen as the students' forum.

Kathy monitored the video recording and transferred the recordings to disks for each class session.

Finally, JB, a man in his 40's, joined us for the first two classes. His data are only revealed in one comment by another participant. He had to leave the class due to an ill family friend. Thus, we had a group of seven active participants including Kathy and me. The final group of women came from a wide variety of experiences and educational backgrounds and provided diversity of ethnicity and age.

## Self-Identification and the Snowballing Strategy in Dialogue Circles

Most classes, workshops, and meetings begin with participant introductions. In many of the diversity and anti-racism workshops and meetings that I have attended, the facilitators asked us to fashion our introductions through *self-identification*. For example, in the Race across America discussion group sponsored by the local YWCA in which I participated during the winter of 2008, we were asked to introduce ourselves by our names and our cultural self-identity. I found the self-identification process at this meeting fascinating. As introductions were made around the large circle of participants, more qualifiers were added. For example, the first introduction was "My name is Lorraine and I am White"; by the final introduction it was "My name is Anne and I am a middle-aged, upper-middle class, European American with roots in Germany and Norway." Because of this experience, I decided to utilize a strategy that Brookfield and Preskill (2005) refer to as snowballing for our self-identification exercise. In this rotating small group strategy, students begin the activity by responding to a question as an individual, then "create progressively larger conversation groups by doubling the size of these groups every few

minutes until the large group has been reformed" (Brookfield & Preskill, p. 108). In each formation, the participants addressed the same questions.

I did not, however, start our first CME class session with individual introductions and the self-identification exercise. Instead, I began by explaining the foundational theories of the class and the components of the class including the syllabus, performance expectations, and the research requirements. Each student agreed to be a part of the research project and signed consent forms, thus becoming participants. The main purpose of this format was to ensure that participants would understand that the self-identification process would be an important component of the research element of the course.

After this class overview, the self-identification exercise served as our first Dialogue Circle (DC). I put the following questions on the overhead and gave the participants time to reflect and to write.

1. How do you want to be addressed as an individual?
2. What cultural groups and classes do you identify with?
3. What name(s) do you prefer for that group

During the individual part of the snowballing self-identification exercise, there was no conversation; it was completely silent (6/10/09: Video 1). I assumed five minutes would be enough time; it took them around 10 minutes for all to be ready to share. I then placed the participants into one-on-one groupings. All of the dyad groups except one were ready to move to a larger forum after 15 to 20 minutes. Three of the individuals were given papers with their partner's name on it; each then found his or her partner.

I believed that the evolution or process of the self-identification was the interesting part of this type of introduction and that it might lead to transformative

learning; however, this was not the main purpose. The major intention of the DC and the snowballing strategy was to help the participants relax and get to know one another while working on a sometimes tricky self-identification task. We had an uneven number that day, so I was also a participant in this DC. As we entered the one-on-one part of the self-identification exercise, the participants visibly relaxed; their faces became animated, their bodies reflected more receptive stances as we talked and listened (6/10/09: Video 1). The first purposes of community building and comfort appeared to have been accomplished; this is verified through the remainder of the CME dissertation.

The second hoped-for outcome of the self-identification process was that transformative learning would occur. I concur with Woods (1993) and his idea that critical events are largely planned and predicted. I assumed or planned that the snowballing strategy for our self-identification activity would produce some type of changes for participants. I also expected our stories of self to evolve as we reported them three times in differing groupings; this was exhibited in the following responses to the second question, "What cultural groups and classes do you identify with"? In the dyad, Elana reported to her partner:

> This is really an interesting question for me--something that I struggle with somewhat. I guess I don't really like identifiers in that way because they are so narrow and nobody really fits into one category. I guess ethnically I am of mixed European descent, however, I grew up in a multiracial/multicultural family so I feel that that label doesn't appropriately - I don't know. I don't feel that is an appropriate box. I feel my experience is certainly beyond that and influenced by other cultures. (Elana: 6/10/09: T3)

In the next phase of the snowballing exercise, Elana entered a group with Tiana, who is African American, and me. After a half hour of conversation around our self-identification, Tiana said:

> I would like to do a study on college students to ask what would be their reflections about self-identifying and which one of those they would use to name themselves, because more often it is the non-dominant cultured person who has an ascribed label. Whereas I find that Main Street folks are just like, well, "I'm just me." You think you're Elana, and you're Jan. I don't always get to be Tiana. I would love to be Tiana. I would love to be American, but I feel compelled to put the African in front of it. I would love to just be Tiana, but too often I may be initially engaged by "other" with whatever image that person has in their head when they initially meet me. (Tiana: 6/10/09: T3)
>
> I get that, too. It's interesting for me because I struggle with that, too, because my stepfather, who my mom has been with since I was 2 years old is African American. (Elana: 6/10/09: T3)
>
> Hmmm. (Tiana: 6/10/09: T3)
>
> So I was raised by an African American man and I have his entire family. Well his mother passed away, but I had more of a relationship with her than with my mother's mother. You know. We would visit her and spend weeks at her house; she would spend weeks at our house. My other grandmother would come four days out of the year and, you know, leave. So that's a really huge influence in my life and a really significant part of my life. But it's not like part of--but it's difficult for me to know how to integrate that--I guess in how I present myself to the outside world. It is interesting, that whole thing, too, of, oh well, you just say that to make yourself appear to be--uh. (Elana: 6/10/09: T3)
>
> Ethnic? (Jan: 6/10/09: T3)
>
> I don't know what exactly. It's an uncomfortable thing for me. It is something I think about and really struggle with. Figuring out, you know. And then today, oh, no, this question! That self-identity question again. (Elana: 6/10/09: T3)

This example illustrates how the self-identification can be a critical incident for a participant. The fact that Elana is a European American woman raised by an African American father is certainly significant to her self-identification; however, she did not mention this in her first discussion opportunity. She and all the participants had the opportunity to reflect on their self-conceptions as individuals and also how those may have changed as they moved to a one-one-one conversation, to a group of three, and finally as part of the whole group. The DC activity gave Elana and each of us the

opportunity to reflect on how we frame our identities as well as how our expectations of the identities of others may be significant and problematic.

Elana's example also provided a good illustration of a critical incident in narrative research. I did not expect the self-identification to reveal itself as transformative learning as far as our stereotyped expectations of others' identifications.

> It was interesting to share with one person and then to the larger groups because as we shared it became evident that there are all types of cultures in which we belong; such as tennis groups, music groups, grandparents, parents, children, siblings, etc. I personally have to be aware of not making quick judgments that can be very detrimental. I have to remind myself to take time to listen carefully to what another person has to say. (Saxon: 6/12/09: CAR1)

The participants began to realize that each of us makes assumptions about the ethnicity, gender, social class, age, etc. of other individuals. The self-identification revealed markedly different information about some of the participants than what most of us had assumed. Tennant (2005) writes, "It is important to acknowledge the diverse and overlapping ways in which the conceptions of self and identity are distinguished" (p. 103). Elana provided an articulate summary in her CAR 1 about her experience with our first DC about self-identification.

> As I expressed during the sharing, the questions that were asked were ones that I struggle to answer within myself because of my life experience. I therefore often feel uncomfortable talking about it. I am aware of what I look like upon first meeting, which is a young, privileged white person. This is certainly part of my identity, but falls short of the reality of who I am. I think it is always interesting to hear something of people's stories and how they view themselves, because we invariably organize people into boxes when we meet them, and more often then not, as we get to know them, those original conceptions are changed.
>
> The exercise was preliminary, and I think everyone still felt a bit self-conscious. As we get to know each other more in the class, it will be interesting to see what else comes out. Although that exercise was difficult and revealing, it still only scratched the surface.

> I always think it is interesting to listen to how people use language, especially talking about things like identity. Language is so politically charged, and the way that people use it is telling. I struggle with this as well, because I want to express myself freely, but I am always thinking about the political implications of the words I am using. I always wonder how that self-consciousness changes the sharing of ideas and self. Is it good to be concerned with being 'politically correct'? Does that block growth because people are not being honest about where they are coming from? I keep in mind that language use is greatly influenced by experience as well. For example, I have a hard time using the term 'American' to describe people from the United States because I know people from the rest of 'America' find that offensive. (Elana: 6/15/09: CAR1)

## Constructionism and Storied Self

The use of the epistemology of constructionism came in handy when interpreting or trying to make sense of what happened during the DC described above. Crotty (2003) writes that "all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (p. 42). That is, truth is a moving target and dependent on "our engagement with the realities in our world" (Crotty, p. 8), even the truth about ourselves and our identities. What we knew about ourselves shifted a bit; what we assumed about others shifted even more, as was revealed in the writing of the participants in the days and weeks following our first CME class session. Leann shared the following:

> I have spent a lot of time thinking about our first class and the implications. My first thought of the word culture leads me to think of ethnicity or ancestors. JB brought in middle-class, teacher, etc. which I never even considered. Jan brought in middle-aged and Elana mentioned economic and social status. These too I never considered as culture. I am broadening my definition of culture to include many different aspects that I never considered before. (Leann: 6/10/09: RN)

> After listening to JB and the other classmates I realized culture also means who you currently are to other people and to yourself. As we got into the larger groups, I started to add more to my culture. Not only am I English, German, and Dutch but I am a daughter, sister, mother, wife, educator, cancer survivor, farm hand, ranch hand, animal lover, lower income class, hard worker and according to my

> sister, trailer trash and my brother-in-law, red-neck. The last two...I like to think that I don't fit in very well but I do live in a trailer and we find dead cars and tools every time we mow around the house and I do vacuum the couch. So, maybe it fits a little bit. The more specific I get with class, education, career, and groups, the closer I get to who I am rather than where my ancestors came from and their beliefs and traditions. (Leann: 6/20/09: CAR 1)

The shifting of identity when shared with others shows the effect of interpersonal dialogue on the intrapersonal dialogue. As Mahmoud (2009) writes, "There seems to be a *preferred* or a *core* identity (whether unicultural or hybrid) that the person *feels* represents them the most" (p. 285). This *freedom of choice* idea around self-identification resonates with Tennant's (2005) outline of the variety of conceptions of self and identity, which relate directly to the tension between the individual and the individual's sociocultural self. Therefore, I included Tennant's journal article in our Week 1 online Discussion Board. In this way, each participant had the opportunity to reflect about the self-identification exercise again in the online Discussion Board. One of Tennant's conceptions of self is the *authentic self*--that which "stands against the inauthentic self, which is distorted by social forces" (p. 104). Elana provided a post directed to this conception in the online Discussion Board.

> I also cannot quite agree with the idea that there is an 'authentic self' that can be seen as completely separate from social forces. Our selves are developed within a social context, and those influences can never be entirely removed. However, continual self-reflection is important, in order to look at how these things influence us and recognize when those influences do not serve us. I am more apt to view the self, not in isolation, but as an entity that is constantly navigating through social interactions, and being affected and changed by those interactions. (Elana: 6/15/09: D1b)

Brookfield (1985) writes that adults often "assimilate and gradually integrate behaviors, ideas, and values derived from others until they become so ingrained that we define 'ourselves' in terms of them" (p. 48). Tennant (2005) concurs; in another of his

conceptions of relations of self and society, he describes this as the *storied self*. The "storied self is not the true or authentic self that is discovered through reflection on one's life experiences; instead, experience is viewed as a story that can be reinterpreted and reassessed" (Tennant, p. 106). This conception of the relationship between self and society allows for the reality that individuals have multiple ways to find meaning and coherence in their lives, and that self-identity is not a static concept.

The storied self is a "psychosocial construction in the sense that it is jointly authored by the person and his or her defining culture" (Tennant, 2005, p. 106). Leann provided an example of storied self in which the "basic function of a life story is integration--to bind together disparate elements of the self" (Tennant, p. 106). Leann's first response to the question of her cultural identification followed in an exchange with Jan:

> It kind of depends upon what I was doing at the time. When I was in LaSalle, even though I'm Caucasian, I was more with the Hispanic group and learned some of the language. I did field work--hard labor like a lot of the migrant workers would do so I would relate to what they were going through. I would relate with them a lot just because what I was doing was pretty much what they were doing. It was interesting because some of the children I was working with actually considered me a light skinned Hispanic. (Leann: 6/10/09: T6)
>
> So, for this group, I think that's really pertinent. I mean it's asking you what cultural group you identify with. (Jan: 6/10/09: T6)
>
> Then it was Hispanic. (Leann: 6/19/09: T6)

Leann clearly shows that her cultural identity or storied self has shifted in her life. However, we, in the class and through this DC, were also acting, in a sense, as social forces on Leann's story. The following verbal exchange between Leann and Kathy exemplified this.

> As far as my cultural groups and classes, I don't know much about my family except that I am probably Dutch and German. But I don't really associate with them because I don't know what their cultures are because I've been here. I tend to identify with Hispanics, mainly because when I worked for a farmer, I did a lot of the manual labor that the immigrants do. So I would work side by side with the migrant workers who came up from Mexico. And we'd be in the field pulling plants and whatever else came out of the ground. So I could relate to them in their hard work. (Leann: 6/10/09: T6)
>
> Interesting. (Kathy: 6/10/09: T6)
>
> And everything they have gone through to come up and do the jobs that most other people don't want to do. (Leann: 6/10/09: T6)
>
> Do you speak Spanish? (Kathy: 6/10/09: T6)
>
> Very, very little. Of course you know they'd try to teach me some of that language and of course I'd try to teach them English. So we'd greet each other: I'd say, you know, "buenos dias" and they would say "good morning" to me. And then it was interesting when I started to work with children in the area. In the farming community, some of the children considered me what they called me a light skinned Hispanic and they didn't believe me when I told them I was Caucasian. No, you're just a light skinned Hispanic. So I kind of fit into that group. (Leann: 6/10/09: T6)
>
> That's interesting. (Kathy: 6/10/09: T6)
>
> Now I can see that I don't fit into any group, per se. (Leann: 6/10/09: T6)

I believe this exchange represented a critical incident as participants became aware of the power, possibilities, and also limitations of self-identification. On one hand, this exchange illustrated the reality of the fluidity of story which may be critical in uncovering and confronting bias; each of us can and will change our stories in an ongoing way. We could see where our stories were no longer suiting us. On the other hand, we could also see where our stereotyped expectations of others' stories were not working. The participants became aware of on-going attempts to stereotype others based on first impressions and on first words. We began to let go of the idea that individuals cannot self-identify in any manner he or she chooses. The following example provided a

description of how that does *not* work. In the whole group self-identification portion of the first class DC, Leann said:

> I'm a parent, educator, middle aged. [We all laugh as Leann appears to be in her early 30s.] I'm older than you think, though. (Leann: 6/10/09: T4)
>
> Well, all right, I'll allow you to be middle aged. That's not my business, right? (Jan: 6/10/09: T4). [There is laughter and we move on.]

The juxtaposition of our collective response to Leann's self-identification was, I believe, a critical incident as we participants became aware of on-going attempts to stereotype others based on first impressions and on first words. The outcome provided an entry into the necessity of accepting an individual's self-identification as valid and certainly not laughable. While the laughter was compassionate and nurturing (especially as the majority of participants could more typically be stereotyped as "middle-aged"), in truth, an individual does get to choose his or her indentify, as Leann shared in the following Research Notebook (RN) entry:

> It somewhat bothered me to not be considered middle-aged. I guess from my perspective, since I have a "shorter" life expectancy than the average person due to being a cancer survivor, I am middle aged. Given the statistics, I should live to about 65 maybe 70. Does that put me past middle age? I wonder. I guess this is something I do not wish to dwell on for too long. (Leann: 6/10/09: RN)

There were two major goals of the DC in our first CME class. One was to provide time for the participants to get comfortable with each other. In my experience, whole group introductions are not comfortable for everyone and rarely provide enough time for authentic sharing. The second was to provide time for individual reflection about choices and around the possibilities of transforming self. In anti-bias work, the hope is that each individual takes on the possibilities, even probability of change. Interestingly enough, as each individual reflected on her own self-identity, she was also able to experience that

others were entitled to opportunities for change in their self-identifications. The following reflect the participants' comments in the online Discussion Board in the week following our first CME class session.

> I just wanted to say what an amazing group of people to meet in this class. I was so impressed and humbled by all of the variety of information and backgrounds you all shared with us. This is going to be quite a wild ride. I was thinking about all of the interaction we had especially how everyone was so trusting with their information on this first day of class. I can't wait to read the articles and hear what you each have to say about them. (Saxon: 6/11/09: D1a)

> I also was impressed by the openness with which everyone shared their experiences on the first day of class. I think that asking these kinds of questions of ourselves, such as how we see our own identity, and how we are perceived by and perceive others, is both essential and scary. I have done some of this work in the past, and there always comes a time when tensions are high, feelings are riled up, and a new path of understanding must be found. Although that is what is scary, that is also where the real learning and growth takes place. I will be fascinated to learn more about everyone, and I feel like the intention and respectfulness of the group makes this a safe environment. Thanks to you all! (Elana: 6/12/09: D1a)

> I am looking forward to working with each person in the class. I feel that I will learn so much from each person. I also like the diversity of the class as to age, gender, and ethnicity. (Pam: 6/13/09: D1a)

> I feel fortunate to be around such an amazing and diverse group of people that seem accepting of who we are even when discussing things that may leave us feeling unsettled or maybe it is just me that feels unsettled at this time. I am currently redefining culture based upon the views of my fellow peers and I like how my knowledge is growing. (Leann: 6/17/09: D1a)

> I enjoyed the first class! Everyone has such interesting backgrounds and experiences that they are bringing to the table. The exercise itself was both exciting and a bit scary. It was exciting to learn how each person defines themselves and it was scary as I wondered if I was clearly defining myself! (Tiana: 6/22/09: D1a)

As any group continues to work together as we did in the CME course, the individual life stories became freer or more constrained depending on the level of acceptance and comfort they felt from the others in the group. This was a critical incident that emerged from our time together. This first class and the first DC exercise set up the

comfort and the openness of the classroom environment. The following comments by Tiana and Pam in their CAR 1 provide documentation of this.

> I felt comfortable sharing my culture with my classmates. I was more comfortable sharing my culture with a partner as compared to the group. I think the comfortable component has to do with the levels of intimacy found within one on one interaction as compared to group interactions. I also found that as we shared in the group and I listened to the sharing of my classmates, as it became my turn, their sharing sparked points about my culture that I had not thought to share in my one on one thus I was able to include more information while sharing with the group. I enjoyed the sharing within my one on one as well as within the group. I believe as we share our stories, we become more aware and conscious of each other. For example, I only knew my classmates' names and that they were apparently matriculating. Yet, as we shared our stories, each person who shared something about themselves, how they think, and how they view the world, opened up and became a fuller picture within my mind. The more we learn about each other is the more we understand that we're more alike rather than different and we began to see each other in our many dimensions. (Tiana: 7/13/09: CAR 1)

> Dialogue Circle exercise was one of the best ice-breakers that promoted team building with our peers. This first week has made me feel connected to this class already and I am excited about what I will learn from each person. I like the diversity of the class with age, gender, and ethnicity. The sharing of our cultures was enlightening and gave us time to reflect on additional levels of our communities. As we spoke, we each realized that our cultures do spiral to various levels which lead our dialogues to deeper self-reflection. (Pam: 6/20/09: CAR1)

These participants' comments supported the achievement of the goals of the self-identification exercise. The essential ingredient of time and patience for this process is rarely provided in introduction exercises in meetings or classes. I believe this allotment of time helped create the strong sense of community that developed within the members of this group so quickly. Thus the stage was set for the uncovering of storied selves that might not have been revealed in a less diverse and accepting group of individuals. Knowing that our stories and our storied selves can and do change helped us to accept the same of others. This would be very important in the critical events and critical incidents

that occurred as we attempted to uncover and confront bias in the CME classes that followed.

## Summary

A safe and comfortable environment is a necessity for uncovering and confronting bias. A safe environment is one in which each individual can share his or her thoughts and have those received with open acceptance. The strategy of establishing relationships by providing a first discussion opportunity in a dyad grouping, then moving to a trio grouping, and then to the whole group gave each participant in the CME class time to get comfortable with finding her voice and also for finding how her voice would be received. As shown in the narratives from the first two classes of the CME project, it was obvious that none of the participants was going to have problems finding her voice. The strategy also gave me the opportunity to see how the individuals in our group conducted themselves in a variety of grouping patterns. I also learned that a commitment to allowing plenty of time for dialogue was going to be necessary.

Time and opportunity for reflection about self and self identity is also an essential component to sensitive work such as confronting individual bias. Separating our authentic selves from our sociocultural selves helped us recognize our storied selves and the fluidity of those. The classroom activities, the journal articles, the CAR assignments, and online Discussion Board provided the tools through which participants could further their investigations.

# CHAPTER V

# UNCOVERING AND CONFRONTING BIAS

The CME class was constructed to directly address the attitudes and beliefs of participants; we began that process in our first class with the self-identification DC. From that point and throughout our class sessions, we experienced profound, albeit sometimes awkward, articulation and scrutiny of a variety of our racial and cultural attitudes. The reality of what happened when we openly addressed our biases resulted in transformative learning for me and for many of the participants. Uncovering and confronting bias is arguably the most important transformative learning that could be accomplished in a multicultural education class. Unfortunately, this aspect is not often directly addressed in college classrooms (Case & Hemmings, 2005; Cochran-Smith, 2000; Gay, 2010; Stuart & Thurlow, 2000). Gay writes,

> Racial, ethnic, and cultural attitudes and beliefs are always present, often problematic, and profoundly significant in shaping teaching conceptions and actions. But they often are not clearly articulated and thoroughly scrutinized in teacher education program. (p. 143)

## Understanding Bias and the Potential for Transformative Learning

Allport (1954/1986) defined prejudice as an "aversive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group" (p. 12). Two factors are fundamental to prejudice: one is denigration and the other gross generalization (Allport). The definition of bias, on the other hand, is a preference towards a particular

perspective, especially one that interferes with the ability to be impartial, unprejudiced, or objective. While most of us in the room preferred not to be called racists or prejudiced, we all agreed that we did have bias, both positive and negative. This process of specifically defining our biases began in our second class session when Elana provided a wonderful example of how the uncovering of a bias could lead to transformative learning. She was describing the process in her preschool of assigning children to the cars of the volunteer drivers for a fieldtrip.

> So we were picking out who was going to go in which car, and this parent--and it is interesting because our school is a bilingual school, and so you figure that you know the parents who are there are interested in that, and interested in sort of opening up these cultural borders and boundaries and things. So, this parent said basically that she didn't feel comfortable taking Spanish-speaking children in her car. Because at first she said it was uncomfortable for her child, because her child couldn't communicate. Then she said, "And it's also hard for the driver to not be able to communicate with the children." So the director said to her, "You know, comfort is actually really overrated." (Elana: 6/17/09: T1)

The other participants provided a variety of replies, gasps, laughter, etc. [6:17:09: Video 3]. Elana's story continued:

> She (the director) said it in a very clear and direct way, but I didn't think that it was rude or anything. But, the mother was so taken aback I think, realizing just how bad what she had said sounded, you know, like when she really thought about it. Like, "Oh yeah, I'm saying that I don't want to take, you know, these children in my car. That is obviously like a discriminatory statement." So the mother, like, teared up, and got really flustered, and really sort of embarrassed. I felt like when I watched her reaction, it was much more like a realization moment for her, of like recognizing her own bias in that moment. I mean I think that she could really see it, but she hadn't conceptualized it that way before. It was interesting because this woman worked tirelessly for the Obama campaign, like she was working day and night and like all of this stuff, and so you know. Isn't that so interesting, that like in a broader sense she has this vision of, you know, wanting or being interested in the multicultural society coming here, but then still when it comes down to the face-to-face interaction, there still is some kind of border in there." (Elana: 6/17/09: T1)

We cannot know if this event was transformative learning for the parent. On the other hand, what we can see is that the director clearly confronted the ideology of the parent up front. Elana said:

> So, the other end for me, to see how my director really confronted that situation in a head on way because I am so, like always trying to avoid confrontation, that I feel like sometimes I don't take those opportunities for a learning experience, like I haven't figured out how to, not to….because I don't want to offend the person or attack the person, I want to say it in a way that they will be able to receive it and work on it. (Elana: 6/17/09: T2)

The disequilibrium that the parent experienced at the hand of the director was a wonderful, potentially critical incident for the parent, i.e., it was not a planned lesson on the director's part. However, it could be revealed as transformative learning only if the parent finds it to be so. The director could not cause transformative learning to happen in another, just as a teacher cannot. However, the director or any teacher may help foster the disequilibrium that Piaget theorizes is essential to learning (Wadsworth, 1989).

One of the tasks of the critical multiculturalist is to challenge ideology. Ideology is defined as "ideas at the basis of an economic or political theory" or "the manner of thinking characteristic of a class or an individual" (OED, 1997, p. 385). It is "embedded in language, social habits, and cultural forms that combine to shape the way we think about the world" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 41). Challenging existing ideologies is the first, and "arguably the preeminent, learning task embedded in critical theory" (Brookfield, p. 40). The individuals in the CME class made it clear they did not want to sit back and appear to accept an ideology that is unacceptable; however, there was some confusion about finding our voices and using those effectively. Saxon provided a great example of the barriers each of us have in confronting ideology when she described her feelings

about the members of her church group who were bashing President Barack Obama (whom she supported in the 2008 election)

> The church group might never invite me back again if I speak up [about what they are saying about Obama]. (Saxon: 6/24/09:T2)

Each of us must find a way to challenge ideology using the graceful conflict phrase that was coined as we discussed Elana's director's words and action to the reluctant car pool driver. We believed that our social action could be as simple as contesting ideology by being prepared to engage in graceful conflict in our daily lives, i.e., with compassion. I made the following comment:

> In my experience of the discomfort of uncovering and confronting my bias and issues of racism, I dealt with the disequilibrium by first writing self-reflectively about it. It was not something I was comfortable talking about right away to somebody else. And I especially would not want to talk about it to the person who made me confront it, because I wasn't happy with them in the first place. (Jan: 6/17/09: T2)

As I made this point in the second class, it was the first glimpse of our working toward the importance of uncovering our *own* biases, not simply observing them in others and judging or even attempting to precipitate that.

> We share maybe how, you know, it makes it easier to come at people with your own story, about uncovering racism or bias. These things are about racism. The story you describe is racist. It is our job to confront, but confronting gracefully should be a goal. (Jan: 6/17/09:T2a)
>
> Is that a contradiction in terms? (Kathy: 6/17/09:T2a)
>
> Well, the director said that [comfort is actually really overrated]. And at this school, we are trying to do things differently. Sometimes you have to challenge your own comfort level. (Elana: 6/17/09:T2a)
>
> Yes, so not only is it okay not to be in agreement in a critical multicultural education class, it is probably optimal to have conflicting ideas. (Jan: 6/17/09: T2a)
>
> Graceful conflict? (Elana: 6/17/09:T2a)

Yes, graceful conflict. (Jan: 6/17/09: T2a)

So we can agree to disagree. (Saxon: 6/17/09: T2a)

This was not easy for us as participants, regardless of how well-versed in critical theory we were, how liberal in social thinking, how well intentioned and "politically correct." It was also the first use of a phrase that we become comfortable with in the class as a means to social action, i.e., to directly but gracefully confront bias when possible.

### Epistemology and Confronting Our Socially Constructed Reality

Epistemology is concerned with theories of knowledge (Crotty, 2003). Constructionism, as an epistemology and the bifurcation within, is central to uncovering and confronting bias. The individual or constructivism part of learning from this perspective focuses on the individual and the unique experience of each of us. Implicit to our CME class was the agreed upon assumption that each one's way of making sense of the world was as valid and worthy as any other's. The other part, social constructionism, emphasizes the hold our culture has on us and how it shapes the way in which we see things. Our view of the world is defined through our cultures (Crotty).

One of my main concerns in the CME class was that participants would be able to uncover the socially embedded biases or conceptions that we each possess. For example, in White privilege, socioeconomic privilege, or any kind of privilege, there is an individual responsibility to understand and accept how this affects our behaviors and the biases that may emerge. However, there is also the reality that the privilege is a piece of an individual's social condition. The goal in uncovering and confronting bias is to begin to see our privilege and our biased thinking through our individual lenses and also the

sociocultural lens. As we will see, biases emerged from a variety of social and cultural constructs.

In the first CME class, we began the process of getting comfortable with one another through sharing parts of our life stories and sociocultural backgrounds. In our second class, we continued to explore our cultures by constructing a concept map or Venn diagram of our macroculture--"the larger shared core culture" (Banks & Banks, 2007, p. 7) and microcultures--"the smaller cultures, which are a part of the core culture" (Banks & Banks, p. 7). My purpose in asking participants to construct a rendition of their own cultures was to give us the opportunity to visibly see our individual selves as separate from, or at least juxtaposed with, our social parts. Participants first worked on their concept maps alone and then each chose a partner with whom to share their ideas. We revisited this self reflective work and dialogue in the third class when I asked participants to share what they had learned about their cultural make up and to give examples of where they had to fight or struggle with socially constructed reality within those cultures to construct an individual reality. The first response came from Tiana.

