A SELF-STUDY: 
PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES IN A 
MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE COURSE 

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for 
The Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of 
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By

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* * * * *

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ABSTRACT

Given the reality of the changing demographics in today’s classrooms, it is imperative that teacher candidates leave their teacher education programs prepared to teach in culturally diverse classrooms. Research shows that using multicultural literature can be an effective approach to teaching about diversity. Research also shows that the majority of teachers neither know much about multicultural literature, nor do they use it regularly in today’s classrooms. This study sought to explore the efficacy of pedagogical practices that help teachers and teacher candidates acquire the knowledge, skills and professional dispositions necessary to identify and select authentic multicultural literature, and explore its use as part of a culturally relevant approach to teaching.
Dedicated with Love to My Family
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Studies in Children’s Literature
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract............................................................................................................................... iii
Dedication............................................................................................................................ iv
Acknowledgements .......................................................................................................... v
Vita....................................................................................................................................... vii
List of Tables .................................................................................................................... xiii
List of Figures ................................................................................................................... xv

CHAPTERS:

1. INTRODUCTION
   Background of the Study .............................................................................................. 1
   Statement of the Problem ............................................................................................. 4
   Research Focus .............................................................................................................. 7
   Objective of the Study and Research Questions ......................................................... 9
   Significance of the Study .............................................................................................. 10
   Key Terms ..................................................................................................................... 12

2. LITERATURE REVIEW
   Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) ........................................................................ 14
      Characteristics of Culturally Responsive Teaching .................................................. 15
      Creating a caring, classroom environment................................................................. 16
      Connecting culture and learning ............................................................................. 17
   High expectations ........................................................................................................ 17
   Implementing Culturally Responsive Teaching .......................................................... 18
   Multicultural Literature (ML) ..................................................................................... 20
      Definitions of Multicultural Literature .................................................................... 20
### Purposes and Challenges to Using Multicultural Literature

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Fostering cultural understanding</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Providing mirrors and windows</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Dealing with sensitive topics</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Authenticity

- Read Extensively from Parallel Literature                              | 30   |
- Cross-Cultural Literature                                              | 32   |
  - Social conscience literature                                          | 34   |
  - Melting pot books                                                    | 35   |
  - Culturally conscious books                                            | 35   |
  - Stereotypical images                                                  | 37   |

### Follow Recommended Specific Guidelines

- Look For Award Winning and Recommended Books                           | 42   |

### Other Reputable Sources

- Using Instinct                                                         | 42   |
- Culturally Responsive Literacy                                         | 44   |

### Summary

- Purposes of Self-Study                                                 | 46   |
  - (1) Reflection in self-study                                         | 47   |
  - (2) Aligning beliefs and assumptions through self-study              | 51   |
  - (3) Self-study and constructivism                                    | 54   |
  - (4) Learning how to become teacher educators                         | 56   |

### Self-Study

- Background                                                            | 58   |
- Standards and Research                                                 | 61   |

### 3. METHODOLOGY

- Purposes and Challenges to Using Multicultural Literature             | 63   |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background of the Study</th>
<th>65</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research Design</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Questions</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Setting</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedure</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Data Collection

- Participant observation                                               | 83   |
- Group interview                                                        | 85   |
- Document collection                                                    | 86   |

### Pedagogical Practices

- Culturally Responsive Teaching                                         | 89   |
  - Autobiography Assignment                                              | 90   |
  - Snowball Assessment Activities                                        | 91   |
  - Hidden Rules Among Classes                                            | 92   |
  - Cultural Iceberg                                                      | 92   |
4. RESULTS

Culturally Responsive Teaching ......................................................... 122
  Autobiography Assignment ......................................................... 125
  Article: “Culturally Relevant Pedagogy” ........................................... 130
  Hidden Rules Among Classes ......................................................... 134
  Article: “But That’s Just Good Teaching!” ........................................ 138
  Cultural Iceberg Activity ............................................................... 141
  Articles for Week 10 ................................................................. 143
  GLBT Literature .............................................................................. 146
  Week 12 Textbook Reading ............................................................. 152
  Summary ......................................................................................... 156
Selecting “Authentic” Multicultural Literature ....................................... 157
  Multicultural Literature Chapter Books ........................................... 161
  Book Sorting Activity ................................................................. 166
  Textbook Chapters ......................................................................... 178
  “Multicultural Literature in the Real Classroom Setting” Assignment .......... 195
  Booklist Activity ........................................................................... 203
  Pre- Post Survey ........................................................................... 211
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H. Cultural Iceberg</td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Articles Used</td>
<td>354</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J. Textbook Chapters</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K. 10 Quick Ways to Analyze Books for Racism and Sexism</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L. Roads Activity</td>
<td>363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M. Chapter Books</td>
<td>365</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N. Pre Survey / Post Survey</td>
<td>367</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>O. Children’s Poetry Books</td>
<td>370</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P. Data Matrix</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Q. Journal Entry</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Required Courses in Diversity &amp; Multicultural Literature</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>Comparison of Syllabi (Summer 2006 and Spring 2007)</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>Planning Methods for Specific Purposes</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Research Question – Method Matrix</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>Lesson Plan Analysis Grid</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>CRT Rubric</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Criteria Guidelines for Checking Authenticity in ML</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Authenticity Rubric</td>
<td>160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>Multicultural Literature in Real Classroom Setting</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Results of “Booklist of Authentic Multicultural Literature” Activity</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>Pre Survey Responses to Question #1: What is Multicultural Literature?</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>Post Survey Responses to Question #1: What is Multicultural Literature?</td>
<td>214</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>Reflection Journals Before Direct Instruction</td>
<td>224</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>The Reflection Criteria List</td>
<td>231</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>The Reflection Rubric</td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>Reflective Language, Weeks 5-10</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.12 Reflective Journal Assessment ................................................................. 246
4.13 Results of the Pre-Assessment of the Snowball Activity ...................... 270
4.14 Results of the Post-Assessments of the Snowball Activity .................... 272
LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Conceptual Framework Logo (MMC)</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>Continuum of Shifts in Understanding</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Continuum of Shifts in Understanding CRT: End of Semester</td>
<td>156</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>Continuum of Shifts in Understanding Authenticity: End of Semester</td>
<td>217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>The Conceptual Framework Logo</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>Continuum of Shifts in Understanding Reflection: Week 5</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter 1

Introduction

Preparing teachers and teacher candidates\(^1\) for diverse populations of students in today’s global society is an important charge and a considerable challenge for teacher educators. Many experts (Ball, 2003; Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll, Richert, Zeichner, LePage, Darling-Hammond, Duffy, McDonald, 2005; Dyson & Genishi, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2001; Noffke & Zeichner, 2006; Singer & Smith, 2003) have long contended that this is an area in teacher education programs in need of improvement. Scholars (Heath, 1983; Ladson-Billings, 1994) have suggested that culturally responsive pedagogy is needed if institutions are to graduate teachers who are aware of and prepared for teaching diverse students (Banks, 1993; Nieto, 2003). Although research has demonstrated the importance and necessity of culturally responsive teaching, most teacher education programs have still not adequately addressed this need (Hollins & Guzman, 2005).

Background of the Study

Ladson-Billings defines culturally responsive teaching (CRT) as “just good teaching” (1995) for all students. Proponents of CRT (Banks et al., 2005; Gay, 2002;)

\(^1\) Throughout this dissertation, “teachers” or “teacher candidates” will sometimes be used for brevity to refer to both “teachers and teacher candidates.”
Hollis & Guzman, 2005; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2000) explain that culturally responsive teachers establish classrooms that are communities of learners, in which all members feel a sense of belonging. Culturally responsive teachers take care to learn about their students’ family and cultural backgrounds, and use these “funds of knowledge” (Moll, 2000) to connect their home and school cultures. Also important to CRT, these teachers believe that all students can attain academic success.

Culturally responsive teaching has become obligatory since the 1990s, especially given the changing demographics of today’s classrooms. Interestingly, while the diversity of the student population has been rapidly growing, the diversity of the teaching force has continued to remain static. For example, in 1972 students of color accounted for approximately 22% of the student population. This number had grown to approximately 40% in 2008 (NCATE, 2008), and it is projected that this percentage of students of color will increase to a majority by the year 2035. However, statistics (Banks et al., 2005) confirm that in this same time frame, the percentage of European American, monocultural teachers has increased and will remain dominant. With the increasing diversity in the student population and the lack of diversity in the teaching force, it is critical that we make culturally responsive teaching a priority in teacher education programs.

In tandem with this discrepancy between the diversity of students and teachers, there is a gap in achievement between minority and European American students resulting from racial, cultural, gender, and socioeconomic differences. Although the achievement gap is narrowing, reports (Supiano, 2008) claim that there still exists a disparity in test scores between students of color and European American students. Some scholars (Banks et al., 2005; Gay & Howard, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001) believe this
achievement gap can be closed by addressing issues of diversity in teacher education programs that will help teachers gain the knowledge and experience necessary for culturally responsive pedagogy.

In an effort to close this achievement gap, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965 was reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, signed by President Bush in August of 2001. The goal of NCLB was to set standards of excellence and make schools and teachers accountable for students’ learning. This act mandated that all children know how to read by third grade. It in turn precipitated a call for restructuring teacher education programs to train highly qualified teachers who are well prepared to recognize potential causes for the achievement gap and teach effectively to eliminate it.

This led to organizations such as the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) and The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) working together to focus on setting standards that would guide the curricula of all teacher preparation programs. They posited that effective teachers must be able to integrate content knowledge with the specific strengths and needs of students to assure that all students learn and perform to their potentials, which is part of what it means to be “culturally responsive.” Their goal was to link the knowledge of teachers to student outcomes in schools, thereby improving teacher accountability.

Defining standards to hold teacher educators accountable for the teachers they prepare assures equity in teacher preparation programs. In order to strengthen these preparation programs, NCATE revised their standards in 2001 to comply with NCLB,
which significantly raised the criteria of excellence for teacher educators. To be accredited by NCATE or a similar accrediting body, teacher education programs are mandated to adhere to these standards. Similarly, INTASC proposed learning standards designed to assure that teachers leave their training programs with the knowledge and skills necessary to become effective educators. At about the same time, NBPTS introduced standards for advanced certification for exemplary teaching. Since 1979, these organizations have included standards regarding diversity, demonstrating that preparing teachers for teaching in diverse settings are common and important goals. Today, these revised standards are used in teacher education programs to assure that teachers are truly prepared to undertake the challenges of the diversity that they will encounter in the classroom.

Statement of the Problem

A challenge in teaching for diversity is that teachers do not enter their programs as blank slates. Rather, their teacher education begins with preconceived notions of teaching and learning garnered from their own educational experiences. Their monocultural worldviews predispose them to believe that one teaches all children in the same way. No matter what the race of the teacher, the majority has “mono-vision” and a narrow worldview; moreover, most European-Americans do not consider themselves as belonging to a specific “culture.” Banks et al. (2005) call for culturally responsive teaching which espouses a “sociocultural consciousness [that] enables teachers to realize
that the worldview they may have grown up with is not universal” (p. 253). Culturally responsive teaching requires observing the world through multiple lenses and not from the sole perspective of the race to which the teacher belongs.

Research suggests that to be most effective, addressing issues of culturally responsive teaching should be incorporated not merely in one or two required courses, but rather should permeate the core of all courses required for teachers in their teacher education programs. Field experiences can help in training teachers for diversity; however, communities are oftentimes homogenous, and it is often difficult to place teachers in settings where they can experience teaching a racially diverse group of children. Many teachers have had very few lived experiences with racial diversity in their personal lives or in their practice teaching. Therefore, they exit their field experiences and enter teaching positions unequipped to teach in classrooms where racial diversity exists (Ball, 2003), and unprepared to teach *about* diversity where it does not exist.

It seems that despite the standards implemented for mandating diversity training, much uncertainty remains about how that training should be translated into practice in order to be effective (Cochran-Smith & Demers, 2008). The scope of approaches to training for culturally responsive teaching is too broad to do it justice here. Some suggest teaching to reduce prejudice (Howard, 2003; McNair, 2003), while others maintain an equity approach (Freire, 1998; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2003). Most agree that multicultural education cannot be effective as an “add-on” to curricula but that rather, it needs to permeate the curricula (Banks et al., 2005). Some
researchers (Lyon & Colby, 2004; MacPhee, 1997; Singer & Smith, 2003) suggest that using multicultural literature can be an effective approach to culturally responsive pedagogy. It is on this notion that the current study focuses.

Multicultural literature serves as an approach to culturally responsive teaching in several ways (Cai & Bishop, 1994; Tyson, 2000). ML provides “mirrors” for students of diverse cultures to see themselves in literature, and “windows” into these cultures for the hegemonic group (Bishop, 1997; Harris, 1996). This affirmation can result in cultural understanding among diverse groups of people and can engender a sense of connection between them. ML can also “provide new perspectives on problems and issues” and “shape attitudes” (Noll, 2003, p. 182) about other cultures. It can open venues for allowing critical discussion of topics that are sensitive in nature. Moreover, multicultural literature used in culturally responsive ways has the potential to change hearts (Bishop, 1990; Rasinski & Padak, 1990). It is imperative that teachers and teacher candidates learn about the importance of selecting and using authentic multicultural literature for culturally responsive pedagogy.

While the connection between multicultural literature and culturally responsive teaching might seem obvious, it is not obvious to everyone. Teachers and teacher candidates need explicit instruction about multicultural literature and its connection to culturally responsive teaching. Research supports that many teachers do not know how to recognize and select authentic multicultural literature, or how to incorporate it into their curricula. Additionally, not all teachers consider multicultural literature to be a separate body of children’s literature, and not all are conscious of the notion of culturally responsive teaching. Furthermore, multicultural literature is difficult to locate, and even
when it is available, teachers do not use it (Ford, Tyson, Howard, Harris, 2000). Despite the fact that ML has been shown to be an effective approach to culturally responsive teaching, most teacher education programs do not offer or require a course in multicultural literature.

Another challenge is that European American teachers do not see the value in using multicultural literature, particularly when they teach in classrooms without much racial diversity (Lyon & Colby, 2004). Most of them are unaware of the issue of race or perhaps it is more accurate to say they choose to ignore it. They lack knowledge about culturally responsive teaching because the issue of race is basically invisible to them. They grow up espousing the view that being “color blind” is best for children (Banks et al., 2005), and they perceive discussions about race as rude and uncomfortable. They have been acculturated to believe that it is best to ignore race completely. Morrison (1992) contends that this issue is made even more problematic because most White people believe that ignoring race is a “graceful, even generous, liberal gesture” (p. 9). As teacher educators, it is important to guide teachers to critically examine their knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward using multicultural literature no matter what the diversity of their classrooms.

Research Focus

Taking seriously the increased emphasis on standards, teacher educators began to search for new methods of conducting research that would be more beneficial to them. Cochran-Smith and Demers (2008) noted that traditional research had not been successful thus far, in answering the questions about teaching for diversity, and they suggested that
practitioner research might provide better answers. Perhaps the development in teaching that has had the most impact on making changes and strengthening teacher education is a relatively new form of practitioner research known as “self-study.” Self-study has been described as a significant development in research methods with major implications for teacher education programs (Zeichner, 1999). Since it is a major responsibility of teacher education programs to assure that graduates leave prepared to teach for diversity, teacher educators began to conduct research on their own practices in order to study the connection between teacher quality and student achievement.

My responsibility as a teacher educator to prepare students for diversity prompted me to develop and teach a survey course in multicultural literature. I shared many authentic multicultural books, handed out lists of good multicultural literature, and presented ideas of how to use these books in classrooms. The final course evaluations were disappointing. Students knew about many good multicultural books, but they did not see the value in using multicultural literature in settings that were “not diverse” and were not able to make informed choices of authentic multicultural literature that were not included on their “lists.” I was disappointed by statements like, “I probably won’t use multicultural literature because there is no cultural diversity in my classroom,” (SU_SEI1) and “One of my favorite multicultural books about Native Americans is Knots on a Counting Rope” (Martin & Archambault, 1997) (SU_SEI2). Although the popularity of Martin and Archambault’s picture book is common in primary classrooms, it is criticized by some as culturally inaccurate (Seale & Slapin, 2005). Clearly, my students had not learned what they needed to know about recognizing and selecting authentic multicultural literature.
Russell (2006) suggests that one reason for this is that lecturing and distributing hand-outs are not the most effective means of conveying information. Others (Beck & Kosnik, 2006) concur that teacher educators need to resist “widespread government pressure toward transmission education” (p. 9) and, instead, focus on a constructivist approach to teacher education. Reflecting on these points brought me to the realization that the pedagogy I had used was not effective in preparing students for diversity. Based on the work of Schön (1983), and influenced by the ideas of Dewey (1916/1944), a central premise of self-study is the notion of reflection. It is through the process of reflection that change occurs and practice is improved. Self-study should be a part of the teaching process for teacher educators.

Objective of the Study and Research Questions

The objective of this self-study is to help teachers recognize the potential for using multicultural literature in classrooms as a culturally responsive approach in teaching for diversity. Further, this study aims to explore the efficacy of the pedagogical practices the teacher educator used in teaching these concepts.

The researcher’s hope is that this study will contribute to the fields of knowledge about multicultural literature, culturally responsive teaching, and self-study of teacher education practices by answering the following research question: What is the efficacy of the teacher educator’s pedagogical practices in guiding teachers and teacher candidates to critically examine their knowledge, skills, and dispositions regarding authentic multicultural literature and its use as an approach to culturally responsive teaching? This question led to four sub-questions:
1. How can I prepare teachers and teacher candidates to teach in culturally responsive ways?

2. How can I guide teachers and teacher candidates to identify “authentic” multicultural literature?

3. How can I encourage teachers and teacher candidates to become reflective practitioners?

4. How can I model effective teaching for teachers and teacher candidates?

In order to answer these questions, it was necessary to confirm my students’ ability to recognize and select authentic multicultural children’s literature, and make certain that they understood the purposes for using multicultural literature in their classrooms as well as what it means to teach in culturally responsive ways. Additionally, I needed to examine the effectiveness of the pedagogy I used to teach these concepts.

**Significance of the Study**

Recognizing the use of multicultural literature as an approach to culturally responsive teaching is an issue with implications for teacher education programs, teacher educators, teachers and teacher candidates, and ultimately, children. It has already been evidenced that multicultural literature can be used to validate children by providing them with examples that allow them to see themselves in the storied lives of others. Multicultural literature can open a window to the rest of the world for children with limited knowledge or experience with racial diversity. Research also clearly evinces that despite its potential as a culturally responsive tool, multicultural literature is not often used as such.
The current study can strengthen teacher education programs by helping institutions that have not fully met the NCATE standards for diversity gain insight into pedagogy that addresses diversity issues. It provides insight into pedagogical practices that are efficacious in conveying to teachers the importance of selecting authentic multicultural literature and using it in culturally responsive ways. It can help teacher educators identify effective pedagogical methods that can result in a better understanding of course content other than multicultural literature. The current study can benefit teachers and teacher candidates by adding to their knowledge, skills, and dispositions about multicultural literature and preparing them to teach in today’s diverse classrooms. Ultimately, the current study can benefit children by providing them with literature that validates their own cultures and expands their knowledge of other cultures. When teachers and teacher candidates use multicultural literature as a part of the culturally responsive pedagogy in their classrooms, children have “mirrors and windows” to expand their worldviews.
Key Terms

American Educational Research Association (AERA): an international professional organization dedicated to improving the educational process by encouraging educational research and its practical application.

Conceptual Framework: The conceptual framework of an institution “reflects the unit’s commitment to diversity and the preparation of educators who help all students learn.” (NCATE, 2008, p. 14)

Cultural Background. The context of one’s life experience as shaped by membership in groups based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area. (NCATE, 2008, p. 86)

Deficit Model: This model places the blame for lack of academic achievement on the student without considering the impact of the environment or instructional practices. Despite two decades of mandates for culturally responsive teaching which refutes the deficit model, there is still much concern about student outcomes of those students who have not been taught in culturally responsive ways.

Disequilibrium: Intellectual growth involves three fundamental processes: assimilation, accommodation, and equilibration. Assimilation involves the incorporation of new events into preexisting cognitive structures. Accommodation means existing structures change to accommodate to the new information. This dual process, assimilation-accommodation, enables the child to form schema. Equilibration involves the person striking a balance between him/herself and the environment, between assimilation and accommodation. When a child experiences a new event, disequilibrium sets in until he is able to assimilate and accommodate the new information and thus attain equilibrium. For Piaget, equilibration is the major factor in explaining why some children advance more quickly in the development of logical intelligence than do others.

Diversity: Differences among groups of people and individuals based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area. (NCATE, 2008, p. 86)

Emic: of, relating to, or involving analysis of cultural phenomena from the perspective of one who participates in the culture being studied (Merriam-Webster)

Ethnicity: Physical and cultural characteristics that make a social group distinctive. These may include, but are not limited to national origin, ancestry, language, shared history, traditions, values, and symbols—all of which contribute to a sense of distinctiveness among members of the group. (NCATE, 2008, p. 86)

Hawthorne Effect: A term coined in 1955 by Henry A. Landsberger, when analyzing data from industrial studies conducted at the Hawthorne Works in Chicago. Landsberger
defined the *Hawthorne effect* as a short-term improvement caused by teamwork when workers saw themselves as part of a study group or team. Others have broadened the definition to mean that people's behavior and performance change following any new or increased attention. (http://en.wikipedia.org)

*Multicultural Perspective.* An understanding of the social, political, economic, academic, and historical constructs of ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area. (NCATE, 2008, p. 87)

*National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC):* an organization dedicated to improving the well-being of all young children, with particular focus on the quality of educational and developmental services for all children from birth through age eight.

*National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS):* an organization dedicated to improving the teaching profession and positively impacting student learning.

*National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE):* a professional organization whose purpose is to help establish high quality teacher preparation.

*Practitioner Research:* umbrella term for variations of research in which the researcher and teacher are one and the same.

*Self-Study:* a genre of qualitative research methodology in which the researcher conducts inquiry on his or her own pedagogy for the purpose of improving practice.

*Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP):* special interest group (SIG) of the American Educational Research Association, which acts as a forum for educators who work in a wide variety of settings and who are seeking to make substantial contributions related to the theory and practice of teacher education, self-study research design / practice, and the professional development of teacher educators.

*Teacher Candidates:* students who are in teacher education programs preparing to become teachers; also known as preservice teachers.

*Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD):* term assigned to Lev Vygotsky’s notion describing the difference between what a child can accomplish independently and what s/he can do with the help of a more knowledgeable other.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

This self-study intended to support teachers and teacher candidates in critically examining their knowledge of culturally responsive teaching, making informed choices in selecting authentic multicultural literature as an approach in teaching for diversity, and becoming reflective practitioners. An additional goal of the current study was to examine the efficacy of the pedagogy used by the researcher to support teachers in gaining this knowledge. The review of the literature in this chapter is organized around these goals.

Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)

One of the most important responsibilities of teacher educators today is preparing teachers and teacher candidates for culturally responsive teaching. Although culturally responsive teaching has been espoused for years by such experts as Ladson-Billings (1995, 2000), Gay (2002, 2000), Banks et al. (2005), and Cochran-Smith and Lytle (2003, 1993), there are still questions about the characteristics of culturally responsive teaching, and how to implement CRT in classrooms. If as Hollins and Guzman (2005) suggest, “teacher quality is the single most important influence on school success and students’ achievement” (p. 478), and culturally responsive teaching is necessary to
reverse underachievement (Banks, 2005; Howard, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2000), it is logical that teacher education programs need to make culturally responsive teaching a priority in the education programs.

**Characteristics of Culturally Responsive Teaching**

Culturally responsive teaching is referred to in many different terms: “culturally relevant, sensitive, centered, congruent, reflective, mediated, contextualized, synchronized, and responsive” (Gay, 2000, p. 29). Gay (2000) contends that no matter what term is used to name CRT, the goals are the same; i.e., to use the “cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 29).

Educators who espouse culturally responsive pedagogy recognize that a gap in achievement exists between European American students and minority students. They further understand that achievement is more than academics. They believe that “culture is at the heart of all we do in the name of education” (Gay, 2000, p. 8). Gay describes culturally responsive teaching as a “dynamic process” (p. 2) that can be useful in narrowing the achievement gap.

The notion of culturally responsive teaching is a multidimensional idea, too extensive to discuss it adequately here. For the purposes of this dissertation, I will focus on three characteristics of culturally responsive teaching that I wanted my EDU 525 students to be aware of at the end of the course. I determined that it was important for my students to know that teachers who strive for cultural relevance in their teaching have
these characteristics in common: a belief in a caring classroom environment, a focus on connecting culture and learning, and the expectation that all students can achieve academic success.

*Creating a caring, classroom environment.* Some teachers believe that creating a positive classroom environment means being “fair” to the children, and that being fair is equivalent to treating all children “the same”; however, “fair” and “the same” are not synonymous. What is fair in working with diverse populations of students is making certain that each child gets exactly what s/he needs, and those needs can vary tremendously given that students enter classrooms with diverse multicultural perspectives. Although teachers’ intentions for creating a “fair” classroom climate are commendable, some of them are simply not aware of the importance of culture in learning. As Gay (2000) contends, however, “good intentions and awareness are not enough to bring about the changes needed…to prevent academic inequities among diverse students” (p. 13).

Classroom climate is too important to learning outcomes to be left to chance. It is critical for culturally responsive teachers to be intentional about creating their learning environments. Teachers who use CRT establish caring, positive classroom atmospheres built on mutual respect and trust (Ladson-Billings, 2000), and take into account the diverse cultural backgrounds students bring with them to school. These teachers create communities of learners where all students feel safe and supported. This sense of “community” between teachers and students results in higher achievement (Banks et al., 2005).
Connecting culture and learning. Given the cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic diversity in today’s student population, and considering the homogeneity of today’s teaching force, “most teachers do not have the same cultural frames of reference and points of view as their students” (Banks et al., 2005). European American students achieve academic success because they are the “norm” on which academic standards are focused. Learning is affected by a disparity between home and school cultures, resulting in a gap in achievement between European American and minority students (Gay, 2000; Heath, 1983). Culturally responsive teachers help their students make connections between their cultural identities and their learning in an effort to close that gap.

High expectations. This disparity in achievement is often not resolved, in part, because the majority of teachers do not understand what underachieving students really need. Some mistakenly believe that lowering expectations for children who experience a “mismatch” between their home and school cultures is an answer to helping these students experience academic success. Nothing could be further from the truth. Culturally responsive teachers believe that all children can succeed. They have high expectations for all students and expect students to live up to those expectations. This replaces the “deficit model” which holds that failure is inevitable for some students.

 Culturally responsive teachers make connections between students’ prior experiences and content, especially making connections to cultural experiences children bring from home. Using culturally responsive teaching is necessary to replace the notion
of “cultural blindness” (Gay, 2000), with the understanding that culture needs to be central in teaching – not ignored. Further, teachers need to examine their own cultural assumptions and recognize themselves as cultural beings.

Implementing Culturally Responsive Teaching

Whether the population of a classroom is racially and ethnically diverse or homogenous, culturally responsive teaching is important for every classroom. To improve teaching and reduce the achievement gap between European American students and minority students, teachers and teacher educators must gain the knowledge and skills necessary to work with culturally diverse students. Ladson-Billings reiterates that culturally responsive teaching is “just good teaching” (1995) for all students. One of my goals as a teacher educator mirrors the goal Schulte (2005) recommends: “…to prepare teachers with the attitudes and skills necessary to reflect on their practice in a way that will increase their effectiveness with a diverse student population, particularly if they have had little experience with diverse classrooms” (p. 33).

Similar to the participants in Schulte’s study, the teachers and teacher candidates in this study have little experience with diversity. Likewise, analogous to Schulte’s own preparation to become a teacher educator, I did not receive much insight for teaching ethnically diverse students in my own teacher education program. My goal, then, is to assure that the teachers and teacher educators under my tutelage, exit the teacher education program with a sound understanding of CRT, as well as to increase my own understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy.
Researchers (Banks et al., 2005; Hollins & Guzman, 2005) state that culturally responsive teaching needs to be embedded into and not just an add-on to the curriculum. These researchers suggest that teachers need to examine their assumptions about CRT, and need to use a wide variety of strategies that support different learning styles and different abilities. Culturally responsive teachers begin with what children know (Banks et al., 2005) and scaffold their learning.

There are other critical features of culturally responsive teaching that teachers planning to implement CRT need to remember. One of these important components is to use social-constructivist techniques and strategies in teaching. For example, a proven constructivist strategy, cooperative learning, has been shown to improve achievement, not only in ability groups, but across ethnic groups as well (Banks et al., 2005). Teachers must understand that learning is socially co-constructed, and plan constructivist lessons accordingly (Gay, 2002). Active participation is a common learning style for many children, and is critical to a culturally responsive pedagogy.

Another important element of culturally responsive teaching is reflection (Gay & Howard, 2000). Reflection is a necessary element in determining authenticity of multicultural literature and is an important characteristic of being “highly qualified.” Gay and Howard suggest that it is also important for culturally responsive teachers to have their students keep reflective journals.

Yet another component in implementing CRT is to use multicultural literature (Banks et al., 2005). Gay (2000) contends that ML is a “powerful way to expose students to ethnic groups, culture, and experiences different from their own” (p. 118). Thus, if the underlying intent of culturally responsive teaching is to “empower ethnically diverse
students through academic success, cultural affiliation, and personal efficacy” (Gay, 2000, p. 111), using multicultural literature has the potential to positively affect diverse populations of students. This study focuses on this notion of using multicultural literature as an approach to culturally responsive teaching.

Multicultural Literature (ML)

To adequately prepare teachers to meet the academic needs of a diverse population of students in today’s pluralistic society, it is important for teacher education programs to graduate teachers who are educated in culturally responsive teaching. Some experts maintain that multicultural literature (ML) is one of the most powerful approaches to achieving today’s educational goals (Fang, Fu, and Lamme, 2003) and as such, should be included in culturally responsive teaching (Bishop, 2007; Singer & Smith, 2003).

Definitions of Multicultural Literature

Ask different experts in the field of children’s multicultural literature to define it and you will hear a variety of responses. Cai & Bishop (1994) describe it as “a concept in search of a definition” and claim it is “difficult if not impossible” to define. Although they made this statement over a decade ago, the definition is as elusive today as it was then.

Multicultural children’s literature is a category of literature in the larger body of children’s literature that has all the same characteristics as any good children’s literature but is separate, not because of its quality but because of its purposes: to teach children
about cultures other than their own; to provide children of parallel cultures an opportunity to see themselves in the literature they read and to help children of the dominant culture view the world through multiple perspectives; to provide a “voice” to underrepresented groups, regardless of race, ethnicity, religious preference, socioeconomic status, or sexual orientation, who have traditionally been marginalized; and to help make the world a more democratic and equitable society. There is much debate among the experts over which literature in the body of all children’s literature should be called “multicultural,” and although they all agree that multicultural literature is important, they maintain a variety of positions on “how” and “why.”

**Purposes and Challenges to Using Multicultural Literature**

If teachers and teacher candidates are to understand the importance of using ML, it is necessary to teach them why it is imperative to use it and the challenges they may face in attempting to use it. Researchers have identified distinct purposes for using multicultural literature in the classroom that align with the culturally responsive teaching I promoted in my multicultural literature class for teachers and teacher candidates. (1) Multicultural literature can foster cultural understanding and promote growth and understanding of complex social issues by providing added background knowledge about a culture; (2) The potential exists for ML to validate children by providing them with stories that are about them, while giving a broader perspective on the view of the world for others; and (3) ML can encourage dialogue about sensitive topics, thus becoming an
important component in achieving diversity and equity in education. In discussing these purposes of children’s multicultural literature in the elementary classroom, it is important to include some of the challenges regarding its use.

(1) Fostering cultural understanding. It is important for teachers and teacher candidates to understand that children’s cultural attitudes are formed at a very young age and are reinforced through their interactions with their cultural group (Laframboise & Griffith, 1997). Children come to school with partially formed conceptions and attitudes about racial issues that they have learned at home. Research (Barrera et al., 1997; Bishop, 1997; Harris, 1996; Spears-Bunton, 1990) emphasizes the significance of using ML for understanding cultural differences. Children learn about the world through books they read and books that are read to them, and using authentic multicultural children’s literature can help students view the world from a different perspective and can foster cultural understanding. It is important to introduce children to literature that can help them learn about people from other cultures through authentically represented experiences and viewpoints that may be different from their own. Literature that offers children multiple perspectives can be a catalyst for encouraging and attaining cultural understanding.

Almost two decades ago, Spears-Bunton (1990) recognized that multicultural literature could be an important resource for promoting cultural understanding in a diverse classroom. She conducted her study in an eleventh-grade classroom in a school that served two low socioeconomic neighborhoods, one predominately African American and the other predominately White. Her findings demonstrate that ML can be a catalyst in
promoting cultural understanding. She found that reading “culturally conscious” texts (i.e., texts which accurately portray characters, setting, language, and authentic cultural experiences) provide a bridge for African American and European American students to expand their cultural knowledge. Spears-Bunton’s (1990) study shows the importance of using multicultural literature in high-school classrooms with diverse populations of students.

Like Spears-Bunton, MacPhee (1997) also looked at how useful multicultural literature could be in promoting cultural understanding and found similar results in her research in a first grade classroom with a mostly European American population: her students did learn much about other cultures through her read-alouds of authentic ML. MacPhee (1997) found that first graders “mimic” the cultural attitudes they assimilate from their communities. Children who live in homogenous communities often view the world through a very narrow lens. MacPhee’s research suggests that authentic ML can help students who have had limited lived-experience with diversity view the world from different perspectives. This supports findings by such experts as Harris (1990), Barrera (1993), and Bishop (1990, 2003), that ML allows children to experience the world from perspectives other than their own in ways that may not be possible otherwise. In other words, ML plays the important role of introducing students to a world outside their lived experiences (Fresch, 1996).

MacPhee’s findings further suggest that using ML in a classroom can be a catalyst in fostering cultural understanding for children who do not have opportunities for lived experiences with racial diversity in their everyday world. Multicultural literature can enhance children’s understanding of another culture; while at the same time it can help
racially diverse students develop pride in their heritage. ML can promote growth and understanding of complex social issues and provide added background knowledge about a culture. Through these new understandings and broader perspectives, children will see commonality and similarities among a variety of cultures, and even more importantly, they will learn to appreciate diversity and differences. These purposes align with the culturally responsive pedagogy I wanted my students to embrace.

A challenge to this is that most teachers have very limited experiences with diverse populations (Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll, Richert, Zeichner, LePage, Darling-Hammond, Duffy, McDonald, 2005) and teach in settings without much cultural diversity (Ladson-Billings, 2001). By living and working in homogenous settings, teachers may not sense the importance of the role of ML in teaching about cultures, or perhaps they simply do not think about using ML because the need is “invisible.”

While it is difficult to contest the value of using multicultural literature in the classroom, that knowledge is worthless if, as Ford (1997) and Desai (2001) suggest, it is not being used. Findings in a study by Nagel and Whitney (2001) in California provide more substantiating evidence, reporting that the state’s attempts to require the use of ML in the schools have not actually occurred, and when ML is used, it is used in ways inconsistent with culturally relevant ideas (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

It was found that many teachers superficially paid “lip service” to the importance of ML, but there was no evidence that substantiated the translation of that belief into practice. This further substantiates the claim that “students are seldom exposed to multicultural literature” (Ford, et al., 2000, p. 238). In both 2007 and 2008, ML made the “not hot” topic list in Reading Today (Cassidy & Cassidy, 2008; Cassidy & Cassidy,
2007). According to the surveys conducted, 75% of the respondents agreed that multicultural literature was among the six coldest topics on the survey for two years in a row. Also in agreement, 50% of the respondents for both years felt that ML should be on the “hot” list.

To change this pattern, it is important to convince teachers to use ML, which is a challenge in itself. European American teachers resist using ML not only because they do not see its value or importance, but also because they fear they will make a mistake. Still, they need to be convinced that not using ML is far worse than making a mistake while using it. The disparity between the perceived “role” of children’s multicultural literature to promote understanding about cultures, and the noticeable absence of ML in elementary classrooms is troubling.

Over the years, an increase in the number of multicultural children’s books published indicates that there is a growing awareness of the importance of the need for more multicultural literature, but in reality there is not enough good-quality multicultural literature available in libraries or bookstores. In looking at the availability of multicultural literature, McNair (2003) has found that very few books specifically written by parallel-culture authors are available through children’s book club orders. “Since it’s inception, multicultural literature has gained some ground in the curriculum but is still far from permeating it…We need more, not less, multicultural literature” (Cai, 1998, p. 322).

(2) Providing mirrors and windows. Many experts (Bishop, 1990; Bishop, 1997; Gay & Howard, 2000; Harris, 1996; Sipe, 1999) make the point that all children need to see themselves in the literature they read, which is another element of culturally
responsive teaching. Multicultural literature can provide both “mirrors and windows” to give children an opportunity to “see themselves” in the classroom as well as to understand the world from someone else’s perspective. One of the primary purposes of reading is to derive pleasure by identifying with characters in stories and living vicariously through their adventures, and also by examining real life issues through the characters’ joys, sorrows, trials, and tribulations. The luxury to be able to identify with characters is a “given” for students of privilege. The main characters and heroes of most children’s literature look, think, and act like European American children, thus affording them a sense of “belonging.” This hegemony affords these children the opportunity to see themselves in nearly every story they read.

For culturally diverse students, however, being able to identify with characters in a book is the exception rather than the norm. Many classrooms today have children from diverse backgrounds, such as the Middle East, or Somalia, or Mexico, whose experiences children from the dominant culture could not begin to understand. Children from families who have fled to the United States to escape the war-torn environment of their countries; children from third world countries whose families came here seeking to make a decent living for their families. Offering ML as part of the curriculum does not only offer the latter group the chance to see themselves in the literature they read, but also exposes children of privilege to some of the experiences of racially diverse children. Through reading stories in which they see themselves, diverse children gain feelings of worth and power and a sense of self-esteem (Hefflin & Barksdale-Ladd, 2001). In this way, books
act as mirrors (Bishop, 1990; Sipe, 1999). Conversely, for those children of privilege who are used to seeing themselves in books, ML can become a “window” for them to see the world “through other people’s eyes” (Singer & Smith, 2003, p. 17-18).

A challenge with this is that people in the hegemonic group take their “color” for granted, not thinking of themselves as having a “culture,” but subconsciously comparing all cultural groups to themselves. They regard themselves as the “standard” upon which they measure all other cultures. The issue of “Whiteness” (Fondrie, 2001; MacPhee, 1997; Wolf, 2001) can interfere with teachers’ ability to be fair and unbiased, and can affect their assumptions and beliefs regarding the use of multicultural literature. Admitting and facing these biases can be difficult, but examining one’s beliefs and attitudes is an essential step in implementing culturally responsive teaching.

Tyson (2000) argues that the purpose for using ML in the classroom needs to go beyond the concepts of “mirrors and windows” and contends that literature should help facilitate students to become change agents. Teachers and teacher candidates must realize that, used thoughtfully, multicultural literature can be one of the most powerful forces in promoting change and fostering a diverse society built on ideals of equality and mutual respect (Bishop, 1993; Cai, 1998).

Bishop (1993) asserts that “multicultural literature is one of the most powerful components of a multicultural education curriculum, the underlying purpose of which is to help to make the society a more equitable one” (p. 40). One of the functions of any literature is to appeal to the heart. Using multicultural literature for that purpose can help change people’s minds and hearts, foster understanding, and promote mutual respect between people from different cultures. ML offers the opportunity for marginalized
voices to be heard so that people of all cultures can, through a deeper understanding and respect for one another, live together in a democratic society (Cai, 1998; Cai & Bishop, 1994).

(3) Dealing with sensitive topics. As teacher educators, it is our duty to make certain that teachers and teacher candidates understand the importance of establishing classroom communities where all children see themselves in the literature; but we must not stop there. As MacPhee’s study (1997) further suggests, when multicultural literature is used as “more than a window,” it can become an important vehicle for dealing with sensitive issues. Literature has the power to broaden children’s perspectives and shape their attitudes regarding serious and important topics (Noll, 2003).

Research findings have shown that ML can be a tool to help one “think critically about race,” (Copenhaver, 2001), can be efficacious in stimulating important discussions about racial issues (Wollman-Bonilla, 1998), can afford rich opportunities to address many sensitive issues such as prejudice (Allender & Adams, 1999), and be a powerful tool for challenging stereotypes (Noll, 2003; Singer & Smith, 2003).

Children often enter the classroom with preconceived stereotypical notions about a culture; careful selection and use of ML with accurate illustrations and images can help dispel these negative stereotypes and encourage cultural understanding (Willis & Johnson, 2000). Teachers and teacher candidates, however, are not always comfortable using books that deal with sensitive topics like slavery, food stamps, abuse, or interracial marriage. They are concerned that they do not have enough background knowledge about
cultural issues to address them adequately, and they worry about whether or not children are capable of participating in such complicated and awkward discussions. In an attempt to shelter children from these real-world issues, teachers often reject using multicultural literature they feel will frighten children, make them sad, or expose them to topics they are “too young” to know about.

Perhaps one of the most controversial topics regarding ML is literature regarding Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) issues. Some contend that GLBT is not a “culture” and therefore should not be included in the multicultural cannon. However, as long ago as 1993, Harris (1996) and Bishop (1993) agreed that GLBT literature is written for an underrepresented group and as such deserves to be included in the multicultural cannon. Today, NCATE (2008) includes sexual orientation in its definition of diversity, and includes sexual orientation in their definition of cultural background. There is no question that gays and lesbians have been marginalized and stereotyped by some, and have had to deal with issues of prejudice and discrimination. Therefore, GLBT literature meets the criteria of underrepresented groups and should be included in the multicultural cannon.

Nieto (2003) argues that “unintentional discrimination” is practiced when “well-meaning teachers” do not address racially, ethnically, and other sensitive issues and topics in classrooms. She further claims: “The decisions we make, no matter how neutral they may seem, have an impact on the lives and experiences of our students,” and she reminds us that “what is excluded is often as telling as what is included” (Nieto, as cited in Lyon & Colby, 2004, p. 5). It is the responsibility of teacher educators to encourage
teachers to consider the importance of offering children opportunities to explore their ideas and assumptions of sensitive topics and to help scaffold their cultural understanding through thoughtful dialogue.

Authenticity

Authenticity in multicultural children’s literature is a “contentious issue” that is very complex and controversial. Determining authenticity is not simple, and the debates regarding who should and who should not write for a culture are prolific. The issue is complicated further because of the wide range and complexity of perspectives within different cultural groups. It is imperative that teachers who use ML in their classrooms as an approach to culturally responsive teaching understand this complex issue. Since multicultural literature may have positive effects on children, it is important to consider the selection of ML used in teaching. All multicultural literature is not equal. Teachers must have the knowledge and skills necessary for making informed selections of authentic multicultural literature.

If teachers are convinced to use multicultural literature as an approach to culturally responsive teaching, they must, next, understand that ML needs to be carefully and thoughtfully chosen. In a study conducted with teachers who taught grades 5-9, Ketter (2001) discovered that although some teachers try to use multicultural literature in culturally responsive ways, not all teachers are knowledgeable about selecting multicultural literature that is authentic. She claims that teachers need to be taught how to read literature in “culturally critical ways that challenge White assumptions about texts and that enable them to see the difference in authenticity between books like The Cay and
The Watson’s Go to Birmingham” (p. 182). This implies that they must develop the skills necessary to make informed selections. The findings of Ketter’s (2001) study further indicate that in addition to believing it is important to use multicultural literature for purposes of promoting cultural understanding, it is also critical that they have knowledge of how to select authentic ML and understand how to use it in culturally relevant ways.

Considering authenticity is of primary concern when making evaluations about what literature to include in a multicultural library (Bishop, 2003; Cai, 1995; Harris, 2003; Nieto, 2003; Norton, 2005). Being aware of and familiar with the different types and categories of multicultural literature is the first step in making these decisions. One of the best ways to become adept at evaluating multicultural literature for authenticity is to read extensively children’s multicultural literature that was written by “insiders.” Knowing the works of authors who are of the culture for which you are selecting books will help acquaint you with accurate cultural aspects of that group (Bishop, 1993) and the subtle nuances of their cultural experiences. Being “well-read” will allow you to better judge multicultural literature for its cultural authenticity.

Authenticity in children’s literature implies that the story is authentic and the people who identify with the characters, plot, and setting of that story recognize it as “real.” Cultural authenticity requires that the author have the insider perspective of the day-to-day experiences of that culture. The author’s background knowledge has an important impact on how accurately s/he is able to capture the spirit of the culture. For these reasons, many experts feel that being a member of the group you are writing about is a “must” in writing children’s multicultural literature that is authentic and believable.
Many experts feel that the best way to assure authenticity is for authors to write for and about the culture to which they belong. Cai and Bishop (1994) among others, refer to these as “parallel-culture” authors. Parallel literature is considered to be the most authentic of the different types of multicultural literature because the author belongs to the cultural group for whom he writes. Being a member of the culture gives the author the ability to “get inside the head” of the characters, and that emic perspective allows the reader to identify in personal ways. This literature is successful because the insider perspective of the author makes the story “ring true” to readers within that culture. In other words, it is successful because it is literature not merely for or about a culture, but rather of a culture. They assert that authors need that “intimate connection” in order to write authentically. Sometimes these books are also called “culturally specific” because characters are portrayed in culturally specific experiences such as conflicts in family relationships; themes in these books deal with culturally authentic issues. Also in these books, a cultural issue such as racism or discrimination is predominant, and the characters and themes reflect their cultural contexts. Those who espouse this view contend that people who try to write outside their own culture often have few lived experiences and little accurate knowledge about the culture they have chosen to write about. Not having first-hand experiences with a cultural group makes it difficult to write believably about a culture other than your own.

Some experts are even more adamant in their stance that one should only write about their own culture. For example, Seto (2003) states strongly that she feels it is
“morally wrong” (p. 93) to write outside one’s culture, while Harris (2003) calls the practice “authorial arrogance” (p. 124). Proponents of the “writer/insider” viewpoint feel that a story written outside an author’s own culture can result in a biased and possibly stereotypical point of view, and cannot offer the same insight into the cultural experiences of those with insider perspectives.

On the other side of this issue are those who firmly believe that authors can indeed write outside their own cultures. Lasky (2003) refutes the idea that authors cannot write outside their cultures as “not only ridiculous but dangerous” (p. 88). She refers to this “insiders only” viewpoint as a “kind of literary version of ethnic cleansing with an underlying premise that posits that there is only one story and only one way to tell it” (p. 4). She feels, as does Gates (2003), that all writers are “cultural impersonators.”

Gates (2003) provides an example of the point that writers can write outside their culture in his article, Authenticity or The Lesson of Little Tree, which was first published in The New York Times in 1991. In this article, Gates discusses the story, The Education of Little Tree, by Forrest Carter, a story loved by all and hailed as an authentic “masterpiece” depicting the life of a ten year old orphan who “learns the ways of Indians” when he went to live with his Cherokee grandparents. After selling more than half a million copies (many of them sold on Indian reservations), it was discovered that the story was actually written by a Ku Klux Klan member named Asa Earl Carter. This incident illustrates, as Gates fervently puts it, “No human culture is inaccessible to someone who makes the effort to understand, to learn, to inhabit another world” (p. 142).

While scholars agree that it is, indeed, possible to write outside one’s own culture, many (Bishop, 2003; Horning & Kruse, 1991; Noll, 2003) are also insistent that authors
of children’s multicultural literature have an obligation to make sure their stories provide “accurate information and authentic cultural images” (Noll, p. 194). Many (Aronson, 2003; Rochman, 2003; Sloan, 1999) concur that an “insider” perspective about races and cultures can be achieved by “outsiders” with enough stringent research, effort and immersion into the culture, and writers who “step beyond their lived experiences” (Fang et al., 2003, p. 286) must be vigilant researchers, committed to portraying facts accurately and with cultural sensitivity.

Bishop (1997) does concede that someone from outside a culture can write about that culture as long as they have ‘steeped’ themselves in the culture and subject their work to critical scrutiny for authenticity. However, Cai and Bishop (1994) caution “outsiders” to “fill in the cultural gap themselves” before attempting to “close it for others” (p. 67). Howard also advises that although it is possible to write authentically as an outsider, “it is not easy” (p. 94). Some experts (Aronson, 2003; Horning & Kruse, 1991; Noll, 2003) remind us that even within a culture you will find many perspectives so no one person is able to represent an entire cultural group in one story.

Cross-Cultural Literature

Another category of multicultural literature, “cross-cultural” literature, is literature that is written by an author about a culture that is not his own. It deals with relationships between characters of different cultures without really focusing on the “unique experience of any one culture” (Cai & Bishop, 1994, p. 63). Cross-cultural books are generally grouped into one of three types: social conscience books, melting-pot books, and culturally conscious books.
Social conscience literature. The equal rights movement of the 1950s through the late 1960s produced a category of children’s literature written with the intent to help children develop a “social conscience” regarding issues of racial discrimination and prejudice about cultural groups outside the mainstream. The majority of these books were stories about African Americans written by white authors for a primarily white audience. They were often didactic, aimed at evoking empathy for minority children and their problems, and they were generally written from a “segregation” perspective.

Although the author’s “intent” for these books was oftentimes commendable, they were filled with examples of inaccurate information and negative stereotypes. Characters were represented with stereotypical illustrations that were pejorative and demeaning, and they were often presented as “poor” or “ignorant;” families were fatherless; women were helpless. The stories were fraught with problems. They were, however, a step in the right direction, finally giving representation in children’s literature to minority groups that were up to this point invisible; but despite their useful purpose, they caused more harm than good.

Melting pot books. The 1970s introduced a second group of cross-cultural books known as melting-pot books. These books were a big improvement over the social conscience books, the focus more on “integration” than segregation, but they were “marred by paternalism” (Cai & Bishop, p. 67). These books tended to ignore all cultural differences except physical appearance. In these stories, the themes are universal and the characters could be any child. Written at a time when the goal for racial harmony seemed to be acquiring a stance of “colorblindness,” these books attempted to convey the idea
that “people are people” and “color is just on the outside.” Again, the author’s intentions were admirable, but because these books were written for a culture other than the author’s, the missing “insider” perspective left these books without the cultural authenticity needed to make them seem “real.”

There are two different types of melting pot books, categorized according to their purpose. The idea of the first type is to promote acceptance of cultural diversity through stressing universality and ignoring difference. These are often works of non-fiction intended to give information about universal themes, featuring people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds for the explicit purpose of showing diversity. For example, *Jobs People Do* (Maynard, 1997) introduces children to a variety of professions to choose from when they grow up. The photographs show a black child dressed up as a surgeon, an Asian child dressed as a paleontologist, and other professions such as dancers, bakers, firefighters, etc., being represented by children from a variety of cultures. The ethnicity of the child has nothing to do with the profession he represents, and no attention is drawn to race outside the visual image of the picture. The book is merely intended to show diversity for diversity’s sake. Although most books in this category are non-fiction, there are fictional examples as well. In *The Snowy Day* (1962), by Ezra Jack Keats, the main character is black, but without looking at the illustrations in the story that fact would not be apparent. There is nothing in the dialogue to indicate an African American cultural experience. It could be a story about “Any Child” written for “Any Reader” (Sims [Bishop], 1982).

The second type of melting pot books includes books written to tell about the experiences of people from different cultures. A good example of this type of book is
Knots on a Counting Rope (1990), by Bill Martin, Jr. This story attempts to portray the relationship between a Native American boy and his blind grandfather. To those of us without inside knowledge of the culture, it is a very touching and interesting story. To Native Americans, however, the story is unacceptable. Someone from inside the culture would know immediately that the conversation between this young boy and his grandfather would be considered disrespectful, a point that is lost on those outside the culture. Once more, the author lacked the emic perspective needed to make this book authentic.

Culturally conscious books. The third kind of cross-cultural books falls into a category known as “culturally conscious” literature. The earliest books in the category were written in the 1970s and continue to be published today. In this category, the author is successful in accurately portraying the characters, setting, language, and experiences of minority cultures despite the fact that the author is an “outsider” to the culture about which he writes. Katherine Paterson is among the authors who have best been able to capture the heart of cultural experiences outside their own racial ethnicity (Seto, 2003). Culturally conscious books are the most authentic type of literature written “across cultures.”

