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AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS A METHOD FOR PRESERVICE TEACHERS TO ANALYZE THEIR  
EXPRESSED BELIEFS OF MULTICULTURAL, ANTI-RACIST EDUCATION:  
THREE CASE STUDIES

by  
Anita Elizabeth Fernandez

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A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the  
DEPARTMENT OF LANGUAGE, READING AND CULTURE  
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As members of the Final Examination Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Anita Elizabeth Fernandez

entitled AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS A METHOD FOR PRESERVICE TEACHERS TO  
ANALYZE THEIR EXPRESSED BELIEFS OF MULTICULTURAL, ANTI-RACIST  
EDUCATION: THREE CASE STUDIES

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## STATEMENT BY THE AUTHOR

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "A. H. ...", is written over a horizontal line.

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, David, without whose unwavering belief in me, commitment to our family and continual support, I could not have attempted nor completed this project.

David, you are the hero of my story.

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## ABSTRACT

Recently, teacher preparation programs have called for an increased awareness of issues surrounding the teaching of linguistic and cultural minority students. As the majority of preservice teachers are white and female, and with the growing diversity of incoming students, there is a noticeable need for discussions of race, privilege and power in teacher preparation programs. One way to open up this dialogue is with the use of narratives and autobiographies connected to courses in anti-racist, multicultural education. In this qualitative study, a case study methodology was used to demonstrate the promise of autobiography as a tool for unpacking preservice teachers' racial identities so that they might become better teachers for an increasingly diverse student population.

This study took place over the course of an eight-week seminar which I conducted with three white, female preservice teachers. All three participants were required to complete this seminar as it is a mandatory course for their program. The setting for this seminar was a small, liberal arts college in a large city in the Southwestern United States. To better understand these three preservice teachers' expressed beliefs of multicultural education and how these beliefs might be influenced by this seminar, multiple data sources were collected including recordings of class discussions, field notes, analytic memos, written documents and classroom artifacts. The constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and analytic induction (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993) were used to analyze and interpret the data.

Three major themes emerged from the data: what we learned; race, power and privilege; and narrative and autobiography as learning tools. Implications for teacher education from these cases include recommendations for curriculum and pedagogy, considerations for white preservice teachers, and the need for honesty and engagement in multicultural education courses.

CHAPTER ONE  
INTRODUCTION

The week prior to my first day as a high school English teacher, I searched all over town for posters, wall hangings and assorted decorations with which to cover the walls of my windowless, cinder block classroom. My intention was to create a comfortable space that represented all my students' backgrounds. I came across a beautiful black and white picture of a Native American woman in traditional dress with the caption "The Real *First People*" below it; a poster of women of all colors celebrating National Woman's Month; a large cardboard book cover displaying multiple titles of current Latino literature; a picture of Maya Angelou; a poster of Amy Tan's book cover for *The Joy Luck Club* and a tapestry from Kenya a friend had recently given me. Directly behind my desk I hung a framed picture of Annapurna, one of the Himalayan mountains I had recently visited, with a sherpa tending his yaks. On my desk I had postcards of Hindu deities, bumper stickers professing to *teach peace* and pictures of my family. All of this was my way of creating a multicultural classroom environment; after all, I had represented most cultures through these decorations as well as created a space that represented who I was and what I cared about.

My multicultural intentions continued into my curriculum choices as I chose literature from around the world, creation stories from many religions and topics to write about that I felt would touch on the experiences of all my students. I felt good about what I was doing and confident that I was

about to teach these students the *right* way. I would listen to their voices, encourage a community of trust in the classroom and "do" multiculturalism the way it should be done.

The first day of classes, I was met by 145 different students, 45% of whom were Latino, 10% who were Native American and were bused in an hour and half each morning to come to our high school, and 90% overall of whom were living a standard of living that I had never experienced. The majority of my students lived in trailers, many of them had full time jobs outside of school, many were in gangs and some were even homeless. These statistics slammed into my reality on the first day of classes and made my attempts at creating a multicultural environment seem ridiculous and shallow.

How could I expect these students to listen to cultural stories from around the world and to be enthusiastic about Latino literature when they were waking up at 5 a.m. to ride a bus for an hour and a half to school, going to school all day, riding home for another hour and a half and then going to work for eight hours? What did I really know about the experiences of these students? Why were some of my white<sup>1</sup> students so hostile toward me yet the Latino students who were in gangs kept coming to me for advice and just to talk? How did these students view me, and where did they view the teacher in terms of their cultural identity? Had I known the answers to even some of these questions when I began

---

<sup>1</sup> I use the lower case "w" for white and upper case "B" for Black in reference to racial identity just as Alice McIntyre (1997, p.171) does, reasoning that, "Harris (1993) argues, both have a 'particular history. Although 'white' and 'Black' have been defined oppositionally, they are not functional opposites. 'White' has incorporated Black subordination; Black is not based on domination....'Black' is naming that is part of counterhegemonic practice' (p.1710)."

teaching, I probably would have been a more effective and influential teacher that first year. Had I looked at my own racial identity and cultural background first and then tried to learn about teaching methods for diverse populations, I probably would have understood my students' experiences better as well as how my own experiences would affect my teaching them.

During my teacher preparation program, issues of multicultural education were discussed briefly but the topics of race, culture and power were not. I was not asked to think about my own race and culture during my coursework, nor was I expected to. It was not until recently, during my doctoral program, that I began to explore the connection between my own story and what kind of teacher I had become. By analyzing my own cultural and racial identity, I believe it has helped me to feel more committed to themes of race and culture which has driven me to include that knowledge in my teaching. When I first faced a classroom full of students from different backgrounds and races, I had no idea that their experiences in schools, at home and in society deeply affected the way they learned. I didn't realize that some students had been given privileges that others had not and that this was a key aspect of their educational history. I do not think that I was alone in this naivete, and that most preservice teachers did, and still do, lack the knowledge needed to teach students who are from different backgrounds than their own.

In a time when preservice teacher demographics are becoming culturally insular (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996), and student demographics are becoming increasingly

diverse, there is an urgent need to understand the beliefs of preservice teachers in the area of multicultural education. Deborah Britzman (1986) believes that "critical consideration must be given to what happens when the student teacher's biography or cumulative social experience, becomes part of the implicit context of teacher education" (p.483). One way to address this is with the use of autobiography/life histories and narrative in teacher preparation courses and with discussions of race, white privilege and social justice which can help preservice teachers to rewrite their autobiographies (Cochran-Smith, 1995) taking these discussions into account. It is this process that I hope to demonstrate as effective through this study.

Recent efforts by several multicultural education theorists and researchers (Sleeter, Cochran-Smith, Tatum and Goodwin) have explored the areas of race, power and privilege within teacher education programs. This effort comes at a time when preservice teachers' demographics are becoming increasingly female and white and as "many white teachers reject engagement with multicultural education intellectually, their own day-to-day classroom realities demand it" (Sleeter, 1998, p.xiv). Although teaching in the U.S. has always been a feminized and white profession, this fact is more pertinent today because of the change in demographics of our students which creates a "difference" between students and teachers. The issues of whiteness and white privilege are only *beginning* to be addressed within some teacher education programs because discussions of race, power and privilege are unsettling and "often generate powerful emotional responses . . . that range from guilt and

shame to anger and despair" (Tatum, 1992, p.2). These prickly conversations are often avoided by individuals because the discomfort that sometimes comes with them is too much for them to handle. How do we therefore address the issues of race, power and privilege in teacher education in order to help preservice teachers analyze their own racial identity before entering their own classroom full of diverse learners?

### Purpose

The present study seeks to address these questions. I do this by investigating three preservice teachers' expressed beliefs about multicultural, anti-racist education and how their life histories influence those beliefs, as well as how the use of autobiography/life histories and narratives, when used in a seminar on diversity, influences preservice teachers' beliefs of multicultural education. The context for this research was a seminar I conducted, which these three preservice teachers enrolled in as a required course. The emphasis of this seminar was on the use of narratives, our own and those of others, to explore issues of multicultural, anti-racist education as well as white racial identity, white privilege and racism. A key part of the course was for the students to write their own autobiographies and then rewrite them at the end of the seminar taking into account what they may have overlooked previously as white women. I chose to work only with white women because they represent the majority of our teachers today and more importantly, because I feel that white women,

and men, don't generally think about their own race as it has usually not been an obstacle for them to have to face. With the increase in diversity of students, it seems crucial for white teachers to think about their own racial identity in order to then be aware of their prejudices or privileges and how they come into play while teaching.

### Research Questions

This study addresses three questions: (a) What are these preservice teachers' expressed beliefs about multicultural education?; (b) How do these preservice teachers' life histories influence their expressed beliefs about multicultural, anti-racist education?; (c) In the context of an eight-week seminar, how do the use of autobiographies/life histories and narratives, influence preservice teachers' expressed beliefs of multicultural, anti-racist education?

### Significance of the Study

When discussing the topic of empowerment through multicultural education, Sleeter (1991) emphasizes the need for teacher preparation programs to acknowledge what resources and background experiences students bring with them to these programs. She claims, "Empowering education programs work with students and their home communities to build on what they bring; disabling programs ignore and attempt to eradicate knowledge and strengths students bring, and replace them with those of the dominant society" (1991, p.5). In order to build an empowering education program, the

use of autobiography, life history or teaching story seems imperative. We need to celebrate, interrogate and critically examine the stories teachers and students bring to their classroom rather than trying to eradicate and replace them with someone else's story.

Tatum (1992) and Sleeter (1992) have both shown that undergraduate and professional development classes on racism and multicultural education can in fact have a significant impact on students' and teachers' racial identity. Although these are tiny steps toward eliminating individuals' "color-blind orientation" (Frankeberg, 1993), they are indeed steps in the right direction. An eight-week seminar cannot measure up to Tatum's one-semester course or Sleeter's two-year professional development study, but it can help determine the influence and effect that the use of autobiography has in relation to learning about multicultural education and beginning to understand one's own racial identity.

This study has a direct impact on the teacher preparation program in which our eight-week seminar took place, and how that program integrated multicultural education and racial identity theories. More significantly, this study demonstrates how autobiographies/life histories and narratives in preservice teacher courses may help prospective teachers analyze their own beliefs, as well as hear and come to understand others' beliefs that they may not have had an opportunity to explore. By applying these methods to program development in teacher education, this study can have a positive and constructive impact on teacher education in general.

The subsequent chapters include a review of the

literature, methodology, a description of participants and themes, and a discussion of findings and implications. Chapter 2 is a review of professional and scholarly literature surrounding the topics of this study. I first discuss preservice teachers' demographics, then follow this with an exploration of the literature on the use of autobiography, life history and narrative within teacher education, and on multicultural education. Chapter 3 discusses methodology, beginning with the design of this study. Next, I introduce the participants and the setting, followed by an explanation of the data collection. The analytical framework used for this study as well as its limitations conclude chapter 3. Chapter 4, Participants and Themes, provides a more in depth description, or story, of each participant, using her own words as well as mine. Following these stories, I briefly discuss the themes that emerged from the data, introducing how the findings will be further analyzed in Chapter 5. Chapter 5 describes the three cases; each is discussed in light of the themes I discovered. Lastly, chapter 6 is a final discussion of the findings, methodological considerations, suggestions for further research, implications for teacher education, and conclusions.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

To situate this study, I have divided this review of literature into three major sections: Characteristics of Preservice Teachers, Life Histories and Stories/Narrative, and Multicultural Education. I will discuss the literature that has been most informative to my developing understanding of the field and helped to structure my theoretical framework for this study. All of the topics are examined through a teacher educator's lens in order to situate the study within the literature of teacher education research.

Within the section of Characteristics of Preservice Teachers, I will first cover the current demographics of the preservice teacher population in the U.S. and how these demographics are influencing an even more urgent need to understand the beliefs of preservice teachers in the area of multicultural education and teaching diverse students. This leads directly into the next focus area, preservice teacher beliefs, and more specifically, preservice teachers' beliefs about multicultural education and diversity.

The second major section of this chapter, Life Histories and Stories/Narrative, examines the literature on the use of story within teacher education. Also in this section is a review of recent literature on the connection between preservice teachers' life histories and their beliefs of multicultural education. The final major section of this paper will look at Multicultural Education, including Sleeter and Grant's (1988) five approaches to multicultural

education, racial identity and how it is used in teacher education courses and the use of autobiography within teacher education as a means to discuss multicultural education. I will end this chapter by explaining how my knowledge of this literature has affected my inquiry up to this point and where I hope to continue researching in the future.

### Characteristics of Preservice Teachers

When I first began searching for participants for previous research projects, I was specifically looking for preservice secondary English teachers because I am an English teacher and English Education is my field. What I found was that almost every teacher candidate I came across was white, middle-class, relatively young and usually female (Gomez, 1996a; Zimpher, 1989). This, I have learned, is the typical profile of our student teachers today and in order to discuss the current literature on preservice teachers and their beliefs, I have to consider their demographics. I also have to consider what preconceptions and beliefs these preservice teachers bring to their teacher education programs. My ultimate goal of this first section of the chapter is to see what has been written about preservice teachers' beliefs about multicultural education and diversity.

### Preservice Teachers' Demographics

As stated above, I found it difficult to locate preservice teachers within several teacher preparation programs, who are not part of the dominant culture, with whom

I could discuss their beliefs about multicultural education. This is because the majority of U.S. preservice teachers are white, middle-class, heterosexual and monolingual in English (Gomez, 1996a). The increase in number of minority students and the decrease in number of incoming minority teachers is creating a mismatch between students and teachers. Because of this mismatch, the cry for more education on teaching diverse students is being heard throughout teacher education programs. As Gomez (1996a) states, "An increasing homogeneous population of teachers is instructing an increasingly heterogeneous population of students" (p.110).

Several large scale studies have been conducted to help us understand not only these demographics but also what impact they may have on our students. Zimpher (1989) reported findings of 2,700 preservice teachers in the RATE (Research About Teacher Education) study, and found that the majority of these future teachers are female, white and middle-class but also that the typical American preservice teacher chose her college because of its proximity to home. The typical female preservice teacher also hoped to eventually teach children like herself who are white, middle-class, monolingual in English and without "special" needs.

Another of these studies was conducted by Metropolitan Life Insurance Company in 1991 and found that an overwhelming 80% of the 1,007 teachers surveyed were female and 90% of them were white. With the rate of minority students increasing and the rate of minority teachers decreasing, we as teacher educators need to use every resource possible to help our future teachers be successful in and committed to teaching diverse students. In order to make this happen, we

must first consider what these student teachers bring with them to teacher education programs as far as their beliefs and preconceptions.

### Preservice Teachers' Beliefs and Preconceptions

Education researchers agree that preservice teachers have definite ideas about school and learning when they come to teacher preparation programs although they can't always articulate those ideas (Lortie, 1975). We have all spent countless hours in classrooms acting as students and observing the actions of teachers which therefore must influence us as future teachers. Carter and Doyle (1995) use the term *preconceptions* when discussing the experiences preservice teachers build upon when they enter the classroom as a teacher. They see the use of personal narrative and life history in teacher education as a positive way to use these preconceptions in learning to teach, which will be discussed more in the second section of this chapter.

Although researchers may agree on the notion of preconceptions of teaching, they do not always see eye to eye on the notion of beliefs. The literature surrounding beliefs is messy (Pajares, 1992) and often conflicting. I will begin unpacking this literature by differentiating between knowledge and beliefs.

Put simply, "A claim to know something is epistemologically different from simply having a belief in something" (Fenstermacher, 1994, p.29). Or, as Pajares (1992) states, experiences create knowledge and that knowledge influences individual beliefs. Pajares also feels that one of the key differences between these two terms is

that knowledge can be changed or altered whereas beliefs rarely change. In other words, our knowledge is based on concrete information whereas our beliefs are based on evaluation and judgment. This information may change, changing our knowledge, but our personal judgments or values will probably not change (Nespor, 1987). I have difficulty with the notion of unchanging or rarely changing beliefs because as educators we are constantly asking our students to change their beliefs. Instead, I subscribe to Kagan's (1992) use of the term "filtering" beliefs when referring to how preservice teachers' previously held beliefs about teaching serve as a filter through which all that is encountered in their teacher education program.

Virginia Richardson (1994), like Kagan, has a much more pliable notion of beliefs than Pajares and Nespor.

Richardson (1994) defines beliefs as,

an individual's understanding of the world and the way it works or should work, may be consciously or unconsciously held, and guide one's actions. The teacher or teacher educator is responsible for helping students explicate and examine their beliefs and belief sets, alter and/or add to them.

(p. 91)

I agree with this definition and especially with the notion of adding to or altering teachers' beliefs. Asking preservice teachers' to look at their own beliefs and critically analyze them, will help the altering of these beliefs as a "fluid process" (Richardson, 1994).

Although the process of changing beliefs may be fluid, it is not always easy or comfortable, especially considering

the amount of time and number of experiences that have probably helped to create these beliefs. As teacher educators we should ask future teachers to use their beliefs as a filter in order to critically look at those beliefs and possibly add to them. Lisa Delpit (1988) phrases this idea beautifully:

We do not really see through our eyes or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs. To put our beliefs on hold is to cease to exist ourselves for a moment--and that is not easy . . . We must learn to be vulnerable enough to allow our world to turn upside down in order to allow the realities of others to edge themselves into our consciousness.

(p.297)

It is this exercise that we must practice as teachers and as teacher educators in order to have an effect on preservice teachers' beliefs.

#### Preservice Teachers' Beliefs and Preconceptions about Multicultural Education and Diversity

In my research, I have been specifically interested in preservice teachers' beliefs about multicultural education because, "a teacher's attitude about a particular educational issue (multicultural education) may include beliefs connected to attitudes about the nature of society, the community, race and even family. These connections create the values that guide one's life, develop and maintain other attitudes, interpret information, and determine behavior" (Pajares, 1992, p.319). It is these beliefs about race, community and

the nature of society that we must understand before we can address them in teacher education programs.

Paine's (1989) analysis, which derived from an earlier, larger study, looked at 62 preservice teachers and their attitudes about teaching diverse students. Her major finding was that students tended to consider *individual differences* rather than *categorical differences* in their students. She defines *individual differences* as things such as being fat, thin, shy, smart . . . whereas *categorical differences* are categories like race, class and gender. Diversity was also seen in these student teachers' eyes as a problem rather than an a potential. These preservice teachers had difficulty articulating their ideas of equity in education and "few had either a contextualized or a pedagogical orientation to diversity" (Paine, 1989, p.5). These findings seem to be very representative of preservice teachers' beliefs of multicultural education and diversity around the country.

Similar to Paine's study, Goodwin (1994) looked at 120 preservice teachers' beliefs of multicultural education. In a questionnaire, she asked students to consider three areas: "To articulate the goals of multicultural education, identify multicultural practices they had witnessed or used in their field placements, and list questions about and hindrances to multicultural practice" (p.119). Using Sleeter and Grant's (1988) topology as a way to analyze students' responses, Goodwin found that there was a wide range of responses to all of the questions, and often students seemed confused about multicultural education. She also concluded that after analyzing these students' responses it became clear that, "multicultural education becomes a reaction to racially

heterogeneous school populations, a response to difference" (Goodwin, 1994, p.128), as opposed to education which is multicultural and social reconstructionist. The notion of adding culturally relevant material to the curriculum, rather than integrating it, seemed to be the most common approach these students believed in. Goodwin feels that teacher self-identity is crucial for preservice teachers to address before becoming teachers, which will be discussed in detail in the final section of this paper.

In South Carolina, Sears (1992) surveyed and interviewed 258 preservice teachers about their feelings toward gays, lesbians and bisexuals. The findings of this study reflect those of Paine's (1989) study in that these future teachers *claim* to care about all of their students, yet are extremely unaccepting of gay, lesbian and bisexual students. This presents a monumental problem for teacher educators--how do we discuss beliefs about diversity and multicultural education with students who have such strong preconceptions about these topics? In a review of the literature on preparing prospective teachers for diversity, Zeichner (1992) suggests that there be a screening process when admitting students into teacher education programs. He calls for procedures that demonstrate these preservice teachers' cultural sensitivity, sense of their ethnic and cultural values, and attitudes toward other ethnocultural groups, in order to be assured that these individuals are committed to teaching that is multicultural and social reconstructionist (Sleeter & Grant, 1988).

Another suggestion to help solve the problem of preservice teachers' lack of cultural sensitivity or

awareness of their own attitudes is to incorporate the use of life histories and stories, or narratives, into teacher education programs as a way to help preservice teachers face these issues (Abt-Perkins & Gomez, 1993; Britzman, 1986; Carter & Doyle, 1995; Cochran-Smith, 1995, Goodwin, 1994; McCall, 1995). It is through self-inquiry that future teachers can begin to "position themselves squarely within multicultural education so that they see themselves as integral to good multicultural practice and responsible for equitable education outcomes" (Goodwin, 1994, p.130). In order to have a firm understanding of what it means to use life histories, stories and narratives in preservice teacher education, I must first look at the literature surrounding these topics.

#### Life Histories and Stories/Narrative

I have divided up this section into two different parts in order to try and sort out the literature that is applicable to my research. First, I will discuss specifically how life histories, stories and narratives can be used in preservice teacher education, followed by how life histories, stories and narratives are a means to specifically address the issues of multicultural education and diversity within preservice teacher education. Some of the information may cross over into both areas as they are so closely related and since many of the same theorists write about both topics.

Life Histories and Stories/Narrative within  
Preservice Teacher Education

Connelly and Clandinin (1990; 1985) write extensively about narrative research and how they implement it in their teacher preparation program. They believe that the act of teaching is an "expression of biography and history . . . in a particular situation" (1985, p.184). This belief has led them to base their research program on the idea that researchers need a way to find out what teachers know without distorting that knowledge and that the answer to this is narrative inquiry research. By using narrative inquiry, they would hear the stories of the teachers themselves and therefore would hear about the human experience.

Another belief that the Connelly and Clandinin research program is based on, is that each teacher has a set of pedagogical beliefs that is influenced by the teachers' life history and previous experiences in schools. Similarly, Britzman (1986) calls this a students' *institutional biography* which is a lifetime of student experiences. These experiences create specific images of a teacher and should therefore be considered and addressed in teacher education courses. In order to access preservice teachers' beliefs, we need to collect stories because, "teachers knowledge is, in other words, event structured (Carter & Doyle, 1987), and stories, therefore, would seem to provide access to that knowledge" (Carter, 1993, p.7).

Carter (1993) and Carter and Doyle (1995) believe that story has become a central focus for preservice teacher

education research. Similarly to Connelly & Clandinin, Carter (1993) claims that stories can capture knowledge and "this richness and nuance cannot be expressed in definitions, statements of fact or abstract propositions. It can only be demonstrated or evoked through story" (p.6). One example Carter and Doyle (1995) give of how to use story in a teacher education course is by asking students to choose well-remembered events (Carter, 1994) that took place during their field experience and then write a brief analysis of that event. Carter defines a well-remembered event as, "an incident or episode that a student observes in a school situation and considers, for his or her own reasons, especially salient or memorable" (Carter, 1994, p.22). These events help prospective teachers to reflect on their experiences as well as create a conversation within the teacher preparation course surrounding issues that are relevant to this specific group of students.

Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991) also write about their use of personal narratives and life histories within their teacher education program. They believe that preservice teachers' personal histories directly affect the way they will teach and what they perceive to be a "good" teacher. Using autobiographical writing assignments (stories), Knowles and Holt-Reynolds hope that their preservice teachers will gain a better self-awareness and will help them find themselves within the long history of schooling experiences they have already encountered. Lortie (1975) calls this experience the "apprenticeship of observation" which all prospective teachers bring with them to their teacher education programs. Through the use of story, narrative and

life histories, preservice teachers can begin to situate themselves around and in that "apprenticeship of observation" (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991).

The use of stories in preservice teacher education is not without its critics (see Fenstermacher, 1994; Phillips, 1994). Carter (1993) herself admits that one of the major flaws of the use of story is that authenticity can always be questioned. If a preservice teacher constructs a story of an event he or she remembers, only that person can know the true story. Doyle (1997) addresses this critique and adds that this is a concern with all narrative research but that, "the research community should celebrate story as a major breakthrough in its quest to understand what happens in classrooms and what teachers do to invent locally effective tools for their work" (p.99).