> In my mind, in the national macroculture, black is written with the lowercase b. When you write it with the lowercase b, it means lack, welfare, illegitimacy, poverty, incapable, unable, uneducated. Although I expect people to refer to me as African American, when I refer to myself (depending upon what company I am in), I am either going to say African American or I am going to say Black. Usually I say Black, but I say Black under certain circumstances. When I say Black, I use the capital B. Because with the capital B, it means able, worthy, capable, strong, integrity, wealth, smart, and abundance. So, that is where my clash, fight, or struggle comes, just looking at it like that, in either the lowercase b that the national macroculture uses or the capital B in my microculture. (Tiana: 6/24/09: T2a)

Kathy and Pam followed with these personal stories.

> I think there are situations like that in terms of gender all the time. For example, when I had an interview for a scholarship when I was 19, I told the guy that I

> wanted a Ph.D. in astronomy. He said that I wasn't eligible because I was a woman. (Kathy: 6/24/09: T2a)
>
> As we saw with the Supreme Court decision just this week, how age discrimination is going to become more difficult in the work force. We are seeing a lot of aging people losing their jobs. I remember when I applied for my teaching job, I could not get an interview even though I had excellent recommendations, excellent grade point average, but gray hair. We had a senior citizen. It just wasn't going to happen. I thought that 50-55 years old would be a wonderful time to reenter the education arena. (Pam: 6/24/09: T2a)

I asked Pam how she finally got the job.

> I did have to fight. There was a well-published person who I had worked for previously who I told that I was having difficulty. She called the schools, basically, said I know this person, what kind of worker she is, and she needs a job. I expect for you to give her a job. That was it. You know what? She was the one who was fighting for me. Had I not known her, I would have kept fighting and pushing for an opportunity. But, because she intervened for me, I didn't have to fight as hard. But it was kind of a scary feeling. When I did get that job, it was kind of funny. I could not get an interview. But when I finally did get a position, I have never once interviewed at my school district. I have had two jobs now. When I think of the jobs I have never interviewed. Isn't that funny? It was because I had someone now that had more power and was able to push for me. I really try to help other people reach their goals now, because I saw the struggle I had. So it is really important to me. Again, it is not a Black thing--just trying to make sure people are given that opportunity that they need. (Pam: 6/24/09: T2a)

I also asked Kathy how she earned her Ph.D. and if it was a struggle against the system.

> No, my Ph.D. process was a process of figuring out how to work within the system, because that was the only way I knew how to do it. I can remember thinking that the way this is going to work is that I have to do a really good job. That will get me what I need. It turns out that in the long run, from my perspective, that wasn't the right strategy but it happened to work I think because of the White privilege options that I had. (Kathy: 6/24/09: T2a)

Both Kathy and Pam were able to use the system to succeed. Elana and Kathy expanded

on this:

> I think that brings up a good point in general, though, of a system that sort of maintains people in their sort of position, whatever socioeconomic position that they run into. Pretty much the way that people get jobs is usually through connections that they have, or that their family has. So, it is like knowing the right people. So, if you were born into, like, a higher socioeconomic situation, then you

> are more likely to know the right people who will connect you to get into higher paying jobs, positions, etc. If you don't have those same connections, you don't have somebody to be an advocate for you or give you an opportunity. Those people are more likely to take on somebody they know something about. (Elana: 6/24/09: T2a)

> That system maintains itself. It is real hard to break out of that system, or break into that system because it is like a snowball. It just keeps going and going and going. You can't crack it. (Kathy: 6/24/09: T2a)

As our dialogue continued, we addressed the fact that we take for granted certain beliefs in our work or life that serve dominant interests.

> I take it for granted. I take it for granted just like White privilege is so interwoven into the fabric of the dominant culture narrative. That oblivion sets in so you don't even see it. Then I have to look at myself and say--for those areas that I have privilege in--how intertwined is it in my narrative, that I can't step away from it to see, to answer that "what take-it-for -granted beliefs do I have"? (Tiana: 6/24/09: T2b)

The epistemology of constructionism helps us to see our individual fight against the socially constructed realities in our lives. This *seeing* helps us to take the perspectives of others also in the midst of the struggle.

## Perspective Taking as a Necessary Component to Confronting Bias

Allport (1954/1986) defined an in-group as one in which the members all use the term "we" with the same essential significance along with the logical reality that "an in-group always implies the existence of some corresponding out-group" (p. 41). I used Allport's in-group/out-group descriptions and the direct relationship of those to our microcultures for an opportunity to practice perspective taking in our DC for Week 3. I utilized the strategy of *paired listening* (Brookfield & Preskill, 2005) in a dyad grouping for this DC. In paired listening, each individual has the opportunity to speak for five minutes without interruption by the other and then the other individual gets a turn. In our

specific DC, participants were asked to first report on the strategy of paired listening and how that practice could affect our ability to take the perspectives of others. The following exchange between Pam and Kathy provided a brilliant illustration of this.

> One of the things that struck me now that I go back and think about it again, is how much value there is in actually understanding someone else's point of view. There is a sense of sort of completeness. That understanding process, at least for me is really important. I also feel like when I understand somebody else's point of view, I understand myself better. (Kathy: 6/24/09: T1)

> That is what I was wanting to say. I think that once we take the time to listen and to want to know, *really* know what another person is thinking, then we are able to take a reflective look at ourselves, and then to begin to understand, okay this isn't just about me. You know, it is about others and they do have opinions and views. We have to respect it. (Pam: 6/24/09: T1)

Along with an understanding of the importance of perspective taking, participants also demonstrated learning about the importance of uncovering bias through the following pertinent comments concerning the questions for this DC:

1. What are your in-groups or microcultures?
2. Can there by an in-group without an out-group?
3. Who is the out-group against which your in-group is formed?

In the reporting, it seemed we all agreed that our microcultures are our in-groups and our explicit awareness of those is integral to our anti-bias work. Kathy and Elana addressed this in our whole group discussion after the DC.

> You know it is a lot easier to see those "we groups" when you are looking at somebody else than it is when you are looking at yourself. (Kathy: 6/24/09: T2b)

> Well, I think for me personally, it is easy for me to see myself in the ones that I perceive in more of a positive way, positive aspects of myself. I think it is harder to see yourself as part of a group that maybe you don't want to be in. (Elana: 6/24/09: T2b)

Elana revisited this topic in the Week 3 online Discussion Board.

> I remember being shocked in college when I took a class called U.S. Race and Ethnic Relations and we read "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," and the idea of White privilege and what that meant was new to MOST people in the class. If people make it to college without ever having thought about privilege or inequity then the system has failed. (Elana: 6/29/09: D3b)

Tiana's response to the question of whether there can be an in-group without an out-group helped us to see the importance of recognizing the power and potential biased functioning of our in-groups.

> I don't think so because to me the biggest thing…you almost have to *otheris*e in order to formulate you, your group, or whatever. Without something to juxtapose you, your group, how you define your group, how you define yourself? I think that that is a natural thing. What becomes complicated is when I am not solid in defining me, and I need to otherise you, but that otherising of you becomes a demeaning thing to you, so that it could become an empowering thing for me. That is the issue I have with otherising, but I understand that you really need it--it is like a yin and yang kind of situation. You need it in order to define whatever. (Tiana: 6/24/09: T2b)

> Is there a way to otherise without being demeaning about the other? Or are you saying it is necessary? (Kathy: 6/24/09: T2b)

> I have just had so many experiences of how it is done so negatively, and how it has been done negatively to me. (Tiana: 6/24/09: T2b)

Elana also provided insight about the hold our national macroculture has on us.

> I thought of myself as really having my own ideas, my own mind, but then when I was in college I spent a year living in India. I realized in that time just how influenced I am by this society and this culture, and how much a part of myself that really is. Like what was happening was just against everything that I believed in. And really, that those beliefs were so culturally influenced. I mean I think that the best example was I was there with my long-term boyfriend and people would not speak to me directly. I was never addressed. If people wanted to know something about me, they would talk to him. And I was like, "That is so rude and disrespectful. I am not seen as my own person. I am seen as being like the property of this person. No one can talk to me." And women would say, "Oh, no, that is their way of showing respect for you. They are being respectful to you that way." And I was like, "They are not being respectful to me. They are being respectful to him." But it was obviously like a total difference of perception or I don't know…world view. I realized that I really am, like so influenced by my culture. I feel that this cultural context is where my self has developed. So that is

> why I don't necessarily see those things as something you can really separate. (Elana: 6/17/09: T2a)

Pam, in this final example, helps us to see how our personal struggles against bias can be complicated within our microcultures as well as against the national macroculture.

> My daughter chose to become a lesbian, and you know not only that connection with the immediate family, but then the extended family and how they are accepting or how they are not accepting her choice. It was a struggle because at first I had to pretend, cover up, and make excuses to justify what is going on in her life. Now I have come to reality and accept the fact that this is who she is, and this is who she is going to be. Not only have I reached out and supported her, but I am learning to support her friend. I see them as just individuals. The other piece of that is going to church, taking her to church with me. She wears pants, she is not about to put on any makeup or anything. She is coming in her pants. It is like, "don't come to church with me," because I didn't want the church members to know that I had a child who had made that choice. But, now it is like, "come to church, go anywhere you want to go." That was a hard struggle. (Pam: 6/24/09: T2b)

The macroculture of the United States in 2009 did not honor sexual preference. For example, gay marriages were not legal except in a very few states. It is easy to see how the national macroculture is in opposition to her daughter's lifestyle in Pam's example; however, it also appears that the perspectives of members of Pam's church, including Pam herself, may also be problematic. Pam's example helps us to see that we also struggle against our microcultures; this struggle against our social cultures is complicated. Learning to take the perspectives of others and to be open to listening to their stories can be transformative learning; our own biases may be changed or challenged. "We learn in communities as social beings, and our development of knowledge depends on our ability to understand what others are telling and showing us" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 251). Tiana provided a succinct closing to this section:

> I think, Miss Jan, that is a good approach. You speak your piece about how you feel about it. But then ask them, why do they feel the way they feel? (Tiana: 7/1/09: T1)

## Uncovering Bias through Dialogue Circles

As our conversations continued into our third and fourth weeks together, it became clear that it was easier for us to see the biases of others.

> I was going to say, we are in the ground, we are in the weeds, we are in the moment of it, and it is hard to step back and take that 10,000 foot view of things, how does this affect everything around you? It is not just what you are plowing through at the moment, looking at you said pulling at a thread (of our macro- and microcultures) and see how that is going to affect the whole piece of material. But, yeah, it is that, we are in the weeds of it right now and we have to stop and take that 10,000 foot view. (Saxon: 6/24/09: T2b)

> For me it was a real eye opener a couple of years ago, just how prejudiced my aunts and uncles are. I got really angry with them, to have views like that. And what it was, was there was a Black person and a White person in the car driving. To me, that is just whatever, you know. Yes, you notice the color of the people, but to me it didn't really make much difference. And then, my cousin is like, "Oh my God, that is so gross!" And I am thinking she just got done stepping in some dog doo or something. That is what I am thinking. And here it had to do with the fact that they were riding in a car together. And I thought, "Who are you to judge them for riding in the car together?" (Leann: 6/24/09: T3)

> I'm sure that does come out of fear and ignorance, basically. In that sort of otherising category, we always had this joke in my family where we call people the WP, which is like capital for White People. It is sort of the category for like, ignorant, racist, red-necked, whatever titles you would put into that category. So that was like a category of "otherness" we always talked about in my family. The WP and how you don't want to be a part of that. (Elana: 6/24/09: T3)

As is clear in the examples above, it was easy for the participants to find examples of bias in their worlds. However, each individual in our group displayed a real difficulty in talking about her own biases. To counteract this in our DC for the fourth class, I first provided a list of typical areas of bias including religion, ethnicity, language, class, gender, and ability. I also provided a list from the web site http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bias (Bias, n.d.). This list provided more ideas for exploring bias such as "geographical--a bias in describing a dispute as it is conducted in one country and political—a

bias in favor of or against a particular political party, philosophy, policy or candidate" (Bias, n.d.), among others.

I asked the participants to go back to their micro-and macrocultural concept maps and ask themselves the following questions in a self-selected one-on-one DC:

1. What are my biases?
2. Where do I want to work on own biases?
3. What do each of these terms (in bias list) mean to me in relationship to your in-group list?

This appeared to work; each participant, in her dyad, spent over an hour in dialogue about this activity. In retrospect, however, I can see that some of the original stifling of individual bias was fear of judgment. As will be revealed, this was a well-founded fear in light of the discomfort that followed.

> It is important to confront our own biases so that we do not unconsciously say, do, or react to a situation that encourages our own bias onto others or is reflected onto them in a negative fashion. I have found that one of my biases is related to my parents' bias even though I have not had much personal contact with the setting. My next step is to confront it by learning about it and then deciding if I want to change my belief or not. (Leann: 7/14/09: D5b)

It takes self reflection and awareness and dialogue with others to uncover buried and unconscious biases so they can be brought them to the light. As the bias dialogue continued, Leann responded with this:

> And as far as my own biases, I guess one of them that came up when I went to a wedding in Wyoming is that ranchers are very biased. (Leann: 7/1/09: T2)

I chose this example even though we are still talking about the bias of others because of what was said after.

> I was driving down here. I passed a big, red Cadillac with a guy in it, with a cowboy hat. My first thought was he's a rancher or a farmer. (Kathy: 7/1/09: T2)

> Okay, cowboy, get off the road. (Saxon: 7/1/09: T2)
>
> Well, yeah, and he was driving with his arm across the [passenger] seat. (Kathy: 7/1/09: T2)

I included this conversation as it shows some of the humor and fun we had in talking about our biases too; they can be rather shallow and inconsequential in retrospect. I always believe that maintaining or allowing a sense of humor to emerge may ease the tension implicit in such difficult work. The most interesting exchange from this activity that shows the intricacies of bias follows:

> But I wasn't sure how I wanted to work with my bias, but Pam had a story that went along with it. It was like the other side of what the bias was. So I was saying that in my teaching, I would say that my bias is in favor of children that I see as being more vulnerable in the greater world. So certainly, I spend a lot more time and energy working with the Latino children in my class than I do with the White children in my class. And I think that it is probably unfair, because as a teacher I see myself as sort of giving preferential treatment to these kids. And the idea in my mind is like, okay it is sort of balancing things out. Like these kids I know are getting a certain kind of support and academic support at home, and their parents are reading to them at home every day. So I make all of these sorts of assumptions about certain kids, and then assumptions about the kids that really need extra support from me. And that is how I approach it. And then Pam had a story about her grandson. (Elana: 7/1/09: T2)
>
> So I was telling her how when he [my grandson] was in kindergarten, in a school in southeast Aurora, which was more of an affluent area, the teacher basically overlooked him, never recognized any of his achievements, never gave him any of those cute little awards you give your kids, or anything. I finally became disturbed about it, and I went over to the school. I had a talk with her. What she said was, "Well, your grandson comes from a background of family where you guys have some money, you drive these fancy cars, you dress well, you are educated, and all this. So he doesn't need anything else because you already provide and give him all kinds of opportunities that the other children don't have. So, basically what she was saying was that he was from a privileged environment. And, I thought that was really kind of interesting because what that helped me to do was now while I am working in my classroom, I am able to see that I do not want to place any judgment on the children. That I need to just meet them where they are, and then move them on ahead. And, try to give equal and fair opportunities in the classroom. So I thought it was interesting to see that she was looking at him as of a privileged group. And he was, I forgot to say, the only African American child in the classroom. (Pam: 7/1/09: T2)

The exchange between Pam and Leann should have led--seemingly inexorably one would think--to discomfort (disequilibrium) and to action so equilibration (and comfort) could be achieved again. What actually happened was that sometimes participants were comfortable with their bias and could live with the discomfort at the moment. The dialogue between Pam and Elana reflected this.

> Elana, this is a good thing to find out about yourself. So, I would be curious to find out…okay, has this class and what we are learning now, kind of given you a new direction about how to look at people and how to look into those areas that you need to…and again, maybe you don't need to work on them. But, I think that as teachers in the classroom, and like she said earlier too, we have no other choice but to learn how to separate… and become more open with that person. (Pam: 7/1/09: T2)

> I think so, absolutely. And something that it has made me think about, too, is I feel like in my classroom--I have a bias in favor of--and I think it is from things like this, of all the inequities that there are in education. That my bias is in favor of the Spanish-speaking children in my class. And so I don't know at this point, I just recognize that that is the way that it is. (Elana: 7/1/09: T2)

## Uncovering Bias through Online Discussion

As shown above, we finally unleashed some of our biases in these conversations. In the week following our fourth class, I asked the participants in the online Discussion Board to reflect more on what each had discovered as she worked to uncover her own biases. I wrote,

> How are you feeling about uncovering your own biases? When you have the opportunity to track bias in your personal cognitive world, feel free to post it here if you like. We will also address this in class next week. The next step is confronting our own biases. That is, what happens after I have a biased perception?
>
> I have attached Construction of a Critical Multiculturalist: An Autoethnography. This is one of my comps projects for my doctorate. Please feel free to read as much of it as you like. Part of the reason I am attaching the autoethnography today is because I want to make sure that you also see the work I have had to do around the ideas of bias, racism, white privilege, etc. I do not want

> you to think that I am apart from the work that we are doing together in the class. (Jan: 7/5/09: D4a)

This planned critical event precipitated a critical incident when Tiana shared this:

> As I thought about a possible "bias," I couldn't really come up with anything. Then I thought about a continuous comment I make about individuals living in the Appalachian Mountains. Whenever I read "studies" that state African American kids still lag behind dominant culture kids in standardized testings (e.g., ACT, SAT, IQ), I think to myself, "hell, I know my gifted daughter is smarter than any White child living in the Appalachian Mountains!" And on occasion I add, "and the trailer park, too!"
>
> So, where does this bias against lower socioeconomic dominant culture individuals come from...it comes from my opportunity structure. On some level, I learned from my grandparents that I was better than poor White people. My maternal grandmother told the story of how "Black folks may be dirty six of the seven days the good Lord gave everybody but White trash stayed dirty all seven!" She went on to say that come Sunday morning, she would dress herself and 12 kids and walk to church. On the way to church, dressed in their Sunday best, they would pass by the homes of physically dirty poor White people who would shout out racial slurs to her and her kids. She also told a story about how on several occasions, poor White people would knock at her door asking if she could "share some victuals." Keep in mind, my grandma had 12-14 mouths to feed; she worked in the fields and had a husband who drinked [sic] his pay away before it got home.
>
> She was the LAST individual in that predominant White country community that anyone should have gone to asking for assistance. Yet, even the most outwardly White racist individual of the community knew my grandmother was a good Christian woman and wouldn't dare think to not feed the hungry or care for the poor.
>
> As I continually share, I am a part of the working class poor. Yet, even with that said, based on my maternal grandmothers' stories, I have long understood on some level that at my poorest, I am still more than poor Whites.
>
> Now, how does this bias impact my desire as a social change agent or having students in my class from working class poor backgrounds in the dominant culture? I'm not sure because it's not an outright, in your face, in my forethought conscious, that I feel or think this way. Yet, it comes up emotionally and viscerally when I have to contemplate that my daughter is seen as "sub" whatever and can't pass the standardized testing as compared to dominant culture kids.(Tiana: 7/7/09: D4a)

This was followed by an interchange between Tiana and Elana that occurred the day before our fifth class:

> Tiana, this is a fascinating story about your grandmother and the history of your family. I actually share this bias with you, and my family has its roots in West Virginia. I myself was born there and my mother insisted we move away because she couldn't handle the “rednecky” predominant culture. I have heard the gammut of jokes when I say that I am from West Virginia. This is a culture that it is still sort of acceptable to be openly biased against. If I could count the number of times I have heard an incest joke! And, having spent time there as an adult, I have to say that I wouldn't want to live there. (Elana: 7/709: D4a)

Tiana responded:

> WHEW, Elana! I guess I can say that I am RELIEVED that my message was received in good spirit. I couldn't have said it in class but wasn't sure even though I believe that we all respect each other...but when I have shared things similar like this with other individuals, I've been perceived as being an insensitive racist.
>
> So, in a nutshell, I find it hard to TRUST folks who say they are "social justice advocates," social change agents and outside of our class, "critical multiculturalist" and who teach about privilege because at the end of the day, when I speak real talk, these individuals react in nonsocial justice advocates ways, social change agents ways, and critical multiculturalist ways.
>
> Again, thanks for receiving this without offense, Elana! (Tiana: 7/8/09: D4a)

## The Disequilibrium

As a result of the online Discussion Board exchange, the ice was broken as far as addressing our biases. One member of our group provided, in her honest sharing, the pertinent material for a confrontation that we were able, as a group, to share in our next face-to-face meeting in the fifth class. This was a pivotal critical incident in our time together as one of our members felt targeted by the comments made. In my experience, the uncovering of biases often comes as a result of a confrontation. Fortunately, the exceptional relationships of the members of the class were firmly in place by this time so that we could all sit and participate as the following dialogue emerged.

Our conversations in the fifth class were about transformational learning and how that may or may not be achieved through uncovering our biases. In response to my question about the appropriateness of Whites facilitating cross-cultural dialogue such as in the CME class, Tiana responded:

> I don't agree that White people can't teach these kinds of classes. That's wrong. As long as you have a sincere willingness about what you're doing. I know some folks who are leading in ME or diversity. They are going at it from the textbook. But when it hits them on a personal level, whatever they call themselves--they call themselves social justice advocates--when it hits them on the personal level, it goes out the door.
>
> I showed my bias on the Discussion Board in a way that I just couldn't do in the classroom. E responded and she received it with a good spirit. And I appreciated it. Because I sat around the table with all these people who sit around the table who want to teach these classes and all that. But when I say that, but when I bring up an issue that they didn't resolve in their personal lives--when I sit in here and tell my story about my grandmother's story and how I have a bias against poor White folks and someone takes that story personally (because of some unresolved issue of their own).
>
> When I say I got a bias against poor White person, I know I'm better than some White folks. Does it come out of me on a regular basis? It comes out more when the research says that dominant cultures still outdo any minority culture even when all things are equal across the board. The African American student is still lagging behind. I understand when it is an African American student coming from an impoverished background. But I don't understand it in the context of my daughter. You're trying to tell me my baby won't do well on the SAT, that my baby, raised by a single mom, won't grow up and excel? (Tiana: 7/8/09: T1)

Leann broke in:

> You say you have a bias against poor White people. So your bias is based on your grandmother's bias? (Leann: 7/8/09: T1)

Tiana replied:

> It comes from knowing at some level, how my grandmother was treated and the things that my paternal grandfather said. He once told me, "Baby, two things White folks don't like--poor White trash and niggers." These are the things that these people have told me. I'm hearing these stories from my grandparents, and each time it's about poor White people. So what is it about poor White people that even White people don't like?

> To really address the question that I think that you are asking me, it's not a bias that is in my "front conscious" or anything, but I find that it comes out in a joking kind of way when I say, "No kid in the Appalachian Mountains is smarter than my girl." That's the equivalent of White folks telling racial jokes and their telling me, "Don't get upset Tiana, I'm just joking." I'm doing the same thing. Even though it's a joking bias, I had to really think about where I am getting this bias from. When I think about the research around African American kids and standardized tests again, I get very emotional about that. Where did I begin to grow this bias? (Tiana: 7/8/09: T1)

We went on a break after this exchange and L was visibly upset. Tiana was also upset. Her voice was shaking and her leg was jumping up and down underneath the table (7/8/09: Video 10). When we returned to the room, Tiana started with this comment:

> When I speak of me and my biases and being able to put it out there and say I know where this comes from...I'm not saying that I'm right. I'm just saying this is how I'm thinking and this is why I think this way. And Miss Leann, this is the fourth time that I've been in situation while in my program, where I'm sitting around with diversity people who hold conferences. They are the leading folks in multiculturalism and diversity. They are writing books and articles. But when I bring it in and talk real talk to them and I bring them back to some issues that they've never dealt with, then number one, I find myself being terminated out of my program, number two, I find myself getting kicked off the research team where I could have been mentored to be published before my Ph.D., before my dissertation gets published. Ostracized. Nobody wants to play with Tiana because Tiana has been a light bulb, so if they want to get their Ph.D., they stay as far away from me as they possibly can. Or they come to me under the cover of night to express whatever dissonance they might be having with whatever is going on. But in front of the right people, they don't come around. (Tiana: 7/8/09: T2)

Elana is playing with her hair, not looking at Tiana. Pam is listening but fidgeting; Kathy and Leann are looking at Tiana and sitting very still. Kathy nods. When I catch sight of myself in the video as I report this incident, I look tight lipped and concerned. After all, I had witnessed Tiana's strength and power of communication in another class when she and I were students together. I was also concerned about Leann as the least self-confident (or so I thought) of our group. I felt I was going to have to do something (7/8/09: Video 10). I finally said,

> Leann, what's going on for you? (Jan: 7/8/09: T2)

Pam and Leann both start to speak, but Pam motions to Leann to go first. Leann talked directly to Tiana who was listening closely. Pam was nodding and looking directly at Leann who began to speak (7/8/09: Video 10):

> For me, it's like she's got a bias against me personally [little laugh, but she's in or close to tears] (7:8/09: Video 10) because I look at myself as basically poor White trash. I'm not the one standing there at the trailer house. I'm not standing there yelling racial slurs at people. I look at it like I'm here for a couple reasons. One is the education that I'm in doesn't pay as much as it should. My husband's job--he is a hands-on worker. He has gotten the position because he is a hands-on, outside worker. They keep him just above the poverty level.

I interrupt and ask:

> I can see the White, I can see the poor. Where is the trash? (Jan:7/8/09: T2)

> Because of the perspective of the trailer park aspect. When you drive by our house, we've got dead cars because I hate to take stuff to the dump. The first impression is that we are poor White trash. We live next to a trailer park. Most of the people there either have warrants out for them, they are drug users. They are not people I want to associate with. But I'm in that community. I'm basically in a poor White community, so it hurts me that you say that. That your bias is against poor White trash. Basically that's how I feel. (Leann: 7/8/09: T2)

As I attempted to move the class into a conversation around the larger issues of sociocultural stereotyping and privilege, I said:

> I'd like to interject something and I think that Pam has something she would like to say too. This conversation gets me back to that sociocultural piece--how I'm influenced by my sociocultural background and how that is wrapped up in who I am. Part of what we are trying to do here is to tease those apart. And your emotion is really wonderful--thanks for sharing that. I feel like crying today too. [There is a little laughter here and the participants visibly relax--at least Elana does. Pam obviously wants to talk (7/8/09: Video 10)]. I ask Pam if a previous topic of privilege and White privilege fits here. (Jan: 7/8/09: T2)

Pam pointed to Leann, looks at me, points to Leann, and finally said:

> No, let's come back. (Pam: 7/8/09: T2) [soft laughter]

She directed her comments to Leann.

> I just want to say something to her [points to Leann]. And just like she said [points to me] about the sociocultural versus the individual. You're moving out and you're taking steps to improve yourself. Your just being in this classroom is making such a difference already. You're learning so much, I mean this lady [and she gestures toward Tiana] is heavy duty. [Pam clasps her hands to her chest and smiles at Tiana and rocks with a laugh. (Video 10; Pam: 7/8/09: T2)
>
> The week before, Pam had joked that she was afraid of working with Tiana in the DC. (Jan: 7/8/09: T2)
>
> Yeah. (Pam: 7/8/09: T2) [Tiana is nodding]
>
> I told my girlfriend that yesterday. (Tiana: 7/8/09:T2) [Laughter]
>
> I've been thinking as we've been in the class, when you become a professor and how is that going to look? [To Tiana] How are your students going to be able to relate to you? Now if they are listening to you, and they have come to listen and learn, they are going to have a wonderful experience in the class and learn, but if they are there just to be in the class, then they can forget it. But, I could feel that [Pam looks back to Leann] and I needed you to share that. I just can't leave someone out there without getting stuff out. (Pam: 7/8/09: T2) [We eventually came to understand that Leann and Pam had had a discussion in the bathroom at the break as Leann was upset.]
>
> I saw it as an attack on me personally (Leann: 7/8/09:T2)
>
> That's what we are understanding. We are having conversations and expressing, you know, just different views to learn. *To learn*. For me, that's what I'm doing. So, don't take it personal because I'm one of those kinds of people who take everything personal. But I moved past that to openness. Just openness. (Pam: 7/8/09: T2)

Elana joins the dialogue:

> It's personal, but on the other hand, I think that most of our biases are based on stereotyping groups of people, right? And it's usually groups who are the ones we don't have that much experience with. And so, you know, how many times do you have these ideas about a certain group and then you meet people from the group who totally blow all those ideas out of the water? So that's why I think it's not really a personal thing. We have these grouped categories and then here we are. That's why this class is so wonderful because we are here having this conversation about how, oh, this is really true about that person. (Elana: 7/8/09: T2)

Tiana followed with this comment:

> You all, I need to learn something. First Miss Leann, I apologize. (Tiana: 7/8/09:T2)

> Thank you. (Leann: 7/8/09:T2)

Tiana continued:

> How do I talk about myself, my personal experience with particular individuals and not have other folks thinking I'm talking about them. Up until this class, I've kept my mouth shut. Sometimes I do need to listen, but I feel they are killing a certain part of me. And my voice as a Black woman sitting around that table is just as important as anyone else's. [Tiana adds an example about the negative and personal reaction of a gay woman to a general comment Tiana made about her experiences and responses to gay Black men leading double lives]. Do I need to learn how to temper my voice or to use certain language so that White folks sitting around the table feel comfortable? Tell me how I can do this better; how it can be done in a way that I honor myself but still am respectful to the people around me. (Tiana: 7/8/09:T2)

I stopped the conversation at this point and made the following comment:

> You've given us some really great examples about stereotypes. It's important to face that we all have stereotypical ideas and we each have bias. I think that's the important point of all this. This is part of the human condition and helps us to work together. (Jan: 7/8/09: T2)

I opened one of the power point slides and said,

> I'd like to move on from this conversation for now. Even though there is nothing going on in this class that I think is out of line or inappropriate or overly emotional, things are getting a little heavy. You've given us some really great examples of stereotypes. Can we find a way of not insulting other people while we are exploring our own bias? Is part of how we might do that is by playing a bit and practicing? We'll come back to your question as it is so important. But, let's see if we can do some playing and see if we can get to some of the responses to that exact question. (Jan: 7/8/09: T2)

> We were able to move the conversation away from the personal issues for awhile.