The three types of Cross-cultural literature show a progression over time of authors’ attempts to write more authentically. Hopefully, most of the social conscience books are no longer available on library bookshelves. These books, with their inaccuracies and major flaws in cultural authenticity, do not belong on any multicultural book list no matter the intentions of the authors; and fortunately few if any of these books
still exist on library shelves. Melting pot books have some titles that are interesting, enjoyable, and some carefully selected titles from this category deserve a place in a balanced multicultural library. Most culturally conscious books are excellent and belong on a multicultural list; however, though they are quite good and accurate, there is an important distinction between these different types of books written “across cultures.”

The first point of consideration in selecting ML for children is that it be “good” literature (Lasky, 2003; Sloan, 1999) according to the literary standards used for evaluating all literature. To be considered “good,” a story must have all the elements that demonstrate good literary quality: believable characters, a convincing plot, and a satisfying resolution. The themes must be appealing and relevant, such as peer and family relationships, coming of age, and struggling to “fit in.”

In addition to being “good” literature, ML must also be culturally authentic and accurate. Locating children’s multicultural literature that is both “good literature” and culturally authentic is no easy task. If not carefully chosen, multicultural literature can have negative effects such as perpetuating stereotypical images, propagating erroneous historical information, and reiterating cultural inaccuracies.

Another study that looked at teacher candidates as they reflected on the use of multicultural literature in primary classrooms, was one conducted by Lyon and Colby (2004). These teacher candidates, like the teachers in Ketter’s study, had the desire to use multicultural literature and they believed that it was important to issues of culturally relevant teaching, but they were unaware of how their “Whiteness” got in the way of making informed selections of multicultural literature. The findings from this study show an overall lack of awareness about personal biases in selecting and using multicultural
literature. The findings also indicate “preservice teachers need a stimulus to become aware of their beliefs, attitudes, preferences and practices when using multicultural literature in the classroom” (p. 6).

Stereotypical images. Stereotypical illustrations are one of the most blatant and common violations against authenticity in children’s multicultural literature. Hefflin & Barksdale-Ladd (2001) have found that stereotypes in multicultural literature often result from a lack of understanding or a lack of sufficient research by “outsider” authors. Bishop (1990) voiced this same concern in her discussion of writing across cultures. Authors who write outside their own cultures need to steep themselves in the experiences of the cultural group they intend to portray in order to avoid using stereotypical images and erroneous cultural information. Richard Ammon provides an exemplary illustration of how this immersion is successful with books like An Amish Wedding (Ammon, 1998) and An Amish Year (Ammon, 2000). He spent years living among the Amish to gain an “insider” perspective, and subjects his work to the scrutiny of the Amish people before submitting it for publication. This is the sort of “social responsibility” Barerra et al. advocate for authors so that they produce culturally sensitive work when writing across cultures.

Research suggests that authentic multicultural literature has the potential to dispel preconceived stereotypes (Harris, 2003; Howard, 1991; Singer & Smith, 2003; Willis & Johnson, 2000). ML can help children see characters as real people, and these accurate portrayals of characters can be effective in moving children beyond stereotypical notions.
What is disturbing is that books like Helen Bannerman’s *The Story of Little Black Sambo* (1899/2003) and Clair Bishop’s *The Five Chinese Brothers* (1938) not only remain in print, but also continue to be used in classrooms despite their pejorative and stereotypical illustrations. Harris (1994) notes that this is due at least in part to the fact that many in the dominant culture, lack the “critical consciousness needed to understand why the texts are controversial” (p. 17). Along with the new understandings we are developing in regard to the harm incurred with stereotypical books, authors are publishing new versions of these old favorites. For example, Lester’s *Sam and the Tigers* (1996) is a more culturally sensitive version of the much loved childhood story about the boy who outwitted the grandest tigers in the jungle. Likewise, Margaret Mahy’s, *The Seven Chinese Brothers* (1990) has the same wit and charm as its counterpart, but illustrations by a parallel-culture illustrator can make a profound difference between stereotypical and culturally authentic illustrations.

It is difficult for some teachers to “let go” of old favorites that have been deemed culturally offensive by members of the cultural groups they portray. As with the social conscience books of the first half of the twentieth century, there was no malice of intent by the author. The stories are loved because they are imaginative and entertaining. But “no matter how imaginative and how well written a story is, it should be rejected if it seriously violates the integrity of a culture” (Cai, 1995, p. 3).

One common way that children’s multicultural literature perpetuates stereotypical images is through illustrations that show children of other cultures pictured in traditional clothing or settings rather than being portrayed in a present day context. For instance, *Amazing Grace* (Hoffman, 1991) depicts the main character donning a feather headdress.
while sitting cross-legged with her arms folded over her chest. Besides the fact that Native American Indians no longer dress in that style, it stereotypes all Indians as Plains Indians and leaves children with the mistaken notion that all Indians wear feathers. Young children are often surprised to discover that not all Indians wear feather headdresses and that there are Indians living today that dress the same and participate in many of the same activities they do. Although there is merit to learning traditional information, it is important to keep the information current and portray minority children in contemporary settings as well (Huck et al., 2007).

To illustrate how inaccurate historical information can be propagated through children’s literature, consider the many available versions of stories about the life of Christopher Columbus. There are numerous versions that contain historical information that is stereotypical, inaccurate, or omitted. D’Aulaire’s *Columbus* (1955) is fairly historically accurate; however, it contains several stereotypical references toward Indians, such as calling them “naked, red-skinned savages” (p. 34). She also stated: “They are cannibals who ate their enemies” (p. 44). Although this piece of information is reiterated in many versions of Columbus’s story, there are many historians who question the accuracy of this “fact.” In the Weisman & Deitch version, *Christopher Columbus and the Great Voyage of Discovery* (1990), Columbus was called a “hero” and praised for discovering many “exciting things,” but never once was it mentioned that he enslaved Indians to mine gold. When selecting books to explore history, it is important to choose books that are historically accurate.

Challenging teachers and teacher candidates to make informed choices when selecting multicultural literature can eliminate these and many other problems. In order to
become adept in making these choices, there are several important criteria to which teachers and teacher candidates need to become aware: read authentic children’s literature extensively; follow recommended specific guidelines; look for award winning books; and use reputable resources.

**Follow Recommended Specific Guidelines**

Hefflin & Barksdale-Ladd (2001) suggest that it is important to “thoughtfully and purposefully evaluate the quality” of the multicultural literature we select for use in a classroom. They, too, recommend selecting books by authentic authors. In addition, they offer several general guidelines: 1) choose books with well-developed characters set in authentic contexts; 2) make sure the dialogue is realistic; 3) illustrations should avoid stereotypical traits; 4) the information in the books should be accurate. Using these selection criteria can be very beneficial in assuring that the multicultural literature is authentic.

**Look For Award Winning and Recommended Books**

Besides the aforementioned selection criteria, it can be valuable for teachers and teacher candidates to look for books that have received awards for achieving the highest standards of quality among children’s literature. The many book awards presented to children’s literature are too numerous for all to be included here. I have elected to limit my discussion to two of the most well-known and prestigious honors awarded to children’s books published in the United States, and several culture-specific awards that are given only to books within the culture for which the award is designated.
Perhaps the most well known of all the awards in children’s literature are the Newbery and Caldecott Medals. The Newbery Medal, initiated in 1922, is awarded to the author of “the most distinguished contribution to American literature,” while the Caldecott Medal, established in 1938, is presented annually to the artist of the “most distinguished” American picture book for children. Over the years, many excellent multicultural works have been chosen to receive these honors, and looking at these award winners and Honor Books is a good place to begin when establishing an authentic multicultural library. It is important to note, however, that not all multicultural books that have been awarded this honor are supported as “authentic” by parallel culture groups. One example is the 1963 Caldecott winner, *The Snowy Day* (1962).

The Coretta Scott King Award was established in 1969 to commemorate Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and to honor Mrs. Coretta Scott King for continuing her husband’s work. It specifically recognizes African-American authors for their “outstanding contributions to children’s literature that promotes a better understanding and appreciation of the culture and contribution of all people to realize the American Dream.” Books are selected because of their accurate portrayal of the African American experience as well as their overall high quality of literature. The books receiving this award are chosen by a committee appointed by the Coretta Scott King Task Force.

The Pura Belpré Medal was named after the first Latina librarian for the New York Public Library and two medals have been awarded every other year since its inception in 1996. It is presented to one Latino author and one Latino illustrator for an outstanding work of fiction or nonfiction that depicts the Latino culture accurately. Gary Soto and Susan Guevara have proved to be a successful team, winning for *Chato’s*
Kitchen (1995) in the first year of the award, and again in 2000 for Chato and the Party Animals. Choosing any book that has won this award will assure that you have selected a book recognized for its authenticity.

Until recently, the only award for Native American Indian writers was the Native Writers Circle of the Americas Award presented by Native American Indian people. In October 2006, the first Native American Youth Services Literature Award was presented at the Joint Conference of Librarians of Color in Dallas, TX. The award is presented in three categories: picture book, middle school, and young adult. Books selected are required to present Native Americans in either past or present contexts without stereotypical illustrations or text.

Other Reputable Resources

In addition to considering the author in determining cultural authenticity, it can be very helpful to use specific guidelines that have been recommended by reputable sources. As early as 1948, the National Council of Teachers of English publication We Build Together, featured a list of guidelines for selecting multicultural literature that they called “Criteria for Judging Books about Negroes for Young People” (Mendoza & Reese, 2001). Included in the criteria were questions dealing with which characters had the power or wisdom in the story, whose voices were heard or missing, and who wrote the story. In 1980, the Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC) published their Guidelines for Selecting Bias Free Textbooks and Storybooks. The questions posed were
based on the 1948 NCTE guidelines, and they are still applicable today. These guidelines are intended to help people make informed decisions in selecting literature from this relatively new genre of children’s literature about different cultures.

Today, the CIBC (2004) publishes a list of points to consider when checking for authenticity and accuracy in selecting multicultural literature, *10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children’s Books for Racism and Sexism*. The guidelines include: checking the illustrations for stereotypes in characterization, setting, and clothing; looking for signs of racism and gender identity issues; assessing relationships and roles of the characters and their effects on the reader’s self-image. The guidelines also ask you to consider the authenticity of the author and illustrator as well as the language of the book. A final check of authenticity is looking at the copyright date. This is important because children’s multicultural books published before the late 1970s had major flaws in cultural authenticity and should be avoided.

As another venue to achieving authenticity in selections for a multicultural library, there are some lists of books worth considering. For example, a committee of the Children’s Literature and Reading Special Interest Group of the International Reading Association annually selects 25 outstanding trade books for enhancing students’ understandings of people and culture throughout the world, to be awarded the title “Notable Books for a Global Society.” The books must meet specific criteria including the following: culturally authentic portrayal and interactions of the characters, richness of “cultural details,” address diversity, and deal authentically with cultural issues. The books
must also “invite reflection, critical analysis, and response; demonstrate unique language or style; meet generally accepted criteria of quality for the genre in which they are written; and have an appealing format and be of enduring quality” (IRA, 2004).


There are reputable journals, as well, which analyze and publish lists of multicultural literature. Reviews in *Multicultural Journal, The New Advocate, Multicultural Review, and The Lion and the Unicorn* provide access to multicultural literature selections that are culturally accurate. In addition, several websites are very helpful in providing lists of books that have been examined for authenticity: Oyate (<http://www.oyate.org>) and The Multicultural Pavilion, (<www.multiculturalchildrenslit.com/>) are among the best.

*Using Instinct*

Bishop (1993) asserts that defining authenticity is difficult but “you know it when you see it.” Others (Harris, 1996; Howard, 1991) agree that authenticity is apparent when people from the culture being portrayed can see themselves in the story. Barrera et al. (1993) go so far as to say that authors have a “social responsibility” to write authentically about the group they are depicting because all children are entitled to the right of
identifying with the characters in a story. Children from the dominant culture have enjoyed this luxury since the beginnings of children’s literature; however, that has not been the case with children outside the mainstream.

Extensive readings of parallel literature, looking at award-winning books and booklists, exploring reputable resources, and using instinct are excellent ways to locate authentic multicultural literature. One piece of important advice in selecting authentic ML is to make certain that experts in the field of multicultural literature recommend the references used. Any books that are not reviewed specifically by committee members from that culture should be scrutinized carefully before adding them to a multicultural canon.

_Culturally Responsive Literacy_

In using multicultural literature teachers should use the same good practices they use for all literature. Using a variety of reading modes, read-alouds, shared reading, guided reading, and independent reading will assure that each child’s strengths are tapped. Whichever reading strategy is being used, it is critical to have the students access their own background knowledge before beginning a story. Drawing on personal experiences and accessing prior knowledge helps children make the text/student connection necessary to gain the most understanding from the story (Rosenblatt, 1994).

Read-alouds make information available to children that they might not be able to access alone. Read-alouds also provide a time for children to make sense of the text as
a community. They allow teachers to check assumptions, monitor understandings, and detect inaccurate thinking or stereotypical notions that might go unnoticed during independent reading (Copenhaver, 2001).

However, “reading” multicultural literature is not enough. It is not the literature alone, but also the experience in sharing and responding to the literature that together determine the “power” of the stories (Mathis, 2001). It is critical for culturally diverse populations of students to have access to literature with which they can connect and, more importantly, to have time to respond to that literature in meaningful ways. Providing time for both personal reflection and sharing responses to the literature is imperative. Response journals allow children to express their innermost thoughts without fear of ridicule or rejection and give teachers a chance to scaffold multicultural learning and clarify inaccuracies. Dialogue, on the other hand, provides an opportunity to socially co-construct new understandings in a safe community environment. The discussions sparked by the literature can provide a space for all voices to be heard (Fresch, 1996). Studies (Copenhaver, 2001; Smith, 2002; Spears-Bunton, 1990) show that these kinds of opportunities to respond to multicultural literature will not only improve literacy, but may also prompt reflective change. Taxel (2003) refers to this as reading “multiculturally.”

Teacher educators have the responsibility of helping teacher candidates internalize the importance of this type of reading.

Often times the benefits of multicultural literature can be lost when teachers fail to use it in ways that effect change. Some teachers “basalize” multicultural literature and use it mainly for “skill and drill” purposes. Others misuse it by including it in their curriculum for informative purposes in the “tourist” sense. We must make sure that we do
not reduce the use of multicultural literature to these superficial ends. We must challenge ourselves to use it not just to read the word, but more importantly to keep in the spirit of culturally responsive pedagogy, use it to read the world (Freire, 1998).

Summary

The literature clearly shows the potential exists for multicultural literature to validate the cultures of some children while providing a broader perspective of the world for others. It can promote growth and understanding of complex social issues and provide added background knowledge about other cultures. It can be an important component in achieving diversity and equity in education.

A major concern in teacher education today is that most teachers work in settings without much cultural diversity (Ladson-Billings, 2001), and may not fully comprehend the importance of using multicultural literature in classrooms. Teachers need to understand the implications of using quality, authentic multicultural literature and must be committed to promoting cultural understanding through its use. It is imperative to challenge teachers to make available multicultural literature in their classrooms that provides “mirrors” for the cultural groups that make up their classroom communities and “windows” through which children in the hegemonic group can gain a better understanding and appreciation for other cultures.

Self-Study

I selected to conduct self-study research because it is being called for more and more by researchers who are interested in improving teacher education and the programs
that educate teachers and teacher candidates, as well as from accrediting organizations for
teacher educators. My goal was to make certain that the second time I taught my
multicultural literature course was more effective than the first time I taught it. The
following literature on self-study gives a brief overview of several important
developments that converged to precipitate self-study research and demonstrates how it is
a sound methodology for this inquiry.

Self-study is a form of practitioner research that was created to fill a space in the
research gap for teacher educators. Many have attempted to define it, to provide a
rationale for its use, and to distinguish it from other genres of practitioner research. One
thing that all of these researchers have in common is an honest and passionate desire to
improve their teaching about teaching. Zeichner (1999) articulates it well:

There is no more important responsibility for a school, college,
department, or faculty of education than to do the best job that it possibly
can in preparing teachers to teach in the schools of our nation and to
support the learning of teachers throughout their careers. (p. 13)

Therefore, it is important to take the new scholarship of self-study seriously and use it to
help us make our programs better. It is becoming more and more common for the
research that is conducted on teacher education to be done by teacher educators
themselves. As Loughran (2005) states, self-study challenges teacher educators to
examine their practices with “new eyes so that their understandings of teaching and
learning about teaching become more meaningful and applicable in their own practice” (p. 13). Considerably more research is necessary to develop a pedagogy of teacher education.

It is difficult to separate “how” self-study is conducted and “why” it is conducted. Loughran and Berry (2005) contend that they should not be separated, but rather “teacher educators should work in the very way they advocate for their students” (p. 194). Self-study is often conducted with teachers in a way that is also meant to inform their knowledge about teaching. In other words, if a teacher educator wishes to teach about constructivism, s/he should use constructivist pedagogy to make the point rather than telling about constructivism in a lecture. This modeling is also called for by NCATE.

Background

Self-study is a relatively new tradition of research that has been recognized as a research genre since the early 1990s; however, despite its newness, Zeichner (1999) claims that it is “probably the single most significant development ever in the field of teacher education research” (p. 8). Because of the implications of self-study for teacher education research, interest in self-study practices has grown significantly in the last decade (Loughran, 2005). Understanding self-study and its importance to teacher education requires a review of some of the events that influenced its inception. The history of self-study has been thoroughly traced by several respected researchers (see for example Loughran, 2004; Russell, 2004; Zeichner, 1999).

Self-study research developed from the convergence of several major influences. While John Goodlad’s (1984) book, A Place Called School, called for reform in schools
and teacher education programs in the 1980s, Schön’s (1983) idea of reflective practice was gaining interest among teacher educators. Until the middle of the twentieth century, research on teacher education was almost exclusively research that was conducted “on” teacher education rather than research conducted “by” teacher educators. Early studies on teacher education consisted of large surveys of teacher education programs that were precipitated by public concerns like the economy and a changing society and conducted on teacher education programs or in teacher education classrooms by researchers outside of education like The Carnegie Foundation and Holmes Group. The paucity of research directly related to first-hand knowledge of teaching teachers and teacher candidates is well documented (Loughran & Russell, 1997; Richardson, 1994; Zeichner, 1999). At this time in history “We hear the voices of university researchers, of law makers, and of policy analysts, speaking about what teacher educators do or fail to do, but we do not often hear the voices of teacher educators themselves” (Harris, 1996). Early self-study proponents recommended that this needed to change.

Taking seriously the call for teacher education reform and the notion of becoming reflective practitioners, while at the same time considering the lack of empirical research on teaching about teaching, teacher educators became determined to have their own voices heard. In 1984 they petitioned for and were awarded their own space in the American Educational Research Association (AERA), which they called the Teaching and Teacher Education Division K. The AERA’s recognition of qualitative research as a legitimate form of inquiry along with these new determinations precipitated a shift in the impetus of teacher education research.
In the late 1980s, action research became popular as teacher educators began conducting research on their own teaching practices (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993); however, this form of practitioner research was not highly regarded. In an attempt to legitimize the research done by teacher educators on their own practice, Richardson (1994) called for teacher educators to consider the difference between “practical inquiry” and “formal research.” With this charge in mind, in 1992 a group of teacher educators committed to improving their practices and contributing to the research on teacher education formed a special interest group (SIG) in the AERA known as Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices (S-STEP). This group recognized the need for teacher educators to conduct studies on their own teaching in their own “practice settings.” They also saw the need to formalize their practitioner research if they hoped to become recognized as a legitimate research genre. In 1999, Zeichner encouraged a shift in teacher education from “non-scholarship” to this “new scholarship” of teacher education research known as self-study (p. 4).

Russell (2006) believes that “those who embrace and engage in self-study research appear to be heading for relevance with rigor in their efforts to improve teacher education” (p. 16). Zeichner (2007) agrees that “great strides” in self-study research have been made over the past 10 years: studies are now being published in peer reviewed journals; the S-STEP SIG has grown tremendously. Zeichner conversely, however, expressed concerns: that the self-study research by teacher educators on their own practice is “fragmented” and “still not taken very seriously” (p. 37); that researchers are not building their work on prior self-study researchers; that more focus needs to be
given to discussion of how this body of research informs the broader research community. There is also a concern that self-study research needs to be made available for critique (Loughran & Russell, 2005).

Zeichner (2007) contends it is time to begin making connections by “accumulating knowledge across self-studies,” thus making it possible for teacher educators to hear the voices of other teacher educators and utilize their expertise in the all important job of teaching about teaching. Finally, as Loughran (1998) states, “The value of self-study depends on providing convincing evidence that it can be undertaken with rigor” (p. 16).

Standards and Research

Self-study of teacher education is “driven by an underlying purpose that is embedded in a need to link teaching and research in meaningful ways” (Loughran, 2004, p. 162). A major expectation is “that through self-study, both teaching and research will inform one another in ways that will lead to valuable learning outcomes for both the teacher and the students” (Loughran, 2004, p. 154).

Self-study is becoming increasingly significant in national organizations in the reform of teacher education standards. With today’s emphasis on meeting professional standards, this is an important point to consider. For instance, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS, 2006) has listed self-study among its five core propositions that define “What teachers should know and be able to do.” They ask
teachers to “think systematically about their practice” and “critically examine their practice on a regular basis” (p. 2). They further ask for “respect for diversity” (p. 8) and “reflection on practice” (p. 59).

Likewise, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2006) published standards that call for self-study and reflection for both teacher educators and teachers. The Council claimed that faculty should “inquire systematically into and reflect upon their own practice” (p. 36) and assess “the effects of their teaching on the learning of candidates” (p. 37). It expects teacher educators to use the findings of their research to not only inform their own practices, but also contribute to the broader teacher education community. Further, NCATE Standard 5b, “Modeling Best Professional Practices in Teaching” and 5c “Modeling Best Professional Practices in Scholarship,” ask teacher educators to reflect on their program’s conceptual framework, to integrate diversity throughout coursework, and to use assessment data to evaluate and improve the efficacy of pedagogy.

In addition, the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) developed standards intended for teacher education programs that prepare teacher candidates for early childhood education. The Association stated that “continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice is a hallmark of a professional” and that candidates should “show evidence of reflective approaches to their work, analyzing their own practices in a broader context, and using reflections to modify and improve their work with young children” (NAEYC, 2001, p. 25). In addition to standards
recommended by professional organizations, research organizations are validating self-study, as well. The rapid growth of the S-STEP SIG, for example, indicates a trend in self-study among teacher educators.

**Purposes of Self-Study**

An examination of early self-study research shows several distinct purposes for conducting self-study (1) to become reflective practitioners and to teach teachers and teacher candidates about the importance of reflection; (2) to align beliefs and assumptions, (3) to develop knowledge and understandings about constructivist teaching and learning, and (4) to learn how to become teacher educators. Further analysis identifies some common themes within these purposes.

**(1) Reflection in self-study.** A common theme in self-study literature is teachers’ reflection on their own teaching (Barnes, 1998; Dinkelman, 2003; LaBoskey, 1997; Loughran, 2005; Patterson & Shannon, 1993). Loughran (2005) asserts “…there is an overarching need for teacher educators to pay attention to their own pedagogical reasoning and reflective practices and to create opportunities for their student teachers to access this thinking about, and practice of, teaching” (p. 9). It is through the process of reflection that change occurs and practice is improved. Research shows that reflection is an important part of the teaching process for experienced teacher educators as well as for teachers and teacher candidates, and is critical to gaining knowledge (Freese, 2005). Thus, it is not surprising that reflection was the most prolific topic of the earliest
self-studies. According to some scholars (Clift, 2004; Dinkelman, 2003; Loughran & Northfield, 1998; Russell, 2002, 2004; Zeichner, 1999), Schön’s (1983) vision of the “reflective practitioner” was influential in starting the self-study movement.

An early study by LaBoskey (1993) demonstrates an attempt to incorporate reflection, as called for by Schön, into her teacher education course for teachers and teacher candidates. Although LaBoskey’s study is not entitled a “self-study,” it has characteristics that fit the self-study criteria. For example, LaBoskey collected a variety of artifacts common to qualitative research and self-study: pre- and post-questionnaires, transcribed audio taped interviews, journals, course assignment, and papers. Her data were coded and analyzed for patterns and her findings demonstrated what her teacher candidates learned about reflection. Another finding demonstrated a need to develop a new conceptual framework for her course; one that incorporated what she felt was previously missing from her teaching. This close examination of her own teaching is what makes LaBoskey’s study fit into the parameters of self-study.

In a later study, LaBoskey (1997) states that teacher educators need to ask themselves this question: “How do I know that what I am doing is making a difference – is accomplishing what I hoped it would?” This is precisely the sort of self-reflective question that proponents of self-study ask themselves. LaBoskey’s growth in self-study research did not stop there. She also contributed to the literature that recognized self-study as a methodology.
In a study she conducted on teacher candidates, Barnes (1998) stated the following:

. . . the roles of the students in their own learning is critical for, without self-examination and a willingness to reflect, they will not benefit from the course . . . That is why it is so valuable to involve students in the process of self-study since it will demand of them precisely the critical reflection that they require as learners. (p. xiii)

Barnes’s inquiry fits into the parameters of self-study because she involved her teacher candidates themselves in the process of her research, which required them to be reflective. For teacher educators who wish to promote reflective practice, an important tool then becomes reflective practice itself (Dinkelman, 2003). Self-study by teacher educators sets an example that reflection is important, and begins in the classroom where teacher educators practice what they preach. Reflective teachers not only look back at their experience, they also examine and constantly challenge their assumptions and beliefs.

(2) Aligning beliefs and assumptions through self-study. Many agree that another important purpose of self-study is to “encourage change in teachers’ belief structures” (Berry, 2004; Chin, 1997; Freese, 2005; Latta & Buck, 2006; Olson, 2000; Russell, 2006; Zeichner & Noffke, 2001). Many early self-studies focused on precipitating change in teachers’ beliefs and attitudes (Berry, 2004; Chin, 1997; Freese, 2005; Latta & Buck,
It is important to encourage teachers to examine their beliefs and make sure those beliefs do not stand in the way of new knowledge (Olson, 2000).

Just as reflection is a necessary component for self-study and effective teaching, so too, is examining beliefs. Teachers and teacher candidates do not enter the classroom as “blank slates” or “empty vessels” (Freire, 1998) waiting to be “filled” with new knowledge. On the contrary, they arrive with their preconceived notions about what it means to teach, with their prior knowledge of the subject you teach, and with their own beliefs and assumptions about their knowledge and the world. The ideas they bring with them are just as important as the new information they are expected to learn; and it is better to begin with their initial beliefs and add to them or revise them, rather than attempt to dispel them. We cannot simply “tell” students new information and expect that they will know and accept it as truth. They need to learn to admit their biases and challenge their assumptions (Dewey, 1916/1944). Loughran and Berry (2005) learned that “building upon beliefs was more likely to be successful than trying to replace them” (p. 12).

Schulte’s (2005) literature review on self-study provides evidence to support Loughran and Berry’s (2005) findings. Schulte found that few studies focusing on changing teachers and teacher candidates’ beliefs were successful. She suggests that perhaps we could be successful if we focused on examining our own beliefs regarding our pedagogical practices and the ways our students learn. To that end, Schulte conducted a study on a class of graduate students and asked them to examine and write about their beliefs about teaching diverse populations of students. Her main data source was her
students’ journal entries, which she coded and looked to for themes. Agreeing with researchers who contend that one must first examine one’s own cultural identity before helping others with that goal, she turned to her own journal entries. It was through her own reflections that she began to understand her students’ learning. Schulte (2005) defines this transformation process as “the continuous evolution of one’s own understanding and perspectives in order to better meet the needs of all students” (p. 32).

One condition necessary to help teachers examine their beliefs is Schön’s (1983) notion of “reframing” the “taken-for-granted” view. In her study, Berry (2004) found it is not easy to change students’ beliefs. Her findings revealed several obstacles to change: fear of failure, strongly held prior beliefs and attitudes, and the fact that students have a tendency to “rationalize” prior beliefs to support their actions.

A common error in teacher education is imposing views on students without first giving them the opportunity to examine their prior knowledge and their assumptions (Barnes, 1998). Self-study has implications for helping students “identify inconsistencies between their beliefs and practices and to discover counter examples to strongly held beliefs” (Freese, 2005, p. 117). Freese (2005) asserts that through helping teachers align their beliefs and practices, we can gain insight into the complex process of learning to teach (p. 116).

Research also demonstrates that reflection is critical to gaining new knowledge (Freese, 2005). We need to begin with the background knowledge teachers and teacher candidates bring with them, and teach them how to reflect, how to face their biases and
challenge their assumptions (Dewey, 1916/1944). It is through examining their personal beliefs, and confirming or denying them that they will learn to make the link between theory and practice.

(3) Self-study and constructivism. Latta and Buck (2006) suggest that teacher educators “evidence the impact of their methods courses” (p. 29) to show how examining beliefs can facilitate the theory, practice, and reflection cycle. The conceptual framework of the teacher education program at the institution where this research occurred is based on the idea that theory, practice, and reflection are the “tools” used to show the way(s) learning is “constructed.” Several theorists are attributed with theorizing this constructivist approach to teaching and learning.

Followers of Piaget argue that children are not receptors of information, but rather, that they are constructors of their own knowledge. They contend that, children interpret information they appropriate from their environments, and organize the information in “constructing [their] own interpretations of the world” (Corsaro, 1997, p. 11). According to this thinking, learning occurs through the “appropriation of knowledge” rather than the “acquisition of skills” (Ferréiro & Teberosky, 1982) as children progress through stages of cognitive development. Furthermore, from a Piagetian (1959, 2002) perspective, it is important to note that children appropriate new knowledge in the context of their activities and environment (Dewey, 1916/1944). Through hands-on experiences, children assimilate new information, determine how it relates to their existing schemata of literacy, and accommodate the information to form new ideas. This knowledge then becomes the basis on which to develop their next new
understanding. Learning occurs when children are kept in a state of “disequilibrium,” the “force that propels the child through the stages of cognitive development” (Corsaro, 1997, p. 12).

Vygotsky’s (1978) contribution to constructivist theory is that learning is “social” and is rooted in the interactions between people. The social constructivist viewpoint positions the child as a “competent and social learner” with an ability to construct his/her own knowledge. Additionally, it recognizes that learning is based on the interactions between people and accomplished through mediation with someone more knowledgeable. The idea that mediation helps children’s knowledge growth is one of Vygotsky’s (1978) most important contributions to this theory of learning. According to Vygotsky, in order for learning to occur, a child must be kept in her/his “zone of proximal development” (ZPD) – the contrast between what a child can do independently and the child’s potential development with the assistance of someone more knowledgeable (Vygotsky, 1978). In Vygotsky’s words, “what a child can do with assistance today she will be able to do by herself tomorrow” (p. 87).

Constructivism is not a theory just for the knowledge acquisition of children. By keeping teachers in their ZPDs throughout the multicultural literature course, they should be able to “internalize” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 45) the important aspects of authenticity in ML and how to use it for culturally responsive teaching. Teachers and teacher candidates need to know about constructivism from the perspectives of both “teachers” and “learners.”
(4) Learning how to become teacher educators. Another common theme of self-study research is that much of what is learned about “how to become a teacher educator,” is learned through first being a student or a teacher. As Russell (2002) states, “Learning about teaching is just as important for teacher educators as it is for student teachers” (p. 4). Zeichner (2005) refutes a common assumption “that educating teachers is something that does not require any additional preparation and that if one is a good teacher of elementary or secondary students, this expertise will automatically carry over to one’s work with novice teachers” (p. 118). Many universities obviously espouse this assumption by hiring teacher educators whose only training was in an elementary or secondary classroom.

Korthagen et al. (2005) claim that acquiring the knowledge and expertise necessary for teacher education should not be taken for granted, but should, rather, be “carefully examined, articulated, and communicated so that the significance of the role of the teacher educator might be more appropriately highlighted and understood within the profession” (p. 107). Russell (2002) agrees that “learning about teaching is just as important for teacher educators as it is for student teachers” (p. 4).

In his study, Ritter (2007) describes the process of becoming a teacher educator as “complex” and claims that the knowledge necessary to become a teacher educator is “co-constructed with students through the joint interrogation of ideas” (p. 15). This kind of “collaboration” between participant and researcher is an important feature of self-study. In the current study, I used the self-study method to examine the efficacy of the pedagogical practices I used to support teachers and teacher candidates in critically
examining their knowledge of making informed choices in selecting authentic multicultural literature and recognizing the potential of using multicultural literature as an approach to culturally responsive teaching.

**Summary**

The literature demonstrates that self-study is effective in improving teacher education programs by providing other teacher educators with examples of pedagogical practices that are efficacious in educating teacher candidates. It can help teacher educators know if what they are doing is making a difference in preparing teachers for diversity. Self-study can strengthen teacher education programs by helping teacher educators improve their practice and become reflective practitioners. It models to teacher candidates the importance of reflective practice and constructivist pedagogy. It can challenge and encourage teacher educators to take seriously the new scholarship of teaching.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

When teacher educators adopt self-study as an integral part of their own professional practice, the terrain of teacher preparation shifts. Self-study becomes more than just a means to the treasured aim of reflective teaching—self-study becomes an end of teacher education in its own right. (Dinkleman, p. 6)

This chapter outlines the methodological framework used in this study, how it positioned me as a researcher and how it informed the design of this self-study. It discusses the background for this study and the preliminary research I conducted prior to launching the study. The chapter then discusses the research design, states the questions that guided the inquiry, and describes the research setting, participants, and research procedures employed for data collection and analysis.

Background of the Study

Insights from multicultural classes I took during my doctoral studies led to my interest in preparing teachers to be culturally responsive and helping them to recognize multicultural literature (ML) as a support in teaching for diversity. I became especially interested in this endeavor when I taught in the teacher education program at a small, religiously affiliated liberal arts college (pseudonym MMC) located in a rural area of a
Midwestern community. In 2006, MMC was under review for accreditation by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Educators (NCATE). MMC was compliant with all sections of the review except for Section 4a of the NCATE Standards, the standard that deals with diversity. The latest version of Standard 4 to date reads as follows:

> The unit designs, implements, and evaluates curriculum and provides experiences for candidates to acquire and demonstrate the knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to help all students learn. Assessments indicate that candidates can demonstrate and apply proficiencies related to diversity. Experiences provided for candidates include working with diverse populations, including higher education and P-12 school faculty, candidates, and students in P–12 schools. (NCATE, 2008, p. 34)

MMC did not fully meet these criteria for NCATE standards (2008) related to diversity. NCATE found the education department of MMC negligent of articulating a specific set of diversity goals for its students. NCATE’s finding was that MMC did not identify its learning goals for the teacher candidates in relation to diversity – neither in the required course in diversity, nor in any other part of the program. Therefore, it was unclear how to assess whether or not the teacher candidates learned about diversity from their teacher education program. Consequently, MMC received a rating of “unacceptable” for standard 4a. The rating read as follows:

> **UNACCEPTABLE**
> The unit has not articulated candidate proficiencies related to diversity identified in the unit’s conceptual framework. The curriculum and field experiences for the preparation of educators do not prepare candidates to
work effectively with diverse populations, including English language learners and students with exceptionalities. Candidates do not understand the importance of diversity in teaching and learning. They are not developing skills for incorporating diversity into their teaching and are not able to establish a classroom and school climate that values diversity. Assessments of candidate proficiencies do not include data on candidates’ ability to incorporate multiple perspectives into their teaching or service, develop lessons or services for students with different learning styles, accommodate linguistically and culturally diverse students and students with exceptionalities, and communicate effectively with diverse populations. (NCATE, 2008, p. 34)

The underlined phrases in the above paragraph highlight the limitations of MMC’s teacher education program regarding diversity. Clearly, to prepare its candidates for teaching in culturally responsive ways, the education program at MMC needed to revise its program.

NCATE’s criticism included the observation that MMC did not “[articulate] candidate proficiencies related to diversity identified in the unit’s conceptual framework.” The graphic representation (Figure 3.1) and the description of constructivism that follows, describe the conceptual framework of the education department of MMC, which is included on the cover page of all MMC syllabi.
The teacher licensure programs at MMC are based on a constructivist philosophy. This means that the teachers and teacher candidates in our programs build or construct their knowledge as a result of a student-centered, hands-on approach to learning. From the beginning of their experience at MMC, our students are actively involved in their coursework and clinical/field experiences.

Specifically, the students build or construct their new knowledge about teaching and learning with several tools - **theory, practice, and reflection**. These are the building tools that connect the constructivist core of the conceptual framework to each of the teacher education licensure programs.

- **Theory** - principles of teaching and learning
- **Practice** - clinical and field experience
- **Reflection** - thinking about, evaluating and revising one's teaching and learning

Thus, constructivism is at the core of the conceptual framework, and the building tools of **theory, practice, and reflection** connect this core to each of the licensure programs. (MMC, Syllabus, 2007)

This framework is important to this study because of both what it does as well as what it does not address. It makes clear MMC’s position regarding teaching and learning is constructivist in nature and illustrates the cyclical nature of teaching that is espoused by many teacher education programs. Although reflection is an element of this cycle, and is a component of all required education courses in MMC’s teacher education program, it is
a weak link in the conceptual framework. Students of this teacher education program are “expected” to reflect in the context of thinking about the strengths and weaknesses of lessons; however, they are not “taught” to reflect in the manner that Schön (1983) and Dewey (1916) view reflection. The disparity between MMC’s expectations of reflection and the type of reflection required to become reflective practitioners, is explained in the Pedagogical Practices section later in this chapter. Furthermore, MMC’s conceptual framework fails to take into consideration reflection on “diversity,” one of NCATE’s criticisms of the framework. To strengthen the teacher education program at MMC, the conceptual framework needed to be expanded to include the concepts of diversity as stated in NCATE (2008) standard 4.

The first step MMC’s education department took to meet the diversity standard was to revise its official lesson plan form that the teacher candidates had to fill out for their field experiences and class assignments. In the revised form, a required section, “Planning for Diversity,” was added. This was a beginning, but not enough for compliance with NCATE standards.

The education department also asked its faculty responsible for training the teacher candidates to revisit their courses and reflect on how they were addressing diversity. As part of that faculty, I resolved to address diversity by including multicultural literature in my courses. I first set out to gauge my teachers’ and teacher candidates’ understanding of their new assignment to plan for diversity in their lessons. Toward that end, I collected the lesson plans of the teacher candidates enrolled in one of my methods courses with the specific purpose to assess two particular elements: what types of diversity they planned for, and what ML they used in their teaching.
In examining the “diversity” section of the teacher candidates’ lesson plans, I discerned that they noted adaptations for a wide variety of diversities: students from a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, family structures, hearing-, vision-, physical-, and learning disabilities, gifted students, and students who required behavior modification. I was interested to discover that none of the teacher candidates considered cultural diversity in their lesson plans, which was more specifically what NCATE found missing in MMC’s teacher education program when it stated, “The curriculum and field experiences for the preparation of educators do not prepare candidates to work effectively with diverse populations,” and their lessons “do not … accommodate linguistically and culturally diverse students” (p, 34). Therefore, I elected to focus this research on cultural diversity. I also looked at the candidates’ plans to observe what types of literature the teacher candidates were using in their lessons, and found that although children’s literature was generally a part of most teacher candidates’ lesson plans, no one was using multicultural children’s literature.

One of the reasons scholars (Ford et al., 2000) claim for the infrequent use of ML is that it is not readily available. To determine the availability of ML in the community and surrounding areas, I visited the children’s section of the public library to examine their holdings of multicultural literature. I found it disappointing that only 28 out of the 50 titles on the “50 Multicultural Books All Children Should Read” list, were holdings of the library. Even more disturbing was the fact that there were multiple copies of only one of the titles, and no ML books were checked out. Considering these points, it appeared that the community was not making ML readily available to teachers, teacher candidates, and, most importantly, the children.
To further determine the availability of multicultural resources, I also examined course offerings in ten colleges and universities within a hundred mile radius of MMC. I randomly selected ten religiously affiliated institutions (as is MMC) with 4-year teacher education programs similar in size to MMC. I downloaded the college course offerings and required education courses from each institution’s website; I also established E-mail correspondence with education department chairs. Table 3.1 displays the titles of required diversity courses listed in the course catalogs of these institutions, the number of semester hours, and the availability of a course in multicultural literature. The numbers listed in the first column represent each of these ten educational institutions that I examined.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Required Courses in Diversity</th>
<th>Semester Hours</th>
<th>Multicultural Literature Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Multicultural Field Experience</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Exploring Education in a Diverse Society</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Introduction to Teaching in a Diverse Society</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>None listed</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Diversity in Today’s Schools</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>*Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>None listed</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Educational Implications of Diversity</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>None listed</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Multicultural Education</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teaching in a Diverse Society</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>None Listed</td>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Required Courses in Diversity & Multicultural Literature
* = Course is offered but not required
Seven of the ten institutions I contacted reported having a required course in diversity. E-mail correspondence revealed that not one discussed the term “culturally responsive” or “culturally relevant teaching.” One of the institutions reported offering a course entitled “Integration of Multicultural Literature into Reading and Language Arts Instruction.” According to the course description, this course recommended titles of children’s literature, including some multicultural titles, to use in literacy instruction for children. A second institution did not offer a ML course, but did offer two education courses in which ML was at least mentioned; however, in an email communication, the teacher educator at that university characterized the extent to which ML was discussed in those courses as “minimal.” The remaining eight institutions reported that they did not offer a course in ML and that ML was not addressed in any of their courses.

In an attempt to fill this “gap” at MMC and surrounding areas, I developed a survey course entitled “EDU 525: Multicultural Literature” and submitted it to the Faculty Development Committee to be considered for adoption. The course was accepted as an elective in the education department. It was available to all teachers in the master’s program as well as to teacher candidates who were undergraduate students at the Junior and Senior levels. When I taught this course for the first time in the summer of 2006, the focus was on presenting many examples of what good ML should look like, so I brought in many authentic and what I considered “wonderful” ML books to share, handed out lists of good multicultural books, and provided some websites that listed authentic multicultural literature.

On the last day of the Summer 2006 semester, I handed out evaluation forms for EDU 525 asking the teachers and teacher candidates both to fill out some bubbles with
standard questions regarding course content and texts and to make any additional comments about the class in general. The students’ comments in these evaluations left me feeling disappointed and frustrated. There seemed to be a lack of understanding on their part about the characteristics and purposes of authentic ML, which I have summarized below.

- Teachers and teacher candidates who taught in racially diverse settings claimed to use more multicultural literature and claimed to use it more regularly than those who taught in racially homogenous settings. They cited that their primary purpose for using multicultural literature was to provide “mirrors” for racially diverse students. They did not mention using multicultural literature to provide “windows” into those cultures for the hegemonic group.

- Other teachers and teacher candidates who taught in diverse classrooms said they did not use multicultural literature because they were “not comfortable” discussing sensitive issues in their classrooms.

- Teachers and teacher candidates who did not use multicultural literature stated they felt there was “no need” to use multicultural literature because their classrooms did not include children from other cultures who needed to “see themselves” in that literature.

I had also asked the teachers and teacher candidates to write a list of their favorite multicultural children’s literature at the beginning of the course and again at the end of the 15-week summer session. Close scrutiny of their lists demonstrated they did not select all “parallel” or “culturally conscious” literature; rather, they aligned more closely to
“universal” or “melting pot” selections. For example, teachers listed books like *Maniac Magee* (Spinelli, 1990) and *Knots on a Counting Rope* (Martin & Archambault, 1997) as favorites on both their initial and ending booklists, even though these books are not considered to be culturally “authentic” in their perspectives; that is, they are written from the hegemonic perspective and do not reflect the perspective of the culture about whom they are written. Obviously, “telling” my teacher education students that these books are not considered culturally authentic was not “internalized” (Ball, 2003). As Dewey contends, “education is not an affair of ‘telling’ and being told, but an active and constructive process” (Dewey, 1916/1944, p. 46).

Russell (2006) offers one explanation for these findings: “We have ample evidence that lecturing to teachers and distributing print materials have limited impact on teachers practices, regardless of whether they are new teachers, experienced teachers, or teacher educators themselves” (p. 13). Indeed, in my experience with attempting to teach a course in multicultural literature, lecturing and sharing a wide variety of ML had been ineffective in helping teacher candidates understand the importance of using ML as a culturally relevant tool in homogenous classrooms. It was discouraging to discover that the teacher candidates in my class either did not “internalize” (Vygotsky, 1978) much of the important information about ML that I addressed, or did not deem it important.

*Research Design*

Latta and Buck (2006) offer that “internalization” of information can have several limitations: (a) preconceived notions that are unexamined, (b) failure to make connections between theory, practice and reflection, or (c) a method of delivery that is
ineffective for communicating the information. Rather than blame my students for not comprehending the foci of my course, I realized that I needed to explore my own teaching practices to determine how to help them understand my goals. Therefore, it was important to select a methodology that aligned with these goals. I thus designed a self-study as my methodological framework.

Loughran (2005), states that self-study enables “teacher educators to look into their practice with new eyes so that their understandings of teaching and learning about teaching become more meaningful and applicable” (p. 13). Also, self-study demonstrates interaction between researcher and participants (LaBoskey, 2006). Loughran (2004) makes explicit this all-important “link:"

Students are not simply part of the study; they are also fundamental in shaping and responding to the study, because the purpose of studying one’s own practice is often linked to a desire for practice to impact on student learning. Hence students’ views, understandings and participation are of more importance than an ‘easily accessible’ or ‘simple data source’; students are fundamental to understandings of practice… Students are at least as important to the study as the teacher educator. (p. 23)

In this self-study, I used the limitations that Latta and Buck (2006) identify, as the lens through which I examined the correspondence between pedagogical practices and teacher candidates’ learnings. In determining what my students learned, as well as looking at the pedagogy that was effective or ineffective in helping them learn, this self-study becomes as Dinkelman (2003) suggests, both the “end” and the “means” of the research.

Self-study research is not static. It requires reflection on previous work as well as in process reflection of teaching (Schön, 1983). Between the first time I taught ML
During Summer Semester 2006, and the second time I taught it for the current study during Spring Semester 2007, I spent much time reflecting on and revising the course. Below are the course descriptions from both syllabi (see Appendices A and B for the full syllabi).

This course is a survey of multicultural literature for children, emphasizing the use of multicultural literature as both mirrors and windows through which children might learn more about themselves and others. It will examine the use of multicultural children’s literature in early and middle childhood classrooms, to promote cultural understanding and affirm the value of diversity in a global society. Students will read from a wide variety of literature that presents an accurate portrayal of various ethnic groups including but not limited to African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American cultures. Theoretical and historical perspectives of multicultural literature, as well as current trends, issues, controversies, and classroom implications will be explored. (Syllabus, summer 2006)

What I accomplished in the first course was to expose students to many multicultural literature books. What I had hoped to accomplish but did not, was to make certain my students had the knowledge and skills to recognize and select authentic multicultural literature, and to understand its purpose as a tool for culturally responsive teaching. Accordingly, I made changes in the syllabus for spring, 2007, to reflect that this was not a survey course, but rather an introduction to the study of multicultural literature. The course description below reflects these changes, which I underlined here to make them apparent.

This course is an introduction to the study of multicultural literature for children and young adults, emphasizing the use of multicultural literature
as a culturally responsive approach to teaching. It will examine the use of multicultural literature in classrooms, to promote cultural understanding and affirm the value of diversity in a global society. There will be a strong emphasis on the selection of authentic literature that presents an accurate portrayal of various underrepresented groups including but not limited to African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American cultures. Theoretical and historical perspectives of multicultural literature, as well as current trends, issues, controversies, and classroom implications will be explored. (Syllabus, spring 2007)

In order to address all of the items in the diversity standard that MMC did not pass, I included pedagogical strategies that were more constructivist and reflective in nature. It was important to move away from merely presenting multicultural literature, and instead, teach my students to recognize and select authentic ML on their own. It was necessary to emphasize the idea that using ML in classrooms is part of culturally responsive pedagogy, and that ML gives a voice to underrepresented groups. Table 3.2 reflects some additional changes I made to the EDU 525 syllabus used in the current study: in the language I used, in assignments that were added, in chapter books that were different, and so forth.
This course is a survey of multicultural literature . . .

This course is an introduction to the study of multicultural literature as a culturally responsive approach to teaching.

Students will read from a wide variety of literature that presents an accurate portrayal of various ethnic groups . . .

There will be a strong emphasis on the selection of authentic literature that presents an accurate portrayal of various underrepresented groups . . .

Candidates will develop an appreciation for the importance of ML

Candidates will recognize ML as an approach to culturally responsive teaching

Candidates will be acquainted with currently available ML appropriate to grade level

Candidates will develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions needed to determine the authenticity of ML

Candidates will affirm the diversity within the US and respect for cultures around the world

Candidates will examine and gain insights into their own cultural experiences and their understandings of others

Articles on culturally responsive teaching were added

Reflective journal

Autobiography assignment was added

Nightjohn. Paulson

The Watson’s go to Birmingham. Curtis

The Blessing of the Animals. Rosen

Confessions of a Closet Catholic. Litman

Table 3.2: Comparison of Syllabi (Summer 2006 and Spring 2007)

The comparison that I made between the two syllabi was the initial step I took toward self-study. Reflection was the prominent component in my efforts to improve my practice, as espoused by Schön (1983), and to make the changes in my syllabus to better align my teaching goals to NCATE’s diversity standard recommendations. This reflection led to the questions that guided this inquiry.
Research Questions

In this self-study, my goal was to answer the following primary research question: What is the efficacy of the teacher educators’ pedagogical practices in guiding teachers and teacher candidates to critically examine their knowledge, skills, and dispositions regarding authentic multicultural literature and its use as an approach to culturally responsive teaching? This question led to four sub-questions, which I answered together with the teachers and teacher candidates who participated in this study. These sub-questions addressed (1) Culturally Responsive Teaching, (2) Selecting “Authentic” Multicultural Literature, (3) Reflection, and (4) Modeling Effective Teaching.

1. How can I prepare teachers and teacher candidates to teach in culturally responsive ways?
2. How can I guide teachers and teacher candidates to identify “authentic” multicultural literature?
3. How can I encourage teachers and teacher candidates to become reflective practitioners?
4. How can I model effective teaching for teachers and teacher candidates?

Research Setting

The particular setting for this research was the multicultural literature course I taught for the second time during the 15-week semester in spring, 2007, with the class meeting one evening per week for 3 hours. The liberal arts college (MMC) where I taught this class was located in a Mid-western community with a population of just under 18,000. According to the most recent census (AreaConnect, 2007) nearly 97% of the
population is “White,” while just over 1% is “Black or African American” and almost 2% is “Hispanic or Latino.” Moreover, 1.37% of the latter population segment consists of Mexican migrant workers whose children attend school in the community for only a short portion of the school year during harvesting season. For the majority of the school year, the classrooms in this community look racially homogenous. MMC has similar demographic statistics to those of the community, with African American students accounting for 2%, the largest minority enrollment and other ethnicities accounting for an additional 1%. For example, in my own experience of teaching at MMC for eight years, I encountered only one African American undergraduate female student who majored in early childhood education and one male African American graduate student who was an assistant football coach majoring in Health and Physical Education. All others were of European American descent, which is not atypical when considering the demographics of teachers and teacher candidates in this community and across the United States.

According to the most recent U.S. census available ("Facts for features", 2004), teachers of color comprise less than 17.5% of all teachers in the United States. Of the 6.2 million teachers in the U.S., only 8.4% are non-Hispanic Black and less than 20% of all teachers are male. These demographics suggest that children in today’s diverse classrooms will likely be instructed by White, female, monolingual teachers. It follows, therefore, that these teachers need to be prepared to teach students with backgrounds different from their own.

The majority of teacher candidates in teacher education programs across the United States are predominantly White with very limited experiences with racial diversity in their lives or in their practice teaching (Banks et al., 2005). These candidates exit their
field experiences and enter teaching positions unequipped to teach in areas where there is a racially diverse student population and unprepared to teach about diversity where there is none (Ball, 2003).

Most of the teachers and early childhood teacher candidates at MMC come from small, racially non-diverse communities analogous to this community; statistics show that most of them have or will seek teaching positions in similarly non-diverse school districts (Banks et al., 2005; Cochran-Smith & Demers, 2008). Moreover, it is very difficult to place teacher candidates in field experiences where they will have opportunities to work with culturally diverse students, given the homogeneity of the surrounding communities. Most communities within the acceptable radius for field placement have populations strikingly similar to those of MMC. These demographic statistics present a challenge in providing lived experiences with racial diversity to MMC’s teacher candidates.

