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Toward a Pedagogy of Compassion: Extracting Principles of Education from Teaching a High School Multicultural Literature Class

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Toward a Pedagogy of Compassion: Extracting Principles of Education from Teaching a

High School Multicultural Literature Class

by

Carlos Roberto Valverde

A dissertation presented to the Faculty of the School of Education,

Loyola Marymount University,

in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education
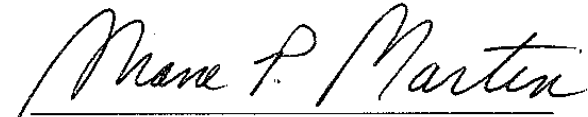
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This dissertation written by Carlos Roberto Valverde, under the direction of the Dissertation Committee, is approved and accepted by all committee members, in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

_____ June 21, 2010 _____
Date

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alcanzar todas las metas que me he propuesto. A mi padre, porque, aun no habiendo tenido la oportunidad de estudiar, me enseñó que el trabajo es una virtud y con su esfuerzo y sabiduría, ha sido mi gran maestro de la vida. A mi madre, por inculcar en mi la caridad y por haberme enseñado un gran verdad: "con fe, nada sera imposible."

And no one deserves greater praise than my wife Thelma, a true partner in every sense of the word. We have come a long way since high school and I know we have many more bright and wonderful moments ahead. I am appreciative of all that we have accomplished together, guiding and supporting each other through each milestone as we co-create our vision for the future as a family.

My daughters Alyssa, 19, Viana, 9, and Analise, 5, every day make me appreciate who they have allowed me to become. I discovered myself through my role as their father, and yet, as they grow, they have let me return to myself to find me again. I am so thankful for their unconditional love and praise.

For many years I have thought about the pursuit of this achievement. But for the past three years, I have worked on developing my educational philosophy and the theoretical arguments contained in this dissertation; it has been a remarkable process of discovery and growth. My heartfelt thanks and deep appreciation for all of those who have shaped me into who I am and who have helped me define myself as a teacher, mentor, researcher, and now scholar. My gratitude is immeasurable.

DEDICATION

To the memory of Rudy, my brother,
whose example and encouragement first taught me,
above all, to believe in myself.

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ABSTRACT

Toward a Pedagogy of Compassion: Extracting Principles of Education from Teaching a

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Based on the assumption by Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993), educational scholars need insight on the "particulars" of what works for classroom teachers within the context of their own classrooms. This dissertation is a self-study that addresses my work as a high school Multicultural Literature teacher and the impact of how my own philosophical/theoretical belief system resulted in significant transformative learning experiences for students as demonstrated in their feedback.

Using intercultural competence, value-creation pedagogy, and compassion as theoretical frameworks that encourage greater social cohesion and collective participation, I used autoethnography as my primary method of investigation to treat data through an analytical, self-reflective, and interpretive lens within the cultural context of my classes. Types of data included personal memory, self-observational, self-reflective, and external data, such as end of the year anonymous student evaluations, personal memoirs, journal entries, notes, course documents, past student assignments, personal communications, and a blog, collected from my 13 years of teaching.

By sharing and examining my ethical/moral-motivation in relation to the positive feedback from students, I demonstrate how my pedagogical interactions and relationships with students manifest through value creation/culturally responsive pedagogy, the empowered voice, intercultural dialogue, transformative learning, and the development and nurturing of empathy and compassion. The study shares personal insights into the elements and processes that contributed to the overwhelmingly positive feedback of students throughout the study. Recommendations suggest greater research and discourse in developing a pedagogy of compassion.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The world today continues to struggle against many of the social and human

injustices that contributed to much of the last century's being categorized as a century of

warfare and violence. The threat of prejudice, ethnic segregation, intolerance, and

discrimination, as well as a seeming moral decay of society through materialism,

individualism, and disregard for the welfare of the community–as well as the world–is

still very much a part of life today and continues to threaten the future of humanity.

While the economic crisis has engulfed contemporary society, many of the concerns that

threaten human welfare continue with the threat of terrorism, war, poverty, the

destruction of distinct cultures, proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and the

disregard for global environmental concerns. The very values that sustain and promote a

higher quality of life, those that bring attention to the concerns of social justice and

promote the overall welfare of a society, are seemingly being threatened through a blatant

disregard of the humanitarian ideals that urge a peaceful and healthy coexistence. As a

result, many of these concerns have become diluted in political, social, and educational

discourse. The freedoms and liberties of human beings, basic human rights, and the

desire for social ethics and justice have been, in many respects, approached from a

distance through major cultural, ideological and ethical divides, often ignoring the human

connections and social responsibility required in sustaining such a society.