Each time I view the video from this portion of the CME class, I have a different response. I have attempted to portray it as accurately as possible by including both transcripts and physical cues from the video. Fortunately, more was revealed in the sixth

class and online Discussion Board. The following comment wraps up the topic of disequilibrium beautifully.

> The whole confrontational situation between L and T was an excellent example of disequilibrium. It was uncomfortable to witness their conversations. But with the conversations came more and more understanding. So it becomes for me a time to remember to ask more questions and get clarification before making judgments and even after making initial judgment it becomes a time to slow down and think. (Saxon: 8/3/09: CAR 5)

## The Equilibration and Recovery

Uncovering and confronting bias in the CME class was uncomfortable as it created disequilibrium for all involved. We did not resolve any issues in our discussions as most participants seemed pretty comfortable in their current biases. What we did see was some recovery of the participants' relationships. The following are comments from the online Discussion Board in the days that followed the fifth class.

> To me the discussions were a major break through and gave us opportunities to expand and explore our bias to a deeper level of thought. It took courage from both Tiana and Leann to be open and honest about their feelings. I was not feeling comfortable before the break about their feelings. I felt that the conversation needed to continue, so that there could be room for closure with at least some agreement and hopefully with better feelings. After class, I appreciated seeing them [Tiana and Leann] continuing what appeared to be a pleasant conversation. (Pam: 7/8/09: D4a)

> I commend your courage in speaking up and being real in a group where it was a possibility that someone could take offense. I also commend Leann for speaking up from her side. I hope that this conversation coming out actually turned out to be constructive. I saw the two of you talking after class. Although it is painful and fraught with difficulty, I think it is important to talk frankly about bias with people who may, in some way, be in or related to the group we are biased against, otherwise how can we ever make any movement in our thinking? I don't yet have to courage to always speak my truth, so I admire those who do. The problem is, even people who claim to be ready to deal with these kinds of things are not, and the outcome can be destructive rather than constructive. This seems to be your past experience, so I hope it is different this time. (Elana: 7/8/09: D4a)

The next day, the following posts were written in the Discussion Board.

> I totally applaud the whole group effort yesterday to work through these difficult issues. The main thing here is that the whole group has trust in each other. I find it amazing that we are able to talk about our personal biases and yet come out with a stronger bond. The most important thing, I think, is that we are able to talk about what it means to each person and how it is perceived by that person. It will take some time to reflect on the statements that were made yesterday. (Saxon: 7/9/09: D4a)

> I think your maternal grandmother is one to be admired for her courage to hold together her family, to walk past the one's who shouted out racial slurs every Sunday at her and her children, and then to feed the very mouths of the one's [sic] most likely to bite her, says a lot about her beliefs and personal strengths. Not everyone could do what she did.
>
> As for the lady who no longer wanted you on the research team...I wonder what she would have done if it were her child that was spat upon and called racial names. If she has children, she could have gone home and shared the story with her own kids and used it as social change rather than refusing to work with you. (Leann: 7/9/09: D4a)

And the following day, Pam added this to the Discussion Board.

> Thanks for being the person that you are! I am sorry to hear that you have been silenced and have had such a struggle with your higher level educational goals. Too often, these barriers are placed in front of us to keep needed messages quiet. Like you, my grandparents and parents have made statements about limiting our trust with people outside our race. And this advice is embedded within us. It's just what it is! But we must learn to step beyond. However, your story helps me to recall just how alive these cultural barriers and boundaries still exist and how relevant they are today. Sometimes we are our own worst enemies. You are going to make it, Tiana, you have so much to offer. (Pam: 7/10/09: D4a)

After our last meeting, Tiana provided this comment to the Discussion Board.

> Thank you, Leann. Thank you for still seeing me as someone you'd think enough to want to understand and work through an obviously challenging situation...as for the woman on the research team, she doesn't have kids. So, she can't feel what a mother feels when it comes down to her babies. I've often said that although the adage is that hell has no fury like a woman scorned. I bet a mother protecting her baby or babies would give the scorned woman a run for her money! LOL. (Tiana: 7/26/09: D4a)

In our sixth and final planned class, and because Pam was so instrumental in facilitating the conversations through the discomfort and disequilibrium, I asked about her work in uncovering and overcoming her own biases or resentments.

> How did I overcome…you know, I was just sitting here thinking, R [her brother] didn't participate in any of the activities that I did in the '60s even though he is only a year younger than I am. But, we certainly experienced so many of the same things growing up in that hard core community. As I think deeper about it, I guess maybe it is a reversed kind of attitude for me, that he *is* remembering what we went through, and now he wants to oppress those that are coming in. He needs to have a little change because he is so contradictory. Because, this is going to sound a little strange--even though he is upset with the White people moving into the neighborhood, he is dating a non-African American person. I think, "R, does that seem like it fits?" (Pam: 7/15/09: T1)

> Your brother is dating the non-African American woman, but yet feeling what he feels about the collective group. Again, it goes back to getting to know each other as individuals. He knows that his girlfriend is an individual. But the issue that he has isn't with White people per se. It is the collective group and the system. So, you could look at a collective group and not like the system and the way the system is going. But, yet take individuals from out of that group, because you are in a relationship.
>
> But, one of those Banks questions about "will it be the best approach for me" is going to be that cooperative learning and working together. Because when you do that and you have a common goal, you can't help but build some form of relationship. I feel like we are all in relationship, having spent this time in this classroom. Is it a deep intimacy? It has a level of intimacy in it because of the depth that we have shared in it, so that develops it. So, yeah, this group can be productive. It can develop synergy, and I believe it has. If we have to get together and have that one goal social action activity, "Oh, hell, yeah, we could pull that off! Because we have gotten to that level!" You know? And so that's what I would say is the difference between individual relationships as compared to looking at something as a whole and describing it. (Tiana: 7/15/09: T2)

> But, the connection that you guys brought…I think that was one of the most powerful things in class discussions that we had. For some reason, it just stayed with me. I'm so thankful that you guys were able to have those discussions. When I saw you after class, how long did you talk? (Pam: 7/15/09: T2)

But Tiana and Leann were done with being in the public eye, I believe. Both commented on it in an indirect way and the subject was dropped. The recovery was

individual for them; the piece of time they had together was private. But it was surely recovery and it certainly appeared a bond between them was established.

I added the following to the Discussion Board from Paulo Friere.

> Through the differences between us we must learn to be tolerant of those who are different, and not to judge them according to our own values, but according to their values, which are different from ours. And here it seems to me to be fundamental to link the concept of culture with the concepts of difference and tolerance...so you are right when you say that we cannot judge another's culture according to our own values, but we must accept that there are other values, must accept that differences exist, and accept that fundamentally these differences help us to understand ourselves and our own everyday lives. (Freire & Macedo, 2001, p. 207; Jan: 7/9/09: D5a)

I also added:

> We learn only if we accept that others are different--otherwise, for example, dialogue is impossible. Dialogue can only take place when we accept that others are different and can teach us something we do not already know. (Freire & Macedo, 2001, p. 212; Jan: 7/9/09: D5a)

I will close this chapter with the following written by Leann:

> If it had not been for Pam asking me how I felt, I may not have been so direct with my feelings but I would have beat around the bush for awhile figuring out things that way. I think Tiana was brave in this as well because she is willing to share how she felt. It takes a lot of courage to share things that may cause someone pain or discomfort but it takes a lot of courage to apologize as well. I think dehumanization=stereotyping but I also think it is part of being human. I am not sure how that can change if it can change because as I see it there is a little strand of truth in it no matter how skewed a stereotype becomes. (Leann: 7/9/09: D5a)

## Summary

Each of us discovered our biases in our work together in the CME classes. It was important to separate the terms racism and prejudice from bias so we could see how each could potentially affect an individual’s work with children and impact his or her personal life. Each of us rejected the title of racist for ourselves. If we had sociocultural inclinations toward believing that human groups could be validly grouped according to

their biological traits, the movie *Racism, the Power of an Illusion* (Alderman, 2003) certainly created disequilibrium about that. However, we could recognize how a bias or a preference toward a particular group may be impacting our ability to engage in impartial behaviors toward an individual. Each participant had a story where this might be true. For me, my perception of Leann as the least self-confident of our group was proven incorrect and possibly biased. She held her own gracefully and powerfully in a dialogue that would have sent many out the door. My story, as all of our stories, taught us that uncovering bias is a necessary step to more effective teaching in diverse communities.

# CHAPTER VI

## TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING AND THE CYCLES OF CRITICAL ACTION RESEARCH

In our CME class discussions about transformative learning, we used Piagetian concepts for understanding *disequilibrium*--the "out of balance state that occurs when a person realizes that his or her current ways of thinking are not working to solve a problem or understand a situation" (Woolfolk, 2008, p. 38) and *equilibration*--when he or she "then search[es] for mental balance between cognitive schemes and information from the environment" (Woolfolk, p. 38). *Accommodation* as a strategy for achieving equilibration occurs in two forms: the creation of "new schema or the modification of old schema. Both actions result in a change in, or development of, cognitive structures (schemata)" (Wadsworth, 1989, p. 14). When transformative learning occurs, disequilibrium is followed by accommodation, which may be particularly significant when individuals are engaged in uncovering and confronting socially embedded knowledge. Two participants described it this way.

> It's like click. (Kathy: 7/8/09: T1)

> Miss Jan, that moment for me has come when my old knowledge or known knowledge is challenged by new knowledge. That challenge is usually something to my core belief knowledge or how I see the world. The clashing of those two knowledge bases causes that discombobulated feeling, which is "scary" or "unsettling." (Tiana: 6/22/09: D1a)

We agreed in class that transformative learning and accommodation are the same; the following narratives and analysis are framed within that understanding.

Attempting to clearly delineate the participants' transformative learning within each cycle of action research was a bit like mixing colors, each color representing a component of the process. When trying to write about the blue investigation cycle, the participants kept adding a little red dialogue or the yellow light of self reflection. The blue investigation cycle became purple or green or even muddy brown. In this chapter, my intention was to adequately portray the blue of the investigation cycle, the yellow of the self-reflection cycle, and the red of the dialogue cycle while also appreciating the blending of those colors and processes in many of the following narratives.

## Investigation and the Critical Materials

The purposeful construction of the CME class pedagogy provided a set of critical events, the purpose of which was to unsettle participants--to create disequilibrium.

> Critical theory gives us a framework through which to explore topics that are emotional, and potentially threatening and frightening. (Pam: 6/20/09: CAR 1)

I assumed the concepts of critical theory would propel participants to new understandings and to social action, but I also assumed that the participants who came to the CME class had prior experience with topics of inequity in education and with racism. The fact that this was true, as will be illustrated in a segment of Pam's life story, certainly provided a better opportunity for the accelerated learning that occurred.

> I am a native of Colorado, as are both of my parents. Their parents migrated from Texas to our state and are recognized as pioneer families. My grandmother was the first female postmistress for our state. My grandfather was one of the first Black pharmacists and was a strong influence in my life and believed in higher education. He was a person of leadership and responsibility. He instilled and inspired his values onto me.

> I think that my quiet spirit has been given to me so that I can understand the needs and concerns of others by giving a listening ear. One thing that I understand now, is how important it is to be heard, and how few people are given the opportunity to be heard, especially children. Voice is important and we must teach children how to value and respect not only their voice but also the voices of others. (Pam: 6/20/09: CAR 1)

Transformative learning through investigation occurred throughout the CME course. While the majority of classroom time was spent on the dimensions of content integration, knowledge construction, and the reduction of prejudice (Banks & Banks, 2007), the dimension of inequity in education was also a recurring theme. All of the CME class participants were either classroom teachers of young children or involved in higher education. When asked about the transformative learning that occurred as an outcome of the critical literature, the following was reported as Saxon and Leann both reflected on inequity in society.

> Chapter 11 in Banks and Banks regarding the colorblind perspective was an interesting look at teachers and at me. “A colorblind society is one in which racial or ethnic group membership is irrelevant to the way individuals are treated” (Schofield, in Banks & Banks, 2007, p. 271). After reading this chapter and thinking about it, I can see that this approach does not work.

Saxons’s narrative provided an example of how self-reflection and investigation may blend. This is also a good place to describe an important point about an investigation strategy.

> *Critical reading* is the opposite of naivety in reading. It is a form of skepticism that does not take a text at face value, but involves an examination of claims put forward in the text as well as implicit bias in the texts framing and selection of the information presented. The ability to read critically is an ability assumed to be present in scholars and to be learned in academic institutions. (Critical Reading, n.d.)

In the CME class, participants were not only assigned pertinent critical literature, but were also asked to be self-reflective about their reading. Critical reading is essential for achieving the cycles of dialogue and planning action, and action. Saxon continued:

> There are so many levels of why this approach [colorblindness] will never work. First of all, we are never truly colorblind. We have our foundational information to deal with; where we were raised, how we raised, etc. To quote T, we will always have "otherisms" to focus on and reflect [on] how we will deal with them. There will be more than race, gender, socio-economic, or intelligence issues to deal with in ourselves as well as in the classroom.
>
> I also found the article "Using Critical Race Theory, Paulo Freire's Problem-Posing Method, and Case Study Research to Confront Race and Racism in Education" enlightening reading. I found the thoughts that "schools either function to maintain and reproduce the existing social order or they exist to empower people to transform themselves, their community and/or society" to be a radical look at how the educational system can be transformed. It allows teachers to then become facilitators in a child's education. What would happen if the children get to ask more questions than the teachers? (Saxon: 8/3/09: CAR 5)

Leann, as a classroom teacher, found the following pertinent to her life story.

> Chapter 9 (Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory and Practice by Geneva Gay) created disequilibrium in my thinking. The majority of people I know of color are very intelligent and successful. They have finished high school and have taken higher education classes or have degrees. The migrant workers I worked with fit this as well. Some worked the fields knowing that the money they made would pay for the schooling of themselves and their children, while others would be able to start a business or purchase a ranch or farm in their homeland. Others worked so they could better provide for their own parents or grandparents care. What I know did not match what the chapter had presented. I was surprised, then angered because it didn't seem to fit and then I questioned it. Why is it like this? What are the economics behind it? What are the family units like? How is this possible? What can be done to change it? Then I looked at the children I worked with in the farming community. Some of their parents were successful and yet the children didn't think their parents were successful while others thought their parents were successful yet their cousins, aunts, uncles were not. The biggest concern was that they would somehow end up like a relative that was unsuccessful because they would not have the means to go to college due to teen pregnancies or lack of money and maybe even intelligence. This thought lead to more questions. Are the teachers encouraging this line of thought? Are the parents, cousins, aunts and uncles? Then I accepted what Chapter 9 had said about the test scores and how the groups compare. I then ask of myself, what can I do to help prevent this as an educator? (Leann: 9/13/09: CAR 5)

It is important to notice that Leann has added some action planning. She investigated the information, reflected on it, and has started to frame her questions for future action in her classroom.

Gender bias seemed a particularly interesting topic for Elana and Pam as they considered their own life stories, their teaching, and whether it, too, engendered inequity.

> The reading that introduced an idea that I had really not thought about before was the final chapter about gender bias in classrooms. The other topics I had at least considered and the readings offered helpful further insight, but this reading really made me realize that I also unconsciously favor boys in the classroom. Going back to school in the fall, it is gender equity that will be on my mind. I am going to be very aware of how I am in the classroom, and make an effort to change my behavior to give my attention to boys and girls equally. (Elana: 8/18/09: CAR 5)

Again, planning action has been mentioned by Elana, as does Pam in the end of the following narrative.

> In the Banks book, the chapter that was most interesting to me was Chapter 6 on Gender Bias. This chapter was very relevant to me as I became aware of some of my unintentional practices with my students. I saw where, with no means of intentionally, I was not meeting the needs of my students. I was being sexist by showing favoritism towards the boys in my class. The reason I believe that this happened was because I felt that the boys needed to have more direction and redirection with their activities. The boys had better verbal skills and appeared to ask more questions and talk more often than the girls. The boys (now I see) overpowered the girls and I allowed it by engaging in more conversations and activities with them. The girls were quiet and usually were better behaved and did not require as much time and attention. Chapter 6 helped me to see where and how I can adjust my teaching style, so that I can reach all the children without exclusion and/or allowing gender bias to affect the practices in my classroom environment. (Pam: 8/7/09: CAR 5)

Elana and Pam both reflected on their bias toward boys in their classrooms and the obvious need for a change in classroom practices, which can be appropriately viewed as action.

Another powerful critical event was the viewing of the movie *Racism, the Power of an Illusion.* The following transformative learning was reported by the participants.

> The scientific approach created disequilibrium in that, in my opinion, science is supposed to be factual not biased or racist. I was surprised with the scientific approach of discovering and proving that whites were superior over the colors. If this "scientific" belief had not been started would racism between colors be as prevalent? Or would it be geared more towards economics? Yet, economics led to the "science" which in a way was based upon the fear of being less because of making less income. If anything, I am more skeptical of science and how information is collected and who is collecting it and whether the information may be skewed based upon the researchers views or findings. (Leann: 9/13/09: CAR 5)
>
> The historical perspectives that were in the video were very enlightening. I did not have a reference point for the DNA of race or rather the lack of it. I thought it was interesting the ways scientific development was shown to us over time. (Saxon: 8/7/09: CAR 5)
>
> This video was powerful with the discussion on the biological make-up of people and how different we appear, yet how alike we are with our genetic makeup. The presentation also revealed a way for me to make sense out of why people have the beliefs and thoughts that they have. Our society has a long history of presenting illusions about politics, religion, race, money and education to name a few examples. Because of intentional destruction as a ploy by some groups to become empowered over other groups of people, a dim picture has been painted of our society. The video planted seeds of thought in my mind that lead me to gain an even deeper understanding of racism, that didn't have much to do with color, but rather the need to maintain status, power and control of economic status by oppression.
>
> Initially, I thought this would be an excellent video to present at a professional development session; however, I became somewhat concerned about presenting this video to the group of teachers at my school. I feel that when presenting a video of this nature, there should be some intensive background of multicultural and race education training prior to presenting this video. I don't think that the average person would be able to comprehend the depth of this video without having either some educational training or personal experiences prior to this type of exposure. The subject matter is too sensitive and I think it could possibly cause more damage than good. Actually, I need to re-watch this video again and completely, before I can make a sound judgment). (Pam: 8/7/09: CAR 5)

## Self-Reflection and Life Stories

The second cycle of action research implicit to the CME class was self-reflection. The intention of the CAR strategy was to stay conscious of the tension implicit in the opportunities for participants to connect their personal histories within a "cultural and

historical specificity" (McLaren, 2003, p. 245) and to be critically reflective about those histories. That is, participants were not simply recounting their life histories; participants were consciously juxtaposing their stories within an individualized and sociocultural perspective and through the lens of critical theoretical insights.

The first CAR assignment (see Appendix F) included A Cultural Journey (Lynch & Hanson, 1992; see Appendix E), which is a set of questions designed to assist individuals in recognizing that "culture is not just something that someone else has. All of us have a cultural, ethnic, and linguistic heritage that influences our current beliefs, values, and behaviors" (p. 60). Cross-cultural competence --"the ability to think, feel and also act in ways that acknowledge, respect, and also build upon ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity in multi-ethnic and/or multicultural situations" (Lynch & Hanson, 1997, p. 49)--is an obvious goal for educators in the increasingly diverse classrooms in the United States.

Participants first responded in writing to the questions from the cultural journey exercise, after which they engaged in dialogue about their explorations. CAR 1 included an elaboration of their responses as well as a reflection on their conversations in the DC. Examples of the responses are included below.

> What I discovered going through the origins piece of the exercise is that I have very little connection with my own cultural origins. I could not think of one thread that attaches my natal family to cultural roots. We do not really have traditions that we carry on. The only culturally influenced traditions that I experience in my family are with my sister-in-law, who is from Ethiopia.
>
> At my school, we tend to incorporate traditional Mexican elements in our celebrations. We recognize the Day of the Dead, and also have a Posada every year in December. My work colleague wears all white during the time of the Day of the Dead. With these kinds of traditions, I never view them as strange, but with curiosity and occasionally with envy because it makes me feel a cultural void more acutely. (Elana: 6/15/09: CAR 1)

> Something that comes to my mind, when asked to reflect on my cultural background, especially when looking at root origins, is that, I feel that most, if not all African Americans cannot trace their African roots. I can trace my Mexican roots to Mexico and my Irish roots to Ireland, because there are written documents. However, I can not imagine the possibility of any true documentation relative to my 1st or 2nd generation linage. Before slavery ended because of the slave trade and new names given to the slaves, it would make it almost impossible to trace linage without DNA testing because accurate records were not kept. (Pam: 6/20/09: CAR 1)

The participants' responses showed the importance of exploring culture. Recognizing the encompassing nature of the cultures affecting us, even if confusing, is essential to anti-bias work. In CAR 2 (see Appendix F), I provided a set of questions that I believed would help each participant find the stories of her cultural upbringing. I used ideas from Atkinson (1998) for some of the questions; he explained, "A life story gives us the vantage point of seeing how one person experiences and understand life…over time" (p. 8). I hoped that reliving some of the stories of their pasts would help participants understand that each of us has a cultural background which has a profound effect on our behavior and attitudes. For example, I asked participants about the neighborhoods where they grew up and what visible aspects of their cultural upbringing may be exposed. I asked them to recount the significant events in their childhoods and the cultural factors that may have influenced their current work and life experiences. Finally, I asked questions about their family's involvement in the community and whether a sense of community was important to them.

I found the responses to these questions somewhat shallow. I was left with more questions than answers about the cultural backgrounds of the participants and the effects of those. Therefore, in CAR 3, I constructed individual questions requesting more details about the CAR 2 responses from each participant. In effect, I provided an element of

dialogue to their self-reflections. This proved to be a good strategy; I believe it helped the participants feel connected with the value of each of her life stories. It is important to understand self before we can work effectively with others. On the other hand, it is equally important to have dialogue with others about our life stories as this is often where the disequilibrium critical to transformative learning may appear. Elana illustrated the effect of the red dialogue on the yellow self-reflection:

> What is wonderful about the CAR exercises is that they helped to put the arc of my life in perspective, and helped me to see how I have arrived at my thinking, and why I care so much about issues of equity. I have done a lot of reflective writing in the past, so the writing exercises did not cause as much disequilibrium in my thinking as many of our group, classroom exercises did. I think that reflective writing is crucial in a critical theory class, and that it supports all of the transformative learning that takes place. (Elana: 8/18/09: CAR 5)

Tiana expressed the disequilibrium that she experienced in writing CAR 3.

> CAR exercise #3 created disequilibrium in my thinking. We were required to identify our biases and stereotypes in the assignment. Moreover, the disequilibrium developed during my reflection on the impact of language. My language. The language I utilized in telling my grandparents racial experiences in the South were their specific words. In my retelling of the stories they shared with me, I couldn't understand why my fellow classmate took such offense considering those weren't my specific words but those of my grandparents. Yet, the amount of emotional pain that my classmate expressed towards my language usage and my inner turmoil in causing the pain created such a disequilibrium that I had to truly reflect on my responsibility in honoring my grandparents' valuable lived experiences and remaining respectful towards my audience.
>
> The transformative learning that resulted involved my stepping out of my perspective and truly seeing the other persons' perspective for such an emotional exercise. In addition, I was able to move away from my strong reaction to the testing research data of Caucasian students out testing African American students. I was able to move away from it, gradually, by resolving myself to emotionally "self talk" and say, "This research is not talking about my daughter!" I am able to model this response as it was modeled for me by another fellow classmate. (Tiana: 7/25/09: CAR 5)
>
> One of the ways that the CAR exercises created disequilibrium in my thinking surfaced during my writing as I started reflecting on our discussions and readings. For instance, as I reflected over my statements, I began to realize how dependent I

> was on past voices that said “there is no value in what you have to say.” I was using these old tapes to compensate for my willingness to be silenced which allowed me the excuse to remain voiceless. I had allowed this type of thinking to place limitations on my thought and speech. As a result of the CARs, I was empowered to move on from these limitations and away from disequilibrium with my thinking. (Pam: 8/7/09: CAR 5)

The goal for the CME class was to create a comfortable and safe space for disequilibrium to occur, especially around issues of diversity such as bias, self-identification, social action, etc.

## Recognizing Transformative Learning and the Importance of Dialogue

I asked the following question in our Week 5 class: Can you describe a specific transformative learning experience in your childhood? I believed that when we could find those ah-ha moments in our earliest memories, it would help us recognize when we experienced transformational learning as adults. When this question was asked in class, however, it took us awhile to come up with examples. Here are three that eventually emerged.

> Mine is when I went down the street to play with an African American kid and his mom came out to say that we couldn’t play together because I was the wrong color. I thought what does she mean? I went back home because she made her son go into the house. I was just told I was the wrong color. My mother just said that some people worry about that more than others. (Leann: 7/8/09: T1)

> I have all these examples--I thought my family was totally normal and then there were things that happened. For example, my mom said she wanted to bring my stepdad to a family reunion and my grandmother cancelled it. That was the first time we had, in our family, the discussion that some people would be uncomfortable with an interracial couple. (Elana: 7/8/09: T1)

> Mine does, I think. It had to do with my musical background. I thought I played the violin really well, but the teacher gave me a C in the class and it upset my mother even more, and that meant she was going to come to school and take care of it. He [the teacher] told her “Pam could play the violin well, but that she was not playing to her ability. She could do better and I expect her to do better, and at the point where she does do better, she will get that A.” So what that did for me--

> and I knew to put more effort into playing my violin and I took private lessons from this person. I ended up getting first chair after awhile, but it was really wonderful. It goes deeper than that. Mr. A helped me to understand you don't settle for just mediocre. You have to be more than that. And it wasn't just music, it was my education. As an adult, this made me realize why I expect so much from the children in my classroom. I refuse to let them just--they have to move ahead. I want so much more from them and for them. (Pam: 7/8/09: T1)

We talked about the fact that our stories indicated that we may require another person to initiate the spark or click of transformational learning--the fire of orange when we blend yellow with powerful red. With the following comment on the power of dialogue, Tiana spoke of the importance of significant others in our transformative learning process.

> This reminds me of the concept I've been taught in Student Affairs which is to "challenge and support." Challenge that person to get from a C to an A in a violin, but at the same time you also provide the support. When you get to the college, you get the challenge, but not the support. (Tiana: 7/8/09: T1)

When I asked the question about transformative learning again for the CAR 4, I became a bit more specific. I first asked participants for examples of transformative learning in early childhood, then in their middle years, and finally as an adult. It was valuable to see how much more information was garnered through a self-reflective analysis of the same question when broached at home in the week following the class. On the other hand, the dialogue that had occurred in the class certainly provided impetus for the following which emerged in the CARs.

> In my early childhood, I can only recall a situation that may not exactly meet this definition, per se. Yet, I remember realizing that Santa Claus didn't exist! I was five or six years old. My parents had split a few days before Christmas. We moved to my maternal grandparents' house. I worried if Santa could find us at my grandparents' house in order to receive my gifts. I think my Mother reassured me that he would and things would be alright. Well, Christmas eve night rolls around and my sister and I are so excited. We put the Christmas tree up, strung the lights and popcorn strings around it. Then, out of nowhere, my Mom comes into the living room and starts putting the gifts under the tree. She said that Santa had left them on the porch but I remember feeling like, "she's lying, there's no Santa!" I can't remember if I questioned my Mom or not but I remember needing Santa to

> be real because I had enough change with my parents so I didn't need him changing too!
>
> In my middle years, I remember my Mom complaining to her Mom, my maternal grandmother, about my leanings toward being a fun loving, carefree, party, good timing girl. This happened one afternoon while we all sat on my maternal Aunts' front porch. My Mom was going off on a tangent about me to me, her two sisters and her Mom in particular. I'm ignoring her like any middle year individual would do. Then my grandmother, who's a woman of few words, in a matter of fact manner said, "Well, Betty, you was just like that too." My Mom was speechless and taken aback! At that moment, I remember just looking at my Mom, thinking, "Her? She once knew what a good time was? *She* wanted to party?" I had gotten a glimpse of or had a moment where I realized my Mom had had a life prior to being my Mom! (Tiana: 7/12/09: CAR 4)

Leann's story is the same as the one she brought up in class, but it had been expanded and elaborated upon in her reflection on it. She might not even have remembered the outcome of this situation if not asked.