Participants

All of the fourteen participants in this study were enrolled in the multicultural course. Of these total participants, ten were female junior and senior undergraduate teacher candidates seeking licensure in early childhood education. The remaining four were graduate students seeking Master of Arts in Education degrees. Two were females with current teaching positions; one was a male who taught physical education and coached football at the high school level; the fourth was a male who worked in the admissions office at MMC and had no intentions of teaching. All of the students in the class were European American.
Procedure

During the first class session on January 10, 2007, I read a written lay summary (Glesne, 1999) for the purposes of introducing myself, the nature of my study, and inviting the students to participate (Appendix C). I explained that participation in the study was strictly voluntary and would in no way affect the grades of the participants. I handed out the consent form (Appendix D), read it out loud to the students, offered them an opportunity for questions, and then invited them to participate in my research. I also explained that if they decided to participate they were free to change their minds and withdraw their consent at any time without penalty. All students agreed to participate and signed the consent form, which was witnessed by a colleague.

“EDU525: Multicultural Literature” was designed for teachers and teacher candidates seeking licensure in all K-12 grade levels. The class was structured as a combination of lecture, whole class and small group discussion, and literature circles. I provided professional readings, and also gave them a variety of assigned and self-selected multicultural literature to share within their small discussion groups. In order to give the participants an opportunity to work closely with others interested in the same grade level, I grouped the students in the literature circles according to licensure and the grade levels they taught, the grade level in which they were currently doing a field experience if applicable, or the grade level they thought they would like to teach when they actually begin their careers. In the end, I divided the undergraduate students into four groups, and placed one graduate student to each of the groups, so that each group had one graduate student and two or three undergraduates.
Although the course did not have a field placement component, I planned one assignment that required field study in a real classroom setting. In effective teacher education programs, it is important for faculty to work together to link coursework and field experiences and to have “integrated, coherent courses” (Darling-Hammond & Hammerness, 2005, p. 392). All of the ten undergraduate students in the class were doing their student teaching or were in field placements for other courses that they were taking. I spoke with the faculty for those courses about adding a multicultural assignment to their field requirements, to which they were receptive. As for the graduate students, two were able to complete the assignment in their own schools, and the other two had access to classrooms to be able to complete the assignment.

Data Collection

In the tradition of qualitative research, multiple sources of data were used. Glesne (1999) names three important techniques for gathering data in qualitative research: “participant observation, interviewing, and document collection” (p. 31). My study incorporated all of these techniques. Following is a brief description of each data source and a rationale for using it.

Participant observation. During each class period I made some broad participant observations and recorded them, when possible, in the form of raw or rough fieldnotes as I observed small and whole group discussions and literature circles. Due to the difficulty of maintaining the dual role of both observer and instructor, I also audiotaped each class session so as not to distract the participants or myself during class. Glesne (1999)
recommends thinking carefully about the purpose of audio-taping, and states, “Don’t assume that you must have a verbatim transcript” (p. 79). Since the purpose of taping class sessions was to provide me with an opportunity to take fieldnotes on class discussions, a procedure that was difficult if not impossible to do while teaching, it did not seem necessary to transcribe the class conversations verbatim. Therefore, I used Glesne’s recommendation and recorded “fieldnotes” while listening to the audiotape, much as I would have as an outside observer in the classroom during class.

Glesne (1999) characterizes this alternate suggestion to verbatim transcriptions as keeping a log as described by Merriam (1988). To keep such a log, I created a double entry Fieldnotes / Transcription Log (Appendix E) in which to record fieldnotes I was able to write during class, notes I had written on my lesson plans, both during and immediately following the classes, fieldnotes I wrote while listening to the audiotaped class sessions, and also to record some “verbatim phrases or sentences that appear[ed] important” (Glesne, 1999, p. 79). When exact words did not seem necessary, I simply made comments regarding the ideas presented on the audiotape. I refer to all of these iterations as “fieldnotes.”

As soon after class as possible, I reviewed and expanded my fieldnotes, adding detailed descriptions and analytic memos as I worked. All “observations” were typed into the left-hand column, while descriptive details, clarifications, explanations, and analytic memos were typed in the column on the right. All fieldnotes were dated, printed, and kept in a notebook. It was important to record my observations and interpretations, so that I could triangulate these data with the group interview and the artifacts I had collected.
Group interview. At the end of the course the participants were invited but not required to participate in a group interview. The interview was semi-structured and informal, and lasted just under one hour. It was conducted outside of class time and scheduled at the convenience of the participants. The purpose for the interview was twofold: (1) to give the students an opportunity to clarify or expound on ideas and responses made during class discussions or in journal entries, and to address any additional issues they wished to discuss; and (2) to give me an opportunity to ask for feedback to my pedagogy.

With the consent of all participants involved, I recorded the interview so as not to forget any salient points or distract respondents by writing while they spoke. Even though all of the participants had signed a consent form to have any interviews audiotaped, I reminded them before they volunteered that I would be taping the interview session. Before we commenced, I again offered them the opportunity to deny permission to audiotape the session. No one objected to the taping.

The questions listed below were written as a framework to guide, and hopefully not stifle, the discussion. I designed them specifically to elicit the participants’ responses that would comment on the pedagogy I used to teach the topics and elicit opinions about my efforts to sensitize them to challenges of cultural diversity in their classrooms. The last question was designed to give the participants an opportunity to contribute any thoughts they had about the course.

1. In what ways did I help you understand the importance of using multicultural literature as an approach (support) to culturally relevant teaching?
2. What activities informed your understanding of multicultural literature?

3. How do you feel the books and text helped your understanding of the cultures?

4. How has your understanding of multicultural literature grown or changed?

5. What is the most important thing you are taking away from this class?

6. What other issues would you like to discuss?

It was important to conduct a group interview rather than interviewing the participants individually, as comments that one participant shared often triggered some thoughts from another. Also, as Glesne (1999) indicates, participants who might be uncomfortable sharing one-on-one, might be “emboldened to talk” (p. 68) in a group situation. Based on the participants’ responses during the group interview, I was able to gather multiple perspectives to help me determine the efficacy of my teaching and accordingly, revise my syllabus for future classes. I personally transcribed the audiotape of the interview and gave each participant a hard copy of the transcription along with analytic memos as a kind of member check to assure that no remark was misinterpreted. All of the participants E-mailed me to say they were satisfied that I had interpreted their comments accurately.

*Document collection.* To supplement the data from the participant observation and group interview, I collected and photocopied a variety of artifacts. In an attempt to improve my practice, there were many points to consider in planning what artifacts would supply me with the kind of data I needed to answer my questions. I had to plan the course content – what the students needed to know by the end of the course; I had to remember
the limitations of internalization that might have contributed to the outcome of EDU 525 the first time that I taught it. I also had to keep in mind NCATE’s Standard 4 on Diversity, particularly the areas in which MMC needed to improve. Furthermore, I had to consider NCATE’s Standard 5, measuring faculty’s performance and development, and make certain to employ strategies that were part of modeling effective teaching practices. I carefully pondered all of the assignments, activities, techniques, and strategies that I used in the course to correlate with these criteria. Table 3.3 shows the planning that developed into the artifacts and the pedagogy for this course.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>A</th>
<th>Need</th>
<th>Addressing the Need</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Culturally Responsive Teaching</td>
<td>Professional readings, class discussion, reading ML, understanding culture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>How to select and recognize authentic multicultural literature</td>
<td>Reading ML, sorting ML books, observing ML in real classrooms, class discussion, professional readings, using ML references &amp; tools (eg. Websites, book awards, booklists)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Becoming reflective practitioners</td>
<td>Teach about reflection, require reflective assignments like journals, critical reflections on text, &amp; meta-reflections on course; autobiography</td>
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<th>B</th>
<th>3 reasons teacher candidates may not retain information taught in courses</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Come into course with preconceived notions that are not challenged</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Failure to make connections between theory, practice, and reflection</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Pedagogy is not effective</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>NCATE Standard 4a: Diversity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Conceptual Framework of education department at research site did not address diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Reflection = weak link in the theory, practice, reflection cycle of conceptual framework of MMC’s teacher education program</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Field experiences did not provide diversity</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Candidates did not understand the importance of diversity in teaching and learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Candidates did not have the ability to incorporate multiple perspectives</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Candidates did not develop lessons for cultural diversity</td>
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<tr>
<th>D</th>
<th>NCATE Standard 5b: Modeling Best Professional Practices in Teaching and Scholarship</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Encourage reflection and critical thinking</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Adjust instruction appropriately to enhance candidate learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Integrate what is known about content, field, teaching and learning into their instructional practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Use data to improve practice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3: Planning Methods for Specific Purposes
Pedagogical Practices

Through examining the information in Table 3.3, I was able to develop and select the strategies that comprised the pedagogical practices I used in EDU 525. I designed my class around four areas of study – (1) Culturally Responsive Teaching, (2) Selecting “Authentic” Multicultural Literature, (3) Reflection, and (4) Modeling Effective Teaching – and my pedagogical practices tied into these areas. Accordingly, I organized my discussion in this section along these four areas. Many of the activities and assignments that I used in class aligned with more than one area of study; below, each activity or assignment is described under the area with which, in my view, it was most closely aligned.

Culturally Responsive Teaching

Culturally responsive teaching refers to “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (Gay, 2000, p. 29). I believe that, given today’s global society, it is obligatory for teachers and teacher candidates to understand how to teach in culturally responsive ways. Therefore, culturally responsive teaching (CRT) is at the heart of my study. In teaching Multicultural Literature in EDU 525, my main objective was to prepare my students to become culturally responsive teachers. I wanted to help them critically examine their knowledge, skills, and dispositions regarding CRT and to give them at least one approach – that of multicultural literature – to culturally responsive teaching.
I believe it is the responsibility of teacher education programs to graduate teachers who are highly qualified according to the NCLB standards, who are reflective practitioners, as espoused by Schön (1983) and Dewey (1916), and who are well educated in culturally responsive pedagogy. Below, I discuss assignments and activities that I found to be most useful in examining the participants’ knowledge, skills, and dispositions regarding culturally responsive teaching. These include the autobiography assignment, snowball assessment activity, hidden rules among classes, cultural iceberg activity, and some assigned professional articles.

**Autobiography Assignment**

Autobiographical writing is valuable for a variety of reasons (Knowles et al., 1994). Many researchers (Ball, 2003; Bullough & Gitlin, 2001; Carter & Doyle, 1996; Clark & Medina, 2000; Cole & Knowles, 1998; Freese, 2005; Greene, 1988; LaBoskey, 1993) have documented the importance of understanding oneself before one can understand others. Further, these researchers claim that autobiography can serve as a point of reference in examining one’s perspective and shifts in thinking and understanding.

Most important to this study, the autobiography assignment served as a starting point from which the participants could track the growth of their knowledge, skills, and dispositions concerning the use of ML in classrooms as an approach to culturally responsive teaching. Another purpose for using the autobiographical narrative in this study was to model one element of establishing a positive classroom community, and
how building community relates to culturally responsive teaching. To develop a multicultural community, it is essential to create a classroom atmosphere based on reflection, mutual respect, and trust.

For the autobiographical narrative assignment the participants were instructed to reflect on a “snapshot” from their lives that revealed something significant about the students themselves, and how it helped shape their values, their culture, and their worldview, and not a summary of their entire lives. In addition, the participants were to select an artifact (picture, special object, etc.) to share, which was related to their stories. The participants were asked to talk about this snippet, rather than read a previously prepared text. They were also asked to bring a children’s book that related in some way to their autobiographies.

Snowball Assessment Activities

I modeled a pre- and post-assessment activity called “Snowball Assessment Activity” (Appendix F) to assess the participants’ beginning and ending understandings of some of the concepts presented throughout the course, such as culturally responsive teaching and authenticity of multicultural literature. I explained that this is a useful assessment technique for determining where a class stands in terms of understanding concepts. After we established what the participants did and did not know about culture, I planned activities to help them gain a better understanding of the meaning of “culture.”
Hidden Rules Among Classes

I spent a portion of two class periods for the purpose of deepening my students’ understanding of “culture.” The first of these activities was Payne’s (1996) “Hidden Rules Among Classes” quiz (Appendix G). Payne contends that groups of people all have “unspoken cues and habits” (p. 52) that impact achievement. Understanding these hidden rules for different cultural and socioeconomic groups can help close the achievement gap. Payne includes “quizzes” with hidden rules for lower, middle, and upper classes. The participants brainstormed a list of concepts that are common knowledge to the middle class, and then took the middle class “quiz.” After discussing their responses, I gave them the quizzes for lower- and upper classes.

These “quizzes” were not used to produce a “grade.” Their purpose was to provoke the participants’ thinking about how people tend to look at things from the perspective of their own culture and are unaware that some groups may not have the knowledge and experience that they do. An additional purpose of the quizzes was to cause my students to reflect on that diversity and how important it is to take their students’ experiences and perspectives into account when teaching and interacting with them. This is an important way that they could become more culturally responsive.

Cultural Iceberg

The “cultural iceberg” (Weaver, 1984) is a common analogy used to generate discussion about different aspects of culture. The purpose of the activity was to sensitize my students to hidden aspects of culture. To begin this activity, I gave my students 60 seconds to write down all the words that came to mind when they heard the word

92
“culture.” Next, I had them share their lists in small groups. I then had the groups share their lists with the whole class, and I recorded them on the whiteboard. Next, I explained that culture is a very complex concept, that everyone has a culture, and culture helps shape our worldview. I reminded them that only the tip of an iceberg is visible; similarly, what we can “see” about another culture is just the tip of the iceberg. Finally, I gave each participant a picture of an iceberg (Appendix H), on which was written certain aspects of culture that are visible, and other aspects of culture that are not always so apparent. After taking several minutes to examine the iceberg handout, we engaged in a whole class discussion about hidden aspects of cultures.

 Assigned Articles

Articles were selected to provide information about culturally responsive teaching. An additional purpose of the articles was to encourage reflective and critical thinking. The articles included the works of Gay (2002), Ladson-Billings (1995), MacPhee (1997), and others. The participants were asked to write critical reflections on these articles. We also discussed each article as a class. Appendix I provides a list of article titles that were used throughout the semester.

 Selecting “Authentic” Multicultural Literature

One of the important aspects of EDU 525 that I had the students reflect upon was how to determine what constitutes “authentic” multicultural literature. I wanted the students to be able to make informed and reflective choices when selecting authentic ML. To achieve the larger goal of CRT, I focused on teaching how to choose the best and
most “authentic” multicultural literature. This was no easy feat, as my students did not have much background in ML in their personal lives or schooling. A majority had not read many children’s books about people from other cultures. If some had read them, they still had no practice considering them from any perspective other than that of the hegemonic “White middle class American.” This posed a challenge, as we delved into what constitutes “authentic.” My responsibility then was to equip my students with various tools, class activities, and readings that would help them become somewhat adept at assessing what might be considered “authentic” multicultural literature.

In selecting ML to use in their classes, the teachers and teacher candidates had to first understand what ML is, then examine the issue of authenticity, so that they could make informed selections. To these ends, I included various assignments (textbook, multicultural literature in the real classroom setting), activities (book sorting activity, roads activity, booklist activity), readings, and a pre-post survey, which are discussed below.

Textbook Chapters

A number of chapters (Appendix J) from the text, *Stories Matter: The Complexity of Authenticity in Children's Literature* (Fox & Short, 2003), were assigned to both correspond to the culture that was being currently studied, and to present opposing or similar points of view to articles on the same topic. In this manner, the participants were provided multiple perspectives on important topics. They were asked to write critical text reflections on six of the chapters they read.
EDU 525 did not require a field experience. However, I wanted the teacher candidates to see the connections between their education courses and their teaching. I also wanted to address NCATE’s diversity standard that stated: “The curriculum and field experiences for the preparation of educators do not prepare candidates to work effectively with diverse populations” (NCATE, 2008). Therefore, I designed the “ML in the real classroom setting” assignment, which required being in a classroom.

The EDU 525 class session scheduled to meet on April 4, did not meet, but rather the time for that class was allotted for carrying out the details of the “real classroom setting” activity. We had spent ten weeks discussing authenticity, looking at a variety of ways to identify authentic multicultural literature. I had carefully scaffolded my students’ learning with book sorting activities, readings, and class discussions. Now, it was time for students to practice determining the authenticity of ML on their own, and to check on the availability and use of ML in real classroom settings. We had discussed the paucity of ML being used in classroom along with its lack of availability. This assignment had the potential to confirm or refute that information. All participants had access to a “real” classroom where they could complete this assignment. I instructed them to examine the existing books in the classroom where they were assisting and to list the titles of the books that they considered authentic “multicultural literature.” I also instructed them to ask the teacher in the classroom how often and in what classroom contexts s/he used those particular books, and whether the children were allowed access to those books. I estimated they would spend about 90 minutes in the classroom and an additional hour writing up their findings to account for the 150-minute class period.
**Book Sorting Activity**

Each week we engaged in a sorting activity with books written about the culture we were examining that week. Culturally responsive pedagogy requires planning for different modalities to assure that the learning styles of all learners are met. Reading about ML in a textbook provides a different modality than actually looking at the multicultural literature. Allowing the participants to look at books, read the text, examine the illustrations, and compare them to other books, while considering the information that has been read “about” authenticity, makes book sorting both a constructivist and culturally responsive activity.

Since I planned to use this activity every week, I wanted to model what the students should look for. The first time I conducted the activity, I brought in books to share, and as a class, we examined each book for characteristics that made it authentic multicultural literature. I made certain I provided examples for each of the important ways I expected them to think about authenticity in ML: stereotypical books, books that would provide mirrors and windows for children in a classroom; award winning books; and books that were “not recommended” by the culture for which they were written. To help us determine authenticity, we used a handout (Appendix K), “10 Quick Ways to Analyze Books for Racism and Sexism” (2004). We discussed the idea of parallel and cross-cultural authors, and also looked at books, keeping their purpose in mind (e.g., using ML to provide “mirrors and windows” among cultures). After the first week, students brought in potential books they had selected as multicultural literature and they
carried out the book sorting activity first in small groups. Then they shared with the class their group’s examples of what they deemed “authentic” ML and examples of books that they considered to contain cultural stereotypes.

Roads Activity

After spending several weeks discussing issues of cultural authenticity in ML, we carried out an assessment activity to determine how they assessed their learning thus far. On the four walls of our classroom, I displayed posters of four different kinds of roads: a dirt road, a super highway, a city street, and the Yellow Brick Road (Appendix L). I then asked my students to consider which of those roads most closely represented where they were in their understanding about authenticity in multicultural literature. The students gathered into groups next to the poster of the road they had selected and discussed their reasons for identifying with that road.

This is one example of modeling activities the participants could reproduce in their own classrooms. This activity is important for keeping students in their ZPDs as well as being an appropriate formative assessment for all grade levels. The “roads” can be substituted with other ideas to make connections across the curriculum, for example, animals, seasons, holidays, or favorite math operations.

Booklist Activity

During the second class session of the semester, the ML being studied was African American culture. I instructed the participants to compile a list of book titles that they could use for the topic. I also asked them to write down their reasons for selecting
those books, as well as their rationale to explain why the books were good ones to use. This activity was carried out two other times during the semester. Theoretically, if the students were gaining useful knowledge and skills in selecting authentic ML, this knowledge should be reflected in their choices.

*Multicultural Literature Chapter Books*

Clearly, there was no time to read many longer chapter books during the course of a semester. Since my students in EDU 525 were teachers or teacher candidates for K-12, they would potentially be selecting literature ranging anywhere from picture books to lengthy chapter books. I chose the middle ground by assigning a variety of chapter books (Appendix M), so that we could quickly read several of them and have a number of texts in common to which we could refer in our discussions. I assigned one chapter book that corresponded to each underrepresented group that we studied. My goal was to provide exemplary ML to help teachers and teacher candidates learn what to look for in authenticity.

Bishop (1993) stated that one of the best ways to become adept at evaluating multicultural literature for authenticity is to read extensively children’s ML that was written by “insiders.” Knowing the works of authors who are *of* the culture for which books are being selected makes apparent cultural aspects of that group and the subtle nuances of their cultural experiences. Reading extensively also provides better skills for judging multicultural literature for its cultural authenticity. Finally, requiring all participants to read chapter books in common provided a point of reference from which
the entire group could share multiple perspectives. For these reasons, reading books to learn about different cultures is an important aspect of culturally responsive teaching and helps make candidates more aware of themselves as cultural beings.

Below is a list and brief annotation of the chapter books required for each underrepresented group we discussed during the course. The books are discussed chronologically, in the order we read them. In choosing to read about one culture and not another, or in placing one book earlier in the semester than another, I did not intend to imply that any one culture is more important than another. However, in the case of the book I chose for Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) literature, I did intentionally place it later in the semester to allow time for us to build a safe environment in which to discuss topics that could potentially make some students uncomfortable. Finally, I made it clear to my students that the seven chapter books we read are not the only, or even the best, ones that I could have selected.

*The Watsons Go to Birmingham – 1963* (Curtis, 1995). Told from the perspective of 12-year old Kenny, this novel will elicit both laughter and tears from the reader. On a cross-country trip from Flint, Michigan to Birmingham, Alabama, Kenny witnesses the 1963 church bombing in Birmingham where four African American children were killed. This is a powerful novel that opens a window into the racial violence of the 1950s in the United States, and draws its readers into the life of the Watsons. It gives readers a glimpse into the reality of racial tensions as Kenny and his family deal with the terrifying events in one of the most turbulent eras of U.S. history. The story brings the reader so intimately close to Kenny and his two siblings that the events depicted in the story are almost as disturbing to the reader as they were to the characters. Living this story...
vicariously through Kenny’s character can make students aware of the prejudice that precipitated such violent acts, and awareness is a beginning step to cultural understanding.

*The Heart of a Chief* (Bruchac, 2004). Author Joseph Bruchac describes his novel as fiction “based on the realities of contemporary Indian America and on the many years I’ve spent working with Indian kids” (cover blurb). In this story, Chris, a Penacook Indian living on a reservation, is apprehensive about starting middle school off the reservation. This is a story of overcoming those challenges, a story of self-discovery, and a compelling example of dealing with issues of social justice. Joseph Bruchac is probably the best example of a parallel-culture author of Native American children’s literature, as he allows his readers to step into the shoes of his characters. Through Chris, readers have a window into the challenges that face many contemporary Native American Indians.

*A Single Shard* (Park, 2001). One characteristic of “authentic” ML is that it must first be “good literature.” I selected this novel because it is an excellent example of children’s literature at its best. The author is known for creating well-developed, realistic characters, thus giving her readers a window into the culture. This story provides an emic view of Korean life in the twelfth century. It tells the story of a 12-year old orphan named Tree-ear who becomes fascinated with the work of Min, the potter. After accidentally breaking a piece of pottery, Tree-ear is bound to work with Min until he pays off his debt. Through working for Min, Tree-ear develops a great desire to learn the trade. When there is the possibility of Min receiving a royal commission, he bravely volunteers to transport and present Min’s sample work to the king. This involves walking on foot for days to get to a nearby town. The young boy is seen to make many personal sacrifices and to overcome many fears to successfully complete the journey and secure the royal
commission for his master. Among the touching cultural characteristics one reads about is Tree-ear’s humility and utmost respect for his elders. If this book were used in the classroom, teachers may have the opportunity to ask their students to consider the sacrifices that this 12-year old Korean orphan is forced to make and to question their own place in society, which possibly includes the taken-for-granted privileges that they may not even realize they have.

*M. C. Higgins, the Great* (M. L. Hamilton, 1998). This is a coming of age story about Mayo Cornelius whose dream is to escape from the mountain where the effects of strip mining threaten to swallow his family’s home. It is a story of responsibility, family bonds, and freedom, universal themes with appeal to children of all cultures. The book paints a particularly vivid picture of life in Appalachia, and provides the reader a window into the world of poverty.

This book has implications for teachers and teacher candidates, as it affords the reader an example of powerful literature to further understand the culture of poverty, and helps them gain insight that is important to culturally responsive teaching. There is a correlation between the culture of poverty and low achieving students (Payne, 1996). When teacher candidates understand the effects of poverty on a child’s learning, they can work at narrowing the achievement gap.

*Confessions of a Closet Catholic* (Littman, 2005). After her best friend Mary Catherine McAllister gave up chocolate for lent, Justine Silver decided to give up being Jewish. In this sometimes funny and sometimes thought-provoking novel, readers will identify with Jussy as she struggles with her religious identity and with the everyday challenges of being a teenager. Culturally responsive teaching requires teachers to
provide literature that gives a voice to underrepresented groups. Written by an insider, Jussy’s story provides a mirror for those of Jewish faith and opens a window through which those outside the faith can learn about Jewish culture.

Boy Meets Boy (Levithan, 2003). In this unique high school setting, everyone is openly gay and nobody thinks anything of it. The homecoming queen is named Daryl and the cheerleaders are guys. Paul’s kindergarten teacher knew even then he was gay. When Paul meets Noah, he thinks he has finally met the one for him, but after ruining his chances, is not sure he will ever get Noah back again. Paul’s good friends, both gay and straight, help him through his time of turmoil and confusion. It does not take the reader long, whether gay or straight, to identify with the characters’ realistic issues as young adults.

Esperanza Rising (Ryan, 2000). In this story, Esperanza Ortega goes from being wealthy to living in poverty after her father’s death. Inspired by the true stories of the author’s grandmother as a child, Ryan paints a picture that allows readers to vicariously experience the culture of Mexican migrant workers during the time of the Great Depression. With the help of her new friends, Isabel and Miguel, Esperanza learns to move on with her life. This novel is an example of a multicultural book that won the Pura Belpré Medal, a prestigious honor awarded exclusively to authentic Latino literature.

Pre- Post Survey

In espousing a constructivist approach to teaching, it is important to keep students in their zones of proximal development. Therefore, it is necessary to determine what they already know about a topic. On the first night of class I conducted a pre survey
(Appendix N) to learn about what the teacher candidates already knew about multicultural literature. I administered a post survey (Appendix N) during the second to the last class session to compare responses to their earlier answers in an attempt to determine evidence of growth in their knowledge about multicultural literature. Of course, pre- and post surveys are only a starting point and cannot tell us everything students know about multicultural literature.

Reflection

Reflection was an intentional component of my pedagogy and an integral part of this study because it has implications for every aspect of my research. It has been well documented (Dewey, 1916/1944; Dinkelman, 2003; Hamilton et al., 2008; Olson, 2000; Schön, 1983) that reflection is critical to teacher education. A major intent for this study was to assure that candidates leave the teacher education program with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to become reflective practitioners. Additionally, reflection has been named as one of the components necessary for teachers to be considered “highly qualified” as defined by NCLB. It was also important to focus on reflection in an effort to strengthen the cycle of theory / practice / reflection in MMC’s conceptual framework. Furthermore, I was complying with NCATE’s Standard 5, which calls for reflection on practice by teacher educators. Moreover, reflection is a critical element of self-study, which is the methodology for this research. I relied on the reflection activities and assignments to better understand my students’ progress toward my course goals.

One of the reasons for this research was to determine teaching practices that were effective in conveying the idea that multicultural literature is an efficacious approach to
culturally responsive teaching. This called for reflection on my own practice to determine the efficacy of my pedagogy. It was also important for the participants to reflect on their knowledge, skills, and dispositions of using multicultural literature as an approach to culturally responsive teaching. To assess these goals, I included assignments that were reflective in nature, including my personal reflective research journal, the participants’ reflective journals, critical reflections on assigned readings, and a meta-reflection on the course.

Reflective Research Journal

Throughout the entire course of this research I kept a reflective research journal. During the semester, I wrote in the journal as soon as possible after the end of each class session, as well as at other times when I had an insight that seemed important to remember. I recorded reflections about my teaching: what I thought went well, what I felt did not go so well, what surprised me, and how I might change things next time. I also wrote about a plethora of other issues: incidents in my personal life that affected my research, my thoughts and feelings about the research process itself, shifts in my thinking, as well as my frustrations, uncertainties, and difficulties of juggling an academic, scholarly, and personal life. It became “part autobiography, part field-notes, and part self-psychoanalysis” (Schulte, 2005, p. 36), similar to the journal Schulte describes and uses in her study. This reflective research journal became one of my most valuable artifacts.
Participants’ Reflective Journals

I also asked the participants to keep reflective journals. This was not a new concept for any of the students enrolled in this course. To align with the reflection piece of the conceptual framework of the education department in MMC’s teacher education program, journaling is a part of every required education course, as well being a component in many graduate courses. Those journal assignments, however, differ from the type of reflective journals I expected for this course. Prior journaling did not focus on having the students look at their beliefs and attitudes, but more on their skills: what they “did well” in a lesson and what they “might do” differently when they taught the lesson again. In order to espouse Schön’s (1983) concept of reflection, I needed to communicate to my students the deeper connotations of reflection. In week four we visited a website on reflective journaling (http://www.clt.uts.au/Scholarship/Reflective.journal.htm, "Keeping a reflective journal") and discussed the important aspects of reflection.

I collected all of the participants’ reflective journals weekly, wrote responses, then photocopied and filed them before returning the originals to the participants the following week. The participants’ entries included their reflections on comments made in class, on information from professional readings, on reactions to assigned and self-selected multicultural readings, and many other topics on which they chose to reflect.

Critical Reflections on Assigned Readings

I selected chapters from the text for critical reflection (Appendix J). I made sure that these aligned with the cultural group we would be studying in each class period. Furthermore, I located and assigned articles from professional journals that supplemented
the information that I wanted my students to take from each class. I expected them to read, reflect on, and respond to assigned chapters in the text and journal articles that I provided. They were free to reflect on any six assigned readings of their choice. I collected these reflections, responded to them, and photocopied and filed them before returning the originals to the students.

Meta-Reflection on the EDU 525 Course

At the end of the semester, I asked the participants to reflect on what they learned in the course. I asked them to read through their autobiography, journal entries, class notes, and critical text reflections. I suggested they look for patterns, themes, concerns, and surprises and highlight them, as well as to jot down notes as they examined these records. The purpose in re-examining these records was to identify links between their reflections and their new knowledge. Then, I asked the participants to organize what they highlighted in their records to provide evidence of growth in their knowledge, skills, and dispositions regarding the use of multicultural literature. Moreover, I asked them to type a meta-reflection in which they explained how their new understandings would impact their teaching. This was to be submitted to me during their individually scheduled 15-minute exit interviews, which were also part of the final examination.

Modeling Effective Teaching

At MMC, the conceptual framework of the teacher education program was built on Vygotsky’s (1978) social constructivist model, which grounds learning in interactions among people. Part of my goal for this research was to include diversity in that
framework. Therefore, I wanted to model teaching practices that are considered both constructivist and culturally responsive, and that allowed students to learn through interactions with one another so that they co-constructed knowledge, with me acting as a facilitator. Standard 5 of the NCATE Standards (2008) names “modeling of good teaching” as one of the criteria necessary for faculty to educate highly qualified teachers. Keeping this idea in mind, I modeled several teaching and learning strategies that the participants could later use in their own classrooms. These strategies (grand conversations, book box, poetry, value line, class discussion, and literature circles) are briefly described below:

**Grand Conversations**

After reading each novel, the participants took part in a grand conversation. Grand conversations are whole group discussions of books designed to deepen comprehension. The idea is for students to participate in a conversation about books without much input from the teacher. Grand conversations can occur after the students read a book, part of a book, or after a read-aloud by the teacher. The facilitator’s role in a grand conversation is to summarize the conversation and ask for predictions for the next reading. An option is to then have the students write in logs or record their predictions.

In this study, grand conversations followed the completion of each assigned novel. To model good teaching, I required the participants to prepare for grand conversations by making drawings, taking notes, writing in reading logs, or marking passages with post-it notes, as well as any other means they chose. Participants shared
their ideas in small groups before the whole class conversation occurred, similar to how it would occur in a classroom of children. As described by Tompkins (2007), one participant presented an idea, while others added to it by making further comments, reading excerpts from the text, or sharing drawings. This sharing of ideas from different perspectives is a good model for culturally responsive teaching.

*Book Box*

This is an oral alternative to writing book reports. Book boxes are started when the reader begins a story and they continue through the end. I selected the “book box” because it provided the participants with an activity that was especially designed for English Language Learners and children with limited vocabularies, although it is appropriate for all learners. In espousing culturally responsive pedagogy, it is important to implement such activities that allow all learners to be successful.

While reading a book, the reader is asked to pay attention to objects that are mentioned in the book that seem important to the story. S/he collects three or more of these objects and places them in a box or tub or some other container. For example, while reading *A Single Shard* (Park, 2001), the reader might collect a piece of green sea glass to represent the shard of green pottery, some rice, and some clay. These objects might then be wrapped in a handkerchief and brought to class. Book boxes can then be shared as a culminating activity after reading the story.
Poetry

I distributed a wide selection of children’s poetry books (Appendix O) for the participants to examine. I instructed the participants to browse through the books and look for examples of poems that would be considered “multicultural.” It was important for the participants to examine different genres in their study of multicultural literature.

Value Line

After reading the novel, Boy Meets Boy (Levithan, 2003) I instructed the participants to arrange themselves into a line along an imaginary continuum that ranged from “I absolutely loved this book” on one side of the room, to “I positively hated this book” on the opposite side of the room. Once the participants took their positions on that “line,” they had a conversation with others who stood nearby to discuss their reasons for taking their particular stance. This is a cooperative learning structure designed to stimulate reflective conversation and provide multiple perspectives, both of which are called for in NCATE’s Standard for Diversity (2008).

Class Discussion

Teacher education inherently employs a wide variety of pedagogical practices selected to help students gain the knowledge and skills required to inform their future teaching. Traditionally, lecture is the most common mode of disseminating information. However, considering the complexity of the nature of teaching and learning, no one approach is effective for all students. Recent research (Darling-Hammond &
Hammerness, 2005) claims that teacher education programs that emphasize “reflective formats” and “constructivist learning” in class discussion, rather than lecturing, are more effective in “helping teachers understand the nature of teaching diverse populations” (p. 393). This supports Russell’s (2006) explanation that lecturing has limited effects on learning.

In the past, I was typically the one who led class discussions. I lectured, asked a question or posed a problem or idea, and expected my students to engage in a discussion on the topic. However, I discovered this strategy to be ineffective. The questions were answered, but real discussion among the students did not always ensue. I also used familiar cooperative learning structures such as “turn to a partner” attempting to get students to talk to one another. This was more effective than me posing the questions, but still did not produce lively conversation.

I wanted my students to assume the responsibility for discussion. I also wanted to model for them how to facilitate discussion in their own classrooms. To reach this goal, I lectured less frequently, and instead planned a variety of grouping structures: whole class discussions, small group discussions, literature circles to discuss assigned chapter books, small groups for sharing ML, and small groups for sharing reflections on assigned textbook readings. Furthermore, rather than discussing the same topic throughout one class, I repeated topics over a number of classes in an attempt to scaffold the participants’ learning. I did this by dividing the 150 minutes of class time into smaller blocks of time and completing several activities that focused on a new goal or objective, and also reviewed previous goals. Again, this scaffolding was meant to model, as well as provide, good teaching.
Literature Circles

An alternative to traditional groups for reading instruction is to have students meet in small discussion groups called literature circles (Tompkins, 2004). Daniels (2002) refers to literature circles as a new style of reading groups. To model this teaching and learning strategy, I had the participants in this study form literature circles to discuss the multicultural chapter books assigned each week. We discussed the guidelines for establishing and running effective literature circles (see Tompkins, 2004), as well as implications for implementing the strategy in classrooms. It was through this structure that the assigned chapter books for the class were discussed.

Research Question - Method Matrix

Maxwell (2005) recommends selecting methods that will produce data to answer the research questions and suggests creating a “Research Question – Method Matrix” to align methods with research questions. Table 3.4 shows the matrix I created to align what I wanted to find out, the reason for wanting that information, and the kinds of data and activities that could best provide the information.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What do I want to know?</th>
<th>Why do I want to know this?</th>
<th>What did I do to teach / know this?</th>
<th>What data will help me know this?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How can I prepare teachers and teacher candidates to teach in culturally responsive ways?</td>
<td>NCATE mandates diversity standards that require teacher educators to prepare teachers for a diverse community of students. Using ML is one approach.</td>
<td>Autobiographical narrative Professional readings and articles Hidden Rules activity Cultural Iceberg activity Snowball Activity</td>
<td>Fieldnotes Participants’ journals Critical Text Reflections Meta-reflections Reflective Research Journal Final Exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can I guide teachers and teacher candidates to identify “authentic” multicultural literature?</td>
<td>In order to use ML as an approach to CRT, teachers must have the knowledge needed to recognize &amp; select authentic ML</td>
<td>Book sorts Chapter books Class discussions Readings from text Booklists Field Experience: ML in classrooms</td>
<td>Participants’ Journals Transcript of class discussions Reflective Research Journal Pre- post surveys Critical text reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can I encourage teachers and teacher candidates to become reflective practitioners?</td>
<td>Reflection is part of the conceptual framework of MMC &amp; is important in becoming a reflective practitioner (Schön)</td>
<td>Autobiography Professional readings Class discussions Assessment activities</td>
<td>Participants’ Journals Transcript of class discussions Reflective Research Journal Meta-reflections Critical text reflections E-mail correspondence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How can I model effective teaching for teachers and teacher candidates?</td>
<td>To improve practice as called for by self-study and NCATE’s Standard 5: Faculty Performance</td>
<td>Self-study &amp; all pedagogical practices</td>
<td>Participants’ journals Reflective Research Journal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4: Research Question – Method Matrix
Data Analysis

In self-study, it is common practice to analyze the data and make changes as one goes along, which I did throughout the semester that I conducted my research. However, I made the more substantial changes before the course began, based on student evaluations from when I had taught EDU 525 the previous semester. I agree with Russell (2002) that “[w]hile the obvious purpose of self-study is improvement, it is even more challenging to make changes and seek evidence that the changes did indeed represent improvement” (p. 4). After reflection and restructuring the course, I examined data from this study to determine whether the changes were efficacious. In order to ascertain the effectiveness of the course, it is important to look not only at what students learned, but also at how they learned it; i.e., in what ways did the course help the participants learn? This information is important, not only to improving the one course, but also to improving other courses and transferring what we learn to other teacher education programs.

As teacher educators instruct their candidates to use State Academic Content Standards to guide their teaching, they also need to heed their own advice. Thus, using NCATE standards to guide the teaching of teacher candidates is required. NCATE (2008) Standard 5: Faculty Qualifications, Performance, and Development states the following: “Faculty are qualified and model best professional practices in scholarship, service, and teaching, including the assessment of their own effectiveness as related to candidate performance” (p. 38). To examine my teaching as a teacher educator, it was necessary to analyze the goals in each lesson taught, in relation to what the participants had learned. This enabled me to scrutinize the efficacy of the pedagogical methods I had selected to
teach the concepts. I do not claim causal relationships between my pedagogy and my students’ learning, but I found evidence in the data to corroborate that some of the strategies and techniques that I used were supportive of shifts in the participants’ knowledge and skills about multicultural literature, its authenticity, and its purpose as a culturally responsive tool.

To begin this self-study of pedagogy, I created a grid to analyze the lessons and activities that I used to present concepts each week of class (see Table 3.5). In the first box, I articulated my goals for the lesson, stating what I wanted my students to learn. In the next box, I named the pedagogy used to teach the concept. Next, I examined the data and listed the evidence to establish what my students learned or did not learn about the concept or topic. Based on the data, I recorded in the last box my reflections on the effectiveness of the pedagogy I had used, and then considered my next teaching strategy.
Lesson Analysis: Book Sorting Activity (February 7, 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I wanted my students to learn</th>
<th>What I did / had them do (pedagogy)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To learn about criteria for reflection</td>
<td>For reflection we looked at a PowerPoint and a website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To read authentic Native American literature</td>
<td>I did a book sorting activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To re-assess positions on authenticity</td>
<td>Handed out stacks of books – one stack per group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>They sorted them by author, awards, stereotypes, and purposes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(windows and mirrors, tough issues, cultural understanding)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5: Lesson Plan Analysis Grid
In deciding which data to report on, I looked at the lesson plans for each class and selected those assignments and activities that directly related to each of my goals. I also chose sections from my students’ journal entries that seemed relevant. In addition, I gleaned data from my own reflective research journal, as they seemed appropriate to my discussion of each of the goals.

In addition to keeping a research journal, I wrote conceptual memos. As I wrote more and more conceptual memos and looked at the copious amounts of data I was collecting, I became concerned about the feasibility of making sense of it all. I pondered the multitude of ways there are to look at data — chronologically, by student, by artifact — and the thought of sorting through all those papers seemed like an enormous task. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggested designing a matrix to organize the data, and further suggested that the matrix be tailored to fit individual need. I created such a matrix using an Excel spreadsheet, naming columns for the week the class was held, student number assigned to each participant, artifact from which the data was derived, the “bin” or main organizational category the data belonged to, two columns for codes, and a wider column to type in the actual data (Appendix P). In order to easily identify data sources in my findings, I also added a column called “source tag” (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The source tag number indicates the date (yymmdd), artifact code, and student number of the “data scrap” (Glesne, 1999). For example, data that was taken from my reflective research journal on May 12, 2008 would be recorded as 080512_RRJ_00. (I assigned myself the participant number 00.) This Data Matrix allowed me to sort my data in multiple ways.
Adhering to Maxwell’s (2005) three categories of coding, the initial coding in my data analysis involved organizing the data. My organization process began with the first night of class and continued throughout the entire course. I responded to the assignments, graded, photocopied, and filed them within a day or two of receiving them. In order to keep track of all the codes that I was naming, I added a “code sheet” to my Data Matrix workbook. I made three columns: one for the code, another for the code name, and the third for a description or example of the code. After naming 58 codes, I began to sort the codes according to Maxwell’s (2005) three types of coding. His first category includes the main “issues” or “topics” of a study that serve as “organizational” categories. These can be emergent or pre-planned categories. Some examples of organizational categories that emerged from my data were Authenticity and Culturally Responsive Teaching. Although I did not name these categories ahead of time, it was no surprise that they emerged, given the context of the research. According to Maxwell (2005), these organizational categories act as “bins” for the initial sorting of data, but as he notes, they are not very useful in “making sense of what’s going on” (p. 97).

Maxwell (2005) designated a second type of code as “substantive” or “descriptive,” developed from a process known as “open coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These codes are generally taken directly from participants’ words, and they describe the participants’ feelings or beliefs. Some of the codes I had named fit into this category, and I found it helpful to use Spradley’s (1980) Domain Analysis to identify “semantic relationships” among these codes in order to reduce the number of categories. For example, I determined that stereotypes, kinds of authors, use of references and book awards, were all “part of” authenticity. “Clumping” (Glesne, 1999) codes together in this
manner and seeing the relationship between the sub-categories helped me to begin making sense of the data. The next step in data analysis, then, was to search for “links” between the data scraps I had coded.

Glesne suggested looking at one code at a time, and she recommended “think[ing] with the data” (p. 137). To begin this process, I wrote conceptual memos to investigate “relationships” that “connect statements and events” (Maxwell, 2005). The Data Matrix also proved useful for sorting data to look for links. To begin analysis, I sorted the data in a variety of ways. For example, I sorted it by the column named “week.” I then printed out the data for each week and filed it in folders labeled by weeks, along with the lesson plans, class transcripts, and my reflective research journal entry for that week. I examined the documents for alignment between what I said I was going to do, what I actually did, and what the students learned or did not learn about the topics for that week.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Opponents of self-study raise questions on the validity of teacher educators conducting research on their own practice. In 2004, LaBoskey contributed a chapter to the International Handbook of Self-Study of Teaching and Teacher Education Practices, a seminal work in the field of self-study, that addresses this issue. In this chapter, she stated that validity is a concern not only in self-study, but also in most qualitative inquiry. She suggested that to address this issue it is important to make certain there is a “fit” between the research questions, data collection, and analyzing techniques. According to Zeichner and Noffke (2001), this alignment strengthens validity. I was careful to make certain this alignment was present.
Hollis and Guzman remind us of the importance of discussing "the dual role of instructor and researcher to protect the validity" of the results of a study (2005, p. 492). I want to make the point that I continually referred to this dual role with my students, stressing the importance of being a reflective practitioner. I "modeled" Schön’s notion of reflexivity and the importance of self-study’s notion of improving practice. I made it explicit to the participants that their role was at least as important to this study as was my own role as teacher / researcher.

Using multiple data-collecting methods also adds validity through “triangulation.” Triangulation involves several different aspects. To achieve methodological triangulation, I collected data in multiple ways, including participant observation, interviews, and students’ artifacts. Member checking is yet another way to strengthen validity. After transcribing the audiotape of the informal group interview, I distributed the transcription to the participants to assure that my interpretations were accurate.

Admitting one’s bias and making it explicit is another important aspect of validity and trustworthiness. I believe, as Peshkin (1988) does, that “one’s subjectivity is like a garment that cannot be removed. It is insistently present in both the research and nonresearch aspects of our life” (p. 17). I admit that I passionately believe that multicultural literature is an important approach to culturally responsive teaching and promotes cultural understanding. Keeping this subjectivity in mind, I have made every attempt to let the data speak for itself.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

*Self-study seeks as its hallmark not claims of certainty, but evidence that researchers, however stumblingly, demonstrate in their practice the understandings they have gained through their study.*

(Pinnegar, 1998, p. 33)

Given the reality of the changing demographics in today’s classrooms, this self-study examined the efficacy of the pedagogy that I used as a teacher educator in preparing teachers and teacher candidates to use multicultural literature (ML) as part of their approach to culturally responsive teaching (CRT). This study was launched on the premise that it is essential to incorporate pedagogy in teacher education programs that prepares culturally responsive teachers, because there continues to exist an achievement gap between minority and European American students, and because a disproportionate number of mono-cultural European American teachers are entering the workforce, with little to no experience teaching minority students. I conducted this study in the context of EDU 525, the multicultural literature course that I taught in the teacher education program at MMC during the 15-week spring semester of 2007. All 14 of my students in that class participated in the study.
This self-study considered the following primary research question: What is the efficacy of the teacher educators’ pedagogical practices in guiding teachers and teacher candidates to critically examine their knowledge, skills, and dispositions regarding authentic multicultural literature and its use as an approach to culturally responsive teaching? This question led to four sub-questions that I addressed, as follows:

1. How can I prepare teachers and teacher candidates to teach in culturally responsive ways?
2. How can I guide teachers and teacher candidates to identify “authentic” multicultural literature?
3. How can I encourage teachers and teacher candidates to become reflective practitioners?
4. How can I model effective teaching for teachers and teacher candidates?

In conducting the current study in my EDU 525 course, my goal was to improve my own teaching practices in educating teachers and teacher candidates to use multicultural literature as an approach to culturally responsive teaching. Therefore, I focused on providing my students with knowledge about what it means to be culturally responsive, and with the critical tools for identifying what “authentic” means when it comes to multicultural literature.

This chapter addresses the above research questions by evaluating the reflections of teachers and teacher candidates on my attempts to enable them to understand ML and CRT, as well as my own reflections. To determine the efficacy of my teaching, I studied and reported on shifts in the teachers’ and teacher candidates’ understandings, and on their new realizations in relation to the pedagogy I employed.
Culturally Responsive Teaching

This section is organized chronologically to answer my first sub-question: How can I prepare teachers and teacher candidates to teach in culturally responsive ways? I designed some of the assignments and class activities for EDU 525 based on the notion that it is imperative for teachers and teacher candidates to develop an understanding of culturally responsive teaching. In assessing the shifts in the participants’ understandings about CRT, it was essential for me to consider several points. My students needed to learn what culturally responsive teaching is and what it means to teach in culturally responsive ways. Therefore, they had to develop some strategies for establishing a caring atmosphere built on mutual respect and trust as a critical component of culturally responsive teaching. They also had to understand the importance of using students’ cultural and background information as a foundation for instruction, another essential characteristic of culturally responsive teaching. Additionally, it was important for them to understand and use constructivist teaching practices with the expectation that all students can achieve academic success. Finally, they had to realize that CRT is a necessary construct in their teaching in order to help all of their students, as well as themselves, become multicultural beings.

It was important to discern what the participants learned about culturally responsive teaching because teacher educators are mandated to prepare teachers and teacher candidates for working with diverse populations of students. In an attempt to meet the NCATE diversity standard criteria, I used a variety of teaching strategies to determine what the participants learned about culturally responsive teaching. These included the Autobiography Assignment, selected articles about culturally responsive
teaching, and a variety of assignments and class activities, which included The Hidden Rules of Class “quizzes” (Payne, 1996) and the Cultural Iceberg Activity (Weaver, 1984). In examining these data, I developed a Continuum of Shifts in Understanding (Figure 4.1) to help me analyze students’ responses systematically and intentionally.

![Figure 4.1: Continuum of Shifts in Understanding](image)

Emergent Understanding (EU)  Developing Understanding (DU)  New Understanding (NU)

The Continuum of Shifts in Understanding provided a structure for evaluating shifts in my students’ understanding over time. However, considering the subjectivity of this kind of analysis, it did not provide enough structure to be effective on its own. Therefore, I developed a rubric to standardize this Continuum and make it more consistent, less subjective, and consequently more useful for my research questions.

The first rubric I created, the CRT Rubric (Table 4.1), provided more specific guidelines for analyzing comments and reflections about culturally responsive teaching. Comments made by the participants that demonstrated a “naïve” or “rudimentary” understanding of the concepts and were scored as “Emergent Understanding” (EU); these students were placed at the number one on the Continuum of Shifts in Understanding. Conversely, responses that were thorough, correct, substantive, and supported, indicated
that the participants had acquired a mastery in understanding the concepts being taught; these students were placed at the number five on the Continuum, and were considered to have developed a “New Understanding” of the topic.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CRT RUBRIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Developed Developing Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: CRT Rubric

The responses that fell between an Emergent Understanding and a New Understanding on the Rubric were considered to be “Developing Understanding.” These responses ranged from a “Less Developed Understanding” in which the information given was partial and unsubstantiated earning a score of two, to a “More Developed Understanding” in which students demonstrated they were making connections to prior knowledge, and where they provided some support for the details that were given in their responses, giving them a four. Students were placed on the Continuum of Shifts in Understanding according to the
score they received on their response using the criteria of the CRT Rubric (Table 4.1). As is often the case in self-study, I developed this analytic tool during analysis as I attempted to look for patterns that would make my evaluations more consistent.

EDU 525 was designed to be an introductory study of multicultural literature written for young children through young adults. It emphasized the use of ML as one part of a culturally responsive approach to teaching. It stressed the ability to recognize and select ML that is authentic and accurate for the purposes of promoting cultural understanding and affirming the value of diversity. I designed the course to achieve these goals through modeling effective teaching strategies and activities. Below, I address my first sub-question, how can I prepare teachers and teacher candidates to teach in culturally responsive ways, by discussing how I attempted to teach about culturally responsive teaching. The assignments and activities intended to move my students in their understanding of CRT are discussed as they occurred throughout the semester, chronologically.

*Autobiography Assignment*

Since CRT requires us to try to understand ourselves before trying to understand others (Greene, 1988), I opted to begin the semester by asking the participants to present an autobiographical narrative. I had designed the Autobiography Assignment to demonstrate the purpose of using autobiographies and model their effectiveness. I also intended for it to help my students begin to view themselves as cultural beings. Following is the assignment as described on the syllabus:
Write an autobiographical sketch of ONE experience, event, ritual, tradition, etc. from your life. This should not be a summary of your entire life, but rather a “snapshot” that reveals something significant about you and your life, your values, culture, worldview, etc. In addition, select an artifact (picture, special object, etc.) to share that is related to your story. Be prepared to share (not read) your story and your artifact with the class. Also, bring a children’s book to share that you feel is closely related to or enhances your autobiography in some way.

This Autobiographical Assignment had multiple implications for this study. Many researchers (Ball, 2003; Bullough & Gitlin, 2001; Carter & Doyle, 1996; Clark & Medina, 2000; Cole & Knowles, 1998; Freese, 2005; Greene, 1988; LaBoskey, 1993) have documented the importance of understanding oneself before it is possible to understand others. Further, these researchers claim that autobiography can serve as the beginning point of reference in examining one’s perspectives and in analyzing shifts in thinking and understanding. Additionally, autobiographies have been referenced as being effective in beginning to establish a positive learning environment. Since all of these purposes are aligned with culturally responsive teaching, the Autobiography Assignment seemed pertinent to this study.