Through the voices of many contemporary scholars and philosophers, the growing

indifference to the intrinsic values of human welfare has placed human civilization in a

precarious situation. The lack of general concern for fellow members of a society is "elusive and almost invisible" (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 2008, p. 251). While education plays a vital role in developing the consciousness of individuals, contemporary educational movements operate on a separate set of principles. The lack of "noncommercial values" (Giroux, 2000) and lack of genuine concern for humanity is evident in education today as society continues to build upon educational systems that are based on economic models that promote competition more than cooperation. As a result of these models, education promotes the standard of success through winners and losers, the haves and have nots, where economic success, self-reliance, and the accumulation of wealth are implied as the essential purposes of education. According to Giroux (2000):

> As freedom is defined increasingly through the logic of consumerism, the dynamics of self-interest, an e-commerce investment of culture, and all things private, there is growing indifference on the part of the general population to those non-commercial values such as empathy, compassion, love, and solidarity that bridge the private and the public and give substance to the meaning of citizenship, democracy, and public life. (p. 1)

In doing so, educators create "an environment where competition, fragmentation and division are promoted, thus eroding most feelings of connectedness that students may experience..." (de Souza, 2006, p. 167).

Built on traditional systems of "banking education" (Freire, 2006), where knowledge is deposited rather than co-constructed, students mechanically memorize and reiterate information; and according to Ikeda (as cited in Noddings, 2005b) education today lacks a concerted effort and realization that, as a civilization, education is the means by which many of the issues that are faced in the 21st century can be resolved. Regrettably, the concerted efforts in education today are swept by a wave of politically generated technocratic assessment and standardized learning that undermines the very

core of social living. Many of the aims of education today impede a serious approach to address the global and social issues confronting the world, causing individuals to "live in a world of isolation of the individual in the self and the loss of interest in others or in society…" (Ruiz & Minguez, 2001, p. 155).

The increase in cultural diversity in many industrialized nations and the changing racial and ethnic demographics have also given rise to many new challenges for educators. While the cultural diversity of contemporary society has become more complex, the very nature of citizenship has been played out within the interactions of culturally different people on a daily basis. In the United States, increased diversity of local environments such as schools, businesses, and communities, has added a new dimension to the growing isolationism between people. As separatist conceptions of cultural diversity emphasize differences over commonality, Gurin, Matlock, and Wade-Golden (2008), described the ability to cooperate cohesively in society becomes hindered through daily cultural interaction. Social psychology theories of group interaction support the importance of commonality between groups (Alport, 1954; Brewer & Kramer, 1985; Gaertner & Dovideo, 2000; Hewstone & Brown, 1986; Grant-Thomas & Orfield, 2008). Therefore, if education today is to attempt to bring awareness of global and human concerns of social justice, a form of education that helps bridge cultural, social, and ideological divides, it must consciously act upon the ethical ideals and orientation of educators themselves.

As a high school teacher, my experience in working with culturally diverse students using pedagogical practices grounded in various intercultural competence

approaches, knowledge of critical pedagogy, and a firm ethical-orientation through the notion of value-creation pedagogy, provided me with a unique position to participate in what Geertz (1973) refers to as the complex "webs of significance" (p. 5) that are present within my classroom. Through my 12 years of teaching high school students, 8 of which I have taught a self-created Multicultural Literature course, significant student feedback prompted my enduring curiosity as a teacher about my own teaching practice. In many different ways, comments by former and current students showed that my practice played a significant role in linking social concerns to the lives of students. Through my return to the university as a doctoral student, the dissertation process has now given me the unique opportunity to examine my own praxis as an educator. As a reflective teacher, I understand that in some way I create something special for culturally diverse students, but I have never truly understood what exactly it was that I was doing. Careful examination of the types of comments I received and the outcomes produced within my classroom point toward more than simple traditional learning. My practice seems to include more than just effective lesson planning, more than just a positive learning environment, and more than just classroom management skills. My preliminary assumptions of what I perceive to be generated within my students are greater cultural awareness, empathy, student empowerment, and compassion. It is for this reason, I felt, a greater analysis of my own teaching methods using the autoethnographic method of my own practice, my ethical-orientation and my knowledge of theoretical frameworks that promote social cohesion would have value in contributing to the discourse of various paradigms of intercultural competence, value-creation, and teacher research itself.

In addition, one of my goals of the proposed study was to generate a dialogue among educators and educational researchers to ultimately reevaluate the role of education today. Educators must reassess their function as agents in a changing world. A guiding question that motivated this research inquiry was whether education today is adequately addressing the concerns of social justice. Are educators firmly grounded on a common purpose, a search toward common goals of humanity, or a sense of interdependent living? Are educational systems generating the appropriate knowledge, skills, abilities, and values within youth that are necessary for confronting the challenges society faces? Failing to comprehend the nature of the future, and the mindful unwillingness to do anything about it, only places the hearts of young people, "adrift, floating without guidance or concern on the surface of life" (Ruiz & Minguez-Vallejos, 2001, p. 156).

