

Beyond Awareness: Preparing Culturally Responsive Preservice Teachers

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Educating preservice teachers for culturally responsive teaching in increasingly diverse contexts remains a substantive challenge. Research findings have suggested that courses in multicultural education have not had much impact on instructional practices of preservice teachers as they enter schools and classrooms (Xu, 2001; Zeichner, Grant, Gay, Gillette, Valli, & Villegas, 1998). Other scholars

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have argued that student preservice teachers and teacher educators must reconsider their own assumptions and work towards a better understanding of values and practices of families and cultures different from their own (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Derman-Sparks, 1995). Only through this type of reflective analysis of their own beliefs and systematic inquiry into diverse cultures can preservice teachers and teacher educators begin to construct a pedagogy that makes diversity an explicit part of the curriculum (Cochran-Smith, 1995). However, how this analysis and inquiry can best be realized and translated into classroom practice remains unclear.

The Beyond Awareness Research Project was de-

signed to develop more effective ways to address culture and cultural differences in the preparation of preservice teachers, inservice teachers, and university faculty. Its purpose was to provide a more adequate preparation for working in high-need schools by assisting educators in the development of habits of mind that incorporate an understanding and valuing of students' cultures and recognition of the need to consider those cultures in teaching practices. This report focuses on findings from the analysis of students' field notes, interview data, and artifacts selected from the larger project.

Theoretical Overview

One of the goals of multicultural education is to bring to light oppression and social inequality that are based on race, social class, gender, and disability. Its aim is to prepare students to become future citizens who are able to reconstruct society so that it can better serve the interests of all groups of people, especially those who are of color, poor, female, and/or with disabilities (Sleeter & Grant, 1999). The orientation and focus of multicultural education, therefore, needs to be on the whole educational process. This approach encourages students to question the power relations that are embedded in the new global economy through four practices that can be incorporated in schools.

- ◆ Democracy is actively practiced in all areas of the school. In the classroom students are given the opportunity to direct a good deal of their learning and to learn how to be responsible for that direction. Teachers guide and direct students so they learn how to develop skills for wise decision-making.
- ◆ Students learn how to analyze institutional inequality within their own lives. Crucial to this practice is the development of a critical consciousness. Here an individual wants to know how the world actually works and is willing to analyze the world carefully. According to this practice, individuals either believe that they have no power to change the way the world works for them or they believe that their problems have no relationship to their position in the power hierarchy. In this practice, students are taught to question what they hear about how society works from other sources and to analyze the experiences of people like themselves in order to understand fully what the problems actually are so they can prepare themselves to change unfair social practices.
- ◆ Students learn to use social action practices such as the knowledge, attitudes, and skills that are necessary for active citizen participation. The school is viewed as a laboratory or training ground for preparing students to be more socially active. Advocates of this approach do not expect children to reconstruct the world, but they expect the schools to teach

students how to do their part in helping the nation achieve excellence and equity in all areas of life.

◆ Students attempt to build bridges across various oppressed groups so that they can work together to advance their common interest. With this practice there is an energizing and strengthening of struggles against oppression.

Educating students for a multicultural, multiracial world by including the voices of those who have not been traditionally included is a complex endeavor. Feminist scholars offer an understanding that all knowledge is socially constructed. This insight affirms the evolving nature of knowledge and the role of teachers and students in its ongoing construction. When educational courses are transformed with attention given to cultural, ethical, and gender diversity to give concrete forms to the complexity of the struggles over knowledge, access, and power, students benefit and are even inspired by the coursework to rethink their notions about cultural, ethnic, and gender diversity (Tetreault, 2001).

Putting Theory into Practice

Children's experiences outside the classroom greatly affect their success at school, especially when children's home experiences are not those of the mainstream culture (Heath, 1983; Moll & Dias, 1987). We are defining culture in its anthropological sense as a system of meaning that is infused with social structures and practices. These structures and practices have directive, evocative, and representational functions (D'Andrade, 1984). Efforts at preparing preservice teachers for cultural complexity of their future classrooms and beyond are often woefully inadequate (hooks, 1994). Preservice teachers need an understanding that enables them to assist children in thinking critically about the role of culture in their own lives, to provide children with culturally relevant curriculum and instruction, and to challenge those aspects of school culture which negate children's cultural experiences (Kincheloe, 1993).