#### Life Histories, Stories/Narrative and their Connection to Multicultural Education

As the racial makeup of our teachers becomes more and more homogeneous and our student population becomes increasingly diverse, the need for preservice teachers to discuss race and discrimination in their teacher preparation programs is indisputable. One way to address this topic is through the use of life histories, stories and personal narratives of the preservice teachers and of other individuals who may have had different experiences from them. This method of bringing in racial issues to the preservice teacher curriculum may help these teachers be prepared and

eager to teach "other people's children" (Delpit, 1988).

Marilyn Cochran-Smith (1995) struggles with the issue of discussing race in the preservice classroom in her own courses. She asks herself whether she is teaching the right authors, asking the right questions and where this is all really leading. In Project START, at the University of Pennsylvania, Cochran-Smith attempted initially to address these questions. She collected data from her students through a variety of methods to study if her students were understanding issues of multicultural education, race and social justice, and also to interrogate her own teaching.

To address the issue of race, one method that Cochran-Smith (1995) used with her students was asking them to rewrite their autobiographies. She explains, "For some white students, the process was literally a reseeing of their lives . . . as filled with the privileges conferred by race. This was a powerful and sometimes painful process" (p. 548). On the other hand, "some students of color wrote about how they had consciously tried not to think about race in their lives . . . by 'acting white' and shunning people and events of their own race" (p. 549). This assignment brought up not only the issues of race and discrimination in her classroom, but also delved into the topics of white privilege, white history and a lot of uncertainty for these students. This example of using personal histories in preservice teacher education can help not only situate a teacher in her pedagogy, as mentioned in the previous section, but also to situate herself in her racial identity, hopefully making her more conscious of her students' identities. Cochran-Smith's example relates directly to teaching

multicultural education using personal histories and gives us a tangible way to do that. She is the first to admit that this is not a method devoid of messiness, but on the contrary, is filled with what she calls "constructing uncertainty." This uncertainty about race, and about how to address race in preservice education courses and bring this into our teaching, seems to be the first step toward creating a teaching force that is prepared to teach a diverse group of students.

Another study which addresses the use of personal histories, stories and personal narratives to help students teach multiculturally was conducted by Abt-Perkins and Gomez (1993). These women taught a summer course for 26 language arts teachers entitled "Teaching Writing to Diverse Learners." In this course, teachers were asked to examine their own beliefs about teaching multicultural education through the use of story. They found that "teachers recognized that although we can never understand the totality of all of our students' racial, social and ethnic 'texts,' we can work toward a position in our teaching where we allow our intentions to be put on hold for the moment as we let ourselves be taught" (Abt-Perkins & Gomez, 1993, p.197). These teachers came to this conclusion through the use of story and narrative which also helped them to look at how their personal histories were privileged in their previous and present school experiences. Without the use of story and narrative, they probably would not have opened these doors to conversations that are so crucial for teachers and can be directly applied to preservice teachers as well.

More connected to the research I have completed, Ava

McCall (1995) looked at preservice teachers in her social studies methods course to try and understand what their views were of multicultural education and their life histories influenced these views or beliefs. McCall chose two of her students to look at specifically. During and after the course, which she called a "multicultural, social reconstructionist teacher education course," she analyzed these students' journals and interview transcripts extensively. McCall found that both students' reasons for wanting to teach from a multicultural, social reconstructionist approach, directly related to their personal histories.

Both students in McCall's (1995) study came from similar backgrounds: white and middle-class, although one was female and the other male. One of the students claimed that his parents' open-mindedness contributed greatly to his attitude toward teaching diverse students although his community was not so open-minded. The other student experienced gender discrimination in her family and observed considerable racial prejudice toward others. Both students seemed committed to teaching a multicultural, social reconstructionist curriculum but for two different reasons. McCall states that, "We must offer opportunities for preservice teachers to become more aware of their own backgrounds and the influence of gender, race, class and culture; explain their conceptions of and interest in multicultural education; and articulate their concerns" (1995, p.349). These opportunities that McCall refers to are what should be prevalent not only in one methods course but integrated into whole teacher preparation programs. This notion of integration is key for a truly

multicultural, social reconstructionist program. In order to be clear about what this looks like, I will discuss the most pertinent literature surrounding multicultural education and a social reconstructionist framework.

### Multicultural Education

When trying to sort through all of the key literature on multicultural education, it becomes quite clear that there is a multitude of angles, approaches, perspectives, definitions and applications of this subject. For the purpose of this literature review, I will first share some definitions of multicultural education so that it is clear where I stand on this subject. I will begin reviewing the literature on multicultural education by discussing Sleeter and Grant's (1988) five approaches to multicultural education and then I will look at the literature surrounding multicultural education specifically within teacher education. Finally, I will elaborate on two aspects of this research which I am interested in researching further: racial identity theory and the use of autobiography in teacher education. Multicultural education has become a politicized term because of its connection with particular aspects of education (special education, bilingual education) which also have been politicized in public and media discourse. Having grown out of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and 1970s, multicultural education represents part of a larger political and historical struggle for equity and human rights.

Multicultural education's historical origins do not discount its strong theoretical base, however. Two

definitions most completely capture the essence of multicultural education and the philosophy upon which it is based. The first definition is from Banks (1989):

Multicultural education is at least three things: an idea or concept, an educational reform movement, and a process. Multicultural education incorporates the idea that all students--regardless of their gender and social class, and their ethnic, racial, and cultural characteristics--should have an equal opportunity to learn in school . . .

Multicultural education is also a reform movement that is trying to change schools and other educational institutions so that students from all social class, gender, racial, and cultural groups will have an equal change schools and other educational institutions so that students from all social class, gender, racial, and cultural groups will have an equal opportunity to learn. (pp. 2-3)

More specifically, Ramsey (1987) gives a definition of what multicultural education should include in a school setting:

Multicultural education is not a set curriculum, but a perspective reflected in all decisions about every phase and aspect of teaching . . . it is a series of questions to induce educators to challenge and expand the goals and values that underlie their curriculum designs, materials and activities. This perspective infuses educational decisions and practices at all stages and is an expansive way of thinking that enables teachers to

see new potential in both familiar and novel activities and events (p.6).

Keeping these two definitions in mind, I will review the literature surrounding specific approaches and aspects of multicultural education.

### Five Approaches to Multicultural Education

One way that researchers have attempted to explain multicultural education and sort out the overwhelming amount of information it incorporates, has been to form specific approaches or systematic ways to divide up this topic. Sleeter and Grant, who are among the most renowned researchers on multicultural education, derived one approach which has become extremely helpful and well-used in analyzing the multiple layers, definitions and uses of multicultural education. Specifically, Sleeter and Grant (1988) claim that when multicultural education is implemented in the classroom, one of five approaches is typically emphasized. These approaches tend to cross over but each has its own distinct characteristics. The five approaches are: teaching the exceptional and culturally different; human relations; single group studies; multicultural education; and education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist.

*Teaching the exceptional and culturally different* approach was created to help students fit into the mainstream U.S. schools by learning the basics of an American education. This approach was geared toward students who were "different" in the sense that they either had special needs or they were minorities and specific teaching techniques or programs were

built for them, such as English immersion programs for minority students who spoke no English.

The criticism of the *teaching the exceptional and culturally different* approach is that it creates only a "difference" view of diverse students, rather than integrating their culture, strengths, and needs into the curriculum. Students may indeed learn the basics they need to function in a mainstream U.S. school, but their voices are not reflected in anything that they learn. This approach is "based on theories of assimilation, human capital, and compensatory education" (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997, p.173).

The *human relations* approach emphasizes an awareness of prejudice and discrimination. A human relations approach to teaching encourages discussions about stereotyping and helps students confront these issues to improve communication between all students. The need for this approach became clear when the diversity of students began to grow tremendously in American schools. Since this approach is based on the notion that talking about stereotypes and discrimination will eliminate them, critics (Bloom, 1989; D'Souza, 1991) believe that it is not enough. It is argued that this approach also fails to address any social action or socioeconomic differences and so it is therefore only an initial approach that must be built upon.

The third approach Sleeter & Grant identify is one that is often used in college courses around the country. The *single group studies* approach was and is an attempt to study a specific group of people and learn more about their culture and history. This approach chooses to look at individual,

ethnic or racial groups in order to privilege their histories and experiences over those of the larger society, which is thought of as white supremacist and patriarchal. An example of the *single group studies* approach would be Women Studies or African-American Studies courses. The argument here is that *single group studies* do not always address specific issues within that group (e.g. gender issues within an African-American Studies class, or class issues within a Women's Studies class).

Sleeter and Grant note that the first three approaches focus specifically on those who are considered culturally different. The issues of racism and social stratification appear to be omitted in these three approaches, although the *single group studies* approach is commonly used in college courses. The last two approaches in Sleeter and Grant's analysis address the issues of racism, social stratification and the problems that accompany racial and cultural differences, as well as strategies to begin to overcome those problems.

The *multicultural education* approach, encourages students to respect individuals from diverse backgrounds, to gain their own positive self-identity, and to learn to work well with others. Within this approach is the need for critical thinking skills and an integration of multicultural education within all subjects. The primary critique of this approach is that it does not promote social action nor does it discuss issues of socioeconomic class differences.

The fifth approach Sleeter and Grant identify directly correlates with Ramsey's (1987) earlier definition, emphasizing social action and the integration of

multicultural education throughout all aspects of education. "This approach argues that all schooling (e.g., staffing patterns, curriculum, instruction, evaluation, counseling) should be multicultural . . . should take into account multiple perspectives and social issues involving race, class, gender, disability and sexual orientation" (Grant & Ladson-Billings, 1997, p.176). One of the reasons more conservative groups have criticized this approach is because of its inclusion of *all* perspectives (see Bloom, 1989; D'Souza, 1991; and Ravitch, 1990), raising issues that have been politicized in public and media discourse (bilingual education, special education, sexual orientation issues). This inclusion of all perspectives is the reason that we as teacher educators should embrace approaches that are *multicultural and social reconstructionist* and try to implement such approaches in our teacher preparation programs.

The *multicultural and social reconstructionist* approach is based on the belief that education is a powerful tool for the transformation of society, and that this transformation is now more necessary than ever before. The means to this transformation is not only a representation of diverse experiences and perspectives in the curriculum, but also and most importantly, a critical analysis of social action and a willingness to create positive social change. According to Sleeter and Grant (1988), this approach calls for democratic ideals to be incorporated and acted upon in schools and society. Specifically, they observe that individuals who are oppressed must be aware of strategies for social action to avoid the stereotyping of responding to oppression in a

violent manner. "Opportunities for social action, in which students have experience in obtaining and exercising power, should be emphasized within a curriculum design to help liberate excluded ethnic groups" (Sleeter & Grant, 1988, p.149).

Ladson-Billings (1992) uses the term "culturally relevant teaching" to emphasize the importance of teachers knowing their students' languages, cultures and backgrounds. She affiliates culturally relevant teaching with education that is multicultural and social reconstructionist because they both emphasize a need for democratic ideals. She writes:

Culturally relevant teaching serves to empower students to the point where they will be able to examine critically educational content and process and ask what its role is in creating a truly democratic and multicultural society. It uses students' culture to help them create meaning and understand the world. Thus, not only academic success, but social and cultural success are emphasized by the culturally relevant teacher (p.100).

The *multicultural and social reconstructionist* approach to education emphasizes both action and critical thinking for students to question current policies in education and society, and then to organize themselves to create changes in these policies or structures. One means for achieving this, according to Sleeter and Grant and Ladson-Billings, is through the use of autobiography and life history narratives. These pedagogies enable students who have been minoritized to

gain a strong self-identity, and assists all students in positioning themselves socially and historically. This approach will be further discussed in the final two sections of this literature review in conjunction with racial identity theory and the use of autobiography in teacher education. First, I examine current efforts within teacher education programs to address the issues of multicultural education and diversity.

### Multicultural Education within Teacher Education

As teacher educators struggle with the requirements imposed by state regulations, multicultural education continues to be marginalized within larger structures of power and privilege. The state of teacher education in relation to multicultural education is a depressing one, as we lack programs that are truly multicultural and social reconstructionist. In Grant and Secada's (1990) review of multicultural teacher education, they found that a shockingly low number of studies (23) which based on Sleeter and Grant's (1988) typology, truly addressed critical issues of multicultural education. Of these 23 studies, three used the "different child" approach; two used the "human relations" approach; four used the "single group studies" approach; ten used the "multicultural" approach; one used the "education that is multicultural" approach and three of the studies did not fit into any of the categories.

Since 1988, the literature on multicultural education

within teacher education has continued to grow, but there also continues to be a lag between theory and practice. Researchers continue to theorize multicultural education, but teacher education programs still fail to incorporate this research in terms of the learning experiences these programs offer to preservice teachers. The use of autobiography, however, promises to be a powerful method of transforming this trend. Autobiography can offer "students a chance to begin with the personal and then to connect their experiences to issues of multicultural education in their future classrooms" (Taylor & Fox, 1996, p.88). Goodwin (1994) also promotes the use of autobiography in teacher education but emphasizes the need for students to analyze and develop their racial identity and that of their prospective students and to critically examine how schools are structured to differentially distribute advantage and disadvantage to particular students as groups. Next, I will review this literature about racial identity theory and then provide specific examples of how teacher educators have used autobiography to address these issues in their programs.

#### Racial Identity Theory within Teacher Education

In her 1994 study, Lin Goodwin concludes her findings of what preservice teachers believe about multicultural education with the suggestion that, "Colleges of Education should consider integrating racial identity theory into their teacher preparation programs. Racial identity theory will help shed light on how student teachers view themselves and how they may view the competencies and capabilities of their

pupils" (p. 130). In this article, Goodwin does not explain specifically what racial identity theory entails but refers readers to an article she and Robert Carter (1994) wrote on the subject. This topic intrigues me because it seems like a key component that is missing in the majority of teacher education programs. However, it is a topic that I will only touch upon here, given the scope and purpose of this dissertation.

Carter and Goodwin (1994) discuss racial identity theory specifically as it relates to education and they define it as,

a person's psychological orientation toward his or her racial group rather than to racial group membership per se . . . while all people belong to racial groups, each may differ in his or her manner of psychological identification with his or her racial group. (Helms, 1990, cited in Carter & Goodwin, 1994, pp.292-293)

This definition of identity helps students and teachers realize how individuals perceive themselves with regard to race and can therefore help create a community of learners who will better understand social issues. With this understanding, teacher educators can create programs that are multicultural and social reconstructionist in nature.

Helms (1990) offers a six-stage psychological model describing the different levels of white racial identity. These stages are labeled: Contact Stage, Disintegration Stage, Reintegration Stage, Pseudo-Independent Stage, Immersion/Emmersion Stage, and the Autonomy Stage.

Individuals who are in the Contact Stage have very

little awareness of the advantages of being white and they are not aware of their own racism. The Contact Stage also "includes naive curiosity about or fear of people of color, based on stereotypes learned from friends, family, or the media" (Tatum, 1992, p.13).

People who are continually in culturally homogeneous surroundings may stay at the Contact Stage for a long time. Those individuals who are exposed to experiences with people of color or learn new information about racism may move into the Disintegration Stage. This stage emerges when ignorance of race and racism turns into feelings of guilt and shame of being white. Sometimes people in this stage turn to denial as a way of alleviating their guilty feelings.

The next stage of white racial identity development is the Reintegration Stage. In this stage, one begins to wonder if it is really worth the struggle to speak out against racism especially when considering the reaction they may get from their friends and family. If one works through this level and decides that it is in fact worth it to speak out, they will enter the Pseudo-Independent Stage. In this stage, white individuals "have abandoned their previously-held belief in white superiority but may still look to people of color to teach them about racism rather than making it their own responsibility" (Lawrence & Bunche, 1996, p.532).

Once an individual begins to possess a strong, positive white identity and commits them self to anti-racism they then embark on the Immersion/Emmersion Stage. From here, the final stage of white identity development comes when individuals think of their racial attitudes and identity as continually open to new ideas and new ways of thinking about

race. The Autonomy Stage of white racial identity development is described by Helms as "racial self-actualization" (p.66).

Although white racial identity theory describes some important aspects of coming to know one's racial identity, this stage theory is problematic as a whole. One dilemma with this theory is that it does not take into consideration the fluidity and multilayered nature of individual and collective identities. Here, identities are fixed rather than dynamic, with race being the prime characteristic. In particular, racial identity theory fails to consider other axes of identity such as gender, social class, and sexual orientation. A more appropriate paradigm is critical race theory.

Critical race theory developed out of critical legal studies which examines hegemony within the American legal system. Critical race theory "challenges the dominant discourses on race and racism as they relate to law" (Calmore, 1992, cited in Ladson-Billings, 1999). One of the key features of critical race theory is the notion that whites--and specifically white women--have benefited the most from civil rights legislation. Critical race theory attempts to address the continued marginalization of people of color in America, and attempts to "change the bond that exists between law and racial power" (Ladson-Billings, 1999, p.214).

Within teacher education, one strategy for disrupting this bond is the use of stories and narrative. Because of the importance of voice in critical race theory--particularly voices of minorities--stories and narrative take on a powerful transformative role. Critical race theory appears

only sporadically in the teacher education literature, but attempts are being made by certain teacher educators, including Marilyn Cochran-Smith and Joyce King, to incorporate this perspective into teacher education programs. Critical race theory can be a powerful theoretical framework for teacher education programs that embrace the importance of addressing race, power and privilege with future teachers.

#### Discussing Race, Power and Privilege with Preservice Teachers

Carter and Goodwin (1994) emphasize that the use of racial identity theory can only be successful if educators take part in exploring their own racial identity as well as enabling their students to explore theirs. This exploration helps teachers to confront stereotypes, prejudices, and assumptions about teaching diverse student populations as well as to allow their students to become more comfortable with discussing such topics. The lingering question is, how do we as teacher educators implement social identity theory into our preservice teacher education programs? One concrete example comes from Beverly Tatum (1992) who had taught a course entitled "Psychology of Racism," eighteen times at the time of her publication.

Tatum (1992) goes into depth about racial identity theory with her students and helps them to explore issues of race while becoming aware of the different levels of racial identity theory which they are experiencing. In this article, she gives specific examples of journal entries and quotes from her students which demonstrate frustration, anxiety, embarrassment and guilt all stemming from

discussions of race. It is this discomfort which really seems to be necessary in order for students to honestly address the topic of race (as was mentioned earlier in Cochran-Smith's case).

In order to set the "context" for her Psychology of Racism course, Tatum outlines five assumptions for her students so that all members of the class are starting out with the same information. These assumptions could be applied to a number of courses in multicultural education or diversity. They include definitions of racism and prejudice; the impact of racism and prejudice on specific groups; the need to identify where oppression stems from; and the notion that change is possible with regards to racism and prejudice. From her classes, Tatum has discovered three major "Sources of Resistance" which seem to be common in circumstances surrounding the attempt to discuss race in the classroom:

1. Race is considered a taboo topic for discussion, especially in racially mixed settings.
2. Many students, regardless of racial group membership, have been socialized to think of the United States as a just society.
3. Many students, particularly white students, initially deny any personal prejudice, recognizing the impact of racism on other people's lives, but failing to acknowledge its impact on their own.

I include this list because it captures how many preservice teachers perceive race and society, and without this information we cannot successfully create programs that incorporate racial identity theory. I believe that racial

identity theory needs to be expanded to include issues of social class, gender, and sexual orientation. Nevertheless, racial identity theory provides a framework that can encourage discussions of all these topics as a means of creating truly inclusive curricula and programs. Using Tatum's assumptions and considering the "sources of resistance" she discovered, we can encourage students to discuss their stories and how race and other aspects of identity, privilege, and power have affected them. This in turn can better prepare preservice teachers to understand their future students and to facilitate critical inquiries into race, privilege, and power in their classrooms.

Cochran-Smith, along with the majority of other teacher educators trying to effectively address the issues of race, power and privilege, asks her students to read McIntosh's (1989) article, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack." In this article, McIntosh discusses her realization that:

whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege . . . . I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was meant to remain oblivious.  
(p.10)

McIntosh goes on to list 43 very basic and stunning privileges she and all white people experience every day.

In their case studies of five preservice teachers enrolled in a multicultural education methods course, Lawrence and Bunche (1996) also used McIntosh's article to

try to determine at what stage of racial identity development these students were when they entered the class. These instructors chose to write down 25 of McIntosh's listed privileges on index cards which were then distributed to the whole class. White students were asked to read the card as it was written but students of color were asked to read their cards inserting "not" in front of the verb in that statement. This example of discussing race and privilege is not only extremely powerful but certainly also uncomfortable. The researchers write, "Students reported reading individual statements of white skin privilege in the article brought to consciousness aspects of their whiteness that were otherwise unconscious to them" (p.537).

Lawrence and Bunche found that the use of McIntosh's article, along with a number of other poignant discussions of race, power and privilege did help their students move through the stages of racial identity development. Their students began to see how racism, classism, sexism and homophobia are all connected and that they have choices about how to become active rather than passive learners. Lawrence and Bunche admit that one course cannot permanently change an individual's racial identity but that "race-focused multicultural education can help white students on their journey to unlearn misinformation and provide some guidelines for relearning" (p.541).

Alice McIntyre (1997) also explored racial identity theory with white teachers in a private, northeastern university. Her thirteen participants, all of whom were women and categorized themselves as middle to upper-middle class, met for eight sessions with McIntyre to discuss the

meaning of whiteness. During their sessions, the women talked about articles, personal stories and teaching experiences related to race. McIntyre's purpose for this study was both to engage these participants in issues of white racial identity and to "make explicit the need for examining whiteness and how we, as white teachers, can be committed to a process of teaching and learning that is antiracist and transformative in nature" (p.25).

McIntyre begins her study discussing her own racial identity as a feminist, white teacher educator which seems to be crucial for a researcher to honestly discuss these issues with future teachers. We cannot make assumptions about others' racial identity until we too have analyzed our own identity. McIntyre makes public her privileges as a white individual and tries to position herself and her place within this process.

McIntyre found that through the process of discussing whiteness with teachers, oftentimes they shifted from discussions of inequalities in the U.S. to the notion that if you work hard enough, no matter what color you are, the American Dream is possible. This denial of privilege resonated through her study and left McIntyre feeling even more so that these discussions need to continue and need to push open the "door to reconceptualizing the complexities of white racism" (p.137). McIntyre admits that one of the limitations for this group of women was the lack of interaction they had with people of color, allowing them to continue "living in a white bubble." This finding again emphasizes the need for teachers to have field experiences in diverse areas before they can truly address the issues of

whiteness and white racism.

At the University of New Hampshire, Pearl Rosenberg also finds the "presence of an absence" which she describes as "the figurative presence of race and racism, even in the virtual absence of people of color" (1997, p. 80). Rosenberg is concerned with discussing race and racism in a predominately white teacher education program and notes that most of the discussions of race are done in private settings or in writing, not in public discussions. She has also found, as have many other teacher educators, that her white students consider themselves in an "empty cultural space" which is whiteness.

Discussions of racial identity, whiteness, racism, power and privilege continue to be scarce in teacher education programs. Rosenberg suggests that these private conversations, which take place "in secret" may not be the dialogue we hope for but they are certainly a place to start. Assuming that discussions of these tough topics are going to be like any other course discussion is just not realistic and so one way to eventually get to that point is, according to Rosenberg, through these private talks which will hopefully become more public in the future.

This research is rigorous and powerful work which sets a strong foundation for future research in this area. Having discussions of race, power and privilege in teacher education programs, then documenting those findings needs to be a continual process taken on by more researchers. Because this is an uncomfortable and not always neatly packaged area of study, it tends to cause people to withdraw which is very understandable, but there is a dire need for further

research. In calling for further research in this area, McIntyre (1997) writes:

What is necessary for white teachers is an opportunity to problematize race in such a way that it breaks open the dialogue about white privilege, white advantage, and the white ways of thinking and knowing that dominate education in the United States (p.15).