True education seeks to cultivate the individual character of young people through their fundamental respect for humanity (Ikeda, 2001, p. 124). However, many contemporary approaches to education fail in reflecting this sense of educational purpose. While the United States continues to be one of the most diverse countries in the world, the national consciousness of living within such diversity is continuously challenged as varying cultural groups interact on a daily basis. Much of this interaction is shaped by attitudes of cultural difference, stereotypical thinking, and misinterpretation that prevents individuals from achieving a sense of interconnectedness that bridges the human divides evident through continued racism, prejudice and intolerance. Greater attention to social interaction, more focused educational approaches and greater emphasis of educational

researchers on the very mechanisms that help individuals perceive themselves and others as fundamental partners in a globalized world, is essential for the "layers of connectedness to be nurtured and given expression in the contemporary world…" (de Souza, 2006, p. 166). It is for this reason that educators today are faced with the daunting and exciting challenge of shifting educational emphasis away from technocratic measurements of perceived achievement toward an emphasis on cultural contact, dialogue, and understanding; processes that directly address the humanitarian concerns of the 21st century.

Educational attempts to address cultural relations in schools have resulted in academic movements such as race studies, culturally-responsive approaches, critical studies, critical pedagogy, multiculturalism, and interculturalism. Through these paradigms, the complexities associated with human interaction reveal themselves and point toward an area of education that goes beyond traditional methods of measuring knowledge (i.e., test scores and assessments). Although extensive research can be found in these theoretical frameworks, a limited understanding of concrete pedagogical practices that recognize the importance of cultural interaction continues. The significant work in critical analysis illustrates how useful it is in examining the relations, elements, and interactions between students and their teachers. According to Kincheloe (2008), the basic concerns of critical pedagogy include the awareness of all education as political, the desire to eradicate the various domains of oppression and human suffering through educational purpose, the need for education to promote liberation from dominant viewpoints and expressions that marginalize students, the importance of cultivating

character toward social change, and the significance of a social and educational vision grounded in social justice. To this end, a process or intent to eradicate suffering is expressed through teacher-student relationships. Hence, it is through my experience as a high school teacher that I point to compassion as an important element of cultural interaction. Further critical analysis of cultural relations and character development can provide educators with the tools necessary to educate young people with the basic fundamentals to confront dominant viewpoints and social injustice, as well as achieve a greater awareness of a contributive existence.

According to Freire (2006), "For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (p. 72). As a researcher and a high school teacher, the purpose of the proposed study was to contribute to teacher-research by situating myself within the context of my own ethical and critical pedagogical practice. It was an attempt to examine the complexities of cultural interaction between students and myself that promote social concern, empathy, and compassion. This not only required an examination of teaching practices, but also the inherent ethical and moral motivation that propelled me, the instructor, to function in such a way. It was here that I aligned myself not only through a framework of intercultural competence, but within a compassionate, educational-humanistic approach influenced by the principles within the system of value-creation pedagogy. The essential aim of the study was to integrate philosophy and theory with practice.

The work of contemporary and past educational thinkers such as Noddings, Ikeda and Makiguchi remind educators of human and ethical underpinnings that help bring greater meaning to the lives of students and provide educational researchers with the foundations by which to transfer theory into practice. Under an ultimate framework of social justice, I argue, that the linkage between global welfare and social responsibility rests on the essential principles of *compassion* that are manifest in one's ability to effectively negotiate cultural interaction. While empathy is often located within intercultural studies, which will be discussed later, for purposes of this study I delineated empathy as a function of compassion. I argued that intercultural competence promotes empathy, which is ultimately a vehicle by which compassion can be fostered. As evident in the literature of multiculturalism, interculturalism, and intercultural competence, compassion and the creation of value through dialogue and understanding achieve a greater sense of interconnectedness and appreciation of life.

Statement of Problem

A lack of adequate, well-formulated concern for the welfare of humanity continues to pervade educational discourse mainly at the political, administrative, and pedagogical level. As cultural paradigms such as multiculturalism and interculturalism foster greater self and social awareness that essentially motivate reactions of empathy on the part of learners, little is known about the way these approaches function through an inter-subjective analysis of interactions between the teacher and students. Contemporary research into human interaction can generally be found through behavioral and psychological variations of inquiry. Relational teaching studies help inform educators of

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the importance of relationships, the interaction and manifestations of social and human values between the student and teacher. By nature of their content, some areas of educational thought (i.e., educational philosophy, critical theory, educational ethics, and spirituality), point to the presence of rather, intangible, intrinsic human processes that occur during a learning experience. However, in-depth study into these areas continues to remain elusive in educational discourse.