One of my goals for the Autobiography Assignment was to guide the participants to recognize that understanding oneself is important in establishing a sense of community, and as such is an essential element of culturally responsive pedagogy. In this way, the assignment addressed MMC’s limitations of meeting NCATE’s diversity standard. Another intention for the assignment was to provide an initial step to help the
participants begin making connections between themselves and their worldview. I wanted
them to see how this premise is critical to culturally responsive teaching and hoped they
would begin to view themselves as cultural beings.

The data illustrate that the Autobiography Assignment was efficacious in
accomplishing these goals. However, it was not apparent that the assignment was solely
responsible for these learnings; nor was the desired outcome immediate. It was not
apparent until the end of the course that the students really demonstrated an
understanding about the importance of learning about themselves as cultural beings. I
introduced the activity during the first class by displaying a quote on an overhead
projector: “We must start with beginning to articulate our own story, learn to first
understand our own life, then move beyond to learn about others” (Greene, source and
page unknown).

The participants presented their autobiographies during our second class meeting.
Most of them elected to share an event such as a family holiday tradition or family
vacation. One participant shared the religious event of receiving her First Communion.
The participants’ first journal reflection following the second class session discussed the
Autobiography Assignment. Their journal reflections evidenced the varying degrees of
the participants’ understanding about the purpose of the assignment. On the Continuum
of Shifts in Understanding, nine of the fourteen participants scored an Emergent
Understanding on their comments regarding the Autobiography Assignment. Their
responses indicated a very superficial understanding of the purpose of using an
autobiographical narrative. They simply described the autobiography as a “neat” and
“fun” activity, reporting on it superficially from their perspective as students, not
recognizing the implications of the Autobiography Assignment to CRT from their perspectives as future teachers. For example, they did not mention the importance of understanding oneself before one can understand others. They gave no indication that they understood the importance of getting to know their students so they could use their cultural background information to inform their teaching. They did not mention the idea of becoming multicultural beings. If they had viewed this activity from the perspective of a teacher, they would have mentioned some of these benefits to their future students.

The remaining five students demonstrated varying degrees of Developing Understanding on the Continuum in their responses. Jill’s response that follows is an example of a Less Developed response that scored a two on the Continuum.

I think that [the autobiography] is a great thing to use for your classroom. The students feel great because they are able to share something about themselves with the whole class. Then they have something to connect students with their faces. (070117_J_02)

The fact that Jill mentioned how, in her opinion, the autobiography precipitates students to “feel great” indicated an understanding that the activity is important in creating a positive classroom atmosphere; however, there is no connection in her reflection as to why a positive environment might be important to culturally responsive teaching.

Participants with responses similar to Jill’s demonstrate a slight shift on the Continuum from Less Developed Understanding toward a More Developed Understanding of the significance of the Autobiography Assignment. I intended for the participants to realize that sharing our stories accomplishes more than connecting names and faces; it connects
students and encourages them to form personal bonds with one another by allowing them to share commonalities and experiences. It provides teachers with background information on their students’ lives that should be integrated into their teaching. Using such information is one criteria of culturally responsive teaching. Still exhibiting a Developing Understanding but further along the Continuum than Jill’s response is Mara’s, which follows:

After doing the autobiographical narrative I feel like I know the people in the class better. In other classes I have made a personal time line but it was not the same thing. This activity goes deeper by sharing a little piece of a person’s life that may show their sensitive side, their family beliefs or a tradition their family shares. The students feel great because they are able to share something about themselves with the whole class and you, as the teacher, are able to really learn about each student, one small piece at a time. It definitely gives perspective and a better understanding of everyone in the class. I like doing things that I know I can use in the classroom and will make me a better teacher! (070117_J_11)

Mara reported that the Autobiography Assignment was effective in helping her learn more about other students on a “deeper” level, and to feel more connected with others. She considered the benefits of this assignment in the context of using it in classrooms with children to establish an atmosphere conducive to culturally responsive teaching. She recognized a critical difference between merely “knowing” others and “understanding” them. Mara’s comments about using the activity to “understand” students demonstrated that she was closer to realizing the goal of NCATE’s Standard 4 to “develop a classroom and school climate that values diversity” (NCATE, 2008, p. 34). Mara seemed to appreciate the idea of drawing on students’ cultures, but it was not yet apparent from her
reflection that she understood how this information needed to inform her planning and instruction. Although Mara’s response placed her further on the Continuum, her understanding was still partial.

Since one of the purposes of the Autobiography Assignment was to help prepare my students to teach for diversity, it seems worthy to mention that although several of the participants used the word “different” in their journal entries to describe the students in a classroom, only one participant specifically used the term “diversity.” Cassidy stated:

The autobiographical narrative was personal and meaningful. I think it would be a good way to see the diversity in the classroom. It would be a good thing to do in a classroom to make it clear at the beginning of the year that everyone belongs and everyone is different and that is ok. (070117_J_10)

Cassidy clearly demonstrated her understanding that one purpose of assigning autobiographical narratives is to establish rapport among the students, which is one important characteristic of culturally responsive teaching. Having used the Autobiography Assignment to establish our own classroom environment for culturally responsive teaching, I began to scaffold the participants toward an understanding of what it means to teach in culturally responsive ways.

*Article: “Culturally Relevant Pedagogy”*

In Week 5, I assigned the first of several articles about culturally responsive teaching, “Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Ingredients for Critical Teacher Reflection” (Howard, 2003). In this article, Howard discussed the importance of reflection in
culturally responsive teaching. I chose to use this article first because it connected with the notion of reflection that we had talked about in Week 3, and it also helped link “diversity” into the context of MMC’s conceptual framework. The article described culturally relevant teaching as defined by Gay (2002), Ladson-Billings (2001), and other experts in the field. I wanted to build on the idea of understanding oneself in order to understand others that had been introduced during the Autobiography Assignment. This article gave an overview of the importance of understanding oneself before one can understand others, connecting to the quote by Maxine Greene that so many of the participants found to be a powerful statement. The article went on to describe the importance of reflection is in the CRT process, and finally it discussed practical classroom applications that teachers and teacher candidates so often request.

Until Week 5, culturally responsive teaching had only been mentioned in a pre-assessment activity described in Chapter 3. The only person who had heard the term previously stated that she had read it in the course objectives of the EDU 525 syllabus. It was a new concept for the participants, as evidenced from many journal entries for this course. Most of the participants, except for Nikki, had similar responses to Howard’s article. For example, Addison wrote:

In last night’s class we spent a lot of time discussing culturally responsive teaching. I felt that I got a lot out of that discussion because culturally responsive teaching is a new term to me. Howard’s article was really good because it did a good job of defining what it is. It really made me stop and think. I want my teaching and how I run my classroom to be in a way that benefits all of my students. (070207_J_07)
Thirteen of the fourteen participants wrote reflections similar to Addison’s. All of them mentioned that CRT was a new concept for them, and that they found Howard’s article to be informative. Tiegan commented that the article “really made [her] stop and think,” and made her “want to be the kind of teacher who teaches students about different cultures” (070207_J_12). Shawna mentioned the class discussion about the article and how she “got a lot out of that discussion,” and how it made her realize that she “may be the only teacher who gives [students] experiences with multicultural stuff” (070207_J_06). Unlike her classmates, Nikki had an adverse reaction to the article:

This article was hard to follow and some of the authors’ points did not seem to be consistent. The statement that upset me was when she asked how could white teachers teach for racial and cultural diversity. How do any teachers learn to teach? They learn by trial and error. Just because the teacher is white does not mean that they are not able to teach in a diverse school. A white teacher is just as capable of teaching any students just as a black teacher is capable of teaching any students. I think the author is looking too much into race and not how the teacher teaches. (070207_J_05)

Nikki’s reaction reiterates the notion that it is difficult to move teachers and teacher candidates to change their already-formed opinions (Lyon & Colby, 2004; Schulte, 2005). This, however, was the first time we had discussed CRT; therefore, I remained optimistic that there was sufficient time remaining in the semester for Nikki to examine her prior assumptions and consider the new information she had just received. I struggled with finding a way to respond to Nikki’s journal entry that might precipitate critical reflection. In my responses to her reflective journal entries I asked Nikki to be more specific in identifying which of the author’s points seemed inconsistent to her. I
mentioned that I agreed with her point about European-American teachers being able to teach for diversity, but asked her if she could give me examples of what she meant by “capable.” Through my comments and questions, I was hoping to open a dialogue in which Nikki would discuss, or at least admit, her biases and prior assumptions. Unfortunately, Nikki did not respond to any of the questions or comments I posed on her journal entry. I found it frustrating to realize that she did not seem to understand the points I attempted to teach. Although there was no requirement to respond to my marginal comments, I hoped that Nikki would ponder the tensions I presented and perhaps use them as discussion points in her next reflective journal entry, as did some of my other students. I was trying to scaffold her understanding, but without her providing responses to my comments, I had no way of determining whether or not my intervention was making a difference in her thinking. Consequently, on the Continuum of Shifts in Understanding, Nikki scored an Emergent Understanding regarding culturally responsive teaching. Therefore, I determined that it was necessary to provide more information about CRT to move Nikki further along on the Continuum.

I planned to use Nikki’s sense of disequilibrium to help her make a shift from her Emergent Understanding of CRT toward a Developing Understanding of teaching for diversity. To that end, I considered using more articles on CRT to determine whether any of them contained information that might provide a buffer for Nikki’s reaction to Howard’s (2003) article. I also planned an activity designed to actuate a conversation about CRT that would provide Nikki and the other participants with an expanded definition of culture as well as multiple perspectives on the topic of culturally responsive teaching.
Hidden Rules Among Classes

In order to further develop the participants’ understanding of CRT, I deemed it necessary to help them broaden their definitions of the term “culture.” In helping to propagate the participants’ understanding of “culture,” especially Nikki’s, it was critical to get them to realize that the terms “culture” and “race” are not synonymous. During Week 7, I administered the Hidden Rules Among Classes “quizzes” developed by Payne (1996). Although these quizzes have been criticized by some (Gorski, 2007; Jacobs, 2008) for being “hegemonic” in perspective, and for giving examples that perpetuate cultural stereotypes, they served as useful tools for eliciting students’ position with regard to matters surrounding culture.

One of my goals for EDU 525 was to give my students an awareness of themselves as belonging to a cultural group, hoping to instill in them an interest that would precipitate their pursuing these vital topics for further study. Prior to handing out the quizzes, I asked the participants to work with a partner to list all of the ethnic and cultural groups they could think of. Their lists included African Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics. Like most European Americans, they equated “race” and “culture”; (Banks, 2005; Howard, 2003). I found it telling that not one participant mentioned European Americans on their list, perhaps pointing to their ethnocentrism. Their lists indicated that they did not think of themselves as having a “culture” but rather, regarded themselves as the mainstream that renders all non-European Americans “marginal.”

I had hoped that through taking the Hidden Rules of Class quizzes (Payne, 1996) which consisted of lists of class-specific tasks (e.g., In middle class, I know how to use a
credit card; In poverty, I know how to manage without electricity and a phone; In wealth, I have at least two homes that are staffed and maintained) and the class discussion that followed them, my students would gain a broader perspective of the meaning of culture. Indeed, students’ journal entries gave evidence that they did. When I distributed the quizzes and the students began to read them, the room began to buzz with their chatting and laughing among themselves. It seemed as though they were off task and not interested in the information on the quizzes; however, upon moving around the room to facilitate the groups, I realized that they were not only interested in the topic, but were also surprised by what they were reading.

In their journal entries following this class, the students described the quizzes as “eye-opening” (070221_J_06) and as a “conversation starter” (070221_J_01) in their groups. One student, Sara, found it “neat to see how different and alike we are in how we have all been brought up and how we live” (070221_J_01). It seems superficial and naïve to view this phenomenon as “neat.” Such responses demonstrated the students’ Emergent Understanding of culture. At the same time, Sara’s statement also gave evidence of some cultural understanding, in that she realized that her own experiences could be compared to those of others. It would have been more telling, however, if she had opted to describe her thoughts in more detail.

There is also some indication that the Hidden Rules of Class quizzes (Payne, 1996) precipitated a shift in some students’ understanding of culture. Jill expressed a new awareness of socioeconomic status as a “culture” as demonstrated by her journal
response: “The class discussion of the Appalachian culture really broadened my mind. I never thought of poverty as a culture” (070221_J_02). Jill’s journal entry specifically credited class discussion with precipitating her new knowledge.

The Hidden Rules activity (Payne, 1996) also helped Jill admit that she had been “guilty of stereotyping people.” As she revealed in her journal, “I have used words like ‘hillbillies’ and ‘hicks’ without giving thought to these people as an actual different culture” (070221_J_02). This entry provided evidence that Jill was admitting her biases regarding culture, which is an important characteristic of culturally responsive teaching. Her realization that there is a “culture of poverty” demonstrated that she was expanding her definition of culture to include more than “race.” Jill’s realization along with her willingness to face her prior assumptions and admit her prejudices placed her knowledge of culture and CRT at two on the Continuum of Shifts in Understanding (see Figure 4.1) according to the CRT Rubric criteria (see Table 4.1). At this point in time, I expected my students to “look at themselves” in order to understand others as Greene (1988) suggests. Jill, however, was in the minority of my students who mentioned this in their journals. These understandings about examining your own assumptions, admitting biases, and realizing that culture is more than race, are an important to developing knowledge about culturally responsive teaching.

In her understanding of the topic, Molly was further along on the Continuum than any other student in the class at this time. She credited the culture quizzes and the class discussion that followed with precipitating her realization that “any race of people can have different cultures, and any culture can belong to any class” (070221_J_13). This remark specifically demonstrated Molly’s recognition that “race” and “culture” are not
synonymous. I considered this an important realization that illustrated a shift in her understanding of CRT on the Continuum. Moving from “not even thinking about belonging to a culture” (080207_J_13) just two weeks prior, to realizing the diversity present in all races and cultures in Week 7, was a significant shift for Molly. Molly’s response was the only one that gave a clear indication of a More Developed Understanding at this point in the course.

In analyzing the data, it seemed as though the Hidden Rules of Class quizzes (Payne, 1996) were the catalyst that initiated the students’ thinking about culture; however, it was the brainstorming and interaction with other perspectives through class discussion that caused shifts in their thinking. Following the Hidden Rules quizzes (Payne, 1996) the majority of the participants’ understanding of CRT remained at a two with a Less Developed Understanding on the Continuum. This was partly due to the fact that I used a scaffolding approach to instruction. I began by giving my students some basic information about CRT and expected them to build on that knowledge as I introduced more information throughout the semester. Since the notion of culturally responsive teaching was such a new concept, it was apparent that the majority of the participants needed additional information to help them give serious consideration to the characteristics that make up a culture and how this information is important to teachers. I therefore assigned a third article in Week 8 on culturally responsive teaching, “But That’s Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy” (1995) by Ladson-Billings, and planned an additional activity, the Iceberg Activity, around culture.
Article: “But That’s Just Good Teaching!”

Ladson-Billings’s (1995) article discussed a connection between CRT and “code switching” for African American students, and then went a step further to include the dialects of people from other cultures such as Appalachian culture, whose English may not be standard. According to the journal responses to this article, code switching was a new term for all of the students and had an impact on their learning. Jim had this to say on code switching:

I feel code switching is incredibly important. Forcing a student to write-respond in an unfamiliar language or language style can stifle learning. Letting students talk or write in a style they are comfortable with encourages students “how” to learn. Code switching doesn’t take away from their culture and it lets students get where they need to be which is the main objective of teaching. (070228_J_04)

Similar to the responses to Howard’s (2003) article that we had read two weeks previously, 13 of the 14 participants found the information in Ladson-Billings’s article to be informative and important. Since Nikki had been adamant in her stance that “any teacher can teach any student,” I had hoped that this article might be successful in providing the information necessary to help her begin to make a shift in her understanding of culturally responsive teaching. Ladson-Billings’s article argued the case that African American students and other minorities “have not been served well” (p. 159) in the school setting. It discussed the importance of linking school and home cultures, defined CRT, and gave an overview of CRT in action. This article clarified that using cultural knowledge about the students and developing cultural competence, i.e., teaching
in culturally responsive ways, is, as the author states in her title, “just good teaching.”

Therefore, it seemed logical to me that associating “good teaching” and “cultural responsiveness” could help Nikki make a connection between the two ideas, and buffer her obvious resistance to the notion of culturally responsive teaching. Jill’s journal entry provided an example of a response to this article that was similar to responses from the majority of the students:

The most important thing I took from tonight’s class was the information of preparing for culturally responsive teaching. CRT is knowledge and understanding of other cultures, and using their life experiences to teach. Preparing for this is difficult if you have not experienced the culture you are teaching. The more research you do the better prepared you will be. (070228_J_02)

Jill’s response demonstrated a shift from a Less Developed toward a More Developed Understanding of CRT that had occurred for most of the students thus far.

My students discussed CRT in the context of using personal knowledge of their students in a classroom to inform instruction. They discussed making certain to hold high expectations for all students, and not “water down the curriculum” for some. They expressed the importance of understanding cultural nuances and implementing them into their teaching. Once again, Nikki was the only student who expressed a negative response to the article. Her entry follows:

I was not a big fan of the article that was to be read for this week. I took offence to the way they referred to teachers as not being ready to teach African American students. Who is to say that any teacher is ever really
ready? I thought that teaching was to be a learning experience. Not all teachers are going to teach in an inner city school, so why make that a main focus of learning? (070228_J_05)

Nikki’s response indicated a defensive stance toward the notion of culturally responsive teaching. Since the article was about African American students, in her mind, she free-associated and made a connection between African Americans and a notion she had of “the inner city.” She then alluded to the idea that CRT is not a valuable approach to teaching in schools that are not located in the inner city. She gave no indication that she recognized diversity in all classrooms, or that she realized the importance of teaching about other cultures in homogenous classrooms.

I was disappointed that the article did not seem to make a difference in Nikki’s thinking about culturally responsive teaching or move her to examine her prior assumptions about teaching for diversity. It did not help her make a shift in the Understanding Continuum toward understanding CRT. The semester was half over and I was worried that Nikki had not made the same shifts in her understanding of culturally responsive teaching that the other students had made. The majority of the students were already beginning to make a shift in their thinking. I had hoped that the articles I assigned would help shift the students’ thinking toward a more developed understanding of culturally responsive teaching. There were still several articles to be assigned, and some activities I had planned to help the students learn more about CRT, so my hope was that Nikki would respond positively to one or more of the activities or readings that were still to come.
After eight weeks of class, we did not meet for the first two weeks of March 2007, as it was MMC’s Spring Break. During that time, I analyzed data to help with my planning. I wrote the following entry in my own reflective journal:

I am very pleased, for the most part, with the progress the students have made with authenticity. But I am still concerned with Nikki, particularly in regard to CRT. She seems almost defensive about it, and seems to have missed the point that we need to be prepared to teach in a diverse setting – whether that is our teaching context or not!

*Cultural Iceberg Activity*

When we resumed classes following the break, I had planned to review what we had learned about CRT thus far, and delve deeper into what constitutes “culture.” I had participated in an activity during my doctoral coursework that was designed to provoke discussion about the characteristics of cultures. I therefore decided to reproduce the Cultural Iceberg Activity (Weaver, 1984) in my EDU 525 course and instructed the students to brainstorm in small groups and to list characteristics that came to mind when they thought of the word “culture.” When the students shared their brainstormed lists, the lists were all identical. They may have used different terminology such as “holidays” vs. “traditions,” but the ideas were the same. Their lists included holidays, clothing, food, music, art, and literature. These are the obvious characteristics of culture that are most commonly thought of when describing a specific culture.

My purpose in conducting this activity was to help the students think about those characteristics of culture that are not immediately apparent. I then gave the students a picture of an iceberg (see Appendix H) and had them compare the list of cultural
characteristics they had compiled, to those written on the iceberg handout. The “primarily in awareness” (Weaver, 1984) characteristics, which they had drafted, were written above the water line on the tip of the iceberg, while many less obvious, “primarily out of awareness” (Weaver, 1984) traits of culture were written below the water line. The students engaged in a rich conversation about how they had not considered any of the characteristics below the surface, although those traits were much more telling about a culture than were the more visible characteristics. A typical journal entry following this activity read as follows:

My favorite part of class was when we tried to define culture. We had a very small list of characteristics on the board, granted it was a thoughtful list, but then we were given the “iceberg” sheet with a long list of criteria that defines a culture. The list had so many items that I never would have thought of, but after reading them, they made so much sense. I loved the iceberg idea and the fact that what defines a culture is much more than what shows on the surface. It’s what’s deep below that is much more important. (070321 _J_ 06)

This response from Shawna and similar responses from the other 14 participants demonstrated that they were gaining knowledge and were making shifts in the their understanding of culturally responsive teaching. All of the students mentioned that they did not think of the less visible characteristics that make up a culture. They all credited the Iceberg Activity with raising their awareness. They also expressed the notion that this “awareness” about the nuances of a culture is important to developing an understanding of that culture. This is evidenced by Jill’s observation: “People often fail to see the deeper parts of culture and that is where a big part of misunderstanding comes from. We need to
really study another culture while we try to understand it, and that is a lot more difficult than it seems” (070321_J_02). The Cultural Iceberg Activity also helped at least one of the participants develop the understanding that we all are cultural beings as stated in the following reflection:

As the iceberg handout was explained to me tonight I began to look in the mirror and go through each of the underlying characteristics that make up “me” and with each step the unveiling of the bottom of the iceberg my own culture came to the surface” (070321_DB_14).

The Cultural Iceberg Activity (1984) seemed to help Dwayne and other students move through a developing understanding of culture toward gaining a new perspective of culture.

*Articles for Week 10*

Nikki did not choose to respond to the Cultural Iceberg Activity or the article assigned for Week 9, “Preparing for Culturally Responsive Teaching,” by Gay (2002), so I cannot determine whether either had any impact on her thinking. She did write critical reflections, however, for both of the assigned articles for Week 10, “That’s Not Fair! A White Teach Reports on White First Graders' Responses to Multicultural Literature” (MacPhee, 1997), and “The Potential of Multicultural Literature: Changing Understanding of Self and Others” (Singer & Smith, 2003). Nikki's response to the latter follows:
The authors made a good point when they said that if you work primarily with White students it is important to pick books with “vivid voices of many cultures and communities” (p. 5). For me that was a very important point. If the students only live in a “white” area, how are they to know what other cultures there are? It is our job as teachers to show them the other cultures in the world. (070328_J_05)

Without question, Nikki’s response was positive in this case, as opposed to her reflections on earlier articles. Although Nikki did not mention the term culturally responsive teaching in her journal entry, it is clear she understood the point that multicultural literature could be used as an approach to culturally responsive teaching. While Nikki focused on her own hegemonic perspective, deeming it important to use authentic ML to expose “White” children to other cultures, it was nonetheless encouraging that she seemed to be making a shift from an Emergent Understanding of CRT through using multicultural literature. It was hopeful to see Nikki’s shift on the Continuum.

Following the reading and discussion of this article, many other students made connections between multicultural literature and culturally responsive teaching to varying degrees. One participant commented that the article “put in perspective the importance for seeing the world through other people’s eyes” (070328_J_02). Another “realized that perspectives are really rooted in our lived experiences and unexamined beliefs” (070328_CR_03). Molly’s entry, however, demonstrated a clear shift on the Continuum toward acquiring a new understanding of culturally responsive teaching. Her entry follows:
Reading this article helped me to better understand why we read certain books for class and why I personally felt more connected to some and not others. The part of the article I felt was most important was that multicultural literature can be a way for students to learn about other cultures even though there is a lack of cultural diversity in school districts in this area. The general theme I have been getting from most of the things we have read is that “white” people need to be more multicultural and we have done a lot to look at how to become multicultural beings in this course. Using multicultural literature would be a good way to be a culturally responsive teacher. (070328_CR_13)

Molly’s entry revealed that she was making a direct link between multicultural literature and culturally responsive teaching, even though the article did not mention CRT explicitly. She specifically stated that reading the articles I had assigned was instrumental in helping her make a shift in her thinking. Molly also made other connections between the articles she read and culturally responsive teaching. Her response to the article “That’s Not Fair!” (1997), follows below:

I was glad to see that the activities like the one in the article really do work and that they produce meaningful results. I think doing a similar maybe shorter activity as a beginning of the school year thing would really be beneficial because it would help to establish the kind of atmosphere you want in a culturally responsive classroom. Then it would be easier to incorporate that kind of learning/reflective activity into other lessons throughout the year. (070328_J_13)

Once again, Molly demonstrated an awareness of criteria necessary for CRT. The articles were effective in helping her and other students make shifts in their understandings about culturally responsive teaching.
In Week 10, the main topic for discussion was Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) literature. When I organized my syllabus for EDU 525, I intentionally scheduled the GLBT lecture for the latter part of the semester because I wanted to be certain that we had first built a community of learners before delving into a topic that I thought might be more difficult to discuss. I felt this way because GLBT was the topic that I had been most uncomfortable discussing when I took a ML course during my doctoral coursework. It also exemplified for me the challenges of examining assumptions and beliefs regarding a topic outside of our own “comfort zone.” I had no idea how un/comfortable my students would be with this topic, or if there were any students in my class who might be gay or lesbian; regardless, it made sense to me to discuss the topic later in the semester.

Prior to the class session in Week 10, several students had commented on their apprehension of discussing GLBT. Molly and Nikki’s comments that follow, demonstrate their reluctance to discuss GLBT, and their hesitance to call it a “culture.”

When I first saw that GLBT was a topic of discussion for this class, I immediately began to form my thoughts and opinions about the matter in my head but I did not do this for any of the other topics. This topic just doesn’t seem to be the same as all the others on the syllabus. (Molly, 070328_J_13)

I think that all of the other cultures we talked about so far are important. Now the topic for tonight is something that I am not sure of. I have a hard time thinking that this should be talked about in the classroom. I don't really think that GLBT is a culture. I think that it is a way of life. I am not
comfortable at all thinking about discussing this topic. So maybe this class tonight will give me something to think about. (Nikki, 070321_J_05)

I selected to highlight Molly and Nikki’s reflections because for the most part, their reflections on other topics had been at opposite ends of the spectrum. In this case, however, their reflections mirrored similar concerns. Their comments demonstrated that, in their minds, the GLBT group did not fit the same criteria as the other underrepresented groups that we were studying. Molly, Nikki, and others did not consider GLBT to be a “culture”; however, since according to NCATE (2008), “cultural background” is defined as “the context of one’s life experience as shaped by membership in groups based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area” (p. 86), it was my responsibility as a teacher educator, to make certain my students were aware of this definition, and to guide the discussion toward eliciting understanding about the GLBT issue.

Molly and Nikki were not alone in their opinions of tentativeness at discussing the GLBT issue. Kelly went even further in expressing her views of this topic. She exhibited an honest self-reflection, with a straightforward admission of her feelings on the GLBT issue:

The whole gay/lesbian issue is something I had not really thought about until this class. I always just said that I really didn't mind it, but when I would see someone who was, I tended to be kind of grossed out by it. I feel very unprofessional in saying that, but that is truly how I feel. I have never really been around gay or lesbian people (that I know of), and I just feel uncomfortable thinking about it. (070328_DB_03)
I was impressed that Kelly had the courage to be honest in her entry. In a later journal she went on to say that she now understood how important journals could be in allowing students to “admit their biases about something they wouldn’t have the courage to say out loud.” Following is a reflection written by Kelly after reading *Boy Meets Boy* (Levithan, 2003).

After reading the book I have somewhat of a different view on the topic and I would like to discuss the issue a little more. This issue was not talked about in my family, so I have not had much conversation or experience with it. (070328_DB_03)

This is an example of how using ML can make a difference in students’ understanding and appreciation of sensitive topics. Kelly admitted she was not very knowledgeable about GLBT, and she was clearly interested in examining her prior assumptions and in learning more about it. Jill’s reflection from the same class explained her idea of how ML can promote understanding:

A large part of our last class was spent discussing the LGTB culture. This is the culture I think most of us have the least experience in discussing and reading books about. I thought the book *Boy Meets Boy* was an excellent book for us to read because it made the people in the book so normal and similar to the reader. You could easily place yourself as the main character even though he was a gay boy and I am neither gay nor a boy. It was a great story for people to realize how similar we all are. The story helped me become more comfortable discussing that topic and now I feel more confident with that touchy topic. (070328_J_02)
Jill’s reflection first indicated that we spent a longer than usual amount of time discussing this particular book. This was because the students were engaged in such a useful debate, it seemed important to continue the conversation as long as it was being productive. Jill also commented that it seemed most of the class lacked experience in discussing GLBT issues, which was accurate. Jill and eight other students as well, specifically credited reading this book with making them more comfortable and more confident discussing what Jill describes as a “touchy topic.” Sara’s entry reiterates this notion:

The book *Boy Meets Boy* opened my mind up to how easy it can be to live with people who are so different from you. I forgot how much of a controversial topic GLBT can be. Every naïve student should read this book to see how simple and wonderful a diverse life can be! (070328_DB_01)

Sara admitted that the book opened her mind and gave her a different perspective of experiences that are beyond her lived-experiences. She recommended that others who are “naïve” in GLBT issues could benefit by reading the book. Clearly, using ML to address sensitive issues was one of the important uses of ML that I wanted my students to realize, and it seems that *Boy Meets Boy* was instrumental in helping them come to this realization. Sara’s reflection also showed that class discussion can help teachers examine their assumptions and change their minds.

There were others who were still on the fence in their opinions about GLBT. As Vivian said, “GLBT is an area in which I need to work on being open-minded” (070328_J_08). It was encouraging that Vivian and others demonstrated that they were at least attempting to keep an open mind about the topic.
Why did the students consider GLBT “sensitive” topic? Could it have been because they were attending MMC, a religiously affiliated school? Shawna’s reflection indicates that this may, in fact, be the case.

Today's topic was a difficult one for me. I am not against homosexuality, even though my religion says I should be. In all honesty, I am uncomfortable with homosexuality. I know gay men and lesbian women. It doesn't make me want to be less of friends with them, but I know that it is always on my mind when I am near them. It's like I don't want to say the wrong thing to make them feel that I am looking down on them. I can imagine that it is not easy being gay. I really do hope to become more comfortable with the topic because I know I will have to deal with it someday. I will need a lot of personal time and reflection with the topic before I will be able to be completely comfortable with it. (070328_J_06)

Shawna was one of nine students who mentioned “religion” in their reflective journal entries, and the overwhelming majority of these students also stated in one way or another that they were “not against homosexuality.” Shawna’s comment about fearing to say “the wrong thing” and understanding that “it is not easy being gay,” seemed to suggest that she was trying to understand the issue.

After reading the book, Boy Meets Boy, and discussing the issue of GLBT, most students had a different perspective of the issues of GLBT as evidenced by Molly’s journal reflection. Exposing them to the topic and giving them permission to express their discomfort seemed to enable my students to imagine dealing with the subject of GLBT in their own classrooms one day.

I often think about how my view and opinions will affect my teaching. Discussing GLBT in class has helped me to realize that I cannot just
ignore the issue as we often do with things we don't think have anything to do with us, or things that make us uncomfortable. It might have a lot to do with me in the future. My classroom might have kids with gay family members and that will be something that they will bring to the classroom as part of who they are. (070328_J_13)

Molly’s reflection made a connection between her own assumptions about GLBT and how those assumptions might affect her future students in her own classroom. She reflected that, although it was not a topic that she was comfortable with, it may one day be part of the background of her students, and as such, she would not be able to “ignore the issue.” Molly’s comments demonstrated her understanding that we all have different backgrounds, and that culturally responsive teaching requires teachers to understand the diversity in their classrooms and to make connections between their students’ home and school cultures.

This is where Molly and Nikki parted ways. Unlike Molly, whose opinion of GLBT was clearly influenced by our class discussion, Nikki’s opinion, which follows, did not change as clearly.

The class discussion of GLBT did have somewhat of an impact on me, but not enough to change my mind. I think the class discussion did give me some things to think about. I guess talking about things helps but it does not always change your mind. (070328_J_05)

Nikki did not provide enough information for me to determine what, exactly, she would think about; however, her comment that discussing issues “does not always change your
mind” seemed to imply that her initial discomfort with GLBT had not changed. I was disappointed to infer from her comment that she had not made a shift in her thinking about GLBT issues.

Most students’ journals demonstrated in one way or another that the GLBT topic was “difficult,” “sensitive,” “touchy,” or “uncomfortable.” All students began with incertitude about GLBT. Some admitted that they needed to “work on being open-minded” (070328_J_08). But most of them had a change of heart that was influenced either by reading the novel, Boy Meets Boy, or by our class discussion. By the end of the semester, most of the students had conceded that the topic of GLBT was no different from other sensitive topics that need to be openly addressed, such as the subject of slavery in a mixed group of African American and European Americans or referring to the poor in a culturally in/sensitive manner.

\textit{Week 12 Textbook Reading}

In Week 12, Nikki wrote that a quote she read in our textbook at the end of Chapter 5 by Harris (2003) reminded her of Maxine Greene’s premise that “to understand others you need to understand yourself first” (070411_CR_05). Realizing the importance of understanding and examining one’s own assumptions was one of the concepts I considered mandatory for the students to acquire from the course, and it was encouraging that Nikki mentioned this idea. It was still striking to observe the difference between Molly and Nikki’s depth of understanding of culturally responsive teaching. Molly’s response to the same reading follows:
It is the responsibility of the teacher to bring in a broader perspective on the world and create a classroom climate where students engage in critique of both the text and their own perspectives. We can learn a lot about what we assume others know and understand by presenting and reflecting on new ways to look at things. (070411_J_13)

At the end of the semester Nikki was just beginning to make sense of a concept we had discussed at the very beginning of the semester, whereas Molly took that idea and cultivated her own vision of how to create a culturally responsive classroom atmosphere. Meanwhile, Nikki continued to struggle with the concept of CRT for the last few weeks of the semester, at one time finding the ideas to be “interesting” or “good points,” yet stating in her final journal entry that her “views on the subject have not changed any” (080502). She reported that she “really liked learning about literature circles,” and how she had a “greater understanding of what Multicultural Literature is” by the end of the course. However, in her final meta-reflection which was defined as presenting a reflective summary of the most salient issues learned throughout the course, Nikki never once mentioned the term “culturally responsive teaching”; nor did she allude to the notion of CRT even indirectly in her comments.

Conversely, Molly reported that her “personal idea of what it means to be multicultural had changed.” She claimed that she wanted to be able to say that her classroom “is multicultural,” and not that she “does multicultural things.” Further, Molly reiterated the following: “This class has taught me what it means to be ‘multicultural’ and what it means to be a culturally relevant teacher” (070502_MR_13).

Part of what it means to be “multicultural” and to be culturally relevant teacher is to understand and embrace diversity. Since one of the areas of MMC’s teacher education
program identified by NCATE as needing to be strengthened was the area of diversity, one of my goals was to make certain my students had a better idea of this issue as a result of my course. Cassidy’s reflection below provides evidence that they did learn about diversity:

I want them to learn that they should not judge others, but should learn about them. I also want my students to not ignore color. I want them to celebrate differences and appreciate diversity in other people. (070502_MR_10)

While Cassidy’s response to “make it clear at the beginning of the year that everyone belongs and everyone is different and that is ok” in Week 3 had indicated an Emergent Understanding on the Continuum of the purpose for using an autobiographical narrative, her final entry above in Week 15 denoted a more sophisticated understanding. She implied that being “colorblind” is not a desirable attitude toward people who are different from oneself, a notion that we discussed at length in class. Whereas in Week 3 she described it as “ok” that people are different, in the final week of the course she spoke of the importance to “celebrate” and “appreciate” diversity. She also spoke of these notions in the context of her own future teaching. Recognizing and appreciating diversity is part of CRT; Cassidy’s reflection demonstrates that she had clearly developed a more nuanced understanding of diversity and had made a shift to a More Developed Understanding of CRT throughout the course.

Sara’s final reflection demonstrated that she did learn the importance of understanding oneself as a cultural being before appreciating others from other cultures.
I learned in this class and I completely believe that a person’s life events and the people around them greatly influence a person's outlook on race and cultural issues. If a child is raised in a family with prejudice, then that child is most likely going to have the same views if not even stronger hatred when he/she is grown up. This, again, is why it is important for teachers to dig deep within themselves and overcome their own discomforts and racisms so they are able to educate the students about all cultures and multicultural perspectives. (070502_MR_01)

Sara not only learned, but also truly believed, that one’s autobiography influences their worldview. More importantly, she accepts the responsibility as a teacher to help children examine and cultivate their views of themselves as cultural beings. During Week 15 of the semester, though many participants said it in many ways, Molly’s final journal entry articulated well the notion of thinking of oneself as a cultural being:

I will take many things from this class with me but most importantly I will take a quote that was said. Maxine Greene said: “We must start with beginning to articulate our own story, learn to first understand our own life, then move beyond to learn about others.” I learned that I must first understand my own culture before I can enforce an understanding upon my students. My personal understanding will help me to be able to show my students how to appreciate the uniqueness of themselves and those around them. I never even thought of myself as having a culture or belonging to a culture before taking this class. (070502_MR_13)

Molly’s final reflection for EDU 525 demonstrated that she did, indeed, learn what I had hoped. The fact that said she needed to understand her “own culture” demonstrated that she realized she is a cultural being and made a reference to helping her future students explore their own views of culture. She attributed this new understanding to taking this course.
Whereas all the participants began at a number one in their Emergent Understanding of CRT, by the final week of the course all students had made shifts in their understandings to differing degrees and had arrived at those understandings in different ways (see Figure 4.2).

The Continuum (Figure 4.2) depicts that while twelve students had achieved a More Developed Understanding of culturally responsive teaching by the end of the semester, there was still one student who had not made much of a shift toward understanding.

*Summary*

The goals I had set for teaching about culturally responsive teaching were accomplished in a variety of ways. I wanted to stress to the participants the importance of establishing a positive atmosphere in building a community of learners. I wanted to make certain they understood the importance of knowing themselves as cultural beings before attempting to understand other cultures. I wanted my students to understand that using their students’ cultural and background information in their planning was a critical part of
culturally responsive teaching. In developing a culturally responsive approach to teaching it was important for my students to realize that their worldview influences their teaching, and that it is not universal.

The data support Banks et al. (2005) in their premise that “[t]o build a culturally responsive practice, teachers need to have a broad set of teaching strategies for working with diverse children. Teachers need to know how to explore their own cultural assumptions to understand how these shape their starting points for practice” (p. 243). They must believe that all children can succeed, and use constructivist pedagogy toward that end. The data demonstrate that the activities, articles, chapter books, and assignments that I used to teach about culture to help my students build their knowledge about CRT met these criteria and that they did impact the participants’ learning.

Selecting “Authentic” Multicultural Literature

This section answers the question: How can I guide teachers and teacher candidates to identify “authentic” multicultural literature? I designed assignments and class activities for EDU 525 based on the premise that to encourage teachers and teacher candidates to use multicultural literature for CRT, I must provide the knowledge about what ML is, help them develop the skills to recognize and choose authentic ML, and cultivate a caring disposition toward using the ML they select in culturally responsive ways.

In appraising the shifts in the participants’ understandings about the authenticity of ML in this study, it was important to consider several issues. The students needed to acquire a basic appreciation for and knowledge of ML to be able to use it as an approach
to CRT, and the ML they selected had to be authentic to be used effectively in culturally responsive ways. Therefore, learning to make informed and reflective choices in selection of “authentic” ML was imperative. To accomplish this, the students needed to learn about the many tools available to aid them in selecting authentic ML. One such support was criteria lists available to suggest guidelines for analyzing books for stereotypes and racism. The students also had to understand the importance of knowing something about the authors’ background and culture and that reading extensively authentic ML written by parallel-culture authors was important to model what authentic ML “looks like.” Additionally, they had to determine whether a book provided mirrors and windows into a particular culture and whether it promoted cultural understanding. They also needed to be aware of “culture-specific awards” and reference books available for ensuring selection of authentic multicultural literature. Finally, they had to understand the complexity of recognizing and selecting authentic ML and obtain a comfort level with their understanding to allow them to trust their own instinct in making their selections.

Given the complexity of determining the authenticity of ML, and considering the participants lack of experience with ML, I deemed it necessary to focus on certain basic criteria guidelines (see Table 4.2) about authenticity through different activities and assignments designed to help them learn how to choose authentic multicultural books. Each time we discussed a new criterion for determining authenticity, we added it to the chart started on the first night of class. By the end of the fifth class meeting we had completed the chart to include all the selection guidelines I expected them to learn in determining authenticity.
1. Read extensively  
a. books by “parallel-culture authors” (insiders to the culture)  
b. books by “cross-cultural authors” (outsiders who have steeped themselves in a culture)  

2. Use handouts with selection criteria for ML  
b. “Stereotypes in Native American Literature”  
c. “Excellence in Jewish Children’s Literature”  

3. Look for books with culturally responsive purposes, promote cultural understanding, i.e. books that:  
a. provide information about traditions of a culture  
b. provide “mirrors” for readers of the same culture and “windows” into cultures for readers outside the culture  
c. provide an avenue into discussing sensitive topics (e.g. prejudice) accurately and authentically  
d. can be an approach to culturally responsive teaching  

4. Look for books that have won culture-specific awards  

5. Use reference tools authorized by:  
a. reference books compiled by experts in ML (eg. *A Broken Flute*)  
b. websites (eg. Oyate.com)  
c. journals (e.g. *Horn Book, Multicultural Review*)  

6. Use your own instinct  

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Table 4.2: Criteria Guidelines for Checking Authenticity in ML  

Table 4.2 represents the selection criteria I taught and reinforced throughout the 15-week semester, and expected my students to become familiar with and use to help them in recognizing and selecting authentic multicultural literature. I do not contend that this is a comprehensive list; however, I believe the selection criteria on this list are imperative for a novice to consider when beginning to learn about and use ML in culturally responsive ways. As I presented each new selection criterion, I added it to a chart that I displayed during each class throughout the semester.  

To help me analyze changes in the participants' understanding on the Continuum of Shifts in Understanding, I used the Criteria Guidelines (Table 4.2) to develop an
Authenticity Rubric (see Table 4.3). Since there was no hierarchy that needed to be attended to in using these guidelines, the rubric took into consideration the number of guidelines the participants used in their judging of books and not specific guidelines themselves.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUTHENTICITY RUBRIC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent Understanding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: Authenticity Rubric

To determine what the participants had learned about ML and its authenticity, I examined their responses to a variety of the teaching strategies that I employed to teach concepts about authenticity, and used the above rubric to place the students on the Continuum of Understanding. Looking at these placements over time during the semester gave me an idea about the efficacy of each of these strategies.

The assignments and activities I used to teach the selection criteria (Table 4.2) about authenticity included Multicultural Literature Chapter Books, Book Sorting Activity, Textbook, “Multicultural Literature in the Real Classroom Setting” Assignment,
Booklist Activity, and Pre-Post Survey. Each of these assignments and activities were used for specific purposes and were ongoing throughout the semester. This section is organized around these assignments and activities. Organizing them in this way enabled me to determine the efficacy of each assignment and activity by observing change in the participants’ understanding of authenticity over time. The data that was analyzed to help make these determinations included my reflective research journal, participants’ reflective journals and meta-reflections, critical text reflections, the pre- and post surveys, and transcripts of class discussions. Below is a discussion of these assignments and class activities in more detail.

*Multicultural Literature Chapter Books*

Bishop (2003) claims that one of the most effective ways to learn how to recognize authentic ML is to read extensively authentic multicultural literature by parallel-culture authors. Therefore, I assigned seven chapter books that corresponded to each underrepresented group that we studied during the semester. My purpose was to provide exemplary ML to help teachers and teacher candidates learn what to look for in authenticity and to provide a common point of reference from which the entire group could share multiple perspectives. I needed books that would provide examples of how authentic ML had the ability to help the reader learn about other cultures and provide a venue for discussing sensitive topics. I wanted to provide my students with characters they could identify with, and whose heroes belonged to the cultural group being represented. Becoming familiar with such authentic examples of ML also helps its reader develop an instinct for recognizing authenticity when they see it.
The following discussion will present data from several of the books read during the semester that support the criteria for determining authenticity in multicultural literature. For example, one chapter book I selected was *The Watson’s Go To Birmingham* (Curtis, 1995). This book was well-liked by all the participants and their reflections demonstrated that the participants recognized a number of the ideas presented above. All the participants reported enjoying the story very much and how they “could relate to the characters in the story” (070124_J_13). Reading authentic ML with characters one can relate to is one way to begin understanding authenticity. This book also helped most students consider stereotypes as suggested by Dwayne’s reflection:

I never thought of myself as being stereotypical of anyone or of any situation until we read *The Watson's Go to Birmingham*. For the first time I realized that not all people from the same color of skin experience [the same things] in our world. Just because I am Caucasian and lived a 'typical' Caucasian middle class life in Kentucky, doesn't make me the same as someone that lived a 'typical' Caucasian middle class life in Ohio. It's like saying because I'm white I know what it's like to live like Donald Trump. It was then that I began to realize the impact ML can have on our youth. 070124_MR_14

This book helped Dwayne recognize his own bias and through reflecting on this reading he admitted the realization that he held stereotypes he had not been aware of. He made an analogy that he could identify with to explain how he was guilty of stereotyping all people with the same skin color as all fitting into one mold. He contributes his new realization to the impact literature can have, and seemed to espouse the importance of using ML with his students in his classroom as a future teacher.
Reading other chapter books also helped some of the other participants contemplate common stereotypes, and caused them to examine their own assumptions about those stereotypes. For example, after reading *The Heart of a Chief* (Bruchac, 1998), Shawna wrote the following journal entry:

> Living near Cleveland and being an Indians fan myself, I am aware of the controversy about team mascots and their Native American affiliation. Until I read this book, I felt that it was an unnecessary controversy because I didn't know anyone who considered the mascots offensive. I always thought that the names were just for fun. After reading this chapter and the rest of the book, and thinking about how we stereotype Indians to wear feather headdresses and live in tipis, I have definitely changed my mind. (070131_DEJ_06)

Shawna admitted in her reflection that she had knowledge about this controversial issue but did not take it seriously. She proclaimed that everyone with whom she discussed the issue shared her perspective that it was a trivial matter “just for fun.” This exemplifies that she had been viewing the issue from her hegemonic perspective. Her comments clearly indicated that reading this particular knowledge made an impact on this perspective and caused her to rethink her opinion from the cultural perspective it had to do with. To alter her thinking in this way is an example of the power of literature to prompt its readers to “change minds” (Rasinski & Padak, 1990).

There was a quote in this book stating that “every Indian man is not a chief, the same way that every non-Indian man is not the president of the United States” (Bruchac, 1998, p. 128) that brought about much class discussion during the Grand Conversation about this book. The general consensus was that this was a “great analogy that many
people who don’t agree with changing the names of sports mascots should hear” (070131_CD_02). Jill commented that this quote “really changed [her] way of thinking” about giving Tribal names to sports teams, and was “impressed by Chris’s character – by his intelligence and his passion about what he is fighting for” (070131_CD_02).

This same multicultural chapter book was instrumental in helping Kelly recognize and admit biases she held. Kelly, already a teacher, wrote her entry about the effect this story had on her thinking about a Thanksgiving unit she used yearly in her third grade classroom.

We talked about how Indians are often stereotyped as living in a tepee, wearing feather headbands, buckskin clothing, etc. I thought about how I am buying into that stereotype and how I am teaching my students that stereotype because that is what was taught to me. I will be changing that part of my unit of Thanksgiving, and we will be doing some different research about Indians and how different tribes lived and how each tribe was different in their own way. (070131_J_03)

This demonstrates, not only Kelly’s recognition of her own biases and her unintentional propagation of stereotypes, but more importantly her resolve to rectify the situation by changing her unit to end this assault and be certain to teach her students a more accurate portrayal of Native American Indians.

Molly also had a response to this quote from Bruchac’s (1998) book: “Even though he has been at Rangerville for three years, he has never been out to Penacook before today” (p. 139). The comment she wrote in her reflective journal follows:
This quote really applies to me as a teacher because wherever I get a job, I think it is part of my job to learn about the community in which I am teaching and also the surrounding communities. It is my responsibility to know where my kids are coming from so that I can better meet their needs. (070131_DEJ_13)

Again, Molly made a connection between the character in the story and her own future students. She recognized the importance of and her responsibility to learn the background knowledge of her students in order to meet their needs. This kind of application of new knowledge demonstrates that the participants understand the importance of teaching in culturally responsive ways. It also demonstrates the power of literature to help them reach such realizations.

Selecting books for others to read is a formidable challenge since not all people react to the literature they read in the same ways. For example, Vivian and Kelly had very different reactions to *M. C. Higgins, The Great* (Hamilton, 1974). Vivian began her journal entry stating that she did not like this book:

I really did not like the novel this week. The story itself was not bad but I didn't care for the author's style of writing. There were several parts of the story that I was unclear on but I talked it over with a few people from class and that helped me to understand. I still didn't like the book and didn’t think it was nearly as good as all the others we’ve read so far. (070221_J_08)

Vivian’s reflection clearly states that for her, the book was unclear and she did not think it was a “good” book. It also demonstrates that hearing other perspectives did help her
with understanding the book, but it did not help her like it any better. Kelly, on the other hand, had a different perspective of the book:

*MC Higgins, The Great* was a great book and definitely had important messages in it. One that I thought was important is that even though both families lived in the Appalachian Mountains, both had different ways of life and believed different things. They had different values and interests. Students may find meaning in this story because of all of the changes that are happening in their life at that time, and how each person goes through those changes differently even though they are the same age, and possibly even the same race. The book made me think about poverty in a way I never thought of before. (070221_J_03)

Clearly, Kelly had a firm understanding of the book and in her opinion, found it to be a “great” read. There is no way to know how readers will respond to a given book; consequently, selecting common texts for discussion purposes can be challenging. I selected this book initially because I loved the book and my expectation was that it would be among my students’ favorites as well. After discussing it in class, however, most participants rated it to be their least favorite of all the books we had read.

*Book Sorting Activity*

Another strategy I used to teach the concepts about authenticity was through conducting a Book Sorting Activity at the beginning, middle, and end of the semester. My purpose in designing this constructivist activity was to give my students hands-on practice using several of the criteria I had taught them for making informed and reflective choices when they examined authentic ML. The criteria I was particularly trying to convey included observing examples of stereotypes, examining books to note if they...
promoted cultural understanding, looking for culture-specific awards, and using reference books and websites. To accomplish this, I facilitated their examination of ML to help them discover these criteria that make it authentic.

The first time I introduced the Book Sorting Activity in Week 4, I provided the books, explained the purpose of sorting, and described the criteria I especially wanted them to be aware of during the activity. I further explained that we would repeat this activity at other times throughout the semester. Since the purpose of the sort was to provide practice in recognizing certain criteria that help identify authentic ML, I was intentional about selecting literature for the first sort that would provide examples of all of the criteria we had discussed thus far in class. I had already introduced the guidelines recommended by the Council on Interracial Books for Children (CIBC), entitled *10 Quick Ways to Analyze Books for Racism and Sexism* (2004); therefore, I provided some books that contained stereotypes. We had already talked about one of the purposes of ML being to promote cultural understanding; consequently, I brought in examples of literature that provided “mirrors and windows” into a culture. I also chose books that would reinforce a number of other methods for selecting authentic ML, which I would introduce during this activity. These methods included browsing websites that are affirmed by the culture that one is researching, and using journals and resource books recommended by experts in the field. The underrepresented group of focus in Week 4 was Native American Indians; therefore, I selected mostly Native American literature to give my students an opportunity to practice using these criteria.

Because stereotypes are the most obvious and most easily recognized, we began our seven-week study of authenticity with the issue of stereotypes in the illustrations and
texts of various literature that stereotyped a cultural group. In order to place my students in a position to make informed decisions about the authenticity of ML, I wanted them to first know and acknowledge that stereotypes do exist in children’s literature; second, I wanted them to have the disposition to look at their own assumptions about stereotypes; and finally, I wanted to be sure they possessed the skills to recognize stereotypes in literature and class discussion. I therefore selected a book that encouraged generalizations about the stereotypes of Native American culture.