### Autobiography in Teacher Education

Earlier in this literature review an example was given of how autobiography has been used in teacher education to help open up discussions surrounding race and multicultural education (see Cochran-Smith, 1995). The use of autobiography in teacher education has become increasingly popular and is vital for preservice teachers because, "the development of one's own cultural identity is a necessary precursor to cross-cultural understanding" (Zeichner, 1993, p.15). With the demographics of U.S. preservice teachers' becoming more and more "culturally insular" (Feiman-Nemser & Remillard, 1996), exposure to cultures and experiences different than their own is crucial for these preservice teachers' awareness of teaching diverse student populations. One way to address this need is with the use of autobiography in preservice teacher education.

Some teacher education programs have begun to use autobiography in their courses to help students analyze their beliefs about teaching as well as hear others' schooling experiences. One way that Susan Florio-Ruane (1994) uses

autobiography to prepare her students for teaching culturally diverse learners, is with an "Autobiography Club." Florio-Ruane has created a book club which focuses on autobiographies about "diverse authors' coming of age as teachers and learners" (p. 55). This approach is different from others who encourage students to write (and rewrite) their own autobiographies because these students are reading assigned books that tell stories of others' experiences. Florio-Ruane points out that although they are reading about others, the students relate to the stories and always tend to apply their own experiences to these stories. "They rely most heavily on personal or autobiographical knowledge in their responses to the texts and rarely tackle the book directly" (p. 64).

Because the books Florio-Ruane chooses are written by authors of a variety of different backgrounds (Maya Angelou, Richard Rodriguez, Jill Conway), her students are exposed to backgrounds different than their own but are also making connections to their personal experiences. This connection, she maintains, is what will help them as teachers to understand their students more completely. Since they are also reading about schooling experiences, these preservice teachers hear the reactions of the authors to specific pedagogical approaches and can discuss those approaches within their preservice classrooms.

Similarly to Florio-Ruane, Gomez (1996a) uses autobiography with her white majority students to examine their beliefs about minorities. She chooses many of the same autobiographies that Florio-Ruane does to capture the essence of what it has been like for some minorities to go through

the school systems in this country. With this understanding, Gomez hopes her students will become more sensitive to the experiences of their future students and how their cultures have influenced those experiences.

Gomez (1996a), along with Tabachnick, helped co-direct a teacher preparation program entitled Teaching for Diversity. This program was constructed around Sleeter and Grant's (1988) multicultural education that is social reconstructionist. Within this program, Gomez used teaching stories to help her students analyze their own teaching practice and how they perceived teaching students of low-income families, most of whom were minorities. Gomez's program has many of the same goals that Carter (1993), Cochran-Smith (1995) and Knowles and Holt-Reynolds (1991) have had with relation to story and autobiography. Gomez (1996b) writes,

We wanted prospective teachers to recognize links between classroom action and children's lives outside of school. We wanted our students to see how their interpretation of children's motives and behavior were rooted in their race, social class, gender, and sexual preferences, just as the children's actions were rooted in their backgrounds and experience (p.5).

With this realization about their own and their students' experiences, teacher educators can begin to move in the direction of rethinking how preservice teachers really feel about teaching students who are different from themselves.

### Significance of the Literature to the Study

The literature reviewed here covers many complex topics that cannot be adequately addressed in one dissertation. The literature on multicultural education and teacher beliefs alone is overwhelming in its magnitude. There still seems to be a need for further research in all of these areas and specifically in the area of how preservice teachers perceive multicultural education and how their life stories influence their beliefs about teaching and learning. I am interested in further pursuing research in this area and particularly looking at what effect the use of autobiography has in a preservice classroom, as was done for this study. Teacher preparation programs in the U.S. have a long way to go in order to address the increasing diversity and continued inequities that structure our classrooms and schools. The use of autobiography is one way to balance the knowledge teachers bring to their professional careers with backgrounds and experiences of their prospective learners.

Chapter three describes the methodology used for this study, which incorporated autobiography and narrative into a course on multicultural education. This chapter discusses the study's design, participants, setting, data collection, analysis procedures and limitations.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

This study examines three preservice teachers' life histories and expressed beliefs about multicultural education, as well as how a seminar on multicultural education which emphasized the use of autobiography and narratives influenced those expressed beliefs. All data for this study were collected in the context of this seminar, which I taught over eight-weeks in the summer of 2000.

Multiple data sources were used in this study including: small group discussions, observational field notes, analytic memos, and selected written documents and artifacts. In this chapter I will describe the design of the study, including sections on the participants and the setting, the methods of data collection, the methods of data analysis and finally the limitations of this study.

#### Design of Study

This study consists of three qualitative case studies (Merriam, 1988). I have chosen a case study design for this research because of the significance of "life histories" (Yin, 1994) within case studies. I have adapted Seidman's (1998) framework for phenomenological interviews to situate the personal experiences of the participants into the context of their lives and the lives of those around them. As I was looking at the expressed beliefs and experiences of three preservice teachers within a seminar setting, I could "fence

in" what I wanted to study, therefore creating cases. Without a "bounded system" this study could not be considered a case study format (Merriam, 1988).

### Rationale for a Qualitative Design

Merriam (1998) describes five characteristics of qualitative research which support my reasoning for selecting this methodology for this study. The first characteristic is understanding whatever it is you are studying from the participants', or the emic, perspective. Second, in all qualitative research, the researcher is the primary instrument for data collection and analysis, meaning that the researcher affects the data collection and analysis through her own perspectives and beliefs. The third characteristic Merriam cites is that qualitative research entails fieldwork; the researcher must interact with the participants in the collection of data. Fourth, qualitative research involves an inductive approach in which themes, categories and concepts are constructed rather than theories. Lastly, qualitative research is richly descriptive as the researcher uses vivid images rather than numbers to convey information.

All of these characteristics inform my selection of a qualitative study format for this study. As I was researching individuals' perspectives, and using life histories to understand those perspectives, qualitative research seemed the natural choice. As a researcher, I continually had to think about my personal impact on the study and how my own life history affected my interpretation of the participants' views.

### Researcher as Primary Instrument

As a researcher who was also a participant and observer in this study, all the data I collected and analyzed were sorted through my own lens. I acknowledged this from the beginning and tried to remain aware of the impact my own perceptions of the world had on the data. My ideas evolved throughout the study as to how I was impacting the data--how I was continually learning and developing from what I discovered from my participants. During this study I filled the role of researcher, teacher, student and observer, all roles that were influenced in different ways by the participants.

My own life history played a major role in this study. From the initial conception of this dissertation topic, my background and beliefs guided my research. Thus, it is imperative to share my story as an important part of this study. After conducting two previous case studies (Fernandez 1999a, 1999b) which also investigated the connection between preservice teachers' life histories and their expressed beliefs about multicultural education, I began to research more deeply the concept of whiteness and white privilege. Along with this research came more questions about my own racial identity and how it has influenced me as a teacher and a researcher.

As a 33 year old student, educator, researcher and feminist, I have only begun to address the issues of my own racial identity. I am the daughter of a Canadian mother and an Argentine father who are upper-middle class and have

afforded me many privileges in life. With my two older brothers, I traveled extensively while growing up, living in five countries by the age of twelve. My parents always made an effort to expose us to as much of the language and culture of each country as possible as we traveled widely throughout each area. I learned Spanish from my father at a very early age and was filled with Argentine pride coming from him.

Today, I ask myself why my Argentine father tells me I am not Hispanic. I have come to appreciate the mixed backgrounds I was born from and am confused by his denial of what I see as something to be proud of. I now think that I understand much better why my father does not consider himself Hispanic, and it stems from labels and perspectives. As an educator and student immersed in literature about racism and multicultural perspectives, I am saturated with American labels that non-Americans often don't subscribe to. The term "Hispanic" is a good example. If a Latin American individual is asked what race she is, she will not respond "Hispanic" but will say, "Soy Argentina," "Soy Peruana," or "Soy Mexicana:" she will not say, "Soy Hispana." The term "Hispanic" has negative connotations to Latin Americans, insinuating that they are somehow all of a single "breed." Mexicans are proud of their own individual heritage and do not want to be mistaken as Argentines or Peruvians, etc. "Hispanic" is also a label that many, such as my father, feel will hold them back in a society that is racist and unjust.

I have also come to understand that from an Argentine perspective, specifically a middle--and upper--class Argentine perspective, many of my ancestors are from Europe, giving them the sense that they are not part of the same

category as "Hispanics." This is tied to a racist ideology with which I do not agree, but out of respect for my father have not confronted directly with him. So what is my racial identity? I have always been considered white because of my skin color, but "Hispanic" by virtue of my name. I have been a recipient of white privilege all of my life. I do, however, embrace my Latina roots. This affiliation has been heightened by my growing awareness of those roots as I have explored the field of multicultural education. I see myself as both insider and outsider--as having both an emic and an etic perspective--and I seek to become an advocate for Latino/a preservice teachers who can identify with a teacher who is a little bit like them.

As a high school teacher, Mexican students often confided in me, speaking to me in Spanish about academic and social concerns. I believe that the reason students seemed to trust me was because I spoke Spanish. The relationship between language and identity is important for teachers to be aware of especially in a time when language rights are being threatened for people of color and "the displacement of other mother tongues by English has become a popular expectation" (Fishman, 1991, p.187). It is for that very reason that I want to continue to represent some aspect of the Latina culture if it makes me more accessible to students who might otherwise not feel they have someone to talk to.

Entering this study, I realized I had a lot in common with my participants, including gender, skin color and professional interests, but I also quickly realized my differences from them. It was a learning experience for me to be placed in the position of being perceived by my

students as a radical of sorts when it came to beliefs about anti-racist multicultural theories, having been surrounded by colleagues who shared my views on issues that are often perceived as very political and difficult to discuss. I learned that as a teacher one cannot assume that students hold certain beliefs just because they are interested in a subject, and that sometimes those who seem most open have the hardest time critiquing and expanding their views.

### Participants

In this study, the participants were three preservice teachers enrolled in Baillie College (a pseudonym), a private, liberal arts college which emphasizes experiential education and self-directed learning for teacher certification. This college is located in the mountains of the U.S. Southwest, and has a satellite campus in a large city several hundred miles away. I conducted my study at the satellite campus. This college is known for its flexibility with schedules and its emphasis on self-directed learning, which tends to attract "non-traditional" adult learners who have been in the work force for some time and have decided to return to school. Most courses at Baillie College are individualized by each student as they decide which texts they will read and what assignments they will complete to fulfill the course requirements. College advisors then look over the study plan and help students complete these requirements.

Since this college usually has self-directed courses,

seminars such as the one I taught for this study are not the norm. I therefore had to recruit preservice teachers for this seminar which I did by writing a brief course description explaining what would be covered in the course. All three participants volunteered to be a part of the seminar because of their interest in discussing multicultural education through the use of autobiographies/life histories and narratives. My sample of participants was thus opportunistic, influenced by my position as the seminar instructor and my specific research interests.

The participants for this study and the seminar were three white women, all of middle-class backgrounds, which is very typical for Baillie College. These three women were the only students in this seminar. Their ages ranged from 28 to 49 and their specific areas of study in education ranged from preschool to high school. Two of the participants already held degrees; one held a masters degree in math and the other a bachelors degree in English. All three were seeking state certification to become classroom teachers.

#### Participant Summary

The three participants in this study were:

- a. Amy: a 32 year old white woman from the Colorado, seeking certification for early childhood education. Amy was recently divorced with two young children.
- b. Michelle: a 28 year old white woman from Texas, with a Bachelor's degree in English seeking certification in secondary English as well as a Master's degree in English.
- c. Barbara: a 49 year old white woman from the Midwest,

seeking secondary certification in math, already holding a Master's degree in math. Barbara was married with two children.

### Setting

Data for this study were collected during an eight-week seminar entitled *Educating for the Future: Multicultural and Environmental Perspectives*<sup>2</sup>. This course, which is an undergraduate, five quarter-hour course (or approximately two semester credits), is mandatory for all preservice teachers enrolled in Baillie College. There are two campuses for this college, the main campus and a satellite campus, both located in the Southwest. As I am an adjunct faculty member for the satellite campus, I conducted this seminar at that location once a week for eight-weeks. Each session was two hours long and included all of the readings and assignments listed on the syllabus in Appendix A. Outside of class, students were expected to spend 15-20 hours a week engaging in not only the assigned readings and assignments for the class but also in researching and reading articles and texts that pertained to their area of teaching.

### The Seminar

As the eight-week seminar during which data were collected was central to this study, I will elaborate here on

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<sup>2</sup> When this course is taught at the main campus there is an equally divided amount of time on multicultural aspects as on environmental aspects but at the satellite campus, we focused almost completely on multicultural education. The same course title is retained, however, to fulfill the requirements of the college.

specifics of the seminar, including how I came to design and teach this course. As was mentioned above, this seminar was a mandatory requirement for all three participants. I was fortunately given permission by the college to design the seminar as I saw appropriate, which meant having the freedom to choose texts, methods of instruction, and course assignments.

### Designing the Seminar

Weeks before our seminar started, I began to gather ideas on how to design the course. I had decided earlier that the class would be structured around the use of narrative and autobiography in order to emphasize the connection between multicultural education and life histories. This design was one that I had observed and participated in during a doctoral course entitled *Multicultural Education and Social Justice* taught by Dr. Teresa McCarty at the University of Arizona. Dr. McCarty emphasized the importance of narrative and testimonial in our course and their connections to multicultural education and social justice. This course was extremely powerful for me because of the complete picture of multicultural education created with theory and story combined, and was the impetus for my research questions in this dissertation. I decided to emulate Dr. McCarty's course when designing this eight-week seminar.

The texts I chose for the seminar were also influenced by Dr. McCarty's course. I used both theoretical texts and narrative pieces which she had introduced me to during our

doctoral seminar. When deciding on other texts I selected each piece with a specific intent in mind. Theoretical pieces were carefully chosen to deliver a great deal of information powerfully in a relatively short amount of time because of the consideration that our seminar was only eight weeks long. I wanted the theoretical pieces to spark conversation, questions and criticisms which would generate a true "seminar" format as well as an inquiry-based method of learning. Also selected were texts which discussed individuals' schooling experiences in the form of stories. When choosing these texts I simply looked to my favorite authors as well as a piece from Dr. McCarty's class. Teaching cases were chosen from Shulman, and Mesa-Bains' (1993) *Diversity in the Classroom: A Casebook for Teachers and Teacher Educators* because of their examples of teachers struggling with teaching diverse populations of students. Finally, a picture book, *Encounter* (Yolen, 1998), was deliberately included to emphasize the concept of transformative action (Banks, 1989) in which curriculum that is normally on the margins is brought into the center to represent the stories--in this case, stories of individuals who have been historically marginalized.

With my selection of texts my awareness was heightened that I was designing this seminar with my own purposes in mind--I wanted to investigate the impact that a seminar steeped in narrative and autobiography would have on the participants' beliefs of multicultural education. I chose the texts; therefore I was steering the participants in a certain direction, yet I would have chosen the same texts were I investigating these connections or not. The reason I

was seeking to answer my research questions was because of my commitment to, and belief in, the importance of narrative and autobiography in a course on multicultural education to help future teachers explore their own racial identity as well as the racial identity of their future students. Also important in the selection of texts was my consideration of reader-response theory. As I was trying to connect the texts I chose with my students' own stories, Rosenblatt's (1995) transactional theory was at the forefront of my mind during this selection process. Rosenblatt (1995) claims that our experiences directly influence the way in which we transact with a text and it is therefore a reciprocal relationship between reader and text which takes place during the reading process. With this information, I sought to find texts which would elicit strong connections between the written word and the students' past experiences.

After choosing texts for this seminar I started to gather ideas and materials for assignments the students would be expected to complete. Selecting assignments was as crucial as selecting texts because it was in these assignments that the students would make connections between the readings and our conversations, coming up with their own questions and discoveries. Reflective logs were an expectation of the students which I was sure I would include because of the importance of self-reflection and inquiry in this course. Reflective logs, or journals, have always been a critical part of my own learning experiences during courses I have completed as well as taught. Other assignments I chose for this seminar were "borrowed" from a number of different places and people.

The most potent assignment for this course seemed to be the writing and rewriting of the students' autobiographies. This assignment was derived from Marilyn Cochran-Smith's (1995) use of "rewriting" autobiographies with her graduate students, which was mentioned in chapter 2. Unlike Cochran-Smith, I asked my students to "rewrite" specific sections of their autobiographies which I highlighted for them. I was not planning to do this highlighting originally, but when reading my students' autobiographies there were sections I encountered which I felt could not be overlooked because of their poignant statements about the students' conceptions of race, power and often times identity. Rather than writing my own lengthy comments about these sections I decided to mark them and see what the students would come up with on their own by the end of the seminar.

Two other assignments which were required for this seminar were: choosing a piece of curriculum the students felt was a good example of anti-racist, multicultural education; and creating a teaching unit in the students' area of teaching which they also felt was a good example of anti-racist, multicultural education. Both of these assignments were derived from assignments Christine Sleeter requires of her students at California State University, Monterey Bay. I came across these assignments when looking for more current publications by Sleeter, who has been such a pivotal force in my research. During this search on the web, I was connected to Sleeter's homepage with links to her course syllabi, where I found versions of these assignments.

Although only a few individuals are mentioned as influences in the design of the seminar, I am certain there

are many other theorists and past teachers of mine who in some way helped me design this course. It was certainly a handful of teachers and theorists who helped initiate the teaching of this course and whose work assisted me in creating a trusting environment of critical, generative inquiry.

### Teaching the Seminar

In order to examine issues of race, whiteness and identity thoroughly and critically, our eight-week seminar had to feel like a safe place to contribute to the discussions held in class. As women using their previous experiences as knowledge, our discussions took the form of collaborative conversations (Hollingsworth, 1992) as will be discussed further below. As the teacher of the seminar but also a participant, I continually wove my own voice in and out of the conversations, using my judgment as to when to keep the conversation on track and when to pull back. Having read McIntyre's (1997) study of discussions of race with white preservice teachers and how she regretted not having intervened more in what she labeled "white talk," I decided to avoid allowing the conversation to diverge from what we were attempting to uncover. This process was difficult for me as I often time wanted to leave the topic of conversation as well because it became uncomfortable for the group.

Another consideration I had when teaching this seminar was how to try to elicit critical yet generative responses to the texts we read. In an attempt to achieve this goal, I continually reminded the participants of what we had been

discussing previously and to keep that information handy when reading the next piece, hence allowing each text and conversation to inform the next. I also tried to remind the participants of what they had said previously, using their own words to reflect back their language as a way to encourage them to continue their dialogue.

Finally, with regard to evaluating and responding to written assignments from the participants, I used a problem-posing and inquiry-based method. I responded to all written assignments, including the reflective logs, by underlining areas that seemed enlightening to me, writing questions in the margins to generate more thought and comments throughout, and encouraging deeper analysis or praising the participants' thought-provoking statements. This method of response came from years of teaching high school English as well as having my own work evaluated in the same manner throughout my graduate program.

All of these methods of approaching the teaching of this seminar were enacted to try and create a trusting community of learners. With such a small group of students, it was relatively easy to encourage responses that might otherwise not be communicated in a larger group, or at least not as quickly. It was important to have these students open up relatively early in the seminar since we had such a short period of time to cover a lot of material. We were successful in creating this trusting community which allowed for a lot of rich conversations and very telling written assignments. Below is a description of how data were collected with more specific explanations of each data source.

## Data Collection

I taught the seminar in which data were collected during the summer of 2000. Data sources include transcripts from small group discussions, field notes and analytic memos, as well as written documents and artifacts. Written informed consent was obtained from each participant before the start of our first seminar session.

### Small-Group Discussions

Each seminar consisted of a two-hour session in which the three participants and I discussed the assigned readings, teaching cases and pedagogy that each participant had read about in her own area of teaching. These discussions were in the form of "collaborative conversations" (Hollingsworth, 1992) using a feminist and critical approach to sharing information. Like Hollingsworth et al., we investigated and posed questions about learning to teach, using a "feminist epistemology, which values considered experience as knowledge" (Blenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). Unlike Hollingsworth's approach, our talk did take the form of dialogue and was situated around specific readings and concepts. Readings included excerpts from Sleeter and McLaren's (1995) *Multicultural Education, Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Difference*, hooks' (1994) *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom*, and articles by McIntosh (1986) and Tatum (1992) (see Appendix A). All discussions were audiotaped and then transcribed as

quickly as possible, usually within three days of each class session.

These collaborative conversations began with these preservice teachers' expressed beliefs about multicultural education, articulated in our first meeting. For that conversation, I asked questions from my previous interview work (Fernandez, 1999a, 1999b) to try and find out as much as possible about what these women knew and felt about this topic. I also used excerpts from my most recent case studies of preservice teachers (1999b) asking for reactions to what the previous participants' believed about multicultural education in their initial interviews. Finally, during that first meeting, participants were asked to draw a concept map or a web expressing how they visualized the topic of multicultural education. Example concept maps/webs were shared with them from other studies. During the final seminar conversation, we returned to the topic of what these women *then* felt and knew about multicultural education and how their beliefs might have changed over the course of the seminar. They were asked to again draw a concept map or web expressing their beliefs and ideas. All of the drawings were kept as artifacts for data analysis.

Collaborative conversations surrounding teaching cases were also used as a source of analysis, inquiry and problem solving (Carter & Anders, 1996). All teaching cases focused on issues of diversity and were obtained from Shulman and Mesa-Baines' (1993) casebook, *Diversity in the Classroom: A Casebook for Teachers and Teacher Educators*. Because of the emphasis on autobiographies/life histories and narratives throughout this seminar, cases of issues in diversity were a

key component of the course and fueled discussions of actual narratives from teachers' classrooms. The use of these cases also emphasized the "storied nature of teachers' knowledge" (Carter, 1993) and how through stories, teachers can learn about their own and others' knowledge and beliefs of teaching.

### Field Notes and Analytic Memos

During each seminar session I attempted to keep some field notes as conversations took place, but as a major participant in those conversations, this was often difficult or impossible to do. I was not always successful at keeping fieldnotes so in order to capture what took place during each session, I wrote myself analytic memos immediately following each session recording impressions and reactions to what was happening in the classroom. For examples of different types of analytic memos I looked at those given by Rossman and Rallis (1998) in order to find a style that best suited me. In my analytic memos, as suggested by Rossman and Rallis (1998), I was sure to address key issues that came up during each seminar, how the flow of conversation was moving, concepts and ideas that needed to be addressed further in the future and questions I had as a researcher and a participant myself. These memos became one of the most pertinent sources of data for me because they captured bits of conversations and immediate reactions that I otherwise would have forgotten.

### Written Documents and Artifacts

Another key data source for this study was written documents and artifacts collected from the participants as well as my comments on these documents. These written materials included two autobiographies written by each participant (for a total of six); participants' reflective logs; a short essay describing a teaching unit that the participant felt was a good example of anti-racist, multicultural teaching; a written statement discussing their own racial identity; and finally the webs or maps outlining their definitions of multicultural education.

The first writing assignment for this seminar was an autobiography that discussed the participants' life history and experiences of culture, education and social justice. The final writing assignment for this course was a rewriting of their autobiography taking into account all that we had read, discussed and analyzed over the eight-weeks, especially the concepts of white privilege and power.

A reflective log was kept by each participant as a place to write reactions to the readings, teaching cases and class discussions. The participants were also encouraged to write about issues of multicultural education and any connections they were making with their other courses. I collected the reflective logs in the middle and at the end of the seminar, at which time I read and responded in writing to them. In order to promote thinking in their area of teaching with relation to multicultural education, I assigned a short essay describing a teaching unit that each participant created as

an example of anti-racist, multicultural teaching. These units were shared in the class and I responded to their essays in writing. All of my responses to their writing assignments were also included as data.

