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PREPARING COMMUNITY-ORIENTED TEACHERS

REFLECTIONS FROM A MULTICULTURAL SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT

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The Banneker History Project (BHP) reconstructed the history of a local, segregated school. The Benjamin Banneker School served African American youth from 1915 to 1951. Oral histories from surviving alumni as well as primary documents from the times were sought. This article focuses on ways that one group of participants, 24 preservice teachers of color, experienced and interpreted the BHP. Data are reported in response to three questions: (a) Whose community does service learning serve? (b) What meanings do preservice teachers make of culturally responsive teaching? and (c) Does a community orientation count in teacher education? The author reflects on and draws insights from these data. She considers implications of this effort for community-oriented teacher education.

Keywords: service learning; teacher education; multicultural education; community-based education

Several years ago, I was presented with an incredible opportunity for an educator interested in utilizing service learning as a tool to prepare teachers for work with diverse communities. Based on my prior service work with a community center, I was invited to facilitate an effort that fit perfectly with my aims to practice multicultural service learning. The proposed initiative, The Banneker History Project (BHP), sought to reconstruct the history of a segregated local school. It seemed full of potential to build community, affirm diversity, and address inequality. Without hesitation, I agreed to participate.

In this article, I focus on the ways that one group of participants, 24 preservice teachers of color, experienced and interpreted the BHP. I respond to three questions that arose from the data: (a) Whose community does service learning serve? (b) What meanings do preservice teachers make for culturally responsive teaching?

and (c) Does a community orientation count in teacher education? I then reflect on and draw insights from these data. Finally, I consider implications of this effort for community-oriented teacher education.

THE BANNEKER HISTORY PROJECT

The Benjamin Banneker School was named for an historically important African American (ca. 1731-1806). It operated as a segregated school for African Americans from 1915 to 1951. It was just a mile from a major research university in a Midwestern town. In the early 1950s, the school closed due to declining enrollment and to the repeal of a state law that supported school segregation. The school then became a community center, which functions to this day.

In 2001, the director of the Banneker Community Center and the president of the local chapter of National Association for the Advance-

ment of Colored People (NAACP) proposed the BHP as part of an effort to foster campus-community partnerships. These leaders wanted to tell the story of the Banneker School through the eyes of surviving alumni (also called elders). They hoped to develop pride in the historic value of the Banneker neighborhood among local youth. In 2002, a school-community-university partnership formed to bring the BHP to life. I was part of this group. Three service learning tasks were set: (a) the collection of oral histories from alumni of the Banneker School, (b) the creation of biographies about Benjamin Banneker, and (c) the investigation of the transition of the school to a community center. The BHP became a 2-year effort that culminated in a public exhibit of the history of the Banneker School and the Banneker Community Center.

THE HONORS SEMINAR

In the spring of 2003, I utilized the BHP as the centerpiece of an Honors Seminar for preservice teachers from Project TEAM—a scholarship program for future teachers of color focused on social justice (Bennett, 2002). Preservice teachers meet for a 1- to 3-credit Honors Seminar each semester to learn to teach in ways that further social justice. When I taught the seminar, I focused on building bridges to communities from which students come. I considered the BHP a perfect opportunity to develop local connections, acknowledge local wisdom, and comprehend culturally responsive teaching.

During class sessions, we discussed readings about culturally responsive teaching, funds of knowledge, and asset-based community development. We also studied the life of Benjamin Banneker and the history of the local African American community. Several class periods were set aside for reflection on field experiences. Preservice teachers spent about 15 hours in the field, assisting with one of the three tasks for the BHP. They completed three reflective essays in which they considered their learning about course topics. They earned extra credit for participation in two public events at the Banneker Community Center focused on sharing information about BHP tasks.

DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY ORIENTATION FOR TEACHING

The BHP was an effort in multicultural service learning. It was utilized as a venue to assist preservice teachers in developing a community orientation for their future teaching. Several ideas and perspectives underpinned class discussions and organized fieldwork: culturally responsive teaching, funds of knowledge, and asset-based community development. In the following section, I describe a community orientation to teaching, consider multicultural service learning as a community-oriented pedagogy, and discuss core notions for the course.