As society is made of diverse communities, at times cultural groups can live mutually contradictorily (Ruiz & Minguez-Vallejos, 2001). With the continued presence of racism, prejudice, and intolerance throughout society, it is quite easy for young people to become insecure and pessimistic about society and the future. With the rise of globalization, migration, and increased cultural interaction by which, in many ways, differences are promoted over commonality, a vision that attempts to establish social and global solidarity is even more complex. Unfortunately, the inadvertent values promoted by current educational models by which educators teach and prepare children for the future, observably, result in the widening gap between the self and others. For Noddings (1984), the underlying premise of her work revolves around the notion that all human life desires to be cared for. This fundamental principle of care, according to Noddings, should be the basis of all ethical decision-making, but more specifically of all educational endeavors. According to Abdallah-Pretceille (2006), intercultural reasoning "emphasizes the processes and interactions which unite and define the individuals and the groups in relation to each other" (p. 476). According to Smith (2003), consciousness transformation that develops compassion and altruism occurs through personal

transformative experiences. Unlike theories that are often interpreted to emphasize

difference (i.e., critical race theory, social identity theory, and in some cases,

multiculturalism), intercultural approaches acknowledge *otherness* through an inter-

subjective understanding that bridges commonality. The social constructions that emerge

through dialogue, reciprocity, and relational teaching within an intercultural context, help

bridge differences by transforming consciousness that allows students to *feel* for others.

Therefore, a transformational intercultural teaching approach that operates by alternating

between attitudes that discriminate and a thinking process which reconstructs universality

(Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006), is key in revealing the inter-subjective experience of

compassion.

As a reflexive teacher with 12 years experience working with high school students

(additional background information located in Chapter 3), I contend that a fundamental

precursor to developing positive, transformational learning environments that promote

greater self-awareness, greater respect for others, and develops a contributive spirit, is

care and/or compassion (de Souza, 2006; Ikeda, 1995; Makiguchi, 1930/1989; Mansfield,

Miller, & Montalvo, 2007; Noddings, 2005a; Poppo, 2006; Riele, 2006; Ruiz &

Minguez-Vallejos, 2001). It is for this reason that findings from further investigation into

the transformation of attitude through a critical, humanistic, and intercultural context that

ignites compassion can assist educators in developing a greater sense of care and

compassion in future pedagogical practice.

Purpose of the Study

I argue that pedagogy must strengthen self-awareness in context with commitment to the greater community. From my personal experience and observations, I recognize that the recent overindulgence with standards-based education, assessment, and inadequate funding has inadvertently created a system of education that is very much impersonal, inanimate, and ethically neutral. As society places greater value on API and AYP scores than on nurture, critical thinking, and creativity, naturally, teachers tend to focus on the trend. But I contend that engaging students and examining intercultural activity can better inform educators in understanding the values, behaviors, views, and subconscious foundations, that arouse cross-cultural dialogue and promote positive cross-cultural interaction (Banks, 2001; Giroux & Simon, 1989; Zeilchner & Hoeft, 1996). It is through this process that society can arrive at "our unavoidable moral responsibility" (Ruiz & Minguez, 2001, p. 164), to deal with human suffering and inevitable global problems. Therefore, the four objectives of this study are:

First, through an autoethnographic method of inquiry, the study widens the research field in interpersonal, social, and relational student development by examining and analyzing how my personal thoughts, characteristics, attitudes and behaviors, manifest in my interactions with culturally diverse 12th grade students to produce positive outcomes within the researcher-created Multicultural Literature & Practicum course at a middle-class, suburban high school.

Second, the autoethnography demonstrates and identifies the ethically latent dialogue and exchange between the student and teacher through a value-creative,

intercultural competence development approach that further reveals how teachers and students mutually impact one another as they create value through social interaction.

Third, the study contributes to the emerging genre of autoethnographic writing as a viable ethnographic method and research tool in exposing the unexamined bias of teachers.

Fourth, the autoethnography provides insight into understanding how empathy, compassion and altruism are developed through daily interactions of students and teachers.

Research Questions

This auto-ethnographic study was designed to answer two research questions:

- How do my belief systems influence my pedagogical interactions that produce positive outcomes in the Multicultural Literature class?

- How do I create transformative learning experiences through intercultural competence development and value-creation pedagogy?

Significance of the Study

Exposing the biases and ethical underpinnings of the student/teacher relationship within an intercultural context, provides researchers, scholars and teachers–committed to social justice–with data that informs the potential progression toward a "pedagogy of compassion" (Carson & Johnston, 2000; Poppo, 2006). Social cohesion, shared sense of humanity, and interdependent living are complex concepts that are not easily studied nor understood. However, the educational process embedded in effective cultural exchange carries a great deal of significance to individuals willing to engage it. Intercultural competence development offers further investigation into the processes that result in

greater understanding of others, giving students the capacity to challenge individualism and social isolationism. It is one method that helps confront prejudice and indifference. Critical analysis offers a system of examining the world in the context of power, empowering an individual's agency within a socio-political framework. Value-creation pedagogy offers individuals the capacity to change "the ordinary order of nature into a special one through human activity, increasing its usefulness for human life" (Bethel, 1973, p. 50). According to Makiguchi (1989) it is achievable by realizing one's full potential to create individual and collective benefit from all circumstances.