After reading Tatum's (1992) breakdown of the levels of white racial identity, the three participants were asked to think about where they felt their own racial identity was at that point in their life. These writings were short, but very powerful additions to the other written data. The six stages of white racial identity are: Contact Stage, Disintegration Stage, Reintegration Stage, Pseudo-Independent Stage, Immersion/Emmersion Stage, and the Autonomy Stage. Finally, as described earlier, the participants were asked to draw a concept map or web with the term "multicultural education" in the middle and any terms they thought were connected multicultural education were drawn in where they felt they fit.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis took place "simultaneously with data collection" (Merriam, 1998, p.163) using the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and analytic induction (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). In this process, data is continually analyzed, categorized and compared. Several stages took place in the analysis process which were: (a) active participant analysis, (b) "diving in" analysis, (c) "seeing the light" analysis, and (d) grounded analysis.

### Active Participant Analysis

Data analysis began on the first day of our seminar as I sat down to write an analytic memo to myself trying to capture the key points of the evening. From the beginning, I had insights about what the participants were saying and where I thought they were going; these insights were not always correct but were an important part of the analysis process as my ideas changed and developed. I have labeled this stage of analysis the Active Participant Stage because I was an active participant in the seminar and my comments as well as how I conducted the class had a very direct impact on what the participants said and did. In this stage, I took into account our collaborative conversations and my own analytic memos. When written assignments were submitted those too were analyzed briefly and commented on in my own writing.

### "Diving In" Analysis

Once our seminar had ended, I continued to transcribe our conversations and organize all written documents. With the transcripts, memos, written documents and artifacts spread out around me, I "dove in" to do a general coding of all materials trying to "identify the chunks or units of meaning in the data" (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994, p.128). I had some idea of what I was looking for from two previous case studies I had conducted (Fernandez, 1999a, 1999b). This process was lengthy and often filled with self-doubt about whether I was coming up with the "right" codes or not. When

I was finished with this first attempt at in-depth analysis, I had identified 40 different data codes (see Figure 1).

### "Seeing the Light" Analysis

After distancing myself from my data for a few weeks by putting all my notes away and concentrating on other aspects of my life, I began to listen to the tapes of our conversations, keeping in mind the codes I had derived. I had been overwhelmed by how the codes overlapped when trying to fit them under more specific headings, and it was hearing the participants' voices again that helped produce some clarity. I used an e-mail listserve which the participants and I had established for continued discussions, to conduct "member checks" (Rossman and Rallis, 1998, p.45) in which I asked them questions about comments they had made or things that had been omitted. Their responses helped tremendously to move me to the next step.

I began to move from inquiry to interpretation (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996) as categories became clear. I determined five major themes (see Figure 2), under which codes would fit. At this point I went back through all of the data and cut and pasted every piece of coded data to fit within a specific theme. During this process, it became evident that many pieces could fit under different themes, so I reread and relistened to the data, trying to develop a more concrete structure.

Figure 1.  
**Early Categories**

1. SHELTERED FROM RACIST COMMENTS
2. PARENT INFLUENCE ON KIDS
3. HOPELESSNESS
4. LACK OF MINORITY TEACHERS
5. FEMINISM
6. FEAR OF BEING A GAY TEACHER
7. RACIAL IDENTITY
8. PRICKLY CONVERSATIONS
9. CULTURELESSNESS
10. WHITENESS
11. PRIVILEGE
12. WHITE GUILT
13. RACISM
14. WHY VS. HOW
15. KNOWING WHY
16. STEPPING ON TOES
17. SOCIOECONOMIC CLASS
18. TESTING
19. DEFINITIONS
20. RELIGION
21. TRACKING
22. AUTHENTICITY
23. HOME VISITS
24. COMMUNITY
25. ENVIRONMENTALISM
26. LANGUAGE
27. GENDER
28. GAY ISSUES
29. METHOD/HOW
30. NURTURING
31. ALL OR NOTHING
32. RESISTANCE
33. DANGEROUS CURRICULUM (GAY)
34. POLITICALNESS
35. BREAKTHROUGHS
36. ENGAGEMENT
37. SEMINAR
38. REWRITING AUTOS
39. NARRATIVE AS LEARNING TOOL
40. CONNECTIONS TO LIFE HISTORY

### Grounded Analysis

By early September, I had narrowed down the five major themes to three (see Figure 3). I immersed myself in the literature on multicultural education and teacher education, trying to reenter the world I was trying to analyze. I read the newest copy of *Journal of Teacher Education* (May/June 2000) from cover to cover, which inspired me to ground my analysis in the most current literature. This issue happened to be the first issue edited by Marilyn Cochran-Smith, so it was full of relevant and thought-provoking articles. I now felt confident that I had the three major themes and sub-themes established, and I proceeded with the last step of the coding process. For this final step, I flagged each unit of analysis with a color--red, yellow, or blue--representing each of the participants. I did this so that I could differentiate between cases although many pieces of data could belong to all three participants (for example, chunks of dialogue). Here, I had to decide which case the unit of data would speak for most strongly. Once decided, I divided the data up by cases and began to write about what I had found.

Figure 2.

### **Developing Themes**

#### **Theme 1: RACIAL IDENTITY**

- PRICKLY CONVERSATIONS
- CULTURELESSNESS
- WHITENESS
- PRIVILEGE
- WHITE GUILT
- RACISM

#### **Theme 2: WHY VS. HOW**

- KNOWING WHY
- STEPPING ON TOES
- SE CLASS
- TESTING
- DEFINITIONS
- RELIGION
- TRACKING
- AUTHENTICITY
- HOME VISITS
- COMMUNITY
- ENVIRONMENTALISM
- LANGUAGE
- GENDER
- GAY ISSUES
- METHOD/HOW
- NURTURING
- FEAR OF BEING A GAY TEACHER

#### **Theme 3: ALL OR NOTHING**

- RESISTANCE
- DANGEROUS CURRICULUM (GAY/LESBIAN)
- POLITICALNESS

#### **Theme 4: BREAKTHROUGHS**

- ENGAGEMENT
- SEMINAR
- REWRITING AUTOS

#### **Theme 5: NARRATIVE AS LEARNING TOOL**

- CONNECTIONS TO LIFE HISTORY

Figure 3.  
**Final Themes**

**Theme 1:WHAT WE LEARNED**

- WHY VS. HOW
- KNOWING WHY
- STEPPING ON TOES
- SE CLASS
- TESTING
- DEFINITIONS
- RELIGION
- TRACKING
- AUTHENTICITY
- HOME VISITS
- COMMUNITY
- ENVIRONMENTALISM
- LANGUAGE
- GENDER
- GAY ISSUES
- METHOD/HOW
- NURTURING
- FEAR OF BEING A GAY TEACHER
- ALL OR NOTHING
- RESISTANCE
- DANGEROUS CURRICULUM (GAY)
- POLITICALNESS

**Theme 2:RACE, POWER AND PRIVILEGE**

- RACIAL IDENTITY
  - PRICKLY CONVERSATIONS
  - CULTURELESSNESS
- WHITENESS
- PRIVILEGE
- WHITE GUILT
- RACISM

**Theme 3: NARRATIVE AS LEARNING TOOL**

- CONNECTIONS TO LIFE HISTORY
- BREAKTHROUGHS
- ENGAGEMENT
- SEMINAR
- REWRITING AUTOS

## Limitations

Like all research, this study is not without limitations. As the teacher of this seminar, my role was that of a researcher, teacher, and a participant. These tripartite roles certainly influenced the way the class was structured and possibly how the three women interacted with me. Since we concentrated on narratives there seemed to be a sense of community and trust in the classroom but one can never know how much of what the participants told me was what they really they really felt or what they wanted me, as teacher and researcher, to hear.

The second limitation to this study was the time frame. This seminar was only eight-weeks long and individuals can obviously only begin to analyze their racial identities and beliefs in that short period of time. The amount of personal analysis that did take place in the eight-weeks was encouraging, however, and it led me to believe that this could be the introduction to what would follow in a longer class setting. I am still in touch with the three participants and will follow closely as they continue their teacher education programs, hopefully incorporating some of what they learned through our seminar.

Chapter four addresses the participants and themes of this study more thoroughly. First, I share the stories of each participant using their own words as well as mine. Next, I discuss the themes which emerged from the data collected. In Chapter five, these themes are then elaborated within each case.

CHAPTER FOUR  
PARTICIPANTS AND THEMES

Examining the connection between preservice teachers' life histories and their expressed beliefs about multicultural education was one of the purposes of this study. The second purpose was to see how a seminar on multicultural education affected these participants when the seminar was structured around the use of autobiography and narrative. To begin elaborating on the findings of this study, I will first introduce each participant using excerpts from her autobiography as well as statements made in class or in her reflective log. Following these introductions, I will describe the major themes that emerged from this study which can be seen within and across the three cases.

Participants

Amy's Story

At the time of this study, life was incredibly difficult for Amy, having recently divorced her husband and been left to raise her two small children, ages four and six. Along with this hardship, Amy experienced a difficult loss of a family member during our seminar, causing her to miss two class sessions. I deliberated whether to continue to include Amy as a participant in this study due to her absences, her general state of mind and her lack of participation in class discussions. Basically, I had very little data on Amy from classroom discussions because she is a very quiet person and her absences limited data even more. I decided that it was

important for me to include in Amy in this study because she is an important example of what may be occurring in a student's life during a preservice teacher education course. In a sense, Amy represents the student who is trying her hardest to "be there" but due to outside forces, can't commit one hundred percent. Much of Amy's story therefore comes from her writing and my own memos after conversations with her on the telephone and in person.

At the time of this study, Amy, a white woman, was thirty-two years old, raised much of her life in Colorado. Her parents had been married for 33 years. According to Amy, her friends always used to tease her calling her "mother June and my father Ward because our family seemed to be just like *Leave it to Beaver*." Amy's father was a college professor and her mother a stay-at-home mom until all of their children were in school, at which time Amy's mother began to work in those schools. Amy has four siblings and comes from a very supportive and tightly knit family.

Almost every two years, Amy's family moved, making it difficult for her to form strong friendships. She enjoyed seeing different parts of Texas and Colorado and meeting different people but admits that it was often difficult.

As a result of moving so often, I became very flexible and tolerant, but also quiet and shy. I always had friends so I wasn't lonely, but I longed to be part of the "native group" of whatever place we were living . . . . I never really fit in anywhere.

The one place Amy's family did settle down for a while was in Durango, Colorado which she considers home more than

any other town. Amy attended college there for two years before she married her Mexican-American husband, and moved to the Southwest. There she worked full-time at a medical center in the accounting department, and her husband worked as a police officer. Being the wife of a police officer, Amy discovered, was very lonely:

I became independent because I had no choice. He worked night shift and weekends and overtime and I could either stay home alone and do nothing or do things on my own; which is what I did . . . I spent some lonely holidays, birthdays, and anniversaries but I did adjust.

Five years after moving, Amy became pregnant with her first son and stayed home with him realizing that "being a mother fulfilled a part of me that I didn't even know was missing." Two years later she gave birth to her second son and felt that her family was now complete. Amy's children were and still are undoubtedly the most important aspect of her life. She feels that "children can teach us to view the world in a very different and beautiful way."

When Amy's younger son was six months old she decided to return to college and take one class in order not to jeopardize the credits she had earned ten years earlier. She continued taking classes and loved being back in school, "having something that was mine and no one else's." Amy excelled in school, continuing to earn a perfect 4.0 GPA. She was enrolled in elementary education courses but really wanted to pursue a career in preschool education which is what she was doing when she enrolled in my seminar. At the time, she felt she should get a teaching credential "so that

I would have something to fall back on in case I should ever need it."

After 10 years of marriage, Amy's husband left her and her children, making it apparent to Amy that she would indeed have to "fall back" on her education experience. This difficult time for Amy tested her strength. She stated: "There are still days when I can just barely make it through, but somehow I do and life continues on." At the time of the study, Amy was in school full time as well as working at a preschool with two year olds. Her dream to become a teacher was coming true, although in a bittersweet way:

Completing my education is so important to me now for so many reasons, but among the most important is to restore some of my long lost confidence and esteem. I will succeed and continue to give my children the wonderful life they deserve!

Amy's goal now was to become a kindergarten teacher at the school where she was currently working, and where both her sons were students.

Amy's basic outlook on life is very optimistic. She admits that her life has been sheltered in some ways but that she was raised to believe that we should treat others the way we want to be treated. Amy feels strongly that if we teach young children to respect each other, this will have a phenomenal impact on the world. She writes: "The children are the future--if we give them the knowledge and power of goodness and basic respect for all life --they can make the world a better place for of those who live upon it."

Michelle's Story

The first writing assignment for these three participants was an autobiographical piece which was to include experiences of schooling, encounters with different cultures and instances of dealing with social justice. Michelle's autobiography took me by surprise; it shocked me actually. Written with bulleted items from her life, Michelle's story was painful, confusing and filled with instances of racism against her and within her. Michelle said she almost didn't return to our second session because the writing of this assignment was so painful. She did return however, and shared intimate aspects of her life with us which appeared to help her deal with issues of racial identity, sexual identity and racism.

At the time of this study, Michelle was twenty-eight years old. A white woman born in a small border town in Texas, she grew up very poor. "We were all poor. Most of the fathers were shrimpers or welders. Most women stayed home. My mom always worked as a deck hand, waitress, receptionist or clerk." Michelle was raised by her mother, a Roman Catholic like many of the families in her neighborhood. Other families were Baptist or Jehovah's Witness. The majority of Michelle's hometown identified as Hispanic.

Michelle experienced quite a bit of racism growing up, both from her mother and from neighborhood children:

My mom was very racist, yet expected other families to babysit me or give us water when ours was shut off due to delinquent bills . . . All my neighborhood friends were not white, and although

they liked me, racial slurs were used all the time toward me as a "joke." I was constantly being beaten up because I was white . . . At the age of twelve, I was beaten and grounded and entire summer for having a crush on a Black guy.

As a result of this beating, Michelle ended up only dating white boys all through high school and hanging out with white girls. She managed to do very well in high school, which gave her the opportunity to attend a private liberal arts college on an academic scholarship. This was an opportunity that opened up many paths for Michelle, allowing her to be herself and escape the narrowness of her upbringing.

Michelle stated the following about her college experience:

The school had a very liberal and diverse community. I never felt unsafe to be myself. The president for many years was a lesbian, Catholic woman . . . The first few years of college, all my friends were straight and white. The last few years of college, my best friends were lesbian Hispanics.

During these years in higher education, Michelle became aware of issues of racism, sexism, classism and heterosexism. She participated in marches protesting groups like the Ku Klux Klan and considered herself politically active during her college career.

The years that followed were painful and confusing for Michelle. She was diagnosed with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and went through a severe depression surrounding her illness as well as the oppression of women in her family. Michelle

searched for answers in the Wicca community. Wicca, an alternative name for witchcraft, is a contemporary neo-pagan religion with traditions that date to pre-Christian earth religions. Wicca is not a satanic cult, as many perceive it, but rather seeks to embrace nature and the earth. By joining this community, Michelle then became ostracized for her pagan beliefs. At this time, Michelle had her first girlfriend and then considered herself bisexual, until "several months later I actively blocked all homosexual feelings and got a boyfriend."

Michelle's confusion surrounding her sexual identity and sense of belonging continued for years, as she searched for answers about who she was and who she wanted to be. She endured oppression from her family and from strangers who considered her "weird." At 26, Michelle met a woman and fell in love, finally admitting to herself that she was a lesbian. This came at a time of turmoil within her family as they struggled with fact that her sister gave birth to a "half-Black baby":

My sister had a half-Black daughter which caused many problems between my mother and her siblings. Our entire family ceased all traditions around holidays and birthdays due to my mother's choice not to disown my sister.

The birth of Michelle's niece surprisingly gave her a true sense of family kinship. She says,

I feel like I'm actually someone's ancestor. . . . It's been healing for me in that a lot of my race issues that were taught to me by my mom as far as being racist, when I'm with my niece, I love her .

. . . there's moments when I realize I'm not really aware she's Black because that love transcends that.

Michelle did admit that she worried about her sister having a Black baby and the torment that she and the baby would face in their small Texas border town. Michelle commented that her sister was sometimes spit upon while walking down the street with her child.

Around this time, Michelle came out as a lesbian to her family and was accepted much more readily than she had expected. She began to read extensively about gay issues as well as gender issues, which she still considers a key part of her education. She said she feels accepted in the gay/lesbian community although she is starting to realize that there is oppression within the lesbian community, as there is everywhere else. "I realize issues such as whether or not you 'look' gay, how out you are in the world, how many straight friends you have, how many male friends you have, and classism all serve to divide this community."

At this point in her life, Michelle would like to take her love of writing and literature, which she majored in during her undergraduate years, and become a teacher. She admits she never really imagined herself becoming a teacher but in retrospect she have may have been headed in that direction all along:

I have a lot of teachers in my family and it just seems natural. When I started to explore that what what I wanted to do, looking through my history I could see like where I played school a lot. Like even in class, in elementary, I would draw little

boxes and I would have a math sections and spelling section and I'd sneak tests to my classmates who would take them. . . . They would come back to me and I would grade them, stuff like that.

At the time of this study, Michelle was substitute teaching for a major school district, which she found challenging and rewarding: "It's a good experience as far as discipline and having to deal with all that." She expressed both nervousness and excitement at becoming a high school English teacher and hoped to incorporate her love of multicultural literature into her teaching.

#### Barbara's Story

At the time of the study, Barbara was 49 years old. A white woman who grew up in the Midwest, she was married with two sons and worked at home as a consultant for a computer company. Barbara held a master's degree in math and wanted to become certified in secondary education to teach high school math. At first glance, Barbara seemed to be a typical white, middle-class suburban mom who loved to talk, but beneath that appearance I discovered an extremely intelligent and warm woman who was eager to learn.

Barbara described her childhood as very white, middle-class and Protestant. She felt that "any allusion to race or ethnicity was as disconnected from my reality as medieval knights or mermaids." In the seventh grade, this reality changed as her family moved to Chicago during the first rumblings of the Civil Rights Movement. "Although my school was still all white, I was introduced to religious

differentiation . . . we socialized freely across religious lines." During this time, Barbara was first exposed to Black America and to social injustice. Her father took her to hear Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. speak:

It was a very large audience of several thousand people, overwhelmingly Black. The style of the service was very, very different from what I was used to when I went to church. Combining the usual tone with the charisma of the speaker and the excitement of the congregation made for a very moving experience.

With her church, Barbara visited some "Chicago slums" as a group of churches sponsored a tour to increase the awareness of how Black people were living all around them. This was an extremely powerful event for Barbara as she observed "physical degradation like holes in the door where door knobs should be, lights that were just a bulb turned on by a string, evidence of rats and mice and sinks where water didn't run." Barbara left there feeling depressed and unable to comprehend how things would ever change.

Leaving Chicago after sixteen months, Barbara and her family returned to Iowa where she was once again cushioned by her all-white surroundings. She moved to California to attend university and decided she wanted to be an elementary school teacher. One of the first requirements she had to fulfill was to observe in a classroom for forty hours. She did this in a second grade classroom, which impacted her so much that she changed her mind about becoming a teacher:

The racial composition of the classroom was diverse; there were five Asian kids who were

reading at the fourth grade level and doing sixth grade math. There were five Hispanic kids who didn't speak enough English to keep track of what was going on in the classroom, so they were all sort of at the bottom and the rest of the class was Black. There wasn't a white kid in the class. The depressing thing was that except for the five Asian kids, the others were so hopelessly behind that by second grade you knew that they wouldn't make it and I just couldn't stand to keep going to such a hopeless setting.

This "hopelessness" caused Barbara to drop out of the education program and major in math, her true passion. Barbara admits that "to me, mathematics has always been a thing of intrinsic beauty. . . . I first remember feeling this in high school geometry which was about the same time that my girlfriends were losing their interest in math." Barbara was told by her girlfriends in high school that boys don't date girls who carry slide rules. She hid her slide rule and continued doing math anyway.

After looking for a job during a heavy recession, Barbara decided to go back to school and earn a master's degree in math. For the first time in her life, she felt discriminated against because she was a woman--in this case, a woman in the math community. Barbara felt that the all-male faculty in her department, combined with the subtle comments that women don't *do* math, were ways of attempting to push her out of the program. She did not, however, leave the program and graduated with a new sense of accomplishment and pride. Barbara had no problem finding a job as a woman with

a master's degree in math and worked full time for an engineering firm until she married and had children.

When her sons were born, Barbara realized that "I could not combine a career and being a mother." She worked part-time as she raised her boys who are now getting old enough that she feels she can have a life of her own again. Barbara has decided to work on her teaching credential because she wants to be in a profession that encourages the nurturing, mother side of her as well as the technical, mathematical side. She hopes to help students see the beauty in math as it relates to the real world and specifically, how it relates to their world.

### Themes

Three major themes emanated from the data, each containing sub-themes within them. Through our seminar, the major themes that emerged were: (a) what we learned; (b) race, power and privilege; and (c) narrative and autobiography as learning tools. Below each theme is discussed in more detail, including the sub themes within each section.

### What We Learned

We began this seminar with definitions of multicultural education, both of the participants and of major theorists (Ramsey and Banks). The intention of this was to have a starting point with which to work throughout the seminar. Within this theme, we first looked at what multicultural

education is and how we can incorporate it in the classroom. Enid Lee (1994) was a favorite of the participants as she gave concrete examples of how to incorporate anti-racist, multicultural education in the classroom. The participants kept asking *how* and we kept exploring what we thought it meant to have a multicultural classroom as well as how the concepts of diversity, authenticity, and inclusiveness fit in.

It quickly became apparent that all three participants felt that multicultural education is a *political and risky agenda*. They were turned off by the major theorists including Sleeter, McLaren and hooks, saying that they were "too political." The consensus of the women was that they did not have the energy or the time to "save the world" as these theorists seemed to require. Repeatedly the participants felt that they were being attacked by these theorists because they called for extreme measures-- changing one's lifestyle to truly embrace multicultural education -- and these women were not prepared to do that, at least not at the start of our seminar.

Because of this supposed extreme political agenda, there was a great deal of *resistance* to the entire notion of multicultural education throughout our seminar. Just when I felt a participant was growing and learning, she would sometimes revert back to blaming the theorists for being too extreme and not giving teachers who use a "foods and festivals" approach to multicultural education, a chance. Amy stated at one point that multicultural education seemed to be an "all or nothing" approach.

The most powerful and transformative session of our

seminar was the fifth session, which we devoted to gay/lesbian issues in the classroom. The discussions in this two-hour block seemed to give these participants a perspective on multicultural education that they had not considered before, and it was a very positive experience. This session did, however, highlight the prospect that *multicultural education is risky*. These women expressed nervousness about the thought of trying to incorporate any curriculum that touched upon gay/lesbian discussions. As a lesbian, for Michelle this brought up fears of being "found out" by teachers, parents and administrators and that by including any gay/lesbian curriculum in the classroom she would be seen as trying to promote her personal agenda.

#### Race, Power and Privilege

The theme of race, power and privilege can be seen throughout our seminar in all data sources. The topic of race was discussed from day one and power and privilege followed in the subsequent sessions. We began to really delve into these issues by discussing *White Racial Identity Theory*. We read about the different levels of white racial identity from Tatum (1992) and read examples of preservice teachers discussing whiteness from McIntyre (1997). The three women were asked to think about their own racial identities and where they saw themselves along the continuum which proved to be a very interesting lesson in self-analysis.

*Racism* was interwoven deeply in our discussions and in the participants' writings. There was a lot of discussion of

what racism is and how to avoid it as well as personal experiences with racism. The participants all claimed to want to combat racism but at very different levels. Some participants had ingrained racism which they were attempting to eliminate. McIntyre's (1997) excerpts of white teachers discussing race helped with these attempts as we tried to unpack where stereotypes and bigotry come from and what to do with that knowledge.

After reading McIntosh's (1989) article, the term *white privilege* became a permanent part of the participants' vocabulary. All three women were appreciative of the article, expressing different levels of emotion in relation to the notion of white privilege. Although they accepted their own privilege as white women, there were many instances of denial of that privilege, feelings of white guilt and feelings of "culturelessness" as white women. This was a difficult topic for these participants and some accepted it much more willingly than others.