This preparation, usually in the form of traditional multicultural education coursework, commonly leads to one of three conditions in those preservice teachers' own classrooms: (1) a curriculum centered on the dominant culture, which ignores bias and fails to address inequity; (2) a curriculum which pretends that difference does not exist, thereby denying the experiences of many children in the classroom; or (3) a curriculum that treats multiculturalism as tourism, in which superficial aspects of culture (e.g., holidays and foods) are introduced as curious examples of the "other" (Derman-Sparks, 1995). These approaches are unacceptable in today's world of diverse learners. Clearly we need to know more about how universities investigate their curricular practices with preservice education.

Educational researchers have examined with mixed results the impact of field experiences have on preservice teachers' views and understandings of diversity. On

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one hand, some studies indicated that preservice teachers do change their attitudes toward students of color as a result of field experiences focusing on these learners (Larke, Wiseman, & Bradley, 1990; Mahan, 1982;). Others, however, suggested no measurable impact of field experiences' shifting preservice teachers' attitudes toward diversity (Ladson-Billings, 1998); and some researchers reported a negative impact of field experiences on preservice teachers' perceptions of diversity (Haberman & Post, 1991).

What may be called for are new approaches and models for working with preservice teachers around issues of cultural awareness and diversity. These approaches and models will need to synthesize opportunities for reflective self-analysis and inquiry within a classroom setting and encourage field observations and interactions in diverse communities. Some researchers have begun to articulate such approaches. For example Schmidt's (2001) work to develop "the ABC's of cultural understanding" and apply this model to teacher education programs has been promising (Xu, 2001). In this approach preservice teachers complete the following: (1) autobiographical writing, (2) biographical writing about a culturally different person, (3) cross-cultural analyses of similarities and differences of individuals portrayed in these previous texts, (4) cultural analysis of differences with attention to personal response, and (5) communication of plans for literacy development for home school/school connections (Schmidt, 1998). The strength of this model is its focus on notions of identity (i.e., the preservice teacher's and the culturally different person's) and its tendency to engage the preservice teacher in a type of comparative analysis for the purposes of developing better instruction.

Another method for preparing future teachers to become culturally responsive takes into account the observational tools ethnographers use to learn about new cultures. Ethnography is sometimes discounted in educational circles because it is traditionally a long-term, labor-intensive activity. However, Moll and Gonzalez (1994) used ethnography to help practicing teachers learn about the funds of knowledge of families of their students. Frank (1999) and Dixon, Frank, and Green (1999) successfully taught student teachers and practicing teachers to become ethnographers in order to learn about their students. They found that using ethnography helped these teachers learn to acquire evidence before drawing conclusions or making generalizations. Or, as Spindler and Spindler (1987) wrote, ethnographers begin with the emic (insider) position before moving to the etic (outsider or interpretive) position. Ethnographers, therefore, learn about a culture from the inside, and then they interpret the data in order to draw generalizations.

Schmidt's (2001) work, as well as the work of Moll and Gonzalez (1994) and Frank (1999), were generative for our project and encouraged us to question how we might shift some aspects of our approach as we pursued community-based work. Among our goals was to gain insights into how preservice teacher's habits of mind might inform their views of diversity and multicultural education. This study brings those habits of mind to the forefront and argues that an ethnographically informed

approach to preservice teacher education is potentially transformative. This transformation would entail recognition that successful teacher education for a diverse world must be linked to a dynamic framework. The framework needs to include a vital commitment to understanding literacy as informed by the complexities of cultural, linguistic, epistemological, and political diversity (Garcia & Willis, 2001). This type of framework, and the data we analyzed details how an ethnographically informed approach can help preservice teachers move beyond awareness to deeper understandings of the complexities of culturally diverse teaching.