During the first Book Sorting Activity, I used The Indian in the Cupboard by Lynne Reid Banks (1980) as a negative example of what is not “authentic” ML. The adventures that Omri and Little Bear shared in this story were quite imaginative and exciting; but unfortunately, they were also fraught with stereotypes and cultural inconsistencies that earned the book a spot on the “Books to avoid” list published by Oyate, a website managed by a Native American organization devoted to assuring accuracy in Native American literature. I selected this book because, due to its popularity it was likely that every participant had either read the book, heard of the book, or had seen the movie by the same name. All were in agreement that it was an excellent story, well-loved by children, and I therefore thought this would be a good book with which I could sensitize my students about stereotypes.

After a lively class discussion about the book, I shared the Oyate website (http://www.oyate.org) with the participants and explained that this website was an excellent resource to use when checking the authenticity of Native American Books, in addition to the 10 Quick Ways to Analyze Books for Racism and Sexism (2004) pamphlet that I had distributed the previous week. For this Week 4 discussion of Native American
literature, I also distributed the *Teaching Young Children about Native Americans* (Reese, 1996) with guidelines specific to Native ML. Further, I shared two excellent resource books for Native American literature with my students: *Through Indian Eyes: The Native Experience in Books for Children* (Slapin & Seale, 1992) and *A Broken Flute* (Seale & Slapin, 2005). I pointed out that *The Indian in the Cupboard* was listed on both the Oyate website’s “not recommended” list and in Seale & Slapin’s reference’s “books to avoid.” All the participants expressed their surprise at this information.

It was interesting to observe the ensuing discussion unfold and to hear the diversity in the participants’ views of this fact. One of the findings from this conversation was that some people do enter the classroom with prior assumptions and tend to cling to their previously held beliefs, sometimes having difficulty assimilating new points of view. Even after presenting the problem that Native Americans have with this story, some of my students could “not understand why Native Americans were so against this book” (070131_CD_10). They expressed their opinion that the “author did not intend the book to be offensive” (070131_CD_02) and queried why Native Americans “were so defensive about it” (070131_CD_05). Such comments gave me the opportunity to point out that we were judging the book from a hegemonic perspective, and that when examining authenticity, it was important to respect the emic point of view. It was also the responses of these three students that enticed me to follow their progress in learning about authenticity. Cassidy, Jill, and Nikki were the only three participants who expressed a problem with the Native American assessment of *The Indian in the Cupboard*. This is not to say they were the only students who had a problem with this view, but since they specifically stated this opinion, I decided to focus on these three to
note shifts in their understanding about authenticity. It was obvious that all three of these students were at an Emergent Understanding of authenticity on the Continuum of Shifts in Understanding at this point in time.

Also during the initial Book Sorting Activity in Week 4, I introduced another recommendation from Table 4.2 to determine authenticity in ML – culture-specific book awards. All of the participants were familiar with the well-known Caldecott Award for best illustrations in children’s literature and the Newbery Award for the best story in young adult literature, and were able to name various books that had won both of these awards. However, no one had heard of the Native American Youth Services Literature Award given exclusively to excellent Native ML. Newly designated for Native American books in the picture book, middle school, and young adult literature categories, this award was conferred for the first time in 2006. I informed my students that this was one of several “culture-specific” awards that were valid measures to assure authenticity. I shared with them the first recipients of this honor for Native literature: *Beaver Steals Fire: A Salish Coyote Story* by the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes (2005) for the picture book category; *The Birchbark House*, by Louise Erdrich (1999) for middle school; and *Hidden Roots* (2004) by Joseph Bruchac for the young adult category.

Finally, I encouraged my students to read these books as well as other books that received culture-specific awards, to help them develop the facility for recognizing, with practice, “what is authentic” in a ML book void of negative stereotypes for children and young adults.

After this class it was apparent that the idea of culture-specific book awards was a new concept for my students and it had made an impression on them. For example,
Cassidy wrote: “I was also interested in all of the book awards we learned about that multicultural books can earn. I hadn't heard of any of them” (070131_J_10). Jill and Nikki were among the majority of the remaining participants who reiterated this same sentiment in their reflection following this class. Other than the Caldecott and Newbery awards, most had been oblivious to the fact that awards existed specifically for authentic ML of some cultures. These book awards helped Cassidy, Jill, and Nikki along in making a shift in their understanding of stereotypes.

Besides learning about looking for stereotypes and book awards in recognizing and selecting authentic ML, it was imperative that my students understand the purposes for using multicultural literature, and that looking for these culturally responsive purposes was also useful in determining ML’s authenticity. During the Book Sorting Activity in Week 4, I stressed that one reason to use ML is to equip classrooms with literature that can provide “mirrors and windows” to its readers; that is, it can validate insiders’ sense of their own culture and can give outsiders an authentic view into some of the nuances of a culture.

As an example of a book that provides such mirrors and windows, I shared the picture book Jingle Dancer (Smith, 2000). This is the story of Jenna, a contemporary young Native American girl who dreams of performing her first traditional jingle dance at a powwow. A particularly poignant illustration is that of Jenna, dressed in her jeans and tee shirt, practicing her jingle dance in her living room as she watches a videotape of her grandmother jingle dancing. What is significant in this drawing is that Jenna is dressed like any other American teen. Therefore, I pointed out to my students that books
such as this could serve well in eliminating the stereotype that *all* Indians wear headdresses and live in tepees, while at the same time providing an authentic look at the cultural tradition of the jingle dance.

There was evidence in the participants’ reflective journals that they did begin to grasp the idea of using ML to help their students learn about other cultures. Cassidy had written this in her journal in Week 1: “Multicultural literature is something that I know nothing about. I never heard of it, I don’t know what it is, I don’t know why I should use it” (070110_J_10). After our discussion about the purposes of using ML during this class in Week 4, she further reflected: “The thing that explained the most to me about the purposes of multicultural literature was the mirrors and windows analogy” (070131_J_10). Cassidy, along with most of the participants, was gaining understanding of using ML to promote cultural awareness.

In Week 5 we repeated the Book Sorting Activity. After reviewing the selection criteria listed on Table 4.2 that we had learned thus far for determining authenticity of ML, I divided the class into four groups and instructed them to examine the books that I provided as well as the ones they had brought to class. I then instructed the groups to share their findings of their sorts with the class, reporting on one authentic multicultural book that they had studied and telling the class what criteria they had used to determine its authenticity.

During the Book Sorting Activity in Week 5, one book described by a group of students as “authentic ML” was *The Snowy Day* (Keats, 1962). The students justified using it because its main character was African American and it had won the Caldecott Medal for its illustrations. Their selection provided a teachable moment in class: *The*
Snowy Day is considered an example of a “melting pot” book (Sims [Bishop], 1982), which focuses on the universality of situations while ignoring the details of culture that make a book authentic ML. For example, while it portrays a main character who is African American, there is nothing in the story itself that indicates anything specific about the race or culture of the character that could promote awareness or understanding of African American culture. If not for the illustrations, the characters could belong to any race or culture, which interestingly complicated our discussion of what constitutes “authentic” multicultural literature.

In our class discussion we concluded selecting award-winning books with characters from different cultures does not guarantee that the book is necessarily “culturally authentic.” Although this book won the prestigious Caldecott Medal for its illustrations, it is not helpful in providing a window into African American culture. Our discussion served as a reminder that although having won the Caldecott and Newbery Medal winners does not guarantee authentic ML, there are culture-specific awards that do ensure that the book is authentic in its depiction of a culture, like the Native American Youth Services Literature award, which we had discussed earlier. The participants generally brought in popular books like The Snowy Day that are often found in classroom libraries, which provided rich opportunities to begin understanding the complexity of what constitutes authentic ML. Without discussion opportunities brought about by such constructivist activities as book sorting, the participants might not realize the subtle differences in the types of multicultural literature that is available.

Another example of the effectiveness of the Book Sorting Activity occurred when Shawna brought in a book called Indian Two Feet and His Horse (Friskey, 1959). She
brought the book because it was one used in her field experience classroom and was popular among the children. After examining the book using the criteria we had established, her group reported that they found stereotypes in the book. This indicated to me that they were beginning to astutely apply what they were learning and could detect stereotypes, placing them further along the Continuum of Shifts in Understanding.

Suspecting that *Indian Two Feet and His Horse* was an older book, I asked Shawna to look at its publishing date. I had not planned to discuss the fact that books written prior to 1970 are often stereotypical in their illustrations and/or language, and as such should not be included in a multicultural library. This Book Sorting Activity provided an unplanned opportunity for me to discuss the strategy of considering the date of publication for determining authenticity. This is an example of how, in self-study, it is important to be flexible and take advantage of “teachable moments” to meet students’ needs. It also brought to mind the category of books from the same timeframe that Bishop (1976) describes as “Guess Who’s Coming to Dinner” (p. 32) books. In these books, a culture outside the dominant culture is portrayed in the story; however, these books are usually written from the hegemonic perspective by European American authors. They are largely out of print, and fortunately, there are very few, if any, left on library shelves.

This incident was a learning opportunity for Nikki who stated: “The one thing that gets me is all of the books out there that are not authentic. The discussions we had about *The Snowy Day* and *Indian Two Feet* made me more aware of all the ways there are to judge a book for authenticity” (070207_J_05). It was encouraging to see that Nikki was giving thought to some of the concepts I had presented about authenticity, and was using this information to help her determine whether or not a book qualified as authentic ML.
In her previous responses, Nikki’s responses had been mostly superficial or negative. She talked about liking to work in groups, but did not discuss what she learned from others or what she contributed. She talked about the autobiography being “a great way to break the ice” (070117_J_05), but did not mention any connection to CRT or establishing a learning environment. I was pleased to note that Nikki remarked about learning from other perspectives as well as gaining more knowledge about authenticity.

All of the participants specifically stated in their journal entries following our class meeting in Week 5 that the Book Sorting Activity was useful. Jill’s comment was typical:

I feel that I learned a lot by having to sort out books by the categories that you provided for us on the chart we have been adding to. It really challenged us to put to use all the information that we have learned so far and apply it to real books. (070207_J_02)

It is important to note that Jill and many of the other participants were beginning to recognize the application of their new skills. Some participants were even looking ahead to application of this knowledge in future classrooms as evidenced by Cassidy’s entry.

I really found it useful to look through books and to "classify" them (cross-cultural, parallel culture, stereotypical, etc.) I work really well with hands-on activities and actually being able to see something, rather than just hearing about it. I liked the chance to be able to look through books and try to figure out if they were good books to use, or books that are stereotypical and should never be considered. It was nice to be able to look at them side by side and to think, "Oh, I would never use that book because of this..." but I would use this book because of this...." It gave me an opportunity to learn a skill that I can use in the future. (070207_J_10)
Cassidy seemed to be further along on the Continuum in her understanding of authenticity than either Jill or Nikki. Her reflection indicated that the Book Sorting Activity was instrumental in helping her recognize books that were authentic ML and those that were not. She alluded to the fact that for her, lectures are not as beneficial as hands-on learning. One of my goals had been to provide the participants with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to make informed selections of authentic ML, and Cassidy stated that she had learned this skill and mentioned using it in her future teaching.

By Week 12, it was obvious that looking for book awards, stereotypes, and evidence of cultural understanding in books had become common practice among the participants in their quest for determining authenticity. Cassidy mentioned a long list of criteria in her reflection that she found useful in determining authenticity. For example, she stated that “becoming more familiar with culture-specific awards was a helpful way to distinguish authentic multicultural books” (070411_J_10) and that she had read some multicultural books before without recognizing that they could be “mirrors for someone from that culture” (070411). She commented that she was now “recognizing stereotypes that [had] slipped right past [her] before” (070411_J_10). Cassidy was clearly moving along the Continuum in her understanding of authenticity.

Jill also commented in her journal reflection on learning about book awards, however, she had a reason beyond their usefulness for writing about the awards:

A few weeks ago we talked about the different culture-specific book awards. I talked to my mom when she got back from a reading conference in Columbus and she was telling me about the multicultural seminar she
attended (mainly to learn more about what I was learning in your class at MMC!) She was talking about all these medals and going on about them. It was funny because this was probably the first time that I've ever gotten to say to her "I already knew that" about something with teaching. It was a really cool feeling when I already knew about the Coretta Scott King Award and the Sydney Taylor Award, and especially the Native American Award. She had heard of the first two, but the Native one was new to her! I like being able to share things like that with my mom. It kind of brings me closer to her since she is also an educator. It's part of our bond. (070411_J_02)

Jill’s entry was interesting because it went beyond merely reiterating information about book awards and their usefulness to determining authenticity, to making a personal connection between what she learned and her own life. When I responded to Jill’s journal entry, I mentioned how excited I was that she and her mom shared this “special bond.” I went on to state how I hoped that this text-life connection would serve as a reminder of the importance of the connections her future students would make between their school work and their personal lives, which is a critical aspect of culturally responsive teaching. Whereas in Week 4, no participants were aware of culture-specific awards for authentic ML, by Week 12 all participants knew of at least four different such awards and mentioned finding these awards helpful in recognizing authentic multicultural literature.

By Week 12, all students were consistently referring to multiple criteria in Table 4.2 when supporting their selections of authentic multicultural literature. Although it is not conclusive that the Book Sorting Activity alone helped students to become more knowledgeable about using the Criteria Guidelines (Table 4.2) for determining authenticity, the data indicate that they found the activity beneficial and that their understanding of these criteria was More Developed as a result of this activity.
Textbook Chapters

One of the most important criteria in determining authenticity in ML was the insider/outsider perspective in regard to the author. Learning to determine whether authors should belong to the culture for whom they write stories, or if authenticity can be achieved by writers outside a culture takes much thoughtful debate. To help participants understand this important concept of multicultural literature I had them write critical reflections in response to assigned chapters from our text, *Stories Matter: The Complexity of Authenticity in Children’s Literature* (Fox & Short, 2003). Each chapter in this edited text was about authenticity in ML, written from the perspectives of a variety of well-respected authors. I wanted to provide readings that would keep students in a state of disequilibrium (Piaget & Inhelder, 1969, 2000) until they had accommodated enough information through reading multiple perspectives, to allow them to confidently define authenticity for themselves.

We addressed authenticity in ML for the first time during the third class session. I explained to the participants that we would be spending much time on this topic because one of the most important goals for this course was to have them leave this class with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they needed, in order to make informed selections of authentic multicultural literature. I wrote in my reflective research journal that there was “a serious feel” (070124_RRJ_00) to class that night. The participants seemed very interested in delving into this important topic. They came to that class session having read the first of many assigned chapters that would be required on the topic of authenticity.
Chapter 1, “The Complexity Of Cultural Authenticity In Children’s Literature: Why The Debates Really Matter” (Fox & Short, 2003) gave the students a general overview of authenticity without really attempting to get the reader to prescribe to any one perspective. My purpose in selecting this chapter first was to provide some background knowledge on a topic that was new to everyone. The first chapter we read succeeded in getting the participants to admit they had little knowledge, and in giving information that led them to ask many questions.

The participants’ journal entries provided evidence that the idea of “authenticity” in multicultural literature was a new concept for everyone. One typical entry stated that this participant “had no clue there were so many things to think about when choosing a good multicultural literature book” (070117_J_12). Following the reflections of one participant over time demonstrated that writing critical reflections after reading assigned chapters along with gaining multiple perspectives from class discussions were effective in helping the participants learn important points about authenticity in multicultural literature. In assessing the students’ reflections, I was looking for any shifts in their understanding that indicated a growing cultural awareness and appreciation of “others” over time. Below is a typical student reflection on Chapter 1 (“The Complexity Of Cultural Authenticity In Children’s Literature: Why The Debates Really Matter”) of the textbook that we used (Fox & Short, 2003):

The meaning of cultural authenticity is a very hard term to define. Most people say that when something is authentic, that they will 'know it when they see it.' But how can people 'know it' when they do not know what they are looking for at all? When looking at authentic literature there is really a lot to consider. Whose judgment is used when deciding which
things are authentic? How does another person from a different culture judge a book written from another culture? How much knowledge and experience is needed to write an authentic piece of literature? Can only insiders of a culture contribute to the literature of their own culture? But it is an important part of our society for people to learn about other cultures different than their own, and compare it to what they know and what yet another culture believes. (070117_CR2_11)

Mara’s reaction to the authors of the first chapter of the textbook, Fox and Short (2003), was one of uncertainty and curiosity. She had many questions as a result of this chapter, and being among those with little exposure to ML, she did not yet feel qualified to “know” ML at all. Mara’s observation was actually rather astute: it indicated that she realized and acknowledged her ignorance of ML, let alone what may qualify as “authentic” multicultural literature. We had not yet had any discussion of authenticity in ML prior to this class; therefore I did not expect the participants to feel competent in their knowledge of the topic. I also expected there would be much diversity in their levels of understanding about authenticity. In the paragraphs below, I follow Jill and Shawna’s reflections as they worked through various levels in defining authenticity through their readings and critical text reflections.

After the first night that we discussed authenticity, Jill wrote: “Finding multicultural literature isn’t that difficult. If you can picture yourself as the character or relate to the characters in the book, it is good literature” (070124_DB_02). We had discussed that to be considered “good” children’s multicultural literature, a book had to first be good children’s literature. We had commented that good children’s literature
requires universal themes that make the story timeless and with which children from all
cultures can identify; for example good vs. evil, love conquers all, and coming of age
themes. Additionally, the characters must seem real and well-rounded.

Jill’s response quoted above reflects that she was familiar with these concepts
about “good literature” but had missed the finer undercurrents that define good
multicultural literature as being “authentic.” For example, we had also discussed different
views of authorship and authenticity and had begun to build the case that authenticity is
in Children's Literature* (2003) should have established the idea that learning about
authenticity was not simple. I was trying to convey the complexity of ML by explaining
that we would be learning about many criteria to help them recognize authentic
multicultural literature. We had read about and had begun our debate on insider/outsider
author perspective. We had read about and discussed the proliferation of cultural
stereotypes in much ML available to children. Jill, however, simplified the issue of
authenticity by clinging to her prior knowledge of what constitutes “good literature” for
children. In other words, Jill’s reflection demonstrated an Emergent Understanding of
authenticity on the Continuum of Shifts in Understanding. For example, as Jill stated, she
felt that selecting ML “isn’t that difficult.” This opinion indicated that Jill felt
authenticity was a straightforward and uncomplicated concept. If so, then she missed the
layers and complexities that make multicultural literature “authentic.”

In contrast to Jill’s reflection, Shawna’s response to her reading of Chapter 1 in
our textbook demonstrated an immediate sense of disequilibrium. She did not even wait
until the next class to share her opinion of the chapter, but rather E-mailed the same night after class with the following comment: “When I first sat down and began reading the chapter, I thought that I would be able to define multicultural literature by the time I was done reading. I was wrong! I agreed with parts of every view” (070117_EM_06). Even though Shawna did not articulate in her correspondence with which points she agreed and disagreed, it was apparent that she was considering multiple perspectives. Furthermore, by saying that she first thought one thing, then after reading more she changed her mind, Shawna demonstrated that she did examine her prior assumptions. The following week, Week 2, she wrote this in her journal entry:

I was on the fence as to whether or not I thought that an outsider could really authentically write about a different culture. Then I came home and turned on the TV. A commercial for a pregnancy test was showing. This particular commercial was being narrated by a man and I instantly started voicing my opinion that this narrator had no business talking about a female product. There was no way he could understand about being pregnant! Then I thought about our class and realized that I actually don’t think that an outsider can authentically write about a different race. (070124_J_06)

Shawna’s understanding of authenticity seemed to be a little further on the Continuum of Shifts in Understanding (Figure 4.1) than Jill’s. Shawna did not verbalize any particular statement that could evidence her knowledge about authenticity, but unlike Jill, she appeared to be definitely thinking about the topic from multiple perspectives.

For the class held on Week 4 of the semester, the students read Chapter 6, “The Candle and The Mirror: One Author's Journey as an Outsider,” Chapter 12, “Authenticity,’ or the Lesson of Little Tree,” and Chapter 15, “Accuracy and
Authenticity in American Indian Children’s Literature: The Social Responsibility of Authors and Illustrators” (See Appendix J). As presented in the entry below, Jill’s description of authenticity was more detailed and explicit than it had been the previous week; that is, it reflected more of the specific selection criteria we had discussed in class, and that I was looking for (Table 4.2), such as reading extensively books by parallel-culture and cross-cultural authors and looking for books that have won culture-specific awards.

This past class was the most informative and helpful class we’ve had yet. Not only did I get a great list of multicultural books from the readings and the book share, but I also learned a great deal on how to tell if a book is authentic or not. The main idea I took from this class was the idea of cross-cultural and parallel culture literature. Another helpful thing we learned about was the book awards that are given specifically to multicultural books. This class helped with a lot of questions I had and gave me hope of learning how to find good multicultural literature.

(070131_J_02)

Jill claimed she found the class helpful, but she was not specific about in what way it was helpful. Although she mentioned “cross-cultural and parallel-cultural literature,” she gave no indication that she had an understanding of what these terms mean. She maintained that the class helped her resolve unanswered questions, but did not state which questions she had and how they were answered. She did note that using awards was helpful in determining authenticity, and was explicit in stating “culture-specific” awards. Jill’s entry provided evidence of some progress and demonstrated that her Emergent Understanding had shifted to a Less Developed Understanding on the Continuum.
Shawna, yet again, demonstrated a sense of disequilibrium as reflected in her following journal entry:

Last week I still felt that the author should be an insider. But Addison brought up a good point in class – as long as it’s authentic, why should the author’s culture matter? In chapter 6 it said that sometimes after reading a story kids were surprised to hear that it was written by someone from a different culture. My opinion is back on the fence. I feel like I am going around in circles. I don’t know how I feel, exactly, because I agree with opinions and statements on both sides of the argument. (070131_J_06)

This entry seems to indicate that Shawna was trying to analyze all points of view, and was beginning to synthesize the information she had learned thus far; however, she had not yet reached a conclusion about what constitutes authenticity. Her entry indicated that she was uncertain about whether or not an author can write about a culture that is not his own. New information from the author of Chapter 6 placed Shawna, once again, into a state of disequilibrium.

Week 5 was the third time we discussed the topic of authenticity; there was no chapter assigned from the textbook for this week. We reviewed what we had learned so far by listing various criteria for selecting authentic ML. We had discussed aids such as criteria lists, reference books, and websites. We looked at books awards, especially honors that were specific to the culture of the book. We were still debating the issue of parallel-culture vs. cross-culture authors. By now, we had completed the chart of Criteria Guidelines (see Table 4.2) that we had been adding to since the first time we had discussed authenticity.
Jill had been static in her understanding about determining authenticity thus far, simply restating many of the ways she had learned in class. For example, her journal entry for Week 5 summarized the criteria we had discussed. Jill mentioned the importance of looking to see whether the author and illustrator were of the culture about which they wrote, looking for culture-specific awards, checking websites for books that are not recommended by a culture, and using the handout with guidelines for checking authenticity. Interestingly, she seemed to be parroting the lists I had handed out to the class, though it was not as clear whether she was actually applying the tools we were learning when making her own selections of books.

Today in class we made a list of ways to select authentic multicultural literature. Some of the important topics on the list were to look at the author and illustrator. Those from a parallel culture will probably have an authentic book. Also check to see if the book has any awards that are given only to books from that culture. You can check the criteria lists that we got in class, like The 10 Ways to Analyze books. There are also some good reference books you can look at like The Broken Flute, and websites like Oyate. (070207_J_02)

Since Jill, once again, did not clarify her reflection, it is impossible to know whether she was still just recalling the information we had learned, or whether she really did comprehend the usefulness of these strategies for determining authenticity. She did list the majority of ideas we had talked about in class, but it seemed that they were merely copied from the handouts I had given the class. Still, Jill’s entry provided evidence that her understanding had shifted on the Continuum to a Less Developed Understanding of authenticity. For instance, when she wrote “Those from a parallel culture will probably
have an authentic book,” she must have had an awareness of there being different perspectives, i.e., insider/outsider. She was simply not providing support for her claims to knowledge.

Shawna, however, seemed to be moving even further along the Continuum as she continued to struggle with her new knowledge and make sense of all she had learned. Her journal entry indicated that she was sincerely trying to understand how to use the tools that I provided for selecting authentic multicultural literature.

My position is that I’m still on the fence about authenticity. As long as stereotypes are not present and information is researched and accurate, I think it might be okay for the author to be cross-cultural. My position has gone back and forth several times and was changed not only from reading the text and articles, but was formed after listening to my classmates’ views. I still need to learn more to make up my mind completely. (070207_DB_06)

One detail that made it appear Shawna was beginning to develop a new understanding was that she did not simply reiterate facts, as Jill had, but rather, articulated how she came to know those facts. She attributed her learning to her reading assignments and listening to multiple perspectives. She admitted that her knowledge was partial (Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1991) and that she needed more information before she could make an evaluation. This evinced that she was at a Developing Understanding on the Continuum.

Week 6 of class was cancelled due to inclement weather, so when we met during the seventh week of the semester, the students had read two more chapters on authenticity, Chapter 9, “Multiculturalism is not Halloween,” and Chapter 16, “Accuracy
is not Enough: The Role of Cultural Values in the Authenticity of Picture Books.” In Week 7, Jill began to exhibit some healthy confusion about authenticity. When she read in Chapter 16 about Tikki, Tikki, Tembo, something really “clicked” for her. Her disequilibrium indicated that she was trying the exercise of determining authenticity in earnest.

One thing I was interested to read about in this chapter is about the book Tikki, Tikki, Tembo. I remember reading this book as a child and recently reading it in my third grade classroom during my sophomore block. When I saw that it was unauthentic I was shocked! It is such a popular fun book that students love to read and hear being read to them. Even though this is not authentic, can it still be read in a classroom? (070221_CR_02)

The above reflection from Jill created confusion for me in my self-study. When I read that Jill knew the criteria for selecting authentic ML so well, and yet she was still shocked that Tikki, Tikki, Tembo was inauthentic, I could not determine whether she had at all internalized the critical aspects of how to judge a book for authenticity. As “the teacher,” I had assumed that my students would see as I did, how unfitting Tikki, Tikki, Tembo is as multicultural literature. Jill’s inability to see this made me recall my own reaction when I learned that my favorite children’s book, Little Black Sambo, was stereotypical multicultural literature. I concluded that we all have blind spots when it comes to books to which we are partial, because of childhood or other such personal associations with them. This led me to be gentler in my evaluations of my students’ progress on the Continuum.
As for Shawna, during Week 7, she seemed to reach a point in her knowledge that moved her “off the fence” that she claimed she was on, and influenced her to finally take a position regarding authenticity. She reported that she became especially “upset” and “angry” after she read Chapter 9. In it, the author (Seto, 2003) criticized European Americans for “cultural thievery” (p. 96) by trying to write stories about other cultures, which, according to the author, was outside their realm of expertise.

As I read, I became angry about what the author had written. I needed to take short breaks to cool off and think about what I was reading. I got the sense from the author that she felt she was better than a lot of people, most notably European-American authors (as she called them) and myself, as well. As soon as I felt personally attacked, I had a hard time reading on, but I did. I took no part of this chapter as factual information, but rather the opinion of an irate woman who took her comparisons to the extreme. (070221_CR_06)

Before I even had the opportunity to read this entry, Shawna brought up the topic in class. When I asked the students to share their perspectives of the assigned readings for this week, Shawna opened the conversation with an emphatic, “I hated Chapter 9.” It was clear that Seto’s (2003) accusation about “cultural thievery” had touched a nerve, as many others followed suit, commenting on what they found controversial. The following portion of the audiotaped class transcription gives an indication of the students’ passionate rejection of Seto’s position:

Something I don’t understand is why people of other cultures or races want to live in America if it is so bad. Why would you want to live in a country where you are constantly reminded of how you are different or not accepted in their eyes? I am not trying to say that people should not be in
America if they are not Euro-American, but it just seems as though people of other cultures like to use their culture or race in a negative way sometimes. (080221_FN_05)

I agree. Seto likes to complain about who can write multicultural literature but seems to not want to do anything about it. If I felt that strongly about an issue such as this one, I wouldn’t complain about it, I would want to do something to change it. (070221_FN_12)

It appeared that Shawna, and many others with similar responses to this chapter, had become defensive about European Americans and had missed the author’s point. Their disequilibrium created an enormous challenge for me as their teacher. At first, I did not quite know how to reign in their self-righteous anger. After allowing them to vent for about fifteen minutes, I raised some questions that required them to reevaluate their position. Why were they so upset with this author’s perspective? What in their own backgrounds could parallel this feeling of being unrepresented, misunderstood, and marginalized? As the discussion ensued, it was gratifying to see them become aware of their European American identity and the unexamined prejudices that come with it. The class concluded with the students’ concession that Seto (2003) had a valid point about who does or does not have the right to write about a particular culture.

As a “reflective practitioner,” (Schön, 1983), this was an incredible opportunity for me to experience self-study in action, as it helped me see my own assumptions. I had not anticipated at all that Seto’s point would be so unwelcomed. I had assumed that the students were going to be receptive to her viewpoint, since they had elected to take this class on multicultural issues. As it turned out, this chapter achieved the disequilibrium
that was necessary for students to move forward in their understanding of how our own
worldviews tend to disrupt our understanding of others unless we intentionally examine
our assumptions. I was encouraged by the additional comments that Shawna made in her
next journal entry on the subject, as it showed the impact of hearing multiple perspectives
on an issue:

The discussion on Chapter 9 was a great conversation, and even though I
started it off with my negative feelings toward one of the chapters and the
author, I really learned a lot and understood some things from other
people’s points of view. (070228 _J_06)

Shawna’s admission of her negative feelings was encouraging, although she did not give
any details as to what exactly she learned and understood. Nonetheless, her reflection
indicated a further shift on the Continuum of Understanding about culturally responsive
teaching. This incident also demonstrates how, although the topic of the chapter in the
textbook was intended to further the participants’ understanding of authenticity, it also
made a huge impact on their understanding of becoming culturally responsive and
thinking of oneself as a multi/cultural being.

It was noteworthy that most students chose to write more detailed reflections on
some chapters in our textbook than on others. The most extensive reflections in both
number and content followed the reading of Chapters 9 by Seto, “Multiculturalism is not
Halloween.” Shawna’s response to reading chapter 9 is representative of the intensity in
reflection on this chapter, and given the number of participants who responded to this
chapter, it appeared to be important in challenging the participants’ thinking. This seems
to be a good indicator for determining the efficacy of particular concepts in the readings, such as the concept of cultural thievery, in Chapter 9. In the process of improving practice, it would make sense to assign chapters that precipitated much response, and eliminate those chapters that did not seem to be effective in moving the students forward in their understandings. Given the number of students who responded to Chapter 9 and the intensity of their reflections, I would include Chapter 9 the next time I teach EDU 525.

In Week 9 we read Chapter 7 by Laskey (2003), “To Stingo with Love: An Author's Perspective on Writing Outside one's Culture.” Jill stated she appreciated the chapter.

I enjoyed Laskey's chapter because I thought she brought up some very good points; points that really made me think about my personal opinions. I like chapters and articles that make me think outside the box, or at least outside my personal bubble of a life. (070321_CR_02)

Although Jill claimed that Laskey brought up points that made her “think outside the box,” she did not give any supporting evidence for this claim. As before, with restating the list of criteria (Table 4.2) I had given them, she praised Laskey’s argument, while it was not clear how much of it she had internalized. In contrast, Shawna’s journal entry did provide ample indications of a shift in her understanding.

I agree with Kathy Laskey in this chapter and I never thought about it until this class. Multiculturalism is coming into full bloom in the schools in 2007. I think that in our town there is little diversity however, our world is becoming more and more diverse each day. Before this class and reading
I was very uncomfortable with culture and the issue of diversity. I would have rather ignored it than to praise and celebrate it. I still feel that talking about diversity is a touchy topic and sometimes I feel that I must tip-toe around terms used for cultures but I am more confident than I have ever been on the topic of diversity. (070321_CR_06)

I appreciated the sensitivity and honesty that Shawna displayed in the above entry. She admitted to being uncomfortable with the issue of cultural diversity, which was a big step in the right direction. When one sees one’s bias, it is difficult not to look at it critically. Thus Shawna appeared to have moved closer to my desired goal of not ignoring, but acknowledging, diversity.

Overall, there were fewer written responses to Chapter 7 by Laskey (2003), “To Stingo with Love: An Author's Perspective on Writing Outside one's Culture.” This could be due to the fact that the accusation of cultural thievery in Chapter 9 overshadowed the points made in Chapter 7, which basically concerned the same issues. This was my rationale for assigning these two chapters simultaneously. In my own teaching experience, I have found that people react differently to the same subject matter when it is presented in a different way by another author.

By Week 12, Jill, who had previously been somewhat static in her grasp of the material, showed tremendous growth in her understanding in contrast to her initial opinion in Week 3 when she had stated that “Finding multicultural literature isn’t that difficult.” Now she seemed more aware of the complexity of determining what is “authentic” literature, as reflected in the following journal entry: “Even with a list of ways to select authentic children’s multicultural literature, it can still be a difficult task that should not be taken lightly” (070411_J_02). She added:
My cooperating teacher used *Knots on a Counting Rope*. I have a really good relationship with my cooperating teacher and she knows that I am taking this multicultural literature course. I asked her if she minded if I told her what we just learned in class. She said she was very interested in hearing about the book because she really wanted to make sure she was using authentic books with kids. I told her that we learned that *Knots on a Counting Rope* was not authentic because a grandson would never speak to his grandfather that way in their culture – that according to that culture the boy would have been considered being ‘rude.’ I told her how we discussed in class that if you were going to use a book like that you should simply explain to the children why it was not authentic. (070411_J_02)

It is laudable that Jill could see the shortcomings of *Knots on a Counting Rope* when held to the criteria for authentic ML that we had established in class. She rightly caught a subtle problem with what disqualified this book from being an authentic representative of Native American culture. She pointed out in her journal entry above that a young Native American boy would know his place and never interrupt his elders while they are speaking. This was a good example that supported the point Seto (2003) made in Chapter 16 about how writing outside one’s culture can misinform.

Jill also demonstrated her understanding of proper use of ML when she commented in her journal that if a teacher uses inauthentic ML in class, she should at least point out the inaccurate cultural representations the book conveys, so as not to perpetuate stereotypes. Furthermore, Jill took what she had learned and applied it to a real classroom situation, which meant that the material I taught in EDU 525 reached teachers beyond those who took my class.

Shawna, too, demonstrated growth in Week 12. In her reflections on Chapter 19, “The Use of Spanish in Latino Children’s Literature in English: What Makes for Cultural Authenticity?” she wrote the following:
I think it is a step in the right direction when students can see connections and relationships among cultures. It is very possible that students in the dominant culture innocently believe that everything about their life is, for lack of a better term, American. It is important for them to process the fact that tortillas, tacos, and nachos are foods that were not originally eaten in America, but were brought to America by people from other countries. I feel that it is important that students realize that not everything Americans do or eat is American. Our day-to-day activities revolve around an overlapping of cultures. I think this is one of the most important aspects of using ML in classrooms -- so that students can see that cultures are different, but that cultures are related in many ways. (070411_CR_06)

Shawna’s reflection made me happy to see that she had realized her own presumption that European Americans are the “real Americans.” This was one of the main points I had wanted to impress upon my students. Shawna’s entry also indicated that she “got” what this class was about: using ML is at the heart of culturally responsive teaching. Shawna had this to say in her last entry in Week 15:

I feel that the biggest growth in my own personal opinion deals with the outsider versus insider authorship of a work. Before I took this class, I never even considered the issue about whether or not an outsider should write a book. When the issue was first mentioned in class, I was feeling that it didn’t matter who wrote the book. After a few more classes, my opinion was blurred. I was unsure of how I felt because I agreed with statements on both sides of the argument. Now that we are at the end of this semester, I realize how much I have learned and grown. Who writes a book is very important and is one of the first things you should look at and if it is a parallel author, the book is probably authentic. But sometimes people can write about a culture different than their own if they really research and check with that culture to make sure it’s authentic. Authenticity is one of the most important things to know if you’re going to use multicultural literature. I am proud of myself for reflecting on, and changing my opinion about, who should be able to write a story. (070502_MR_06)
Like Jill and Shawna, the other students in my class also seemed to have made shifts in their understanding of the insider/outsider perspective of the author in authentic ML. At the beginning of the semester, all of the participants had been at an Emergent Understanding, all admitting they knew little if anything about the insider/outsider perspective of authenticity. The terms “parallel-culture” and “cross-culture” authors were new to all of the participants. The chapter readings, providing opposing perspectives each week, placed most of them as Shawna described it, “on the fence” (070124_J_06). It had been my hope that these chapters would indeed provoke discomfort and force my students to think critically about their own perspective. As they became more aware of other means for determining authenticity, and as they gained experience reading a variety of authentic ML, they became more confident in their decisions about whom they determined could and could not write authentic multicultural literature.

“Multicultural Literature in the Real Classroom Setting” Assignment

As an additional method of helping the participants understand authenticity in multicultural literature, I designed the “ML in the real classroom setting” assignment, which required the students to be (though not necessarily teach) in a real classroom setting during Week 11. This assignment was useful to me as a formative assessment tool. I had already taught most of the concepts I planned for the students to learn, and had given them time to practice these skills with their peers in the classroom. Now it was time for them to practice these skills independently. I instructed the participants to list the titles of multicultural books found in the real classroom in which they were assisting, record the different cultures that were represented by this literature, and examine the
books for authenticity using the criteria we had learned. I also instructed them to ask the classroom teacher how and how often s/he used ML. Table 4.4 shows the results of that assignment.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classroom</th>
<th># of ML Books</th>
<th># of Cultures</th>
<th>Authentic ML</th>
<th>Frequency of Use</th>
<th>Ways Used</th>
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Table 4.4: Multicultural Literature in Real Classroom Settings
(Note: Student 9 dropped the course before this assignment was due)
By Week 11, I expected my students to be able to articulate why a particular book was or was not authentic in their opinion. I also wanted them to notice the availability of ML and be able to indicate how ML was being used in real classroom settings.

Examining their multicultural literature in the real classroom setting assignment revealed that, only 2 classrooms had 25 or more multicultural books, while 7 classrooms had none. However, this information may be inaccurate, since the majority of the participants reported a certain number of ML books in the rooms they visited, but did not provide the titles of those books. Therefore, it was difficult to know whether the literature they located was indeed authentic ML.

For instance, Sara (070411_ASN_01) listed 5 books she located in her classroom. She reported finding 2 non-fiction multicultural books and one multicultural poetry book. The other two books she identified as fictional multicultural were *The Sneetches and Other Stories* by Dr. Seuss (1961) and *Whoever You Are* by Mem Fox (2001). Sara’s booklist demonstrated that the definition of authenticity may not have been clear to her. While both of these titles can be classified as being about diversity, neither has the criterion to qualify it as authentic ML. Although Sara claimed that there were 3 other multicultural books in this classroom, she did not provide titles for these books, to help me determine whether she had made informed judgments about their authenticity. Given the evidence Sara provided, I would consider her to be in the Emergent Understanding stage on the Continuum of Understanding about authenticity. Sara’s confusion between diversity and cultural authenticity led me to rethink the criteria I would provide for my students next time I would teach the class.
Other participants exhibited that they were further along on the Continuum in their understandings of authenticity than Sara was. For example, I was interested in making my students aware of the scarcity of authentic ML used in K-12 classrooms. Therefore, I was pleased to read in my students’ journals that many of them got this point. The quote below from Molly’s journal shows her awareness of the paucity of authentic multicultural literature.

I looked at the books in a 3rd-grade classroom at Riverdale Elementary. Overall, I was surprised at the number of multicultural books that I found. Altogether, I came across forty-eight books that had something to do with a different culture. These were both picture and chapter books. However, not all of these were authentic or quality multicultural literature. For example, *The Rough Face Girl* [1998] was one of the books I came across and I remembered from class that this was not a culturally authentic book. (070411_ASN_13)

Molly’s surprise at finding more books than she expected demonstrated that she recalled the knowledge that, in most instances, there are fewer authentic multicultural books than other children’s literature. Further, Molly knew that Martin’s (1998) *The Rough Face Girl* was not considered authentic by some experts in Native American children’s literature (Seale & Slapin, 2005). However, to rate her response as New Understanding, I would have expected her to articulate additional information, such as this book was “not recommended” according to the Oyate website or in a reference book such as *A Broken Flute* (Seale & Slapin, 2005), rather than merely stating a fact she remembered from class. This does not establish that Molly did not have that information. Still, many of the other examples of authentic and not-authentic ML that she cited from her classroom’s
library demonstrated that she was moving from a Developing Understanding toward a New Understanding, which could mean that she did indeed have that knowledge. One such example follows:

In regard to the types of cultures represented in the books I examined in my teachers’ classroom, I found that the stories about the African American culture dominated. She had some excellent parallel author African American literature like Through My Eyes [1999]. There was no question about this book. What could be more authentic than Ruby Bridges telling her own story! She also had a book called Show Way [2005]. I was surprised to see that Jacqueline Woodson wrote children’s books, too! I found it hardest to judge chapter books because there are no pictures and only reading one or two pages doesn’t give you as much information as a picture book would. (070411_ASN_13)

This reflection provided evidence that Molly used the method of looking at the author of a book to determine authenticity. She recognized Woodson as an author who was featured in our textbook. Her mentioning the term “parallel author” indicated to me that she understood issues of insider/outsider in authorship. Her remark about Ruby Bridges telling her own story demonstrated that she recognized the book’s authenticity. She also did not attempt to judge the authenticity of the chapter books because she did not feel she could make an informed decision from a cursory overview of a book without actually reading it.

Unlike Sara, who did not understand the difference between books that talk about “diversity” and books that actually provide an authentic window into a particular culture, Dwayne seemed to understand the difference. This was evident in his journal entry:
My visit to my son’s preschool was disturbing to me. To my disbelief, there were very few books involving [other] cultures. In my search I was only able to find one authentic ML book in the classroom, Dr King’s, *I Have a Dream* [1997]. Many of the books they had were “how to” books and books like *Elmo’s Neighborhood* [2001]. (070411ASN_14)

Dwayne named other books that were authentic ML, as well as a number of books that “were on Oyate’s not-recommended list” (070411). Clearly, he was able to make the distinction between books about diversity, books that were multicultural, and books that were not authentic ML, and he was “disturbed” about the paucity of available authentic ML books. As this reflection shows, Dwayne did not only make an objective observation about the lack of authentic ML in his son’s preschool, but was upset over it. Perhaps the authenticity of ML in this particular classroom mattered more to him because, as a father, he had a personal connection to the situation. He went on to say:

> I know we talked in class about the fact that there is not nearly as much multicultural literature found in classrooms as regular children’s literature, but I thought for sure it was probably just the young age of the children that accounted for the lack of multicultural books in my son’s school, so I went and visited the 6, 7, and 8 year old classrooms; but again, nothing! (070411ASN_14)

The fact that Dwayne was able to distinguish between books that are about diversity and books that provide cultural information, as well as to recognize that these books are not readily available, places him a little farther than either Sara or Molly on the Continuum toward a new understanding about ML and authenticity. This understanding is credit to the efforts Dwayne made above and beyond the assignment, as he took further steps and
visited other classrooms to compare and corroborate his findings. Of course, it is any 
teacher’s dream to have a student take more responsibility for his learning than just meet 
the requirements for the course. It is rewarding when a student indicates that he “gets” 
what the class is about and carries the “exercise” to its logical conclusion—that is, 
something needs to be done differently if US classrooms are devoid of ML in today’s 
multicultural America.

I believe that the “ML in the real classroom setting” assignment was somewhat 
useful in assessing where the participants were in their knowledge and skills about 
recognizing authentic ML. However, I could not determine the accuracy of the 
information they gleaned from their classroom, since many participants were not careful 
to list the specific titles of the books they deemed “authentic.” Therefore, there was no 
way of knowing for sure whether the books they claimed were multicultural, were, in 
fact, authentic ML. Even when the information they provided was accurate, there was not 
enough evidence that they were making informed judgments.

If I gave this field assignment again, I would specifically require students to 
explain why a book was or was not authentic. Toward that end, I would have the 
participants work together in class to design a form for them to fill out with the required 
information, such as a list of the titles of the books and the authors’ names, and a brief 
justification for why they consider each book on their list to be authentic. In their group 
work before their field study, I would also ask the participants to develop interview 
questions for their classroom teachers regarding how often, and in what ways, they use 
multicultural literature.
Booklist Activity

My purpose for the Booklist Activity was to provide me with an assessment tool to assess my students’ ability to make informed choices in selecting authentic multicultural literature. Three times throughout the semester I instructed the participants to write a list of at least 5 multicultural books of which they had become aware outside the ones we used in class. I was also interested in knowing what criteria the participants used to determine the authenticity of the particular books on their lists, because this would help me identify which strategies they knew for determining the authenticity of ML. Therefore, I instructed the participants to also indicate the criteria they used to determine the authenticity of the books they included on their lists. Table 4.5 reveals the results of these booklists.
Table 4.5: Results of “Booklists of Authentic Multicultural Literature” Activity

Key:
“Criteria for Determining Authenticity”:
- a. No reason given
- b. Illustrations were authentic
- c. Book was located in the library of a real classroom setting
- d. Authentic characters, hero, story, etc. “Seemed real.”
- e. Knew the author as belonging to culture written about (parallel-culture author)
- f. Book was a culture-specific award winner
- g. Book was listed in a resource book or on a multicultural book list

* Several participants listed more than one criterion used for their selections, which explains why there were more “criteria” listed than there were participants.

** One participant dropped the course, which accounts for the discrepancy in total participants between the second and third booklists.
Table 4.5 is divided into three main columns. The first column shows the three booklist activities that are being represented. The second column shows the percentage of authentic ML selected by the participants and is subdivided into percentage increments. The third column is subdivided into sections that represent the seven criteria the participants used to determine the authenticity of their selections. The numbers in the table depict the number of participants whose lists met the particular criterion noted at the top of that column. For example, the row on the table for Booklist 1 shows that of all the books listed by 12 of the 14 participants, none were authentic multicultural literature, while less than half of the books listed by the other 2 participants were authentic ML. As an aside, 8 of the participants did not even attempt to write any titles, but commented that they were not familiar with any multicultural literature at that time.

The second part of the table shows the seven criteria the participants used to judge the authenticity of the book(s) they selected. These criteria, named in the “Criteria for Determining Authenticity” Key below the table, were accumulated over the three repetitions of this activity. Continuing the example in the row for Booklist 1, the first time the participants wrote their lists, 12 of them either did not respond to the part of the instructions that asked them to tell how they determined the authenticity of the book, or they simply wrote that they did not know what characteristics qualified their ML as authentic. Two of the participants wrote that they examined the illustrations in their books to determine authenticity.

When analyzing the results of the first Booklist Activity, it was apparent that all of the 14 participants scored an Emergent Understanding on the Continuum. This was not surprising, as all of the participants stated from the beginning that they had little to no
experience with multicultural literature. The score of one on the Continuum for all
students for the first Booklist Activity was the baseline from which to begin to track
shifts in the participants’ understanding of authenticity.

In Week 8, midway through the semester, I asked the participants to repeat the
Booklist Activity with the same instructions I had given them the first time we had
conducted the activity in Week 3. This time, the results were somewhat more promising.
Three of the participants did not list any books that were considered authentic, but the
majority of the other participants listed at least a few excellent choices. Furthermore, for
this second booklist activity, most participants listed more criteria they had used to
evidence that their selections were authentic. For example, five participants reported that
they made their selections because the illustrations were authentic. One of these
participants even reported beginning to “recognize the authenticity of illustrators like
Jerry Pinkney” (070228_J_08). Responses such as this demonstrated that some my
students were making shifts in their understanding on the Continuum.

Other responses, however, did not give such clear evidence in shifts of
understanding. For example, two participants stated that they listed their particular book
because they had either seen the book in a classroom or had used it in their teaching.
However, this does not guarantee in any way that the book was authentic multicultural
literature. Statements such as “the story seemed real” and “I could identify with the
characters,” the “dialogue sounded authentic” (070228_ASN_10), or the “story rang true”
(070228_ASN_02) indicated that at least nine of the participants seemed to recognize
Bishop’s (1997) philosophy that “you recognize authenticity when you see it.”
One participant mentioned seeing the title, *Giving Thanks* (Swamp, 1997), in a resource book she had used. Though there were still three participants who had not given reasons for selecting the books on their lists, and many participants were still not listing a high percentage of authentic ML books, they were all moving forward on the Continuum in the understanding. After I analyzed the students’ responses to the second Booklist Activity and noted their shifts in understanding, it became obvious that the participants were exhibiting a Developing Understanding of authenticity. The participants were listing more books than they had been in Week 3; however, they were still not offering support for their selections. After I analyzed these booklists, I wrote the following in my Reflective Research Journal:

From the results of the booklists, it was apparent that the students didn’t get the part about parallel-culture and cross-cultural authors. How could I have been more specific? I need evidence that they have internalized the knowledge about authenticity that I have been trying to get them to learn. I need to stress that they should look to see if the book has won any awards or if it if on a ML booklist that was compiled by an insider to the culture. But there I go again, back to the “telling” transmission model of teaching! A better idea than telling them these things would be to add a part to the activity in which I give them a few minutes to first, list all the ways that we have talked about to determine authenticity of ML, then have them write their lists and tell how they know it’s an authentic book. At least then I’ll have a better idea if they know about the criteria.

(07228_RRJ_00)

The fact that the participants did not list a criterion to support their selection on their booklist, is not indicative of whether or not they had knowledge of the Criterion Guidelines (Table 4.2) we had learned. A point to keep in mind, however, is that we too often focus on what we consider to be the “right” answer to demonstrate that our students...
understand a concept. For example, a student might list *Confessions of a Closet Catholic* (Littman, 2005) as authentic because the author is a parallel-culture author, while we are looking for him to respond that the book is authentic because it provides mirrors and windows into a particular culture. This student may be aware of this point but simply not mention it.

I realized that the students would not be referring to all of the criteria when they made their selection of an authentic multicultural book. Furthermore, I did not require that their selections had to meet all of the criteria simultaneously. However, if they had listed all the criteria they knew to use in selecting authentic ML, I might have better insight into their familiarity of the insider/outsider author issue.

My journal entry above conveys the hope I held that the participants might really know about cross-cultural and parallel-culture authors, but simply may need time to organize and focus their thoughts before writing. When I conducted the third and final Booklist Activity, I decided to give the participants more time to jot down what they knew before they launched the activity. This allowed me to see which criteria they remembered and which they were not using or were not aware of. This information was more useful, as it indicated where all my students were in their knowledge, and enabled me to better scaffold their learning.

The final booklist activity was administered during Week 14, the second last class of the semester, and the results were encouraging. Every participant was successful in listing at least some authentic ML titles. The ten participants whose lists fell into the “50 – 99%” authentic category, actually named authentic books with at least 90% accuracy. All participants listed multiple criteria for supporting that their book selections were
authentic. They did not simply make general statements such as “the illustrations were authentic”; rather, they clarified that the illustrations “were accurate and not stereotypical” (070425 ASN_11). They did not simply state that the characters “seemed authentic”; rather, they explained that the book was authentic because “the hero of the story was a member of the culture represented in the book” (070425 ASN_07). I was elated that every participant articulated that the authors of their books were “parallel-culture” or “cross-culture” authors, providing such renowned names as Virginia Hamilton, Walter Dean Myers, and Christopher Paul Curtis.

Besides a shift in understanding regarding authors and authenticity, the participants also named other tools they had learned about. For example, whereas the participants might have previously stated that they used book awards to help them determine authenticity, now they named culture-specific book awards such as the Sydney Taylor Book Award for Jewish literature, the Tomas Rivera Award for Latino literature, or the Coretta Scott King Award for African American literature, just to mention a few. Clearly, the majority of students demonstrated major shifts in understanding authenticity, and moved from an Emergent Understanding of authenticity well past Developing Understanding closer to the New Understanding segment of the Continuum.

Following the final Booklist Activity in Week 14, I entered the following thoughts into my Reflective Research Journal:

When I evaluated the results of this final booklist activity, it was clear that more participants were successful in creating booklists of authentic ML during the second time the activity was conducted than the first; and again, even more successful when they participated in the activity for the third time. Also, my analysis showed that my students are giving more reasons
to support their selections, which demonstrates that they really do remember the criteria to use when assessing the authenticity of ML.