#### Narrative and Autobiography as Learning Tools

This seminar was structured around the use of life histories, narratives and autobiographies to hear authentic voices discussing multicultural education and to analyze our own stories and beliefs about this subject as well. The *seminar impact* was felt as participants' analyzed others' narratives about teaching and schooling experiences. The impact was not always comfortable but seemed to be appreciated. By the end of the seminar, all three participants seemed eager to continue discussions like the

ones we had been having and they took charge of setting up an e-mail listserve to do just that.

With the use of narratives and autobiography, often came *breakthroughs* in the participants' thinking. By breakthroughs I am referring to instances in which a participant delved into a topic that she would not have delved into at the beginning of the seminar. Some of these breakthroughs came with the *rewriting of their autobiographies*, which was a powerful assignment that each participant took on in a different manner. Participants attempted to resee their lives taking into consideration what we had discussed throughout the seminar. Most often this reseeing involved the topics of white privilege, white racial identity, and white guilt. It was only with the use of narrative, life histories and autobiographies that these breakthroughs and moments of engagement seemed to appear.

#### Framing the Cases

Chapter five will attempt to frame three separate cases, one on each participant using the three themes mentioned above. Each case will be considered individually as well as compared with the other cases to create a cohesive set of findings.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## FINDINGS: THE CASES OF AMY, MICHELLE AND BARBARA

In this chapter, I will present the cases of the three participants in relation to the themes described in chapter four. All three cases are very individual yet often overlap because of the heavy emphasis on collaborative conversations. I will begin explaining my findings with the case of Amy, which is the shortest case due to her absences and frequent lack of participation in class, which was described earlier.

The Case of Amy: "I Should Treat Others the Way I Want to be Treated"

What We LearnedMulticultural Education: What Is It and How do we Incorporate it in the Classroom?

Amy, who was seeking a teaching certification for early childhood education, entered our seminar with some background knowledge of multicultural education that she had gained in a previous course that focused a few class periods on diversity. In our first session, the three participants were asked to draw a concept map or web that had the term *multicultural education* in the middle of the map/web. Amy's diagram was very simple and concise and included eight concepts in relation to multicultural education: diversity; fairness; teaching aimed at the children being taught; awareness; encouraging differences; respecting differences; becoming familiar with your own culture; and exploring other cultures.

When we began to discuss what we felt multicultural education really was, Amy had very little to say although what she did say was concise and relevant:

A goal [of multicultural education] would be a curriculum that works for all, not just for certain kids . . . not only considering the teaching, but the children being taught.

Coming from the perspective of a preschool teacher, much of Amy's concern about multicultural education was about teaching children respect. Over the course of our seminar, Amy continued to claim that if we teach children to respect each other at a young age this will help greatly to fight racism and discrimination. Amy's mantra seemed to be a version of the golden rule that "we need to treat others the way we want to be treated."

Multicultural Education is a Political and Risky Agenda:  
"It's Very All or Nothing"

One of the main concerns all three participants had about multicultural education was its political nature. Amy was intimidated by the call for action that many of the theorists we read were asking for. After reading Sleeter and McLaren's (1995) introduction to Multicultural Education, Critical Pedagogy and the Politics of Difference, Amy and the others felt "attacked" by terminology that made them uncomfortable and what Amy referred to as a "very all or nothing" attitude about multicultural education:

One part of the article which stood out to me, was when they were talking about how many white

teachers have pulled multicultural education away from social struggles and redefined it to mean the celebration of ethnic foods and festivals. This talked to me because it's kind of what I thought of as multicultural education until now . . . . I do think that for certain reasons, learning about other cultures foods and celebrations is a starting point to find some similarities between people.

This resistance to the notion that using a "foods and festivals" approach to multicultural education was not acceptable, was difficult for Amy to accept. On numerous occasions she kept asking what was "so wrong" with this approach, and it wasn't until we read a more pedagogy-oriented article, by Enid Lee<sup>3</sup>, that she slowly began to accept that foods and festivals are a starting point, but that we must build upon that in order to do justice to a certain group of people.

The idea of multicultural education being "risky" came about during a session completely devoted to gay/lesbian issues in the classroom. Amy felt a lot of compassion toward gay teens and the challenges they face. She wrote in her journal that, "This [article about gay issues in the classroom] was eye opening for me because I never considered the problems of gay children when thinking about multicultural education." Although Amy seemed concerned with this issue, it also appeared that her perceptions of being gay or lesbian were somewhat skewed:

I think that people are afraid to accept

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<sup>3</sup> Lee, E. (1994). Taking multicultural, antiracist education seriously. In B. Bigelow, L. Christensen, S. Karp, B. Miner and B. Peterson (Eds.), *Rethinking our classrooms: Teaching for equity and social justice* (pp.19-23). Rethinking Schools Ltd.

homosexuality because there is such a fear of it, and the feeling that if we accept it and say it is ok, then more kids will become gay.

This statement insinuates that children are *choosing* to be gay, and that the more we accept homosexuality, the more children will make this choice. Amy did write about her personal feelings about homosexuality, in a later journal entry, which might explain some of her preconceptions:

Personally, I struggle with this [homosexuality]. I think that the violence and isolation that these kids are going through is very wrong and should not happen, but at the same time, I do have a problem with the lifestyle. I just do not agree with it, so how do I learn to put that aside and just focus on the child? I think I will have to do more reading on this one.

Amy's willingness to admit her personal bias yet search for an answer to how to move beyond that bias, demonstrates that she was and is willing to change and to learn more about gay/lesbian children and how to approach gay/lesbian issues in the classroom. This example is very typical of Amy's entire approach to this seminar. Although she may not have agreed with things said, or with the political nature of some of the writings we read, she was always willing to hear more and promised to think about subjects she was not well versed in. Amy's conceptions of the world were very naive at times and I think that many of the topics we discussed were new and sometimes intimidating to her.

Race, Power and PrivilegeWhite Racial Identity

When discussing white racial identity, the participants were asked to write about where they saw themselves along the continuum of racial identity that we had read. This stage theory claims that white racial identity can be analyzed along a continuum beginning with the Contact Stage and ending with Autonomy. All three participants saw themselves moving along the continuum during the course, not necessarily in a linear fashion, but rather fluctuating between stages. Amy claimed to be having a very "hard time with the concept of white racial identity development continuum" and even wrote that it brought her to tears after class one day. After asking her about this incident, she told me that she felt there was tension in our class which was directed at her. Looking back at my memos and trying desperately to find some taped discussion of this tension directed at her, I could not find it. I now think that the tension Amy felt was one within herself about the notion of white privilege and identity that we *all* felt during our discussions.

In her writing assignment about white racial identity, Amy wrote:

I would place myself somewhere between the Disintegration and Reintegration stage. I see the stage fluctuating as this course continues. At times I feel like I'm just at the Contact stage because in some ways I really have had very little exposure to other cultures and races. At times I see myself in the Immersion/Emmersion stage as I

struggle to learn more about white privilege and what I must do in order to make a personal contribution to the fight against racism. I'm also finding that the stage of the continuum that I am in depends on the issue at hand.

Amy's movement from one stage of white racial identity to the next, left me feeling that she was still very unclear about her own white racial identity. A number of times during our discussions she alluded to the notion of white culturelessness. As we discussed cultural practices we had in our families, she remarked that her Mexican in-laws seemed to have many Christmas and holiday traditions whereas "It seems like we [white people] don't have any." This admission of a white culturelessness was about as deep as Amy would reach within her racial identity, leaving much room for self-exploration.

In order for Amy to commit more to exploring her racial identity, she would need to admit facts about herself that were uncomfortable, such as the unearned privileges that come with being white. At this middle point in the seminar, Amy was not willing to do that, although she did begin to delve a little more deeply when we discussed white privilege and when the topic of racism in general emerged. A common theme with all three preservice teachers seemed to be that when discussing racism and privilege, those topics were not as threatening as was identifying one's own identity, especially as a white person.

Racism and White Privilege

The topic of racism permeated our discussions throughout the course and I found it was important to differentiate between the terms "racism" and "prejudice," using Tatum's (1992) work to do so. This clarification seemed to help the participants decipher between instances that had to do with race and instances that did not. When reading excerpts from McIntyre's (1997) study of white preservice teachers and their conversations about whiteness, I asked the participants to discuss what they had read. One of the excerpts was a conversation about a comment one of the white preservice teachers had heard, stating that Black people are poor tippers in restaurants. Amy and the others discussed what they thought about these racist remarks and where they may have originated, but what was interesting to me was that Amy claimed she had never heard these types of racist comments before. She stated, "I just never heard any comments like this . . . . I can't imagine people being so blatant."

Amy's statement about never hearing racist comments seemed to emphasize her sheltered personal background as well as her privilege as a white person. The notion of white privilege seemed clear to her yet every time she admitted that it was in fact there, she would distance herself from it, stating that she was not part of the problem:

While the article [about white privilege] is disturbing in many ways, I cannot deny its truth. Being white has afforded me certain advantages that I did nothing to earn. On the other hand though, being who I am has also provided me with

disadvantages that I did nothing to deserve. I'd like to think that there is a neutral ground somewhere where advantage and disadvantage are meaningless, but I'm not sure there is or ever could be such a place. . . . It's very hard for me to accept that white privilege is something that I have to be ashamed of. White privilege is a concept that takes time and effort to incorporate into my daily life and thoughts. It is something that I am currently struggling with and I will continue to struggle with because though I realize it's the truth, I want to think I'm not part of the racism simply because I'm white . . . white privilege is an extra burden of guilt that I simply cannot carry around right now.

After reading this journal entry, I wrote back to Amy that she indeed should not feel guilty for being white especially if she is an advocate of anti-racism. White guilt seems to be a hurdle for individuals to get over before they can in fact embrace the concept of white privilege. In her statement, Amy claimed that she did not have the strength to deal with this issue at that moment and she clearly felt burdened by the idea of white privilege.

Amy's personal struggles during our seminar definitely contributed to her lack of willingness to delve in and explore her racial identity as well as her feelings about white privilege. She had recently divorced, being left with two young children and not having a job, and she lost a close family member three weeks into our course. Amy commented at one point that, "I just don't have the energy to combat

racism in a major way." It is difficult to know if her personal circumstances made Amy feel this way, or if she had not had these obstacles would she have had the energy to combat racism. I personally feel that this is also a common theme in preservice teachers' reaction to multicultural education, as all three participants made similar comments about not having time to "save the world." It was through a number of narratives by different individuals, that I think I finally emphasized the point that no one is expecting them to save the world, just to do their part to make it that much more equitable.

### Narrative and Autobiography as a Learning Tool

#### Seminar Impact

The purpose of using narratives and autobiography during this seminar was to hear authentic voices representing the different aspects of multicultural education. I felt that it was imperative for the participants of our seminar, and of this study, to explore their own autobiographies and to listen to the stories of others as a way of understanding issues of race, privilege, discrimination, education, and schooling. Toward the end of our meetings, I asked the participants why they felt I had chosen to put such a strong emphasis on narratives or stories. Amy responded, "I'm thinking that's one way to underline things that people have come to sort of focus on what we all have in common."

What I found most interesting was the openness to these narratives and the participants' willingness to analyze and

discuss issues of multicultural education when there was a teaching story or narrative involved. If only theory was being discussed, Amy and the others would get defensive and feel threatened by the "political" nature of the writing, but if there was a human story attached, they seemed to respond much more enthusiastically.

Amy continually pointed out important issues in the narratives and questioned some as well. In the following example, we had just read a teaching case of a teacher coming to terms with her own prejudices:

Anita: . . . What do you think about her comment on the first page, her encounter with wanting to hug a [Black] student and feeling something holding her back and really admitting to herself am I prejudiced and the answer came up yes?

Amy: That probably took a lot of guts to admit that.

Anita: and I think she's being really really self corrective and really looking at who she is, which is not easy, especially when you're working in a school that's probably predominantly Black. She's definitely reflecting a lot on herself and her situation, who she is, and wants the best for these kids.

Amy: That's on the first page too and I'm not sure if I liked it or not. It just really stood out that, "However urban or not, deficient or not, they

were kids in my classroom and I believe I can make a difference." I'd like to believe in the picture that I could make a difference to the kids in my class. I'm kind of uncomfortable about her saying "urban or not, deficient or not." Although they are urban and they probably have been labeled deficient, that she could fix them. I don't know. I like part of it and part of it I'm uncomfortable with.

Here Amy pointed out an important example of this teacher's wording which reflected her true feelings about teaching this group of students. She commented that the wording made her uncomfortable, which demonstrated Amy's ability to hear what was going on with this teacher.

It was encouraging to hear Amy, who was normally so quiet, open up during the discussions of these narratives. After reading parts of Richard Rodriguez' *Always Running*, Amy again became more animated, telling the class that the Rodriguez' situation during his high school years, was unfair and unjust: "It's like they [administrators] make these molds that there was no way that you could break out of." Amy was consistently surprised by the racism and inequities that minorities faced during their schooling, which also brought up the issue again of her sheltered background.

Amy's sheltered upbringing was an example of how narratives can also make connections to students' life histories, making them more aware of their own experiences, or lack of experiences, with racism, privilege and prejudice. One connection that Amy made about her upbringing was that as a female, there were certain expectations of her during her

schooling. Compared to Rodriguez and others we read about who fought against the system, Amy told us that she was taught not to fight:

I was always just taught that girls don't make a fuss. You just do what you're told to do and everything will be smooth and it will be OK. It's a hard thing to buck too and I struggle with that now.

Amy's recognition that these expectations still affect her is a poignant example of how the use of narratives can help teachers to analyze their lives and use that knowledge to make them better teachers. The hope would be that Amy would use this information to her advantage when dealing with girls in her classroom.

### Breakthroughs and Rewriting Autobiographies

Amy had a difficult time writing and rewriting her autobiography. She felt that at this difficult time in her life, it was often just too painful to write down her true feelings. "I just barely thought of it [writing her autobiography] because it would hurt too much." By the end of the seminar, and in her rewriting of her autobiography, Amy had a lot more to say about her personal experiences as well as the impact our seminar had on her thinking:

After completing the readings and assignments for this course, I feel like I have just skimmed the surface, but I also feel like my eyes have been opened to new things. I am more aware of multicultural issues and my responsibility as a

teacher to make changes to improve education for all children. I think I will be able to do this in my classroom. However, that being said, this has been one of the most (maybe the most) difficult courses I have ever taken. The materials and readings were not difficult to comprehend or read, but the content was extremely hard to internalize, more than any other class I have ever taken. There were times when I really didn't know if I could make it through this one. My personal circumstances have been extremely difficult during this course, so I'm sure that had something to do with it. I usually left class feeling very much at odds with myself and wondering why I was feeling so badly when I was trying to do something good. I think it is something I will continue to struggle with as I continue with my education.

This was the extent of Amy's "breakthrough" during our seminar. She realized that these issues were difficult and painful but also admitted that at this point in her life, it was too hard to face them. I hope that Amy will continue to interrogate and analyze her beliefs of multicultural education, but she seems more inclined to retreat from such self-analysis. Amy will most likely have personal obstacles throughout her life which could be used as an excuse for not confronting her real perceptions of race and identity.

Amy's attitude toward multicultural education remained, until the end of our seminar, one of naive optimism. She continued to profess that if we "teach children to treat others the way they want to be treated," we will have a

harmonious world. Her comments above, however, demonstrate that she is aware of the issues that she still needs to work on and that those issues are difficult and often painful to face. All three participants felt that our seminar required a lot of soul-searching which also required time and energy that Amy seemed to lack at this point in her life. Unlike Amy, Michelle seemed to transform her attitudes and beliefs before our very eyes. The case of Michelle, which follows next, is the most dramatic of the three cases.

The Case of Michelle: "I am painfully aware of how many issues I have around the 'isms'"

#### What We Learned

#### Multicultural Education: What is it and How Do we Incorporate it in the Classroom?

Michelle came to our seminar with a bachelor's degree in English and a love of multicultural literature. She had enrolled in Baillie College to earn both a master's degree in education and a secondary teaching certificate. At the beginning of this study, Michelle had a strong background in what multicultural education is and how she visualized using multicultural literature in her classroom, as she told us in our first discussion:

As far as having a multicultural classroom? Just trying to be inclusive and how to have different opinions . . . you don't have all white male authors and try to have different stories about different kinds of people and to try to have sources in the classroom that the students can identify with, not having all women or all men.

Michelle also had a firm understanding of the injustices in a lot of curriculum materials which do not embrace a multicultural perspective. In our first session she claimed, "To be truly multicultural it has to be authentic in some way. It can't be like the old history books, where the white man tells about slavery in two paragraphs. It has to be like a complete, authentic, telling." Along with the concern of authenticity, Michelle questioned, from the very beginning, how to include literature that is multicultural without falling into the trap of including the literature just to fit a quota of "non-white" literature:

But when I think about curriculum and lesson plans, and to have to sit down and say, here's my Black author, here's my white author, here's my woman, here's my Black woman, you know that just seems really inauthentic to me but if I love Japanese literature, how fair is it of me to have you know, ten Japanese authors? So I have to be aware.

Although Michelle came into our first session enthusiastically with an understanding of authenticity and a critical perspective on teaching multicultural literature, by our second session her enthusiasm began to dwindle as she listened to the other students question the theorists we were reading. Michelle also began to question the theorists and became visually upset at some of the concepts we read about. Like Amy, Michelle felt personally "attacked" by Sleeter and McLaren (1995):

But part of this article that I felt the most personal attacked was on page 24: "We cannot call for solidarity across racial lines and at the same

time continue to promote our own interests first. Bridging this division will also require middle class people to question the ideology of individual mobility and material acquisition that allows us to move to the suburbs and into corporate offices leaving the masses behind." And there's where I, that was like, you know, if I am working, you know, to have a home and to have everything I need that I should be putting my energy elsewhere and that by me, you know, owning a home and maybe owning a home in the suburbs and buying a car and all the material things that I'm like helping to exploit the people in the factories and the poor masses and how my promotion in class or whatever is hurting others.

Michelle was supported by Amy and Barbara when she made this statement, encouraging again the attitude that "If we can't save the world, why do this stuff?" Michelle seemed to reverse herself dramatically from this attitude to one of complete support of the the multicultural theorists' position. During one session, Michelle would praise bell hooks, and during the next session she would label bell hooks as egotistical and too radical. These changes in opinion would continue throughout our seminar and across many different topics. Her opinions seemed to change but there was growth within that change as we heard her challenge her own preconceptions throughout the seminar.

Multicultural Education is a Political and Risky Agenda

One area in which Michelle did not change her opinion was that multicultural education is both political and risky. Michelle sometimes felt "attacked" by the political nature of multicultural education, as was mentioned above, but she always felt that it was "risky." This riskiness was magnified during our session surrounding gay/lesbian issues in the classroom for all of the participants, but was even more so for Michelle. In the second session of the seminar, Michelle came out as a lesbian to the class, which made our session on gay/lesbian issues very powerful for her. She wrote in her journal:

I don't know if I've ever attended a class in my life that spent more than 5 minutes talking about homosexuality. That is really painful for me to realize that. I mean I'm 28 years old and I've been in school for almost twenty years, and I've never had a class where homosexuality was mentioned. Even in literature courses when talking about writers' biographical information. Come to think of it, I can't remember talking about it in Psychology 101, which was taught by a lesbian. No wonder I took so long to figure out I was gay. Thanks for doing this class on gay issues.

During this session, Michelle began to question the riskiness of being a gay teacher in a time when most teachers are not "out" to their students. She worried about being "found out" and how that might affect her career, as well as how being a lesbian would affect her teaching:

. . . I sort of got in like my own personal struggle with being a teacher and being out and what's really appropriate. You know, like nobody needs to know my personal business yet the gay youth need to know that there are gay people in the world so that they don't slit their wrists, which happens a lot. So I have this personal struggle and this was interesting because it [an article on gay issues in the classroom<sup>1</sup>] goes through their view from being out to like in the school organizations and how if you're a gay teacher how that affects your teaching. Which I thought was important because a lot of times like a lot of people, a lot of my friends are gay and so like how does that limit and how does that isolate me and how does it affect my teaching. That whole issue of surrounding yourself with people like yourself, but yet you know that's my community . . . . If you're Catholic, you know, you want to have Catholics [as friends] because you have this in common but if all your friends are Catholic then how does that affect you?

Michelle questioned both the effect of being a lesbian on her teaching as well as how others would perceive her teaching if they knew she was a lesbian. One major concern for her was, "If you're actually gay, then there's like this whole other of like, converting, of being a molester, so I

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<sup>1</sup>Pohan, C.A. & Bailey, N.J. (1997). Opening the closet: Multiculturalism that is fully inclusive. *Multicultural Education* 5(1), 12-15.

feel really paranoid." When Michelle made this statement I empathized with her, having been familiar with more than one teacher who was afraid to be openly gay and went so far as to create a fictitious partner of the opposite sex. This information did not surprise Michelle, as she had heard of teachers doing just that to protect themselves from homophobic parents and teachers or administrators.

All of these issues surrounding gay/lesbian topics in the classroom generated a lot of thought on Michelle's part. All of the discussions were deeply embedded in multicultural education theory and seemed to be strong connecting points for her to embrace the concepts of multicultural education. This session on gay/lesbian topics seemed to be a turning point for Michelle, as she felt herself represented and heard as a lesbian and as a gay teacher.

One of the activities we did during the class session on gay/lesbian curriculum was watch part of a video, *It's Elementary*, which documented a number of school districts integrating a curriculum on gay/lesbian issues into their classrooms. This documentary was powerful and moving, showing both the misconceptions about homosexuality which children had and the celebration of homosexuality once the concepts were understood. As we viewed the video, Michelle felt the following, which she logged in her journal:

Tonight we had our class on gay issues in the classroom. The film was very powerful. It made me realize things I hadn't been aware of, even as a gay person. I did find myself holding my breath a lot throughout the film because I kept waiting for a parent to come on screen and start yelling or for

a principal to be arrested. I was shocked that they were discussing homosexuality with young children. I kept waiting for someone to scream child molestation. I was sad to see the difference between the young kids and the older kids. The young kids were so much more open-minded. I had a really powerful experience when another student spoke up about the film and talking to her kids about gays. She was actually moved to tears and caught me totally by surprise. I have lots of issues with this woman and had once again pegged her as an upper class white woman. I had been struggling with it all term. When I saw her truly moved about not knowing how to talk to her kids about gays I saw her as human again, instead of as other. I also realized that I don't have a lot of advice to give to anyone who wants to be a gay ally.

Michelle's recognition that she did not have the information to pass on to someone about homosexuality was one that she quickly changed. Michelle made a point to become an ally for gays and lesbians by seeking information on the internet, through community groups in which she was involved, and from articles and books I recommended for her. The fact that Barbara, who is the student Michelle mentions in her log, came to Michelle for help in addressing issues of homosexuality with her own children, was a turning point for their relationship. This will be discussed further within Barbara's case study, but I too noticed this exchange and wrote the following in an analytic memo:

Great class tonight. Just now in the parking lot Barbara was telling Michelle how after last weeks' class she went home and asked her kids if they knew anything about gays and lesbians--they said no and she wondered what to do next. I felt good that the class had affected her enough to really think about what her kids were seeing and hearing in relation to homosexuality.

Although Michelle embraced the opportunity to be an ally for gays and lesbians, the concept of being an ally for students in this area still was very frightening for her. Michelle worried about having the kinds of discussions portrayed in *It's Elementary*<sup>5</sup> with her own students. In reference to the film she explained: "I was really surprised at how young those kids were. I wouldn't consider talking to them about it [homosexuality]. That just seems so dangerous to me." Michelle worried about "how many parents you're going to have yelling at you." This notion of "dangerous" curriculum was a common theme for all three participants regarding not only gay/lesbian discussions in the classroom, but often topics of race and discrimination as well. Michelle felt that discussing gay/lesbian issues in the classroom was dangerous, although her own comments and perceptions of race and discrimination often seemed dangerous to me as well, as will be discussed in the next section.

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#### Race, Power and Privilege

<sup>5</sup> *It's Elementary* (1996) is a film demonstrating what happens when teachers talk about gays and lesbians with their students. In the film, students are asked what they know about gays/lesbians as well as to consider topics surrounding homosexuality. Footage includes in-class discussions in six different elementary and middle schools as well as teachers and parents sharing their opinions about such a curriculum.