Methodology

In our methodology we required that preservice teachers in an urban professional development school (PDS) describe the diverse community in which their methods courses were being delivered, write observational field notes and reflections of sites within the community, meet in a study group to discuss their observations, and complete a final paper that synthesized their data. We conducted exit interviews with selected preservice teachers as well.

Participants

The participants of the study were 34 preservice teachers who were engaged in a yearlong professional development program as their last year before teaching. These preservice teachers were enrolled at a large midwestern university and had relocated 150 miles away from the university to a suburb of a large urban area for their senior year. The professional development program provided the students with 16 hours of coursework and clinical hours in schools during the fall semester and student teaching during the spring semester. Faculty from the university and from the school district provided the course instruction.

The entire class of 36 students was invited to participate in the study. From the class, 34 students agreed to take part: three males and 31 females. All of the students classified themselves as European Americans, but four of the participants also identified with additional ethnic groups—one Korean American, one Mexican American, and two Greek Americans. Five female instructors provided the instruction in the program, four of whom were European American and one who was African American.

Procedures

The preservice teachers were asked to make ethnographic observations in the community in order to observe and learn from the cultural groups represented in the district's communities over a period of seven months. Cultural groups were not defined by ethnicity, but as the patterns of a way of life. For example, the preservice teachers were encouraged to think about ways in which people shared traditions, values, and activities as cultural artifacts. When emphasizing cultural practices, the

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preservice teachers' focus was on commonalities of practice rather than on race or ethnic group. In this way, a broader, more inclusive defining of culture was used. Students learned that ethnography is a way to describe culture and that the basis of ethnography is observation. Students learned about participant observation from one of the course instructors and an anthropologist from the university. The students met in study groups during the year to discuss the process and results of their community observations.

The instructors followed the 12 steps for conducting ethnography from *Participant Observation* (Spradley, 1980), a book given to each student. The 12 steps included: learning about culture, doing participant observation, making an ethnographic record, making descriptive observations, making a domain analysis, making focused observations, making a taxonomic analysis, making selected observations, making a componential analysis, discovering cultural themes, taking a cultural inventory, and writing an ethnography. The students completed each one of these steps during nine months, typically finishing one assignment every two weeks (excluding holiday weeks) from August through April. A typical two-week period would consist of the students reading the chapter, having an anthropologist discuss the chapter and answer students' questions, and providing students with time to complete the assignment. Some chapters of the Spradley book involved learning about a topic or a process. Other chapters discussed making field observations. During these weeks, students went to a community site where they took field notes and in some cases became a participant observer.

Data Collection and Analysis

Over the course of this project, the researchers used an ethnographically informed approach to data collection (LeCompte & Priessle, 1993). Data were collected on multiple levels. Data sources included: (1) students' responses to a question about diversity before beginning the project, (2) students' observational field notes of community sites; (3) students' final ethnographic papers; (4) videotapes of students' discussions of their participation in the program; and (5) exit conversations with eight students.

The 34 preservice teachers made field-note observations over the course of seven months. Each preservice teacher observed a community site such as a library, after-school program, local restaurant, or religious institution at least six times. The goal of each observation was to describe the interactions within the setting, particularly noticing how people interacted with one another, patterns of behavior, and how language was used in each setting. After each observation, the preservice teachers wrote a reflective note in which they speculated about the significance of the observation for their own views of diversity and/or classroom instruction. These documents were collected by the researchers and coded using an open-coding approach in which preliminary categories were identified, and then used to guide further analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). As the analysis

continued, permanent categories were established and then data were re-examined to increase validity.

Semi-structured conversational interviews with eight students were videotaped at the school site by one of the researchers. These students were chosen from the larger group based on analyses of their field note observations that indicated a developing awareness of how cultural issues could have an impact on teaching and learning. The interviewer asked each preservice teacher to respond to eight questions that were developed from emerging themes and trends identified in the field notes. These questions focused on the experience of ethnographic writing, participation in the PDS, and shifting views of diversity and instructional choices. The conversational approach allowed the interaction between the researcher and the preservice teachers to become more of a dialogue in which digressions, at times, provided insights into how the preservice teachers valued the PDS experience (Kvale, 1996). The videotapes were transcribed and then analyzed using a sociolinguistic approach based on the work of James Gee (Gee, 1985, 1991). This approach for analysis allowed researchers to emphasize speech markers for parsing the discourse of the conversations, thereby focusing on both content and structure of the interactions.