Based on students’ reflective journals and my own reflective research journal, I concluded that Booklist Activity was a worthwhile assessment tool. It seemed to be useful in helping me analyze the participants’ understanding about what constitutes authentic multicultural literature. The Booklist Activity allowed me to see changes that occurred over time in the participants’ understanding of authenticity. It also gave me information I needed to make adjustments to the course as I went along by showing me what the students were learning and what they were struggling with. Therefore, I would definitely use it in future classes, with the added adjustment that I mentioned in my 070228_RRF_00 journal entry above.

From a self-study perspective, the Booklist Activity was useful as an assessment tool to help me determine what my students understood and what they still needed to know about authenticity. It was interesting to compare the results of this activity as conducted for this course, to the first time I taught EDU 525. The final booklists constructed by the participants in this study illustrated a much greater shift in the participants’ understanding of authenticity, than the booklists generated by my students the first time I taught the course. While students in the EDU 525 course I taught in 2006 during the pilot study included many books on their final lists that were clearly not considered to be authentic ML, all booklists submitted at the end 2007 Spring Semester contained very few examples of ML that were not authentic. One possible explanation is that I used the booklist activity for a different purpose during the current study. Whereas
in the first course I had my students write their beginning lists to assess what they knew about authentic ML and their final lists as an evaluation of the their knowledge about authenticity, for the current study I used the activity as an assessment tool to guide my instruction. In this context, the Booklist Activity could be considered an effective pedagogical tool.

*Pre- Post Survey*

In using a constructivist approach to teaching, it is important to keep students in their zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). Therefore, it is necessary to determine what they already know about a topic. On the first night of class, I conducted a pre survey to inform me about what students already knew about multicultural literature.

The first question of the pre survey asked the participants to give their definitions of multicultural literature. Table 4.6 shows the participants’ responses to the question, “What is multicultural literature?” The first row of the table lists some major concepts that were important for the students to learn. The first column lists the students by the numbers assigned to them. The one point all of the students stated was that ML is literature about different cultures. Jim’s response to the question, “What is multicultural literature?” illustrated that he already understood a couple of important points that I wanted them to learn about ML: “Multicultural literature is studying, reading, understanding, and most importantly enjoying/appreciating the literature of many different cultures, both familiar and unfamiliar” (070110_PPS_04).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Good literature</th>
<th>Main characters and heroes belong to culture written about</th>
<th>About different cultures</th>
<th>Lacks stereotypes</th>
<th>Written by parallel-authors</th>
<th>Not about European-American culture</th>
<th>Purposes for using Multicultural Literature</th>
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Table 4.6: Pre Survey Responses to Question #1: What is Multicultural Literature?

**Purposes for Using ML:**

a) provides information about traditions of a culture
b) provides “mirrors” for readers of the same culture and “windows” into cultures for readers outside the culture
c) provides an avenue into discussing sensitive topics
d) can be an approach to culturally responsive teaching
Jim and students with similar responses understood that one of the important qualities of any literature is its aesthetic quality. For multicultural literature to be authentic, it must first be good literature. Jim also mentioned the importance of “studying” and “understanding” the literature. He realized a point that eluded me the first time I taught the course: It is not enough to merely be exposed to multicultural literature; it is necessary to examine ML using specific criteria that establishes it as “authentic.”

In their definitions of multicultural literature, three participants mentioned that ML should be void of stereotypes. Recognizing stereotypes in literature is one critical component in determining authenticity – one that all students needed to understand. Table 4.6 indicates that only one student understood that literature about European Americans should not be included in the multicultural canon. It further illustrates that the participants did not appear to have knowledge about parallel-culture authors, nor an understanding that the heroes and main characters in a story should be members of the culture the story is written about. These were all important points I needed to include in my lesson plans in order to meet my goals for the course.

Comparing the results of the pre- and post surveys (see Tables 4.6 and 4.7) provided evidence that the students made shifts in their understandings of multicultural literature. By the end of the course, every student could state the purposes for using multicultural literature.
Table 4.7: Post Survey Responses to Question #1: What is Multicultural Literature?
(Note: Student 9 dropped the course before the post survey was administered)

Purposes for Using ML:

a) provides information about traditions of a culture
b) provides “mirrors” for readers of the same culture and “windows” into cultures for readers outside the culture
c) provides an avenue into discussing sensitive topics
d) can be an approach to culturally responsive teaching
Table 4.6 indicated that every student could articulate that the author of multicultural literature is critical to its authenticity. Most participants appeared to realize that in authentic ML the main characters and heroes belong to the culture about which the story was written. The pre- and post surveys suggested the possibility that these claims can be made; however, it was necessary to examine other data for corroborative evidence to support these assumptions as well as to examine the effectiveness of pedagogy used to teach these concepts.

I looked at the Continuums for Cassidy, Jill, and Nikki since I had identified them as displaying the least understanding about authenticity at the beginning of the semester. I looked at all of their journal reflections over time and noted all of the criteria they had used in reporting on authentic multicultural literature.

One of the more prominent findings that these data revealed was that students’ shifts toward new understandings in authenticity occurred at different rates and through different means—i.e., a variety of assignments and class activities. For example, while all three participants began the semester scoring a 1 for Emergent Understanding, Cassidy (C) and Jill (J) both scored a 4+ on the Continuum (see Figure 4.3) by the end of the semester. They both regularly used 4 or 5 criteria to determine the authenticity of the books they read. They also gave thorough descriptions of what these criteria meant. For example, one of Jill’s reflections stated the following about authenticity:

At first, I thought nothing of authenticity. I didn’t even know what it was. Then I went through a stage when I couldn’t make up my mind who could write authentic ML. Now, I think both parallel authors and cross-cultural (if they do enough research) can write authentic books. But there are just so many other things to think about when trying to figure out if a book is
authentic. It’s really very complex, but we have learned so many ways to help us. I can’t believe how much more I know about ML now than I did before! (070411_J_02)

In earlier entries, Jill had described all of the criteria on the Guidelines Chart thoroughly and accurately and it was obvious that she understood them all. Cassidy, too, wrote thorough and accurate descriptions of the criteria she used. She talked about the “insider/outsider author perspective,” her new “familiarity with book awards,” and described herself as “feeling much more professional” in her knowledge of authenticity (070321_J_10). Cassidy, too, discussed all of the criteria on the Guidelines Chart and showed an extensive shift in her understanding of authenticity. Nikki, on the other hand, did not make such significant gains. She made statements like “my position has not changed all that much” (070207_J_05) and “I have a problem understanding why some books are not considered authentic” (070221_J_05). She did state that her “ideas and thoughts about what ML is have really changed” and that she now had “a greater understanding of what to look for”; however, she offered no explanation for what changes took place and what her new understanding was. The compilation of Nikki’s (N) scores on the Continuum (see Figure 4.3) over the semester earned her a score of 2. It is not conclusive that Nikki had not developed a new understanding about authenticity, but she gave no evidence to support her claims.
Summary

In teaching my students how to recognize and select “authentic” multicultural literature I had specific goals in mind. I wanted to teach the participants what ML is and cultivate a caring disposition toward using the ML they select in culturally responsive ways. Furthermore, I wanted them to make informed and reflective choices in selecting “authentic” multicultural literature. To accomplish this, I demonstrated a variety of criteria for detecting what makes multicultural literature “authentic.” I also wanted my students to understand the importance of knowing something about the authors’ background and culture, and that reading extensively authentic ML written by parallel-culture authors was important to model what authentic ML “looks like.” Additionally, I wanted my students to be able to determine whether a book provided mirrors and windows into a particular culture and whether it promoted cultural understanding. I also wanted them to pay attention to “culture-specific awards” and reference books available for ensuring selection of authentic multicultural literature. Finally, I wanted them to arrive at a comfort level with their understanding of authentic ML and trust their own instinct in making selections. The data demonstrate that the assignments, chapter book...
readings, and activities that I used to teach about authentic ML did impact the participants’ learning of selecting and recognizing authentic multicultural literature.

Reflection

This section answers my third sub-question: How can I encourage teachers and teacher candidates to become reflective practitioners? Reflection is a multi-faceted concept with implications for both the participants and the researcher, and given several important factors, it was logical to make reflection a central element of this study. Reflection is espoused in teacher education as a critical component, both for teacher educators and teacher candidates. From the perspective of teacher educators, reflection was a significant component of self-study and improving practice. From the standpoint of the participants, it was a critical element of becoming “highly qualified” as well as a necessary part of culturally responsive teaching. Furthermore, reflection was an area of MMC’s teacher education program that needed to be strengthened.

NCATE states that the conceptual framework of an institution is supposed to reflect a “commitment to diversity and the preparation of educators who help all students learn” (NCATE, p. 14). To ameliorate MMC’s conceptual framework, and given the fact that NCATE found the absence of diversity to be a factor in its evaluation, it was also necessary to show teachers and teacher candidates that reflection should include planning for diversity as a component of CRT. Therefore, I added diversity to MMC’s existing conceptual framework logo. The new logo (Figure 4.4) is my attempt at adding the visual representation of reflecting on diversity as a major component of MMC’s conceptual framework.
This new logo maintains the original premise of the conceptual framework that the theory / practice / reflection (TPR) cycle is part of MMC’s constructivist philosophy of teaching and learning; however, it adds the idea that these elements are all components of a program that espouses equity and diversity as part of culturally responsive teaching built on the same constructivist frame. The following entry from my own reflective research journal conveys my thoughts about reflection as it related to the conceptual framework of MMC’s teacher education program:

Although reflection is expected as part of the requirements for all education courses, it is not explicitly “taught.” Well, I guess the students are taught that reflection is a part of the theory / practice / reflection cycle of our conceptual framework, but the idea of reflection is presented to them as a journal assignment. No one explains to them about how important it is to become a reflective practitioner, that being a reflective practitioner is one of the criteria for being culturally responsive as well as being considered “highly qualified.” The students complain about their journals being a “time-consuming” and “useless” assignment. And actually, in the way they have been required to reflect, they are not entirely wrong! They think of reflection as merely looking back at their
lessons after they have taught them to see if they can think of anything they would do differently. They don’t think about reflection in the way Dewey (1916/1944) and Schön (1983) require to become reflective practitioners. (070207_RRJ_00)

Dewey (1916/1944) required responsibility, open-mindedness, and whole-heartedness when reflecting. Schön (1983), who based his work on Dewey’s philosophy, defined a “reflective practitioner” as one who practices those qualities “in action.” I adopted their stance in my own teaching, expecting my students to reflect in action, during a lesson, in addition to looking back at their lessons to make any necessary changes for the next time they would be teaching the same class. However, it was a challenge to apply this new way of thinking about reflection.

As I stated in the above reflective journal entry, reflection is, in my students’ own words, a “time-consuming” and “useless” assignment. In the required education courses at MMC, each student was expected to submit a “journal entry” to fulfill the “reflection” aspect of the conceptual framework. However, the problem with that was the definition of reflection espoused by professors and students alike. Firstly, in all of the syllabi of all professors, this reflection was termed “journal entry.” For example, the reflection assignment for EDU 525, Multicultural Literature, in the Summer of 2006, was written on my syllabus as follows:

**Response Journal:** Maintain a weekly journal with entries for each day of class. You can reflect on your personal reactions to content covered in your assigned text readings and/or class discussions. You can also share a personal reaction to the assigned literature. I am NOT looking for a
summary of the stories, but rather a personal reaction you felt as a result of reading the stories. The length of the journal responses will vary, and should be appropriate to the subject matter.

In reflecting on my purpose for this assignment, I realized that this description did not convey the message I intended. I was asking for a “response” and expecting a “reflection.” I needed to change this description so it aligned with my expectations. Therefore, for the EDU 525 class for Spring of 2007, I modified this description along Dewey (1916/1944) and Schön’s (1983) recommendations for reflection. The revised description follows, which is the version I included in my syllabus:

**Reflective Journal:** Maintain a *reflective* journal with entries for each week of class. These entries should reflect a personal response to: the theme, characters, etc. of the assigned novel and/or self-selected literature; reactions to class discussions or professional readings, considering such topics as the theoretical perspectives discussed in class, etc. Reflective writing enables the documentation of experiences, thoughts, questions, ideas and conclusions that signify part of becoming reflective practitioners. Keeping a journal is of limited value if you just *record activities* you have done. To gain the full benefit, you need to *reflect on* what has taken place. Some areas to include (a) Focus on the experience and think " aloud" in your writing (b) Focus on a critical incident that took place in class (c) Take stock of your learning (what's the most important thing I learned today, what surprised you? Etc.). The length of the journal reflections will vary, and should be appropriate to the subject matter and your depth of analysis.

In this revised description, I changed the name of the assignment from “response journal” to “reflective journal,” and added details to point out that merely “recording activities” in a journal is not synonymous to “reflecting.” It had been my contention that through writing the required reflective assignments for this course, the participants would
gain a more critical understanding of what it means to reflect. I wanted them to change their thinking about journals being a “waste of time” and just another assignment. Moreover, I did not want them to think of reflection as an assignment at all; but rather, I wanted them to view it as a necessary part of their pedagogical practice, and as such, a characteristic of a “reflective practitioner” (Schön, 1983). I wanted them to understand that reflection is more than looking back and responding to what you did. Rather, reflection requires the ability to think “in action” (Schön, 1983) and make on-the-spot adjustments in teaching to meet the learners’ needs. The complexity of teaching calls for educators to have this kind of adaptive expertise (Bransford et al., 2005).

However, as some scholars (LaBoskey, 1993; Pajares, 1992; Schulte, 2005) claim, teachers and teacher candidates do not enter their education programs as blank slates. They enter, instead, with preconceived notions about what it means to teach and learn and reflect; and once formed, assumptions are difficult to change (Bullough & Gitlin, 2001; Schulte, 2005). Having prior knowledge of MMC’s expectations for reflection was a deterrent to having the participants reflect according to the definition of reflection espoused by Schön (1983). An added deterrent to understanding a deeper meaning of reflection is explained by Latta and Buck (2006): unless prior assumptions are acknowledged, learning is inhibited. Reflection is important to this process of recognizing and examining preconceived notions, both in regard to the content of the course, and the participants’ ability to become reflective practitioners.

Reflection was also important for me, as the researcher, from the perspective of self-study. My expectations were that by the end of the course, all the participants would understand what it means to be a reflective practitioner. The reflective practices that I
included in EDU 525 included my own reflective research journal, students’ reflective journals, and students’ meta-reflections. These were the sources of data I examined to look for shifts in the participants’ understanding of the act of reflection itself, as well as for evidence of their actually becoming reflective practitioners.

**Reflective Journals**

I have established the rationale for wanting to help my students use reflection in EDU 525. I required reflective journaling as a pedagogical strategy through which both the participants and I, as researcher, could evidence shifts in learning and understanding, not only in the major content areas of the course, but also in the act of reflection itself. To explore shifts in our understandings about reflection, I examined the participants’ reflective journals and my own reflective research journal, chronologically, taking into account the pedagogical moves that I interjected in order to guide my students toward more critical and thoughtful reflections. In an effort to elicit more reflective responses in the participants’ reflective journals, I attempted a number of pedagogical strategies that were recommended for encouraging students to become more reflective. One strategy I employed, for example, was that I interjected comments and asked probing questions on their journal entries where I deemed them to be appropriate, before returning the journals to the participants the next week. Scholars (Brookfield, 1995; Freese, 2006; Werderich, 2006) suggest that this “dialogue” between teacher educators and their students in reflective journals is an effective strategy for improving reflection.
One of the methods I used to examine these journal entries for shifts in reflection was to look for evidence in the participants’ journals that demonstrated “reflection.” Table 4.8 shows words and phrases taken directly from the participants’ journals written during the first four weeks of class and the comments I jotted down at the time.

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Vocabulary from Journals</th>
<th>Memo</th>
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| 1    | • “surprised to discover”  
• “shocked to find out”  
• “knew nothing about” | The similarity of the language of the participants in their first journal entries was striking. I coded these as LBM (light bulb moments) because the pattern seemed to be that of hearing unfamiliar information that had an impact on their thinking. That was to be expected, given that none of them had prior knowledge of ML or CRT. |
| 2    | • “didn’t realize”  
• “a lot to think about” | These reflections were similar in “depth” to the reflections from Week 1. This was as “deep” as their reflections got. Again, this was not surprising when taking into consideration that the students were being confronted with a new perspective. |
| 3    | • “really got me thinking”  
• “am gaining knowledge”  
• “starting to understand”  
• “would like to know more” | It seems that they are gaining knowledge, but they do not really say “what” they’re beginning to understand or “why” they want to know more about it. This is still pretty emergent understanding. |
| 4    | • “never thought about it that way”  
• “first time I ever thought about it like that”  
• “was one of those ‘wow’ moments” | Not much change from last week. Still no particulars that provide evidence of growth. They are talking more about the “what” but still not including the “why.” I need to revisit reflection in class and make my expectations for reflection more clear and explicit. |

Table 4.8: Reflection Journals Before Direct Instruction
Evidence gleaned from these data in Table 4.8 reveals that the depth of reflection in the participants’ journals for the first four class sessions was general and superficial; it was interesting to note the similarity in the participants’ responses. In their journal entries during the first two weeks of class, all 14 participants used words like “surprised,” “shocked,” and “knew nothing,” which demonstrated that the information they heard about multicultural literature was new and made a considerable impression on them. They gave the impression of newness and wonder, which I labeled “Emergent Understanding.” Their responses, moreover, did not indicate that they had any questions that they would like to have answered, or that they desired to learn more about the topic.

In Week 3, the students’ reflections implied that the information they had read or discussed in class “got them thinking”; however, they did not elaborate what their thinking was before the intervening idea, i.e, the article or the class discussion; nor did they report on how their thinking had changed as a result of that particular intervention. This was the first time that any of the participants had indicated that they wanted to learn more about ML; but again, they failed to articulate why they wanted to learn more.

Some of the language used by the participants in their Week 4 journal reflections indicated that their thinking had somewhat broadened, and that they now were examining information from different perspectives. For example, Molly’s statement, “that was one of those ‘wow’ moments” (070131_J_13), suggested that she had a new realization about the topic, or was viewing it from a perspective she had not previously considered. In another example, Shawna said she “never thought about it that way,” (070131_J_06) indicating that she had prior knowledge of the topic, but was now examining it from a different viewpoint.
These and similar reflections by other students demonstrated that they did not make much of a shift in their understanding by Week 3. That is, none of the participants used language that suggested they were making connections between what they learned about authentic ML, and what that knowledge meant for them as teachers. They did not use higher-level thinking by asking why or how. They merely reiterated facts about different strategies they had learned to use when checking for authenticity in ML, without demonstrating that they could actually apply the new strategy to the real work of identifying authentic multicultural literature. There was a noticeable absence of what this information meant for them as teachers and what their thinking was about the elements they discussed. Since one of the goals of this course was for the participants to learn about ML so they could use it in their classrooms, their lack of application of ML’s use in their future classrooms was disappointing. Although the lack of such responses did not definitively indicate that they did not have knowledge about ML or other topics of discussion, it did demonstrate that they needed to improve their abilities to reflect.

My hope had been to model for my students the kinds of responses that I considered to be “reflective,” as defined by Schön (1983). One way I attempted to accomplish this was through writing responses on their reflective entries. My comments, however, did not seem to have a significant impact on the depth of the participants’ reflections. None of the participants responded to my comments, and through examining their journal responses each week, I determined that their understanding of reflection seemed to remain static over the first four weeks of class. The respondents’ language remained unchanged; there was no evidence that their knowledge about reflection had
changed. In my own reflections about this process, I wrote the following in my reflective research journal:

Hamilton & Pinnegar (2000) says, if we were trustworthy, we “would use the methods and strategies we wanted [teachers and teacher candidates] to use with their students” (p. 238). I have been really trying to do that this time around by using constructivist activities and avoiding lectures. Sometimes, however, direct instruction is necessary. This is the first week I actually talked to my students about reflection since we had discussed the journal assignment on the first night of class. Reflection is a huge part of this course and a crucial part of what you need do in your teaching, and they just haven’t been “getting it” up to now. So, I need to instruct the participants to think about what good reflection looks like, how reflection fits into constructivism, how it fits into the TPR cycle, and think about the different reasons to journal. I need to be systematic and intentional in making my points about journaling; I think I should do a PPT presentation. (070131_RRJ_00)

My journal reflection indicated that, in attempting to practice what I preached, I intended to teach in more constructivist ways in the EDU 525 course that I taught for this study in the Spring semester of 2007, than I had when I taught the course for the first time during the summer session of 2006. My reflection also conveyed my disappointment that despite my attempts to improve my teaching, the participants were not “learning” according to my expectations. I needed them to gain a better understanding of what it means to be a reflective practitioner; however, my attempts at helping them understand this by making marginal comments on their reflections did not seem to be working.

Up to this point I had intentionally avoided using PowerPoint presentations in my teaching. I had used PowerPoint presentations as part of every class session the first time I taught EDU 525, to “teach” all the important techniques I wanted my students to use
when selecting authentic multicultural literature. However, considering that the final course evaluations from the first time I taught the course indicated that the students did not apply these techniques when they were making selections on their own, I surmised that the PowerPoint presentations had been ineffective in helping them make informed selections when choosing ML to use in their classrooms. Therefore, in teaching this course the second time, I was determined to use more constructivist methods.

*Direct Instruction*

After examining the participants’ journal entries, however, and noticing a lack of the type of reflection I was hoping to observe, I decided that direct instruction was necessary. I needed to make my expectations for reflection explicit. I therefore provided some direct instruction on reflection. In Week 4 of class, I engaged the participants in a conversation about their understanding of the theory / practice / reflection (TPR) cycle that was part of MMC’s conceptual framework. The participants shared that “journaling” was an assignment in every required education course in the teacher education program at MMC. When I asked them to tell me what they knew about reflection, they assured me that they had experienced much practice in reflecting and did not need any further clarification. However, just the fact that they referred to it as “journaling,” even though I referred to it as “reflective journaling,” demonstrated that they held prior assumptions about the assignment.

When pressed for clarification, they explained that for every day they taught in their field placements, they were required to write a journal entry telling of incidents in their classroom practice that connected in some way to the theory they had learned in
their MMC courses. Additionally, they were required to describe what went well in their teaching and how they might change their lesson to make it better the next time they taught it. Having been an instructor in MMC’s education department, I was familiar with MMC’s definition of and expectations for student reflection. I told the participants that they had clearly explained the theory / practice / reflection (TPR) cycle and that it was, indeed, part of what it means to reflect. I explained, further, that in this course we would be expanding our definition of reflection to include Schön’s (1983) notion of becoming reflective practitioners in action.

In explaining what is necessary to become a reflective practitioner, I wanted to make certain that the participants understood that reflection is more than reviewing completed lessons to determine strengths and weaknesses and identifying areas in their teaching that they would address in future lessons. Reflection was required to be a part of who they were as teachers, to permeate every aspect of their teaching, not after they taught a lesson, but rather while they were teaching it. To help them understand the importance of reflection in education and give evidence of that importance, I provided references (Bullough & Gitlin, 2001; Dewey, 1916/1944; Schön, 1983; Trigwell, Martin & Prosser, 1999), I listed the benefits of journaling to offer an incentive, and posed practical ideas to help them begin writing reflectively. In trying to make the lesson seem like less of a transmission model, I made certain that the PowerPoint presentation I prepared for this class session was succinct, and included opportunities for the participants to discuss in pairs, and in a whole group, the information that I presented.

In addition to providing more information about reflection to the students, I also needed to devise a more objective method of evaluating their reflective journals.
Therefore, I compiled a list of criteria (Table 4.9) that I considered important to reflection, and that I would be looking for in the reflective journals. This list was an accumulation of reflection criteria that I had gathered over time while attempting to improve my own reflection, as well as to assess my students’ reflections. The ideas in the list were garnered from the works of Dewey (1916/1944), Schönc (1983), and others (Brookfield, 1995; Freese, 2006; Hutchinson, 1998). The list follows:
Documents experiences, thoughts, questions, ideas, and conclusions that signify part of becoming a reflective practitioner (text, self, world connections)

Demonstrates responsibility, whole-heartedness, & open-mindedness;

Demonstrates changing perceptions – not static (admits prior assumptions)

Seeks to understand concepts by considering multiple perspectives

Uses higher level thinking skills (tells why & how) to make clear connections between what is learned and personal experiences

Gives more detail explaining ideas; may include a reference

Makes some connections between theory, practice, and reflection

Makes a general connection between readings, discussion, etc. & personal experiences

Makes minimal connections between self and what is learned in class; static assumptions

Presents concepts learned; uses vocabulary linked to topic / discussion; gives no indication of examining prior assumptions

Table 4.9: The Reflection Criteria List
I wanted to evaluate the students’ reflections using these criteria to help me place the participants on the Continuum of Shifts in Understanding so that I could observe movement that indicated a shift in their understanding. My thought was that the more of these criteria the students applied to their reflective journal entries, the more reflective their entries would be. To make this process more objective, I created a Reflection Rubric (Table 4.10) to help me examine the journal entries more systematically and to track shifts in the participants’ reflections over time. The rubric follows:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>REFLECTION RUBRIC</th>
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<tr>
<td>New Understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 Complete, reflective, well-written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>response; 9-10 criteria present with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>evidence of understanding and application</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Developing Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Very good response; 7-8 criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present with evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Good, acceptable response; 5-6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>criteria present with supporting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Fair response; 3-4 criteria present</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>without support; some missing elements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Beginning attempt; 1-2 criteria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>present; major components missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0 Not submitted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 4.10: The Reflection Rubric

For example, if a participant’s reflective journal entry exhibited that s/he used only 1 or 2 of the criteria listed in Table 4.9, I scored the entry as a 1, which indicated that this participant had an Emergent Understanding of reflection.

I was optimistic that I would see improvement in the participants’ reflective journals from this point forward. During the next 4 weeks of EDU 525, I continued to
write probing questions on the participants’ journal entries to guide their thinking toward more critical reflections. Now I also had additional tools to help me in examining the data. I had the TPR cycle of MMC’s conceptual framework; I had the Reflection Criteria List (Table 4.9); and I had the list of words and phrases that I had highlighted in the participants’ reflective journals that I critiqued using the Reflection Criteria List (Table 4.9). For example, the words “have a different view” (070207_DB_08) highlighted in Vivian’s journal entry, implied a “changing perception” on the criteria list (Table 4.9). Table 4.11 displays the words and phrases I highlighted in the participants’ reflective journal entries written between Weeks 5 and 10 (Week 6 was cancelled due to inclement weather).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Vocabulary from journals</th>
<th>Memo</th>
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</table>
| 5    | • “I am trying to make some sense of”  
     • “I thought about it some more”  
     • “I still need to learn more”  
     • “has opened my eyes”  
     • “is a new term for me” | There remains some of the emergent language in their responses, but words like “more” may suggest they are digging a little deeper. Perhaps some of the comments that I made on their journals caused them to be a little more thoughtful in their reflections. Or the PPT and journaling website I shared could have made a difference. |
| 6    | **Weather Cancellation** | |
| 7    | • “difficult to understand”  
     • “I am upset”  
     • “got to hear others’ ideas”  
     • “learned from others”  
     • “really made me think” | What strikes me most here are the references to multiple perspectives. They are not saying that it is important to hear other perspectives; but they are at least acknowledging that they learned from others. Several students mentioned the word “difficult.” |
| 8    | • “will have my students reflect”  
     • “started conversations about teaching in our group”  
     • “responsibility of the teacher”  
     • “will try to incorporate this in my teaching” | It is encouraging that they are making connections to their work as teachers. One of my goals is to model effective strategies that they can use in their own teaching. It sounds like they’re getting it. |
| 9    | • “made me think outside the box”  
     • “am gaining helpful knowledge”  
     • “realize more and more”  
     • “uncomfortable” | Interesting – in earlier weeks they talked about being “comfortable” and now they are saying they are “uncomfortable.” What’s that all about? |
| 10   | • “am becoming more knowledgeable”  
     • “opened my mind”  
     • “have a different view” | The “have a different view” comment shows that there was a definite shift in perspective. |

Table 4.11: Reflective Language, Weeks 5 - 10
I examined the participants’ reflective journals chronologically to determine whether comments they made in their reflective journals evinced a shift in their understanding of reflection. In the participants’ reflections from Week 5, I had highlighted phrases such as “trying to make more sense of,” “thought about it more,” “still need to learn more about.” The reflections for this week were still somewhat superficial, but the word “more” in many of the participants’ entries suggested that they had already gained some knowledge of the topic and that they were at least attempting to gain additional information. They had made a general connection between their reading and their own learning.

At this point in time, the majority of the participants were still “reflecting” in the manner that they had reflected since the beginning of the semester, i.e., simply reiterating facts from their readings or in connection to class discussion, but offering little or no evidence that they were making shifts in their reflections. Addison’s reflection that follows is a response that is characteristic of the majority of the reflections I read in Week 5:

Today in class we made a list of ways to select authentic multicultural literature. Some of the important topics on the list were the author and illustrator, any awards the book has, the criteria lists, and last yet still very important is instinct. (070207_J_07)

I selected Addison’s reflection to feature here because it was representative of the typical response in Week 5. Addison, like most of the students, reiterated the criteria about selecting authentic ML that we had discussed during class; however, she did not
attempt to explain why her selections were important. For example, clarification that parallel-culture authors are more likely to capture an emic perspective of his or her characters, or an explanation of how and why using instinct can be critical in making selections of authentic ML that would best represent the diversity in classrooms would have clearly indicated a more thorough reflection. In examining Addison’s journal entry using the list of reflection criteria that I had complied (Table 4.9), I saw that most of the criteria were missing from her entry. She remained in the Emergent Understanding category of the Continuum scoring a 1 on the Continuum of Shifts in Understanding.

In using the Reflection Rubric (Table 4.10) to score all the participants’ reflections, I determined that 7 participants were still exhibiting an Emergent Understanding, having applied one or two of the criteria (Table 4.9) in their reflections. In comparison, 5 participants were in the beginning stages of the Developing Understanding category. Reflections by these students demonstrated their use of 3 or 4 Reflection Criteria. Finally, 2 participants used 5 of the criteria in their reflections, demonstrating that they were further along the Continuum in Developing Understanding about reflection. Their placement on the Continuum was also influenced by their personal experiences and cultural background that they brought to the classroom, so that they internalized the information differently. Figure 4.5 shows a class composite of where all of the participants stood on the Continuum in their understanding of reflection at this time.
Shift in My Own Reflection

It was while reflecting so intently on why my students were not reflecting in the manner I had expected, and how I was going to teach them more about reflecting, that I realized that my reflections were not up to my own standards. I examined all of the journal entries I had made thus far and found that my own reflections did not use the criteria I expected my students to use.

Okay, tonight I am going to try journaling the way I told my students to journal. I told them to “hunt out assumptions and critically examine them. I have to admit that there are times when I still struggle with the “books to avoid” list on Oyate. Could all Indians really feel that all those books are stereotypical or inaccurate? I’m sure there are inaccuracies in all literature. After all, a book is written from one person’s perspective and I’m sure that not every person of the culture would agree with every word. I talked to my students tonight about hunting out assumptions and challenging those assumptions. I wonder how honestly they do that, when I have trouble myself even after all the studying I have done and all the soul searching I have done about ML. (070207_RRJ_00)

In this entry, I admitted that my “journaling” was not meeting my own expectations. I mentioned that I expected my students to examine their assumptions concerning the topic on which they wrote, and I made a commitment to practice what I preached. I admitted
struggling to accept the criticisms of certain books on the Oyate website, even though I
told my students that this was one way to assure that the books one selects are authentic. I
felt hypocritical for saying one thing while believing another, and admitted how difficult
it really is to be honest in challenging one’s own assumptions.

I saw that this entry demonstrated a shift in my own reflections. Whereas in
earlier journal entries I was keeping lists of things to do and ideas about how to make
sure my students were learning, in this journal, I actually examined my own reflexivity
for the first time. I attributed that to awakening my own realization of my own
shortcomings through teaching my students about reflection. This, in my opinion, gives
credence to the constructivist notion that we learn through teaching.

I just had the greatest conversation with Sam about reflection. He made
the comment trying to teach students to reflect is like leading students to
water – you can lead them there, but you can’t make them drink. I’ve
heard that adage many times, but today it hit me like a ton of bricks! I
believe there has to be a way. If there’s not a way, then why bother to
teach? I am now more interested than ever in learning more about
reflection. It’s kind of like the Maxine Green thing: you have to know
yourself before you can know anyone else. I think you have to know how
to reflect yourself, before you can help others reflect. You can’t teach
something you don’t know well – or at least are learning well!
(070209_RRJ_00)

This was an epiphany for me. I had been trying to teach my students to do
something I had never really been taught how to do myself. Just as I had been given
assignments to reflect without ever having had instruction, I expected my students to
reflect without teaching them what it means to be reflective. Even at the beginning of this
dissertation when I claimed to be keeping a “reflective research journal,” in reality I
238
wrote only once a week following my class. In examining some of these early entries, I discovered that they were more like random thoughts and lists of things to do than reflections. An important finding was that not only did my students need help in learning to become reflective practitioners – but so did I.

Week 6 was cancelled due to inclement weather. Week 7, as we launched the second half of the course, was the first time any of the participants referred to the idea of their thinking being influenced by the perspectives of others. Comments such as “got to hear others’ ideas,” and “hearing others really made me think,” demonstrated that some of the participants acknowledged that at least part of their learning was attributed to hearing the perspectives of their classmates. Considering the perspectives of others was one of the criteria I used to help me determine the depth of reflection. I found it encouraging that the students were indeed considering viewpoints other than their own. Another interesting word that recurred in Week 7’s reflections was the word “difficult.” This implied that the students were once again in a state of disequilibrium. Both the idea that the students were beginning to acknowledge the perspectives of others, and the fact that they were finding things difficult were signs of social-constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978).

In Week 8, some of the participants demonstrated yet another criterion that suggested reflexivity; i.e., they began to make connections between their reflections and their practice as teachers. For example, Jill mentioned that having students reflect is an “important responsibility of the teacher” (070228_J_02). Moreover, Cassidy added that she would “definitely try to incorporate reflection” (070228_J_10) into her classroom. Clearly, both of these participants made connections between the importance of reflection
and their future work as teachers. One of my goals for this study was to model teaching strategies and techniques that I deemed important for the participants to use in their own classrooms. The reflections of these participants demonstrated that they did, indeed, make that link. Overall, however, the majority of the participants were still using only about half of the criteria (Table 4.9) in their reflections.

In Week 8, Addison wrote a reflection about an activity that I had conducted, to give the participants an opportunity to hear others’ perspectives and compare those perspectives to their own points of view. I gave each student a 5X8 index card at the beginning of class and told them to jot down anything they wanted to remember during class. I suggested that it might be something that surprised them, something they found interesting, something they disagreed with, and so forth. At the end of class, I had them work in pairs and discuss one of the points they had written on their card. Addison had this to say about the activity:

I also really like how you have been having us write down something that catches us on a note card and then discuss it. It's funny to see how often we all write down similar things that strike us. It’s also interesting how we can write down the same things and have such different opinions about it. It really makes you stop and think if your opinion is right. This is a good way that we could have our students reflect, too. 070228_J_07

Addison’s reflection demonstrated that she appreciated knowing that she and others often found the same ideas to be interesting. She also realized that even though they had a common interest, they may still hold different perspectives on the idea. Further, she commented that hearing the perspectives of others could sometimes cause one to question
their own assumptions. She considered this activity to be a form of reflection, and saw possibilities for applying this reflective activity in her future classroom. This showed a clear shift on the Continuum toward a more developed understanding of reflection.

The class did not meet for the next two weeks because of MMC’s Spring Break. In Week 9, Addison’s reflective journal entry demonstrated a further shift in her understanding about reflection. In the initial portion of her entry she echoed Dewey’s (1916/1944) recommendation:

I’m going to focus the next part of my journal on the topic of reflection. Reflection is part of being a good practitioner. There are 3 characteristics to keep in mind when actively reflecting—open-mindedness, responsibility, and whole-heartedness. (070321_J_07)

This type of response is reminiscent of the type of responses most participants had submitted in their journals thus far. They reiterated salient points from the readings or from my class instruction; however, they failed to demonstrate more thoughtful reflections that discuss the “how” and “why” of their responses or that made text-to-self connections. The next portion of Addison’s entry, however, made apparent a shift in her understanding of reflection:

Being open-minded means to take into account others’ perspectives and viewpoints. Oftentimes I lack this characteristic when I reflect and I only talk about my side of the story or the way I view things. Being responsible means that I am responsible for actively reflecting and I am responsible for the words that I write and the things that I say or lack to say. Lastly, is whole-heartedness, which I am struggling to understand. To me
whole-heartedness means giving it your all and doing the best that you can; trying to capture all viewpoints and truly digging deep down within yourself. (070321_J_07)

It is clear that Addison had expanded her understanding of reflection to include a description or definition of the concept she was talking about, rather than a mere reiteration of the term. For example, she mentioned being “open-minded” and defined it as taking into account other points of view. She continued with a reflection about being “responsible.” Again she defined it; however, she continued by reflecting about how the concept of responsibility pertained to herself personally and explained why the concept was important. Perhaps the most impressive point about Addison’s reflection was that she admitted her “struggling to understand” the meaning of whole-heartedness, but made herself vulnerable by attempting to define the concept. Addison’s reflective journal entry substantiated that her understanding of reflection had shifted on the Continuum to a More Developed Understanding. This was encouraging; however, Addison was the only participant whose journal entry demonstrated this level of sophistication. The overwhelming majority of participants were still simply parroting the criteria back to me.

Teachers need a variety of methods to approach a topic in order to meet the needs of all their students. I had already used a couple of strategies to teach about being reflective practitioners. I had made some important changes between how I taught EDU 525 the first time as well as this time; but even so, there were many participants who still needed more scaffolding on the topic of reflection.
Sharing My Reflective Journal

The course was two-thirds over, and in my reflective research journal for Week 10, I commented I was worried about my effectiveness in reaching my teaching goals for EDU 525. I wrote that I was disappointed in the reflexivity of the participants in general. Having the participants become reflective practitioners was one of my goals for this study, and since my attempts at teaching reflection had not achieved the goals I was expecting thus far, I felt it was necessary to intervene in yet another way. I did some journaling to sort out my next course of action.

In my professional reading for today I read something that validated one of my philosophical beliefs about teaching; that is, in order to learn, the students must first trust the teacher, and the teacher must be worthy of the students’ trust. This made me think of the journaling assignment and how I have been disappointed in the level of reflexivity of my students. Trust is a critical issue in journaling and perhaps a significant factor in students’ ability to be honest and make themselves vulnerable by admitting their biases, etc. To help build trust, I will give them one of my journals to read. I am hoping that this demonstrates that I am worthy of trust and that if I can admit my biases, they are safe to admit theirs. It will be interesting to see if this makes an impact at all on their reflections. If not, I guess I’ll have to continue to scaffold that process in other ways, although time is running out! (070327_RRJ_00)

I hoped that in sharing one of my own reflective journals that I had written while taking a multicultural class as part my doctoral coursework (Appendix Q), I would gain my students’ trust, and model for them the process of honest reflection. I reasoned that if I could admit my biases, they would be safe to admit theirs. Since assigning written
journal reflections asks students to bare their souls and make themselves vulnerable, I considered it important to demonstrate that we were all in this together, that I did not expect them to complete an assignment I was not willing to do myself.

At the end of class in Week 10, I gave each participant a copy of my journal entry (Appendix Q) and explained that I had written it for an assignment similar to the journal writing I expected from them. I further indicated that it was difficult for me to share this entry with them because it would show them “the good, the bad, and the ugly” parts of my thinking. I told them to read my reflection and make comments to me, similar to the ones I had written on their journal reflections. I further explained that they should not worry about giving me honest feedback, because the points for the assignment would be awarded for completing the assignment regardless of what they wrote. My purpose for doing this was to assure the participants that they could disagree with my reflection without fear of losing points for making comments that might be negative. They were to give these reflections back to me the following week with their comments.

The comments the students made in their reflective journals supported that my decision to share my own reflective journal with them made an impact on their understanding. It is interesting to note that the most obvious shifts in the participants’ written reflections occurred in Week 11 following this activity. Shawna’s reflection appeared to echo the experience of most of the participants in response to my journal: they all seemed to appreciate my willingness to expose my own biases:

It was wonderful to read your journal. Hearing your own personal feelings and opinions made me re-evaluate my views. I loved reading your journal. It was so well-written and in my opinion, very reflective, and showed what
you mean by being open-minded and whole-hearted. I am realizing that I thought I knew how to reflect but I didn’t have the right idea. I sure have a loooong way to go! Doing something like this at the beginning of the semester might be very helpful to your students. If I would have had an example of such a personal reflection early on, I think my own reflections would have been much more reflective. (070407_RTJ_06)

The words “re-evaluate my views” in Shawna’s entry suggest a deeper level of reflection than in earlier entries. She admitted that she thought she knew how to reflect, but that now, she had a better understanding of Dewey’s (1916/1944) recommendations to be open-minded and whole-hearted.

Meta-Reflections

The participants’ last reflective journal assignment was to submit a written meta-reflection over the entire semester. Table 4.12 shows the participants’ shifts in reflection over time beginning with the reflective journal in Week 5 and ending with the meta-reflection due in Week 13. In their meta-reflections, 4 out of 13 participants used at least 8 of the 10 criteria established for writing thoughtful reflections and 8 out of 13 participants used at least 9 of the criteria. The scores were given according to the Reflection Rubric (see Table 4.10).
Table 4.12: Reflective Journal Assessment
(Note: Bridget dropped the course in Week 8)

Molly’s meta-reflection below discussed her own assessment of her growth toward becoming a reflective practitioner over the course of the semester:

The way I reflected upon class discussion and readings has changed over the semester. I felt that I learned how to incorporate my own feelings whereas in previous journaling in other classes it was more about what I did and how to make it better. I turned from just writing down what were my already formed opinions and feelings and allowed myself to rethink and be more whole-hearted about it. (070502_MR_13)
Molly mentioned that her reflecting had changed, and she continued to explain how it changed. She alluded to “admitting prior assumptions,” and specifically stated Dewey’s (1916/1944) criterion of being whole-hearted in her reflections. In her reflection, Molly also mentioned or exhibited the use of other reflection criteria, indicating a shift from an Emergent Understanding of reflection to a Developing Understanding of what it means to reflect. Shawna’s meta-reflection also demonstrated a shift on the Continuum:

I feel that I have grown tremendously over the course of this semester in understanding multicultural literature, in my knowledge of culturally responsive teaching, and in reflecting. After taking this course, I have learned more about reflection. I am starting to take into consideration points of view other than my own. This is one important component of being a reflective practitioner. (070502_MR_07)

Shawna did not merely state that her “reflection” had changed, but claimed that she, herself, had grown. She talked about the areas she felt demonstrated growth, and mentioned viewing issues from multiple perspectives. Finally, she made a connection between these criteria and becoming a reflective practitioner. In the remainder of her meta-reflection, Shawna discussed or exhibited an understanding of all ten reflection criteria.

What were the pedagogical strategies we implemented in class that supported the participants in becoming more reflective over time? It could have been, simply, time itself. The old adage “practice makes perfect” is a distinct possibility. It could have been the reflective comments that I wrote in response to the participants’ reflections. The lecture in which I presented the PowerPoint presentation may have also made a
difference in the way some participants reflected. Sharing my reflection may have also had something to do with the students’ deeper understanding. From the social-constructivist perspective, it could have been a combination of all of these strategies.

Students respond differently to assignments and activities; therefore, it is critical to use a variety of assignments and activities to meet a goal. The autobiography, the journals and meta-reflections, the class discussion -- all seemed to be important strategies that affected shifts in the participants’ and the researchers’ level of reflection. Students learn at different rates and in different ways, so as teacher educators we must make sure we use a variety of pedagogical strategies to make certain all our students have an opportunity to learn (Spalding & Wilson, 2002). Reflection must not be automatically “expected,” but intentionally taught. The following is an excerpt from my own reflective journal:

Reflection was a big part of all of my doctoral courses. When I really stop to think about it, I never “learned” how to reflect anywhere. Somebody just says “reflect” and you just do it! Nobody ever “taught” me how to reflect or gave me any specific reflection guidelines. In reflecting upon learning about reflection from the perspective of a student, it reinforces that students truly do bring their own agendas, their own prior knowledge about teaching to their work, and truly, there is a disconnect between what we know and what we are taught. I was guilty of it myself. We “do” what we already know, and don’t necessarily do what we are told or taught. In the same way, my students are reflecting the way they always have, the way they know how to reflect from their years of reflecting, and it is obvious that they really didn’t pay any attention to the points I tried to make about reflecting in this course. (070407_RRJ)

I was interested in the “disconnect” between what students learn and what they do. Since the participants were already accustomed to reflecting, they began their journaling assignment with prior knowledge about what it means to reflect. Even though I did a
PowerPoint presentation, the participants’ journaling did not change significantly. This supported Latta and Buck’s (2006) claims that learning is interrupted when prior knowledge is not addressed, when no connection is made between theory and practice, and/or when the teaching method is ineffective. I experienced this disconnect in my own teaching when I failed to recognize that the participants were using reflection as they had known it previously, and not as I had instructed.

Even though it was precisely these points – the importance of examining prior assumptions, connecting practice and theory, and using teaching methods that were effective – that were instrumental in shaping this study, I did not reflect “in action,” as Schön (1983) recommends, and as I was trying to impress upon my students. It was not until I examined the data during analysis that I realized this emerging point, although it was, in large part, what precipitated the study in the first place. My own disconnect between my teaching goals and my teaching practice exemplified the difficulty of implementing a new strategy to meet my teaching goals. I was asking my students to practice a new way of reflection, when I myself was not fully carrying out my own instructions. Having realized this, I made a minor change in the course “in action”: I exposed my own biases through handing out copies of my own reflective journal. In teaching my students about reflective practitioners, I too learned alongside my students how to become a better reflective practitioner as Schön (1983) prescribed.

**Summary**

In this section I attempted to answer my third sub-question: How can I encourage teachers and teacher candidates to become reflective practitioners? Reflection, as a
significant component of self-study and improving practice, was important both to me as teacher educator and to the teachers and teacher candidates in EDU 525. I wanted the participants to understand what it means to be a reflective practitioner. I wanted them to understand that reflection is a critical element of becoming a “highly qualified” teacher and that it is a necessary part of culturally responsive teaching. Furthermore, I wanted my students to build on their prior definition of reflection as looking back at lessons they had taught, and become reflective practitioners by learning how to reflect “in action.” I wanted to show teachers and teacher candidates that reflection should include planning for diversity as a component of CRT.

To achieve these goals, I included reflective practices such as my own reflective research journal, students’ reflective journals, and students’ meta-reflections. The data indicated that these reflective practices contributed to shifts in the participants’ understanding of the act of reflection and facilitated their becoming reflective practitioners. Reflection was important for me, as the researcher, as well. In the process of teaching the importance of reflection, I too arrived at a better understanding of what it means to be a reflective practitioner.

Modeling Effective Teaching

The NCATE Professional Standards guided me in part to design this study. As a teacher educator, I had the responsibility to align my teaching with the standards set forth by NCATE (2008). Standard 5b follows:
NCATE’s Standard 5b requires teacher educators to “model best professional practices” in their teaching. It defines best practices as “techniques or methodologies that, through experience and research, have proven to lead reliably to a desired result” (NCATE, 2008, p. 85). It then requires teacher educators to “model good teaching” and to “reflect on their own practice” systematically and intentionally (p. 41). While NCATE uses the term “good” to refer to the desired quality of teaching, I use the term “effective” in referring to teaching that meets NCATE’s standards. I judge my own teaching and how well it yields the desired results by the impact that my teaching has on my students – that is, on my efficacy.

This section answers my fourth sub-question: How can I model effective teaching for teachers and teacher candidates? This question implies that teacher educators first decide what to model, and then examine their teaching to observe the impact it had on students’ learning. In other words, the question tries to get at teacher educators’ self-reflection as they think about what they did to help their students learn.
NCATE defines teacher educators as “scholars who integrate what is known about their content fields, teaching, and learning in their own instructional practice” (NCATE, 2008, p. 39). As teacher educators who are required to educate teachers and teacher candidates who are well prepared to “integrate(s) diversity…throughout coursework [and] field experiences” (NCATE, 2008, p. 39), we cannot afford to leave this responsibility to chance. We need to do more than teach content; we must also model how to teach it effectively in culturally responsive ways.

Thus far in Chapter 4, I have discussed the three main areas of content that I covered in this course: authenticity in multicultural literature, the role of authentic ML in culturally responsive teaching, and the importance of becoming reflective practitioners. In this section, I discuss my instructional practice and how I integrated it into the course content.

It is important to model “good” teaching as called for by NCATE when we teach future teachers because modeling is an effective way to teach (Loughran & Berry, 2005). Just as teachers and teacher candidates do not come into our classrooms as “blank slates,” they also do not leave our classrooms without adding to their schemata some notions of effective teaching that they gather from observing other teachers. During their time in a classroom, whether as students in their coursework or as practice teachers in the field, they inadvertently emulate the teaching practices they observe. In my experience as a supervisor, I have noticed that teacher candidates often leave their field experiences using the same teaching strategies, the same instructional language, and often even exhibiting the same mannerisms that they observed in their cooperating teacher. This can be beneficial to the teacher candidates when they are placed with a cooperating teacher who
models culturally responsive teaching. Unfortunately, this is not always the case. Therefore, it falls on teacher educators to model teaching techniques that will be efficacious in helping future teachers become highly qualified, which includes culturally responsive teaching.

In examining my responsibility to model culturally responsive techniques, I wrote the following reflective journal entry:

In teaching this course, I need to do more than teach about ML. I need to teach that ML is important in teaching for diversity and I need to teach how to use it. I believe that modeling is a good way to teach. So rather than say, “You might want to use literature circles,” we are using literature circles. Instead of saying, you should read aloud ML, I am doing a read aloud and showing how it can be an effective tool for discussion. ML needs to be assessed, so I modeled some informal assessment activities. (070320_DJ_00)

In deciding what were “good” or effective teaching practices to model for my students, I reflected on some of the “best practices” I wanted to use. I selected teaching strategies and techniques that I had found effective from my own practice as well as research-based practices that were espoused by proponents of culturally responsive teaching. Indeed, many students reported using the techniques I had modeled for them. For example, after we used a literature circle in class, some said they went on to try it out in their own classrooms. Literature circles provide students the experience of working together and teaching and learning from one another.

NCATE Standard 5b also credits modeling of good teaching with helping teachers and teacher candidates “develop multiple teaching strategies to help all students learn”
Some of the strategies that I modeled to show teachers and teacher candidates some culturally responsive teaching strategies included constructivism, supportive learning environment, grouping strategies, and assessment.

*Constructivism*

One of the deficiencies in MMC’s teacher education program was that the conceptual framework lacked diversity. At MMC, the conceptual framework of the teacher education program was built on Vygotsky’s (1978) social constructivist model, which grounds learning in interactions among people. This is what NCATE describes as an “engaged community.” It states that a conceptual framework should “provide direction for programs, courses, teaching, [and] candidate performance” (p. 85). Since part of my goal was to include diversity in that framework, I wanted to “foster active engagement in learning” (NCATE, 2008, 39) to allow students to learn through their interactions with one another so that they would co-construct knowledge, with me acting as facilitator.

Since NCATE (2008) calls for teacher educators who “foster active engagement in learning and positive social interaction” (p. 39), I wanted to model constructivist activities. Such activities comply with the constructivist and cooperative learning strategies called for in culturally responsive pedagogy. I knew that most of the participants were familiar with this framework, since all undergraduates are required to have the ability to articulate the constructivist framework of the education department; however, I was not entirely convinced that they really understood it. In their pre survey responses, they had defined “constructivism” as “hands-on” learning. However, constructivism is much more complicated than that. To model effective constructivist
teaching, I included much group work and employed a variety of cooperative learning structures. All of the strategies and activities I modeled were designed to be easily adaptable to all grade levels, so the participants could replicate these things in their own classrooms. Mara reported the following in her reflective journal:

I like how when you were teaching us about cultures you also had us doing things with it such as reading the chapter books or having the textbook sections relate to that specific culture that we were talking about. So it wasn't just you preaching to us, it was us doing it with you. It made me think about the kind of teacher I want to be. I want to make sure that I allow students to learn by doing – through hands-on experiences. And I want to be sure I let them work together. You really do learn more when you work together.