Community-Oriented Teacher Education

The preparation of teachers who are attuned to the communities they serve has been discussed for years in teacher education (e.g., Corwin, 1973; Flowers, Patterson, Stratemeyer, & Lindsay, 1948; Mahan, Fortney, & Garcia, 1983) but rarely actualized (Zeichner & Melnick, 1996). Recently, Peter Murrell (2001) proposed a framework for “community-dedicated” urban teacher education (p. 3). As part of this model, teachers develop “community teacher knowledge” (p. 54): a working knowledge of the cultural backgrounds, personal identities, and local contexts of their students. Service learning is a potential pedagogy for community-oriented teacher preparation, but Murrell finds fault with the “old service learning model” (p. 119) in which faculty are remotely involved, preparation for service is minimal, and service learners fail to build local relationships. He calls for stronger collaborations that help teacher candidates cull the rich resources of culturally diverse communities.

Multicultural Service Learning

Multicultural service learning potentially responds to Murrell’s call. Multicultural service learning aims to affirm diversity, critique inequity, and build community (Boyle-Baise, 2002). Multicultural service learning should offer opportunities for preservice teachers to become

better acquainted with culturally diverse and/or lower-income communities, particularly to learn about local needs and to link to local wisdom. Multicultural service learning can help teacher candidates to identify assets in culturally diverse and/or lower-income neighborhoods (e.g., Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) and gain cultural knowledge about groups other than their own (e.g., Coles, 1999; Nieto, 2000). The BHP provided a chance to learn from service that was locally derived, culturally affirmative, and socially just.

There is some evidence, however, that service learning is viewed cautiously by preservice teachers of color. In college courses focused on issues of race and ethnicity, students of color chose conventional paper assignments more often than service learning options (Coles, 1999). They reported that they were too busy with work or family responsibilities; service learning seemed like a White, charitable program; they had other outlets for service (such as their churches); or, as first-generation college students, they needed to invest their time in making good grades (Coles, 1999). Moreover, conversations in class and on site were perceived as more complicated and difficult to maneuver when race was an explicit focus. However, service is perceived as a traditional, core value within some communities of color (e.g., Jones, 2000; Stevens, 2003; Wokie & Simmons, 2000) and this regard can legitimate service learning.

Culturally Responsive Teaching and Funds of Knowledge

Murrell's notion of community teacher knowledge correlates with culturally responsive teaching. Arguably, culturally responsive teaching draws on community teacher knowledge. Teachers who practice culturally responsive teaching validate student's life experiences. They teach to the whole child as a student, family, and community member. They utilize the cultures and histories of minority group students as teaching resources and they question universal versions of truth (Gay, 2000; Nieto, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Although culturally responsive teaching seems compelling to preservice teachers, there is some evidence that they find the concept abstract and theoretical (Seidl, 2003). Kidd, Sanchez, and Thorp (2003) found that gathering stories about a family's history and values helped preservice teachers understand the sociocultural contexts in which students lived. Seidl (2003) found that describing a family's cultural patterns helped preservice teachers grasp meanings for culturally responsive teaching. Both of these investigations tap into funds of knowledge, an idea proposed by Moll, Amanti, Neff, and Gonzalez (1992). Families can hold funds of knowledge in terms of life skills, moral teachings, cultural information, or historic memories. The BHP tapped into funds of knowledge through recollections of local elders.

An asset-based or capacity-driven view of communities is utilized in community development work where even the most poverty stricken neighborhoods are considered to have resources on which to build. An asset-based view focuses on local aspirations, resources, and capabilities rather than on local needs, inadequacies, and deficits (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Multicultural service learning should put an asset-based perspective into practice. The BHP recognized the assets of a diverse community through highlighting stories of its elders and histories of its buildings.

THE CASE STUDY

Preservice teachers' participation in the BHP was investigated as a case through naturalistic, field study (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993). Twenty-four preservice teachers comprised the case: 15 were African American, 12 women and 3 men, and 9 were Latino(a), 7 women and 2 men. Project TEAM includes preservice teachers who are elementary or secondary candidates, from across subject areas. Ten preservice teachers were elementary candidates and 14 were secondary candidates. The group was a cohort but they entered Project TEAM at different points in their college careers. Most were sophomores or juniors but a few were seniors in college.

Data Collection

A combination of methods, including interview, participant observation, and document analysis, was used to triangulate data and to reduce the limits of any one method (Denzin, 1989). I taught the seminar for preservice teachers and observed them in action during their service tasks. My role most closely fit that of participant-as-observer (in LeCompte & Preissle, 1993).