> During my childhood, a family moved into our neighborhood that was of a different ethnic background. I was thrilled yet again about the prospect of another child to play with. The lady of the house told me she had made a mistake on the address of the house she really wanted and that she would not be staying long. I told her she could stay here as long as she wanted. She explained that she didn't really belong here and that she needed to go to a neighborhood where people looked more like she did. I did not and could not fully understand what she was saying even though I tried. She did however let me play with her son until they moved a week or so later. My assumption that anyone could live anywhere they wanted started to shift to certain people living in certain neighborhoods. (Leann: 7/26/09: T4)

Elana's memory, too, presented in the class, was elaborated upon in her CAR response.

> Early childhood--My grandmother canceled our family reunion because my mom wanted to bring my stepfather. They were not married at the time. My mom and grandma didn't talk for two years after that. At that time, my mom had been divorced twice and had three children. It was shocking to me to think that my grandmother believed that my mom was doing something wrong. This is when we first discussed that part of my grandmother's problem was with Ray's race. It was when I first became aware that my family wasn't like other families.
>
> Middle years--I remember a teacher calling Latino kids in my class gangsters. I realized that we were not all treated or supported the same.

> Adult years--I was snuggling with my nephew and he asked me, "Do you still love me, even though my skin is brown?" I realized in that moment that his life experience is so different from mine. He gets the negative message about his skin color from the outside world, despite seeing everyday, through different examples, that people with different skin colors love each other. The very conscious effort that the whole family had put into overpowering those negative, implicit messages received form society and the world is not enough to do so. Although we are together, we are seen differently, treated differently and receive different messages about our worth and value. Even though I think he is the most perfect and beautiful being. (Elana: 7/14/09: CAR 4)

Now each participant had a basis for recognizing her transformative learning. This certainly came in handy for our final analysis of the success of the CME pedagogy in creating opportunities for transformative learning.

## The Strategies for Dialogue Circles and Transformative Learning

Here I provide an analysis of the relationships between the strategies of DCs and the participants' examples of the resulting transformative learning. The DCs were planned critical events; by the end of the first class together, participants were eager to share their experiences. From the beginning, it seemed obvious that each participant needed a chance to use her voice, to be heard; for some, it seemed for the first time. "Critical events permit teachers to retain their ideals in spite of the assaults that might more customarily be made on them" (Woods, 1993, p. 358).

> I felt comfortable sharing my culture with my classmates. I was more comfortable sharing my culture with a partner as compared to the group. I think the comfortable component has to do with the levels of intimacy found within one on one interaction as compared to group interactions. I also found that as we shared in the group and I listened to the sharing of my classmates, as it became my turn, their sharing sparked points about my culture that I had not thought to share in my one on one thus I was able to include more information while sharing with the group. I enjoyed the sharing within my one on one as well as within the group. I believe as we share our stories, we become more aware and conscious of each other. For example, I only knew my classmates' names and that they were apparently matriculating. Yet, as we shared our stories, each person who shared something about themselves, how they think, and how they view the world,

> opened up and became a fuller picture within my mind. The more we learn about each other is the more we understand that we're more alike rather than different and we began to see each other in our many dimensions. (Tiana: 7/13/09: CAR 1)

The DCs that occurred in dyads seemed particularly effective. The second DC was a paired listening exercise. The directions requested that one person takes the turn as speaker while the second listens and then they reverse. Each person had five minutes to share. "This exercise not only enhances communicative accuracy, but also gives students valuable practice in empathizing with others and in simply accepting what is heard without imposing interpretation or making premature judgments" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 92). S reflected on the comfort in her dyad conversation.

> I don't know about you, but I feel like I've known her for almost ever. Just in like our 10 minute conversations. We had a great discussion about that. Here are the two things that you are never supposed to talk about--religion and politics. We talked about those two subjects. Okay, I won't speak up in a church group, but I'll talk to a total stranger. (Saxon: 6/24/09: T2)

> Sometimes it is easier because there is no baggage, no background, and no expectations. That makes a big difference. (Kathy: 6/24/09: T2)

Communication, both social and educational, differs between *and* among cultural groups; therefore an aura of cultural openness and awareness in the CME class may have led to a "more dynamic process of mutual accommodation" (May, 1999, p. 32) among individuals. As individuals evolve in their cultural and socio-political self-awareness, they require dialogue even more with others. The following are a few of the interesting revelations concerning the transformations that occurred through the DCs:

> It is fascinating to me to think back to the first day of class, and our introductory discussions. It reminds me that first impressions are important but that we should not place too much importance on them. I remember wondering what on earth Tiana could be thinking as I told her that I didn't feel 100% like a White person.
>
> The discussions in class were the fastest way for us to uncover our own assumptions, biases, prejudices, and receive the input of others' experiences. One

> powerful conversation for me was when Pam and I had a discussion about biases, and I said that in my classroom, I notice that I give less attention to children that I identify as privileged, because I feel they do not require my attention as much as others. Pam countered this revelation with a story of a teacher who perceived her grandson as being privileged, and therefore did not give him as much attention as other children who she thought needed it more. She was able to share with me how hurtful that can feel on the part of the child. Obviously all children need to be loved and acknowledged by the adults in their lives. This made me think a lot about my tendency to make assumptions that inform how I choose to expend my energy in the classroom. It is unfortunate that I feel this is necessary, because I often feel I do not have enough personal resources to distribute equally among all of the children. This conversation made me realize that I need to approach my interactions more consciously, and every time I engage with a kid, try to give them the same quality attention I would give to any other child. (Elana: 8/18/09: CAR 5)

It is worth noting that Elana has evolved to more of a commitment to action around this bias than she professed in Week 4 when she said:

> And something that it has made me think about, too, is I feel like in my classroom --I have a bias in favor of--and I think it is from things like this, of all the inequities that there are in education. That my bias is in favor of the Spanish-speaking children in my class. And so I don't know at this point, I just recognize that that is the way that it is. (Elana: 7/1/09: T2)

Other participant responses to the transformative learning in DC follow:

> DCs did not create disequilibrium in my thinking in the class. Yet the dialogue circle allowed for a deeper insight into the backgrounds of my fellow classmates.

> The discussions in the class always lead to an experience of transformative learning. Especially with the discussion that Tiana and Leann had. This was a major break through for each of us. Even though the discussion was of a major importance for them, it helped me to see how important it is to have open and skillful dialogue when communicating with others. I wasn't feeling that we were closing the conversation at the right time. I sensed some strong disturbance that needed to be resolved. I think this experience led each of us to experience a transformative learning experience that actually brought us to higher levels of trust and sensitivity. (Tiana: 7/25/09: CAR 5)

> Being able to trust and show sensitivity are skills that we need to reinforce with children, as they are learning how to effectively work out issues and concerns with each other. "We need to teach and learn how to check in, before checking out."

> I did experience transformative learning in several ways but one "ah ha" was as a result of a statement that Kathy had made to me during one of the classes. Basically what she said was how long are you going to hold on to the past of being silence? These weren't her exact words but I got the message. I knew it was time for me to let go of my crutch and get on with conversations and make contributions when I could, without feeling intimidated. (Pam: 8/7/09: CAR 5)

## Life Stories and Planning Social Action

The fourth cycle of action research is planning action and the fifth is action. These marked the end of one set of cycles and the beginning of new investigation, reflection, dialogue, etc. The life histories, even when obviously known to the CME participants, became a vehicle for transformative learning when viewed through the newly critical lens of the writer. The criticality does not "relate so much to the context (though that might be extraordinary), as to the profound effects it has on the people involved" (Woods, 1993, p, 356). "It is almost always a change experience and it can only ever be identified after" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 74). Action research depends upon participants' needing action as a result of all the preceding cycles.

As my own autoethnography revealed, I was so changed by the experiences and learning of a certain period of my life that an action was required. But I would not have been aware of my transformative learning if I had not been engaged in critical self reflection or if I had not possessed the newly critical lens that I was finding through reading literature from a critical theory perspective. Therefore, I modeled the transformative learning that I hoped would occur as we wrote our life stories. The juxtaposition of life story with social action was a planned critical event in the CME class as well as a forum for making social action plans for the future.

The narratives I have chosen to report specifically document each participant's family involvement in her communities. I have provided participant responses from CAR

2 and CAR 3 (see Appendix F) to the question: How do you perceive that you might engage in action that may positively affect your community? I have juxtaposed those earlier responses to their writing from the CAR 5 (see Appendix F) in which they were asked to describe: How has your concept of social action changed as a result of the materials in the class? What is your current social action plan?

> My family and I were very involved in the community. During my school years, mother was involved with the PTA, Girl Scouts, church and other social events and programs. My father was active with the educational community and within the workforce. He was a leader and a mentor for many people in the community. He was instrumental in helping minority employees seek and get jobs that they were qualified for during the sixties and the seventies. As for myself, I was part of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE). I was mentored and coached to become the president of the NAACP Youth Group and an active member of CORE. I was a youth leader in the community and had many opportunities to meet and greet local and national leaders who were involved with the Civil Rights Movement. One of my favorite people that I met and was an inspiration to me was Dr. Ralph Abernathy. I also had the pleasure of meeting Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Ralph Bunche, and other political leaders. At that time, I had no idea of just how important some of them were. What I did understand was that a change was coming and we were a part of it and that this change would not only affect our local community but would affect our nation. Now I see that this change did not only affect our local communities but was a catalyst for other social change throughout the nation and world. (Pam: 6/23/09: CAR 2)

Of all the participants, Pam probably had the most vivid view of her social action. I believe the class may have served to reinforce her skills for her.

> Sense of community is even more important to me today. We are in an ever changing world where we are now facing new challenges. Not only are we still addressing some areas of racism, the isms are changing. We continue to look at women's rights, civil rights, racial profiling, hate crimes, drugs, child abuse, poor education and the learning gaps. My work supports a connection and sense of community. My attempts are to draw people together and to extend different outlooks on life-time experiences. (Pam: 6/23/09: CAR 2)

By the end of our sixth class, Pam's thoughts on social action were as follows.

> My view has been expanded far beyond my expectations. When I entered the class, I was thinking of ways that I could learn how to address the needs of

> African American boys. Since then, my concepts of social action for change have been extended to include all aspects of multicultural perspectives and issues that require intentional responses to bring about change. As I begin to choose materials and strategies for teaching my class, I hope to provide opportunities that will foster social development for change. This would include providing diverse avenues that support my desire to help children build and develop social competent skills. With these skills, I would encourage and promote them to seek better living and working conditions in society. My goal is to redirect the exposure and experiences of children that will allow them to have and maintain a choice of becoming active citizens that will honor and respect each other as individuals.
>
> My current social action plan will be to work with the parent education group as a facilitator and hopefully be able to present/open discussions that will engage the parents in meaningful and purposeful conversations that will lead them to becoming multicultural activists and advocates for better structured educational learning environments. (Pam: 8/7/09: CAR 5)

Elana was also reared within a family with active community involvement.

> My parents have always been advocates of getting involved in creating the kind of community that you would want to live in. They have been, and continue to be, active community members. When I was younger, they curated several multicultural art events at the Boulder Public Library. They have also been part of community groups and served on community boards. They are both members of an anti-bias action group. My stepfather is also a commissioner on the Human Relations Commission.
>
> I am also a part of BCU, and community activism and involvement are very important to me. Thanks to my parents, I feel that this is my responsibility as a community member. I also feel a sense of empowerment, that it is possible to be innovative and create change within my own community. I have seen that it is possible to develop and execute an idea that will serve the community. (Elana: 7/14/09: CAR 3)

Here were her thoughts by the end of the class.

> Being in this class, working on the CARs, thinking about my life and what I am involved in, has made me realize that I am much further down the path than I thought. I am already active in the field of multicultural education and building community relations. I am now considering how to expand on my social action, making it both smaller and larger. By smaller, I mean discovering how to include social action even more into my day-to-day life including how to approach conflict gracefully, so that I never once allow an opportunity for disequilibrium, growth, and learning to pass me by. By larger, I intend to continue studying at a

> master's level and potentially beyond, and figuring out how to spread this information further in the community.
>
> I have also come to realize that my lifestyle choices are important, for example, I have pondered a lot over where I live, and what that says about me. Seeing the play about the history of Boulder, and how from its very beginnings Boulder has been an exclusive community for people with means, made me feel more acutely what kind of 'intentional' community I want to create. I am interested in something more inclusive and accessible to all kinds of people, and have decided that part of my social action will be moving to a place that is more diverse. This will be a small and large change, because it will make those small daily interactions possible, but will be a dramatic change in my life because I will be choosing to re-root in a new place. (Elana: 8/18/09: CAR 5)

Saxon wrote the following:

> My parents were very involved in our school and my mom was Brownie and Cub Scout leader. (Saxon: 7/25/09: CAR 3)

Saxon is also involved in her community as her parents were, but she has grown to see her day-to-day interactions as potentially social action.

> I am now thinking that every day can involve social action. I just have to be aware of my surroundings. There are all kinds of interactions that happen every day; when I am on the phone, email, face to face. There are times when I can use my learning from the class to interact in a respectful way. (Saxon: 7/25/09: CAR 3)

At the end of our time together, Saxon wrote these thoughts.

> My concept of social action plan has changed. I was concerned at the beginning of class that I would not be able to come up with a plan, but that has changed. I personally think that discussing what is happening in the news around social injustice and actions can cause a ripple effect. My social action plan is not to remain silent when I disagree or see news items, newspaper (electronic) articles that are not what is good for all people.

Leann evolved to a different sense of her community from her experiences in the CME class as is illustrated in the following examples from her CARs:

> A sense of community isn't very important to me. I like my isolation in that I don't want to be part of the trailer park community which is the closest housing community near me, even though I, myself, live in a trailer house. (Leann: 6/23/09: CAR 2)

Even so, Leann showed a commitment to social action in her work when she also wrote in the same CAR:

> I encourage children to take care of themselves, each other, and their environment regardless of where they are or what they may look like. Even though we are all wrapped differently, we are all gifts. (Leann: 6/23/09: CAR 2)

By the end of class, Leann eloquently wrote:

> At first social action meant getting involved with a group and sending fliers, picketing and voicing an opinion boldly. It now means questioning or challenging one's views whether it is one's own or someone else's and it doesn't have to be done in a group as much as it is on an individual or small group level. What is your current social action plan? My current social action plan is to work on my personal biases and views, change them if I think I need to, find my voice and then question the views of others and plant the seed for change whether it is through my questions or my teachings. (Leann: 9/13/09: CAR 5)

And finally, Tiana wrote:

> I haven't taken part in any of those types of actions. Yet, as I think more and more clearly about what being a "social change agent" means to me or looks like to me, the list gives me a starting point for where I can begin on that kind of level.(Tiana: 6/23/09: D2c).

And Tiana, by the end of the class, wrote:

> The materials in the class allowed me to conceptualize the idea of "social action" rather than change my concept. I did not have a clear concept of what a social action or a social action plan was prior to the class. Yet I was able to better conceptualize either idea after reading the list of social action activities in the textbook as well as taking a critical look at the activities I take for granted such as online membership with the Color of Change organization.
>
> My social action plan will include using my voice in unison with the GLBT community in addressing their right as believers to worship and participate in religious or organized religion. The social action will also include addressing the hypocrisy and discrimination I've identified within organized religion against the GLBT community. (Tiana: 7/25/09: CAR 5)

An orientation toward action was the desired outcome of the CME class. Action research is a social process; as such, types of community action and the means to accomplish action are meant to evolve through that social process. At the same time,

"people can only do action research 'on' themselves, either individually or collectively. It is *not* research done 'on' others" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 567).

In the CME class, each participant was willing and able to take shared ownership of our action research. Authentic participation (McIntryre, 2008) or shared ownership of the class and research project provided the opportunity for each class member to take leadership roles. While transformative learning occurred through the planned critical events of the CME class, we also flowed to the topics of interest to the individuals within our group, common in a constructivist or democratic classroom. In this way, the CME project evolved appropriately in a myriad of directions toward planning action as indicated throughout this dissertation.

## Summary

In this chapter, the participants, including myself as research-participant, documented our experiences through the CME pedagogy and through the cycles of action research. Critical action research is emancipatory because participants had the opportunity to confront socially embedded biases through acts of individual learning. It is a process through which "people explore the ways in which their practices are shaped and constrained by wider social (cultural, economic, and political) structures" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 567). Through our emancipation, we achieved the transformative learning that is essential to anti-bias work and to working successfully with diverse populations.

# CHAPTER VII

# SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Summary

In the preceding chapters, I presented the design and implementation of the CME class. The textbook and articles written by critical theorists provided the impetus for investigation and I included those references within the dissertation. The CARs provided the outlet for self reflection for the participants. The DCs and the online discussion board provided the opportunity for dialogue. The writings of the participants and the transcriptions of the audio recordings provided the data through which I constructed the narrative analysis of the participants' transformative learning. Identifying "self," uncovering and confronting individual biases, and recognizing the transformative learning that occurred in each cycle of the action research were the outcomes of the CME class on which I focused.

The documentation of our first two CME class sessions was presented in Chapter IV. The safety and comfort of the environment were established. Constructionism, critical theory, and action research were each explained. Transformative learning was exhibited through critical events and critical incidents. Chapter V contained the documentation of the third, fourth, and fifth CME classes. Uncovering and confronting bias was an essential step to the reduction of prejudice and it took time as was evidenced. In Chapter

VI, I presented the transformative learning as it occurred through the investigation, self-reflection, dialogue, and planning action cycles of action research.

The narratives of the participants provided the documentation of exceptional relationships formed in the CME class. The question remains as to whether this result occurred simply because of the individuals who enrolled in the course or if it happened as a result of the pedagogy of the CME class. I presume it was a combination of these factors, the outcome of which was a coalesced group of individuals who continued to meet for several weeks after the CME class ended.

In the six months following the CME scheduled class, we met four more times--two times in our classroom. In the final meeting in our classroom, Tiana led us in a closing ceremony to honor the work we had done together. Needless to say, this was a personal and unique moment that illustrated the strength of our relationships. We also met as a group (with five of the six participants) to attend a play in Boulder--*Rocks Karma Arrows*--that provided information about the little recognized history of racism in that city. We also met at my house for lunch, again with five of the six participants. I was in contact via email or phone with each participant in the six months after the CME course ended. Participants were also contacted to provide feedback on chapters from the dissertation; several did so. Two participants attended the dissertation defense.

Here I provide a summary of each participant's progress in the six months since the CME class ended. Tiana established a doctoral committee and successfully defended her comprehensive exams for her degree. Elana began the process of enrolling in a graduate education program. Leann continued to teach kindergarten at the same school and reported that she was utilizing her new-found confidence. Pam organized a

multicultural parents group at her school and attended a national conference on multicultural education. Saxon seemed likely to take over the directorship in her organization. Kathy joined the diversity group on her university campus as an active participant. I arranged to teach the CME class again the following summer in the same location.

## Conclusions

The research question that guided the CME dissertation project was: What transformations did participants experience; that is, what shifts occurred in their repertoires of meaning, of culture, and of social action as a result of the pedagogy of the CME class? While that question was specifically addressed in Chapter VI, here in the Conclusions I have pondered the reasons the individuals in the CME class achieved the goal of transformative learning and what that success might mean to future multicultural education efforts.

Why was the CME class successful? In my analysis of the data, I recognized three key ingredients as integral to the transformative learning that occurred as a result of the planned critical events and the critical incidents. The first key ingredient was the principle of constructivist teaching. The second key ingredient was the group of participants themselves, and the third ingredient was the methodological framework of the CME project's research design.

The first key to the success of the CME project was the constructivist teaching approach; it is believed that "knowledge is constructed by the individual as a result of interactions between the individual and the environment" (Lambert & McCombs, 1998, p. 113). My intention for the activities of the CME class was to provide a variety of

forums within which each participant could construct knowledge through a newly critical lens as well as through her cultural lens, individually and in dialogue with others. The learner-centered approach of constructivism provided such a forum.

The research design of the CME class paralleled constructivist teaching in several ways. First, my overt placement as instructor as well as participant-researcher in the CME class clarified the position of teacher-as-learner in the classroom and of power sharing (Weimer, 2002). Second, the primacy of the students (participants) was recognized in the CME class. Family configurations, cultural history, life experiences, current struggles of the participants--these were the true content issues of the CME class. Learning outcomes were individualized; no two participants were expected to achieve the same transformative learning or to achieve any transformative learning. The results were dependent on the participants. In a constructivist classroom, learning is the responsibility of the student.

The use of democratic principles in the CME class added an important intention to the constructivist framework; it was a stated requirement that each participant would be expected to use her voice in our work together and that no one voice, including mine, would dominate. Implicit to a democratic and a constructivist classroom is a teacher who embraces her role as a critical pedagogue. Teachers working as critical pedagogues have the foundational stance that “all forms of education are contextual and political whether or not teachers and students are consciously aware of these processes” (Weimer, 2002, p. 9). The stated intention of the CME dissertation was to document the voices of both student and teacher. I presented a setting in which each participant’s voice was recognized as valid and real. Therefore, as I practiced the principles of critical pedagogy

in the CME course, I offered democratic practices in the classroom that actively honored all perspectives and viewpoints of each participant.

Brookfield and Preskill (2005) provided a myriad of ways in which discussions could be utilized to enable a more democratic classroom. The freedom accorded to students through constructivist teaching methods and the responsibilities expected of students in a democratic classroom environments did much to set the stage for the critical events and critical incidents that occurred. Leann reflected on the nature of the instruction:

> But, it [the CME class] is also being taught in a way that I am not used to, which is sitting in the classroom listening to the professor tell us what we need to know, and then either doing tests or papers and having to turn that in. Not knowing what this class was, I had decided that it may be a lot of talking and intervention, talking about the course with each other, and that I would not be the shy, quiet person that I typically am and that I would actually be very outcoming [sic] and talk a lot, I guess. But it has been a very huge learning experience for me because I am branching out of my comfort zone, and I am talking a lot more (Leann: 6/17/09: T1)

One of the realities of a co-constructed classroom is the fact that the "teacher" is not expected to hold the knowledge of the class; each member of the class holds expertise. An important example from the CME class occurred when Tiana exposed her bias and used seemingly racist language. We were able to have a scholarly conversation in the class, including all the participants, about whether an African American can be a racist. Kathy found a good working definition in the Banks and Banks (2007) text. Racism is a

> belief that human groups can be validly grouped according to their biological traits…[and] is practiced when a group has the power to enforce laws, institutions, and norms, based on its beliefs, that oppressed and dehumanize another group. (Banks & Banks, p. 474)

We engaged in a scholarly dialogue about the language and the example presented by Tiana, but we also engaged in an intimately personal dialogue. When Leann felt victimized by Tiana's dialogue about her bias, it was another participant, Pam, who facilitated the conversation among us. The ability of Pam to directly confront Tiana in her use of language in a way that was beneficial to all in the room provided one of the most important critical incidents of the CME class. Could this have occurred in a typical classroom? It more likely would have occurred outside the classroom, but then the dialogue would not have been a critical incident for each of us participants. The fact that both Tiana and Pam were African American provided, I believe, an element of safety as well as heightened learning for the rest of us. Each of us learned that we could sit and participate in a racial and personal dialogue and emerge stronger individually and more connected as a group. Constructivist teaching strategies were important; the relationships among the participants were also important.

Woods (1993) wrote, "Exceptional relationships are developed during critical events" (p. 361). I can't help but wonder, however, if critical events happen more readily when exceptional relationships exist. The exceptional relationships among the individuals in the CME class were a second significant factor to the success of it. The participants for the CME class formed a dream team. How did that happen? In the first place, the title of the class itself--critical multicultural education for social action--would obviously attract a certain audience. The introductory interview also helped to set the stage for the expectations for the class, i.e., the critical theory perspective. The DCs and life histories and cultural focus of each participant provided an affirmation of each individual's value to the class and to the CME research project.

I believe a teaching disposition important to those exceptional relationships, to the success of the CME class, and one that is not natural to me and perhaps others is patience for the process. It was critical that the participants were given all the time they needed to work through the self-identification exercises, the cultural journey exercise, and all the CARs, DCs, and online discussion board conversations that were needed to uncover and confront their biases. For our CME class, the participants needed five classes to come to terms with addressing their own biases. Using the CARs and the life story interview (Atkinson, 1998) to continue to connect individual life histories to the classroom conversations about hegemony, inequity, bias and social action kept the tension between the political and the personal--therefore, interesting and motivating. Each individual could envision her empowerment and ability to make a difference. The uncovering and confronting of individual bias was also instrumental in solidifying our exceptional relationships. This is a bit of a paradox--the uncovering and confronting might not have occurred without the exceptional relationships and the individual personalities of the participants.

Finally, the methodological framework of the CME project increased the positive outcomes of the class. The choices of epistemology, theoretical perspective, methodology, and methods were presented as parts of the CME class curriculum. The epistemology of constructionism was defined first through lecture and then continuously referenced through our work to recognize authentic self and storied self. We also utilized the bifurcation of constructionism when we began to see how our biases were part of our sociocultural or socially constructed realities. We learned to confront those biases as individuals capable of separating ourselves from our cultural bindings.

The theoretical perspective of critical theory was a backbone of the class. The materials utilized for investigation were written from the critical perspective and the writing and dialogue of the participants contained elements of critical theory. As participants explored their life histories through their increasingly critical viewpoints, they began to see their stories in different ways. We reconstructed our childhood memories of those moments of learning when we experienced a "change in understanding or worldview by the storyteller" (Webster & Mertova, 2007, p. 73).

The methodology of action research provided a compelling framework through which to investigate the key issues of the CME class. From the second class, participants were asked to reflect on social action in their lives; the iterative cycles of investigation, self reflection, dialogue, planning action, and action were referenced in class throughout the sessions. Action research is a social process; as such, types of community action and the means to accomplish action will evolve through that social process. "People--individually and collectively--try to understand how they are formed and reformed as individuals and in relation to one another in a variety of settings" (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 567). The participants, including myself as participant-researcher, documented our experiences through the CME pedagogy with the ultimate goal of researching our "own communities with a view to changing them in directions they (the adult citizens concerned) determine" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 26). In this way, the CME project evolved and will continue to evolve in a myriad of directions toward a variety of action projects by the participants.

The method of narrative inquiry brought me to the study of critical events and critical incidents, but not until after the CME class pedagogy was constructed. In the

future, critical events will be part of my curriculum construction. A discussion concerning this follows at the end of the Recommendations section below.

Finally, I must report that I have not covered all the data provided by the CME class participants. The participants decided to meet for two additional days and I have audio and video recordings of both these sessions. I have not transcribed those recordings or included that data in this dissertation. Other examples of transformative learning were also not included in this report. In the near future, I plan to revisit the data and make additions as well as to report the progress of the CME class participants over time.

## Recommendations

There were at least two obvious components of the CME class that should be amended. The course needed to be longer and the research notebook documentation was underutilized, both for instructional and research purposes. First, each participant's evaluation forms for the university supported the consensus that the CME class needed to be longer than the scheduled six-week class sessions.

> I believe that this class needs to be longer. Luckily we had a group of people who were all ready to do the work. Some people who would really benefit from this class would take a longer time to get there. After making our biggest breakthrough, we only had a couple classes left. Obviously none of us were ready for the class to be over on the last day. I will be interested to see how we proceed, meeting on our own, and hope that we can keep some momentum going. The great thing about meeting every week over a longer period of time is that there would be more continuity and more time to develop action plans. (Elana: 8/1809: CAR 5)

> The class should be of a longer duration. Either a longer day or more weeks would allow one to assimilate new and unsettling information and then to adjust, discuss and move forward. It felt to me a like we were in a storm trying to learn as much as possible in a short period of time and didn't get to the calm eye of the storm to internalize just before getting back into the storm of learning. (Leann: 9/13/09: CAR 5)

The second area of concern for the CME class was that each participant was expected to keep a research notebook that would include class notes, the CAR assignments, on-going personal and professional reflections, artifacts, and action plan notes. Three of the participants submitted their research notebooks as data for the CME project. I take full responsibility for not receiving all five research notebooks. By the end of class, I felt I had enough documentation for my narrative inquiry. However, in reading the research notebooks that were submitted, I realized the potential of these documents as far as tracking cognitive and emotional responses to the classroom dialogues and lectures. I recommend that teachers of critical multicultural education classes emphasize the importance of ongoing written reflection of the metacognitive processes of students in future CME classes. For the CME project, participants were not required to submit the research notebooks to successfully complete the class.

Other general recommendations include the following: First, it was apparent through the six weeks of the CME class that the diversity of ethnicity and age was an advantage. As a group, we concurred that dialogue in a safe environment among individuals from diverse ethnicities was vital. Therefore, an important recommendation for critical multicultural education classes is that they be comprised of students from diverse gender, ethnicity, age, religion, etc. whenever possible. Uncovering and confronting bias is, in my opinion, the crux of the CME class. Allport (1954/1986) wrote:

> Prejudice may be reduced by equal status contact between majority and minority groups in the pursuit of common goals. The effect is greatly enhanced if this contact is sanctioned by institutional supports, and provided it is of a sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of the two groups. (p. 281)

I believe that honest conversations among individuals from diverse backgrounds led to a reduction of prejudice and a greater willingness to uncover and confront biases in our CME class. Our small class size might also have had an effect on comfort levels of participants.