Mara’s remark, “it made me think about the kind of teacher I want to be,” indicated that the way I modeled how to integrate the readings with our class discussion and activities had an impact on her. She reported that she in turn would teach by example and foster active engagement in learning (NCATE, 2008, p. 39).

Supportive Learning Environment

A necessary element in constructivist pedagogy is establishing a classroom atmosphere that is conducive to effective culturally responsive teaching and learning (Dewey, 1916/1944; Ladson-Billings, 2001). Nater and Gallimore (2006) claim that “teacher-student relationships are the foundation of effective teaching” (p. 1). Building rapport with the students based on trust and respect creates a risk-free environment where students feel safe and supported. Therefore, we need to teach through modeling how to
“create supportive learning environments” (NCATE, 2008, p. 60) built on mutual respect that we hope our students will establish in their own classrooms—we have to *live* CRT in our own teaching.

One research-based technique that I used to model creating a supportive learning environment was the Autobiography Assignment. The data demonstrated that this activity was effective in getting the majority of my students to understand the importance of teaching in culturally responsive ways. The consensus was that presenting autobiographies was beneficial in getting to know each other better. However, in reflecting on the participants’ comments, I realized I should have stressed earlier the importance of also getting to know *themselves* better by examining their own assumptions and thinking about themselves as beings who are part of a culture. It was not until the end of the semester that the majority of students understood this part about the importance of knowing themselves better. In order to address this point, it might be helpful to add a detail to the assignment asking the students to reflect on their own autobiography to determine what they learned about themselves as cultural beings by completing the assignment.

*Grouping Strategies*

Another important element in constructivist pedagogy is grouping. I wanted my students to assume the responsibility for discussion and to take over the initiative. I also wanted to model for them how to facilitate discussion in their own classrooms. To reach this goal, I lectured less frequently and instead used various grouping strategies. Since social-constructivist theory holds that learning is social, it is essential to group students in
various ways for a variety of purposes. In grouping my students in different ways, I wanted to point out to them the importance of grouping; so I explained why and how they were grouped, such as by their interests or ability, or at random. Some of the groups were assigned by me and remained the same throughout the semester. Other groups were randomly picked and changed each time by drawing cards or counting off and grouping by numbers. Still others were self-selected by the students. I also used small groups to discuss textbook assignments and participate in literature circles to discuss the chapter books that we all read.

*Text-sharing groups.* I used text-sharing groups in which I asked students to discuss textbook assignments because I wanted them to share what they had read and explain it to the others in their group – that is, they could co-construct their knowledge. This came out of a common complaint from students that there was too much reading. I therefore decided that they did not have to read everything, but that they had to know everything I wanted them to read, and this could be achieved through text sharing in small groups.

I formed the groups by assigning one graduate student to each group and assigning the undergraduate students alphabetically, rotating through the four text-sharing groups. I did not want all of the graduate students to work together and all of the undergraduates to work with the friends they were accustomed to working with. I wanted them to be exposed to different perspectives by working with people they were not accustomed to working with. I then instructed the groups to look at the reading assignments from the textbook chapters and decide among themselves who would be
responsible for reading which chapters each week. The only guidelines that I gave them were that they were responsible for making certain that everyone in the group knew and understood all of the information in their chapter because everyone would ultimately be responsible for answering questions on a test that may include that information. How they shared the information was up to them. They could prepare a PowerPoint presentation, or a handout of some sort with the important points outlined or summarized. It seemed that the participants appreciated and learned from this strategy, as is indicated by Mara’s comment that follows:

I liked how you split up the textbook chapters to our groups because then I would only read a chapter each week and the rest of my group would fill me in on the important parts of the chapters I didn't read. I thought that was great because it saved me time and also it made me really learn what I did read so I could tell the other people in our group. So it helped us process what we read better and we also got the same from the other group members as well. (070507_GI_11)

Mara’s comment reflects that she thought the idea to share the responsibility for reading the textbook chapters was a good one. She appreciated the time it saved her by not having to read every chapter every week, but more importantly, she admitted that she placed much effort on the chapters she did read because of her responsibility to “teach” that information to her group members. She also implied that she trusted the other members of her group to work with the same diligence that she did when the responsibility was hers. I would definitely use this same technique again.
Literature circles. An alternative to traditional groups for reading instruction is a constructivist approach called “literature circles” in which students meet in small discussion groups (Daniels, 2002; Tompkins, 2004). Daniels (2002) refers to literature circles as a new style of reading groups, in that they are run by the students themselves, rather than being teacher-led. In the literature circles, the students have various roles such as time-keeper, discussion monitor, or the person responsible for providing definitions for new vocabulary. I modeled literature circles for my students because I wanted them to really understand how literature circles work. I wanted them to actually participate in them rather than just having me tell them what they are like. An entry from my own reflective research journal explains my purpose for using literature circles:

My idea was to teach the students how to use literature circles by having them participate in literature circles. This way, they understand how literature circles work and have practice running effective literature circles. What does each novel teach them about diversity? What does working in the literature circle teach them about teaching? (080320_DJ_00)

To model this teaching and learning approach, I had the participants in this study form literature circles to discuss the multicultural chapter books assigned each week. We discussed the guidelines for establishing and conducting effective literature circles (see Tompkins, 2004), as well as implications for applying the strategy in classrooms. It was through this structure that we discussed the assigned chapter books for the class. The data shows that the literature circles did accomplish my goals for using them. Nikki said the following:
I am really enjoying the literature circles and I am starting to understand literature circles better by doing it. It is such a good way to have kids read and enjoy a book. I like that it can be done with any age group. This would have been great for my eighth graders. It would have gotten them to read and I think they would have liked it. That was the one thing they hated the most. I also think that I am going to try it this summer with my migrant students. It would also get them to speak more English which is the whole goal. (070207_J_05)

Nikki not only mentioned that she was understanding literature circles by participating in them, but she also stated that she was finding them an enjoyable way to share books. She even went so far as to conjecture that her own students would find that using literature circles would make a difference in her students’ attitudes toward reading. What was more exciting to me was that her comments made a connection to what I wanted them to learn about teaching. She recognized the benefits of literature circles to English language learners and that they are a good way to incorporate culturally responsive pedagogy.

Text-sharing groups and literature circles were just two of the small group settings I established in the class. I also had my students work in small groups on projects that were self-selected, and to sort books during the book sorting activity described in the section about authenticity. In addition, I had students work in whole group discussions. In whole group settings, we held “grand conversations” to discuss the chapter books after students had discussed them in the literature circles. We also participated in traditional whole class discussions on a regular basis to discuss course content, articles, and chapters in the textbook.
**Grand conversations.** The grand conversations were focused whole group discussions on one topic designed to deepen comprehension of cultural diversity. This sharing of ideas from different perspectives is a good model for culturally responsive teaching. After reading each novel and discussing it in small group literature circles, the students took part in a grand conversation. Grand conversations are whole group discussions of books without much input from the teacher. The facilitator’s role in a grand conversation is to summarize the conversation and ask for predictions for the next reading. To model good teaching, I required the participants to prepare for grand conversations as they would have their own students prepare for them in their own classrooms by making drawings, taking notes, writing in reading logs, or marking passages with post-it notes.

The grand conversations proved to be an effective teaching strategy as the students reported having learned a lot in the process. Many thought it was a good idea to allow students to lead the discussion themselves. They reported enjoying hearing new perspectives from each other. I reserved my use of grand conversations to our discussion of the chapter books, whereas when discussing course content, articles, and chapters in the textbook, I used the traditional whole class discussion format.

**Whole class discussions.** In the past, I typically led whole class discussions by lecturing, asking a question, or posing a problem or idea, and expected my students to engage in a discussion on the topic. However, my concept of a whole class discussion was limited to my leading the conversation. Consequently, this strategy was ineffective. The questions were answered, but real discussion among the students did not always
ensue. It was difficult to break the flow of conversation from teacher to student and back. The students did not talk to each other but looked to me for affirmation. Recent research (Darling-Hammond & Hammerness, 2005) claims that teacher education programs that emphasize “reflective formats” and “constructivist learning” in class discussion, rather than lecturing, are more effective in “helping teachers understand the nature of teaching diverse populations” (p. 393).

To achieve whole class participation, I tried to get students to talk to one another by using familiar and effective cooperative learning structures such as “turn to a partner.” This was more effective than me posing the questions, but still did not produce lively conversation. I had decided that I did not want to lecture much during this second time teaching this course. I also realized I had to lecture some, but I wanted to keep it short and use it more as a tool to lead into class discussion than to transmit knowledge. I wanted to model “mini-lectures” that were comparable to the “mini-lessons” espoused by some scholars. As the “more knowledgeable other,” lecturing by the teacher is necessary as part of keeping students in their zones of proximal development (Vygotsky, 1978). I tried to keep it more interactive by using the “turn to a partner” strategy, “thumbs-up/down” for agreeing or disagreeing with a point. I tried to keep them “engaged” in the lecture rather than having them just “listen.” Listening to the comments the students made about their reactions to Chapter 9, I concluded that the selection of readings made a big difference in the students’ engagement level. This left me wondering how to identify the “perfect” reading assignment to enliven class discussion.

Another strategy to elicit good class discussion that proved to be effective was to provide an activity that challenged the status quo. For example, when I gave the class
Payne’s quizzes on the culture of poverty, the students really had a great discussion. Sara reported the following:

The handouts on the hidden rules of class really started conversations in our groups. It was neat to see how different and alike we have all been brought up and how we live. I feel that once you are in a certain class it would be hard to adjust to anything different because you become so accustomed to certain things. (070228_J_01)

As Sara stated, we indeed had a good class conversation that was precipitated by the handouts on the hidden rules of class. This told me that I could intentionally select a class activity that would be more appropriate than another, to engage the students in a lively and fruitful discussion.

I also wanted my students to see was that class discussions could help them understand something from someone else’s perspective and could clarify questions they might have. Mara’s reflection indicates that she understood this.

I don't fully agree with the author in this chapter. Maybe after a class discussion I might see how the author spoke differently to them than to me when I read it. I am interested to hear more opinions than just mine and see how my mind may be changed after class. (070321_CR7_11)

Mara did not ask me for clarification. She specifically stated that she was looking forward to the class discussion to see how the author spoke differently to her peers than to herself when she read it. She expressed interest in hearing the opinions of others, and how hearing those opinions might affect her own perceptions.
I concluded from student remarks that next time I taught this class I would try other strategies, such as selecting articles with opposite points of view, and giving one point of view to half the class to read and the other point of view to the other half of the class to read. Hopefully this would spark the engaging conversation that constructivism calls for. I also concluded that it would be a good idea to give “wait time.” Sometimes I wanted to jump into the conversation and give the “right answer,” but I made myself wait and most of the time the students came up with it on their own.

Both small-group and whole-group discussion groups helped me model effective teaching. Students were grouped with different peers in different groups to give them an opportunity to experience working with different people. There is evidence to support that the students understood the different grouping strategies I used, as exemplified by Cassidy’s comments below:

I like all the different groups that you put us in. At first it was confusing to have all of the different groups and the different colors. But it didn’t take too long to get used to it and then it was great. I think I will use a lot of different groups in my class. I like the idea that all of the children need to able to work together and they should be able to. This is another way for the students to get to know one another. I am in a group with two other students that I did not know. At first I didn’t think I liked it because I’m not used to working with people I don’t know. But now I see how in the classroom it is also a good idea to make the groups up for the students. This would eliminate one student being left out or the same people always working together. It’s a good way to establish classroom community. (070117_J_10)

Cassidy stated that she liked being part of all the different groups I used. She also commented on her initial confusion, but that once she got used to working in the different
groups she realized the benefits of grouping people in many different ways. She understood that all of the children should be able to work together. She alluded to her initial discomfort of working in a small group with someone she did not know, but she could eventually see the benefits of such an arrangement. Her foresight in recognizing grouping strategies as a “good way to establish classroom community” is also a confirmation that it is an effective tool for culturally responsive pedagogy.

Assessment

According to NCATE (2008), teacher educators need to be “engaged in deepening understanding of research and practice that informs their work. Professional education faculty model the use of performance assessments in their own work. They are assessing the effects of their teaching on the learning of candidates and using their findings to strengthen their own practice” (NCATE, p. 41). I knew from my own teaching experience and observations of teachers and teacher candidates, that making formative assessments usually took the form of paper/pencil testing, from which I wanted to move away. I wanted to introduce my students to other, more interesting ways of assessments, such as the Roads Activity and the Snowball Activity. I also felt it was important to model each assessment.

Roads activity. In Week 7, I wanted to assess the students’ knowledge about authenticity so that I was aware of what they had learned so far and what I still had to teach them. I conducted a Roads activity (Appendix L) in which I showed the participants pictures of 4 different kinds of roads: a highway, a city street, a dirt road, and The Yellow
Brick Road. I asked them to look at each photo and think about which road they thought they were on in their knowledge about authenticity in multicultural literature and why they saw themselves on that road. I then had the students write a “two minute paper” on their thoughts. Next, I had the students walk up to the photo of their choice and discuss with the others who chose the same photo, why they had selected that particular road. I conducted this activity for the purpose of having the students self-assess their knowledge of authentic ML, allowing them an opportunity to articulate their knowledge with others, and giving me an opportunity to assess the knowledge of the class overall. Another reason for the assessment was to model for the students an idea for a formative assessment beyond a paper/pencil response. I selected one response for each road to represent some of the ideas the students gave for their selections.

Bridget made the following comment to explain her choice for the dirt road: “I’m on a dirt road in my understanding. I can't go faster than 25. There are bumps that you can’t see coming. I like to take it slow. It takes me a long time to internalize” (070221_FN_09). Bridget was one of only two people who felt they were on a dirt road. She implied that she needed to move slowly in her learning because she was not sure about what was coming, and it took a while for her to internalize her knowledge. Bridget and Nikki admitted that they had a tentative understanding of authenticity. Their hesitation to move more quickly in their understanding might indicate that they had some assumptions that they were having difficulty sorting out.

There were seven students who selected the city road. After their conversation, they stated that they were all pretty much in the same place. They had Sara speak for the entire group, since they all had similar reasons for being on the city road. As Sara wrote,
“We are on the city road because we feel like we've learned a little bit about authenticity, but we don't feel like we're ready to go to the highway yet. But we know more than we did when we started” (070221_FN_01). Sara and the others in her group felt like they had learned some information about authenticity, but were still tentative in their knowledge. The fact that they stated they were not ready “yet” implied that they intended to get there sometime.

There were four students who felt like they were on the highway in their learning. Although they stated that they all had different reasons for choosing the highway, they elected to have Shawna give her reason, since they all said that hers was the sum of all the others. Following is the explanation that Shawna gave for being on the highway: “I'm on the highway because my opinions often go back and forth as to what I think is right or wrong so I need to get off at the exits every once in a while and head back in the other direction”. (070221_FN_06). Shawna had articulated her teetering on the fence in her opinion of who can write authentic ML. In her explanation of selecting the highway, she continued her analogy, saying that when she was uncertain about her position, she exited the highway to slow down and rethink her opinion.

There was only one person who chose the Yellow Brick Road. Mara gave the follow explanation for her choice.

I'm on the yellow brick road because on the yellow brick road you learn a lot on the way, there's always things popping up in the woods, you know you're on it for a reason but you don't necessarily know where it's going or how it's going to end up or what you're going to find at the end. (070221_FN_11)
Mara’s rationale for being on the Yellow Brick Road was interesting. She stated that she learned a lot, much of which came as a surprise to her. She discussed that although you know there is a good reason for learning about authenticity, the reason may not be apparent at the beginning. Unlike Bridget and Nikki who did not seem to appreciate the unknown, Mara seemed to welcome the challenge of the unknown and looked forward to finding out what she would know at the end of the road.

For the journal entries in Week 7, all of the participants claimed that they enjoyed the Roads Activity and appreciated it as a self-assessment to reflect on their understanding of authenticity. Tiegan remarked:

I really liked the roads things we did. It was a really neat and different way to show where we are in understanding ML. It really made you think. Even after choosing a road, you got to listen to why each of us said we were there, and you got to hear things that you didn't even think of for a certain road. It is definitely something that I would use in my classroom to have my students gauge how they felt about what they knew about a certain subject and it would also tell me what they know. (070221_J_12)

Assessment tools such as the Roads Activity also offered students an opportunity for self-assessment, giving them the chance to think about where they were and why they think they were there. Tiegan’s above journal reflection demonstrates her realization that this type of assessment activity was “different” from a typical paper/pencil assessment, yet can be very effective in showing students’ understanding of a topic. She attributed the activity with making her think about her own understanding, and through listening to
others, it provided multiple perspectives on an issue. Modeling this activity was also useful in helping the students develop another strategy they could use in their own future classrooms.

_Snowball assessment activity._ The foci of weeks one through four had been to establish a classroom community built on mutual trust and respect, as well as to learn about what constitutes authentic multicultural literature. We had talked about one of the purposes of ML as learning about other cultures. We had also discussed the idea of becoming multicultural beings. I planned to continue developing the information around these foci each week, and to add the new focus to make the connection between ML and its use as an approach to culturally responsive teaching.

In Week 5, I conducted a formative assessment to evaluate how the participants appraised their knowledge of authenticity thus far, and also to get a sense of what they already knew about culturally responsive teaching in order to determine what to teach next. This “Snowball Assessment Activity” (Appendix F) modeled a “risk-free” assessment tool that the participants could use in their future teaching. I explained that this technique provided an assessment for determining where the entire class stood in its understanding of a concept, and therefore, provided feedback on what they needed next to gain a better understanding of the concept.

Below, I focus on the second question on the snowball activity that deals with culturally responsive teaching: How comfortable are you with the concept of culturally responsive teaching? In responding to this question, I asked the participants to select from the following four multiple-choice answers:
A. I am very comfortable and could explain it to anyone.
B. I think I could explain it to someone.
C. I am not really confident I understand it well enough to explain it to others.
D. I do not know about it and/or would not be comfortable attempting to explain it.

In this “risk-free” assessment, I instructed the participants to circle an answer that best described their own assessment of their knowledge of CRT. I then asked them to crumble the sheet into a “snowball” and throw it onto the carpet at the back of the room. I instructed the participants to pick up someone else’s snowball, unfold it, and respond to the next question. They continued in that manner until they had responded to all of the questions on the pre-assessment. Then we tallied and analyzed the answers.

Table 4.13 shows the results of the Snowball pre-assessment activity. The first column shows the letters that were answer choices for the pre-assessment. The numbers in the first row of the table correspond to the question numbers on the pre-assessment. Below each number are two columns: the pre- column displays the number of participants who recorded the letter on the left as their answer to the pre-assessment questions.

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Table 4.13: Results of the Pre-Assessment of the Snowball Activity (Appendix F)
As Table 4.13 indicates, no student felt knowledgeable enough about culturally responsive teaching (question 2) to be comfortable explaining the concept to someone. In the discussion about this activity, only one student reported at least some rudimentary knowledge about the topic; but the overwhelming majority of participants were not confident about the idea of culturally responsive teaching.

Following through on the purpose of assessment, I asked the participants what they did know about culturally responsive teaching in order to help me determine what they needed to learn. One student said she had heard the term, but had no knowledge of the criteria for teaching in a culturally responsive way. The remaining thirteen participants stated they had never before heard the term. Discussion indicated they had not learned anything about this topic in any of their education courses, and had no idea how to define the concept of CRT. Nikki’s response is representative of the responses of the rest of the participants. She stated, “I have no idea what culturally responsive teaching is. Until this class, I never heard of culturally responsive teaching or multicultural literature. When I came to school here two years ago, we never talked about either one of them then” (070207_CD_05).

In the discussion that ensued, it was clear that the participants had not encountered a discussion of CRT in any of their education courses. I planned some activities and assigned some readings to help them learn about CRT. On the second to the last class meeting, I did a post-assessment to see what the participants had, indeed, learned. The results of the post-assessment are shown in Table 4.14. The post-column shows the number of participants who recorded the letter on the left as their answers to the post-assessment questions.
The pre- and post-assessment questions were the same: How comfortable are you with the concept of culturally responsive teaching? The potential answers were as follows:

A. I am very comfortable and could explain it to anyone.
B. I think I could explain it to someone.
C. I am not really confident I understand it well enough to explain it to others.
D. I do not know about it and/or would not be comfortable attempting to explain it.

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Table 4.14: Results of the Post-Assessments of the Snowball Activity
(Note: All students were present and participated in both the pre- and post-assessments. One student dropped the course, after Week 8, which accounts for the discrepancy between the total numbers for the pre- and post-assessments.)

As Table 4.14 indicates, the students’ comfort level was much greater at the post-assessment than it had been when they participated in the snowball pre-assessment activity. Following is a comment Shawna made in her journal entry about the assessment tool:

I also had a great time with the snowball activity questionnaire. It helped me to feel more comfortable circling my actual opinion. I was not worried
that someone would see my paper and think less of me, so I could be honest, even if I didn’t know anything about the topic – what a great tool for any classroom! (070207_J_06)

Shawna expressed that the Snowball Activity allowed her to be honest in sharing her knowledge of the topic without embarrassment since she knew it was anonymous. She also mentioned that Snowball was an assessment tool that would be appropriate for any grade level. In modeling this particular assessment tool, I had intended for the students to realize its application to real classrooms. All of the participants made this connection and mentioned it in their reflections.

As for the effectiveness of the Snowball Activity, when focusing on Question 2 as a post-assessment, it was very useful in telling me what my students knew and did not know about the concepts on the assessment. Therefore, it was useful in letting me know what I needed to plan next to help the participants make shifts in their knowledge. From the standpoint of modeling effective teaching, the Snowball Activity was one of the most popular and most written about activities from the entire semester. All of the participants commented about it in their journals, and every comment they made was positive.

The Snowball Activity demonstrated a marked shift in the participants’ understanding about culturally responsive teaching from Week 5 when it was introduced, to Week 14 when the post assessment occurred. During that timeframe, the participants had read six assigned articles and had participated in three activities designed to further their understanding of culturally responsive teaching. As Table 4.14 indicates, by the end
of the semester, most of the participants had shifted in their confidence regarding their knowledge about culturally responsive teaching from an Emergent Understanding to a more Developed Understanding.

Summary

Teachers and teacher candidates inadvertently emulate the teaching practices that they observe in their teacher education classes and in their field placements. They often exit their programs using the same teaching strategies, instructional language, and even the same mannerisms that they observed. Therefore, in order to model for teachers and teacher candidates effective teaching in culturally responsive ways, I selected teaching strategies that had been effective in my own practice, as well as research-based practices that were espoused by proponents of culturally responsive teaching. The strategies that I modeled to show teachers and teacher candidates some culturally responsive teaching strategies included constructivism, supportive learning environment, grouping strategies, and assessment. Many of the participants said they went on to try out these strategies that I had modeled for them in their own classrooms and found that their students had a positive experience working together and learning from one another. This led me to conclude that my modeling of CRT did impact the participants’ practice.

Chapter Summary

This self-study examined the efficacy of the pedagogy that I used as a teacher educator in preparing teachers and teacher candidates to use multicultural literature as part of their approach to culturally responsive teaching. In an effort to improve my own
teaching practices in educating teachers and teacher candidates to use multicultural literature as an approach to culturally responsive teaching, I focused on providing my students with knowledge about what it means to be culturally responsive, and with the critical tools for identifying what “authentic” means with regard to multicultural literature. In attempting to teach my students about culturally responsive teaching, selecting authentic multicultural literature, becoming reflective practitioners, and modeling, I made some important realizations about in my own practice. For instance, I discovered myself stereotyping the participants in this study even as I was teaching them how not to stereotype their students. Or, as another example, while I was trying to teach about Dewey’s (1944) criteria of open-mindedness, whole-heartedness, and responsibility and Schön’s (1983) concept of reflecting in action, I saw that I tended to simply compile lists of things to do in class, which had little or nothing to do with being open to and being responsible for the needs of the moment. That is, I was not reflecting in action. Therefore, “living” the definition of self-study, I will use the findings from this study to inform my teaching, not only for future times that I will teach EDU 525, but also to improve all other courses that I will teach.
CHAPTER 5
DISCUSSION

In a multicultural curriculum, there are few stimuli with greater potential to move people to action than literature. Because it tells the stories of human events and the human condition and not simply the facts, literature does more than change minds; it changes people’s hearts. And people with changed hearts are people who can move the world. (Rasinski & Padak, 1990, p. 580)

The eloquent words in the above quote spoke to me many years ago and inspired me to pursue this dissertation. They compelled me to learn more about the powerful genre of multicultural literature and became my mantra. Indeed, “people with changed hearts are people who can move the world.” I believed this with my whole heart and soul, and my quest became to help those whom I teach learn about and appreciate multicultural literature. My response was to develop and teach a survey course in multicultural literature. However, my spirit was dampened when I realized at the end of the semester, that my students did not understand the purposes for using ML as I had hoped they would. Therefore, my revised quest became, how I might help the teachers and teacher candidates in my classes learn about multicultural literature, and then how I might motivate them to actually use it for culturally responsive purposes in their classrooms.
My new resolution required me to reflect on my own teaching as a teacher educator, in order to discover how I might accomplish these goals. Although I have long contended that teaching and learning are two sides of the same coin, and that it is impossible to discuss one without considering the other, I had never put enough emphasis on evaluating the “teaching” side of that coin. To remedy this, I launched a self-study of my own teaching by first revisiting the early years of my teaching career.

This look backwards to the time before I became a teacher educator rekindled the feelings of joy and satisfaction I had experienced during my seventeen-year tenure as a second-grade teacher. My reflection sparked recollections of my reasons for wanting to become a teacher educator in the first place. My goal for educating young teachers and teacher candidates was to inspire in them the same joy and love that I had for teaching. I wanted them to begin their careers with the knowledge of constructivist teaching that it took me so many years to discover and develop.

The following example from my years as a second-grade teacher, when I attempted to integrate researching, reading, writing, speaking, and listening in a science unit about bats, illustrates one of my efforts at constructivist teaching. Intentionally, I did not lecture about bats; rather, the students and I brainstormed together what we already knew about bats and decided collectively what more we wanted to learn about bats. I then provided my second graders with a plethora of resources about bats: books, websites, and videos. I also invited a guest speaker who brought in a live bat to our classroom and shared his knowledge about bats. As we acquired new information, we wrote it on a chart to which we referred often. Throughout our study, we examined our preconceived notions about bats, reflected on them, and adjusted them as necessary to match our new
understandings. Amusingly, I will never forget the parent who asked me at conference time what exactly it was I was teaching her child about bats. She could not believe that all her daughter wanted for her birthday was to build a bat house. In those three weeks of socially co-constructing our knowledge on bats, my students did not only learn about bats, which captivated their imagination and fed their curiosity, but they also acquired and practiced necessary academic skills. Furthermore, their initial fear of and disgust for bats changed into a genuine interest and fondness for the gentle creatures that they came to appreciate.

So it was that same kind of appreciation that I wanted the teachers and teacher candidates to have in my multicultural literature course. Rather than lecturing to them as I had with less-than-satisfactory results the first time I had taught EDU 525, I wanted to enable my students to experience the satisfaction of discovering new information in constructivist ways. I wanted to help them examine their current knowledge of culturally responsive teaching, and I wanted to challenge their prior assumptions with new information and understandings through research, discussion, and reflection on multicultural literature. Finally, I wanted to model the sort of constructivist, culturally responsive teaching to which I hoped they would aspire.

_Culturally Responsive Teaching_

The data support that the pedagogical strategies and techniques that I used to teach my students about culturally responsive teaching were effective. My goal was for my students to leave the EDU 525 course thinking of themselves as cultural beings and to understand certain criteria that are necessary for teaching in culturally responsive ways.
At the beginning of the course, the concept of CRT was new to all of my students. I was surprised that none had heard the term, and none had any idea of what it meant to be culturally responsive. Using what I deemed to be constructivist teaching strategies and techniques, I set out to scaffold my students’ learning about CRT throughout the semester, to periodically assess their knowledge and understanding of CRT, and to use the information I gleaned through these assessments to inform my teaching. Self-study requires this kind of self-assessment to improve one’s teaching practices.

All of my students began the semester with an Emergent Understanding of culturally responsive teaching, and by the end of the semester, all of them had made shifts in their understanding of CRT to differing degrees. As I had hoped, they claimed to believe that it is critical to think of themselves as multicultural beings, to use their knowledge of their students’ backgrounds in their planning and teaching in order to establish a caring, supportive classroom environment. To help my students move along the Continuum of Shifts in Understanding, I used a variety of tools that included assignments, articles, and activities.

Among the assignments I used was the Autobiography Assignment to help students begin to look at themselves and their assumptions about teaching for diversity. It helped them make connections between their worldview and their teaching, and helped them understand the importance of creating a classroom climate conducive to culturally responsive teaching and learning. It was satisfying to see the variety of observations that emerged in response to a simple assignment such as asking students to tell their own stories of their cultural backgrounds. The Autobiography Assignment ultimately helped
the majority of students begin to view themselves as unique cultural beings and appreciate difference, although this did not occur until later in the semester. Given this positive outcome, I would definitely use this assignment again.

The articles that I assigned were also beneficial in moving students on the Continuum of Understanding about culturally responsive teaching, although I found that it became too much reading, on top of the chapter books and the textbook that we were reading and discussing. The articles that seemed to have the most impact on all of the students were “‘That’s Not Fair’! A White Teacher Reports on White First Graders' Responses to Multicultural Literature” (MacPhee, 1997) and “But That's Just Good Teaching! The Case for Culturally Relevant Pedagogy” (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Both of these pioneering works are excellent articles that resulted in moving the students’ understanding about CRT, as evidenced by their critical reflections on the articles. Therefore, when teaching this course in the future, I would use fewer articles, and only those that were the most closely relevant to multicultural literature.

Among the activities that I would conduct again is the Cultural Iceberg activity; all of my students commented on it and credited it for helping them better understand cultural diversity. All of the participants came to appreciate the rich material underneath the tip of the iceberg, or the superficial representation of a particular culture, such as its dance, music, food, or holidays. They realized that there is much that they do not even think about when they interact with others, and that their awareness of the nuances of
another's cultural background can enable them to share in one another's humanity. This activity was effective in helping me achieve my goal for the participants to expand their definitions of culture and add to the idea that they are cultural beings.

Examining one’s worldview, and understanding that it is not universal is critical to culturally responsive teaching. Despite the controversy over Payne’s Hidden Rules Among Classes Quiz (1996) which challenges students' tendencies to perpetuate the stereotypes that they identify, I would most likely use it again. In this study, the Hidden Rules activity was quite successful in helping students see that some teachers operate from an ethnocentric European American worldview without giving much thought to their students who may not be privy to that worldview. I believe that the Hidden Rules exercise made my students aware of their ethnocentrism.

Culturally responsive teaching is so critical and complex that there need to be multiple required courses in teacher education programs. While some teacher education programs do already offer a variety of courses that touch upon multiculturalism and diversity, many do not. Teacher education programs need to make CRT more of a focus by designing specialized courses around issues of multiculturalism and diversity, and culturally responsive teaching should be required of all teachers and teacher candidates. In other words, CRT needs to permeate the entire curriculum. Furthermore, teacher educators need to know what each other are doing with regard to multicultural education and reinforce in their classes what the others are saying about multiculturalism. It makes a deeper and more lasting impression on students when they hear the same thing from
multiple perspectives, in many different classes. It is my hope that this dissertation will aid in adjusting the teacher education curriculum to include a focus on culturally responsive teaching.

Recognizing and Selecting Authentic ML

One of the tried and proven ways to achieve CRT is through using authentic multicultural literature (MacPhee, 1997). Determining authenticity is both complex and critical. In the EDU 525 Multicultural Literature course, to help my students and research participants become proficient in recognizing and selecting authentic ML, I needed to guide their acquisition of a basic appreciation for ML, teach them how to determine whether or not ML was authentic, and help them understand its role as part of a multicultural curriculum. To enable my students to gain the knowledge and skills they needed to accomplish these tasks, I used many different approaches, such as reading extensively from parallel-culture literature and using guidelines for detecting what makes multicultural literature “authentic.”

There is evidence that the participants did acquire an appreciation for authentic multicultural literature. We read examples of ML that are considered authentic and that I hoped would touch my students’ hearts as Rasinski and Padak (2003) articulated in the opening quote to this chapter. Reading for pleasure is one important purpose for reading, and I wanted to model for my students the importance of appreciating “good literature.” I used literature circles to allow them to discuss the chapter books we all read, and the data confirm that this strategy was helpful. This modeled the affective purpose for reading, i.e., reading for pleasure, as well as the purpose of promoting cultural understanding. The
students’ journal reflections and grand conversations in response to the examples of authentic ML that we read gave evidence that they had “enjoyed” this literature. However, the students also reported gaining insight into other perspectives and learning information about cultures that may otherwise remain unknown to them. I wanted them to understand that one of the main purposes of literature is to be enjoyed, but that their appreciation for literature could also result in learning.

In Chapter 4 of this dissertation, I reported on shifts in the participants’ understanding about determining authenticity, which had improved considerably halfway through the course. Examining the students’ reflective journals indicated that they had used many of the criteria they had learned through the experiences I had constructed for the course. For example, eight of the students scored a 3.5 (out of 5) and five students scored a 4 (out of 5) on the Continuum of Shifts in Understanding Authenticity by using at least 4 of the 6 criteria we had learned. Moreover, they were applying their knowledge about, and skills in recognizing, authenticity to make selections of authentic ML that they could share with the class.

During the first half of the term, we participated in many conversations about the purposes for using authentic multicultural literature. The students were given many examples of authentic ML that promoted cultural understanding and provided mirrors and windows for them to see themselves in the literature or observe the nuances of another culture. By midterm, I expected the students to know and recognize authentic ML that fulfilled all of the criteria for selecting it. However, there was one criterion for
considering ML to be authentic that the students had not mentioned even once in their reflective journals thus far. That was the criterion of providing a venue to discuss issues or topics that might be sensitive in nature.

Levithan’s (2003) *Boy Meets Boy* was a novel that met this criterion, as it allowed us to discuss Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) issues, on which all of the students suddenly had much to say both in their reflective journals and in class discussions. The participants’ reactions to this book reinforced one of the key findings in this study, that the students are not at the same level of understanding at any given time, and they do not relate and respond to issues in the same way. It was interesting that in discussing GLBT, every student mentioned the words “sensitive” or “touchy” to describe the topic, and every student mentioned feeling “uncomfortable” at the thought of discussing this literature in class, or described it as “difficult” to talk about. This was likely due to the fact that it can be disconcerting to discuss concepts outside our own lived-experiences and our comfort zone of understanding. However, one of the purposes of my research was to help teachers understand that this is exactly what they must do if they are to become culturally responsive teachers, and it was rewarding to see small changes in attitude. *Boy Meets Boy* met the criteria for authentic ML hands down on all counts, including the very important issue of enabling readers to address sensitive topics.

One of my findings was that it was challenging to model for the participants how to select not only ML that was authentic, but also ML that would be engaging to all students. Some chapter books were better received than others as a whole. For example, all of the students particularly enjoyed *The Watson’s Go To Birmingham* (Curtis, 1995), while the overall enthusiasm for *M.C. Higgins, the Great* (Hamilton, 1974) was not as
great. My first inclination was to discontinue using this particular book and substitute another that would still give my students an inside look at Appalachian life. However, the following journal entry by Kelly gave me a different perspective:

Even though this was my least favorite book, *MC Higgins, The Great* definitely had important messages in the book. One that I thought was important is that even though both families lived in the Appalachian Mountains, both had different ways of life and believed different things. They had different values and interests. Students may find meaning in this story because of all of the changes that are happening in their life at that time, and how each person goes through those changes differently even thought they are the same age, and possibly the same race. (070221_J_03)

Analyzing Kelly’s entry helped me conclude that just because one book is not as popular as another, it does not mean that the book is not worthwhile. This conclusion may have escaped me, had I not been engaged in self-study.

*Becoming a Reflective Practitioner*

Since becoming a reflective practitioner is both required for self-study and for teacher candidates to be considered “highly qualified,” and because reflection was specially identified as an area in need of improvement in MMC’s teacher education program, it was logical to make reflection a focus of this study. I focused on reflection in my study – both reflecting on my own teaching and requiring my students to reflect on their learning. In the process of teaching my students about the importance of reflection, I too, arrived at a better understanding of what it means to become a reflective practitioner.
I determined from my data analysis that the pedagogical moves I had planned were helpful in achieving my goals in teaching reflection. Initially, I evaluated my students’ reflections using the criteria I had judged to be necessary for good reflection, but without making the connection to my own reflecting. I was criticizing my students for doing the same kind of superficial reflecting that I was guilty of doing myself. I realized I myself had been using only part of the criteria that point to good reflecting. Therefore, I began to focus more on the criteria I expected my students to use in their reflections and as a result, became more whole-hearted and open-minded in my own reflections. I learned that reflecting really did help me become a better teacher, and caused me to make some “in-action” changes in my teaching that proved to be effective.

Both my own reflections and those of my students, demonstrate that preconceived notions truly are difficult to change. My students and I all had “reflected” many times in the past, and we clung to the ideas we had about what it means to reflect. The idea of becoming a reflective practitioner, using Dewey’s criteria of whole-heartedness, open-mindedness, responsibility, and learning to reflect “in action” rather than exclusively after-the-fact, are ideas that need to be accommodated and assimilated into prior knowledge of reflection. This is particularly challenging when students register for a course because they want to learn about literature and are resistant to changing the way they already understand reflection.

The data give evidence that the participants did make shifts in their reflections over the semester. Initially, all of the participants were “journaling,” using the criteria to which they had become accustomed in their education courses at MMC, even though I had changed the description of their journal assignment to clarify the distinctions I
expected them to make. I wrote marginal comments on the reflections they submitted, asking probing questions to encourage more reflective comments from them. However, their journal entries continued to remain near an Emergent Understanding of reflection on the Continuum of Shifts in Understanding throughout the first four weeks of the semester.

In an effort to help the participants improve in being reflexive practitioners, I made the decision to give them a copy of one of my own reflective journals, so I could model for them how I reflected. It was this technique that finally seemed to nudge them along on the Continuum. After they read the journal entry I shared, they began to use at least half of the criteria for achieving a favorable reflection. This proved to be an effective strategy that helped shift the students’ understanding of reflection to a Developing Understanding. I will use this again the next time I teach the course, and will also take the recommendation of several of my students who suggested sharing the entry earlier in the semester to model the reflective criteria that I expect to observe in their reflective journal entries.

Writing this dissertation, I became even more convinced about the benefits of keeping a reflective journal if I wish to call myself a reflective practitioner. In fact, I have continued to make daily entries in my reflective journal beyond my research and teaching. It has become a habit now, which I will continue. To date, my journal consists of more than 1,000 typed double-spaced pages. I believe that it is necessary to keep such a reflective journal myself, if I am going to “preach” the importance of reflection to the teachers and teacher candidates I teach.
Modeling Effective Teaching

Modeling effective teaching is another requirement called for by NCATE. It asks teacher educators to “model best teaching practices,” both research- and empirically-based, by integrating what they know about their content areas, as well as what they know about teaching and learning (NCATE, 2008, p. 39). The first of task a teacher educator is to decide what to model – that is, what is effective. As Gay (2000) and Ladson-Billings (1995) argue, culturally responsive teaching is effective for all students. CRT involves getting to know one’s students, using that knowledge to help one plan lessons, and actively engaging students in their own learning – that is, engaging in constructivist pedagogy.

To model culturally responsive teaching, I began the semester by establishing a learning environment that would be culturally responsive and conducive to the kind of teaching called for by NCATE. One of my objectives in doing this was to get to know my students. I also created assignments and activities that would help me model social-constructivist theory at work. Students will better understand constructivism if they experience how it is actually used, rather than only being told about it. As Dewey said, “education is not an affair of ‘telling’ and being told, but an active and constructive process” (1916/1944, p. 46).

Scaffolding was one of the techniques called for in constructivist pedagogy that I modeled in EDU 525. We began our study of using ML in culturally responsive ways by completing a KWL Chart to determine what the students already knew about CRT and what they wanted to know about it. Based on this chart, I set out to model how spreading the teaching of these concepts out over the entire course and reinforcing them by...
repetition was more effective than devoting one whole class lecture to CRT. In this way, we “built” or “constructed” knowledge as described in MMC’s conceptual framework.

Culturally responsive teaching calls for planning lessons that incorporate knowledge of students’ backgrounds and make connections between their home and school cultures. It requires having high expectations for all students while at the same time giving students what they need so they can be successful. I modeled this in a way that I had not planned, but in a way that I believe made a lasting impact on my students. In my enthusiasm to help students understand CRT after discovering they knew nothing about the topic, I assigned articles to provide the information to them. They respectfully pointed out that the articles were not on the syllabus, and they had not realized that there would be so much “extra” reading involved. Reflecting “in-action” regarding their complaint, I agreed that they had a legitimate point.

In response to the complaint that there was more reading than I had indicated on the syllabus, i.e., the assigned articles, I decided to establish text-sharing groups in which the participants were free to divide the assigned readings among their group members in any manner they decided. They alternated the responsibility for reading the chapters in the textbook each week, and decided individually how to disseminate the information they were responsible for to their group members. By differentiating the reading assignments, they learned about meeting the needs of their students while observing the reflecting “in-action” required of reflective practitioners. Using text-sharing groups in place of requiring everyone to read all of the articles received very favorable comments from the students and was also an effective constructivist method of co-constructing knowledge. This also provided an opportunity to model another constructivist concept –
grouping students in a variety of ways to allow them multiple contexts in which they could learn from one another. The students reported in their journal reflections that although at first they were confused, they quickly saw the benefits of grouping and believed they would definitely use groups in their own teaching.

One of my goals for this study was to model the importance of using formative assessment. Before this self-study, I planned my lessons for an entire semester before the first class session, and I followed these plans every week. I “told” my teachers and teacher candidates that they should conduct frequent assessments for the purpose of allowing the data to drive their instruction, but I did not use formative assessments myself to model this practice for them. Instead, I relied on summative assessments such as quizzes, midterms, and final examinations for the purpose of assigning grades. When designing this study, I realized that it was beneficial to do formative assessments. The formative assessments, especially the Roads Activity and the Snowball Activity that I modeled during this study, were well received by my students. The participants commented that they would use these assessments in their own classrooms as “fun” ways to assess the knowledge of a topic of their entire class overall. Modeling the use of formative assessments was one of the ways I attempted to integrate what I knew about teaching and learning into the course content.

Study Limitations

As Marshall and Rossman (2006) remind us, all research has limitations; there is no such thing as a perfect design. This study is no exception. One limitation to this study was its duration; 15 weeks is a relatively short time to accomplish covering content goals,
reflection goals, and research goals simultaneously. Additionally, there was a small sample due to the small size of the EDU 525 class in which I conducted this study.

Another limitation of this study was the lack of cultural diversity. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1999) suggests that preparing teachers for culturally responsive teaching is “difficult, if not impossible” (p. 240). I concur that this important responsibility of teacher educators is a challenge when there is a lack of lived-experiences with other cultures among the teachers and teacher candidates we teach. The problem is compounded when the teacher educator has a similar lack of lived-experiences with diversity. This study was conducted from the perspective of a European American teacher educator who teaches predominately European American teachers and teacher candidates, and who is grappling with the complex issue of teaching about diversity, while still learning about diversity herself. Since the premise of the research concerned using multicultural literature as an approach to culturally responsive teaching, having a diverse population involved in the study would have provided the advantage of multiple and diverse perspectives.

EDU 525 was an elective course and students self-selected to take the course. This interest in taking the course could account for the fact that the students worked hard and did a good job, independent of the particular pedagogical techniques I used to conduct my study. Further, the students knew that I was using the data from this course for my dissertation. This awareness in itself could have resulted in the Hawthorne effect; because they were a part of the study and knew what was at stake for the researcher, the participants may have been more engaged in the course than they otherwise would have been. Likewise, this self-study could have had a similar effect on my teaching. It is easy
for teaching to become routine and automatic where one simply “goes through the motions” of teaching without examining the effectiveness of that teaching. Self-study requires teacher educators to place their teaching under a microscope each week, which can help keep teaching from becoming rote.

One of the limitations for this study was the Continuum of Shifts in Understanding. I developed the Continuum for the purpose of providing a tool to help me make sense of the corpus of data gathered from the participants’ journal reflections. The Continuum was not designed to provide a measurement in the students’ understanding, but to record shifts in their language – in their talking and in their writing – that demonstrated a change or growth in their awareness about concepts presented in class. My hope was that the Continuum would show, at a glance, the effectiveness of my teaching strategies. A problem with the Continuum is that its display is limited to one point in time, and does not reveal the on-going growth and change in the students, nor the recursive nature of learning. Perhaps representing the students’ responses in a scatter plot would better reflect the variations of their non-linear thinking patterns and better depict the diversity in the students’ awareness.

A final limitation of the study concerns the researcher’s subjectivity. In self-study research, the “researcher’s degree of involvement” with participants is an unavoidable implication, as one is both the researcher and the teacher of the class that one is researching. Being both the “researcher” and the “researched” can be viewed as a limitation; however, proponents of self-study (Berry, 2004; Loughran & Russell, 2002; Russell, 2002; Zeichner & Noffke, 2001) consider this dual role as an asset to a study rather than a limitation.
Implications for the Study

Several implications can be drawn from this study. I contend that no one cares more about the education of teachers and teacher candidates than teacher educators. They have a vested interest in their programs and their students. Their goal is to graduate teachers who are prepared to tackle the important responsibility of educating today’s children and tomorrow’s future. They understand first-hand the complicated business of teaching cultural beings, that there is no way to apply a one-size-fits-all plan. No one understands this context better than teacher educators, themselves.

This self-study has been, to borrow Schulte’s (2005) description, transformative. It changed the way I view myself as a teacher educator and the way I will approach the courses I will teach in the future. The powerful sense of purpose and accomplishment I experienced as a result of this study is difficult to describe. It was a real growing experience for me; however, I believe that the implications for this research are more far-reaching than that. This study can add to the body of knowledge about self-study research. Zeichner (2007) has called for self-study researchers to conduct their research with rigor by being explicit in describing methods that can be replicated, and by accumulating knowledge across studies. Hopefully, the Continuum of Shifts in Understanding and the rubrics I created for making my data analysis more systematic and intentional will be useful for others as they conduct self-studies to improve their own practice. Furthermore, as this study built on the work of Schulte, hopefully others will build upon this research to examine their own teaching in preparing teachers and teacher candidates for diversity.
When teacher educators conduct the kind of critical reflection demanded by self-study, it contributes to the transformation of prospective teachers’ thinking about cultural diversity by helping them develop a conscious knowledge of “the influence of culture on the way we personally make sense of and respond to the physical, social, and spiritual world” (Hollins & Guzman, 1997, p. 102). In other words, teachers and teacher candidates leave their teacher education programs with an ability to view the world from multiple perspectives. This study also has the additional benefit of providing knowledge about using multicultural literature as an approach to culturally responsive teaching.

Ultimately, children can benefit from this research by having teachers who are prepared to teach in culturally responsive ways, thus improving their academic performance and narrowing the achievement gap between different cultural groups. When teachers use multicultural literature as a part of the culturally responsive pedagogy in their classrooms, children have “mirrors and windows” to help them expand their worldviews. Peace on earth can begin with one story.

Further Research

Several issues for future research have emerged in the process of answering my questions for this research project. The participants in this study mentioned often that they were anxious to practice culturally responsive pedagogy in their future classrooms. It would be instructive to follow one or more of this study’s participants as they enter the teaching force and to observe and evaluate the impact that my teaching ultimately has on the students in their classrooms. Such a study could further point to the importance of inclusion of a CRT course in teacher education. Will these new teachers apply their new
knowledge about culturally responsive teaching in their classrooms? Will there be a difference in the impact of this knowledge when used in racially and ethnically diverse classrooms as opposed to those which are more racially and ethnically homogeneous?

Although there is a fairly obvious connection between multicultural literature and culturally responsive teaching, the connection between other subjects and culturally responsive teaching is not as straightforward. How might the important ideas about culturally responsive teaching be included in other areas of the curriculum, such as phonics, math, or science?

Classroom management is an issue about which many teacher candidates perseverate. I believe that classroom management is a non-issue when teachers have established a classroom atmosphere that is built on mutual respect and trust, where students feel safe and supported – in other words, a culturally responsive environment. The development of a classroom management course that is grounded in culturally responsive pedagogy and constructivist theory, supported with a self-study the first time I teach that course, could provide important links to CRT and the classroom communities teachers build.

A final thought for future endeavors is to follow Zeichner’s (2007) suggestion to accumulate knowledge across self-studies by compiling an edited volume of self-studies around a single issue in teacher education. I would specifically be interested in self-studies about preparing teachers and teacher candidates to teach in culturally responsive ways, regardless of the diversity of the classrooms in which they teach.
Concluding Remarks

It seems that even after self-study, changes to improve practice and reflection, there are still the Nikkis of this world, who do not learn, or resist, or balk at what we have tried to teach them. Unfortunately, it is often those students who need the information the most urgently, who are the most resistant to accepting it. Take, for instance, the following journal entry that Nikki wrote:

I was not a big fan of the article that was to be read for the week. I took offense to the way they referred to teachers as not being ready to teach African American students. Who is to say that any teacher is ever really ready. I thought that teaching was to be a learning experience. I feel that I was ready to teach when I graduated. Not all teachers are going to teach in an inner city school so why make that a main focus of learning? (Nikki, 070228_J_05)

Nikki is precisely the target student / future educator for whom I am proposing the change to culturally responsive teaching that is needed in K-12 classes. Yet her reflections throughout the semester, like her journal entry above, left me feeling frustrated and deflated. Nikki clearly did not want to address or change her ethnocentrism. She seemed to carry an unconscious racism that she was not willing to let go of. What is exasperating about her remarks in the above paragraph is that she brazenly announces that it would not be within the realm of possibilities for her to seek a position that would involve forcing her out of her comfort zone of white middle-class small-town America. In other words, she declares that this class on multiculturalism does not pertain
to her career goals. This is precisely why I believe that teacher education programs must be revamped to include multicultural education not as one or two classes, but as part of all the teacher education curriculum.

And then there was Dwayne, a football coach. I assumed that he had registered for EDU 525 because the course fit into his coaching schedule. He missed a couple of classes early in the semester because of his coaching responsibilities, and he turned in his assignments late. These things did not surprise me because I had subconsciously pegged Dwayne into my own stereotype of a “coach” that I had arrived at over the years. I was certain he was not serious about anything but football. Following is Dwayne’s final reflection, which was humbling to my prejudiced perception of him, and at the same time a delight to read, because, unlike Nikki, he had “changed” beyond my wildest expectations:

I used to be a very "to the point" football coach. Yes sir, no sir type of guy. Very strict and demanding. For a while I struggled to change, having a lot to do with the prejudices we have talked about all semester. My style of coaching fell under the belief that I am right and any other way is wrong. As I moved further into the semester, I began to take some of the things we discussed and read about becoming multicultural and applied them to my coaching techniques. I stripped myself of the disciplinarian mono-cultural perspective and began to work on becoming the kind of educator I want to be. I am working on creating an atmosphere built on mutual respect and trust. As I have started to lose the image of "I am the Law," my guys have started to work as a community. At the beginning of this semester if someone would have told me I would change the way I coach I would have laughed. But now, learning how vital it is to teach in a culturally authentic way, I realize these lessons don't just apply to the classroom. As my views begin to broaden and my understanding grows, I wish for my child and for my students to experience what has happened to me. That is, to be able to understand and reach people in a way that is understood by them. Once we have begun to build those kinds of
relationships, and rid ourselves of the sub-conscious biases we have, we will be able to let go of prejudices and instead hold kinships with people from other cultures we never thought possible. (070502_MR_14)

These remarks of Dwayne both pleased me and made me see how wrong I was in my prejudgment of him, as I had been of Nikki, to assume she would be my “star student.” I would have thought that Dwayne was just taking the class for the credits he needed. In contrast, if I were to have made an educated guess at the beginning of the course who would make the most of what I had to offer in EDU 525, I would have picked Nikki, a wife and a mother who already had some teaching experience. I would have thought that she, of all the students in my room, would have had a vested interest in learning about culturally responsive teaching. So I learned from both Nikki and Dwayne to become aware of my prejudgments and to get to know my students as quickly as I can.