Each of the preservice teachers submitted a final paper for the methods course in which they attempted to synthesize their field observations of the community site. These papers were viewed as another data source and were analyzed in terms of the discourse patterns and rhetorical stance developed by the students. Two questions guided this portion of the analysis. How did the students situate themselves within these ethnographic papers, and how did the students situate the subjects of their observations? This focus allowed us to link the field notes and papers to track shifts in language and discourse from the field notes to the final student documents. The four themes apparent in the data were: 1) how the preservice teachers situated themselves as ethnographers, 2) how they situated themselves in the site, 3) how they situated themselves by the purpose of their work, and 4) how they situated themselves within contested sites of influence. In the next section, we present findings based on data from the final student ethnography papers and the interviews with the eight students.

Findings

Preservice Teachers Situated Themselves as Ethnographers

The preservice teachers voiced concerns throughout the project about being asked to conduct ethnographies. One of the goals of the project was to encourage students to position themselves as researchers in the hope that they would observe and learn about a culture without viewing themselves as the preservice teachers. One of the concerns of the researchers was that the preservice teachers would see the project as one more teaching activity, where they, as preservice teachers, would

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find themselves in situations where they were considered an authority. Instead, they were encouraged to make observations as researchers or ethnographers. We thought that by asking the preservice teachers to position themselves as ethnographers, they would be able to distance themselves from their role as preservice teachers and actually learn about a cultural group. The tension was reified in their final ethnography papers as well as in the interviews.

Data from the Final Ethnography Papers

Most of the students resisted the role we had assigned them. They were vocal about their views. For example, in an exit interview, Shannon wrote, “We’re not ethnographers, we’re education majors.” In class, the students frequently stated that they had signed up for an education course, not an anthropology course, and didn’t want to be addressed as ethnographers or researchers. Another student, Shari, remarked in the final interview: “It was weird being talked to as ethnographers instead of being talked to as students. I had no idea what an ethnographer did.” Other students were not as explicit about their role as ethnographer, but in understated ways, all of the students interviewed commented that they wanted to know what they were looking for *before* they began observing. They were uncomfortable with making observations without a focus, and, even though they were not given grades for the project, they were concerned about the expectations of the researchers. They wanted the project to have more structure, even though they basically followed the steps of ethnography described by Spradley (1980). As researchers, we viewed this tension as potentially generative—students were struggling with learning how to observe by doing rather than being told what to look for in their observations. The students were not as sure about the value of this aspect of the project. For example, in her final ethnography paper, Susan wrote: “At the beginning of the study, I wasn’t actually sure what I should be looking for. I wondered to myself, ‘How will I benefit from watching these people? What could I possibly learn from them?’” A few students used the project as a learning experience by looking for situations to apply to their teaching. Karen wrote, “When I learned of the ethnography, I wanted to get involved in something where I would be able to use the information in the classroom.”

Despite the preservice teachers’ reluctance to consider themselves ethnographers, many of them described ethnography in fairly complete terms in their final papers. Becca, for example, wrote: “The purpose of an ethnographical study is to develop an awareness of cultures of individuals within a specific region or regions, in order to enhance understanding and aid in the benefit of acceptance. For our purposes, this ethnographic study was designed to enhance our awareness of the cultures of the children and the families within the community in which we are teaching.” Many of the papers described ethnography as investigation of culture, and two students described themselves as participant observers.

The preservice teachers also developed a basic understanding of ethnography itself. Lori, for example, wrote: “The anthropologist goes to where people live and

does field work. Ethnography is describing a culture. It is to understand life from another point of view. This was a brand new topic that was introduced to me during my senior year student teaching experience.” Three conceptual strands, initially resisting ethnographic roles, growing awareness of how this type of observation could inform teaching, and a developing understanding of ethnography, were corroborated in the student interviews.