Second, in addition to the diversity of students in a critical multicultural education class, an optimal facilitation for the class may be a teaching team of individuals representing both majority and minority cultures in a community.

Third, teachers of a critical multicultural education class must be prepared to facilitate difficult conversations. I believe there are two important aspects to this: one is that teachers must be continuously self-reflective. Howard (2006), a White multicultural educator, provided good insight in this warning:

> We cannot fully and fruitfully engage in meaningful dialogue across the differences of race and culture without doing the work of personal transformation. If we as White educators are not deeply moved and transformed, there is little hope that anything else will significantly shift. We must assume that we will be changed in the process of engagement and dialogue. We cannot help our students overcome the negative repercussions of past and present racial dominance if we have not unraveled the remnants of dominance that still lingers in our minds, heart, and habits. (p. 6)

Teachers of critical multicultural education classes must be students of themselves and their teaching practices. I recommend Stephen Brookfield (1995) as an essential resource. Weimer (2002) writes after her review of Brookfield's *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*:

> It was as if someone had held a mirror up to my teaching. In that reflection, I saw a different, and not very flattering, instructional image: an authoritarian, controlling teacher who directed the action…[with] displays of instructor power present everywhere. (p. 3).

Brookfield's methods of analysis helped Weimer to see where old assumptions were still holding her hostage to the teaching practices she thought she had rejected. Brookfield (2005) was influential in my design of many components of both the structure and the operating principles of the CME class.

A second part of facilitating the difficult dialogues that will emerge in a critical multicultural education class is a willingness to allow them to do so. My experiences with practicing self reflection on difficult topics through my autoethnography were helpful in teaching the CME class, but I am at the beginning of my understanding of this. In our CME class, Pam provided facilitation when I felt overwhelmed. It would be wonderful to always have a cultural guide such as Pam around the classroom, but that will not always be so. Students must be able to speak their truth. Gay (2010) writes that teachers and students "can (and should) learn to speak their thoughts and beliefs about race, ethnicity, and cultural diversity and how to reconstruct or transform them" (p. 144). To be prepared, I strongly recommend diversity training workshops for all teachers engaged in teaching critical multicultural education classes. However, I did not find these readily available. A valuable workshop I did attend soon after the CME class ended was offered at the National Association of Multicultural Education 2009 National Conference. Another option may be for interested multicultural education teachers to create their own resource groups in order to further their studies and teaching practice.

Fourth, the DCs were very important to the participants. In light of that, it is worth mentioning that more assigned grouping might be valuable. In my analysis of the narratives, it was obvious that participants had many opportunities to engage in one-on-one dialogue; however, too many of those were self–selected. The self-selected dyads or

trios for conversation would typically occur between seat mates. This is problematic, in general, as students tend to sit in the same seats. At the beginning of our DC, I deliberately grouped individuals so that they could each spend time with different partners. I would suggest that students track their partners and make attempts to vary their DC dyads as much as possible.

Fifth, using the cycles of action research as a framework for the transformative learning worked well for the CME class. However, my learning since the class about transformational learning theory may provide an even stronger framework. In my next CME class, I will work with the following ideas to facilitate transformative learning.

The first phase of transformative learning is critical reflection on one's assumptions (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). There are several components to this process, one of which is a "disorienting dilemma…that a person experiences as a crisis" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 321). Taught from a critical perspective, the CME class gave participants their "crisis", i.e., the inequity in our educational systems. The acceptance of the idea that inequity is a crisis that affects every citizen of the United States, and especially teachers, was critical to whether participants experienced transformative learning in the CME class. Another part of the first phase of transformative learning is self-examination. These parts within the first phase of transformative learning resonate with the investigation and the self-reflection within action research.

The second phase of transformative learning is reflective discourse, described as involving an effort to "set aside bias, prejudice, and personal concerns and to do our best to be open and objective" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 322). The dialogue component of action research has a parallel function, especially in critical action research. Our work

in perspective taking in our CME class reflected the importance of learning to see where our minds were closed and to whom or what. Again, participants experienced transformative learning to the extent that they embraced the dialogue described above.

The last phase of the transformative learning process is action that is determined by the individual and can encompass a broad range of activities, but not necessarily social action. For Mezirow (1991), the action can be as simple as making a decision. Mezirow has been criticized by others for this acceptance of such a wide range of action; it is viewed as "too egocentric" (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999, p. 323) because of its emphasis on individual transformation. From my experiences in the CME class, however, I would suggest that individual transformation and a resulting simple decision could, and probably would, result in an action that has important social consequences. In the CME class, there was no set boundary to the social action plans designed by participants. As I hope is obvious, Mezirow's phases of transformative learning are very similar to the components of action research model. The value of using the Mezirow model is that it may be more likely to encourage other teachers to use the transformative learning model for all ages of students and types of classrooms.

Finally, attention to three or four planned critical events might prove to be useful in future curriculum planning. Woods (1993) defined critical events as those that indicate "outstanding advance, be it in terms of attitudes toward learning, understanding of the self, relationships with others, acquisition of knowledge or development of skills" ( p. 357). It is likely that critical events as defined by Woods and the disorienting dilemmas defined by Mezirow (1991) above may be one and the same. The opportunities for transformative learning are heightened for students working through critical events.

"Critical events permit teachers to retain their ideals in spite of the assaults that might more customarily be made on them" (Woods, p. 358) in typical classrooms. In the CME class, the participants easily revealed their transformative learning through the critical events provided in the curriculum.

A component I will add to future CME classes will be to work with the students to recognize the specific critical events (or disorienting dilemmas) that led to their transformative learning. From my initial understanding of critical events, it makes sense for a teacher to plan for them. Whether the teacher's planned critical event becomes one that precipitates transformative learning is an individual reality for each student. But the awareness of the importance of the critical event to the transformative learning provides the opportunity for preservice teachers or graduate students who are teachers to also ask the question: What critical events do I plan for in my class? I believe this is a strategy that can be used to more effectively teach all ages of students, especially in constructivist classrooms.

The critical incidents are a bit trickier to document as they are "unplanned, unanticipated, and uncontrolled" (Woods, 1993, p. 357). Again, I believe it is important to work with students to recognize these when they occur. Working to recognize critical incidents in ourselves as teachers should help us encourage our students to also pinpoint these. Understanding learning as a continuous process and also recognizing critical events and critical incidents as key to transformative learning is a metacognitive skill and should be taught as such.

In closing, I encourage all of us teachers to explore constructivist teaching practices, to investigate critical literature, to uncover and confront our own biases within

a working group, to be self-reflective of our teaching practices in a political as well as personal manner, to laugh heartily and often, to take ourselves a little less seriously and our students more seriously, and to model positive emotional health and behaviors in our classrooms.

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# APPENDIX A

# INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

UNIVERSITY of NORTHERN COLORADO
Institutional Review Board (IRB)

January 16, 2009

STUDENT'S COPY

TO: Mark Riddle
Sociology

FROM: Maria Lahman, Co-Chair
UNC Institutional Review Board

RE: Expedited Review of Proposal, *Critical Multicultural Education for Social Action,* submitted by Jan Ferrari (Research Advisor: Kathryn Cochran)

First Consultant: The above proposal is being submitted to you for an expedited review. Please review the proposal in light of the Committee's charge and direct requests for changes directly to the researcher or researcher's advisor. If you have any unresolved concerns, please contact Maria Lahman, School of Educational Research, Leadership & Technology, Campus Box 124, (x1603). When you are ready to recommend approval, sign this form and return to me.

I recommend approval as is. Mark D Riddle 2/3/09
Signature of First Consultant Date

The above referenced prospectus has been reviewed for compliance with HHS guidelines for ethical principles in human subjects research. The decision of the Institutional Review Board is that the project is approved as proposed for a period of one year: 2/18/9 to 2/18/10.

2/18/9
~~Teresa McDevitt~~, Co-Chair Date

Comments:

# APPENDIX B

# INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH

UNIVERSITY of NORTHERN COLORADO

Informed Consent for Participation in Research
University of Northern Colorado
Project Title: Critical Multicultural Education for Social Action

Researcher: Jan Ferrari, M.A., College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Researcher: Kathryn Cochran, Ph.D, College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
Phone Number: (303) 916-9583

I am a doctoral candidate at the University of Northern Colorado. I am researching the effects of a critical multicultural education class on teachers, administrators, and other interested educational experts. You have enrolled in a course entitled *Critical Multicultural Education for Social Action* through the University of Northern Colorado. Through course materials and your participation in classroom and online dialogue, I intend to analyze, with your assistance, the effects of these activities on your work in educational settings.

I am asking your permission to videotape and/or audiotape classroom dialogue and face-to-face interviews that will be used in the study. I am asking your permission to utilize these videotapes and audiotapes as well as your written autobiography, your responses to written interview questions, your online discussions, and your field notes from research notebooks.

Be assured that I intend to keep the contents of all information confidential. The names of participants will not appear in any professional report of this research, and the tapes will not be played in any public setting. Computer files of participants will be created, and participants will be identified by pseudonyms. Written and coded information will be kept in a locked cabinet, and consent forms will be kept in a location separate from the video and/or audio tapes. Video and/or audio tapes will be erased as soon as the study is completed and all information has been transcribed.

All attempts will be made to protect the identities of participants; however, participants will obviously know the identities of one another. A confidentiality agreement will be distributed and signed by each member of the group (see attached).

I foresee no risks to participants beyond those that are normally encountered in typical college coursework functioning. The probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort

anticipated in the research are not greater, in and of themselves, from those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examination or tests.

Thank you for assisting me with my research.

Sincerely,

_____

Participation is voluntary. You may decide not to participate in this study and if you begin participation you may still decide to stop and withdraw at any time. Your decision will be respected and will not result in loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Having read the above and having had an opportunity to ask any questions, please sign below if you would like to participate in this research. A copy of this form will be given to you to retain for future reference. If you have any concerns about your selection or treatment as a research participant, please contact the Sponsored Programs and Academic Research Center, Kepner Hall, University of Northern Colorado Greeley, CO 80639; 970-351-1907).

_____ _____
Participant's Signature Date

_____ _____
Researcher's Signature Date

If you give permission for Jan Ferrari to use the video and/or audio taping of your classroom dialogue and face to face interviews, please initial here:

_____
Initials

# APPENDIX C

# INTRODUCTORY INTERVIEW

INTRODUCTORY INTERVIEW
PSY 513

This introductory interview will help me in preparing the curriculum for the PSY 513 class. During our first class on Wed., June 10, I will provide information about the research project and about expectations for the class. I will also provide consent forms so that you will understand how your confidentiality will be maintained during and after the class. Please let me know if you have any question.

Introductory Interview Guide

Please write your answers to the following questions in a Word document and email your responses to me as soon as you can (at least before the class begins on the 10th ).

1. What is your interest in enrolling in the PSY 513 class?

2. What are your previous experiences in multicultural education classes or diversity workshops?

3. Write a little about your life/work history. This can be as brief as you like and written in any manner (as paragraphs, a bulleted list, a timeline, etc).

Thanks so much and I look forward to meeting/seeing you all soon!

Jan

# APPENDIX D

# CME SYLLABUS

**UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN COLORADO**
**OFFICE OF EXTENDED STUDIES**
**SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SCIENCES**
**Summer 2009**
**Syllabus**

**Course:** PSY 513- Professional Renewal: Critical Multicultural Education for Social Action (3 credits)

**Course Dates:** June 10 – July 15, 2009
Wednesdays: 8:30 am – noon, Lowry
This class is a hybrid – class meets both face to face (50%) and online (50%)

***Prerequisites or Skills***
Prior multicultural or diversity courses or workshops
Consent of instructor

**Instructor of Record:** Jan Ferrari, M.A.

School of Psychological Sciences, UNC College of Education and Behavioral Sciences
E-mail: <janferrari@comcast.net> Mailbox: McKee 0014
Office Hours: Wednesdays 12-1 at Lowry and by appointment

***Course Description (short)***
Focus on participant's commitment to self-critical reflection on their educational aims and values but also on social matters requiring collective or common action if they are to be satisfactorily resolved.

***Course Description (long)***
Welcome to Critical Multicultural Education for Social Action (CME). A multicultural education class designed from a critical view focuses not only on the individual participant's commitment to "self-critical reflection on their educational aims and values … (but also on) social matters requiring collective or common action if they are to be satisfactorily resolved" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 31).

The methodology of action research is conceptualized within iterative cycles of self-reflection, dialogue, and planning to create effective action plans within systems or communities. The CME course provides content and strategies to enhance participant reflection and dialogue with the intention of empowering and encouraging teachers and other staff to engage in social action projects within those systems that affect education in the United States.

***Required Text***

Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. (2007). *Multicultural Education: Issues and Perspectives* (6th ed.)

Articles available on Blackboard

***Course Content and Schedule (subject to change by instructor)***

| Date | Topics | Critical Autobiography Reflections and Assignments | Online Discussions and Assignments |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Week 1**<br>**June 10**<br><br>**Who we are** | Introductions<br>Class Orientation | In class:<br>Cultural Journey as CAR<br>Due 6/16 | Online Discussion Participation<br><br>Banks & Banks Ch 1 and 2 and BB article: Tennant |
| **Week 2**<br>**June 17**<br><br>**What we know** | Dimension of ME:<br>Content Integration;<br>Knowledge Construction;<br>Critical Theory | Entry Interview as CAR<br>Due 6/23 | Online Discussion Participation<br><br>Banks & Banks Ch 3 and 4 and BB article: Brookfield (1985)<br><br>Research Notebook Check |
| **Week 3**<br>**June 24**<br><br>**How we see** | Dimension of ME:<br>Prejudice Reduction<br>Film: *Race: The Power of an Illusion* | Implicit/Explicit Bias Exploration<br>Due 6/30 | Online Discussion Participation<br><br>Banks & Banks Ch 9 and 11 and BB Article: Smith-Maddox<br><br>Research Notebook Check |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Week 4**<br>**July 1**<br>**How we change** | Dimension of ME:<br>Prejudice Reduction | Confronting Bias and Prejudice in Myself and in Others<br>Due 7/7 | Online Discussion Participation<br><br>Banks & Banks Ch 7 and 8 and BB article: Pfeifer<br><br>Research Notebook Check |
| **Week 5**<br>**July 8**<br>**What we can do** | Dimension of ME:<br>Equity Pedagogy | Social Action History and Future<br>Due 7/12 | Online Discussion Participation<br><br>Banks & Banks Ch 16 and 17 and BB article: Gay |
| **Week 6**<br>**July 13**<br>**How we can do it** | Dimension of ME:<br>School Culture | Transformations: Past, Present, and Future | Online Discussion Participation |

***Course Objectives***

Upon completion of this course the successful student will be able to:

1. Articulate the current opportunities available as a result of the diversity of culture and ethnicity within public school systems in the United States.
2. Explain critical perspectives of education.
3. Identify and describe learning strategies within each of Banks & Banks (2005) five dimensions of multicultural education.
4. Identify educational materials and instructional strategies to enable learning opportunities for each student.
5. Recognize effects of bias and prejudice; describe strategies for the reduction of bias and prejudice.
6. Develop experiential and integrated pedagogy to positively impact the behaviors and learning of students from a wide variety of cultures and ethnicities.
7. Develop social action projects.

***Course Requirements***

1. Participate in three interviews
2. Actively and appropriately participate in collaborative dialogue in class and in online discussions
3. Engage in self-reflective journaling to create a Critical Autobiography
4. Develop on-going social action plans
5. Produce a final Research Journal including class notes, critical autobiography reflection assignments, on-going personal and professional self-reflections, interview questions and responses, and action plan iterations

***Method of Evaluation***

Grades will be awarded as S/U. A satisfactory grade will be achieved through a combination of self-evaluation, peer-evaluation, and instructor evaluation

***Supplemental Reading List Attached***

***Relevant University Policies***

Please become familiar with these and other policies pertaining to students by the University of Northern Colorado.

- Disability Statement: Students with disabilities who believe they may need accommodations in this class are encouraged to contact the Disability Support Services at 970-351-2289 as soon as possible to ensure that such accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.
- Academic Conduct: The University of Northern Colorado's Student Code of Conduct (http://www.unco.edu/dos/student_code_conduct/student_conduct.html) and Honor Code (http://www.unco.edu/dos/honor_code/index.html) strictly prohibit any form of academic misconduct. Academic misconduct includes but is not limited to plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, and knowingly or recklessly encouraging or making possible any act of plagiarism, cheating, or fabrication. Academic misconduct is an unacceptable activity in scholarship and is in conflict with academic and professional ethics and morals. All incidents of alleged plagiarism or other forms of academic dishonesty will be investigated and violations of academic integrity will result in a consequence that may be as severe as an F in the class and a recommendation for expulsion. For more information on plagiarism and appropriate paraphrasing, please see: http://www.unco.edu/dos/honor_code/defining_plagiarism.html

***Professional Standards***
This course addresses several Colorado Performance-Based Standards (CPBS) and professional standards specified by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE). The matrix of outcomes for candidates, standards addressed, and course activities are located at the end of this syllabus.

***Notice***
The Office of Extended Studies reserves the right to cancel or reschedule courses based upon enrollment. Enrolled students will be contacted with information of any change.

***Student Satisfaction Evaluation***
Participants will be asked to evaluate the workshop for instructors' knowledge, interest and enthusiasm as well as providing additional information on classes or topics which you would like to see developed as a future offering from UNC.

***Portable Electronic Devices***
Please extend courtesy to your instructor and fellow students by turning off your portable electronic devises such as: cell phones, pagers, and IPods. Although not an audio issue, text-messaging is a distraction to other students and prevents you from full participation in class. You should keep your portable electronic devices in your backpack or purse during class. Your personal electronic devices should not be on your desks. If you know that you may need to accept an emergency phone call during class or if you have children in childcare or school, please let the instructor know. If you need to take a phone call during class, please step out of the classroom while you complete your call. Thank you for your cooperation.

***Course Withdrawal Information***
In accordance with University and Colorado Department of Higher Education policy, if you drop this class after the course starts you will be assessed a drop fee. The drop fee is pro-rated up to the half-way point in the class. You are legally responsible for payment of full tuition once 50% of this course has been concluded. In order to be eligible to receive any refund of tuition, you must contact the Office of Extended Studies (1-800-232-1749) to formally withdraw from your class. Your refund, if applicable, will be based on the date of contact with our office. Withdrawals received via telephone during non-business hours will be processed and dated on the next working day. Failure to notify us will result in UNC tuition being owed even though you do not attend or complete the coursework.

# Information About Colorado, University, and National Accreditation Standards Relevant to this Educational Psychology Course

I. This course focuses on these Colorado Performance Based Standards
http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprof/li_perfbasedstandards.htm

5: Knowledge of Classroom and Instructional Management
Create a learning environment characterized by acceptable student behavior, efficient use of time, and disciplined acquisition of knowledge, skills, and understanding.
5.3 Apply appropriate intervention strategies and practices to ensure a successful learning environment.
Raise the academic level of a group of students, over time, to a higher level.
Understand the cognitive processes associated with various kinds of learning (e.g., critical thinking, problem solving, invention, memorization, and recall) and ensure attention to those learning processes so the student can master content standards.
6: Knowledge of Individualization and Instruction
6.1 Employ a wide variety of teaching techniques to match the intellectual, emotional, and social level of each student, and choose alternative teaching strategies and material to achieve different curricular purposes.

II. This course focuses on these NCATE (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2002) Standards
go to unit standards at http://ncate.org/public/standards.asp

Standard 1: Candidate Skills, Knowledge, and Dispositions
*Candidates preparing to work in schools as teachers or other professional school personnel know and demonstrate the content, pedagogical, and professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn. Assessments indicate that candidates meet professional, state, and institutional standards.*
Candidates are knowledgeable in the subjects they teach and methods for teaching these subjects to students.
Candidates understand pedagogical knowledge and skills. They develop meaningful learning experiences to facilitate learning for all students; they make adjustments to learning based on their reflections; they can make ideas accessible to students; they consider school, family, and community contexts in connecting concepts to students' prior experience and applying the ideas to real-world problems.
Candidates work with students, families, and communities effectively.
Candidates accurately assess and analyze student learning, make appropriate adjustments to instruction, monitor student learning, and have a positive effect on learning for all students.
Standard 4: Diversity
*The unit designs, implements, and evaluates curriculum and experiences for candidates to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn. These experiences include working with diverse higher education and school faculty, diverse candidates, and diverse students in P-12 schools.*
Candidates learn to conceptualize teaching and to draw upon representations of students' own experiences and knowledge. They learn how to challenge students toward cognitive complexity and engage all students, including students with exceptionalities, through instructional conversation.
Note. Illustrations of NCATE standards (bulleted items) are sometimes paraphrased from the NCATE handbook.

III. This course strives to support students' attainment of goals for prospective teachers as established by faculty at the University of Northern Colorado
http://www.unco.edu/cebs/framework.htm

**Candidate Proficiencies for Initial Programs at the University of Northern Colorado**
**Competence in Caring**
1. Candidates understand the importance of caring as an underlying attribute of an effective professional (knowledge).
2. Candidates are able to mediate ideas and communicate caring viewpoints, through the modification and adaptation of the curriculum and development of supportive interventions in the school, community, and family (skills).
3. Candidates demonstrate a desire to reflect upon and promote unbiased attitudes and impart the skills necessary for understanding and performing successfully in a diverse world (dispositions).

**Mastery of Subject Matter**
4. Candidates understand the subject matter they are preparing to teach (knowledge).
5. Candidates are able to identify, design, and employ assessment strategies and use technology to create solution-focused interventions that support the acquisition of subject matter knowledge in their students (skills).
6. Candidates demonstrate an appreciation for academic understanding, knowledge, intellectual examination, and evidence-based decision-making (dispositions).

**Understanding Education as a Collaborative Enterprise**
7. Candidates understand the need to work collaboratively with their colleagues, students, families, communities, and other professionals to improve learning environments for students (knowledge).
8. Candidates are able to work collaboratively and utilize technology to implement instruction and related interventions (skills).
9. Candidates are able to reflect critically about their personal experiences, identities as professionals, and beliefs about the profession (dispositions).

**Continuous Inquiry for Renewal**
10. Candidates understand the principles of standards-based decision-making, pedagogical content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and how this knowledge informs practice to support learning and development (knowledge).
11. Candidates are able to analyze, synthesize, and evaluate the professional literature to inform practice in their discipline (skills).
12. Candidates respect and model appropriate professional and ethical behaviors that embody their commitment to systematic research, educational inquiry, and practice (dispositions).

PSY 513: Critical Multicultural Education for Social Action
Supplemental Reading List
(Articles in Blackboard indicated by *)

**Content Integration**

*Artiles, A. J. (2003). Special education's changing identity: Paradoxes and dilemmas in views of culture and space. *Harvard Educational Review, 73*(2), 1-34.

Diamond, J. (1999). *Guns, germs, and steel: The fates of human societies*. New York: W.W. Norton.

Gould, S. J. (1996). *The mismeasure of man*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

McLaren P. (2003). *Life in schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education*. Boston, MA: Pearson Education.

Tavris, C. (1992). *The mismeasure of women*. New York: Touchstone.

**Knowledge Construction**

Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The social construction of reality*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday.

Cole, M. (1996). *Cultural psychology: A once and future discipline*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.

*Cole, M. (2005). Cross-cultural and historical perspectives on the developmental consequences of education. *Human Development, 48*, 195-216.

*Knapp, N. F. (2005). "They're not all like me!" The role of educational psychology in preparing teachers for diversity. *The Clearing House, 78*(5), 202-206.

Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development.* New York: Oxford Press.

**Prejudice Reduction**

Allport, G. A. (1986). *The nature of prejudice* (25th Anniversary Edition). Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.

Derman-Sparks, L., & Phillips, C. B. (1997). *Teaching/learning anti-racism: A developmental approach*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Katz, J. H. (1978). *White awareness: A handbook for anti-racism training*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press.

Lynch, E. W., & Hanson, M. J. (1992*). Developing cross cultural competence: A guide for working with young children and their families*. New York: Paul Brooks Publishing.

McIntyre, A. (1997). *Making meaning of Whiteness*. New York: State University of New York.

*Smith-Maddox, R., & Solorzano, D. (2002). Using critical race theory, Paulo Freire's problem-posing method, and case study research to confront race and racism in education. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *8*(1), 64-84.

**Equity Pedagogy**

Brookfield, S. D. (2005). *The power of critical theory*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Freire, P. (1970/2006). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum Publishing.

Freire, P. (Ed.). (1997). *Mentoring the mentor: A critical dialogue with Paulo Freire*. New York: Peter Lang Publishers.

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, & practice*. New York: Teacher's College Press.

*Howard, T. C. (2003). Culturally relevant pedagogy: Ingredients for critical teacher reflection. *Theory into Practice, 42*(3), 195-204.

Weimer, M. (2002). *Learner-centered teaching*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

**Empowering School Culture and/or Social Structure**

*Brown, K. M. (2004). Leadership for social justice and equity: Weaving a transformative framework and pedagogy. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 40*(1), 77-108.

*Gay, G. (2004). Beyond Brown: Promoting equality through multicultural education. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, 19*(3), 193-216.

*Greenman, N. P., & Dieckmann, J. A. (2004). Considering criticality and culture as pivotal in transformative teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education, 55*(3), 240-255.

Kozol, J. (2005). *The shame of the nation: The restoration of apartheid schooling in America.* New York: Crown Publishers.

*Young, S. L. (2007). Practitioner research on critical multicultural pedagogy: Challenging hetereosexism in a public school. *Multicultural Perspectives, 9*(4), 13-19.

# APPENDIX E

# A CULTURAL JOURNEY

# A Cultural Journey

Culture is not just something that someone else has. All of us have a cultural, ethnic, and linguistic heritage that influences our current beliefs, values, and behaviors. To learn a little more about your own heritage, take this simple cultural journey.

## ORIGINS

1. When you think about your roots, what country(ies) other than the United States do you identify as a place of origin for you or your family?

2. Have you ever heard any stories about how your family or your ancestors came to the United States? Briefly, what was the story?

3. Are there any foods that you or someone else prepares that are traditional for your country(ies) of origin? What are they?

4. Are there any celebrations, ceremonies, rituals, holidays that your family continues to celebrate that reflect your country(ies) of origin? What are they? How are they celebrated?

5. Do you or anyone in your family speak a language other than English because of your origins? If so, what language?

6. Can you think of one piece of advice that has been handed down through your family that reflects the values held by your ancestors in the country(ies) of origin? What is it?

BELIEFS, BIASES, AND BEHAVIORS

1. Have you ever heard anyone make a negative comment about people from your country(ies) of origin? If so, what was it?

2. As you were growing up, do you remember discovering that your family did anything differently from other families that you were exposed to because of your culture, religion, or ethnicity? Name something that you remember that was different.

3. Have you ever been with someone in a work situation who did something because of her or her culture, religion, or ethnicity that seemed unusual to you? What was it?

4. Have you ever felt shocked, upset, or appalled by something that you saw when you were traveling in another part of the world? If so, what was it?

   How did it make you feel? Pick some descriptive words to explain your feelings.

   How did you react?

   In retrospect, how do you wish you would have reacted?

5. Have you ever done anything that you think was culturally in appropriate when you have been in another country or with someone from a different culture? In other words, have you ever done something that you think might have been upsetting or embarrassing to another person? What was it?

   What did you do to try to improve the situation?

IMAGINE

1. If you could be from another culture or ethnic group, what culture would it be?

   Why?

2. What is one value from that culture or ethnic group that attracts you to it?

3. Is there anything about that culture or ethnic group that concerns or frightens you? What is it?

4. Name one concrete way in which you think your life would be different if you were from that culture or ethnic group.

# APPENDIX F

# CRITICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY REFLECTIONS

## Critical Autobiographical Reflection 1

Please write a synopsis of your "A Cultural Journey" by Section (Origins; Beliefs, Biases, and Behaviors; Imagine).

Feel free to focus on any aspect of these sections that you find interesting or pertinent.

Please also write a short reflection about the Dialogue Circle exercise. What are your thoughts about sharing your culture with your classmates? What are your thoughts about the sharing they provided?

Please add anything else you might want to remember or to watch for or to think about it the future.

## Critical Autobiographical Reflections 2 and 3

Directions: Answer as many of the questions as you can and enjoy this opportunity to reflect on and honor your life story. I realize this may take more than 1 week, but please do the best you can to return as much information as you can by Tuesday, June 23. Continue to work on this as you wish and submit adjustments and additions later in the summer.

1. What are some of the visible aspects of your cultural upbringing that you experienced in the neighborhood and community where you grew up? See Banks & Banks (2007), pp. 42-56

2. Which parts of your cultural background have been the most influential factors in your personal life and/or in your work life?