Instruction is the site of human cultural exchange. Instructors are guides who work at the core of fundamental learning. Social justice is not a paradigm that always works from the top down. Social justice is born within the common person's desire to effect change in the very lives of individuals. The need to understand the importance of social relationships in instruction and education is now more important than ever. According to Freire (2006), praxis is the "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 51). Within an educational context, to understand the fundamental aspects of my praxis and to examine how social justice manifests from ethically driven critical, intercultural interaction with my students, the study employed the autoethnographic method. The method provides a means to access the subjectivity that drives praxis. The significance of this study is my situated position of a classroom teacher–as well as researcher–engaged in an empowering, value-creating, intercultural competence development approach. This form of teacher research provided the study with valuable resources in collecting data for analysis. According to Orfield (2008),

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"Scholars have a deep responsibility to use their knowledge and their ability to analyze official data and collect new information to build an understanding of what is happening and what can be done to produce a more viable society and political community (p. 288). Essentially, the production of social change is manifest in the daily praxis of teachers, and it is ultimately up to the teacher to share this knowledge and experience.

The promotion of social justice not only requires an ideological shift that rearranges educators' common assumptions of educational purpose and educational research, but also seeks to eradicate the growing sense of individualism that erodes social commitment and participation (Bellah et al., 2008). Under traditional and technocratic systems of education, instruction can continue to emphasize a system that values competition over cooperation. However, without an appropriate balance social justice matters in education will solely remain in the periphery. It is through direct instruction that educators hold the greatest strength and power to effect change. Educators can allow present conditions to go uninterrupted or stubbornly strive to change them. Social justice not only requires educators to know how to circumnavigate the tendencies that produce youth disconnected from society, but the courage and willingness to transition individuals toward a common purpose.

Ultimately, what made this study significant was that it told my story as a practicing teacher situated on the actual frontlines of instruction. Based on my 12 years of teaching experience, I observed that students were powerfully latent with possibility to transform themselves and each other if guided appropriately through firmly grounded ethical principles of the teacher as revealed through compassionate dialogical exchange.

Through my eight years of teaching a Multicultural Literature and Practicum course, combined with years of student feedback, students have revealed a greater sense of empathy, connection to each other, and concern for societal harms when empathy and compassion were nurtured and developed within the relationships of the classroom.

Therefore, the added significance of the study was that it utilized the autoethnographic method as an interpretive and autobiographical approach to elicit the depths of my own biases, my own ethical orientation, and my own accounts of the cultural interaction in dialogical exchange with students through student feedback. Using student feedback, data collected from the daily interactions with students, reflective writing, journaling, interviewing, and discussions as a unique entry point for research also allowed me to examine my own personal ethical, moral, and philosophical views or principles through these daily interactions. The data located within an educational and pedagogical narrative, which was constructed through the voice of the ethnographic researcher as the subject, was useful in advancing teacher research by better understanding how educators can ethically operate within an educational context. From the data obtained, such an inquiry provided a new and unique perspective on the very nature of teaching and learning; it provided greater insight into addressing the growing diversity in schools; it added to the awareness of combating cultural conflict that arises between groups; it exposed ways to minimize prejudice, bigotry, and discrimination; it added to the discussion of culturally-responsive pedagogy, intercultural competence, rational-moral motivation; and ultimately opened a discourse in approaching education through a paradigm of compassion. For Ruiz and Minguez (2001), ultimately, the

recognition of compassion is not to seek an "alternative to justice but as the source of a new way of understanding justice" (p. 163).

Therefore, this autoethnographic study was a theoretically and methodologically grounded qualitative work that extends the traditional boundaries of empirical research while advocating a new and invigorating thrust to better comprehend education for social justice.

Limitations

Although the autoethnographic method is evident in various forms within qualitative research, the autoethnographic genre of research is still considered relatively new to the field of ethnographic research. The lack of agreement by scholars on a solid definition of autoethnography may warrant a potential limitation to the overall study. To address this potential limitation, I subscribe to the contemporary work by Chang (2008). Autoethnography can be described as, but is not limited to, a personal narrative, narrative ethnography, socio-autobiography, evocative narrative, or confessional tale. The tradition of self-narratives is an affirmed ethnographic research method "that focuses on cultural analysis and interpretation" (Chang, 2008, p.10). According to Chang (2008), autoethnography is a search for understanding of culture through the self; it asserts the concept of self as a relational being. Although the use of the *self* in ethnographic research is not new, it continues to raise criticism as a viable empirical method to obtain data. However, a growing body of research and analysis is evolving the genre to greater importance in ethnographic research circles.