Preservice teachers were interviewed twice for about 30 min in small groups. Scheduled standardized formats were used (Denzin, 1989). Three community partners and two doctoral students conducted most of the interviews. Preservice teachers wrote three reflective essays about their service learning and they completed written descriptions of their field-based project, considering its application to their future teaching. These documents and e-mail correspondence were collected. Field notes were taken during service learning activities in which preservice teachers took part. Public events were videotaped and transcriptions were made of the audio and videotapes.

Data Analysis

Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Essays and field-based projects were copied. I collated data from reflective essays and interviews by question or topic. I then used line-by-line analysis and open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to determine key ideas and major themes. I noted the name of each student who made a particular point, gaining a sense of the frequency with which it was mentioned. Because questions were open-ended (e.g., What, if anything, am I learning about funds of wisdom and/or community strengths?), a host of responses were possible. When, from a world of possibilities, a particular response was reiterated, I considered it significant. I also used constant comparison analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to identify divergent responses for each question. Distinctions related to gender, ethnicity, or intended level of teaching were noted.

Observation data were read, first, to get a general description of what happened in the

field and then to determine emergent concerns. For example, participation in public events prompted community connections in unexpected ways. Observation data were analyzed for critical incidents, especially occasions when participants discussed a community orientation to teaching. Field-based projects were the primary documents collected. Preservice teachers wrote a short paper in which they explained their fieldwork, stated key points in their data, and described what they learned. For example, preservice teachers who collected oral histories identified their respondents, outlined key points of the interview, and shared what they learned from the experience. These papers were read and information contained within them was used to corroborate trends that emerged from observations and interviews. Multiple data sources ground this report. In the narrative, however, data are not cited by type. Instead, wording suggests that information came from spoken, written, or observed materials.

Potential Limitations

Feelings of coercion are an issue when data are collected from course material and the researcher is a course instructor. To protect participants, I did not know who agreed to take part in the study until after the course ended. Preservice teachers signed informed consent forms, which were presented, collected, and then stored away by a colleague. Preservice teachers were involved in activities for the Banneker History Project regardless of whether they agreed to take part in the research. Reflective essays were not graded. I did not interview students unless they were absent from scheduled sessions. Participants often were critical in essays or interviews, leading me to consider these data as fairly accurate reflections of their beliefs.

FINDINGS

Dilemmas related to the promotion of a community orientation among teacher candidates were reflected in the data. Prospective teachers raised questions, such as the following: Whose

community are we serving? Is what we are doing culturally responsive? Does this kind of work really count in the larger scheme of teacher education? These questions represent significant conundrums for service learning. I decided to probe the dilemmas to comprehend problematic aspects and to suggest insights about service learning as part of teacher preparation.

Whose Community Is Served?

In service-learning literature, meanings for community rarely are explored. Cruz and Giles (2000) suggest that the problem stems from a slippery notion of community. It can be an intellectual, social, cultural, or geographic space. In this section, I explore who community service learning serves and how preservice teachers perceive their college community.

Finding local identity. In early seminars, many preservice teachers wondered how work in this local community connected to them. I was surprised to learn that quite a few felt distanced from the town. There was little sense of belonging, that this was a place they lived in, associated with, and cared about.

I learned that most preservice teachers came from cities far from campus. A few lived in apartments in town or attended church there, but most lived on campus. Few preservice teachers considered the town as their geographic community. Instead, most preservice teachers defined the campus as their community. According to one African American preservice teacher, "If it wasn't for this project, I wouldn't really accept this place as a city. I would just think of it as the university" (A. D., April 16, 2003). Many preservice teachers thought of the town as a temporary stopping point. Another African American preservice teacher said, "It is not really important for us to go out and discover the city because most of us don't plan to live here. We just go to school here, then, we plan to leave" (T. L., April 16, 2003).

Partly, preservice teacher's lack of connection stemmed from a normal, but narrow, focus on college life. However, race relations also spurred a sense of dislocation—the campus was

predominately White, as was the town. One African American preservice teacher wrote that the BHP made her realize that she "had not been connected to this town in any way except going to and from work and school and feeling as if the Black population did not exist past Black students attending the university" (T. J., April 1, 2003).

Not surprisingly, more than half of the group was unfamiliar with the Banneker Center or its neighborhood, although it was close to campus, a historic Black community, and a site with a growing Latino presence. One Latina prospective teacher wrote, "In the years that I have been part of the university, I had not heard of the Banneker Center or all of the things that it has offered to the community" (J. M., February 19, 2003). Across ethnic groupings, these preservice teachers seemed to feel like brief visitors to their college town.