Data from Student Interviews

Students felt competent in applying the observational techniques they learned through the ethnography in their teaching situations. Kelly discussed her future plans in an exit interview. Kelly said that if she got a job in a community that was unfamiliar to her, she would spend time in the community before the job began to learn something about the community. She said, “Even if I go out to lunch and sit back and watch, I will learn a little bit more about my kid’s community.” Mark agreed, saying that he would begin his teaching year observing the community and the learning about his students’ cultural backgrounds as they talked in school. Before this experience, they would not have thought about using observational techniques to learn about their students, as illustrated by Brad’s comment: “I wouldn’t have gone and looked at people and studied them.” The students also agreed that the concept of observation was new to them and that it “opened my eyes” to the differences among students in schools. And many students found that participating in ethnography helped them view people in new ways. Kellie wrote, “I discovered that, contrary to popular belief, ethnography is not merely studying people, but actually learning from people.”

Data from the student papers and the interviews suggest that students were moving from an initial awareness of how cultural issues shape the nature of teaching and learning to a better understanding of how careful observation through an ethnographically informed lens could inform their work as new classroom teachers. This metaphor of lens as a way to view cultural interaction surfaced in data collected earlier in the project. To gain a more complete understanding of how this developed, an analysis of data from the field note observations is presented in the next section.

Data from Student Field Note Observations

The lenses the students use to develop their individual worldviews are particular socio-economic/ideological frames that shape how the observer is seeing. We saw preservice teachers becoming aware of how they viewed the world through three lenses: how they situated themselves in the site, how they situated themselves by the purpose of their work, and how they situated themselves within contested sites of influences. As we were analyzing the data from the student field notes, we drew again on the work of Gee—this time using his more recent scholarship on discourse theory to inform our analysis (1999). Gee describes how language as a feature of discourse creates contexts that shape the way people make

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sense and organize their world. As researchers, we adapted Gee's ideas as a way to recast students' language of field note observation into a lens that the preservice teacher were looking through as they described social interactions. We used the term "situated" as a way to capture how we, as researchers, believe written language orients the writer within a particular social context. In the sections that follow, we present data that details the nature of the three lenses listed above.

Preservice Teachers Situated Themselves in the Site

During the ethnographic process, we saw preservice teachers becoming aware of how they viewed the world. They questioned how ethnicities, cultural identities, gender, and religion shaped their perceptions. One preservice teacher, who observed at a local Starbucks Coffee Shop, interprets her observations as the following:

Many of the people coming in were 35+, seemed to be middle class. Some construction workers came in—the only physical workers I saw. The businessmen seemed what many would call the typical Starbucks customers. They were in their shirt and tie and were very business-like. The lady that came in with the two kids are always running around screaming. I don't know if it's the fact that she's on crutches that makes the kids so wild or if she really has no control over the children.

Cassie's biases shaped her data collection and analysis. The lens she used comes from her understanding and background beliefs about Starbucks' customers. At the end of the year Cassie's lens became more refined. She reflected on the way she examined the customers as follows.

As I started my ethnography at Starbucks, I first went in as a regular observer. I looked at the customers that came into the store and tried to classify them. Some of the categories I used were Regular, Non-regular, Male, Female, Age (50+, 35-49, 25-35, 19-25, under 19). I found that here was a difference between the way we treat our regulars and our non-regulars.

As a result of her categorization Cassie was able to gain insights into how people were treated in this social setting. She examined her practices at this site and recognized that individuals were offered a different quality of service based on age and gender.

The student ethnographers were not always sure how to read or interpret sequences of events, ritualistic behaviors, or codes that were pertinent to the setting or context. For example, Jessica explains one of her observations:

My first observation at the Temple's Hebrew School was very interesting. I was in a third grade class of a small group. Two kids in there I happen to know. Being Jewish and not being very religious was fun to see all these children taking part in learning Hebrew. The day I went they played games...the children sang a song in Hebrew. I only wish I knew what they were singing.