Some of the more common critiques of the autoethnographic genre warn of over self-indulgence, over-introspection, excessive individualization, and even narcissism (Coffey, 1999; Sparkes, 2000). According to Chang (2008), autoethnography as a research method should avoid the following limitations:

1. Excessive focus on self in isolation from others.

2. Overemphasis on narration rather than analysis and cultural interpretation.

3. Exclusive reliance on personal memory and recalling as a data source.

4. Negligence of ethical standards regarding others in self-narratives.

5. Inappropriate application of the label *autoethnography*. (p. 57)

To counter such claims, the genre of autoethnography requires the demonstration of appropriate validity and verification techniques that are ethnographic in their intent. Using the inherent, empirically sound qualitative methods of ethnographic research found in autoethnography, data is drawn through reliable forms of data collection procedures. For example, autoethnography entails data collection strategies that are methodological as utilized in sound ethnographic research. Strategies such as systematic self-observation, the field journaling, chronicling, inventorying, as well as data collection from external sources such as contextual artifacts, interviews, and literature, contribute to the validation and triangulation of data that quells any potential limitation.

The essential purpose of this autoethnography is to study the self in context with others as a method to reveal the multiple cultural interactions, values, and voices that entail the teacher-student relationship. The acceptance of the autoethnographic genre continues to be debated. However, the popularity of autoethnography, or self-narratives, has grown throughout the last 30 years in the fields of anthropology, sociology,

communication, medicine, nursing, psychiatry, psychology, and education (Chang, 2008). Such advances attest to the growing recognition that subjective experience is valuable for understanding cultural relations within schools. Under Chapter 3, Methodology, I will explain the methods of autoethnography in greater detail, including the verification strategies associated with data collection.

Theoretical Frameworks

Further investigation into subjective social relations provides educators with the tools necessary to educate young people in the basic fundamentals to confront social injustice and achieve a greater awareness of a contributive existence. The proposed study began by setting the stage of the current state of affairs of American society from the philosophical frameworks of Bellah et al.'s (2008) analysis of American individualism and commitment, Ikeda's (2001) Buddhist vision and philosophy of modern education, and Makiguchi's (1930) writings on the notion of *value-creation pedagogy*. Framed within this philosophical paradigm, the study is supported by the various characterizations of intercultural competence by contemporary scholars (Byram, 1997; Cui & Awa, 1992; Deardoff, 2006; Jokikokko, 2005; Le Roux, 2002; Torres & Rollock, 2007). The various notions of culture as explained through frameworks of intercultural competence are also explained (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006; Rathje, 2007). Additionally, the study analyzed and explains intercultural competence as a developmental framework (Tesoreiro, 2006), as a critical-pedagogical orientation (Shi-Xu, 2001), as an ethical/moral consideration (Bellah et al., 2008; Fullan, 2003; Jokikokko, 2005; Sergiovanni, 1999; Shi-Xo, 2001), its relation to educational models of empathy and

compassionate development (Rousseau, 1762, 1979; Dewey, 1916; Purpel, 1989; Freire, 2006), and the role of compassion as a framework for moral education (Arteta, 1996; Ikeda, 1996, 2000; Mate, 1991; Ruiz & Minguez, 2001). The intent of this study was to provide research with insight into human/ethical interaction within an educational context. Its aim was to help translate philosophy and theory into practice.

Definitions of Key Terms

Autoethnography–A social science method of qualitative study that utilizes the autobiographical personal narrative in exploring the self within culture. Ethnographic in its intent, autoethnography seeks to provide insight into subjective and inter-subjective territories often overlooked in cultural analysis. According to Chang (2008), "effective autoethnography requires a triadic balance between the following: ethnographic in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretive orientation, and autobiographical in its content orientation" (p. 48).

Compassion–Often referred to as a feeling or emotion of deep sympathy, several philosophical and social science scholars regard compassion as a value-system and/or theoretical framework that essentially recognizes another's suffering, develops a feeling of concern for that suffering, and ultimately compels individuals to end that suffering (Vieten, Amorok, & Schlitz, 2006).

Intercultural Competence (IC)–A term that, arguably, varies throughout the literature; it is essentially the ability to effectively negotiate cultural interaction. However, some scholars approach IC through a developmental framework that describes IC as a skill-set of communicative, interpersonal, social, and managerial abilities.

Other scholars argue that IC is a social/ethical/moral orientation, consciousness, or adeptness to cultural interaction. For purposes of this study, IC is reformulated to include within its definition the competencies of individuals that bring value to diversity, enhance social cohesion, stimulate personal growth, and promote a commitment to social justice.