3. What was going on in your family, your community, and the world at the time of your birth?

4. What would you say was the most significant event in your life up to age 12?

5. How were you and/or your family involved in your community (and what parts of your community) when you were growing up (to age 21)?

6. Is a sense of community important to you today? How was that influenced by your response to # 5 above?

7. How are you and/or your family involved in your community today?

8. How does your work contribute to the life of your community?

9. Today, how do you perceive that you might engage in actions that may positively affect one of your communities?

Critical Autobiographical Reflection 4

This is our working definition of transformative learning:

a learning process of "becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 4).

1. Can you describe a specific experience of this type of learning in your early childhood? Middle years? Adult years? Please include your work from class when you turn this back to me.

2. Now let's think about uncovering and confronting bias as transformative learning:

    a. Think about one or more of your own biases that you have uncovered in the past few weeks.
    b. Describe the bias in a few sentences and explain why you think you may have it.
    c. Determine how your behaviors are or have been affected by this bias.
    d. Decide on the possible steps might you take to overcome this bias? Or, if you are comfortable with the bias, why you are not going to take any steps to confront and overcome it.

3. In looking at the above information, analyze where the following concepts (defined below) may be involved.
    a. Does the bias create disequilibrium? How or why?
    b. Do you think the steps you created may lead you to an accommodation of a new scheme or an assimilation into existing schemes? Explain.
    c. Do you think you could arrive at equilibration as you attempt to confront this bias? What might that look like?

- Disequilibrium -"out of balance" state that occurs when a person realizes that his or her current ways of thinking are not working to solve a problem or understand a situation.
- Accommodation - altering existing schemes or creating new ones in response to new information
- Assimilation - fitting new information into existing schemes.
- Equilibration – search for mental balance between cognitive schemes and information from the environment (Woolfolk, 2010)

Critical Autobiographical Reflection 5

Assuming transformative learning opportunities are available when disequilibrium occurs, please respond to the following questions. Please see definitions on page 2.

1. How did the CAR exercises create disequilibrium in your thinking? Can you provide specific examples?
    a. Did you experience transformative learning as a result?
    b. Can you pinpoint the particular topic, materials, and/or your thought processes that brought that about? Details are welcome!

2. Which specific reading assignments created disequilibrium in your thinking? Please provide as much detail as possible as you explain how and why.

3. What did you think about the format of the class- online plus face-to-face?

4. How did the Discussion Board work for you as far as creating disequilibrium and achieving transformative learning?

5. How did the face-to-face classroom environment work for you as far as creating disequilibrium and achieving transformative learning?

6. How did the DC's in our class create disequilibrium in your thinking? Can you provide specific examples?
    a. Did you experience transformative learning?
    b. Can you pinpoint the activity, materials, and/or your thought processes that brought that about? Details are welcome!

7. How did the video, *Racism: The Power of an Illusion*, create disequilibrium in your thinking? Can you provide specific examples?
    a. Did you experience transformative learning? Please describe it.

8. How has your concept of social action changed as a result of the materials in the class? What is your current social action plan?

9. What does Critical Multicultural Education mean to you? Has your definition changed through your participation in the class? Can you describe that?

10. What suggestions do you have for the improvement of any part of the class, especially those that would increase the opportunities for transformative learning?

FYI: there will be a final interview process, so you will get another opportunity to debrief about the class and your participation there. Thank you!

Definitions:

This is our working definition of disequilibrium:

> “out of balance” state that occurs when a person realizes that his or her current ways of thinking are not working to solve a problem or understand a situation (Woolfolk, 2010)

This is our working definition of transformative learning:

> a learning process of "becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 4).

APPENDIX G

CME POWERPOINTS

## Critical Multicultural Education for Social Action (CME)

Orientation

## PSY 513

- Class
  - Critical
  - Multicultural education
  - Social action
- Research project
  - Consent forms
  - 1st interviews

## Components of the Class

- Reading assignments (1)
  - Critical Theory
- Critical Autobiography Reflection (CAR) (2)
- Dialogue Circle (DC) (3)
  - Brookfield (2005) techniques
  - Democratic principles
- Online Discussion Board (4)
- Research notebooks (5)
  - Action plans

## Critical Theory

- Concerned with issues of power and justice
- Concerned with the ways that social institutions and cultural dynamics interact to construct a social system (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005)

## Historical Critical Theory

- Frankfort school
  - Institute of Social Research at University of Frankfort
  - Horkeimer, Adorno, Marcuse
  - Influenced by Marx, Kant, Hegel, and Weber
  - Belief that injustice and subjugation shape the lived world
- In US
  - "contradictions between progressive American rhetoric of egalitarianism and the reality of racial and class discrimination" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 280).

## Paulo Freire

- Pedagogy of the Oppressed ( 1970/2006)
- Reflection without action is empty 'verbalism'
- Literacy work with Indigenous populations in Brazil in 1960's
- To Harvard U and special consultant to Office of Education of the World Council of Churches in Geneva

## Autoethnography of a Critical Multiculturalist

- South America journey
- Comps project
- Path to social action
- Class = social action

## Critical Action Research

- Goal – "evaluate social issues so that results can be used for social change" (Hendricks, 2009, p.10)
- Participatory framework
  - Shared ownership of research
  - Orientation toward community action
- Self-reflexive
  - Participants seek to transform practices through cycles of critical and self-critical action and reflection (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 567).

## Critical Action Research

- Goal is empowerment of individuals
- Participatory framework
- Democratic principles
  - Commitment to full participation of each participant
- Simultaneous contribution to social science and to social change

## Spiral of Cycles

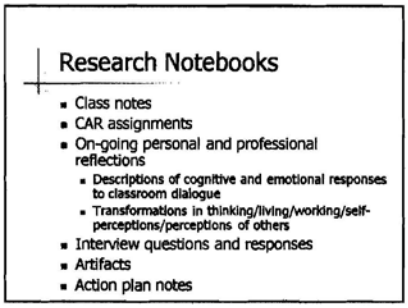
- Investigation
- Self-Reflection
- Dialogue
- Planning Action
- Acting
- Investigation
- Self-Reflection
- Etc.

## Intentions of CME

- Confront ideologies (expressions of specific groups)
- Contest hegemony (conventions or constructs that are shared and naturalized throughout a political community)
- Critique institutional structures and accept responsibility of racism as a White problem (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997, p. 32)
- Establish new equilibration in thinking and self-concept about power relations

## Data Collection

- CAR
  - "critically reflective investigation of their own lives and of family and local community histories" (Banks & Banks, 2007, p. 48).
  - Participants consciously juxtaposing stories within individualized and sociohistorical perspectives within light of critical theoretical insights
- DC and Online Discussion
  - Acts to counter "banking concept of education (Freire & Macedo, 2001, p. 67)
  - As individuals evolve in cultural and socio-political self-awareness, require dialogue with others
  - How are dialogue and online discussions different?
- Research Notebooks


Research Notebooks
Class notes
CAR assignments
On-going personal and professional reflections
Descriptions of cognitive and emotional responses to classroom dialogue
Transformations in thinking/living/working/self-perceptions/perceptions of others
Interview questions and responses
Artifacts
Action plan notes

# CME
# Week 2

What We Know

## Question for DC 1

- **To what extent** can there be an 'authentic self' that can be seen as completely separate from social forces? (reference Tennant article)
  - Self-selected groups of any size
  - 10 – 15 minutes – everyone shares
  - Report to group – 1-2 minutes

## Dimensions of ME

- Content integration
- Knowledge construction
- Prejudice reduction
  - Uncovering bias and prejudice
  - Confronting bias and prejudice
- Equity pedagogy
- An empowering school culture

## Content Integration

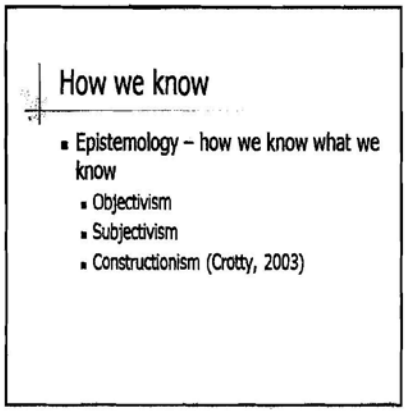
- Teachers use "materials, activities, and examples from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations...in their subject area or discipline" (Banks, 2004, p. 14)
- Examples?
- Problems?

## Problems?

- Tourism approach
  - Overemphasis on visible or explicit cultural practices
  - Reduce cultural practices to a set of static facts
  - Trivialize them in superficiality and...it seems as if culture were necessarily unchanging

## Knowledge Construction

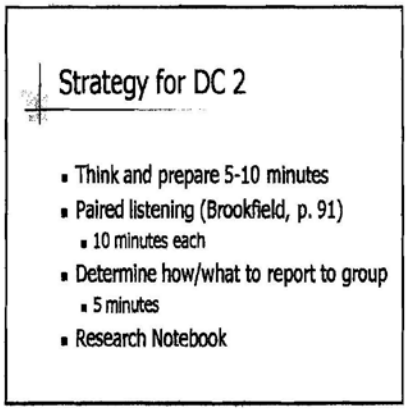
- Manner in which individuals come to terms with their new understandings about how cultural assumptions and biases may "influence the ways in which knowledge is constructed within it" (Banks, 2004, p. 5)

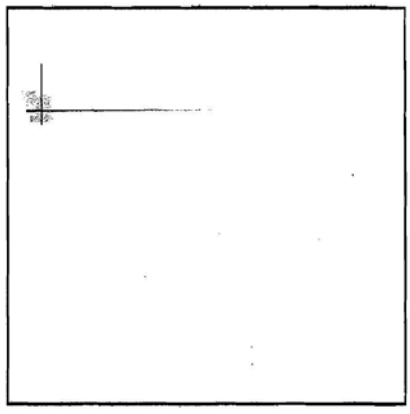

How we know
Epistemology – how we know what we know
Objectivism
Subjectivism
Constructionism (Crotty, 2003)

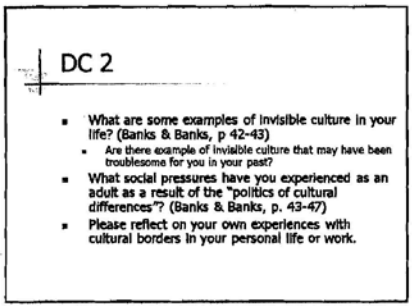

Who We Are/How We Know
Constructivism
Focuses on meaning of the individual
Unique experience of each of us
Each one's way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy as any other
Social Constructionism
Emphasizes the hold our culture has on us
Shapes the way in which we see things
Gives us a quite definite view of the world (Crotty, 2003)

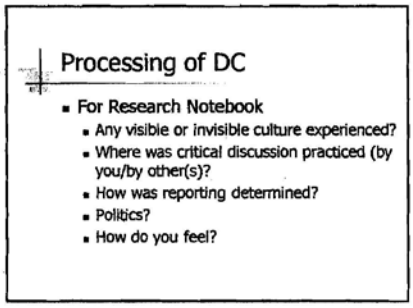

Critical Social Constructionists
Concerned with how public knowledge is constructed
Interested in how commonly held understandings are communicated to new members of sociocultural groups (Woolfolk, 2008)
Work of critical multiculturalist is to confront that which is social constructionism


A Discussion is Critical:
When individuals are committed to questioning and exploring even the most widely accepted ideas and beliefs
Willing to enter conversation with open minds
Flexible enough to adjust views
Confident enough to retain original opinions
Agreement is not necessary (although, at times, could be desirable)


Strategy for DC 2
Think and prepare 5-10 minutes
Paired listening (Brookfield, p. 91)
10 minutes each
Determine how/what to report to group
5 minutes
Research Notebook




DC 2
What are some examples of invisible culture in your life? (Banks & Banks, p 42-43)
Are there example of invisible culture that may have been troublesome for you in your past?
What social pressures have you experienced as an adult as a result of the "politics of cultural differences"? (Banks & Banks, p. 43-47)
Please reflect on your own experiences with cultural borders in your personal life or work.


Processing of DC
For Research Notebook
Any visible or invisible culture experienced?
Where was critical discussion practiced (by you/by other(s)?
How was reporting determined?
Politics?
How do you feel?

CME
Week 3

How We See

## Critical Social Constructionists

- Concerned with how public knowledge is constructed
- Interested in how commonly held understandings are communicated to new members of sociocultural groups (Woolfolk, 2008)
- Work of critical multiculturalist is to confront that which is social constructionism

## In-group

- What is an in-group?
  - Members all use the term "we" with the same essential significance (Allport, 1952).
  - Ethnic groups (Phinney, 1996)
    - Reference group (Allport term)
      - Groups to which the individual relates himself as a part
    - Best understood in terms of dimensions along which individuals vary, rather than as categories into which individuals could be classified (Phinney, p. 922)
- Shifting nature
  - Can there be an in-group without an out-group (Allport, p. 41)
  - "new tribalism" (Economist)

## Personal referencing

- What are your in-groups? (Allport, p. 32) Or microcultures? (Banks & Banks, p. 11-12). List them
  - Who is the out-group against which your in-group is formed?
  - Can there by an in-group without an out-group?

## Self-Reflection

Illustration of socially constructed/individual constructed idea? (Banks & Banks, p. 11)

- Concept map?
- Graph?
- Diagram?

- Examples of where you had to fight or struggle with socially constructed reality to construct an individual reality
- Or where have you seen others confront socially constructed knowledge?
- Share

## DC: Social Action

- Sharing from RN?
- How could ideas around critical social constructionism relate to social or community action?
- Banks and Banks pages 100- 101
- Current ideas about your social action?

## Dimensions of Critical ME

- Content Integration
- Knowledge Construction
- Prejudice Reduction
- Equity Pedagogy
  - Transform existing social inequalities and injustices
- An Empowering School Culture
  - Create a school culture that empowers students from diverse racial, ethnic, and gender groups

## Prejudice; Bias; Stereotype

- Prejudice
  - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prejudice
  - A **prejudice** is an implicitly held belief, often about a group of people. Race, economic class, gender or sex, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age and religion are other common subjects of prejudice. It can be used to characterize beliefs about other things as well, including "any unreasonable attitude that is unusually resistant to rational influence."[1]
  - At times the terms prejudice and stereotype are confusing:
  - Prejudices are abstract-general preconceptions or abstract-general attitudes towards any type of situation object or person.
- Bias
- Stereotype

## Nature of Prejudice

- Gordan Allport (1952)
  - 2 basic ingredients for prejudice
    - Denigration
    - Gross overgeneralization

## Defining Prejudice

- Prejudice - "aversive or hostile attitude toward a person who belongs to a group, simply because he belongs to that group" (Allport, 1954/1986, p. 12)
- Explicit
- Personal examples?

## Bias

- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bias
- **Bias** is a term used to described a tendency or preference towards a particular perspective, ideology or result, especially when the tendency interferes with the ability to be impartial, unprejudiced, or objective.[1]
- Implicit?
- Personal examples?

## Racism (Banks & Banks)

- Racism is the belief that human groups can be validly grouped according to their biological traits and that these identifiable groups inherit certain mental, personality, and cultural characteristics that determine their behavior.

## IAT

- https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/demo/

## Group Discussion

- What is an example of a widely accepted idea and belief in your work culture?
- What taken-for-granted beliefs do you have (in your life or work) that may serve dominant interests?
- Does each reflect prejudice, bias, and/or stereotype?

## CD:

- Uncovering our own biases

Go back to in-group list

- What are my biases?
- Where do I want to work on own biases?
- What do each of these terms (in bias list) mean to you in relationship to your in-group list?

## Question for DC

- Race
- Religion
- Ethnicity
- Language
- Class
- Gender
- Ability
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bias

## Rogoff (2003)

- Rather than equating culture with nationality or ethnicity, look at an individual's culture by examining his or her participation in the community (p.3)
- How might this help our uncovering of our own biases?

CME
Week 4

How We Change

## Transformative Learning

- describes a learning process of "becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 4).
- Ah-ha's

## Transformative Learning

- can result in:
  - frames of reference that are more permeable to additional amendments and
    - Reflective and
    - inclusive and
    - discriminating and
    - more emotionally capable of change.
- As opposed to acting upon the "purposes, values, feelings, and meanings... we have uncritically assimilated from others" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 8),

## Learning in Constructivism

- Piaget
  - Accommodation - altering existing schemes or creating new ones in response to new information
  - Assimilation - fitting new information into existing schemes.
  - Disequilibrium – "out of balance" state that occurs when a person realizes that his or her current ways of thinking are not working to solve a problem or understand a situation
  - Equilibration – search for mental balance between cognitive schemes and information from the environment (Woolfolk, 2010)

- Vygotsky
  - Zone of proximal development

## CAR in class

- Transformative learning
- Working definition
  - a learning process of "becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation" (Mezirow, 2000, p. 4).
- Can you describe a specific experience of this type of learning in your early childhood? Middle years? Adult years?

## Three Phases of Transformative Education

Merriam and Caffarella (1999, p. 321) codify Transformative Learning into three phases,

- critical reflection (CAR)
- reflective discourse (DC)
- action (SA)

- Transformative Learning often involves deep, powerful emotions or beliefs and is evidenced in action.

## Race: The Power of an Illusion

- Now what?
- How could you use this information
- Was it transformation for you? Would it be for others that you know?
- If race is an illusion, what other illusions have been constructed as the truth?
- This illusion still MUST be addressed

## Paradox

- We need to confront racism
- But to focus exclusively on race is "both reductive and essentialist" (May, 1999, p. 3).
- Research focused on either side of this paradox
  - Understates reality of racism and
  - Complex interconnections with other forms of inequality

## Phinney article

- Page 919 – three aspects of ethnicity
- What are some broad cultural differences?
- What are some differences in ethnic identity?
- Conclusion, p. 925
- Other reactions to article?

## Stereotypes

- **Stereotypes** are generalizations of existing characteristics.
- Personal examples?

## Deficit Theory

- Focus on any group in a historically stereotypic fashion
- "Artiles article – how/why can this happen?
  - p 14

## Stereotype Threat

- Robber's Cave 1954 example
- Banks & Banks p. 231
- Other examples? Where do you experience stereotype threat? Where do you perpetuate the stereotype threat to or of others?

## Essentialism

- An individual's "representation of things (that) reflects a belief that these things have essences or underlying natures that make them what they are" (Medin as cited in Keller, 2005, p. 686).
- Essentialist beliefs strengthen group stereotyping
- How are you coming in uncovering your own?

## Observation of Personal Bias

- What did you discover?
- Did it change your thinking about bias
- Implicit vs explicit
- Examples of each?

## Confronting Stereotypes

- D.C.
  - Take on role of "alter-ego"
  - Frame points for that viewpoint for a "critical debate" (Brookfield, p. 111-112) about the issue of open enrollment within DPS
  - Be prepared to engage in "graceful conflict" and to take the perspective of those we "otherise" (Trinicia).

## Dialogue and Critical Thinking

- Liberating education consists in acts of cognition, not transferrals of information (Freire, 1970/2006, p. 79)
- Problem-posing
- Link to politics of culture and critical democracy
- Participants become students of themselves and their psychological makeup, including, but not limited to their own particular set of prejudices

## Critical Autobiography Reflection and Epistemology

- Explore visible and invisible culture that defines daily functioning
- Confront ideology
  - Expressions of specific groups
- Contest hegemony
  - Conventions and constructs shared and naturalized throughout a political community
- See "truth" as historically and socially embedded, not "standing above or outside history and the concerns of participants in real social situations" (Carr & Kemmis, 1986, p. 149).

## Critical Dialogue

- When individuals committed to questioning and exploring even the most widely accepted ideas and beliefs
  - Willing to enter conversation with open minds
  - Flexible enough to adjust views
  - Confident enough to retain original opinions
  - Agreement is not necessary (although, at times, could be desirable

## Critical Dialogue

- How do different linguistic, cultural, and philosophical traditions silence voices?
- How do our choices of action (or inaction) perpetuate injustice and continued silence?

## Opportunities

- Move from "individualistic or victim-blaming explanations of racism to a critique of institutional structures and acceptance of responsibility of racism as a White problem (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997, p. 32).
- Establish new equilibration in thinking and in self concept about power relations in work and life

## Opportunities, continued

- Forum to "investigate and determine how the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of references, perspectives, and the biases within a discipline influence the ways (his or her) knowledge is constructed in an ongoing manner" (Banks, 2004, p. 5)

## Racism

- *I was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group"*
- Peggy McIntosh, author: **White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack**

## Unpacking

- http://www.case.edu/president/aaction/UnpackingTheKnapsack.pdf

## CME Week 5

What we can do

## Equity Pedagogy

- Goal is to transform existing social inequalities and injustices
- Prerequisites?

## Perspective Taking and Critical Thinking as Prerequisite

- Investigation
- Self reflection
- Dialogue

## Critical Autobiography

- Recounting life histories and consciously couching those stories within individualized and sociohistorical perspective
- What are the systems and beliefs that envelope us?
- Are all teachers and college students ready for equity pedagogy?

## Motivation and Interest as Prerequisite

- Desire for real equity?
- View diversity as an asset and opportunity?
- Willing to explore critical theory perspective?

## Prejudice Reduction

- Confronting bias and prejudice
- Contact hypothesis
  - Allport with 4 conditions
  - Chapter 11 Banks & Banks.
- McIntyre; Curry-Stevens
  - Advantages
  - Disadvantages

## The Colorblind Perspective

- Banks & Banks, p. 276 – 288
  - Race as an invisible characteristic
  - Race as a taboo topic
  - Race as an intergroup process

## Colorblindness

- When one is uncomfortable acknowledging differences, particularly racial differences
- Dysconscious racism
  - Uncritical habit of mind that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given" (King in Smith-Maddox & Solorzano, 2002, p. 67)
- Color muteness (Banks & Banks, p. 278 )
- More on this!

## DC: Smith-Maddox

- Experiences around acknowledging differences (with children/with grown ups)?
- Banks & Banks, p. 277
  - Should not notice racial differences?
  - Consequences?
- Experiences with dysconscious racism?

## Ladson-Billings

- Participant-observer role of teachers
- Uncovering stereotypical thinking
- Confronting bias
- Learning to (and then teaching children to) take the perspective of others

## Ladson-Billings Chapter 9

- How do we help students
  - Recognize
  - Understand
  - Critique social inequities and their causes?
  - Ladson-Billings, p. 224

## Banks and Banks

- Students critique social injustice
- Teachers must first recognize it
- DC
  - Create examples – pages 234-238

## CD

- You are the teacher
  - Decide on the age group
  - Come up with set of activities that will help the students to
    - Uncovering stereotypical thinking
    - Confronting bias
    - Take the perspective of others

## White Privilege Conference

- http://www.uccs.edu/~wpc/

## White Privilege

- **a.** A right, advantage, or immunity granted to or enjoyed by white persons beyond the common advantage of all others; an exemption in many particular cases from certain burdens or liabilities.
  **b.** A special advantage or benefit of white persons; with reference to divine dispensations, natural advantages, gifts of fortune, genetic endowments, social relations, etc.

## Definitions from WPC

- "White privilege is the other side of racism. Unless we name it, we are in danger of wallowing in guilt or moral outrage with no idea of how to move beyond them.
- It is often easier to deplore racism and its effects than to take responsibility for the privileges some of us receive as a result of it
- Once we understand how white privilege operates, we can begin addressing it on an individual and institutional basis."
- *~Paula Rothenberg*
- "Privilege exists when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of the groups they belong to, rather than because of anything they've done orfailed to do.
- Access to privilege doesn't determine one's outcomes, but it is definitely an asset that makes it more likely that whatever talent, ability, and aspirations a personwith privilege has will result in something positive for them." *~Peggy McIntosh*

## An Empowering School Culture

## Questions for DC

- From Chapter 8
  - Question 8 on page 191
- From Chapter 9
  - Has your sense of "identity" changed during the past few weeks. How?
  - Where have you noticed that that you may have an 'incomplete' story about an individual based on a "racialized" concept?

## Equity Pedagogy

- Critical multiculturalism
  - Objective – empower the powerless
  - Transform existing social inequalities and injustices

## An Empowering School Culture

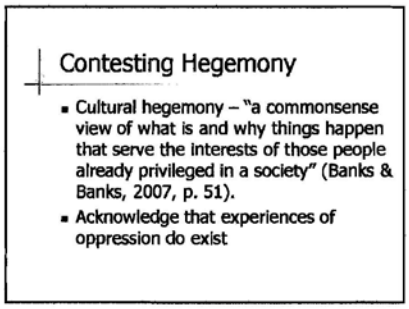
- Create a school culture that empowers students from diverse racial, ethnic, and gender groups
  - Social action plans
  - Artiles article and Chapters 2 and 3 – How do these fit in social action

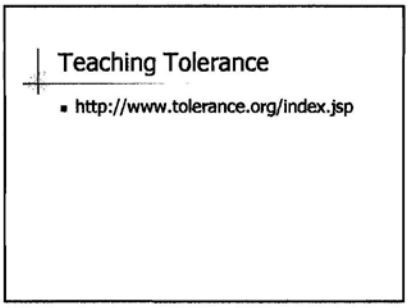
## Challenge Ideology

- Ideology
  - Ideas as the basis of an economic or political theory
  - Manner of thinking characteristic of a class or individual (OED, 1997, p. 385)

## Challenging Ideology

- Returns ME to roots of 1960's when challenges to racism in education was curricular centerpiece (Sleeter & Bernal, 2004, p. 240).
- How are unjust dominant ideologies that "justify and maintain economic and political inequity" (Brookfield, 2005, p. 13). Embedded in everyday practices?


Contesting Hegemony
Cultural hegemony – "a commonsense view of what is and why things happen that serve the interests of those people already privileged in a society" (Banks & Banks, 2007, p. 51).
Acknowledge that experiences of oppression do exist


Teaching Tolerance
http://www.tolerance.org/index.jsp

# APPENDIX H

# CONSTRUCTION OF A CRITICAL MULTICULTURALIST: AN AUTOENTHNOGRAPHY

# Construction of a Critical Multiculturalist:

# An Autoethnography

Jan R. Ferrari

University of Northern Colorado

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# Construction of a Critical Multiculturalist:

# An Autoethnography

## *Introduction*

Early in my teaching life, I was taught that self-reflective journaling is an essential component to quality care and education of children. The Art of Teaching Curriculum (Culkin, 1997) provided a forum for the directors of several early childhood settings in Boulder County, Colorado, to learn how to become better managers, mentors, and leaders in their communities. The forum included monthly meetings where the participants had the opportunity to dialogue about the issues in their centers and schools, and also about their responses and reflections upon these issues. This was one of the most valued experiences of my twelve years as a preschool teacher and director. An added advantage was the continued practice of self-reflective journaling.

*Journal Entry, October 10, 2007, Colorado: I asked the students in my language and cognition class to report on an observation of a child who was an English language learner (ELL) in an immersion classroom. The immersion classroom is one in which the majority of children and teachers speak English, and in which the ELL child does not receive visible support in that classroom (Genesee, Paradis, & Crago, 2004). I received the following comment from a student concerning her experience with the assignment:*

> *This observation was beneficial for both the little girl's teacher and me. We both agree that we can learn a great deal about our teaching techniques and ourselves* when we are challenged with *ELL children (V. Francis, personal communication, October 5, 2007). I replied, Do you think it would make a difference if we phrased this:* when we are given the opportunities *to work with ELL children?*

The nuance contained in this simple exchange reflects several years of a sometimes concentrated, but also often unconscious growth in my progress, as a White middle class teacher, toward a critical multiculturalist perspective of education and of life. Recognizing that cultural differences are not deficits is foundational to critical multicultural education; one of the central tenets of any culturally relevant teaching is a rejection of deficit-based thinking about students from diverse cultures (Howard, 2003).

Cultural difference theorists, who maintain that *all* students have rich culture and values, demand that multicultural education examine strengths in diversity, which, in turn demands self-reflection of the part of teachers (Gay, 2000; Howard, 2003; McIntyre, 1997; Rogoff, 2003). From any point on the continuum of the issue of diversity awareness, it is obvious that teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward topics of diversity must be developed within a climate of self-reflection that results in their effectively creating and using culturally relevant pedagogical practices with students from diverse backgrounds (Howard). As McIntyre asks, "How do we, as white teachers become more self-reflective? How do we learn to acknowledge our own sense of ourselves as racial beings actively participating in the education of young people?" (p. 14). Effective multicultural education provides time and freedom for practitioners to come to terms with their histories, their biases, and the changes in their thinking that may occur as a result of this work (Middleton, 2002). The following narrative reflects more than a decade of the self-reflection of one teacher.