I learned especially from Nikki and Dwayne that part of being culturally responsive is to let each student enter my classroom, not necessarily as an “empty slate,” but with a “clean slate.” I learned to begin to get to know my students on the first day of class, and begin with the information they provide me, rather than with my own preconceived ideas about them – whether based on their profession in life, the language they use, or the clothes they wear. Therein lies the root of one of the challenges that all teachers face: we cannot know what our students are thinking unless they make it apparent to us. One way to get to know our students would be by creating a culturally responsive learning environment that is safe and supportive, one in which people are willing to risk exposure. In this self-study, I found that the autobiographical assignment and the reflective journal were especially efficacious in drawing students out.
One of the most important lessons I have learned from this self-study is that there is always more to learn. Whether as a teacher in a primary classroom or a teacher educator preparing teachers, learning to teach is not a four- or five-year process. It is a lifelong commitment to continue learning and to improve practice through self-study. We have the responsibility to help all students reach their potential through CRT, and more importantly, to be effective educators through modeling. Learning to teach involves a lifelong commitment to reflective practice. It involves looking at oneself and remembering, as Sartre suggests, “Persons are forever in process [and] forever growing…. We cannot be obliged to be what we are; we must continue making ourselves what we might be” (Sartre as cited in Greene, 1988, p. 97.).

I conclude this study the way it began: with the same passion for multicultural literature, the same belief that it is critical for teachers and teacher candidates to know about using ML as an approach to culturally responsive teaching, and the same commitment to improving my practice. I believe that culturally responsive teaching is not just about “reading” authentic multicultural literature to expose children to other cultures; it is about fostering an understanding and appreciation for other cultures; it is about focusing on people’s similarities and celebrating their differences; it is about expelling prejudice and eliciting understanding.

I move forward from this research with a better understanding of how my pedagogy affects teacher candidates’ outcomes and how it prepares them to teach in a global society, as well as with a commitment to continue my journey in becoming a reflective practitioner. My hope is that other teacher educators will, as a result of this study, share the commitment to engage in self-study and reflective practice. Hopefully,
this dissertation will also serve as a reminder to other teacher educators, as it did to me, the awesome responsibility we face in preparing future teachers. It is also my hope that others feel compelled, as I do, to live up to this responsibility and just as importantly, to foster this sense of responsibility in the teachers and teacher candidates whose lives we touch.

What I already knew and what was confirmed by this study is that all students enter our classrooms with prior experiences that shape their knowledge and sometimes interfere with our expectations. What I really had not focused on before this study is that I, too, enter my classroom with my own prior experiences that shape who I am as a teacher. C. Wright Mills (1959/1976) claims that a researcher’s unique contribution will come at the intersection of her biography, her values, her experiences, and other aspects of herself and her research project. I am the European American granddaughter of Italian immigrants who came to this country so that their twelve children and their children’s children could receive an education in the land of promise. I am the daughter of two loving parents who instilled in me a love for life and a thirst for knowledge that ultimately prompted me to pursue this dream. I am a wife of 40 years, a mother of four children and their spouses, and a grandmother blessed with eleven grandchildren. I am a teacher educator, a researcher, and a scholar. And all these aspects of me enter the classroom with me, even if, like the Cultural Iceberg, they may be submerged. Through this self-study, I have come to understand that much of my culture lies beneath the surface. But without doubt, these aspects influence who I am and what I choose to do in my classrooms. By raising culturally responsive teaching to an explicit level through this self-study, I realize now that I must be aware of how I infuse CRT into my work.
My years have taught me the value and wonders of life, and how to keep life’s challenges in perspective. They have taught me that we are never too old to learn or too young to teach. My years of experience have led me to imagine the kind of world I want for my grandchildren and my grandchildren’s grandchildren – a world much like the one of hope that brought my grandparents here so many years ago. A world of peace achieved by cultural understanding, where diversity is not just accepted, but is celebrated.

I believe that this world can become a reality in teacher education programs that are committed to making certain that their teacher educators are reflective practitioners dedicated to the self-study and improvement of their own practice. In classrooms where teacher educators understand what is at stake and are committed to preparing teachers to teach in culturally responsive ways. In a world where teachers establish communities built on an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust, have high expectations for all their students, and where their students feel safe and supported.

I am, always have been, and will always be, an idealist. If we did not, as the Little Engine that Could, believe that we “can” teach, the fact is that we could not. It takes an idealistic, Pollyanna mentality to remain positive and enthusiastic in our teaching. I relied heavily on those qualities to get me through this research process. I also relied on Dewey’s (1944) and Schön’s (1983) notion of reflexivity to keep me grounded in reality, open-minded to all possible interpretations of the data, and responsible in reporting my findings.

In my future classes, I hope to inspire the teachers and teacher candidates to espouse a culturally responsive pedagogy and become reflective practitioners. I would like to enable them to value their students as individuals and encourage mutual respect.
between all of the members in their classrooms. As we improve our teacher education programs, teachers and teacher candidates will leave our programs equipped with the skills to establish classroom atmospheres where children feel supported and safe to take risks. When we successfully model culturally responsive teaching, our students will in turn build communities of learners where similarities are acknowledged and differences are celebrated, and where all are engaged as agents for change in this ever-changing world.
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APPENDIX A
SYLLABUS MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE SUMMER 06
Conceptual Framework

Vital Connections

The teacher licensure programs at MMC are based on a constructivist philosophy. This means that the preservice and inservice teachers in our programs build or construct their knowledge as a result of a student-centered, hands-on approach to learning. From the beginning of their experience at MMC, our students are actively involved in their coursework and clinical/field experiences.

Specifically, the students build or construct their new knowledge about teaching and learning with several tools - **theory, practice, and reflection**. These are the building tools that connect the constructivist core of the conceptual framework to each of the teacher education licensure programs.

- **Theory** - principles of teaching and learning
- **Practice** - clinical and field experience
- **Reflection** - thinking about, evaluating and revising one's teaching and learning

Thus, constructivism is at the core of the conceptual framework, and the building tools of **theory, practice, and reflection** connect this core to each of the licensure programs.
“In a multicultural curriculum there are few stimuli with greater potential to move people to action than literature. Because it tells the stories of human events and the human condition and not simply the facts, literature does more than change minds; it changes hearts. And people with changed hearts are people who can move the world.”

T. V. Rasinski & N. D. Padak

Course Description:

This course is a survey of multicultural literature for children, emphasizing the use of multicultural literature as both mirrors and windows through which children might learn more about themselves and others. It will examine the use of multicultural children’s literature in early and middle childhood classrooms, to promote cultural understanding and affirm the value of diversity in a global society. Students will read from a wide variety of literature that presents an accurate portrayal of various ethnic groups including but not limited to African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American cultures. Theoretical and historical perspectives of multicultural literature, as well as current trends, issues, controversies, and classroom implications will be explored. Open to all Junior and Senior undergraduate and all graduate students. No prerequisites. Offered SP and SU semesters.

Course Goals:

1. Candidates will develop an awareness of and an appreciation for the importance of multicultural literature and its place in the curriculum.

2. Candidates will become acquainted with currently available multicultural literature appropriate for grades P-8, about and/or by major parallel cultures in the U.S.

3. Candidates will develop the ability to critique multicultural literature in terms of literary quality and treatment of the group portrayed.

4. Candidates will affirm the value of diversity within the U.S. and respect for cultures around the globe.
Course Requirements:

1. Class attendance/participation: participate in class discussions/activities. (See Rubric)

2. Text/Poetry Sharing:
   For each class meeting, bring a text or a poem that connects to the assigned literature for that day (as indicated on the syllabus), and is appropriate for the grade and reading level of your choice. In small groups, assigned by grade level, you will be expected to share your text or poem, both verbally and in writing. The written sharing should include: (1) the bibliographic information; (2) a one-paragraph annotation; (3) the grade/s and reading level/s for which it is appropriate. This written sharing should be submitted to me electronically via email attachment PRIOR to class, and a hard copy should be submitted IN class. Additionally, at each class, your group will select one text/poem to share with the whole class. Be sure that each person shares with the whole class at least one time throughout the summer session.

3. Response Journal:
   Maintain a weekly journal with entries for each day of class. You can reflect on your personal reactions to content covered in your assigned text readings and/or class discussions. You can also share a personal reaction to the theme, characters, etc. of the assigned literature. I am NOT looking for a summary of the stories, but rather a personal reaction you felt as a result of reading the stories. The length of the journal responses will vary, and should be appropriate to the subject matter.

4. Final Project: (Choose one of the following)
   a. Choose one aspect of your curriculum and describe how you can incorporate multicultural literature as an integral part of it. Begin by examining what already exists. For example, look at your read-alouds. Do they fit the criteria for authentic and un-stereotypical literature? What changes can you make to ensure diversity in your future selections? Do the multicultural books you currently use provide “mirrors” for all the cultures represented in your classroom? Do they provide “windows” through which your students can learn about other cultures? Submit a paper (about 5 pages) in which you describe (1) what exists currently in your program; (2) what changes you will make; (3) justify your changes. Attach an annotated bibliography (beyond the 5 pages) of at least 10 books you will add to your curriculum. Use APA style for references and bibliography.

   b. Booklist: read and annotate 40 picture books (early childhood) or 4 novels (middle childhood or aya) that are considered to be authentic children’s multicultural literature. Fill in the information requested in the Excel template you will receive as an E-mail attachment. Return completed booklist via E-mail attachment. Type “EDU 525 BOOKLIST_Last Name” in the subject line. Also, be sure to type your name in the booklist template in the space provided at the top.
c. Create your own adventure: make a suggestion of something you would like to pursue in relation to multicultural children’s literature.

*Student input is welcomed and appreciated. Assignments more than 24 hours late will not be accepted.*

**Textbook:**


**Required Readings:**

- Bruchac, J., *The heart of a chief.*
- Paulson, G., *Nightjohn.*
- Rosen, M., *The blessing of the animals.*
- Hamilton, V., *M. C. Higgins, the Great.*
- Ryan, P. M., *Esperanza rising.*
- Levinthan, D., *Boy meets boy*

**Class Schedule:** Tuesday & Thursday 8:00 – 12:00

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week &amp; Date</th>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Readings Fox</th>
<th>Readings Novels</th>
<th>Assignments Due</th>
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<td>Introduction Defining Terms</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 06/08</td>
<td>Authenticity African Americans</td>
<td>Chapters 1 &amp; 2 Chapter 13</td>
<td><em>Nightjohn</em></td>
<td>Journal Text Sharing</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 06/13</td>
<td>Asian Americans</td>
<td>Chapter 14 Chapter 16</td>
<td><em>A single shard</em></td>
<td>Text Sharing Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 06/15</td>
<td>American Indians</td>
<td>Chapters 15 &amp; 17</td>
<td><em>The heart of a chief</em></td>
<td>Text Sharing Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 06/20</td>
<td>Stereotypes Jews L.G.B.T.Q.</td>
<td>Chapter 18 Chapter 7 Chapter 11</td>
<td><em>The blessing of the animals Boy meets boy</em></td>
<td>Text Sharing Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 06/22</td>
<td>Appalachians</td>
<td>Chapter 21</td>
<td><em>M. C. Higgins, the Great</em></td>
<td>Text Sharing Journal</td>
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COURSE EVALUATION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>DUE</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1. Class Participation</td>
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<td>20 @ day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Booklist</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>As scheduled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Text / Poetry Sharings</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>See syllabus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Journal</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>Daily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Final Project</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>6/29</td>
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The Education Department **Grading Scale** is as follows:

<table>
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<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>100 – 93%</td>
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<td>84 - 75%</td>
<td>C</td>
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<tr>
<td>74 - 65%</td>
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</table>

Relationship to Conceptual Framework:

Inclusion of the conceptual framework is evident through the literature response journal assignment. Students are asked to consider the theory they’ve learned in class, apply that theory to the assigned readings, then reflect on their personal connections to the literature.

Technology:

Candidates are expected to submit electronic entries for various assignments, for example, the “Text Sharing” assignment. There are also encouraged to explore suggested websites for further information.
Relationship to Standards:

The specific INTASC standards covered in this course are:
• Principle #2: The teacher understands how children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social and personal development.
• Principle #3: the teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.
• Principle #6: The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal, and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
• Principle #9: The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others
• Principle #10: The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students’ learning and well-being.

Diversity:

Students are expected to consider issues of equity and diversity in every class. They are expected to teach from multicultural and global perspectives that draw on histories, experiences, and diverse cultural backgrounds of all people (NCATE Standard IV).

What Students have the Opportunity to Learn:

Candidates will have the opportunity to:
• Present subject matter content that is aligned with Ohio Academic Content Standards in a clear and meaningful way.
• Focus on students’ learning by using assessments in instruction that are based on students’ developmental levels and prior knowledge and experience.
• Use theory, practice, and reflection to construct their own learning.
• Adapt instruction to diverse learners.
• Meet Praxis II criteria
• Meet INTASC and NCATE standards listed above.

Attendance Policy:

Due to the accelerated nature of summer session, attendance is required for all scheduled class meetings.
**Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism:**

It is understood that all work is the student’s own. Please refer to the College “Planner” for the College policy and procedures for Academic Dishonesty. Plagiarism could result in the student being dismissed from the College.

**Special Needs:**

If you are a student with a special need, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor verbally by the end of the first class and then provide verification in writing from the Learning Center by the second week of class so that any accommodations can be arranged.

**RECOMMENDED READINGS**


*Syllabus subject to change*
Conceptual Framework  
Vital Connections

The teacher licensure programs at MMC are based on a constructivist philosophy. This means that the preservice and inservice teachers in our programs build or construct their knowledge as a result of a student-centered, hands-on approach to learning. From the beginning of their experience at MMC, our students are actively involved in their coursework and clinical/field experiences.

Specifically, the students build or construct their new knowledge about teaching and learning with several tools - **theory, practice, and reflection**. These are the building tools that connect the constructivist core of the conceptual framework to each of the teacher education licensure programs.

**Theory** - principles of teaching and learning  
**Practice** - clinical and field experience  
**Reflection** - thinking about, evaluating and revising one's teaching and learning

Thus, constructivism is at the core of the conceptual framework, and the building tools of **theory, practice, and reflection** connect this core to each of the licensure programs.
“In a multicultural curriculum there are few stimuli with greater potential to move people to action than literature. Because it tells the stories of human events and the human condition and not simply the facts, literature does more than change minds; it changes hearts. And people with changed hearts are people who can move the world.”

T. V. Rasinski & N. D. Padak

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to the study of multicultural literature for children and young adults, emphasizing the use of multicultural literature as a culturally responsive approach to teaching. It will examine the use of multicultural literature in classrooms, to promote cultural understanding and affirm the value of diversity in a global society. There will be a strong emphasis on the selection of authentic literature that presents an accurate portrayal of various underrepresented groups including but not limited to African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American cultures. Theoretical and historical perspectives of multicultural literature, as well as current trends, issues, controversies, and classroom implications will be explored. Open to all Junior and Senior undergraduate and all graduate students. No prerequisites. Offered SP and SU semesters.

Course Goals:

1. Candidates will develop an awareness of and an appreciation for the importance of multicultural literature and its place in the curriculum.

2. Candidates will become acquainted with currently available multicultural literature appropriate for grades P-8, about and/or by major parallel cultures in the U.S.

3. Candidates will develop the ability to critique multicultural literature in terms of literary quality and treatment of the group portrayed.

4. Candidates will affirm the value of diversity within the U.S. and respect for cultures around the globe.

Course Requirements:

1. **Class attendance/participation:** participate in class discussions/activities. (See rubric)

2. **Autobiographical Narrative:** Write an autobiographical sketch of ONE experience, event, ritual, tradition, etc. from your life. This should not be a summary of your entire life, but rather a “snapshot” that reveals something
significant about you and your life, your values, culture, world view, etc. In addition, select an artifact (picture, special object, etc.) to share that is related to your story. Be prepared to share (not read) your story and your artifact with the class. Extra credit: bring a children’s book to share that you feel is closely related to or enhances your autobiography in some way.

3. **Critical Text Reflections:**
   Write a 2-page critical reflection for 6 text chapters of your choice.

4. **Literature Circles - TBA**

5. **Reflective Journal:**
   Maintain a reflective journal with entries for each week of class. These entries should reflect a personal response to: the theme, characters, etc. of the assigned novel and/or self-selected literature; reactions to class discussions or professional readings, considering such topics as the theoretical perspectives discussed in class, etc. “Reflective writing enables the documentation of experiences, thoughts, questions, ideas and conclusions that signpost our learning journey. A scholarly approach to teaching requires critical inquiry into practice and into learning; change and improvement result after reflection, planning and action. Keeping a journal develops this as part of our every day practice.” (From http://www.clt.uts.edu.au/Scholarship/ Reflective.journal.htm). Journals are of limited value if you just record activities you have done. To gain the full benefit, you need to reflect on what has taken place. Some areas to include (a) Focus on the experience and think "aloud" in your writing (b) Focus on a critical incident that took place in your classroom (c) Take stock of your learning (what's the most important thing I learned today, what surprised you? Etc.). The length of the journal reflections will vary, and should be appropriate to the subject matter and your depth of analysis.

6. **Final Project:** (Choose one of the following)
   a. Teach 2 classroom lessons: Select multicultural literature you have become aware of during this course and share them with a group of children. You may want to follow up your reading with appropriate activities that relate to the students’ cultural understandings. Submit a paper (5-7 pages) that describes your procedures and analyzes the children’s responses. Did the children respond to the texts as you predicted? Did they have prior knowledge of the culture? What background information did you provide to scaffold their understanding of the text/s? Lessons should take into consideration the diversity of students in the classroom, and should be aligned to curriculum standards and state indicators.

   b. Write a scholarly paper (7 - 10 pages) on a topic of interest related to multicultural literature for children. Some ideas: an in-depth study of the works of one author; a critical review of the research on response to
multicultural literature; a critical examination of the “authenticity”
controversy; a content analysis of a set of books that come under the
multicultural umbrella (e.g. The image of Vietnamese and Korean immigrants
in recent picture books.)

c. Author Study: write a short biography of an author. Write an annotated
booklist with teaching ideas for each book. Include other information such as
websites that will be useful.

d. Create your own adventure: submit a written description of something you
would like to pursue in relation to multicultural children’s literature not
outlined above. Provide details of the project including suggestions for
assessment. Projects will be considered for approval on an individual or small
group basis.

7. Booklist
Write an annotation for each authentic book you bring to share (at least 30 picture
books or 3 novels). Enter them into the template provided via email attachment.
Submit the booklist via email attachment to each your peers and myself on or
before the due date.

8. Meta-reflection
a. Read all your “records” (i.e. journals and responses, autobiography, class
notes, critical text reflections, etc.)
b. Look for patterns, common topics/themes, problems, concerns, etc., and jot
them down.
c. Reorganize these notes into categories.
d. Re-examine these records with the express purpose of identifying passages
that provide examples links between journals, knowledge, theory, and
practice.
e. Organize these examples to show evidence of growth
f. Tell how new understandings will make a difference in your teaching (typed
to hand in – format of your choice)
g. Be prepared to present your evidence at a 15 minute scheduled exit interview.

9. Final Exam

_Student input is welcomed and appreciated. Assignments more than 24 hours
late will not be accepted._
Textbook:


Required Readings:

Park, L.S., A single shard.
Bruchac, J., The Heart of a Chief
Littman, S.D., Confessions of a Closet Catholic
Hamilton, V., M.C. Higgins, the Great
Levithan, D., Boy Meets Boy
Ryan, P.M., Esperanza Rising

Class Schedule: Wednesday: 5:00 – 7:50

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<th>Novels</th>
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<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Authenticity African Americans</td>
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<td>Autobiographical Narrative</td>
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<td>3 01/24</td>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>2 &amp;14</td>
<td>The Watson’s go to Birmingham</td>
<td>Book Sharing</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 01/31</td>
<td>American Indians</td>
<td>6, 12, &amp;15</td>
<td>The Heart of a Chief</td>
<td>Book Sharing</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 02/07</td>
<td>Using Multicultural Literature in Classrooms</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Project Proposal</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 02/14</td>
<td>Asian Americans</td>
<td>9 &amp;16</td>
<td>A Single Shard</td>
<td>Book Sharing</td>
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<td>7 02/21</td>
<td>Appalachians</td>
<td></td>
<td>MC Higgins, the Great</td>
<td>Book Sharing</td>
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<tr>
<td>8 02/28</td>
<td>Using Multicultural Literature in Classrooms</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>9 03/21</td>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>7 &amp; 8</td>
<td>Confessions of a Closet Catholic</td>
<td>Book Sharing</td>
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<tr>
<td>10 03/28</td>
<td>L.G.B.T.Q.</td>
<td>3 &amp; 11</td>
<td>Boy Meets Boy</td>
<td>Book Sharing</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Activity</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/04</td>
<td>Using Multicultural Literature in Classrooms</td>
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<tr>
<td>04/11</td>
<td>Latinos 5 &amp; 19 <em>Esperanza Rising</em></td>
<td>Book Sharing</td>
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<td>Poetry Sharing Reflection Paper</td>
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<td>Celebrating Diversity – Project Presentations</td>
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<td>05/02</td>
<td>Celebrating Diversity – Project Presentations</td>
<td>Final Project</td>
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**COURSE EVALUATION**

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<tr>
<th>ASSIGNMENT</th>
<th>POINTS</th>
<th>DUE</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Class Participation</td>
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<td>Daily</td>
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<td>7. Autobiographical Narrative</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>1/17 or /24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Literature Circles</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>TBA</td>
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<tr>
<td>9. Journal</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>Daily</td>
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<tr>
<td>10. Meta-reflection</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>04/18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Critical Text Reflections</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>TBA</td>
</tr>
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<td>12. Final Project</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>4/18</td>
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<td>13. Booklist</td>
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<td>14. Final Exam</td>
<td>80</td>
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<tr>
<td>84 - 75%</td>
<td>C</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>74 - 65%</td>
<td>D</td>
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**Relationship to Conceptual Framework:**

Inclusion of the conceptual framework is evident through the literature response journal assignment. Students are asked to consider the theory they’ve learned in class, apply that theory to the assigned readings, then *reflect* on their personal connections to the literature.

**Technology:**

Candidates are expected to submit electronic entries for various assignments, for example, the “Booklist” assignment. There are also encouraged to explore suggested websites for further information.

**Relationship to Standards:**

The specific INTASC standards covered in this course are:

- **Principle #2:** The teacher understands how children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social and personal development.
- **Principle #3:** the teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.
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What Students have the Opportunity to Learn:

Candidates will have the opportunity to:

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• Focus on students’ learning by using assessments in instruction that are based on students’ developmental levels and prior knowledge and experience.
• Use theory, practice, and reflection to construct their own learning.
• Adapt instruction to diverse learners.
• Meet Praxis II criteria
• Meet INTASC and NCATE standards listed above.

Attendance Policy:

Persons preparing to teach should exhibit those attitudes appropriate to professional teaching. Therefore, students, in accordance with Educational Department Policy, are excused from class only for college business, illness, or family emergency. Please notify me in advance if possible.

Academic Dishonesty/Plagiarism:

It is understood that all work is the student’s own. Please refer to the College “Planner” for the College policy and procedures for Academic Dishonesty. Plagiarism could result in the student being dismissed from the College.

Special Needs:

If you are a student with a special need, it is your responsibility to notify the instructor verbally by the end of the first class and then provide verification in writing from the Learning Center by the second week of class so that any accommodations can be arranged.
RECOMMENDED READINGS


RECOMMENDED WEBSITES

http://aila.library.sd.gov/

http://www.oyate.org/books-to-avoid/index.html

http://www.leeandlow.com/home/index.html

http://www.uwm.edu/Dept/CLACS/outreach/americas.html

http://www.ala.org/ala/emiert/coretascottkingbookaward/coretascott.cfm

http://www.ala.org/ala/alsc/awardscholarships/literaryawds/belpremedal/belpremedal.htm
APPENDIX C
LAY SUMMARY
Lay Summary: (Verbal presentation of research)

1. Who I am.


3. What I will do with the results: I will report my findings in my dissertation. I may use the results to write articles in the future. I may present my findings at a conference such as AERA.

4. How participants and site were selected: selected because it is the course I decided to use for my self-study.

5. Benefits and risks: minimal risks may include discomfort with topics of course and confusion and/or discomfort with old or new beliefs and assumptions.

6. Promise of confidentiality and anonymity: all materials, audio-tapes, artifacts will be kept under lock and key at researcher’s house. All identifying information will be stripped and pseudonyms will be used. No one will have access to the data other than the researcher.

7. How often and who interview: 1 – 3 interviews will be conducted with individual students selected to clarify or expound on responses; 1 or 2 focus group interviews will also be conducted.

8. How long each session will last: interviews will last approximately 30 – 45 minutes.

9. Request to record observation and words by audiotape and transcription.

10. Answer any questions the teacher candidates have.

11. Invite the teacher candidates to agree to be a part of the study.

12. Hand out the consent form and allow teacher candidates’ time to look it over for questions. They should sign the form if they choose to participate.

13. Explain to them that they do not have to participate and that they can change their minds later.
Consent Form

I consent to my participation in research being conducted by Mary Jo SanGregory, a Ph.D. Candidate at The Ohio State University and Assistant Professor of Early Childhood Education at MMC.

Prof. SanGregory has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures that will be followed, and the amount of time it will take. I understand the possible benefits, or lack of, for my participation.

I know that I can choose not to participate without penalty to me. If I agree to participate, I know I can withdraw from the study at any time and there will not be a penalty.

I consent to the use of audiotapes during literature circles, during class lectures, and during interviews. I also consent to an individual interview, focus group interviews, and photocopies of artifacts including but not limited to reflective journal entries and a personal narrative assignment. I understand that none of the artifacts or audiotapes will be in anyway a part of the evaluation for this course. I further understand that all artifacts will be stripped of all identifying information through use of pseudonyms. Prof. SanGregory has explained that the information will be used primarily for purposes of her dissertation, and she may also present the findings at a conference or through a journal article.

I have had a chance to ask questions and to obtain answers to my questions. If I have other questions I can contact Mrs. SanGregory at home (555-555-5302), or work (555-555-2125 ext. 2134), or via email at <msangreg@mmc.edu>. I can also call Dr. Laurie Katz at 614-292-2111 or E-mail katz.124@osu.edu. If I have questions about my rights as a research participant, I can call Sandra Meadows, Human Subjects Manager, at the Office of Responsible Research Practices at (614) 688-8641, or contact her via E-mail at <meadows.8@osu.edu>.

I have read this form and I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy has been give to me.

Name of Participant: ____________________________________________

Print

Date: _______________ Signed: ________________________________

Participant

(Researcher) (Witness)
## Transcript log

**Asian American Children's Literature**

### 1
I explained the "You have the last word" debriefing activity.

### 2
The students met in groups to discuss Chapters 9 & 16. I gave groups discussion guide questions and told them the questions were "guides" only and not to limit their discussion to those questions. Only one group wrote something on the back of their sheets that was not asked on the front. It was Nikki, Alene, Molly and Addison. They wrote about folktales and how it is important to explain some before reading them. They were concerned with the authenticity of folktales. This was the only group that understood that authenticity is not just being accurate and avoiding stereotypes but also has cultural values met, while accuracy is basically focused on getting the facts right. For Chapter 9 all the groups agree that you can't write about a culture if you haven't lived it or researched it enough to accurately portray the culture they are writing about.

### 3
Chapter 9 discussion (Shawn): "I hated this chapter. I felt that the author complained the whole time and if she really felt that strongly about books not being written about her culture she should do something about it and go out and write books instead of complaining the whole time. She needs to get over herself. She sounded bitter the whole time. A few of her points I agreed with. You can't just put on a mask and pretend you are part of a culture. But I think in her analogies she took some things to the extreme.

While groups discussed, I facilitated. I really enjoy listening to the group’s discussions. The groups stayed on task and everyone participated. Some were very passionate tonight, articulating that Seto went beyond the limits in expecting authenticity.

### 4
Alene talked about going to Mexico for 3 weeks and coming back and being able to write authentically about that culture. She didn't think that would be cultural thievery because she had experienced the culture first had. She asked "Is that still stealing because you were not born there?"

I answered that "It could be" and said it depended on what you were attempting to say. If you're just trying to say: "I had an experience and this is what I understand as a result of that experience," it's different than saying: "I had an experience and this is what that culture is about." You need to make it clear that, "from your perspective, this is what this tradition is like." To really understand a culture, you need to spend much more than a month with that culture. You need to really steep yourself in that culture and you have to make certain that you put your work up to that culture for scrutiny.
APPENDIX F
SNOWBALL ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY
Snowball Pre-Assessment Activity

1. How comfortable are you explaining authenticity and accuracy in multicultural literature?
   A. I am very comfortable and could explain it to anyone.
   B. I think I could explain it to someone.
   C. I’m not really confident I understand it well enough to explain it to others.
   D. I do not know about it and/or would not be comfortable attempting to explain it.

2. How comfortable are you with the concept of culturally relevant teaching?
   A. I am very comfortable and could explain it to anyone.
   B. I think I could explain it to someone.
   C. I’m not really confident I understand it well enough to explain it to others.
   D. I do not know about it and/or would not be comfortable attempting to explain it.

3. How knowledgeable are you with Latino children’s multicultural literature?
   A. I know 10 or more titles that I could recommend and discuss.
   B. I know between 5 and 10 titles that I could recommend and discuss.
   C. I know 5 or less titles that I could recommend and discuss.
   D. I do not know any titles at this point.

4. How knowledgeable are you about the 10 ways to analyze books for stereotypes?
   A. I could talk about 8 - 10 ways to analyze books.
   B. I could talk about between 5 - 8 ways to analyze books.
   C. I could talk about 3 - 5 ways to analyze books.
   D. I don’t remember any of the ways to analyze books.

5. Compared to where I was before taking this class…
   A. I am much more knowledgeable about multicultural literature than before.
   B. I am somewhat more knowledgeable about ml
   C. I don’t know any more now than I did before.
Snowball Post-Assessment Activity

1. How comfortable are you explaining authenticity and accuracy in multicultural literature?
   A. I am very comfortable and could explain it to anyone.
   B. I think I could explain it to someone.
   C. I’m not really confident I understand it well enough to explain it to others.
   D. I do not know about it and/or would not be comfortable attempting to explain it.

2. How comfortable are you with the concept of culturally relevant teaching?
   A. I am very comfortable and could explain it to anyone.
   B. I think I could explain it to someone.
   C. I’m not really confident I understand it well enough to explain it to others.
   D. I do not know about it and/or would not be comfortable attempting to explain it.

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   C. I could talk about 3 - 5 ways to analyze books.
   D. I don’t remember any of the ways to analyze books.

5. Compared to where I was before taking this class…
   A. I am much more knowledgeable about multicultural literature than before.
   B. I am somewhat more knowledgeable about ml
   C. I don’t know any more now than I did before
SNOWBALL ACTIVITY
1. Pass out survey
2. Explain that this is our pre-assessment to determine prior knowledge
3. Have each person answer the first question.
4. Make a snowball and throw it to the center of the room.
5. Calmly retrieve a snowball, open and answer 2nd question.
6. Continue until all questions are answered and throw snowball.
7. Retrieve snowball for last time to use for human graph.

HUMAN GRAPH ACTIVITY
1. Direct participants to charts displayed in room. (A, B, C, D, E)
2. Read question, have participants stand under the letter filled in on their survey.
3. Record findings.
4. Continue on with each additional question.
APPENDIX G
HIDDEN RULES AMONG CLASSES QUIZ
Test Your Knowledge of the Hidden Rules of Class:
How well could you survive?

People who grow up in poverty learn different things from people who grow up wealthy or in middle class. But most schools and businesses operate with middle-class norms, and most teachers and business people grew up learning the hidden rules of middle-class families. It's no surprise, then, that children of poverty often struggle in education and business environments:

In her book *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, Dr. Ruby K. Payne presents lists of survival skills needed by different societal classes. Test your skills by answering the following questions.

**Could you survive in middle class? Check each item that applies. I know how to ...**

- _____ get my children into Little League, piano lessons, and soccer.
- _____ set a table properly.
- _____ find stores that sell the clothing brands my family wears.
- _____ order comfortably in a nice restaurant.
- _____ use a credit card, checking and/or savings account.
- _____ evaluate insurance: life, disability, 20/80 medical, homeowners, and personal-property.
- _____ talk to my children about going to college.
- _____ get the best interest rate on my car loan.
- _____ explain the differences among the principal, interest, and escrow statements on my house payment.
- _____ help my children with homework and don’t hesitate to make a call if I need more information.
- _____ decorate the house for each holiday.
- _____ get a library card.
- _____ use the different tools in the garage.
- _____ repair items in my house almost immediately after they break, or I know a repair service and call it.
Could you survive in poverty? Check each item that applies. I know how to...:

- find the best rummage sales.
- locate grocery stores’ garbage bins that have thrown-away food.
- bail someone out of jail.
- physically fight and defend myself.
- get a gun, even if I have a police record.
- keep my clothes from being stolen at the laundromat.
- sniff out problems in a used car.
- live without a checking account.
- manage without electricity and a phone.
- entertain friends with just my personality and stories.
- get by when I don’t have money to pay the bills.
- move in half a day.
- get and use food stamps.
- find free medical clinics.
- get around without a car.
- use a knife as scissors.

Could you survive in wealth? Check each item that applies. I can...:

- can read a menu in French, English and another language.
- have favorite restaurants in different countries around the world.
- know how to hire a professional decorator to help decorate your home during the holidays.
____ can name your preferred financial advisor, lawyer, designer, hairdresser and domestic-employment service.:

____ have at least two homes that are staffed and maintained.:

____ know how to ensure confidentiality and loyalty with domestic staff.:

____ use two or three "screens" that keep people whom you don’t wish to see away from you.:

____ fly in your own plane, the company plane, or the Concorde.:

____ know how to enroll your children in the preferred private schools.:

____ are on the boards of at least two charities.:

____ know the hidden rules of the Junior League.:

____ support or buy the work of a particular artist.:

____ know how to read a corporate balance sheet and analyze your own financial statements.:

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APPENDIX H
CULTURAL ICEBERG
Figure H.1 Cultural Iceberg

APPENDIX I
ARTICLES USED
Articles Used:


Textbook Chapters:


APPENDIX K

10 QUICK WAYS TO ANALYZE BOOKS
FOR RACISM AND SEXISM
10 Quick Ways to Analyze Children’s Books
For Racism and Sexism

Both in school and out of school, young children are exposed to racist and sexist attitudes. These attitudes—expressed repeatedly in books and other media—gradually distort children’s perceptions until stereotypes and myths about minorities and women are accepted as reality. It is difficult for librarians or teachers to convince children to question society’s attitudes; but if children can learn to detect racism and sexism in books, they can transfer that skill to other areas. The following ten guidelines can be used by teachers, librarians, and other educators to evaluate children’s books and to help students detect racism and sexism in the books they read.

1. Check the Illustrations

*Look for stereotypes.* A stereotype, which usually has derogatory implications, is an oversimplified generalization about a particular group, race, or sex. Some infamous (overt) stereotypes of blacks are the happy-go-lucky, watermelon-eating Sambo and the fat, eye-rolling “mammy;” of Chicanos, the sombrero-wearing peon or fiesta-loving, macho bandito; of Asian Americans, the inscrutable, slant-eyed oriental; of American Indians, the naked savage or primitive brave and his squaw; of Puerto Ricans, the switchblade-toting teenage gang member; and of women, the domesticated mother, the demure little girl, or the wicked stepmother. While you may not always find stereotypes in the blatant forms described, look for descriptions, depictions, or labels that tend to demean, stereotype, or patronize characters because of their race or sex.

*Look for tokenism.* If racial minority characters appear in the illustrations, do they look like white people except for being tinted or colored? Do all minorities look stereotypically alike, or are they depicted as individuals with distinctive features?

*Look for active doers.* Do the illustrations depict minorities in subservient and passive roles or in leadership and action roles? Are males the active doers and females the inactive observers?

2. Check the Story Line

Publishers are making an effort not to include adverse reflections or inappropriate portrayals of minority characters in stories; however, racist and sexist attitudes still find expression in less obvious ways. Examples of some subtle (covert) forms of bias include the following:

- **Standard for success:** Does it take “white” behavior standards for a minority person to “get ahead?” Is “making it” in the dominant white society projected as the only ideal? To gain acceptance and approval, do persons of color have to exhibit extraordinary qualities, excel in sports, get A’s, and so forth? In friendships between white and nonwhite children, is it the child of color who does most of the understanding and forgiving?

- **Resolution of problems:** How are problems presented, conceived, and resolved? Are minority people considered to be “the problem?” Are the oppressions faced by minorities and women represented as related to social injustice? Are the reasons for poverty and oppressions explained, or are poverty and oppression accepted as inevitable? Does the story line encourage passive acceptance or active resistance? Is a particular problem faced by a racial minority person or a female resolved through the benevolent intervention of a white person or a male?

- **Role of women:** Are the achievements of girls and women based on their own initiative and intelligence, or are their achievements due to their good looks or relationships with boys? Are sex roles incidental or critical to characterization and plot? Could the same story be told if the sex roles were reversed?
3. **Look at the Life-Styles**

Are minority persons and their settings depicted in ways that contrast unfavorably with the unstated norm of white middle-class suburbia? If the minority group in question is depicted as “different,” are negative value judgments implied? Are minorities depicted exclusively in ghettos, barrios, or migrant camps? If the illustrations and text depict other cultures, do they go beyond oversimplifications and offer genuine insights into other life-styles? Look for inaccuracies and inappropriateness in the depictions of other cultures. Watch for instances of the “quaint-natives-in-costume” syndrome, which is noticeable in areas such as clothing, customs, behaviors, and personality traits.

4. **Weigh the Relationships Among People**

Do white people in the story possess the power, take the leadership, and make the important decisions? Do racial minorities and females of all races primarily function in supporting roles?

How are family relationships depicted? In black families is the mother always dominant? In Hispanic families are there always many children? If the family is separated, are social conditions – unemployment and poverty, for example – cited as reasons for the separation?

Are both sexes portrayed in nurturing roles with their families?

5. **Note the Heroes**

For many years books showed only “safe” minority heroes – those who avoided serious conflict with the white establishment. Today, minority groups insist on the right to define their own heroes (of both sexes) based on their own concepts and struggle for justice.

When minority heroes do appear, are they admired for the same qualities that have made white heroes famous or because what they have done has benefited white people? Ask this question: “Whose interest is a particular hero serving?”

6. **Consider the Effects on a Child’s Self-Image**

Are norms established that limit any child’s aspiration and self-concept? What effect can it have on black children to be continually bombarded with images of the color white as the ultimate in beauty, cleanliness, and virtue and the color black as evil, dirty, and menacing? Does the book counteract or reinforce this positive association with the color white and negative association with the color black?

What happens to a girl’s self-image when she reads that boys perform all brave and important deeds? What is the effect on a girl’s self-esteem if she is not fair of skin and slim of body?

In a particular story is there one or more persons with whom a minority child can readily and positively identify?

7. **Check Out the Author’s Perspective**

No author can be entirely objective. All authors write from a cultural as well as personal context. In the past, children’s books were written by members of the middle class. Consequently, a single ethnocentric perspective has dominated children’s literature in the United States. Read carefully any book in question to determine whether the author’s perspective substantially weakens or strengthens the value of his or her written work. Is the perspective patriarchal or feminist? Is it solely Eurocentric, or are minority cultural perspectives respected?
8. Watch for Loaded Words

A word is “loaded” when it has insulting overtones. Examples of local adjectives (usually racist) are savage, primitive, conniving, lazy, superstitious, treacherous, wily, crafty, inscrutable, docile, and backward.

Look for sexist language and adjectives that exclude or ridicule women. Look for use of the male pronoun to refer to both males and females. While the generic use of the word man was accepted in the past, its use today is outmoded. The following examples illustrate how sexist language can be avoided: substitute the word ancestors for forefathers; chairperson for chairman; community for brotherhood; firefighters for firemen; manufactured for manmade, and the human family for the family of man.

9. Look at the Copyright Date

With rare exceptions nonsexist books were not published before 1973. However, in the early 1970s children’s books began to reflect the realities of a multicultural society. This new direction resulted from the emergence of minority authors who wrote about their own experiences. Unfortunately, this trend was reversed in the late 1970s, and publishers cut back on such books.

Therefore, although the copyright date can be a clue as to how likely the book is to be overtly racist or sexist, a recent copyright date is no guarantee of a book’s relevance or sensitivity. The copyright date indicates only the year the book was published. It usually takes about two years from the time a manuscript is submitted to the publisher to the time it is printed. This time lag meant little in the past; but today, publishers attempt to publish relevant children’s books, and this time lag is significant.

10. Consider Literacy, Historical, and Cultural Perspectives

Classical or contemporary literature, including folktales and stories having a particular historical or cultural perspective, should be judged in the context of high-quality literary works. In many cases it may be inappropriate to evaluate classical or contemporary literature according to the guidelines contained in this brochure. However, when analyzing such literary works, remember that although a particular attitude toward women or a minority group was prevalent during a certain period in history, that attitude is in the process of changing.

Adapted from the original brochure, which was published by the Council on Interracial Books for Children by the CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION Bill Honig, Superintendent of Public Instruction Sacramento, 1998

This brochure, adapted with permission for the Council on Interracial Books for Children, 1841 Broadway, New York, NY 10023, is provided by Project SEE (Sex Equity in Education), California State Department of Education, P.O. Box 944272, Sacramento, CA 94244-2720; telephone 916-322-7388.

A related filmstrip, Identifying Sexism and Racism in Children’s Books, is also available on loan from Project SEE. In addition, detailed criteria for evaluating children’s books is contained in Standards for Evaluation of Instructional Materials with Respect to Social Content, which is available for $2.25; plus sales tax for California residents from Publications Sales, California State Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802-0271.
APPENDIX L
ROADS ACTIVITY
Figure L.1 Roads Activity
APPENDIX M
CHAPTER BOOKS
Independent Reading:


Read-Aloud:

APPENDIX N
PRE SURVEY / POST SURVEY
EDU 425 & EDU 525: Multicultural Literature

Pre Survey – Spring 2007
Please respond to these questions as thoughtfully as you can:

1. What is multicultural literature?

2. How does one select authentic multicultural literature?

3. Why use multicultural literature?

4. How does one use multicultural literature in classrooms?

5. Describe/define your understanding of the conceptual framework of the education department.
EDU 425 & EDU 525: Multicultural Literature

Post Survey – Spring 2007
Please respond to these questions as thoughtfully as you can:

1. What is multicultural literature?

2. How does one select authentic multicultural literature?

3. Why use multicultural literature?

4. How does one use multicultural literature in classrooms?

5. Describe/define your understanding of the conceptual framework of the education department.
APPENDIX O
CHILDREN’S POETRY BOOKS
Children’s Poetry Books:


APPENDIX P
DATA MATRIX
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Source Tag</th>
<th>Artifact</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>BIN</th>
<th>Code 1</th>
<th>Code 2</th>
<th>Code 3</th>
<th>THEME</th>
<th>Pedagogy</th>
<th>Entry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>070207_J_01</td>
<td>J 01</td>
<td>AUT</td>
<td>PAR</td>
<td>ITM</td>
<td>ATT</td>
<td>CD</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tonight we discussed how to select authentic ml by looking at the author to see if he or she is writing from a parallel or cross-cultural point of view. Looked at criteria lists, looked to see if they won any awards, used reference books, websites, and instinct. I still find it a little bit intimidating to find authentic ml.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>070221_J_01</td>
<td>J 01</td>
<td>MET</td>
<td>SIU</td>
<td>MP</td>
<td>NU</td>
<td>ACT-R</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I really liked the activity we did tonight with the different types of roads to show where we are in understanding ml. This is definitely an activity we can use with any age in the classroom. I liked hearing the people who chose the yellow brick road. I never thought of that perspective before.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table P.1 Excerpt from Data Matrix
SOURCE TAG:
    yymmdd_Artifact_Student Number

BIN:
    AUT = Authenticity
    MET – Modeling Effective Teaching

CODES:
    PAR – Parallel-culture author
    ITM – Intimidation
    SIU = Shift in understanding
    MP = Multiple perspectives

THEME:
    ATT = Attitude
    NU = New understanding

PEDAGOGY:
    CD = Class discussion

ACT – R = Activity – R
APPENDIX Q

JOURNAL ENTRY
Hi all,

As I prepare for the EDU 525 class session on GLBT, it seems like the perfect time to share one of my own reflective journals with all of you. One of the most important aspects of self-study is reflection. My personal definition of “reflect” is “to look deep within oneself, to see what’s ‘in there’.” The definition of reflection according to the Encarta World English Dictionary is, “careful thought, especially the process of reconsidering previous actions, events, or decisions; an idea or thought, especially one produced by careful consideration of something.” The “something” I’m going to carefully consider in this journal entry is the issue of GLBT.

Reflection requires one to examine his or her beliefs and assumptions. It calls for being open-minded, whole-hearted, and responsible. I used to find reflection to be easy because I always began with my own assumptions and beliefs and pretty much ended there as well without taking other perspectives into consideration. However, when you truly use Dewey’s criteria for reflection, it is important to look at issues from multiple perspectives. If you continually look at ideas and situations from your own perspective, and not take into account the ideas of others, there is little room for change or growth.

When I took my first diversity course in my doctoral program at OSU, I was extremely uncomfortable to find that GLBT was going to be the topic in one of our classes. My beliefs about lesbians and gays were already formed. I believed with my whole heart that lesbians and gays were an aberration, that they were making a choice that would send them straight to hell. I found the thought of gays and lesbians disgusting and that was that. I was uncomfortable with even saying the words “lesbian” and “gay” and was practically hyperventilating at the thought of actually having to discuss the topic. I had an assignment to “reflect” on my own personal beliefs and assumptions about the GLBT issue, using Dewey’s criteria for reflection. I can remember like it was yesterday, the difference I felt making that reflection. I decided that that would be the reflection that I would share with all of you. I searched the archives of my computer and found it quite coincidental that the date on the journal entry I am going to share was exactly 3 years ago today! The journal that I submitted to my professor at OSU during that course follows unedited:

Mary Jo SanGregory
Ed T&L 976
Journal Reflection # 4
March 26, 2004

I am really going to need help on this one! I attended a lecture by Kevin Kumashiro on Wednesday afternoon entitled, Against Common Sense: A Workshop on Anti-Oppressive Education. He was a skilled presenter, kept the audience engaged, spoke eloquently and to the point -- in short, it was a very interesting, informative, and enjoyable experience. He left me wanting to find out more, so when I got home I began to read the article distributed at his presentation, Toward a theory of anti-oppressive education. I got to page 5 when I had to put the article down and write.

378
Please understand I am going out on a limb here. I am trying to be open-minded and to view oppression from different perspectives. One of the things that has stuck with me from Brian Edmiston's class (and has been reiterated in this class) is that before you can begin the serious work of multicultural education, you must acknowledge and face your own biases and prejudices. As I felt the discomfort creeping into my gut as I was reading Kumashiro's article, I realized that this issue of "queerness" is one that, for me, requires some soul searching. So that's where I am, hoping not to sound critical, judgmental, etc., but striving to understand. I'm going to "get out" what I'm thinking now, but then I am going to continue reading the article. Perhaps some of my answers are there.

I know some people who are queer, and I think they are wonderful people. I wish I could honestly say that I don't think about their sexual orientation when I am with them, but that would not be the truth. It's not that I am being judgmental -- exactly -- it's just that I don't understand. I've even come to terms with that part of my prejudice. I think I can best describe my position by comparing it to "having faith." There are some things that you "believe" and accept on "faith," that you don't necessarily understand. The "understanding" part is not always possible, and when you are convinced that it is right, or true, you accept whatever it might be without the "understanding." With the topic of sexual orientation, that is the case with me. In my estimation, it's the "accepting" part that is important. You accept certain spiritual and religious truths on faith. Is "accepting" sexual orientation without understanding it a comparable analogy? Is this sort of "acceptance" without understanding enough to claim you are not prejudiced against that particular group? Or does the "acceptance without understanding" perspective make you an oppressor?

Let's just say for a moment that "acceptance" is enough -- that understanding is not always possible and that it is not necessary. It still doesn't help with my discomfort in addressing issues of sexuality in a classroom. My discomfort welled up with Kumashiro's suggestion "to signify advocacy by … putting pink triangles on their classroom door." I can see this as opening up a whole can of worms. Do you then let students with a communist political orientation put up swastikas? Or let gang members display their colors? Actually, I feel like I am digressing. The real point with me is that I do not view sexual orientation in the same way I do other marginalized and oppressed groups. I'm all for having my students learn about racial diversity, but I can't see myself "celebrating" a student's "gayness" in my classroom any more than I would celebrate someone's "heterosexual-ness". I guess the bottom line is, at this point, I do not believe that sexual orientation should be a topic of discussion in a classroom.

One of the reasons I feel it is so important for me to get this sorted out is because of my responsibility of teaching future educators. If I am going to be successful in engaging in anti-oppressive education, I must be certain that I have faced my biases and do not precipitate or perpetuate them in my teaching. I am going to stop here and continue reading. I sure hope to answer some of my own questions. . . .

Well, Kumashiro managed to clear up some of my muddiness on this issue, and gave me some new things to think about! His article, like his presentation, was very clear, very well organized, and very thought provoking. His idea of the harmfulness of stereotypes was not new to me, but I had never given much consideration to the harmful
effects of "partial knowledge." He suggested using literature and units in teaching about cultures, and "integrating otherness" throughout the curriculum could be useful in bringing about change. He also stressed the importance of developing empathy in students along with imparting this knowledge. He stressed the idea that bringing about change "requires more than looking at more than one's own dispositions toward, treatment of, and knowledge about the Other" (p. 36). He spoke of Freire's "conscientizacaco", and how this consciousness-raising is important in bringing about change in society. I particularly like this statement: "We unconsciously desire to learn only that which affirms our sense that we are good people and that we resist learning anything that reveals our complicity with racism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression…. Anti-oppressive education, then needs to involve overcoming this resistance to change and learning, instead, to desire change, to desire difference" (p. 43). He also discusses that this is not necessarily a comfortable process, but rather requires "disruption, dissatisfaction, and the desire for change." In this respect, I guess my discomfort with this issue could be viewed as a good thing!

To return to my initial questions, I guess that I am going to have to "unlearn" my partial view of "queerness" by learning more about it; to, in Kumashiro's words, "participate in the ongoing, never-completed construction of knowledge. . . and always look beyond what is known" (p. 44). Kumashiro cites Britzman (p. 46) who suggests that "educators always need to look for ways in which what we do not consciously know influences our teaching, … and to consider the multiple ways in which what we (unconsciously) repress hinders teaching and learning." If I do not work toward anti-oppressive education, I guess that makes me an oppressor. Looks like I've got lots of work to do!

Back to today . . .

I guess there are a couple of important things that jump out at me from this journal. First, we learn a lot about ourselves and can sort through some pretty intense and controversial topics through an honest look into our hearts and souls. Second, learning never ends if we continue to reflect and be open-minded, whole-hearted, and responsible. It is important to continually look at beliefs and assumptions and not be tempted to hang on to those beliefs and assumptions that might be more comfortable, but don't take into consideration other perspectives. That also doesn’t mean you give up your beliefs easily. It just means that being truly open-minded is important though sometimes difficult and uncomfortable. Third, be man enough to admit your prejudices. This was very hard for me. I always thought of myself as a very understanding person without a prejudicial bone in my body. I can now admit that I did harbor prejudice against gays and lesbians and I still struggle with some aspects of this difficult topic. Admitting one’s biases is the first step in eliminating them. Fourth, being reflective is an essential element of becoming a highly qualified teacher and a reflective practitioner. I guess that’s what I’m still striving to be, and what I hope for all of my students to aspire to.

I couldn’t tell you how many journals I’ve started in my lifetime. But today, I have made a commitment to myself that reflection will become a part of my daily
teaching. I will not consider another class of mine “over” until I have taken the time to reflect on what occurred during that class. I have ordered two books by Donald Schön about becoming a reflective practitioner. I will read a portion of the books weekly until they are finished.

Another important piece of self-study is to “open yourself up for scrutiny.” I invite each of you to reflect upon my teaching and feel free and safe to offer feedback. Thanks, and have a marvelous week 😊
Prof. SanGregoryy