This student continued her difficulty in interpreting the context as she continued her observation throughout the year. In her final analysis she states:

The family services were the most confusing for me. There was a lot of Hebrew spoken that I did not understand and I often wondered how much of the service was understood by the younger children. It is also amazing how the children behaved in this service. Here they were well behaved, sat completely still, and listened attentively. They also obeyed any instructions that were given by the Rabbi. The services with their own age group alone they were loud, not always listening, and fidgeting in their seats. It appeared with their parents and adults closer to them, they were better behaved.

As Jessica dealt with her difficulty to interpret the rituals within this setting, she questioned her understandings of educating children. By examining the observations and the written ethnographies this preservice teacher reflected on practices that didn't always make sense to her. Jessica saw the difficulty in interpreting a situation that could affect the way she looked at her own teaching. And in turn, an awareness of children's experiences outside the classroom could greatly affect the way they might interact in a classroom setting.

Preservice Teachers Situated Themselves by the Purpose of Their Work

Through observations, the preservice teachers attempted to connect characteristics from the site to other settings. Aimee, who observed at a local public library, attempted to apply what she observed in this context to another setting. She stated:

My second trip to Woodford sparked my wonder about the ability of children to peacefully accept and separate themselves from others. How and at what age does the need to label ourselves arise? I think it is inevitable that with age these same children will classify themselves and eventually wouldn't chose to gather at any table with strangers. At the same time I watched these younger children, I heard the voices of adolescents.

Aimee's purpose in doing this work emerged as she observed the relationships of young students and the implication of future relationships among her future students. She might have questioned herself on how this observation scaffolds her current understanding about socialization in a classroom setting.

Mary observed at a public library in the community. She focused in on parents in the library with their children.

These three parenting styles that I observed at the library will greatly impact me as a teacher. My guess would be that parents are consistent in their parenting styles wherever they are. If a parent is uninvolved in the library, he or she will most likely be uninvolved in the school as well. I must take into account the different parenting styles while planning many parts of the curriculum. Each type of parent will impact me in a different way. I must be very aware of the overinvolved parent. I will need

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to make assignments reasonable for the students so parents do not feel they need to do the all the work.

As the preservice teachers observed in their particular sites, personal connections to some aspect of the data were noted. Rita observed at the home of a family who had children in the school district. She reflected on her observation and made the following connections:

Primarily, I am interested in this particular family because of racial background of family members. The mother is white and originally from Canada. The husband is African American. Together they have racially mixed children. This has particular interest to me because I have been dating an African American male for the past two years.

Throughout the course of the year, Rita's personal connection to her observation site surfaced. In her final ethnographic paper she deepened her analysis and comments:

Being an observer in an interracial family has broadened my thinking as to which groups of people, ethnic or otherwise are identified in my classroom. If I want to create a learning environment in which students feel safe and accepted, I have to make sure that that is true for every one of my students. How do I make the interracial student in my class feel as though they fit in? How can I provide role models for that student to identify with? How do I de-emphasize race and focus on interest?

In the analysis of Rita's comments we were struck at what we supposed was a glimpse of her personal life in the future. She seemed to use the data as a way to think imaginatively about her own social future (New London Group, 1996). As Rita explored her site, she was designing a meaningful context for her future in her private life.

Preservice Teachers Situated Themselves within Contested Sites of Influence

Some of the preservice teachers made assumptions about the situations and questioned the practice of those in charge. As these preservice teachers continued the process of observation, they recognized they were incorrect about their initial analysis. Myra explains:

I wasn't sure where to order because you have to go to the back to order and move towards the front to pay. It's a complicated system and the customers who came in all seemed to know exactly what to do. The handwritten signs explaining the system were difficult to see and read. The ordering process goes by very fast too. Everyone is expected to know what they want by the time they reach the counter. I think they need a new system, but it seems like they are too busy to worry about what the inside of the place looks like. It makes me wonder about all the other small restaurants like this. Places with 'regulars' and the small cramped spaces. Places that a lot of people drive by everyday without even noticing, like I have. I must have

driven by it a hundred times and never noticed it before. But to the people who eat here, it is important.