*The Autoethnography*

I do not believe effective diversity training can occur until an individual has taken some steps to understand his or her own cultural make-up, including familial history,

educational settings, international travel, work settings, and dispositions towards issues of diversity. I decided to utilize autoethnography as the means through which I can showcase an example of this work, when it is defined as

> writing that seeks to unite ethnographic (looking outward at a world beyond one's own) and autobiographical (gazing inward for a story of one's self) intentions. The aim in composing an autoethnographic account is to keep both the subject (knower) and object (that which is being examined) in simultaneous view. (Schwandt, 2001, p. 13)

I choose this methodology as it legitimizes my efforts to examine the process through which my eyes are learning to see beyond the bars of my cultural cage. "As qualitative research has become the site of philosophical and methodological revolt against positivism, constructivist and interpretive alternatives are encouraged. Autobiography, as such, is recognized as an important way of knowing" (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005, p. 218). Critical pedagogy, folded into and through this project, attempts to disrupt and deconstruct cultural and methodological practices in the name of a "more just, democratic, and egalitarian society" (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 285). In light of this, the autoethnography will act as a sort of

> radical democratic politics – a politics committed to creating space for dialogue and debate that instigates and shapes social change. It does not act alone; it is meant for public display, for an audience. It is not meant to be left alone. (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 765)

My hope is that through my willingness to share my messy and awkward personal journey toward a critical stance concerning the politics of teaching and the construction

of knowledge, others will feel comfortable in also sharing their experiences. Utilizing self- reflective journaling within the framework of an autoethnography that acts "to illustrate and evoke rather than to state or to make a claim" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 13), I intend to provide an integral introductory piece for a multicultural education class. Couching the self-reflective work within critical multicultural theory provides a possible forum for disrupting the misconceptions and unrealized assumptions of participants in the class through revealing my own. The "work of the good realist ethnographer has always been to study and understand a social setting, a social group, or a social problem" (Denzin, 2006, p. 3). My intention for this autoethnography is that it be self-reflexive as this term refers "to the process of critical self-reflection on one's biases, theoretical predispositions, preferences, and so forth" (Schwandt, p. 224) without being overly emotional or self-obsessed. That may open the door to freedom from the feeling of hopelessness many feel about engendering social change through activism (Chiznik & Chiznik, 2005).

In truth, I also intend to provide documentation to move others, especially teachers, towards this critical multicultural stance, which not only rejects positivism, but also confronts the "divide between the powerful and the powerless" (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005, p. 217) and encourages these same others to value their own journeys and to document them.

*The audience*. Chizhik and Chizhik (2005), in a review of the research literature documenting the resistance of students to multicultural education classes, pointed to instructor approach as problematic in social justice issues within multicultural education classes. There appears to be lack of fluency between professors and students who often

have different notions about the causes and cures for segregation, prejudice, equity in education, and other social justice issues.

> In all these cognitive and content-based studies, many undergraduate students and preservice teachers had relatively simple understandings of multicultural and social justice–related terms. These preconceptions, according to social constructivist research, may negatively interact with the material presented in a social justice–oriented class. (Chizhik & Chizhik, 2005, p. 120)

As multicultural courses proliferate, so do the number of articles focusing on students' resistance to multicultural education (Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 1999; Chizhik & Chizhik, 2005; Garmon, 2004; Swartz, 2003). Aside from disparity in the comprehension of terminology of multicultural education, other findings suggest that the students' guilt, shame, and fear around these highly charged issues often causes a resistance to conversations around racism, social equity issues, etc. (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997; McIntyre, 1997). Would a voyeuristic tour of another's journey be helpful in opening doors to these ideas? Would this reading engender effective dialoguing with others on this path? Finally, how will my own journey be enlightened through conscious and deliberate communication and study with others?

*The Journey: From the Beginning*

> Suffice it to say that many critical ethnographers have replaced the grand positivist vision of speaking from a universalistic objective standpoint with a more modest notion of speaking from a historically and culturally situated standpoint. (Foley & Valenzuela, 2005, p. 218)

I am a teacher. This is one of the ways in which I define myself. On the morning of 9/11/01, I was preparing to attend a workshop in Denver called *Unpacking White Privilege: Understanding Cultural Differences.* I had registered for this workshop

because I was experiencing some cognitive dissonance around my perceptions of other cultures. How perfect to be driving to that workshop in the midst of such anguish and confusion, hearing the voices of American citizens on my radio arguing the pros and cons of racial profiling and other supposedly protective discriminatory practices. As I walked into the workshop and greeted our facilitator, I suddenly recognized that, to be effective in my work and life, I must become a cross culturally competent American citizen. I began to *see* how little I knew about my own biases and culture and about the cultural and social realities of persons outside my own limited perspective.

I was ripe for a revelation as it was becoming clear to me over the past two decades in my work as the director of a preschool and as an adjunct college professor of early childhood education that our students in both venues were becoming increasingly diverse in culture, nationality, gender orientation, and religion. I felt uninformed, unevolved, unicultural. This, along with my continued pursuit of knowledge through doctoral studies in educational psychology, began to generate passion and interest about the topic of cross-cultural competence. I recognized that this insatiable desire to understand more, to educate more effectively, and to become a cross culturally competent world citizen would be a worthy use of time.

*Flashback to 1964: I am 12, maybe, and have just asked my very wise grandmother why all Japanese people look alike. "Jan", she exclaimed. "How can you say that? That's like saying all grandmothers look alike. Do you think your other grandmother and I look alike?"*

*Well, no, I could admit that they did not resemble each other at all, but I still held with the firm notion that all the Japanese people I had seen looked very much alike. We*

*did not discuss the fact that all of the Japanese people I had seen were in WWII movies, looking quite evil and demonic, or in horror films, seen running in great crowds down narrow streets, chased by giant reptiles. This was my first lesson in culture that I can recall.*

*I spent my childhood and school years in a small town of 18,000 in Northwestern Pennsylvania. The diversity in my town had been observable primarily through religion; I had an orthodox Jewish friend and several Catholic friends, most of whom were Polish. I enjoyed very much eating the food at both of their homes. I also enjoyed attending services at St. Joseph Cathedral as it seemed that it went faster than the Presbyterian service and there was quite a bit of standing up and sitting down. That was entertaining. This rather limited, but perhaps typical United States experience followed me to college where, in 1970, my most vivid cultural experience involved being part of a group who thought it would be amusing to put white sheets over ourselves to visit our African-American friend in our freshman dorm. She responded good-naturedly by brandishing a butcher knife around at us. We all collapsed in laughter and I do not remember anything else about that incident.*

I include this devastating example so that others may feel free to talk about the most ignorant and thoughtless experiences of their own backgrounds of White privilege. Perhaps others will take the role of Sharon, now a doctor on the East coast, who served as an unwilling victim to the clumsy and witless harm that was perpetrated by those who believed racism was a distant memory for all of us. It is possible that the most important point of it is the fact that no conversations or actions followed this incident. A more recent example which did include dialogue follows.

*Journal Entry, November 9, 2006, Greeley: Our class met last night at a local coffee shop where we conducted our group discussions with facilitation by our instructor. I was trying to tell a story about a group of people I had met, one of whom was a gay couple. As I mentioned this piece of information that I believed would prove pertinent to the outcome of the story, a woman from the class, openly gay, berated me for my posturing about my gay friends. I was so embarrassed and almost threatened by her anger. I fumed all the way home. Here I am trying to wrap my brain around diversity and my own bias and feel that I am making progress, and it's never noted or appreciated. I just keep finding more layers to unravel.*

I attempted to use this discourse and my anger as an opportunity for learning. Such conflicts could become common, and perhaps even welcome, in an open classroom environment, and I would need to become practiced at these exchanges. In light of that, I discussed this experience with others, including those who happened to be gay. This open dialoguing allowed me to begin to see the perspective of this other woman and eventually to initiate a conversation with her.

Through that discussion, this woman and I exchanged information about those theorists who were currently feeding our philosophical understandings about the construction of knowledge. Both of us were fans of Paulo Freire. Because of our exchanges, I found myself reading a bit deeper into the ideas of critical theory. I became aware that there were journals and annual workshops about White privilege. I also joined a professional group called National Association for Multicultural Education and began to receive their journal, *Multicultural Perspectives*. I found myself in good company in the search for the understanding of culture in perspective taking. McLaren (2003) writes:

> Knowledge is a social construction deeply rooted in a nexus of power relations. When critical theorists claim that knowledge is socially constructed, they mean that it is the product of agreement of consent between individuals who live particular social relations (e.g., of class, race, and gender) and who live in particular junctures in time. To claim that knowledge is socially constructed means that the world we live in is constructed symbolically by the mind through social interaction with others and is heavily dependent on culture, context, custom, and historical specificity. (p. 196)

Through my experiences over the past years, I have found the willingness to show myself as clumsy and naïve in my search for understanding the other. I am coming to understand that I operate from the posture of privilege, of the current dominant and empowered culture. I must situate myself within that privilege as I believe that "understanding is not a procedure-or rule-governed undertaking; rather, it is a very condition of being human. Understanding is interpretative" (Schwandt, 2000, p. 194). The traditions of my upbringing and my culture operate behind my back, in a sense, but as well as in front of me as it conditions my perspectives and my interpretations of what I see. To become more professional and sensitive in my work toward cultural understandings, I have to accept the embedded nature of my viewing lens.

*Flashback to 1994: I am the director of a non-profit preschool which I also founded, and am therefore viewed as the resident "expert". I could certainly embrace this role with fondness. With a different type of fondness I remember this conversation with one of my international parents, the one whose language I had the most difficulty understanding.*

*"Well, Valerie, tell me. Just what is the native language of Ireland", I asked. She was very polite even as she came to understand that I was not joking. She patiently and kindly explained the history of language in Ireland, which culminated in the reality that English is recognized as the common national language. As I think back, our relationship seemed unchanged as a result of that conversation, and, fortunately, we laughed easily at that preschool.*

To better understand my embedded viewing lens, I have included "developing cross cultural competence" as a class-long topic in every course taught since that training on 9/11. I follow a three-step format that includes self-awareness; culture-specific awareness and understanding; and cross cultural communication. My presentation is influenced by the work of many but, in particular, by Lynch and Hanson (1992) who define cross cultural competence as the "ability to think, feel and also to act in ways that acknowledge, respect, and also build upon ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity in multi-ethic and/or multicultural situations" (p. 49).

The first assumption of cross cultural competence, and the only one I will address in this study, is self-awareness (LeRoux, 2002; Lynch & Hanson, 1992; Kitsantas, 2004; Marshall, 2001). It is difficult, if not impossible, to understand others before we understand self. Often, when I have asked students to describe their native culture, they will reply that they have no culture, that they are American. This can certainly be understood in terms of the success of melting pot philosophy in the United States over the past 100 or so years. Immigrants from the 1800s through the late 1900s were committed to some ideal of Americanism, committed to leaving behind language, customs, food, and politics to be American, or at least modifying those cultural realities to best "fit" this new

nation. Renaming that process pluralism does not change the fact that many Americans feel they have no culture (Lynch & Hanson).

But, the truth is that "like fish in water, we fail to 'see' culture because it is the medium within which we exist" (Cole, 1996, p. 8). Culture is infused in each individual's behaviors, habits, language, and customs. "Without culture we could not function… As a direct consequence of the way in which we humans have evolved, we depend on culture to direct our behaviour and organise our experience" (Crotty, 2003, p. 53). However, it is evident that to enable adults, at least Americans, to become culturally self-aware, they often need some guidance in exploring their own cultures. Places of origin or indigenous status, time of immigration, reasons for immigration, language(s) spoken, and the place of settlement of the family in this country (Lynch & Hanson, 1992) all provide the background information for a beginning understanding of one's current biases, belief systems, and behaviors. An unspoken advantage of this "roots"examination is that we gain a better understanding of how difficult it is to embrace a new culture, society, and nation. This journey may also bring us to a respect for our ancestors that perhaps has been sorely missing. Finally, it may be that this disregarding of our culture in the United States is, in truth, a belief that it is the only culture, the dominant culture.

*Journal Entry, February 4, 2006, Ecuador: My time here in Ecuador requires an informed, but objective frame of reference. I think it's natural that I must start my observations based on what I already know. I have spent the last fifty-some years thinking and writing about events and circumstances within my own culture. Therefore my first impressions are informed by an imposed etic research mode, that is, an uncritical*

*placement of the pieces of things I see here into some precut puzzle of my understanding (Rogoff, 2003). There is no other way to do it honestly.*

The above reveals one of the many important personal revelations of my five months lived in South America in 2006: the importance of the limiting role of my own culturally biased perceptions of the world around me. If I transition from the decades of research in my own society and simply contrast Latin American culture in Ecuador with my native culture of the western United States, the research reveals itself as tourism (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997).

> Culture isn't just what other people do…we each have culture, and understanding one's own cultural heritage, as well as other cultural communities requires taking the perspective of people of contrasting backgrounds. The most difficult cultural processes to examine are the ones that are based on confident and unquestioned assumptions stemming from one's own community's practices. (Rogoff, 2003, p. 368)

*Journal Entry, February 4, 2006, Ecuador: Emic observations are defined by Rogoff (2003) as an in-depth study of one community. Actually, I wonder if there can be emic research outside of one's "home" culture. It seems one would have to "go native" in order to effectively analyze a culture that was different from one's own. In preparing for this stay in Ecuador, I found that reading the work of researchers such as Rogoff, Cole (1996), and Diamond (1999) as well as travel books, and fiction by such authors as Isabelle Allende was mind expanding. I began to feel open to the cultural history of Latin America in a way that I didn't find in my Eurocentric-focused education. Why was I so unaware of the history of these other cultures?*

*Over the past years, I noticed that my undergraduate students were beginning to discuss the idea that their history textbooks were written from one perspective, and that they might not contain the only way to understand history, or be necessarily the Truth. And I remembered that I was also presented with this reality when I, myself, was a college student in the 70's in my Western History class. This class, affectionately named "Cowboys and Indians" was considered revolutionary at the time and was very popular.*

*I enjoyed the class, but somehow that perception of knowledge construction left me, and I began to read the newspapers and to watch television and to become a middle class, middle aged White woman. It is easy to believe what we see and read and it is easy to complain about what we see and read. What is difficult is to be released from that bombardment of one-sided information and cultural bolstering until one stops reading the newspaper, turns off the television, and begins to peek outside the bars of one's cultural cage. Turning away from popular media was a conscious health decision to attempt to mediate stressors in my life. An unintended consequence was the ability to see the media more clearly as part of an orienting cultural machine. I found myself more able to see the extent to which this form of enculturation had an effect on my perspectives of self and others, in and out of my culture*.

One of the roles of critical social theory, according to Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) is to facilitate an understanding of the "hidden structures and tacit cultural dynamics that insidiously inscribe social meanings and values" (p. 305).

*The Journey: Exploring Epistemology*

Before going further, the epistemology or the "nature of knowledge and justification" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 71) which provides the "theory of knowledge

embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology" (Crotty, 2003, p. 3) must be explored for its influence on this project. Through travel, reading, research, learning, I have come to believe that the "I" who types these words evolved from two knowledge sources: that which I have come to know through my individual journey to this moment, and that which I have come to know through the interweaving paths of my varied cultural habitats. I exist as a part of both of these worlds, but am aware of only those factors explicit to me in this moment. There are facets of my emotional, cognitive, and social make-up of which I am not aware, that have been placed there through enculturation processes that are beyond my recognition. I am revealed to myself continuously as I make the effort to own or to discard the pieces of my heritage that I may currently discern. Therefore, I must choose Crotty's (2003) constructionism as my epistemology and as the foundation for this journey.

*Constructionism as mediator to objectivism.* "Essentially the history of the philosophy of knowledge can largely be written in terms of a continuous series of pendulum swings, beginning with Plato's pure forms of knowledge verses Aristotle's concern with the role of sensory experience" (Gergen, 1985, p. 270). The intentionality of constructionism as an epistemology reveals a moderating of the pendulum as it focuses on the interaction between subject and object (not one that is apart from the other). There is interdependence between the individual and the world. Crotty (2003) places constructionism as a mediator between objectivism (which includes the theoretical perspectives of positivism and post-positivism) and subjectivism (postmodernism), while being independent of the underlying tenets of either. Or, as Gergen writes, "constructionism attempts to move beyond the dualism to which both of these traditions

(empiricist and rationalist schools of thought) are committed and to place knowledge within the process of social interchange" (p. 266).

In Crotty's (2003) definition of objectivism, reality is independent from and outside an individual; the individual's learning is a "matter of transferring what exists in reality to what is known by the learner" (Driscoll, 2000, p. 15). Gergen (1985) coined the term "exogenic perspective to define the work of empiricists such as Locke and Hume which confined the "source of knowledge (as mental representation) to events in the real world….Proper knowledge maps or mirrors the actualities of the real world" (p. 269). Thus, I am what I have been taught is the truth.

> Then, the endogenic perspective regards the origins of knowledge as: dependent on processes (sometimes viewed as innate) endemic to the organism. Humans harbor inherent tendencies, it is said, to think, categorize, to process information, and it is these tendencies (rather than features of the world in itself) that are of paramount importance in fashioning knowledge. (Gergen, 1985, p. 269)

The tension between exogenic and endogenic psychological perspectives mirrors the epistemological differences between the objectivism and subjectivism used in Crotty (2003). "Human action is critically dependent on the cognitive processing of information, that is, on the world as cognized rather than the world as it is" (Gergen, 1985, p. 269).

*Constructionism as mediator to subjectivism.* Subjectivism, defined by Crotty (2003) as the "orientation in which reality is assumed to be constructed by the knower" (p. 9) is the polar opposite of objectivism. Simply conceived, subjectivism views reality

as “nothing but reports of an individual speaker’s feelings, attitudes, and beliefs” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 241). That is, reality is held individually and separately. Postmodernism, the reaction again modernism and the “most slippery of terms” (Crotty, 2003, p. 183) sets forward the idea that no tradition has a universal and general claim as the right truth (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003). As researchers find their voices in a variety of forms of presentation, this individualistic uncovering of truth holds an essential place in the continuum of how knowledge may be displayed, but also may act to limit the recognition of the influence of embedded cultural realities (Cole, 1996).

Autoethnography, as a methodology, may fall into what Crotty (2003) calls the “rampant subjectivism” (p. 48) that is currently exhibited in qualitative research if written from the theoretical perspective of postmodernism. Postmodernism has been defined as a “philosophical orientation that rejects the dominant foundational program of the Western tradition” (Crotty, 2003, p. 192) as each individual’s life is “embedded in social and cultural contexts that constantly shift and fragment” (Brookfield, 2005, p. 51). Critical theory, on the other hand, “holds that individual conduct must always be understood as shaped by dominant ideology” (Brookfield, p. 51), and therefore requires the juxtaposition of self with culture as well as self with other. The myriad of discussions around the use of the term “bricoleur” by Denzin and Lincoln (2005), in the influential *Handbook of Qualitative Research,* reveals the tension between the epistemologies and the resulting effect on the critical lens of my project.

*Epistemology and critical autoethnography.* The Levi-Strauss metaphor of “bricoleur as a Jack-of-all-trades, a kind of professional do-it-yourself” (as cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 4) asks the research question, “Can I do it?” This definition

of the metaphor "places the spotlight on the multiple skills and resourcefulness of the individual researcher" (Crotty, 2003 p. 49) in an autoethnography. In critical theory research, that spotlight shines instead on the tension between the researcher "voice" and the researcher's embedded cultural notions as he or she responds to whatever the current social reality shows itself to be. As Kincheloe and McLaren (2005) write:

> In the first decade of the 21st century…while this interdisciplinary feature (employing diverse methodological strategies) is central to any notion of the bricolage, critical qualitative researchers must go beyond this dynamic. As one labors to expose the various structures that covertly shape our own and other scholars' research narratives, the bricolage highlights the relationship between a researcher's ways of seeing and the social location of his or her personal history. The critical researcher-as-bricoleur abandons the quest for some naive concept of realism, focusing instead on the clarification of his or her position in the web of reality. (p. 316)

From this perspective, the bricoleur's, "What can be made of these items?" (Crotty, 2003, p. 50) is an invitation to reinterpretation. I can not walk away my cultural background and socialized learning and easily or simply enter another culture. I can, however, use the opportunity of access to another culture to see mine in a different light or framework. If autoethnography is used as cultural criticism, perhaps it may find itself released from the rampant subjectivism described above as it is embedded in the process of hermeneutical analysis; that is, an awareness of self as a product of the social and psychological forces that have shaped one's self.

> A critical perspective involves the ability to criticize the ideological frames used to make sense of the world and can be learned only in the Deweyan sense - by doing it…researchers practice the art by grappling with the text to be understood, telling its story in relation to its contextual dynamics first to themselves and then to a public audience. (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000, p. 286)

Crotty (2003), in describing the mediating effect of constructionism, writes that "all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human begins and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (p. 42).

*Reflection Paper, March 16, 2005, College Faculty Teaching Course: The concept that skilled writing is a metacognitive process is a valuable insight for my teaching practice. Expertise in written communication emerges from a writer's ability to retrieve and organize domain knowledge and then use rhetorical skills to present that information in a way that facilitates the audience understanding. The discussion format in an online class or the dialogue within a live class requires that students find something relevant to their own understanding and confront misconceptions. The open dialogue format also allows (and even requires) input by students and allows the teacher to see if a student is able to be part of a synthesis that helps create "summary notes" that reflect the group's progress rather than an individual's belief. "The goal is to get students involved in improving the knowledge itself rather than with improving their own minds" (Scardamalia, Bereiter, & Lamon, 1994, p. 207). The scaffolding and the feedback are commingled with the idea being that the communal knowledge is broadened; the knowledge reflects the group's progress rather than an individual's beliefs.*

*A requirement for the success of this process is that the teacher believes him or herself to be a facilitator, not the conveyer of the truth, but instead a guide to resources, a mediator of conflict, and a question asker. "We are looking for ways that allow the teacher's domain-specific knowledge and pedagogical knowledge to contribute without restricting the discussion to the teacher's expertise" (Scardamalia et al., 1994, p. 224).*

*Over the last few years, I have begun to see myself in the classroom as a facilitator. I understand that I don't transmit information into the students' brains. Instead, I present information in an engaged and interactive manner so that students can construct their own learning. I think setting my classroom up in this way creates a community of learners. This means that students feel comfortable in saying almost anything; all ideas are valued. The classroom is a forum for the elevation of ideas from individuals to groups and back to individuals. That is, students come into the room with information and through dialogue we emerge with new understandings from that dialogue. We also have the opportunity to continually check our processing of the information because of the nature of the material of the class.*

Teaching students from this perspective requires a separation from objectivist reality, from commitment to their being one truth to which we aspire. On the other hand, a teacher cannot present only his or her individualistic reality. My hope is that through the reflection of the autoethnographic notes within the structure of the dynamics of social research background, my understanding of my own process of learning will be improved, and may also serve as a springboard to the learning of others. I believe that confronting one's own prejudices through reflective journaling is essential to becoming a critical multiculturalist. I am also coming to believe that uncovering these prejudices and

bringing them to the light of dialogue with others is essential. Having provided the foundation for choosing constructionism as an epistemology, I continue by providing a more detailed exploration of it.

*The Journey: The Bifurcation of the Epistemology of Constructionism*

Ernest (1995) defines epistemology as being composed of two parts:

(a) a theory of the nature, genesis, and warranting of subjective knowledge, including a theory of individual learning
(b) a theory of the nature, genesis, and warranting of knowledge (understood as conventional or shared human knowledge), as well as a theory of truth. (p. 465)

Ernest adds this footnote: "The difference between subjective knowledge and conventional knowledge resides in the type of warrant. The former is warranted by an individual's experience, and the latter satisfies socially shared criteria" (p. 465). Therefore, the distinctions made between the terms "social constructionism" and "constructivism" are critical even as both are included in the epistemology of constructionism (Crotty, 2003; Schwandt, 2000; Tobin & Tippins, 1993; Williamson, 2006). Pedagogy, defined as "the work or occupation of teaching" (Oxford Educational Dictionary, 1971, p. 604) is driven by epistemology. Even as we appear to move past epistemology to dwell in the world of pedagogy, it follows us, envelopes us, really, in the manner in which we teach and in the materials and activities we present.

In this manner, the bifurcation of constructionism is critical to this project and to my burgeoning awareness of the recognition of and reduction of individualized and also societal bias. The importance of separating constructivism from social constructionism can be seen in an influx of the current research pieces using these terms (Brinkmann, 2003; Burkitt, 2003; Gergen, 2001; Harris, 2006; Hastings, 2002). Constructivism

focuses on the meaning of the individual; that is, the unique experience of each of us. "It suggests that each one's way of making sense of the world is as valid and worthy of respect as any other" (Crotty, 2003, p. 58). Social constructionism, on the other hand, "emphasizes the hold our culture has on us: it shapes the way in which we see things and gives us a quite definite view of the world" (Crotty, p. 58). "This constructivism is primarily an individualistic understanding of the constructionist position" (Schwandt, as cited in Crotty, p. 58). It seems to me that the work of a critical multiculturalist is to continue to confront that which is social constructionism.

*Journal Entry, February 4, 2006, Ecuador: I cannot deny my socially constructed knowledge, but I can choose which part to nourish and which to suppress. Saturday morning in Ecuador: I don't often take time to reflect about the wonder of that. As we assimilate into the culture of the city, our thoughts are about work and about the market and meals. And then the week-ends are about relaxing and taking in a museum and catching up on shopping, cleaning. That part is just life – life anywhere.*

*Of course, here, living means walking through the crowded streets on cobblestones veering past indigenous women with their babies on their backs, a few beggars in the streets, mobs of uniformed school children, each group with their own uniform, shop after shop after shop selling either specialized items or selling everything under the sun. The traffic is a constant here in the Centro of Cuenca. Pedestrians have no rights. It is imperative to keep alert, to watch for cars turning and to especially watch on corners where there is no signage – neither traffic lights nor stop signs.*

*The traffic situation is metaphoric. It is noticeable early on in the trip that regulations and regulating are different here than in the States. If a man falls into a*

*manhole (unmarked, of course) and breaks a piece of machinery as he lands, he will be the one required to make compensation. He is responsible for where his feet land him. Cars and buses decide among themselves who has the right of way at many of the corners. Few use turn signals. Horns are used to signal intent, not usually out of anger or irritation, but simply to inform. If one of the rare accidents does occur, all parties go to the police station to sort out the problem. And in this way, the traffic moves through the third largest city in Ecuador.*

*Last summer, when we were in Cuenca for two weeks, Tarqui, one of the major streets, was closed while the street workers removed the cobblestones, dug by hand to the pipes, replaced the water and sewage pipes, and replaced the dirt and cobblestones. When we returned in January, the street was finished, beautiful again. And how many men were employed for how much money? I don't know and don't even know whom to ask. I do know they worked in crews both in the day and in the night and that there were boys as young as 12 or maybe 14 in the work.*

*There is an impulse to judge the youth of the boys in the dirt. My husband's grandfather worked in the mines around the town of Louisville, CO, at the age of 12. That was the end of his formal schooling. Would we judge that? To judge it or try to define it in today's terms is to subvert the reality of it. There needs to be a clear understanding (to the extent we are capable) of a variety of background issues before the work or the situation can be comprehended in a way that has meaning. "Humans develop through their changing participation in the socio-cultural activities of their communities, which also change" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 11). Therefore each point of interest,*

*either historic or current, needs to be perceived within the structure of its time and place and condition.*

*Social constructionism and critical theory.* The Institute for Social Research in Frankfort was comprised of a group of men interested in social theory, united by "the critical approach to existing society" (Crotty, 2003, p. 127). When they fled Nazi Germany, the members, including noted researchers such as Max Horkheimer and Theodore Adorno, sought asylum in the United States and settled at Columbia University (Crotty; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000). During this traumatic time, the men resumed their research activities, but worked in isolation from their US counterparts who were perceived as accepting of existing societal conditions and thus not critical researchers (Crotty). For my autoethography the important point is that these pioneers of critical theory also encouraged a departure from objectivist theoretical practices. They were "shocked by American culture (and) offended by the taken-for-granted empirical practices of American social science researchers and their belief that this research could describe and accurately measure any dimension of human behavior" (Kincheloe & McLaren, p. 280).

When these original members returned to Germany, a second-generation of Frankfort theorists, including Habermas, the most illustrious, remained in the United States (Crotty, 2003). They developed a view of critical theory that rejected "the radically anti-capitalist stance of Horkheimer" (Crotty, p. 141). These theorists focused instead on language and the importance of communication, and also on social evolution.

> Habermas sees the evolution of society proceeding by way of processes of learning that go on within it and the adaptations that occur at every level of

> learning to accommodate the learning processes…Systems problems that occur in any given society …create and demand a response….these provide the dynamism for social development. (Crotty, p. 145)

This work influenced researchers such as Gergen (1985) who wrote: "social constructionism begins with radical doubt in the taken-for-granted world - whether in the sciences or daily life – and in a specialized way acts as a form of social criticism" (p. 267). This lends itself to one of the assumptions of critical theory in research that states:

> all thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are social and historically constituted….and that certain groups in any society and particular societies are privileged…and finally, that mainstream research practices are generally, although most often unwittingly, implicated in the reproduction of systems of class, race, and gender oppression. (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005, p. 304)

*Journal Entry, February 4, 2006, Ecuador: I had a meeting with the director of the organization that oversees the preschool and primary school where I am observing. He told a story about the 6 year old boy of a family in Ecuador. The parents are both professionals, both work outside the home. The father was washing the dishes one night when the boy said to his father, "Why are you doing the dishes? You are a man; you are not supposed to do the dishes." The storyteller continued in this rather exasperated way, "That boy had not heard about that kind of prejudice at home and he had not heard it at our school. Why would he think that? Where would he get that?"*

In Ecuador, families have lived in the same towns and houses for generations. Grandparents, aunts and uncles, great grandparents all have great influence on the

upbringing of the children. After spending 5 months in Ecuador, I did not find this boy's comment surprising. This society appears to be gravely entrenched in an illusion of male superiority and specific gender-role definition. My response to this situation was not outrage at what the boy had said; it was not so bad or so monumental. The critical issue here is what happens after the occurrence of these kinds of prejudicial or biased behaviors. The conversations that ensue as a result of the comments and behaviors are the means to the movement away from generations of entrenched beliefs.