Race, Power and PrivilegeWhite Racial Identity

In Chapter four I provided a brief description of the participants' life histories, which included Michelle's background growing up in a Texas border town. Michelle grew up as a minority in a predominantly Mexican-American community, feeling a lot of racism directed at her. She also grew up with a mother who Michelle claimed was very racist, instilling feelings of confusion in Michelle about her race and how to perceive and interact with those of different races. The discussions we had in our seminar regarding white racial identity and whiteness in general, seemed transformative for Michelle as she explored her own racial identity honestly and intensely. Like the other participants, she found herself fluctuating from one stage to the next, especially during the course of our seminar:

I think I've always had some amount of the disintegration stage in my life. I think the classwork we did on "whiteness" put me into a deeper degree of disintegration. This class has helped me move to pseudo-independent stage in that I am abandoning beliefs in white superiority and feel some alienation from whites; but I have not buddied up to any minorities. This class has helped me experience the immersion/emmersion stage, as far as learning correct information about white allies and minorities. To a very slight degree I've achieved some autonomy. I have made some peace with being white and have had some noticeably

different interactions with people of color at work. I don't see the stages as linear, I think this course has deepened each stage for me. I think as a teacher I need to be at the immersion/emmersion stage.

Michelle felt that she fluctuated from one stage of racial identity to the next during our seminar, but also that she fluctuated depending on the topic being discussed. I watched Michelle move through the continuum of white racial identity very quickly as she struggled with issues of white privilege and white guilt then broke through to begin to be at peace with being white and attempt to be a white anti-racist ally. At the start of our seminar this was not the case as Michelle struggled with her own racism and whiteness as discussed below.

#### Racism and White Privilege

There is one instance, during our seminar, that stands out as a kind of starting point for Michelle regarding racism. As she questioned whether she in fact was racist and whether her upbringing had instilled racist beliefs within her, bits of conversation surfaced which would shock the rest of us in the class. I say this not to use Michelle's words against her, but rather to illuminate how far she came during our seminar. Michelle was aware that her comments were surprising, and, as is apparent in the following dialogue, she tried to understand why they so surprised others.

The following exchange was in response to Michelle's explanation of what had happened the previous day in a

predominantly Mexican-American classroom in which she was substitute teaching. Michelle told us that she was trying to take roll but could not get the attention of her students. She then attempted to say their names "in Spanish," which I assume meant with a Spanish pronunciation, when all of a sudden the students were quiet and attentive:

Michelle: A couple of them were bad but you know, but yeah everybody sat down and it got quiet and answered me. So it worked. But I just question, you know, that this is sort of manipulative in a way to me, using the language to get them to do something. But I don't know. I mean like, you know, is it manipulative, I mean they *know* English.

Barbara: Manipulative is not the right word.

Michelle: I think I was shocked by the amount of power I had instantly. It threw me off. I was like whoa. So if I just know a bunch of Spanish then, you know, I do better as a teacher of Spanish kids?

Amy: Maybe they took it as a sign that you had respect for them too. I think we're so into [the idea that] kids have to respect us but we forget that we need to respect them back. You give that back to them.

Anita: I think especially at P. High there's a lot of sense of pride of culture and pride of being

Latino or being Native American. And when a white teacher in particular comes in and makes that effort I think to them it's a way of saying I respect you and I respect your culture and where you're coming from.

Barbara: I think that what you were saying was my authority will derive from respect, not power.

Michelle: But I don't know if that was my motivation. I think I was just grasping. How can I get them to answer me, you know, and I just started grasping at things. So I don't know if I was really thinking consciously, you know. I don't know what my motivation was.

Barbara: You'd probably be surprised at how many substitutes don't even want to bother with their names let alone names in native tongue.

I found this exchange extremely interesting because Michelle seemed unaware of the power of language, yet the language she used to describe this incident was telling. Michelle questioned whether her motives, and her students', were "manipulative" and Barbara sharply answered that manipulative was not the right word. Michelle was questioning her own beliefs and the other two participants and I were carefully choosing our words to let Michelle know why the students probably quieted down when spoken to in Spanish. I remember wanting to lecture about the connection

between language and identity but I tried to let Barbara and Amy have the floor instead. After this class I wrote, "An interesting comment was made by Michelle in class . . . interesting choice of words and she was very sincerely perplexed by why the use of their [students'] own native language would command instant respect."

After the conversation above occurred, Michelle began to question what it meant to be white, and particularly what it meant to be a white teacher. When exploring these questions, Michelle began to feel, as do many white people, that she was "cultureless," as is demonstrated in this oral excerpt:

White people, especially in America, we are all mixed and so, to embrace that, that can be overwhelming and so what do you grab from for your holidays and, I mean, I'm part Native American, part French, part German, part Norwegian, and this isn't very far back either and where do I draw from, you know what do I cook, what is my ceremony? [inaudible] white and dominant and not realize that, like my great, great, great, great aunt or whatever was Black, and what does that mean?

Here Michelle was visibly moving into the immersion/emersion stage of white racial identity. She was attempting to put together a positive white identity and facing many roadblocks on the way. Having been involved in Wicca, as was mentioned earlier, Michelle felt a strong connection between identity and ritual, which is why she connected her lack of culture to her lack of ritual. When reading Maya Angelou's *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* during our seminar, Michelle expressed her feelings of

culturelessness in comparison to Angelou's strong connection with her own culture. In the conversation below we were discussing a scene in Angelou's book in which the African-American community had banded together to celebrate the graduation of their young children from elementary to middle school, regardless of the white principal who tried to ruin the ceremony:

Michelle: I thought of rites of passage, when I read about her [Angelou's] rites of passage, that's something . . . I'm so jealous when I read stuff like that. I mean the Roman Catholic rites of passage I went through meant nothing to me. They were so hard. I'm jealous of that.

Barbara: Maybe that's back to the white culture being so oddly defined.

Anita: Cultureless? I think that's the word you used.

Michelle: Yeah.

As Michelle continued to understand her whiteness, she would encounter moments of defensiveness about being white. After I read the children's book *Encounter* to the class, Michelle made an important realization about her racial identity. *Encounter* (1992) is the telling of Columbus' arrival in the West Indies, told from the point of view of a young Taino Indian boy. I shared this book with the class as an example of anti-racist, multicultural literature and to

demonstrate how certain curricula can bring people who have been marginalized in the past, into the center of the curriculum. I was once again surprised at the negative reaction the students had to this rendition of Columbus' story. Michelle's reaction to *Encounter* was:

I was thinking about the book [*Encounter*] and how it made me feel attacked as a white person. Now I'm thinking maybe it stirred up feelings around being taken advantage of and exploited by those in power; or anyone at all, for that matter. It seems that the peace loving cultures always welcome in the exploiters and offer them the best treatment. Then the exploiters do nothing to honor the gifts that have been bestowed upon them.

Although her use of a phrase like "peace loving cultures" demonstrates some deeply embedded stereotypes, Michelle clearly was beginning to question her feelings of defensiveness surrounding being white. When she had a defensive feeling, such as after hearing *Encounter*, she would analyze those feelings and usually conclude that her defensiveness stemmed from deeper issues. In the same journal entry as above, she claimed:

Clearly I feel conflicted. I don't identify with the dominant culture in values and lifestyle, yet I was raised white, so I belong to the group, affected . . . .

I wouldn't mind being white if I could identify with something about it.

The lack of connection with being white that Michelle felt during our seminar is a common feeling for many white

people because race and white racial privilege are unmarked--invisible--to them. For Michelle, it was the discussion .. specifically about white privilege that seemed to be breaking point between feeling cultureless and guilty to addressing privilege and moving on. As we read McIntosh's (1989) article<sup>6</sup> on white privilege, Michelle continued to explore her own privilege and how that affected her day to day life. In McIntosh's article, she shares 26 very basic privileges that white people experience every day illuminating the injustice that non-white people don't share those privileges. In response to the article Michelle wrote:

McIntosh's list really brought racism to a more personal and identifiable level. To think about what kinds of things I don't have to carry with me everyday because I'm white is upsetting. Even if a Black person isn't conscious of these 26 things, they know on some level most likely. What a load to carry each day!

With this recognition of white privilege came feelings of frustration for Michelle as she began to realize others' lack of understanding white privilege. After reading an excerpt from McIntyre's (1997) *Making Meaning of Whiteness*, of white preservice teachers discussing privilege, Michelle vented her frustration to us:

This one [excerpt] just drove me crazy because it's like, I highlighted where [the student] says "I just want somebody else to be able to have privilege too." Privilege can't exist, period,

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<sup>6</sup> McIntosh, P. (1989). White privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. *Peace and Freedom* (July/August).

unless somebody is not privileged. I mean everybody can't be privileged. Either everybody is equal or somebody is privileged and somebody is not. So they [these preservice teachers] don't even like grasp the concept of privilege. That just drove me nuts.

As we discussed Michelle's observation of this excerpt, she began to make personal connections with issues of privilege. As a lesbian Michelle claimed that, "There's no reason it [privilege] can't be taken away." What Michelle meant here was that if she was "found out" as being a lesbian, she might lose her job or be shunned by her neighbors. Michelle also connected the issue of privilege with her sister who, as mentioned earlier, had a child with an African-American man and was ostracized by her community. Regarding her sister Michelle said:

You know, there's no reason it [privilege] couldn't be taken away. You know? My sister deals with that. She goes places with her Black boyfriend and she, you know, she gets stuff taken off of her, her privilege, where if she goes by herself you know into a restaurant she has that privilege. So just that kind of thing or like you know we didn't do anything to earn any of this. We were just born with this privilege. It would be hard if you didn't have it all.

As Michelle made connections with her own life and the privileges she had been accorded, the importance of an association between our life histories and our beliefs of anti-racist, multicultural education was reaffirmed. All of

the topics we discussed in our seminar seemed to connect with the participants' lives and it was this connection that made all of us more engaged and committed to the class. As will be discussed in the following section, the use of autobiography and narrative as a learning tool was imperative for the participants and myself to genuinely learn and understand better the issues of race, racial identity, multicultural education, and whiteness.

### Narrative and Autobiography as Learning Tools

#### Seminar Impact

Although all three participants seemed to be more engaged in the literature we read and discussed when it was in the form of a narrative, Michelle did not always embrace this use of personal stories in our seminar. After reading her journal, I documented in my own memo that "Michelle wrote in her log that she always feels the discussions [in our seminar] get personal for her and that she wishes the class would get more intellectual--interesting how our stories are perceived as 'unintellectual'." Michelle's feeling that our own and others' stories were not intellectual learning materials, seemed to change as we read stories of schooling experiences, teaching cases and shared our own histories.

After reading parts of Rodriguez' *Always Running*, Michelle made connections between his story and some of the theory we had been reading:

One of the things that I really liked about this is the multicultural piece which kinds of ties in with

that thread thing we were talking about is that, you know, even though he was oppressed because of his race you can still look at he's in a situation where he has no support and even when he wants to go beyond what's expected of him he has no support and he's robbing and he's still going to the library. I just thought that was amazing. That was really beautiful.

Michelle also began to feel deeply the experiences that Rodriguez had encountered as a Latino adolescent who was tracked by the school administration regardless of his interests or ability. Below is Michelle's reaction to an excerpt describing what happened when Rodriguez tried to get into a photography class for which the administration did not feel he was "suited:"

To me it was like deliberate racist, that moment where, "sorry, classes are full." That's like prolonged racism. It's not subconscious or, you know, it's like prolonged "sorry." You know. That just about made me really angry. That person had to know exactly what they were doing.

Michelle grew to think of narratives as more "intellectual" as our seminar went on, and she even began to think of narratives as an important aspect of learning about multicultural education. During one of the final seminars, I asked the three participants why they felt I had put such an emphasis on narrative and autobiography for this class. In response to this question, Michelle stated, "I mean this [narratives/stories] makes it relevant if you can hear two people's stories, give them meaning, instead of like reading

my textbook that has those definitions of racism and the statistics and just really impersonal." This response supported my opinion that the use of narratives and autobiographies could really help preservice teachers analyze their own beliefs about multicultural education. Since there was such an initial resistance to some of the multicultural theorists, this use of stories and narratives helped to put a face to these theories.

As I asked the participants to discuss how they felt our seminar may have helped them with the understanding of multicultural perspectives, Michelle told us:

It [our discussions] just feels so powerful to me. It's hard to find a place to share, to talk about this stuff . . . . I mean to give ourselves some credit, I mean because we talked about the time constraints and stuff but I mean most of us are 20, 30, 40. I have no idea how old everybody is, but that's a long time to not have talked about this or not have spent two hours a week for how many weeks, so I think we've done a lot.

This statement by Michelle assured me that a seminar of this nature really did make a difference in these future teachers' perceptions of multicultural education, regardless of its length. One of the most transformative assignments using stories, for Michelle, was the writing and rewriting of her autobiography which will be discussed in the final section of this case.

Breakthroughs and Rewriting Autobiographies: "It's Heavy Stuff, You Know?"

After writing her autobiographical assignment, which was discussed in Michelle's story, Michelle felt overwhelmed and even frustrated with how painful the process was for her. In her journal she wrote, "I attended my first multicultural class and am painfully aware of how many issues and feelings I have around all the 'isms'." Michelle wrote about her confusion over her sexual identity, her realization that she had some issues of racism to resolve and the pain that she had felt growing up as a minority in small town. When asked to describe the process of writing her autobiography, Michelle told us:

. . . it was really very painful. In fact I didn't even want to come back it was so painful. One of the things that bothered me is that it's mostly negative experiences. Lots of racism, lots of classism. I think that, you know, all of the work I've done on myself and my personal life has been about stuff I do, like every white person. But I think that I have a lot of unresolved feelings about stuff that's been done to me, you know, growing up in a white family in an Hispanic neighborhood and stuff like that. Not wanting to face feelings about that. I've been aware that I've gotten over, especially the last few years, that I feel like I'm becoming more and more, less mainstream, you know, and that's really hard to deal with. Because I was raised that I was going

to go to college and marry a doctor. I was poor and my mom was raised upper middle class so she had these, she wasn't poor until she had me and my sister. So it was like if I could get to college then I could get a husband and I could be middle class at least, and I've sort of gone the other way. And mostly by choice. So it's really hard to deal with. A lot of tension I think. But I think it was a really good exercise. Even stuff I was aware of, just having it all listed like this is really powerful.

Although Michelle said that this exercise was compelling, she also considered it was somewhat inappropriate for a class setting, stating that, "So one of the things I've found after doing this was to me this doesn't necessarily feel like a good place to do this kind of work. This isn't to me an intellectual exercise." When Michelle made this statement, I worried that I had imposed a painful experience on these students without thinking through the consequences. After much thought, I came to the realization that this is an intellectual exercise and the reason Michelle believed our class was not an appropriate place for this kind of writing was that she was dealing with very painful, deep issues which might arise in a counselor setting, if at all. Michelle later told me that the reason she made this remark was that she felt these were very spiritual issues and that spirituality did not belong in the classroom. I now think that Michelle changed her mind about that opinion after a few sessions of our seminar.

At the end of our seminar, the participants were asked

to rewrite their autobiographies, taking into consideration all that we had discussed in the class. I had marked specific passages in their autobiographies which I wanted them to be sure and address, along with anything else they chose to include. Michelle again had an emotional experience but seemed more satisfied that it was positive. I asked her how she went about rewriting her autobiography and she wrote, "I started with the things you marked . . . it just got really emotional and messy, and by the time I was done with this I thought it was good."

An example of how Michelle "rewrote" her autobiography was with the elaboration on certain statements. In her first autobiography she wrote, "At the age of twelve, I was beaten and grounded an entire summer for having a crush on a Black guy." She expanded this excerpt in her rewritten autobiography to say:

I always thought it was ironic that the only reason I even liked him was because he was the only boy in the entire school that was taller than me. The way I remember the story was I gave him a bracelet with my name on it and my sister told on me. . . . My mother came to the library and dragged me out in the middle of everything. She took me home, threw me on my bed, slammed the door and started screaming about niggers . . . she said I was grounded all summer. I wasn't allowed to see anyone, but I talked to a few friends through my window and I was too afraid to tell them why I was grounded--I worried they'd beat me up because my mom was racist. They were all Mexican and Black.

I can't believe now that she would react like that to something so simple. A twelve year old giving a bracelet to a boy the same age is not very serious . . . and I'm sure the incident has something to do with why I'm just never attracted to Black people as partners. . . . I also wonder if that incident has anything to do with my sister's obsession with Black guys, music, television shows, etc.

By rewriting and delving deeper into this painful incident, Michelle developed some important realizations about her feelings toward African-Americans. She went on to use this information to try and uncover how this had affected her feelings as a white woman and as a teacher of students who might not be white. She went on to question these ideas:

Not everybody is aware of racism and how it works. Then there's those people that know about racism and don't care. How do you make that line? And then is that making excuses for that person? I mean should they still be held responsible if they've never had any education, they've just grown up in the hills, you know, with their parents on the farm and they've been taught racism and they don't know it's racism?

These questions which Michelle developed, were in essence her breakthrough during the seminar. She began to question how to be a white anti-racist ally and how all of this would affect her as a teacher. I was inspired by the way Michelle delved so deeply into her personal feelings during our seminar. She engaged in the use of autobiographies and narratives, even after doubting their

intellectual value. Of all three participants, I saw Michelle make the most dramatic leaps in connecting with the issues we discussed.

Similarly to Michelle, Barbara made dramatic leaps as well. But unlike Michelle, when addressing these tough topics, Barbara hit many walls of resistance within herself. I turn now to the final case, that of Barbara.

The Case of Barbara: "I never thought this much, I'm exhausted"

#### What We Learned

#### Multicultural Education: What is it and How do we Incorporate it in the Classroom?

As a 49-year-old woman, Barbara's perspectives on multicultural education took on a different shape than Amy's or Michelle's. Barbara grew up in a generation that she claims focused on "sexism rather than racism." This perception may be interpreted as a white woman's perspective because she did not have to face racism, but as a female mathematician Barbara did experience the effects of sexism. Because of this generational difference between her and the other participants, it may have been more difficult for Barbara to expand her beliefs of multicultural education. Yet she was more committed to doing so because of her maturity and her desire to instill positive values in her children.

During our first class session, Barbara demonstrated what seemed to be a well-rounded understanding of multicultural education. When discussing about the

importance of multicultural education she mentioned the importance of "respecting differences in cultural values" and made connections to teaching as well as her own children:

You know, one of the problems, I hope to teach close to home and I live in a very homogeneous community so you go in the classroom, you won't see a lot of diversity but that doesn't mean that those kids don't need--I say this especially for my younger one--don't need to respect the differences, don't need to understand that they are the privileged ones and that they have a lot of responsibility for social justice . . . but it won't be because their classmates are different.

After discussing our thoughts of what multicultural education should strive to accomplish, the tone of the first session changed. With the use of excerpts from preservice teachers I had worked with in the past, the discussion became quite lively between Michelle and Barbara. One of the excerpts we read was from a preservice teacher who claimed that, "Big people are saying they [teachers] should incorporate multicultural literature [into their curriculum] but teachers don't know why." In response to this excerpt came the following discussion:

Michelle: I don't understand how teachers don't know why. I mean, you know, as a human basis to not get it, to not know why it's done.

Barbara: No, I don't think, I don't agree.

Michelle: . . . Because I don't understand how you could not know why you should not be racist in the classroom. I mean how could you not know that?

Barbara: But why would you necessarily think there was any issue of being racist, if you're white teacher in a white classroom, why would you necessarily be aware of inequities in education?

Michelle: Yeah, I interpret that as these big people are saying make your class multicultural and these people are like, well why? To me that seems astounding that you would wonder why.

Here, Michelle and Barbara had their first disagreement, which was to be the beginning of a somewhat tumultuous relationship. Both women seemed concerned about the excerpt we read, but for different reasons. As they continued their discussion, the importance of how to go about incorporating multicultural education into the classroom seemed to emerge.

Barbara: Again, if you weren't aware something was wrong and you thought you were dealing with things and all of a sudden some pressure comes from outside and says you've ignored all of these problems. And you say, why do I have to do this, why do I have to change? [to Michelle] What if you'd never left Texas, do you think you would have the same appreciation of the richness of multicultural education as if you'd stayed in that parochial, provincial town?

Michelle: It wasn't so much Texas as the part of Texas I was in and if I hadn't left that town, it would be very different. But I wouldn't ask why but I would have been like how--my question would have been how. To me that's the--

Barbara (interrupting): To me there's some of that in there, she says why but she's really saying how because being given materials that don't seem appropriate and not being given real definition or direction but some of it that comes of as why but really means I'm not sure how.

At this point we all agreed that the we had questions about the "how" of multicultural education, or the pedagogy to accompany theory. On Barbara's web, which the participants were asked to draw in our first session, she wrote, "What difference can I make as a teacher?" Barbara struggled with this question throughout the seminar, continually doubting that one white woman could make a difference. Often Barbara would seem to make a breakthrough in understanding just what she could do as a teacher, and then she would fall back to the statement that, "I can't save the world." Part of this dilemma for Barbara came from the resistance she seemed to have toward the theorists we were reading and to what she felt were radical viewpoints.

### Multicultural Education is a Political and Risky Agenda

As we explored more extensively the why's and how's of multicultural education, Barbara, like Michelle and Amy,

began to resist much of the theory we were reading. In response to Sleeter and McLaren (1995), Barbara commented that, "The next column says this book is about dialogue, and I circled the word dialogue because up until that point I had thought attack would be a better word than dialogue." Barbara felt that Sleeter and McLaren were too radical in their claims, and that their writing was "off-putting too though because then it's like I'm afraid to try because, even though I believe I have good intentions, maybe what I do will be wrong." This fear of somehow "doing" multicultural education incorrectly was a common theme for the participants as they were challenged by the theorists to change their life perceptions rather than just their lesson plans.

Barbara, like Amy, was annoyed at Sleeter and McLaren's statements that multicultural education was often degraded to a "foods and festivals" approach to diversity. In her journal Barbara wrote:

As I think more about this comment, it bothers me more. I understand the concern that superficiality be used to preclude painful confrontation with real, difficult issues. But for most of us--and especially for children --culture is experienced most in our everyday family lives: what we eat, what we wear, what music we listen to, how we compete, how we relax, how we celebrate. And tolerance is experienced socially. To that in the real multiculturalism, culture is intellectual and tolerance is political is both elitist and sexist. Yes, freedom, political power, and economic integration are essential. But they need the

staying power of personal relationships.

When hearing this resistance, I had to once again draw from our readings of Enid Lee and her perspective on a "foods and festivals" approach, which calls this a starting place to be built upon. For multiple sessions we discussed "going further" and incorporating anti-racist multicultural beliefs into our lifestyle. In Barbara's case, she would seem to embrace this attitude but then would revert back to resisting what the theorists were saying.

After reading bell hooks (1994), Barbara again stated that, "you can sign up [for multicultural agenda] only if you are willing to talk political rhetoric." By focusing on the political nature of multicultural education, Barbara seemed to diminish the theoretical nature of multicultural education--or the fact that theory, politics and pedagogy are interrelated--thereby dismissing what the theorists were saying. Barbara believed that bell hooks did not take into consideration teachers who may not be as dynamic and passionate as hooks. Barbara was concerned that bell hooks "is clearly a risk-taker and it apparently never occurs to her that some people wouldn't operate in that mode." Here again, Barbara diminishes bell hooks' theoretical stance by focusing on her political and passionate outlook. Barbara also separates theory from politics and practice failing to acknowledge that all are interwoven and reciprocal. As time went on in our seminar, Barbara would begin to embrace some of the concepts of the theorists we were reading and then suddenly she seemed to come to a wall and resist those ideas. I vented my concern at this in one of my analytic memos:

Barbara continues to say things that amaze me--she

will completely agree with comments we make and then turn it around and make comments like the one tonight [explained below] . . . She is a perfect example of coming up to the issues and then it's too painful (which she admitted at the end of class) so she turns the issue around. At the end of class she commented that she doesn't have the courage to face these issues because they're too painful.