Myra's purpose for ordering food at this local restaurant became a complex task for an outsider. She saw the view from someone else's perspective and questioned how she might use this observation to help her understand future students in a classroom setting.

Lisa observed an afterschool setting at one of the local schools. She was one of the volunteers at the school, but was still an outsider in the community. Her initial reaction to what she saw was flawed because she made assumptions about the situation.

I was surprised at the lack of students and volunteers that were present. I was not sure if this was an off day or if a lot of the students dropped from the program. Normally, there are about 50 kids and that day there were only 15. The first half hour is dedicated to reading and I was surprised to see barely any of the students reading. I was extremely surprised to see that the program had started to crumble. I did think this would be a good learning experience for me on how to keep successful programs running. Through questioning different people that day I did discover that my observations were wrong. The student were not dropping from the program, the volunteers were. So the coordinator decided to spread the students out throughout the school with the preservice teachers and volunteers that were still participating.

Lisa's skills of questioning herself and the situation helped her realize that her assumption about the situation was incorrect. She did not allow herself to be satisfied with just an outsiders' view of the situation but challenged her understanding through questioning and discussing the situation with others. She made a shift from the negative to a more positive understanding of the setting and was in active pursuit of more information through the questions she posed.

As the preservice teachers observed in their sites, they were not always completely comfortable or questioned their own ability to really interpret what was going on. Katie, who observed at a Jewish Synagogue, reflects on her site:

I was fairly surprised by the security cameras and TV's. I'm not sure why, I guess I just wasn't expecting them! The waiting room was very cozy and the people were friendly. I did, however, feel slightly uncomfortable with myself. I felt like I didn't "fit in." I could not relate to the things the women were talking about, and I had no personal connections with many of the cultural icons that were obviously present, such as the menorah, the halvah bread, etc. I could not read things written in Hebrew and that made me feel uncomfortable. Is this how it feels to be a "minority"?

Katie's feelings of being an outsider are duly noted. The language she uses of "minority" makes one infer there is a majority within her thinking. As preservice teachers encountered settings where they were not comfortable, we hoped to push

their thinking on how they would approach cultural differences in their future classrooms.

Discussion and Conclusions

Historically, the purpose of education in the United States has been to encourage participation in the democratic process (Lincoln, 1995). One of goals of our work is to help future teachers move beyond an awareness of the cultures of their students to an understanding of how students respond to and shape the dominant cultures in schools. Our belief is that students, preservice teachers, administrators, and community members need to negotiate the important beliefs about education in such a way that each person's voice is heard and valued. A great deal of critical thinking occurs when all members have a stake in listening to each other and sharing information, opinions, and ideas. Recent scholarship of infusing a cultural understanding into teacher preparation argues that this work is longitudinal and difficult (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). We agree, and we further argue that it is an ethnographically informed approach to preparation of preservice teaching that can be a catalyst for this work.

By using ethnographically informed methods to listen to the community at large, preservice teachers began to interact with other perspectives different from their own. From this interaction they can move beyond awareness to effectively teach all students in their classrooms—especially those who have been overlooked because of their cultural heritage. The preservice teachers in our study learned to be problem posers through real life experiences within ethnographic inquiry. They learned to examine more critically the situations they observed and question their beliefs and understandings of the community.

In a follow-up study of these students, the habits of mind that they developed during the ethnographic project did stay with them into their first year of teaching. To find out whether students were able to put into practice the kinds of things that they learned through the ethnography, the researchers interviewed six students and visited them at their teaching site (Daniel, Lenski, Crawford, Crumpler, & Stallworth, 2004). Findings from that study revealed that the observational skills the teachers learned through ethnography were valuable for learning about their students. Furthermore, interviewees developed an in-depth awareness of the teacher's role in differentiating the curriculum, and the know-how to build positive relationships with students and families of different ethnicities.

Just as democratic decision-making needs to be in place in a political arena, so do classrooms need preservice teachers, students, and the local community working together to create a collaborative and democratic society in our schools (Friere, 1970). From the dialogue that occurs in a democratic learning setting, barriers such as race, class, religion and gender can be confronted and perhaps worked through so all students will have access to educational opportunities.

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