Radical individualism–A philosophical concept suggested by Weber, Michels, Marx, Engels, and Tocqueville, that suggests that individuals view and find themselves independently of other people and institutions. According to Bellah et al. (2008), "We live in a society that encourages us to cut free from the past, to define ourselves, to choose groups with which we wish to identify" (p. 154) and we fail to "articulate a socially responsible individualism within the context of communities" (p. 155) and social commitment. Hence, radical individualism is a feeling of detachment from others.

Value-creation–Based on the theory of education derived from the writings by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1930/1989), value-creation recognizes that humans cannot create matter, however, possess the ability to create value. Value is conceptualized as the benefit that leads to the personal and shared condition of happiness. Grounded in a Buddhist perspective, value-creation is the enabling of individuals "to perceive life in the context of its nurturing community," and in so doing, "human beings will choose to use their creative capabilities both to enhance their own lives to the fullest and to create maximum benefit for their community" (p. 6).

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

A Current State of Affairs of American Individualism and Collective Participation

One of the most fundamental concerns society and the nation face today is the growing sense of isolation of the self in context with others. Despite modern advancements that make society appear more interconnected in technology, politics, and economics, a growing body of research and commentary suggests that individuals are retreating into zones of social isolation evident through society's decline in civic membership, community consciousness, social capital, and overall loss of concern for others (Bellah, et. al., 2008; de Souza, 2006; Giroux, July 2000; Ikeda, 2001; Ruiz & Minguez, 2001; Poppo, 2006). Within a system driven by consumerism and competition, society's contemporary abandonment of the self and others, manifests in forms of inequality, egoism, and self-centeredness that affects the fundamental processes of human interaction.

One of the most prolific contemporary bodies of work that elaborates on these matters is that of Bellah et al.'s (2008), *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life*. This social-scientific analysis of the cultural patterns of life within the United States serves as an important lens by which to view the current state of affairs regarding social interaction. As intercultural competence seeks to build stronger communication and social cohesion, Bellah et. al's examination of contemporary individualism, or radical individualism, is an important effort that helps frame the

argument that intercultural competence is an essential tool in developing a needed language of relationships.

Through the generalized data collected from interviews of over 200 middle-class Americans, Bellah et. al., examined attitudes and systems of meanings that illustrate American individualism in contemporary cultural life. The analysis began with the educationally relevant questions: "What responsibility does one have for the long-term social effects of the work ones does?" and "What duties does one have toward the vast agglomeration of anonymous individuals that surrounds the circles of family and friends with whom one is personally involved?" (p. 178).

According to Hegy (1987), *Habits of the Heart* is a sociological analysis that hinges on "public philosophy." The data presented through illustrations and generalizations of the interviews provided this study with an important tool in informing "social interventionism." Bellah et al.'s analysis, I argue, informs a rationale for greater attention to intercultural competence that seeks to establish greater social ties.

Key to Bellah et. al.'s findings of individualism in the United States are the needed, more engaged, active and caring forms of collective participation. Through what *Habits* called "radical individualism"–the living within one's "own moral universe" (p. 76), disconnected from the obligations and responsibilities to the greater social context– the evidence revealed the trend away from understanding the complexities of social interaction. Through strong cultural, historical, political, religious and economic forces, such as racism, free-market economy, Judeo-Christian ideals, and the American notion of self-reliance, contemporary forms of individualism have resulted in attempts to define the

self with ambiguous notions of commitment, social life, justice, and shared community. Radical individualism is approached through an analysis of American middle-class values that promote individualism as a desire for "individual wants." Through notions of success defined through economic enterprise, egoistic individualism insists that individuals find themselves independent of cultural and social influences. What is created, as a result, is a sense of reality that is void of social and personal resources and fails at the realization that, "at the core of every person is a fundamental spiritual harmony that links him or her not only to every other person but to the cosmos as a whole" (p. 81). The lack of a moral language or "vocabulary of relationship" (p. 114), that transcends radical individualism, according to Bellah et al., gave rise to deep cultural conflicts that manifest in interpersonal relationships.

Further reflection of radical individualism revealed the gaps or areas of need for greater attention by social scientists to delve deeper in "reappropriating ethical meaning" (p. 211), to social endeavors. The Bellah et al.'s study ultimately warned of the need to curb radical individualism by emphasizing the development of a common value-latent individualism.

A number of humanistic, holistic and ethical models of education have existed in response to the concern for growing isolationism, apathy, moral relativism, injustice, etc. Entering the 21st century without a comprehensive regard for eradicating some of the most fundamental human atrocities (i.e., hunger, disease, warfare, poverty, and social isolationism), there is no better time to address the calls for a more globally humanistic approach to modern life. While many of the problems faced in the world are approached

through political means, a growing number of thinkers point to the crucial role education will play in the future of humanity.