The particular instance to which I refer above came about as we were discussing tracking in schools. Barbara's comments showed an understanding of the downfalls of tracking, she even addressed her own children's experiences with tracking. At the end of this discussion, Barbara made this comment:

One of the consequences of this, of saying privileged class takes college prep--you other guys can have the industrial arts--is that if you happen to be white and want to be a plumber that's as difficult as if you're Chicano and want to be an author. I know when the steering committee met to determine what the new high school should be, they opted not to have any vocational classes. So if you live out there [the wealthier school district], "Sorry. You can't do anything of that kind."

Although I understood the point Barbara was trying to make here, I was uncomfortable with her equation of being kept out of a vocational education class with *trying* to be kept out of a literature or advanced placement class because of one's race. The difference between these two instances is one of

choice (hence, privilege): A student who is tracked into vocational education has no choice in the matter, whereas choice, and thus privilege, is clearly present in the example to which Barbara refers. Barbara was trying to make a point about "reverse discrimination," but in reality she was resisting the real issue at hand: racial and social class discrimination.

Another example occurred when we read the picture book *Encounter*, which was discussed in Michelle's case. This book made Barbara uneasy. She stated that "It muddles the question of their oppression with their whiteness." Barbara went on to say:

Of course that in and of itself, how accurate can it be when you're interpreting something that no one living has current perspective on? In fact I've thought that one of the current issues is whether the Anasazi people were cannibalistic and their descendants find that perception generally quite offensive. If I look at my ancestors, they were Vikings. They were great explorers; they were wonderful seamen; and they were barbarians. What does that say about me? Not very much.

By taking this stance, Barbara neglected the fact that she is part of the dominant culture, whereas Native Americans were and are oppressed as a group. In response to Barbara, I told her:

But I think it's important to think of what position they are in as opposed to what position you are in in our society here and now. Do you know what I mean? They are coming from a

perspective of an oppressed group . . . . And again feeling that oppression like you're telling me what my history is, what my ancestry is. I think that there's a different reaction than if you're in the dominant culture.

Barbara negates the fact that there are living people who have a perspective on the history of the oppression of Native Americans. Comments like those above would periodically come from Barbara, even after discussions in which she seemed fully engaged and accepting of anti-racist, multicultural education. This suggested to me that Barbara still had not fully confronted her own racial identity and privilege, which will be discussed further in subsequent sections.

Barbara wavered during our seminar between resistance and engagement with the issues at hand. Our fifth session on gay/lesbian issues in the classroom was a sort of epiphany for Barbara. She and Michelle seemed to put aside their differences at this point and Barbara seemed to make leaps in the direction of becoming more committed to anti-racist, truly inclusive multicultural education. After viewing the film *It's Elementary*, Barbara turned to us with tears in her eyes and explained:

I think I feel remiss as a parent. There's two roads. One teacher said they're ready for more than you give them credit for. And all through I was amazed at how formed a perception [of homosexuality] they [the children] had. And then the media images really startled me. So as a parent you have to decide on a strategy for dealing with values pushed on you by the culture with which

you disagree. One strategy which my neighbors employ is to hide from the world. Their kids stay home virtually all the time. But my strategy has been to observe the presentation of those values with my kids and explicitly reject them. Watch hours and hours of Power Rangers<sup>7</sup> to deal with what role does violence apparently play. Lots and lots of shows that don't convey the message that I want them to. Rather than saying you can't watch that, I let them watch it and said now this is what's wrong with that. But with respect to gay issues, and I guess with respect to race too, I haven't done that, and it just didn't occur to me that they would be forming these stereotypes from this barrage of images that I don't even see because I decided that's not the way I feel. I don't know what that means as a teacher but clearly there's a gap in the education there.

Barbara clearly was affected by this film and the entire topic of gay/lesbian curriculum in the classroom. She was angered by the congressman in the film who claimed that teaching about homosexuality will influence students to become gay. Barbara lashed back: "What's wrong with this country is that you [the legislator] got elected to Congress."

Along with the frustrations of ignorance surrounding gay/lesbian discussions in schools, Barbara also expressed

<sup>7</sup> Power Rangers is an extremely popular children's television show which has been the cause of much debate for parents due to its violent content. The Mighty Morphin Power Rangers use martial arts maneuvers to "fight evil" and there have been a number of instances where children have copied these maneuvers and seriously injured other children.

the frustration that "It wouldn't fly in my neck of the woods." Here Barbara was implying that the school district that her children attended would never allow for the integration of a curriculum that discussed gay issues. This frustration and notion of "riskiness" with regard to multicultural education seemed to lure Barbara in as a more determined and committed anti-discriminatory ally. As was mentioned in Michelle's case, Barbara went on to confide in Michelle that she did not know how to approach the subject of homosexuality with her own children. Both Barbara and Michelle took it upon themselves at this point to do more research on gay/lesbian curriculum and they seemed to form a bond as activists for gay/lesbian rights in schools. This activism took more time to come about when the topics of whiteness, privilege and power were at hand. Barbara made great strides in these areas as well, but she continued with the pattern of engaging and then resisting which will be discussed below.

### Race, Power and Privilege

#### White Racial Identity

When analyzing her racial identity, Barbara arrived at some of the same conclusions as Michelle and Amy. All three participants said they felt "cultureless" as white people. Barbara stated that, "For some reason, those of us who are white, don't preserve our cultural heritage." When I asked Barbara why she thought this was true, she responded:

I don't know. But, you know there are fragments of it [culture], one of which is religion and one is

food, interestingly enough. I know how to make all kinds of food from several facets of my background. But ceremony is essentially gone--I mean we have certain family traditions but they don't have strong ties to any external structure.

The frustration expressed by Barbara and the other white women surrounding a perceived lack of "ceremony" and cultural definition, helped them to think more deeply about what it meant to be white. Barbara revealed that she thought of her culture as being artifact-based because of her desire for food and ceremony that represents who she is. There seemed to be a lack of depth and analysis on Barbara's part with regard to what culture really is and how she fits in to that culture.

As Barbara reflected upon racial identity theory, she expressed where she viewed herself along the continuum, as well as how she might deepen her sense of racial identity. In her journal she wrote:

I can't settle on one of the labels [of white racial identity theory]. I think I have gone farther along the path of a positive perception of my whiteness than I have in empathizing with the position of people of color and actively working against racism . . . . Since I started this course, my awareness of where I am privileged and where I have been denied privilege has increased. This has increased my sensitivity to the dilemmas of racism . . . . I am rather stymied though in a more active expression of anti-racism by lack of exposure to people of color and to oppression in my daily life.

I am not sure, now anyway, from what I would redirect the time and energy to make this a higher priority. One milestone in the immersion/emersion stage which I've missed and which might trigger the desire for further growth is to "learn about anti-racist allies."

Here Barbara addressed some key discoveries relating to her racial identity. She claimed that she had done more work during our seminar on the topic of her whiteness rather than on empathizing with people of color. This is an important point, as she needed to analyze her own racial identity before she could truly empathize with people of color. Another important point made above is Barbara's comment that she could not figure out how to find the time to battle racism. This comment came up several times in our seminar as Barbara struggled with how she could make an impact on racism in her busy life. Finally, Barbara was very honest in her writing about what she perceived as a lack of exposure to racism and oppression in her daily life, which made it harder for her to develop the drive to fight racism and oppression.

The dilemmas of time and opportunity to fight racism were crucial for Barbara to analyze as she tried to discover what it meant to be a white racist ally. Barbara told us that "It has to do with my unwillingness to tackle problems when I'm uncertain that I can affect the solution." This uncertainty of her impact on racism continued throughout our seminar even as I tried to remind all three participants that, "We can only do what we have the power to do." By saying this, I meant that we cannot hide behind the statement that "I can't save the world," but rather we must take what

power we have and use it to combat racism. Barbara understood this philosophy but still felt frustrated that she was expected to confront racism and oppression when "there just isn't a lot of it in my daily life so I have to go out and look for it." She went on to say, "I came to this [conclusion]. Confront racism and oppression in daily life. This is after I had done three loads of laundry. I like wish I had some racism and oppression to confront."

This notion of having to look for instances and oppression definitely suggests that Barbara has settled into a comfortable place with regard to her own white privilege. By insisting that she does not see or hear instances of racism and oppression, she acknowledged that she did not look for, or see, these instances in her daily life. Barbara clearly failed to see how (or that) racism is structured into the very fabric of the systems and institutions in which she participated daily. Barbara was thus in denial about her position as a white person in society. Her statement that, "I wish I had some racism and oppression to confront," speaks volumes about her white privilege. This comment demonstrates how privilege can make invisible the racist structures within which we live. Barbara not only did not see this racism, but failed to comprehend how she could be an agent of change in her daily life.

Barbara eventually did begin to look at the world around her more critically. She began to do so during and after our discussions of white privilege.

Racism and White Privilege

During our discussions of white privilege, Barbara made connections to her own life history with regards to racism. Here I again saw Barbara repeat the pattern of engaging and then resisting theories of racism and white privilege. Oftentimes, Barbara's comments were not meant to be intentionally resistant, but within them I heard denial about being privileged and being white. One example of this denial was during a conversation about what it means to be white. Barbara stated:

In California, not by design but we lived in a neighborhood that was extremely diverse. We were obviously white and we had neighbors that were Hispanic, Black, Indian, from India, Native American, Philipino, but we were all the same class and there was no issue about race. You know, we all went to a block party, or kids all went to the same school. So, if you can break the cycle then race ceases to be an issue.

Barbara may not have believed that race was an concern in her diverse neighborhood but again, she was coming from the perspective of the dominant culture. She did not feel the pressures of being a person of color; therefore, in her mind, there was no "issue" of race. Here Barbara again ignored her privileged stance within the dominant race and class structure, as she lived comfortably, never feeling any racism or discrimination. Barbara also made the comment that "racism ceases to be an issue," demonstrating an ignorance of how embedded racism is in our society. Barbara had not given

any thought here to how her position in society influenced her perceptions of race and racism.

Yet Barbara continued to try to engage the notion of white privilege. At times, she seemed to recognize the fact that white privilege is very much a part of the power structure of every facet of American life. In response to McIntosh's (1989) article "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," Barbara wrote:

The single most significant complaint that I have about my own education is that I was led to believe that life was a meritocracy--that achievement was the foundation of success. So it [McIntosh's article] helped me to get an understanding of what white privilege is when the author came at it from that direction. I also really liked her concrete list of examples. For one, it's easy to read as a reminder of the privileges we are so carefully ignoring. For another, there are several examples where I thought, "I can fight that."

At other times, however, Barbara would stray from a focus on white privilege and challenge the idea that power comes with white privilege. Below is an exchange which demonstrates this:

Barbara: It's certainly true that white privilege is the dominant racism but I don't know that I agree with her (McIntosh's) statement that it's only the attitudes of whites that routinely carry the social power inherent in our society. I think there are places where there's a pecking order in the minorities too. In some places certain

minorities--for example in Central L.A. the Blacks are now also victimized by Hispanic power.

Anita: But you think outside the minorities that still whites have more privilege and more institutional power regardless of what the pecking order is going on within minorities?

Barbara: I was thinking specifically of issues that, being squeezed out of your neighborhood, which is certainly an abrogation of power. If you were to say that you couldn't live there because it's a white neighborhood, you would say that's white privilege.

Anita: White racism.

Barbara: White racism. So if you say you can't live here because it's now an Hispanic turf, that's still racism.

Anita: You mean pushing whites out?

Barbara: Pushing Blacks out. It would be nice if it, I mean we who are privileged would probably learn our lesson faster if we got pushed around a little, but no I was, specifically she seems to say there are two categories, white and non-white. I'm not saying that that's not true. I think, even if you took whites out of the picture you would find

examples of racism, of prejudice.

In this exchange, Barbara made a valid point that there are many instances of racism and discrimination within groups other than whites. But Barbara chose not to ignore the issue of who holds the economic, social and political capital, as she tacitly accepted her privileged stance. Also, even as we were discussing white privilege Barbara steered the conversation away, saying, "minorities are racist too"-- thereby diverting attention to our own white privilege. This was a pattern for Barbara; she tended to do this when the conversation became emotionally charged around the topics of white racism.

When discussing white privilege, Barbara also expressed frustration about how she could make a difference as a single individual. One of her underlying frustrations seemed to be a concern that she would lose her own privilege by helping others understand and confront theirs:

Barbara: Well you know this is actually, this is related to where I get stuck. You know because take funding for schools. It has certainly been the case that the white privileged schools have had a lot more money than Black schools. OK, so you say, "Well now wait a minute. We don't want white privilege so let's go to equity." And that's what I would say. I would say our schools set out to be equitable. But when we try it, because everyone doesn't commit, what happens is that instead of--it doesn't turn out to be zero sum in the sense that you trade privilege but what happens is that it sinks to the lowest common denominator so that you

end up with no privilege but not something that anybody would want. So I would argue with Michelle that you can't just substitute privilege but at the same time I really don't see the way that I as an individual could step in and make it so that the privilege is eliminated in a fashion that elevates everyone. So then it's hard to commit to anything because you certainly don't want to say, I don't want to say I'll work toward equity in the schools if that's going to mean a lowering of the bar for everyone. If I say I'll work for equity in the schools I don't see how without the cooperation of all these people that don't seem to be willing to step up to it, to pull it the other direction.

Michelle: I don't know. I have the mindset that there is enough of everything in this world for everyone. I don't want to hear about overpopulation. There's plenty of food. There's plenty of resources and it's just, it's like this greed and say privileged thing that wastes it.

Barbara: But how as one person do you take on hordes of greedy people?

Anita: Well you can really only do what you have the power to do . . . as a teacher especially that you are going to be impacting a lot of young people and that maybe with the power that you have as a teacher that you can help students to realize

the privilege and the inequities that are in this world and maybe those kids are going to go out with your class and after your class to do things that are going to help the community in baby steps as we were talking about, to do things that are going to help make things more equitable.

Barbara: Right.

Anita: OK, and that we can gradually start, but those are goals that we all have as a society and--

Barbara (interrupting): Actually we don't all have them.

Anita: But that you want to create that with your students.

Barbara: So I just have to be more patient. I have to wait a generation.

Conversations like the one above seemed to help us all try to figure out how we could be more effective anti-racist allies. Yet Barbara continued to view the problems of discrimination and racism as individual rather than social or collective ones. This demonstrated to me how deeply internalized were her notions of individualism, and how these notions support the hegemony of dominant racial and social class structures. By focusing on individual causes and solutions, Barbara in effect disengaged from responsibility

for struggling against racism. She thereby, furthered the reproduction of her own ideologies and of socially constructed racism.

Barbara nonetheless seemed to realize that her inquiries into who she was as a white woman and what that means in society was a first step to making a difference with regard to racism and oppression. In our penultimate class session, Barbara seemed to make this connection as she talked about her racial identity and white privilege:

I even went to Norway and stayed where my family came from and met the relatives that I still have there and learned 150 words in Norwegian. And I really think I can say I'm comfortable with who I am and how I got here. That's not to say that I'm comfortable with knowing that I'm privileged when others aren't but I'm not about to say it's bad that I'm white because of that. I both appreciate what I've got and understand that there's unfairness.

This kind of "breakthrough" for Barbara came from investigating her own life history, her whiteness and her commitment to making a difference as an anti-racist teacher. In the last section of Barbara's case, I analyze specific instances of how she connected her own autobiography with our seminar as well as her "breakthroughs."

Narrative and Autobiography as a Learning ToolsSeminar Impact

The use of narratives and autobiography had a significant impact on Barbara's learning during our seminar. Like Michelle and Amy, she reacted more positively to narratives than to theory about multicultural education. Barbara struggled with many subjects during these eight-weeks, but she ended up feeling that our seminar challenged her and made her grow as a future teacher. At the end of our last session, Barbara made the statement that, "I never thought this much . . . since before my kids were born. I'm exhausted." As we discussed how the use of narratives had helped the three women to analyze their beliefs of multicultural education, Barbara felt that, "There's more still buried," leading me to believe she would continue to work on these issues well after our seminar ended.

Toward the end of our seminar, Barbara continued to question what effect she could have on racial discrimination, but she seemed determined to attempt to make a difference in her students' lives:

So it's [our seminar's] growth provoking as anything I've thought about in 20 years and I really think that there's a lot of threads coming together strategically. My question is what do I do tactically? How does this get manifest to my students? I haven't come very far in that but I think that it will come when I start thinking about real lessons in the same way, that having opened

the door strategically I see things that I just overlooked before, and practicing with the kids. I notice now where they need to be engaged and they need to face up to their privilege and that, so I'm hoping that they're a very tolerant audience. You know there's only so much they can say to mom that that practice will enable me to see things that I can do in my classroom someday. But I still really don't have many concrete notions of what difference it will make in math lessons.

Making personal connections between the narratives we read and experiences she had encountered, Barbara began to see the inequities present in schools. An example of this was after reading a chapter of Maya Angelou's (1993) *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, in which a graduating class of Black children are told they can aspire to be athletes but not much else. Barbara reacted by making this personal connection:

. . . I can empathize with that experience that I've encountered that myself, when the world says no, you can't; your place isn't there. It's like a slap in the face to your sense of self that says yes I could have, that she's thinking, "Well now wait a minute. Why is that so?" And his position is so unequivocally, this is your path in life.

Barbara made these kinds of connections several times as we read narratives but seemed to resist when we read more theoretical pieces.

Barbara said that the use of narratives for our seminar opened up a whole new dialogue that may not have been present

otherwise. With the words of a true mathematician, she summed up the effect of this seminar on her thinking as a teacher: "It's like a chemical reaction. When you stir it up, it's not going to settle down tomorrow. I can tell it's going to ferment for a while." One of the ways in which Barbara "stirred up" her thoughts about her race and identity was by rewriting her autobiography. In the last section of this case, I discuss how Barbara approached this rewriting and also the breakthroughs that she had during the eight-weeks we met.

### Breakthroughs and Rewriting Autobiographies

One important discovery that Barbara made during the process of writing and rewriting her autobiography, was that she had grown up during a time during which public attention focused more on feminism than multiculturalism. This was an important discovery for Barbara because it explained for her why many of these ideas seemed so difficult to address. With this discovery, she explained:

But I still think there's a generation gap here too. Because you are all a lot younger than I am. That the issue at the time of your coming of age where it's multiculturalism and mine was more feminism. So the sense of who I am was more involved with the oppression based on my gender than with the inclusion based on my color.

Here, Barbara connected the issues of discrimination and privilege discussed in class with her feelings of being discriminated against as a woman in the field of math. Yet,

she still failed to consider how her race and class privilege factored into these experiences, as the feminist movement was primarily a struggle by and for white women rather than women of color.

Unlike Michelle and Amy, Barbara did not find that writing and rewriting her autobiography was a painful or wrenching experience. Barbara even joked that it was the actual writing process that was more difficult than the emotions that went into the writing: "There's a reason I went into math [laughter]. It wasn't the thought that was uncomfortable. It was the commission of it to paper." Barbara made some enlightening additions to her autobiography when she went through the process of rewriting. One example of this was on a passage I marked in her autobiography which said:

As part of my first course in Education, I was required to spend forty hours observing in a classroom. I spent half of that time in a second grade classroom. The racial composition of the the classroom was diverse; five of the students were Asian American, five were Hispanic with limited English and the rest were Black. The five Asian-Americans were, as a group, reading at a fourth grade level and so far ahead in math that they seldom had math lessons. The rest of the students were so far behind in second grade that it seemed to me they could never catch up. It seemed that being a teacher in a classroom like theirs was akin to being asked to save the world. This ended my enrollment in the education program; I transferred

back to a mathematics major.

I marked this passage in Barbara's autobiography so that she would be sure to think about what had happened here. She clearly felt helpless and saw no way for the Black students to catch up in what she called a "hopeless" situation. After eight-weeks of discussing race, privilege and equity, Barbara added the following in her rewritten autobiography:

I see two components to this withdrawal [from the education program]. I have always been reluctant to tackle any problem without a conviction that I can make a significant difference. Doing my best on the way to ultimate failure does not sit well with me. The other factor was a change in my perception of racial identity. Confronted with the disparity of my own background and their situation, I chose to withdraw to quell the discomfort of my own white privilege.

Although Barbara's first reason for withdrawing from her education program did not seem very revealing or reflective, she went on to acknowledge that it was really her discomfort with her own race status that was the reason for her withdrawal. Barbara would not have made this statement eight-weeks earlier. It was passages like this one that encouraged me to believe that our seminar had made a difference in Barbara's views about racism, schools and society.

I consider the passage above a "breakthrough" for Barbara. Her growth during our seminar seemed to me to be the most difficult, but also the most authentic of the three participants because it took much hard work on her part. By

our sixth session, Barbara started to analyze her own comments and voice her concern about what she had said. These breakthroughs were painful for Barbara but they seemed to reflect a change in her attitude about multicultural education, toward a more positive and hopeful outlook. One comment worth mentioning occurred during the session following our reading of *Encounter*:

Barbara: You know last time we met the question came up when we were doing the Columbus about being able to repudiate behavior of your ancestors, and you asked me if I could do that because there's never been any question of the validity of my heritage.

Anita: Uh hmmm.

Barbara: And I thought about that several times and I decided I can't put those shoes on. I can't know if I would be strong enough to challenge my heritage if it had been externally challenged for my whole life. So I have to submit I couldn't. That strength comes from the privilege of having a heritage that is universally respected. But then it seems to me that you would be kind of like the person who comes home at Christmas and realizes their parents are bigoted.

Here, Barbara clearly had been thinking about our previous discussion and had come to important resolutions about her own comments, yet she still acknowledged her inability and powerlessness to act as a change agent. This

inability to act, left intact the comfort that one person "can't save the world."

Regardless of these well internalized attitudes and beliefs, by the end of our eight seminars I was convinced that Barbara, along with Michelle and Amy, had been deeply affected by the use of narratives and autobiography. By connecting with their own stories, these women saw and felt more of what multicultural education strives to accomplish than they would had they simply read texts about the subject. During our seminar, Amy was faced with ideas of white privilege that made her uncomfortable but which she admitted she needed to address more deeply. Michelle tried to sort out a confusing and tumultuous childhood which has affected her as a woman and which would certainly affect her as a teacher. Finally, Barbara transformed some of her narrow beliefs about race and identity to try to become more of an anti-racist ally for her students, although she clearly had not come to terms with her own deeply internalized ideologies about difference, individualism, and the social causes of race-based inequities.

All three women in this study were unique in their backgrounds when we began our seminar, but all three left with new senses of identity. Their comments and their actions led me to believe that they would continue the dialogue and reflection we had begun around the topics of multicultural education, racial identity and white privilege. Whether that dialogue and reflection would lead to socially just action cannot be known for certain. However, it seems evident that without the efforts begun in this class, the women would not have had the theoretical or pedagogical

resources or resolve to act as change agents.

CHAPTER SIX  
DISCUSSION

This study of three preservice teachers' expressed beliefs of anti-racist, multicultural education and how their life histories influence those beliefs, developed from my own search for racial identity and how I felt that might affect me as a teacher. With the growing number of white teachers in the U.S. and the increase in students of color, I see a need for teacher educators to address issues of race and racial inequalities with their students. One place for that investigation to begin is with one's own racial identity. The use of autobiography and narrative to address these issues is a natural and authentic process that encourages self analysis. In this chapter, I first summarize the study, then discuss the findings, consider the methodology used, elaborate on areas for future research, and state the implications for teacher education.

Summary

In this study, I collected data from three preservice teachers to analyze their expressed beliefs about anti-racist, multicultural education and how their life histories influence those beliefs. Data were collected through an eight-week seminar, taught by me, called *Educating for the Future: Multicultural and Environmental Issues*, at a small liberal arts college in the Southwest. I designed this course, a required class for all preservice teachers at the college, with an emphasis on autobiography and narrative as

well as issues of whiteness. By focusing on people's stories, I hoped to bring authentic voices to the topic of multicultural education and also to encourage the three participants to analyze their own life stories.