Making historic connections. Many preservice teachers developed closer community connections from their participation in the BHP. Most were pleased to learn that the town was a historic place for African Americans. Some preservice teachers said the BHP challenged their perceptions of the town as a White bastion for the Ku Klux Klan. One African American preservice teacher wrote,

I am now a senior and I have never tried to get to know the community, especially the African American community, which is larger than many people think. Many people, including myself, who come to school here do not take the time to understand that the history of this city goes beyond the founding of the university or the White population being the majority. (T. J., April 1, 2003)

Others expressed respect and awe for the elder's struggles with segregation. A couple of preservice teachers recognized that these struggles paved the way for their own collegiate experience. One African American preservice teacher wrote, "Just to meet someone who paved the way for my presence here overwhelms my soul with joy" (A. W., February 19, 2003).

Several African American and Latin American preservice teachers developed feelings of pride and attachment from being part of a

history-making project. According to one Latina, "We are creating a bond that makes us feel special because we are helping the community conserve their history and this history will be passed on to others" (A. M., April 14, 2003). These preservice teachers seemed to build community in the sense suggested by Rhoads (1997); they made "meaningful connections" by "being in something together" (pp. 155-156).

A few African American preservice teachers mentioned a sense of cultural closeness with other people of color. As one preservice teacher explained, "I grew up in some of the situations that I talked to people about. I feel like I am part of the community. I don't feel like the community is over there and I am over here" (T. J., March 10, 2003). Generational differences affected this feeling of closeness, however. As another preservice teacher noted, "while some communities seem similar to mine, everyone's experience is different. . . . My interviews with [elders] from the same race allowed me to draw this conclusion. . . . We express very different cultures" (A. W., April 30, 2003).

What Does Culturally Responsive Teaching Mean?

In this section, I consider the following questions: What meanings do preservice teachers make for culturally responsive teaching from multicultural service learning? How do preservice teachers understand funds of knowledge from multicultural service learning?

Doing history. Preservice teachers who assisted with oral histories recognized that African American elders held a wealth of knowledge about racism in earlier days. As one preservice teacher expressed, "Every elder has a story to tell. Just like trees, if allowed to talk and share worldly events they have seen (lynching, riots, etc.) listeners would be amazed" (B. B., February 25, 2003). Some preservice teachers were startled to find evidence of a robust Black community in this predominately White town. As one African American preservice teacher wrote, "This experience has been an eye-opener. You never know how much potential or history a community has" (A. W., February 19, 2003). A

majority of these preservice teachers began to think of the community as a reservoir of historic knowledge: "I have learned that rich resources are right there in front of your face. They are the experiences of the people who have been there the longest" (T. T., April 30, 2003).

This recognition of people as historic resources was underscored by comments of preservice teachers at a public, celebratory, sharing event. For the event, preservice teachers sat next to the elders they interviewed. Each introduced his or her respondent and shared key points from their oral history with the audience. One Latino, male, prospective teacher recalled his interview in the following way:

I interviewed a brave, wise man. I learned how hard it was, not just to get through school but to go to school. He carried rocks in his pockets to defend himself and his sister. It makes me wonder how I would feel if I had to do that. I never thought about what those times were really like. Learning from him was pretty cool. (O. C., March 29, 2003)

Preservice teachers who assisted with biographies of Benjamin Banneker realized that his life story was "backyard history"—pertinent to elementary students' own backyard. "Banneker School—1915" was written on the fascia of the building where students attended after school programs and an etching of his face graced a sign outside. These preservice teachers talked about teaching elementary students to take pride in the heritage of their neighborhood, especially in the fight for equality personified by Benjamin Banneker.

Several preservice teachers realized that history is more complex and personal than what is written in textbooks. Personal stories about segregation touched them deeply and informed their understandings of racism and discrimination. One preservice teacher said that personal stories and idiosyncratic interpretations of events helped her grasp what is meant by multiple versions of historical truth.

Historical investigation seemed to serve as a significant project for culturally responsive teaching. It engaged preservice teachers in intensive study of a community, acquainting them with local lore, historic customs, and significant leaders. It offered a means to connect to

a community and to discover types of information that can enrich a culturally responsive curriculum. Many preservice teachers started to wonder about the racial history of their own towns. Many spoke or wrote about their intentions to delve into community study through similar history projects in their future classrooms.