> Under the influence of adult speech, the child distinguishes and fixes on behavioral goals; he rethinks relationships…he reevaluates the behavior of others and then his own….which results in a radical reorganization of thinking that provides for the reflection of reality, and very processes of human activity. (Luria, 1976, p. 11)

Sociocultural approaches have increasingly been used to understand learning within the framework of culture (Cole, 1996; Nasir & Hand, 2006; Rogoff, 2003). Rogoff states, "human development is (viewed as) a process in which people transform through their ongoing participation in cultural activities, which in turn contribute to changes in their cultural communities across generations" (p. 37). While sociocultural theories offer pertinent and valuable ideas that assist teachers in constructing more meaningful classroom activities and expectations for their students, they do not include the pointed discussion about the effects of race, power, and economic status on educational systems (Ladson-Billings, 2004; McLaren, 2003; Nasir & Hand).

Critical theory, if perceived as only an economic or materialistic viewpoint of power, limits the variety of influences engendered by the varied power differentials

within cultures. And I align myself with this. I believe the realities of economics and politics must be addressed, especially as they impact educational systems, but I do not believe that economic equality (a dream) would change the reality that there is more to culture and to the myriad of issues of diversity within cultures than economy. For me, it is simply one point among many. For example, in Cuenca, Ecuador, the Catholic Church could be said to wield more power than do the economic inequities in that country. At the same time, it can be theorized that the Catholic Church engenders the economic realities in Ecuador. Rogoff (2003) writes that "cultural practices fit together and are connected" (p.368). Cultural nuances don't happen in the boxes that we are accustomed to thinking about things. "It is impossible to reduce differences between communities to a single variable or two (or even a dozen or two); to do so would destroy the coherence among the processes" (Rogoff, p. 11).

*Social constructionism and "Periods of Enculturation"*. The term social constructionism emanated from the work of Berger and Luckmann (Gergen, 1985). However, as with critical theory, Marx provided the basic premise that man's consciousness is determined by his social reality: "human thought is founded in human activity and in the social relations brought about by this activity" (Berger & Luckmann, 1967, p. 6).

> *Journal Entry, March 29, 2006, Ecuador:*
>
> *A recurring question for me then, was: "And how does my race, gender, class, status, and self-interest position me within this process?" (McIntyre, 1997, p. 29)*

*In this process of enculturation, I began with what I am calling the Period of Glorification. For me, this stage was short-lived, but brilliant while it lasted; it is the*

*idea that there is a perfect or near-perfect culture. I have lived in the United States all of my life and have traveled outside rarely, to Mexico, Canada, and Jamaica. As the decades passed, I found myself becoming more frustrated and angry about certain cultural experiences in the United States. The recent overtly imperialistic posturing of the United States, along with the overall misuse of the abundance and privilege accorded to us, have created in me a strong desire to be in a country and culture different from my own. From the "liberal stance" of a doctoral student and as an early childhood professional, I had come to believe that South American culture was a "relationship-based" culture. Even the phrase is a simplification and a glorification of a complex construct, but it appeared obvious that by immersing myself in a South American culture, I would surely experience something different from the one within which I was currently embedded, a culture that, on the surface, appeared to be a "monetarily-based" culture.*

*The Period of Glorification felt wonderful. I saw the colonial architecture and cobblestones streets in the city of Cuenca as interesting and magnificent. I saw the people are beautiful: generous and caring, and, as a matter of fact, our entry into the country and city was gentle and accommodating. An example of this was exhibited in a conversation I had with a middle-aged Ecuadorian woman as we were waiting for our airplane from Quito to Cuenca. She initiated a conversation in English, a language in which she was moderately comfortable. We talked back and forth for about an hour and the result was that she, after consultation with her husband, gave me her phone number and asked me to call her. We planned to walk together so that she could practice her English and I could practice my Spanish. She is typical of several such generous and responsive individuals I met in our first few weeks in Ecuador.*

*I found hints of this Period of Glorification also reflected in a surprising place: a Hollywood production called Spanglish. In this funny movie, the lead female character from the United States could be seen as stereotypical of the culture in the United States: her frenetic pace of life, her lack of understanding or empathy for others, her self-centeredness in perspective, and her comfort in her White privilege were all juxtaposed against the beautiful, soft, generous, wise, and family-focused woman from Mexico. The stereotyping of cultures, I found to be somewhat intriguing. I do find that in the United States today, there is a sense of agreement that we, as United States citizens, are morally corrupt, egocentric, money focused, neglectful of our elderly and our children, etc. This, of course, is not true, but as I enter Ecuador with these self-confessed prejudices against my own culture, I seek that which is to be glorified.*

*And thus, I entered the city and wore my Americanism quietly; I deprecated myself and my lack of language daily. I felt apologetic and attempted to stay as low key as possible. Not long after we arrived, we began to realize that traveling through a country and culture is nothing like living and working in one. "The average White person is not exposed to daily harassment, stereotyping, marginalization, and living 'under surveillance'" wrote McIntyre (1997, p. 136), but here in Cuenca, that is just how it became for us. We were consistently stared at by young and old and that has never changed. Cuenca, while a city of 200,000 people, is an extremely conservative and closed-feeling city. Even after four months of living in the same location, the stares continued. I had my wallet stolen by a pickpocket, my partner had his backpack, filled with his school supplies and paperwork stolen in a con. We soon realized that the*

*markets and stores automatically added double price to an item when we walked in the door.*

Thus, a paradox emerged in this Period of Glorification. One side has been the denigration of native culture, the looking for an ethereal better-than or "one best way" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 347) locale and culture. The other side has been a deep-seated and culturally reinforced sureness of superiority of race and privilege. I came into this new culture with a misconception and prejudice that Freire (1970/2006) defined as paternalistic or as a false generosity. That is the idea that we, the empowered and in this case, Euro-Americans, came to countries different from our own to give our students, if we are teachers, or the Indigenous/disempowered if we are emissaries or missionaries, the privilege of our enhanced technology and evolved education. This is how we would be of service.

*Journal Entry, March 29, 2006, Ecuador: That false generosity of paternalism existed and it had, in truth, infused my attitudes in the Period of Glorification as reflected in my conception of my time here as service work for the "poor people" of this non-industrial world. This conflict continued and shifted positioning in the next phase of enculturation, named here the Period of Disdain. When I, myself, began to recognize that I had became a victim of racism, I began to "unpack the underpinnings of White power…shed the veneer of benevolence that is associated with the power derived from membership in the dominant group" (McIntyre, 1997, p. 91). Because, amazingly "these people" did not seem to understand that I am the majority, the power. They seemed not to need or to appreciate any type of service from me. In this period, I begin to explore my feelings of disempowerment, frustration, rage at not being recognized for the power*

*implicit in my race and culture. These lines from my first paper: "It takes cognitive dissonance and discomfort and actually living and functioning in a culture before I have enough information to begin to see that the 'participants' have a perspective that is different from my own" were somewhat insightful at the stage it was written. Now I can see the Ecuadorians are not less evolved than United States citizens and not more evolved. They are simply different and can not be viewed optimally through just my emic or my imposed etic lenses. I can only know their perspective to the extent to which I can engage in dialogue through which their ideas, language, and realities are expressed. I can only report their perspective, not live it.*

*Constructivism and the "Period of Individuation".* Schwandt (2001) portrays the obvious when he writes that constructivism "is a particularly elusive term with different meanings depending on the discourse in which it is used" (p. 30). What constructivism has to say about reality is that we can only know about it in a personal and subjective way" (Tobin & Tippins, 1993, p. 3) or as von Glasersfeld's first principle: "knowledge is not passively received but actively built up by the cognizing subject" (as cited in Ernest, 1995, p. 462).

I believe that one of two things happen when I, as a White United States citizen, am a "victim" myself of racism. I can become more self-aware of my own perspective by writing, dialoguing, reading, and immersing myself into the situation, or I can become even more racist in retaliation for the discomfort. Friere and Macedo (2001) are very clear about the danger of the oppressed becoming the oppressor, about how culture is only moved when the oppressed overcome the oppressor to become something new. How could I achieve that "something new"?

Because we were involved in an international school in Cuenca, I had access to the feelings and thoughts of many other White persons. I appreciated the opportunity to pose my feelings and thoughts against those of others, to check my perceptions, and to dialogue. In my interviews with the gringo teachers (this is the term that the women I interviewed were most comfortable with, because this is how the Ecuadorians refer to them and they do not find it offensive) we experienced what Freire and Macedo (2001) described as a culture circle: "we attempted through group debate either to clarify situations or to seek action arising from that clarification" (p. 81). Our conversations were first geared toward their preschool teaching experiences as this was the first topic of the interview and it also allowed us a non-threatening way to begin our relationships. However, as I observed at the preschool and began to interview the teachers, I understood that analyzing the circumstances at the preschool were beyond my capabilities because of my lack of fluency in language and experience in the culture of Ecuador. As an added difficulty, I realized through a meeting with the executive director, that he was hostile toward philosophies and educational theories emanating from the United States. The preschool theory and practice that I would recommend for the preschool would be steeped in NAEYC's *Developmentally Appropriate Practice* (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997) and the *Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scales* (Harms, Cryer, & Clifford, 1990). These documents represented the basis of my understanding of best practices for children; however, to properly present this pedagogy would require additional international research outside the United States and I did not have the resources available for that in Ecuador.

So, while our interview began with their teaching situations at the preschool, I became more interested in moving into the topic of their feelings about being a minority. In interviewing the gringo teachers in Ecuador, however, I received less information about being White in Ecuador than I did about being female in Ecuador. When McIntyre (1997) points out that "many teacher education programs in this country tend to minimize – if not totally ignore – racism in the development of their multicultural programs" (p. 146), I think this is reflected in the reluctance of the teachers to talk about race.

> It has been my experience….that as White people and teachers, no matter how intelligent, well-read, progressive, liberal, or outspoken we might be, we do not feel comfortable talking about Whiteness – our own or anyone else's, but it is necessary that we move from paralyzing shame and guilt to stances in which we/they take effective responsibility and action for disinvesting in racial privilege. (McIntyre, p. 76)

The willingness to share our feelings about ourselves and people of color is crucial to being able to move the discussion beyond the feeling realm and into the action realm (Freire & Macedo, 2001; McIntyre, 1997). Can this dialogue be easier in a culture where Whiteness is a minority, where everyone around us does NOT look like us? One would think so, but there is a misconception dominant in our United States society that racism is in the past, that we have developed a color-blindness that put "all that" behind us (McIntyre). I wondered: what happens when cross culturally competent persons bring their constructivist ideals to bear on a social constructionist reality such as racism?

*Journal Entry, March 29, 2006, Ecuador: While the teachers I interviewed were initially uncomfortable with the talk about racism; they were quite comfortable talking*

*about issues of sexism in which the racism was embedded. They agreed, 100%, that the men in Cuenca are particularly unpleasant to gringo women. They honk horns, yell obscenities, and make teeth-sucking noises as gringo women pass. The teachers also complained about the fact that the people they knew in Cuenca operated under these illusions: all gringos are rich and all gringo women are sexually promiscuous. These responses coupled with the experiences of thievery and price hiking mentioned by almost every gringo teacher in the English teaching program reinforced and strengthened my righteous disdain. During one of my frequent outbursts about the awful men of Ecuador, I was asked if I actually* knew *any men in Ecuador. It was an irritating question, but a sound one. As I recounted the Ecuadorian men I actually knew, had engaged in business or conversation with, I had to admit (as much as I hated to) that they were quite nice and, in fact, even charming. I could recognize the illogic in my ranting; I could not immediately be free of it.*

*The Period of Disdain, for me, was filled with this kind of frustrating and uncomfortable exercise in increasing self-awareness. I appreciated from the beginning that this trip would be self-revealing, but I thought my awareness would come gracefully and intellectually, not so angrily and so basely. I despise sexism even as I personify sexism. What an unpleasant reality, to begin to understand that my cultural identity is a "social activity that is constantly being created and recreated in situations of rupture and tension" (McIntyre, 1997, p. 18). Friere provided some relief to the despair implicit in this uncomfortable period of enculturation. Education takes place when there are "two learners who occupy somewhat different spaces in an ongoing dialogue" (Freire & Macedo, 2001, p. 6). We confront our biases by dialoguing about our biases. "Time*

*spent in dialogue should not be considered wasted time. It presents problems and criticizes, and in criticizing, gives human beings their place within their own reality and the true transforming subjects of reality" (cited in McIntryre, p. 41).*

And it was through dialoguing, finally, that I began to move to a center ground, a third period of enculturation which I am calling the Period of Individuation. My sexism was racist; I could not detach one from the other as much as I wanted to. I was the same as the White teachers I interviewed. As I began to see the multiple and varied realities that make up my own cultural identity at any moment, I became open to the idea that culture is fluid for all of us. An interview with one of the English teachers about topics of racism, sexism, ses-ism, etc, was helpful. When I asked if she could coin an encompassing word for all such ism's through which we could continue to discuss the biases implicit within them, she mentioned the book, *Female Masculinity* (Halberstam, 1998*),* and that author's perception that much of our bias comes directly from the idea of blocking people into these boxes of generalizations. Rogoff (2003) articulates this concept, too: "cultural processes are not the same as membership in national or ethnic groups and individuals are often participants in more than one community" (p. 52). Through my personal individuation, I could begin to move myself out of the framework of my cultural cage and to separate myself from my own classification and self-classification system. I could begin to see that the classifying and coding mechanisms which appeared true were the very illusions which constrained me.

Awareness of the fallacy of these classification systems is the place where the Period of Individuation occurred for me. Those systems not only fed my biases, but also restricted my self-understanding. Consciousness-raising experiences happen when we

become “researchers about (our) daily lives, to pose questions that arose from the complexities around (our) own racial identities, and to strategize ways for making meaning out of (our) individual and collective experiences” (McIntryre, 1997, p. 21). For me, the opportunity to discuss ideas of enculturation and of racial identity was both focusing and freeing. In not allowing the racism, sexism, etc. to be ignored, one had to come to terms with the reality of one’s feelings. In allowing the “ism’s” to be discussed openly, one could also become aware of the shame and guilt that binds those reactions. Self-awareness is the first step to a cultural competence that allows us to accept our own and others’ limitations and also to see our own and others’ strengths.

Self awareness and acceptance help me to truly integrate the understanding that I am not a victim of my culture, I am the maker of my culture. Each individual has not only the opportunity, but also the obligation, in a life fully lived, to come to terms with the Glorification and the Disdain, to pick out the pieces of each perceived culture to create the life that one seeks to live. In this process of individuation, of becoming a functioning unit within the world of humans, we create ourselves, no longer hampered by the totality of any one culture. Can we see then how learning is so constrained by our sociocultural boundaries?

Freire and Macedo (2001) spoke of social education, of the need for learners to discover themselves, as well as to understand and to acknowledge the social problems that afflicted them. He did not see education simply as a means toward mastering academic standards of schooling or toward professionalism. He spoke about the “need to encourage the people to participate in their process of immersion into public life by becoming engaged in society as a whole.” (Freire & Macedo, p. 18). “The most valuable

part of comparative work in another culture is the chance to be shaken by it, and the experience of struggling to understand it" (Rogoff, 2003, p. 13). Well I am certainly shaken and struggling, so I have to acknowledge this as good work. I also acknowledge the call to action elicited from the reflection and the work.

Writing the current autoethnography has proved useful in the development of a theoretical perspective that focused on critical theory within the framework of the epistemology of constructionism. Interestingly, the epistemology and theoretical perspective both were developed on the back of my autoethnography. The journey and extended stay in a foreign country allowed me to see more clearly the parameters of my own cultural constraints, my racism and bias. Through dialogue and discourse with others from diverse backgrounds, I learned more about myself and my cultural make up through them. Freire (1970/2006) supports constructionism as a moderator of epistemology and to the bifurcation of constructionism itself as he writes:

> One cannot conceive of objectivity without subjectivity…the denial of objectivity in analysis or action, resulting in a subjectivism which leads to solipsistic positions, denies action itself by denying objectivity in constant dialectical relationship. (p. 50)

*Constructing the Second Level Multicultural Education Class*

Action is the necessary next step for a critical multiculturalist. Because I am a teacher, constructing a class using my own journey as one example among many, seems a reasonable place to start. Subjectivism and self-reflection, while essential to action, can only be effective within action. That is, "liberation is a praxis; the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it" (Freire, 1970/2006, p. 79).

This autoethnography can act as a piece of critical thinking only to the extent to which it is used to engage in action upon the world. It cannot serve only as a means for me to subvert the oppressive nature of my cultural upbringing. As I continue to work to understand and to confront my individual racism and the culture that breeds it, I can serve as a model and mentor to the students in my classes.

*Reduction of prejudice through anti-racism training.* An example of the use of the bifurcation of constructionism is clearly evident when one seeks to research a complicated issue such as prejudice. To what extent has an individual constructed the reality of his or her bias? To what extent has the environmental culture of the individual imposed bias and group identification upon said individual? How do these questions affect the manner in which the topics of racism and prejudice are addressed?

My own struggle with racism and the interviews with White teachers in Ecuador have helped me to understand that the topic must be addressed slowly and over a period of time. When I even mention the word racism to most people, they turn from the conversation, at least figuratively. No one wants to talk about this.

*Journal Entry, October 26, 2007, Colorado: In the hallway before meeting with my October, 2007, Educational Psychology for Elementary Students class, I eavesdropped on a professor giving a lecture on racism. He is Latino, probably in his mid to late 30's. He seems nervous as he asks questions: they are rhetorical and he doesn't wait for an answer. It is obvious he is reading from a power point slide. I peek in the room and the young man sitting closest to the door is asleep, sprawled along his seat. Asleep! Who could sleep through a presentation on racism? What could be more*

*exciting? When I shared this experience with a woman in my class before we started, she responded," I don't think we should talk about that in class".*

*Dumbfounded, I asked," Why?" She replied "Last semester, a professor brought up the topic of racism and the class divided into two violently opposed camps. Neither side listened to the other, and it was really bad."*

*When I asked how the professor had responded, she said he did nothing. When I asked what she thought he could have done, she replied, "Let the class go early."*

*"Wow", I said, and we looked at each other for several seconds. I said, "Do you think the professor could have used that situation as an opportunity for a debate – perhaps sent the students out to do research and come back and continue the discussion?"*

*She thought about this idea for 5 seconds or so, and then replied, "Yes, that would work. At least they would be coming from a point of research instead of anger and opinion."*

So I am learning to handle this topic slowly and to count on self-awareness building over time as it must through dialoguing and journaling.

*Journal Entry, April 28, 2006, Ecuador:*

> *The perversity of racism is not inherent to the nature of human beings. We are not racist; we become racist just as we may stop being that way. (Friere & Macedo, 2001, p. 278)*

*I came to Ecuador with the idea that I would explore the racism of the Spanish Ecuadorians toward the Indigenous Ecuadorians, and in particular racism of teachers within educational systems. It became clear shortly after I arrived that this was not to be. The distinctions among ethnicities within the culture in Ecuador were confounding. In*

*Cuenca, for example, while the physical characteristics of the people were similar, the manner in which people dressed displayed distinctions in ethnicities. The rich and powerful Ecuadorian men dressed in beautifully tailored business suits, the women working in banks and schools wore uniforms, the Indigenous women and children in Cuenca wore brightly colored skirts, peasant-style blouses, shawls, sensible shoes, panama hats. Ethnicity among Cuencanos is worn in an obvious manner. But in a cloud forest, in Mindo, Ecuador, it was quite different. One of the bird watching/hiking guides was a young woman from the town who also taught Indigenous people from the area. She was not Indigenous? In that town, I could not distinguish one group physically from the other; however, if I had understood native languages, I may have heard distinctions between people speaking Spanish and Quichua, the language of the Inca Empire and one of the twenty native tongues spoken in Ecuador (Ades & Graham, 2003). While the majority of Ecuador's people are mestizo (mixed) populations, "a quarter are Indigenous peoples from more than a dozen native groups, and the remaining ten percent are divided between Black descendants of slave and Whites of Spanish extraction" (Ades & Graham, p vi.). Studying ethnicity in Ecuador could take a lifetime. Studying racism among Ecuadorians would take even more. Fortunately I discovered the interesting reality of my own ethnicity and racism.*

In unpacking the construct of ethnicity, Pinney (1996) defined identity or a subjective sense of group membership as a component. Subjective identification with one's ethnic group is more meaningful than membership itself; therefore, when viewing culture as identity, distinctions may be based on cultural norms and values that differ among groups rather than an individual's physical characteristics. Perhaps this is

difficult for me to understand as a White United States citizen because as Pinney writes, "ethnic identification has been shown to be a more important component of the self for groups of color rather than for most White Americans" (p. 7). I, as many Euro-Americans, did not strongly align myself with an ethnic group outside the United States; therefore I didn't have personal experience with this alignment.

Interestingly, as my time in Ecuador progressed, I began to be more aware of my ethnicity, as I, myself, began to feel racially targeted as a White woman. I felt chagrined when I read Derman-Sparks and Phillips (1997) write that "White supremacy is a structured system of belief and behavior…embedded within systems" (p. xi). I wanted the authors to rephrase that to say "majority supremacy" because I felt that the racism I was experiencing was based on my minority status, that racism was not singularly a White problem. Immersed in the intensity of this temporary minority status, I found myself continually contradicting the concepts underlying the pedagogy in the anti-racist curriculum being developed by Derman-Sparks and Phillips. I was more interested in fitting myself into the construct of ethnicity that Pinney (1996) defined as minority status, that is, "the experienced association of minority status including powerlessness, discrimination, prejudice and negative stereotypes" (p.2). This aspect I could relate to as I, myself, came to terms with being a minority for the first time in my life.

> The psychological importance of race derives largely from the way in which one is responded to by others, on the basis of visible racial characteristics, must notably skin color and facial features, and in the implication of such responses for one's life chances and sense of identity. (Pinney, p. 2)

*Journal Entry, April 28, 2006, Ecuador: As I continued to read and reflect, I began to confront the fact that, amazingly, I seemed to take some satisfaction as a victim of this perceived racism I felt from the Ecuadorians. While it was unpleasant to be a target of stares and thieves and inequitable treatment in the marketplace, it was also firmly embedded within the reality that, for me, this was not a permanent condition. I knew that I would return to a place where I have privileges as a White middle class citizen in the United States. It was as if the anger, resentment, and frustration I felt was a game; in truth, there was some power, in the entitled, but play feeling of "victim". Over time and through reading, writing, and dialoguing, I began to see that I was using my temporary minority status to divert myself from the difficult and real work of facing my own racism. I didn't have to look at my Whiteness as a quality of racism when I had minority status, and, just as the English teachers I interviewed here in Cuenca, it was easier to think and talk about sexism or classism rather than racism. "Many Whites are in the ambiguous position of being on the privileged side of one form of institutional oppression (i.e., racism), and on the losing side of others (i.e. classism and sexism)" (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997, p. 24) which diverts us from the most basic, and perhaps most important work.*

I denied my racism in part because I did not understand it, and further, did not understand that I did not understand it. McIntyre (1997) began to open my eyes to the denial by Whites of the reality of their privilege and of their own bias toward people of color. I began to see that I used my own experiences of being a victim of racism to become convinced that racism was biological, that we are all racist, each racist. That relieved me of too much responsibility, especially as a teacher of teachers. When

Derman-Sparks & Phillips (1997) stated that "racism in the United States is a White problem" (p. 24), I railed against this statement. The more I read, however, the more I came to understand the truth of it. I can dilute my race consciousness by spending time in other countries and cultures, and in truth, I become a better citizen and pro-active force in my own culture because of it, but I can also hide from my racism in this foreign culture instead of using it to inform.

My work and life in Ecuador helped me to understand that addressing racism is a critical component of the self-awareness requirement of becoming cross culturally competent. I have recognized that there was racism implicit in both my Period of Glorification and in my Period of Disdain. Today, here in my Period of Individuation, I see that viewing any ethnicity as either the savior or a demon culture is too easy and limits one to a uni-dimensional understanding.

> A new White… need not be unafraid to admit he or she is racist because it is true. A new White need not be afraid to live in the ambiguity of White privilege while fighting White privilege because that is real…and need not to be guilty or ashamed to be White because that is a given he or she cannot change. (Derman-Sparks & Phillips, 1997, p. 25)

To become an anti-racist, I cannot see myself as outside the system, but instead must choose to make efforts to transform the system. I am lucky that my profession and passion is education; I am lucky that I am already embedded in a system in which I have an audience, willing or not, who will confront these issues with me as individualized racism. When racism is addressed in educational systems in the United States, it is too often talked about in terms of helplessness and hopelessness. IQ testing, curriculum

materials focused on Euro-American culture, ineffective bilingual education, inappropriate state and federal standards are a few of the problems openly discussed within the system. These issues seem too large for an individual to address except in conceptual terms. What can one teacher do to impact institutional racism?

*Journal Entry, April 28, 2006, Ecuador: In Ecuador, Steve, the executive director of the collaborative corporation that includes the language classes and the preschool here in Cuenca, explained his overall goal for the preschool was that children be exposed to and come to understand individuals from many different cultures. In addition to the National (Ecuadorian) teachers, therefore, others were hired from England, Australia, and the United States: all women, no Blacks, no Asians, no men. There was only one child in the school from a country outside of Ecuador and there were no children from Indigenous families in the school. From these facts and from my observations at the preschool, I had to question whether this goal had any chance of being met.*

*On the other hand, in the United States, we are currently experiencing the largest influx of immigrants since the beginning of the twentieth century (Banks, 2003). While public education has historically been viewed as an institution that intends to equalize opportunity for all its citizens, today we can also balance or juxtapose that goal with the concurrent and dual opportunity for teachers and students in public schools in the United States to be exposed to and learn about a variety of different cultures. One of the many issues to be addressed is a deficit model of racial understanding implicit within our educational system. We hold racist and "deeply embedded notions of deficit thinking that pervades both our pedagogy and our curriculum, ensuring that certain children cannot learn in U.S. schools" (Brandon, 2003, p. 35). The cultural deficits model focuses on the*

*shortcomings of individual children and their families and ignores the strengths or assets they bring to classrooms.*

*This situation in the United States requires that teachers who work within school systems become cross culturally competent; that is develop the "ability to think, feel and also to act in ways that acknowledge, respect, and also build upon ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity in multi-ethic and/or multicultural situations" (Lynch & Hanson, 1992, p. 49). The cultural and institutional racism within the educational system cannot be impacted until teachers and administrators are willing to uncover the dark, cultural secrets of individual racism.*

*Derman-Sparks and Phillips (1997) wrote "Whites must first distance themselves from their own group, determine what they want to keep and discard, and then establish a new identity that enables them to maintain a dual relationship to their group – reconnecting, on one hand, and challenging its roles and racism on the other" (p. 32).*

*This is what I get to do now. Culture for each individual is a fluid reality and I understand now that the knowledge I received here and the work I did here was not so much about South American culture, but instead was about me, one American White woman, and my personal cultural journey. My journal has a page of the ideas, beliefs, and "overcome misconceptions" that I have gained from living in a culture so foreign to my own. And, thankfully, now 17 days from returning to the States, another page is filled with cultural assets that I will be grateful for upon my return.*

# Conclusion

> From the constructionist position the process of understanding is not automatically driven by the forces of nature, but is the result of an active, cooperative enterprise of persons in relationship. (Gergen, 1985, p. 267)

I have come to understand that autoethnography can act as a piece of critical literature only to the extent to which it is used to engage in action upon the world. It cannot serve only as a means for me to subvert the oppressive nature of my cultural upbringing. This work is the response to "the need to be explicit in moving readers and audiences intellectually, emotionally, and toward concerted social, cultural, and political action" (Holman Jones, 2005, p. 784).

As my eyes learned to see beyond the bars of my cultural cage, I came to understand that dialogue provided equilibration to the cognitive dissonance I was experiencing. Upon my return from Ecuador, I wanted more dialogue with individuals interested in the topic of power, privilege, and bias. This project was initiated, in fact, by an inability to find a multicultural education class that fit my criteria. It became obvious that creating a class in which this dialogue could emerge was a reasonable idea.

My hope is that I may use parts of my autoethnography as focus material for such a class. Addressing epistemology as the framework for cultural learning provides an objective entry to dialogues about power, privilege, and equity in education. By examining educational stories and theories through both the social constructionist and constructivist lenses, students can begin to personalize their own histories of bias and reactionary teaching practices. Overall, I hope that individuals find, through engaging in self-reflective journaling and in collaborative conversations with others, the means to create their own Periods of Individuation.

Will this autoethnography prove to be a useful tool and vehicle for change? This can only be revealed by the extent to which open and honest dialogue will be prompted through its use (Holman Jones, 2005).

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