The three participants for this study were all white women who comprised an opportunistic sample, as they all volunteered for this seminar. The participants included: a 32 year old woman majoring in early childhood education; a 28 year old woman majoring in secondary English education; and a 49 year old woman majoring in secondary math education. With the data collected over eight weeks, I created three qualitative case studies looking at major themes that emerged from each case as well as across cases. Data sources for this study included small group discussions, field notes and analytic memos, written documents and artifacts. To analyze these data, I used the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and analytic induction (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993), which guided me through four stages of analysis: active participant analysis, "diving in" analysis, "seeing the light" analysis, and grounded analysis.

From this analysis, three major themes emerged, each containing within them sub-themes. The first theme was, "What We Learned." Within that theme I found that the participants believed multicultural education to be "a political and risky agenda." Also within that theme lay the sub-theme of resistance to multicultural education because of it's "risky" nature. The second theme which emerged was "Race, Power and Privilege." Within this theme the sub-themes of white racial identity, racism and white privilege emerged. Finally, the third theme I discovered was

"Narrative and Autobiography as Learning Tools." Within this third theme were the sub-themes of the impact of our eight-week seminar, breakthroughs that the participants made over the course of the seminar, and the rewriting of their own autobiographies.

The three themes mentioned above, revealed the importance of pedagogies that include the use of autobiography and narrative. Resistance and non-engagement seem to be a common reaction of these preservice teachers when the topics of multicultural education and race were introduced. From this study, I have learned that the use of autobiography and narrative can help alleviate some of this resistance and begin to engage students in discussions that are crucial for preservice teachers to undertake before becoming teachers. In particular, white preservice teachers, like the participants of this study, need to understand the issues of privilege and whiteness that often are ignored in courses on multicultural education. In the following section, I discuss the findings of this study, focusing specially on the resistance and non-engagement mentioned above, as well as readdressing my research questions.

### Discussion

At the onset of this study, I attempted to address the importance of autobiography and narrative in a course on multicultural education to emphasize the connection between life histories and beliefs about multicultural education. As I write this final chapter of my dissertation, I realize that as important as the use of narrative and autobiography is the

need to address the resistance and non-engagement experienced by the participants of this study. I believe this resistance and non-engagement is common to students in courses on multicultural education. As teacher educators we need to understand where this resistance comes from and how to negotiate and transform it.

In the 1998 book, *Speaking the Unpleasant: The Politics of (Non)engagement in the Multicultural Education Terrain*, Diane Goodman addresses these concerns:

Critical, transformative multicultural education threatens students' self-concepts and identities, ideologies and world views. When we talk about power and privilege, and systematic and structural change, there are good reasons why people, especially from advantaged groups, would resist these changes and become defensive. Social change threatens the privileges (often invisible) that have been taken for granted and changes the rules of the game. It raise the fear of the unknown and the concern for one's well being (p.250).

This fear of the unknown must be directly confronted in multicultural education courses. By making these topics known, and by bringing identities and self-concepts to the forefront, we can help make the unknown "known" within a critical, transformative approach to multicultural education. In so doing, we can help our students become engaged and empowered.

Our eight-week seminar was a starting point for the types of conversations needed to confront non-engagement in preservice teachers' learning about multicultural education.

For these three white women, analyzing their own racial identities through autobiography was a way to begin to understand the power structures that envelope our lives, and how whiteness bequeaths advantages which are unearned privileges. These women's expressed beliefs about multicultural education changed over our eight-week course as they sought to explore their own experiences as well as those of people of color.

The student-teacher relationship is another crucial factor in addressing students' resistance and non-engagement within multicultural education courses. As a teacher embracing a multicultural and social reconstructionist view, it was very difficult for me to lead a class discussion when some of the students embraced a conservative or passive perspective. I had to sense when to disengage from dialogue that created an unproductive environment in our seminar, as well as when to forge ahead and challenge my students to interrogate varied viewpoints. In an increasingly conservative social climate, these patterns of non-engagement and resistance to change are likely to grow, reinforced by public and media discourses in support of dominant race and class interests. These pervasive social and cultural forces permeate the classroom. If teacher educators are to effectively challenge these forces, we must form strong student-teacher relationships in our courses on multicultural education, so that we may help students confront uncomfortable issues without feeling valueless or powerless to effect change. Having students analyze their own stories is one way to create such a learning-teaching-acting environment in a non-threatening yet self-critical way.

With respect to the participants in this study, I came to feel proud of the strides all three made to become more informed and open to issues of whiteness, racism, gay/lesbian identities and race and class privilege. Of the three, Barbara seemed to resist engaging these issues the most. In my journal I wrote:

She [Barbara] is a perfect example of coming up to the issues and then it's too painful (which she admitted at the end of class) so she turns the issue around. At the end of class she commented that she doesn't have the courage to face these issues because they're too painful.

Although Barbara seemed to resist many of the topics we covered, she was never unengaged in our class. Interestingly enough, Barbara seemed to be the most engaged student and probably worked the hardest at really trying to understand who she was and how her identity would affect her as a teacher. Barbara also was a classic example of a white student who was completely blinded by her own privilege and social status. Yet, Barbara did remain determined in our discussions. It was this determined engagement that eventually led her to many breakthroughs in her resistance and to the possibility of becoming a teacher capable of embracing a critical-multiculturalist approach.

Like Barbara, Michelle seemed also to be committed to issues of multicultural education by the end of our seminar. Her non-engagement became evident when analyzing her own life history, which was often painful for her and led to a resistance toward that analysis. Amy, on the other hand, seemed only somewhat engaged throughout the seminar. I

believe that Amy wanted to engage in the course content, but personal circumstances interfered at that moment in time. This concerns me, as I believe that Amy, like other teachers, will always have circumstances in her life which are difficult to negotiate and which may be used as excuses for avoiding deep self-interrogation of white privilege and racism.

The voices and stories of Barbara, Michelle and Amy, although only truly representative of white, female preservice teachers, demonstrate the importance of analyzing one's own racial identity before becoming a teacher. These three women, all very different in their backgrounds, demonstrated the ways in which their expressed beliefs about multicultural education were influenced by their life histories. Although only a beginning toward making larger self and social transformations, our eight-week seminar helped these preservice teachers analyze the connection between their lives and less privileged others through autobiography and narrative. The brevity of the seminar was a limitation but its outcomes suggest the need for more sustained critical analysis of multicultural education within teacher education programs. Along with the length of the seminar, other methodological considerations for this study include how the research process affected me as a teacher; the use of white racial identity theory as a problematic framework; and my interpretation of the participants' experiences. These considerations are discussed in the following section.

## Methodological Considerations

As I consider this research experience I am left with several observations of aspects that I wish had been different. The first is the length of our seminar. Although eight weeks was the required length for this college course, I felt as though our last few sessions were the beginning of a truly in-depth, critical discussion. I now know that a seminar of this sort can be but a starting point for preservice teachers, which must then be continued and reinforced within a program that embraces the many topics and concepts we discussed. We must consider also who we are admitting to our teacher preparation programs and whether they are individuals committed to analyzing their racial identity, biases, and ideas of race and power. For these learning experiences to have a significant impact on teachers' pedagogy, experiences must be integrated into the entire teacher education program. This is a goal I have been addressing with Baillie College; to be realized and to have systematic lasting change, this goal requires a great deal of time and a strong commitment from all instructors. However, when considering the time restrictions within which we operated, I am reminded of this comment by Michelle:

. . . to give ourselves some credit, I mean because we talked about the time constraints and stuff but I mean most of us are 20, 30, 40. I have no idea how old everybody is, but that's a long time to not have talked about this or not have spent two hours a week for how many weeks, so I think we've done a lot.

Thus, although our time was limited, we examined issues that possibly would not otherwise have been discussed in these participants' teacher education program.

Another methodological consideration concerns being the "research instrument" as well as the teacher of this seminar. As a teacher, researcher, and participant I fluctuated between observing and engaging in the seminar, which sometimes was very difficult. As a participant, I was sometimes tempted to vehemently disagree with what was being said about issues of racism and whiteness. As a researcher and teacher, I had to stop and think about what my role in this seminar really was. I struggled with how my own identity played into the information given to the participants and how it was presented. I finally resolved that as long as I was honest and direct in the documentation of this study, all of these feelings would be known and therefore considered by my readers.

The third and most problematic consideration was the use of white racial identity theory in our seminar. When I first read Carter and Goodwin's (1994) article on racial identity theory, I was excited at the prospect of using a stage-theory model that addressed whiteness, as I had not encountered such a model in the past. As the seminar progressed and we discussed the stages of white racial identity, the problematics of this stage-theory became apparent. None of the participants positioned themselves at one stage of racial identity, nor did they "progress" predictably from one stage to the next. Like similar stage-based models, this theory ignores the fluidity and multiplicity of identities as well as the connections among race, gender, social class, sexual

orientation, and other axes of identity. Stage theory is static and does not consider how we move between different axes of identity throughout our lives. Rather than eliminating racial identity theory completely from our seminar, however, in the future I would address it critically, using the descriptions of stages as one characterization of feelings and responses preservice teachers might have about their racial identities.

Finally, one of the most challenging aspects of writing this dissertation was interpreting the participants' words while attempting to not portray them in an overly negative light. As I analyzed the hundreds of pages of transcripts and written documents, I discovered resistance and views expressed by the women that often sounded narrow or even ignorant of multicultural education. As I have used their words in my account, I have attempted to demonstrate how their words reflect the places where they were at that time. I have been guided by a former question: "How would you feel about the participants reading this paper?" I can honestly say I feel comfortable about any of the participants reading this dissertation, and I hope they will. Although I know some of the findings will be painful to read, I also know that the participants are aware of what they said and also how they grew throughout the course.

As a researcher and instructor, I sought to be reflexive (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983), asking for feedback from the participants about statements they made or journal entries they wrote, and constantly weighing my dual roles in this project. This process gave me confidence about my interpretation of the participants' words. Yet once the

seminar had ended, it was more difficult to find time to discuss the study with the participants. The three women and I all still communicate through our own listserve where we send each other interesting articles, pose questions about multicultural issues, and generally update one another on our current experiences. This has proven to be a rewarding process for me as I feel I am still connected to these women whom I have spent so much time thinking about and came to know on a very personal level. I hope to continue to follow their professional and personal growth and to hear about their experiences in teaching.

#### Future Research

As Amy, Michelle and Barbara embark on their student teaching experiences, I hope to continue to collect their stories whether in the form of formal research or through more informal means. I am anxious to see if or how our seminar has affected their teaching, and how they integrate anti-racist, multicultural pedagogy into their classrooms. For Amy, I will be interested to see how her current life situation affects her as a teacher and whether she will take strides to critically examine some of the issues she left uncovered during our course. When considering Michelle, I wonder how she will incorporate multicultural literature into her high school English classroom and whether she will take an activist approach to teaching this literature. I am also curious as to how her painful upbringing and sexual identity will affect her teaching. Will she be an advocate for gay

and lesbian students, or will she remain closeted within and by the system? Finally, I look forward to hearing about Barbara's use of real-world examples in her math classes that take into consideration multicultural experiences. I hope to hear about Barbara's children as well, and how she has decided to approach topics of homosexuality and racism with them--questions she faced in our seminar.

Along with future research with these three participants I am interested in continuing to look at issues of whiteness with preservice teachers. I would like to see courses designed to address race at the beginning of teacher preparation programs that would discuss white privilege as well as other forms of racism. I also plan to continue my research on the use of autobiography and life histories as it is our stories that shape who we are and what kind of teachers we will be.

These personal research aspirations suggest larger implications for needed research in multicultural education and teacher education more generally. Specifically, there is a need for further study of how teacher preparation programs can integrate critical, multiculturalist beliefs into the structure of their programs; how multicultural education is being politicized by the media and by increasingly conservative government agencies as well as how this affects teacher education in the U.S.; and why more people of color are not going into the teaching profession, creating an "unbalanced" teacher-student demographic picture.

## Implications for Teacher Education

There are many implications for teacher education that can be drawn from this study. I will focus on three major implications for (1) curriculum and pedagogy; (2) professional growth of white preservice teachers; and (3) the relational aspects of multicultural education, in particular the need for honesty and engagement.

### Implications for Curriculum and Pedagogy

When considering this study in the larger context of teacher education, there are implications for curriculum and pedagogy which can be drawn from this work. As a teacher and researcher directly involved in a teacher preparation program, I see this study as a guide for curriculum and pedagogy related to anti-racist, multicultural education. The two areas I see as critical for inclusion in these curricula are racial identity theory and the use of autobiography and narrative in teacher education courses.

If the women in this study are typical of many in the field (and I believe they are), then it can be assumed that most preservice teachers have not had sustained opportunities to critically reflect on their racial identity or background prior to entering teacher preparation programs. Without critical analysis of one's own racial identity, it is difficult if not impossible to comprehend the myriad ways in which that identity affects one as a teacher. As we saw with Michelle, had she not delved into her past to consider the racism she was exposed to as a child, she might not be

considering today how that will affect her as a teacher. Because she did delve into the past, she is more aware of her biases and how her upbringing led her to make assumptions about certain groups of people. As I stated many times in this dissertation, the U.S. is currently seeing a dramatic increase in the number of students of color attending our public schools. This increased diversity makes it all the more imperative for teachers to be prepared to teach students of color and to genuinely understand the meanings attached to students' racial identity as well as their own.

The second implication for curriculum and pedagogy is directly connected to the first as a method of helping preservice teachers analyze their racial identities. The use of autobiography and narrative in teacher preparation courses is one way for preservice teachers to examine their life histories and identities, as well as hearing stories of others' identities as well. From this study we have seen that students engage much more quickly with narratives than with textbook theory, especially when the topic is multicultural education. This is perhaps precisely because of the sensitive and often controversial and politicized nature of multicultural education. As was demonstrated in our seminar, the use of narrative and autobiography enabled students to see that their life experiences were an important and integral part of their education. Students own life stories then became a bridge for making critical connections to the lives and histories of others. If courses in teacher preparation programs made better use of autobiography and narrative we would see an increase in preservice teachers' understanding of--and ability to effectively address in their

teaching--race, identity and privilege.

### Considerations for White Preservice Teachers

This study looked specifically at the expressed beliefs and life histories of three white women. The study's implications, then, relate directly to this group. I am in no way implying that these implications may not hold true for other preservice teachers; rather, here I wish to emphasize the need for discussing issues of whiteness and privilege in teacher education programs. As white students enter these programs they often have not considered whiteness, as they have never directly experienced instances of racism perpetrated against themselves. I therefore believe that white preservice teachers must be challenged to confront and consider the meanings inherent in their own white privilege. They also need to be exposed to communities unlike their own in order to prepare them to teach diverse populations of students.

One method of exposing white preservice teachers to diverse populations is through field experiences. Many teacher preparation programs now require their students to observe classrooms in areas that are populated predominantly by minorities. This experience helps preservice teachers begin to understand communities different from their own as well as alleviate some of the entrenched stereotypes and "fear of the unknown" students associate with these populations--responses which ultimately emanate from students' own privileged positions. Field experiences such as these can make a dramatic impact on white preservice

teachers before they enter their student teaching semester, and help them better understand issues of diversity and of teaching minority students.

Lastly, from this study we see how white preservice teachers often respond by expressing guilt when discussing the concept of privilege connected with race. In order to move beyond that white guilt and become white anti-racist allies, these preservice teachers need to be supported in being honest with themselves, their stance and their privileged position. This leads me to the last major implication for teacher education, which is the need for honesty and engagement in multicultural education courses.

#### The Need for Honesty and Engagement in Multicultural Education Courses

I recently had the privilege of hearing Dr. James Banks speak at the University of Arizona, where he discussed the topics of multicultural education and diversity in teacher education. Dr. Banks claimed that as teacher educators we should strive to teach or guide preservice teachers "to know, to care, and to act." Our students need to know theory as well as pedagogy; they need to care and act compassionately toward their students. From this caring will come action which is crucial for future teachers to become multicultural activists. Along with these three goals, Dr. Banks referred to the work of Gary Howard (1999), who calls for honesty and engagement in multicultural education courses. Banks and Howards' calls for social justice as a critical component of

teacher education are directly connected to this study.

As we saw with Amy, Michelle and Barbara, white preservice teachers are likely to continually hit a "wall" when facing discussions of whiteness and privilege unless they are honest with themselves about the power structures in which they participate as white, middle class women. In the type of course we participated in for this study, the need for honesty is imperative if white preservice teachers are to move ahead in their understanding of what it means to be white and how that affects them as teachers. Honesty "begins for whites when we learn to question our own assumptions and acknowledge the eliminations of our culturally conditioned perceptions of truth" (Howard, 1999, p.69). With this honesty about the self, about the way history has been enacted and written, and about the ways that each of us can exert our power to transform the racist infrastructures of our educational systems, preservice teachers can become empowered to teach from a critical, multiculturalist stance. Honesty and engagement can provide the foundations for greater understanding and compassion as teachers. It is this honesty that will lead to engagement in courses like our eight-week seminar, allowing preservice teachers to analyze their own beliefs about anti-racist, multicultural education.

Acting upon these three major implications has the potential to transform the future of teacher preparation programs. I specifically hope that these implications can be applied to courses on anti-racist, multicultural education as well as programmatic missions for creating more inclusive, truly multicultural teacher education programs.

## Conclusion

As I sit here, almost a year after the eight-week seminar and on the verge of giving birth to my second child, I am filled with more worry than optimism at the future of teacher education. In a time when conservatism seems to be gaining strength, and as a new conservative president appoints cabinet members opposed to bilingual education and affirmative action, I worry greatly for my children and their education. I hold out hope that educators will continue to struggle against this conservative, racist trend, and that future teachers will have opportunities to teach from their hearts and from their experiences, rather than from their fears of state standards and high stakes testing. As a teacher educator, a feminist and a mother, I am committed to integrating anti-racist, multicultural education into teacher preparation programs, opening up the dialogue on racism and hegemony which is so often missing from teacher education courses.

This journey of research and autobiography has given me new impetus for such strength as I continue to help future teachers examine their own stories and use them to critically examine their racial identities. The larger conservative trends in our society, make it all the more crucial for teacher educators to remain committed to anti-racist, multicultural education, not just as a curricular "add-on," but as a fundamental world view and way of life. I am reminded of Christine Sleeter's (1998) words, that "In this conservative era, activism and engagement are not dead" (p.xiv). The experiences of Amy, Michelle and Barbara

illustrate both the challenges to and the means of motivating activism and engagement among preservice teachers. I hope to remember Sleeter's words and use them to fuel my passion for working with preservice teachers.

## APPENDIX A

## Course Syllabus

**EDUCATING FOR THE FUTURE: MULTICULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**  
**Spring 2000**  
**Baillie College**

**Anita Fernandez, Instructor**

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**Class Time and Location: Tuesdays, 4:00-6:00pm at Baillie College**

**Dates: April 25, May 2, May 9, May 16, May 23, May 30, June 6, June 20.**

**Seminar Description:** This course will focus on multicultural issues in education specifically in the classroom. We will begin by exploring our own educational histories as well as our beliefs about multicultural education while reading about the beliefs and definitions of experts in the field. We will then move into analyzing and discussing specific educational cases that deal with diversity issues in the classroom. Finally, we will look at the literature on racism and white privilege in our society as well as re-think our life-histories with these topics in mind. Throughout the course, we will focus on what is true anti-racist, multicultural teaching and curriculum as well as how to move toward teaching that incorporates social justice.

**Seminar Format:** This course will be conducted as a seminar based in narrative tradition where class members have a voice that is respected and encouraged. All members should read critically and analyze the required texts as well as participate in class discussions. Seminars are not lecture courses, but focused, in-depth inquiries into a particular area of study which means that everyone's participation is important. Required assignments for this class include readings, two major writing assignments, a reflective log, compiling multicultural web sites for your area of expertise and creating a unit to share with the class in your area of teaching. Each assignment will be described below in more detail .

**Seminar Texts:** All required readings for this course will be articles or chapters from texts which I will provide a copy of and make available for all of you to copy or read at your leisure. I will leave these copies at Baillie College in a box marked with our course title. Please do not take these articles and chapters out of the college in case another class member needs them at the same time. Below are a list of the articles and texts from which we will be reading.

Dick, G.S. (1998). I maintained a strong belief in my language and culture: A Navajo language autobiography. *International Journal of Social Languages*, 132, 23-25.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress: Education as the practice of freedom*. New York: Routledge.

Lee, E. (1994). Taking multicultural, antiracist education seriously. In B. Bigelow, L. Christensen, S. Karp, B. Miner and B. Peterson (Eds.), *Rethinking our classrooms: Teaching for equity and social justice* (pp.19-23). Rethinking Schools Ltd.

McIntosh, P. (1989). white privilege: Unpacking the invisible knapsack. *Peace and Freedom* (July/August).

McIntyre, A. (1997). *Making meaning of whiteness: Exploring racial identity with white teachers*. Albany: State University of New York.

Pohan, C.A. & Bailey, N.J. (1997). Opening the closet: Multiculturalism that is fully inclusive. *Multicultural Education* 5(1), 12-15.

Rodriguez, L. (1993). *Always Running*. New York: Touchstone.

Sleeter, C.E. & McLaren, P.L. (Eds.). (1995). *Multicultural education, critical pedagogy and the politics of difference*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Tatum, B.D. (1992). Talking about race, learning about racism: The application of racial identity development theory in the classroom. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(1), 1-24.

### **Seminar Projects and Writing Assignments**

1. *Writing an autobiography/life history* that talks about your own experiences of culture and education as well as social justice. Your narrative can be in the form of an autobiography, poem, story, or a song. Autobiography/life histories should be between 5 and 7 pages, typed, double-spaced.
2. *A reflective log* will be a place to continually respond to readings, class discussions and issues of multicultural education. This log can take the form of a dialogue journal and will be turned in twice during the course at which time I will respond to your log.
3. *An annotated list of resources from the Web* which you feel would help you in your specific area of teaching. We will talk in class about where to look for these sources as well as how many you should be looking for.
4. *A teaching unit* that you feel is a strong, anti-racist multicultural unit that you could take and use in your future classroom. These units should include text citations that you would use, objectives, class activities and a 3-5 page discussion of why you feel this is a good example of an anti-racist, multicultural unit.

5. *Rewriting your autobiography/life history* will be your last writing assignment for this course and will be discussed in detail toward the end of the course.

**Schedule of Topics, Readings, and Assignments:**

<b><u>DATE:</u></b>	<b><u>TOPICS:</u></b>	<b><u>READINGS AND ASSIGNMENTS:</u></b>
April 25	-Introductions -Introduction of my study and consent forms -Overview of the course -Discussion of our beliefs of multicultural education -Questions about autobiography/life history assignment	
May 2	-Definitions of multicultural ed. -History of multicultural ed. -Analyze and discuss a case dealing with diversity	Sleeter & McLaren, Introduction: Exploring connections to build a critical multiculturalism <b>DUE:</b> Autobiography/Life History
May 9	-Share and discuss anti-racist, multicultural curricula	bell hooks, Teaching in a multicultural world Lee, Taking multicultural, anti-racist education seriously <b>DUE:</b> Bring in a textbook, novel or picture book that you feel is a good example of anti-racist, multicultural curricula
May 16	-Schooling narratives -Analyze and discuss a case	Rodriguez, excerpt from <u>Always Running</u> Dick, I maintained a strong belief in my language and culture: A Navajo language autobiography <b>DUE:</b> Reflective log and Resources list
May 23	-Social justice and environmental perspectives -Gay issues in the classroom -VIDEO clip: It s Elementary	Pohan & Bailey, Opening the closet An article/chapter of choice on social justice/environmental issues (be prepared to share it with the class)
May 30	-Present units -Racial identity theory	Tatum, Stages of racial identity development

	-Racial identity theory -Assumptions of discussing race	development McIntyre, excerpt from <u>Making meaning of whiteness</u> <b>DUE:</b> Teaching units
June 6	-white privilege -Analyze and discuss a case -How do we rewrite our stories?	McIntosh, Unpacking the invisible knapsack...
June 13	-How did we rewrite our stories? -Why narratives? -What do we believe now about multicultural education? -What do we still need to consider? -Lingering questions	hooks, Engaged pedagogy <b>DUE:</b> Rewritten autobiography Reflective logs

## References

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