Building confidence. I have heard White students express unease about doing service work in lower-income or ethnic minority communities—places that often diverge from their own home space. In this case, preservice teachers of color spoke apprehensively about their work in community settings. As an example, “it is very difficult to utilize the community. At times it might seem unappealing because it is unfamiliar and getting to know people requires a great deal more work than traditional in-class lessons” (S. J., April 16, 2003). The BHP seemed to foster confidence about making community connections. Preservice teachers used phrases such as, “less intimidated,” “more familiar,” and “more confident” to describe their feelings about work in communities. Learning skills to work in communities, such as mapping social organizations, identifying local leaders, and conducting oral history interviews, seemed to boost preservice teachers’ sense of efficacy. One Latina teacher candidate wrote, “We are getting the chance to work with youth, directors, and elders. The project is enhancing our knowledge of how to work with others, how to do interviews, and how to find places in communities that represent something meaningful” (A. M., April 14, 2003). Hosting public events, such as a panel discussion among former community center directors, helped preservice teachers become acquainted with local residents. One African American preservice teacher wrote about his experience related to the panel discussion in this way:

I learned how to utilize programs as a source for building bridges to citizens within the community. Before the panel discussion at Banneker Center, I looked around and only recognized Team students in the crowd. At that moment, I realized I had to meet people that had an affiliation with this project

because they are my colleagues. After the program, I went up to people and introduced myself until I had spoken with each person who entered the room as a stranger to me. All those previous strangers turned into present friends. (W. M., April 1, 2003)

Some preservice teachers seemed to gain a sense of confidence to face racial tensions in their own lives as a byproduct of service learning. Elders’ perseverance in the face of racism helped them deal with segregation in campus life. As one Latina preservice teacher shared,

In my classes, I am the only minority student. I feel that I do not belong. Now, I realize that my oral history informants had to deal with that the whole time they were at school. It made me realize that no matter who is around me, I can succeed. (J. M., April 27, 2003)

A sense of hesitancy about reaching out to communities might inhibit efforts to teach responsively. These recollections suggest that fostering relationships with people of color who are considered local assets can ease preservice teachers’ uncertainties about community work.

Moving toward concrete meanings. Early in the semester, preservice teachers described culturally responsive teaching abstractly. One third of the group thought of it as “putting more diversity in your class” (A. M., February 26, 2003) or as “taking cultural background into consideration” (D. V., February 26, 2003). Two preservice teachers described culturally responsive teaching as something that was much discussed but little practiced in their teacher education programs. They viewed the BHP as a rare chance to teach responsively.

A similar vagueness characterized funds of knowledge. Five preservice teachers admitted outright confusion about the term. To illustrate, one African American teacher candidate said, “I am still confused on funds of knowledge. I guess you are learning something and applying that knowledge to your teaching. Hopefully, it builds student’s knowledge and skills up” (T. J., March 10, 2003). Others thought it meant including what students want to learn in the curriculum or applying information from home in the curriculum. The BHP provided an

unusual opportunity to seek local knowledge about school segregation and to see its potential to enliven curriculum.

More than half of the group thought that "working hands-on in the community" (A. M., February 26, 2003) helped them develop more specific understandings of funds of knowledge and culturally relevant teaching. Historic memories of elders offered clear examples of funds of knowledge. In their final project, Latina and African American preservice teachers wrote, "We discovered a side of town few are aware of; a thriving African American community paved the way for minority students on campus. This project encouraged us to look to elders of communities for knowledge and strength" (M. M. and A.W., April 18, 2003). Writing biographies about Benjamin Banneker, the community center's namesake, offered clear examples of culturally responsive teaching. An African American preservice teacher said,

Culturally responsive teaching is what we do at Banneker. It is when you go into the community and teach things that are relevant to that community or cultural group. Before it was just a definition, now we have done it, and I know what it is like. (B. B., April 18, 2003)

The meanings that preservice teachers made for culturally responsive teaching and funds of knowledge related strongly to the service tasks they did. Six preservice teachers interviewed past directors of the Banneker Community Center to trace its history after segregation. Their comments suggest an increased understanding of funds of knowledge. The leader of this group wrote, "Local citizens have great knowledge and insight about the center. I was able to meet and speak with people who played a huge role in Banneker history" (P. T., February 19, 2003). Although this group tapped into local sources of wisdom, they missed the interactions with students that helped to particularize meanings for culturally responsive teaching for their classmates. One preservice teacher from this group explained, "I think other people who were interacting with kids . . . got a more meaningful experience. I learned a lot, but I just interacted with adults" (J. M., April 16, 2003).

Nine preservice teachers guided teams of high school students in their collection of oral histories. They were expected to conduct a preinterview of oral history informants, arrange the actual interview, and debrief their team afterward. In reality, most teams and team leaders met briefly for interviews and then dispersed. This group had difficulty perceiving how their task practiced culturally relevant teaching. One preservice teacher said, "It is hard to consider what we are doing as culturally relevant teaching because I don't really know these students that much" (R. K., April 16, 2003). Most of these preservice teachers described culturally responsive teaching as a tool for their future teaching rather than as a moment of relevance for these high school students. Alternatively, this group recognized elders as significant sources of local wisdom. One preservice teacher wrote, "They [elders] are historians and teachers. Being a teacher respects no degree" (A.W., April 1, 2003).

Nine preservice teachers helped elementary students write biographies of Benjamin Banneker. Banneker Community Center was just down the street from school: Many of the elementary students attended after-school programs there. These students told preservice teachers that they were pleased to know about Benjamin Banneker and to be able to tell their friends about his fight for equality. The biography project clearly connected to children's lives. Preservice teachers in this group reported a deeper understanding of culturally relevant teaching, but unlike the other groups, they did not tap into local funds of knowledge.

Does a Community Orientation Count?

In this section, I examine the following questions. Does a community orientation really count in teacher education? What did preservice teachers think about doing community work? What did they find most worthwhile about their service learning?

Expressing reservations. Nine of 24 preservice teachers expressed initial reservations about doing service learning. As the reader might re-

call, Project TEAM includes elementary and secondary teacher candidates, and members of both groups questioned the pertinence of the BHP. One elementary candidate wrote, "When I started this project, I was upset that I was going to have to give up my precious time to help with a service learning project that was only concerned with me because of my scholarship program" (C. Z., April 8, 2003). A secondary candidate wrote, "I know that coming into this project we all questioned its significance, and we were somewhat concerned with how we were to conduct our search for historical wisdom" (J. M., March 26, 2003).

Near the end of the semester, as part of an interview, preservice teachers were asked if they considered community work as busy work. None did. Yet, there was lingering uncertainty among some secondary preservice teachers about the value of a community orientation for their teaching. Their primary concern was teaching their content specialties well. Building relationships with student's families and communities was perceived as a secondary, time-consuming project. As one secondary preservice teacher wrote,

It is frightening to think of the responsibilities teachers have on top of teaching content and preparing students for standardized tests. I understand the point of reaching out to community, but it seems so time-consuming, especially for people who have family lives outside the classroom. (B. B., April 30, 2003)

Several preservice teachers who worked on the oral history dimension of the BHP felt their assistance was "superfluous." Project partners did most of the organizational, advance work that preservice teachers might have completed: We identified oral history respondents, we invited them to participate, and we developed an interview protocol. Our preparations left preservice teachers primarily in oversight positions. One preservice teacher was hesitant to do the legwork for oral histories but said she missed the chance to do so: "We didn't really get to organize the oral histories, which would have been a lot of work. I am glad that we didn't have to do it, but in a way, it would have been more beneficial" (R. K., April 16, 2003). Furthermore,

she wanted to do the interviews rather than assist high school students with them, further stating, "In real teaching, I am going to have to go out there and find the resources and do the interviews. I didn't do the interviews, the high school students did. It seemed like a vague circumstance" (R. K., April 16, 2003).

Community connections might be considered peripheral to good teaching, especially for secondary teacher candidates. However, when expected to practice community-oriented teaching, prospective teachers want to experience projects in their entirety, including the organization of service activities.

Jump-starting a community orientation. For most preservice teachers, the BHP jump-started a community orientation to teaching. One African American preservice teacher explained, "You don't really think about community. You just think about going to class, teaching, and clubbing" (A. P., April 16, 2003). Later, she wrote further about this point, "There are many Black communities just like the Banneker neighborhood that have assets to contribute to children's education" (A. P., April 30, 2003).

Another African American preservice teacher told us that culturally responsive teaching might increase the credence of schools in marginalized communities: "In my neighborhood, people didn't buy into what was said at school. Schools should relate stuff to the outside community" (A. M., April 16, 2003). Another thought that getting students involved in worthwhile community projects, such as the BHP, might prevent negative feelings about low-income neighborhoods. Near the end of their semester of service learning, more than half of the prospective teachers described themselves as more interested in and comfortable with a community orientation for their teaching.

Serving for social justice. Half of the preservice teachers realized that the BHP actualized the missions of Project TEAM: teaching from a multicultural perspective and advancing social justice. A Latino teacher candidate said, "Through this project one of TEAM's fundamentals was highlighted, teaching for social jus-

tice. I helped to enlighten students about Benjamin Banneker as a famous African American, and I gave back to the neighborhood" (C. Z., April 18, 2003). Also, preservice teachers found it eye-opening to learn about struggles with racism firsthand. One African American teacher candidate wrote, "Listening to these stories made segregation more real. . . . This project opened my eyes to the things [the city] dealt with back in the days. I would not have known that segregation existed here without this project" (T. B., April 2, 2003). However, several preservice teachers thought the BHP taught about social justice in the past but did not carry this emphasis to the present. They wanted more class discussion about racism today, especially about possible resegregation inside desegregated schools, a topic much in the news today.

REFLECTIONS/INSIGHTS

Whose community does service learning serve? As Cruz and Giles (2000) suggest, it is a slippery matter to define community for service learning. The matter is even thornier for service learners of color who can feel disconnected from college communities that are predominately White and/or culturally (as well as literally) far from home. We (teacher educators) cannot assume that there will be a built-in motivation to work in "our" community. We need to seriously consider what it means to develop a sense of locality, including building bridges between local populations of color and preservice teachers.

Often, service learning treats people of color or those living in poverty as clients, not as sources of wisdom. For multicultural service learning, this relationship should be turned on its head. Through learning about past racism from people who confronted it, preservice teachers began to develop a sense of shared identity with the neighborhood served. The BHP dealt specifically with the history of the local, Black population. I worried that preservice teachers who were not African American might feel distanced from the effort. My fears were unsubstantiated. The project's focus on segregation seemed to motivate his-

toric ties that crossed racial and ethnic groupings.

What meanings do preservice teachers make of culturally responsive teaching? These data indicate that service learning helps preservice teachers gain community teacher knowledge (Murrell, 2001), or deeper understandings of contexts from which their students come. Local history projects can foster an asset-based view of older, lower-income neighborhoods (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993). Investigations can probe the significance of old buildings; unearth critical, past events; and acknowledge long-time residents as sources of wisdom.

The three inquiries, undertaken as parts of the BHP, seemed to result in different kinds of learning. The collection of oral histories and the conduct of interviews with past directors for Banneker Center helped preservice teachers recognize local adults as funds of historical knowledge. The creation of biographies about Benjamin Banneker helped other preservice teachers clarify culturally responsive pedagogy. Regardless of the task, however, preservice teachers glimpsed the power of local, historic study to tap into community resources, galvanize youth, and educate about racism. As in the study by Kidd et al. (2003), knowledge of local history helped preservice teachers understand one sociocultural context for education. As in Seidl's (2003) study, local investigations (in this case, of a historic Black citizen) helped preservice teachers practice culturally responsive teaching.

What really counts in teacher education? The initial reservations of preservice teachers about service learning suggest that community outreach does not really count. In this case, there were several possible causes. Project TEAM is a scholarship program and preservice teachers take the Honors Seminar in addition to full class loads. As in Coles's study (1999), time for community work was definitely a factor. Preservice teachers feared that service learning might consume so much time that it would negatively affect their other course grades. Current emphasis on subject matter expertise, rather than on community sensitivity, was another factor. Secondary teacher candidates seemed particularly

attuned to this reality. I needed to give this issue much more attention. Educators might use discursive openings prompted by this conundrum to discuss teaching as public service, to consider the worth of a service ethic for teaching, and to ponder the benefits of service learning. As part of such considerations, a model can be found in historic, high regard for service as a sort of giving back of benefits received by teachers in communities of color (e.g., Jones, 2000).

There was some indication that preservice teachers "buy into" service learning to the extent that they help develop service projects. The leadership team worked tirelessly to arrange oral histories to limit potential problems with a many-peopled endeavor. Our efforts seemed to rob many preservice teachers of chances to develop community-building skills. Usually, service-learning efforts are pre-planned and then preservice teachers (or other service learners) are inserted into them. Perhaps this arrangement is in error. If we want service learning to count in teacher education, future teachers must act as teachers to plan and carry out projects.

Yet another aspect of the BHP that was meaningful to preservice teachers was its connection with social justice aims for Project TEAM. The BHP met the aims of multicultural service learning (e.g., Boyle-Baise, 2002). It taught about racism, validated elders of color as important resources, and made public a local history of segregation. Preservice teachers seemed to find their participation in the BHP worthwhile because of its direct confrontation with inequality. However, some preservice teachers asked for stronger connections between past and present conditions of educational inequality. I could have used the Honors Seminar to push reflections toward this end, but I failed to do so.

SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHER EDUCATION

Based on these insights, several suggestions for the development of a community orientation to teacher education follow.

The BHP seemed to jump-start an asset-based, culturally sensitive, justice-oriented view of communities, such as those in which

these teachers will one day serve. This kind of project in multicultural service learning can be a valued aspect of teachers' preparation for work in culturally diverse and/or lower-income communities. However, much remained to be accomplished. Preservice teachers wanted more practice of culturally responsive teaching, more opportunities to develop service projects, and more connections between community work and justice aims. Participation in one service-learning project seems insufficient to develop a community orientation for teaching. As in Murrell's (2001) framework, a community orientation might be integrated into the entire teacher education program.

Most preservice teachers seemed to feel little connection to the local community, and few had even visited local sites only a mile or so from campus. Efforts in multicultural service learning cannot be based on assumptions that college towns invoke a sense of community in preservice teachers, especially in preservice teachers of color who live in a predominately White space. Preservice teachers might be encouraged to venture away from campus, meeting people and visiting places where they will serve. They can participate in a tour of the neighborhood, preferably guided by a local resident whose life experience relates to the project at hand. They can accompany the instructor on his or her engagements in the community, taking part in events as appropriate. They can meet elders (and other people resources) in their homes, gaining a sense of their everyday lives. An orientation to service learning might be planned with local residents in key teaching roles. A local history, mini-unit of study in the service learning course might ground service efforts.

In the BHP, preservice teachers expressed initial reservations about the time and value of service work. Efforts in multicultural service learning might address potential reservations upfront. Issues of time, of focus on academic work, and of conflicts with other obligations can be addressed. Forthright discussion about the worth of community service to teacher preparation seems needed. Educators need to acknowledge that current educational conversation

favors content, not community knowledge. Educators can open the door to reconsider (and possibly recast) what it means to be accountable (or responsible) to students. Ideally, the development of an ethic of service and of an orientation to community should be considered part of one's responsibility to students and their families.

The BHP brought to light a real story of social injustice. It created a space where previously silenced voices were heard. This just cause for service learning seemed to heighten its value for preservice teachers. However, some preservice teachers felt their work focused on past injustice, leaving present problems untouched. Multicultural service learning might offer opportunities for preservice teachers to take action in support of social justice. Furthermore, in a historic endeavor, educators can use reflective class discussion to link examples of past and present injustice.

Some preservice teachers felt their oversight of oral history interviews was superfluous. They wanted to be involved in the advance work for multicultural service learning. When everything is done for them, preservice teachers can lose opportunities to gain organizational skills and to develop ownership for the effort. I discussed the BHP with preservice teachers the semester before their fieldwork began, but then I inserted them into preplanned options. Instead, I might have included them in the development of service tasks.

In the BHP, preservice teachers' perceptions of culturally responsive teaching or funds of knowledge depended on their service task. Educators need to carefully consider the kind of community connections likely to result from a given task and match service tasks with intended aims. Once a service effort is underway, questions about funds of wisdom (from whom and how) and about cultural responsiveness (to whom and in what ways) might guide preservice teacher's reflections on their work.

The BHP reflects that historic inquiries can build community connections, excavating and honoring the past. Local events marked by discrimination commonly are overlooked, misrepresented, or forgotten. Service learning is an

appropriate venue to unearth these stories and to investigate them from insider's perspectives. Elders of color, who can tell firsthand, personal accounts of racism in times gone by, can be invited to serve as community educators for such efforts.

QUESTIONS THAT REMAIN

Participation in the Banneker History Project seemed to foster a community orientation among preservice teachers, but many questions beg further consideration. What kind of perceptions might preservice teachers have of their college communities? Should we encourage preservice teachers to make connections with unfamiliar places? If so, what might we do? What community linkages are meaningful for preservice teachers of color? In what ways might multicultural service learning deepen preservice teachers' grasp of culturally responsive teaching, funds of knowledge, or local resources? What kind of service activities actually tap into funds of knowledge or practice responsive teaching? Who might we consider as community assets, particularly in addressing issues of equity? Is community service learning of real worth to teacher education programs? If so, how can social justice projects contribute to the value of fieldwork? If not, why not? How might we make the case for community service learning as integral to teacher education? It is my hope that this article encourages discussion of these questions.

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