For purposes of this study, Bellah et al.'s findings represent the current state of affairs of American society with regard to the growing sense of isolated individualism. It sets the stage for educators to respond to a potentially disastrous future for humanity by reexamining and reconceptualizing a globally humanistic approach to education. The finding that education has not adequately addressed some of the most fundamental concerns we face as a society and as the world, deeply troubles me as a citizen, a father, and an educator. *Habits of the Heart* represents the need to deepen the understanding of human relationships, but more specifically, it points to education as an ethical means by which we can help curb the "culture of separation" (p. 277) of modernity. Therefore, nothing becomes more important than for educators to examine themselves as a way to reconceptualize their roles in relation to the greater society. It is for this reason that through this study I examined, identified, and shared my own humanistic-ethical motivation in context of my own teaching. In doing so, it is important to explain the ideas of Tsunesaburo Makiguchi and Daisaku Ikeda that have played a major role in my own ethical development as an educator.

Philosophical and Ethical Foundations of My Teaching Experience

Ikeda and Makiguchi: Value-creation pedagogy and educational philosophy.

In response to Bellah et al.'s characterization of where American society seems to be headed, especially relevant here are the writings of the contemporary philosopher, poet and educator, Daisaku Ikeda. Seldom known in US educational discourse, Ikeda's

accomplishments are worth noting: founder of the Boston Research Center for the 21st Century; founder of the Soka educational movement in Japan; introduced numerous educational initiatives at the UN; published abundant dialogues with world leaders; published hundreds of speeches, essays and books; and recently founded Soka University of America in Aliso Viejo, CA.

For 40 years, Ikeda has consistently urged for a more formal, humanistic form of global education. Like Bellah et al. (2008), Ikeda (2001) pointed to the growing lack of social responsibility in society today. As psychologists might commonly refer to it as a *communication disorder*, Ikeda likened this aspect of modern society to a "pathology" that weakens the bonds among people. Grounded in a Buddhist worldview, Ikeda insisted that education is the most important endeavor of the 21st century. Through various books and essays published throughout the last 30 years, Ikeda has been highly critical about the major issues that threaten collective existence. Drawing from educational thinkers, from Rousseau to Weil, Maslow to Makiguchi, Ikeda has evolved a sophisticated critique and philosophy of education that is gaining global attention in contemporary scholarly work and has played a significant role in my own development as an educator.

Ikeda's approach to education specifically addresses the need for greater strides in confronting the cynicism and indifference that is eroding society. Ikeda critiqued modern education for failing to have a comprehensive strategy that treats the individual as the primary focus of educational endeavors. Grounded in a Buddhist worldview, Ikeda (2001) approached his educational philosophy in terms of good and evil:

A state of life controlled by apathy and cynicism grows immune to emotions of love or hatred, suffering or joy, and retreats into barren, makeshift world of alienation. Indifference toward evil implies indifference toward good. It makes for a bleak state of life and a semantic space estranged from the vital drama of the struggle between good and evil. (p. 40)

He called for a paradigm shift away from "viewing education as serving the narrowly defined needs of a society to a new paradigm that sees society serving the lifelong process of education" (p. 35). Accordingly, education in the twenty-first century must address the needs of society by building a society that serves the fundamental needs of education. For Ikeda, the "semantic space" he referred to clearly aligns with Bellah et al.'s (2008) lack of a language or "vocabulary" (p. 114) of relationships. For Ikeda (2001), educational reform requires the "shifting from an emphasis on factual knowledge alone to the development of intellect and wisdom" (p. 82). To construct such a strategy, Ikeda framed his educational thought by expanding the concept of *value-creation* first expounded by his mentor and revolutionary Japanese educator, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944).

Makiguchi's educational philosophy essentially sought "the full development of human personality… mind-body unity–a harmony of part to part and part to whole" (as cited in Bethel, 1989, p. xv). His philosophy argued that education itself must coincide with the larger purpose of life, and for Makiguchi, this purpose was the attainment of lifelong individual and collective happiness (Bethel, 1973, 1989; Gebert & Joffee, 2007). *Happiness*, accordingly, was not defined through traditional Western notions of happiness often synonymous with the euphoric emotion of pleasure or joy; Makiguchi derived the notion of happiness through Buddhist principles as taught through the Lotus Sutra the total explanation of which is beyond the scope of this dissertation. However,

according to Makiguchi, humans cannot create matter, but through intellect and experience, humans can create *value*. His notion of value creation is best explained through his alteration of the Platonic values of truth, goodness, and beauty, by replacing truth with value, or benefit (Bethel, 1973, p. 50). For Makiguchi, truth was very different from his notion of value because truth cannot be created, but only discovered. However, value or benefit, can be created to increase something's usefulness for human life; thus, achieving a condition of happiness. Ultimately, he believed that teaching individuals how to create value leads people toward individual and collective happiness.

Furthermore, to Makiguchi, the notion of value is explained through the three values: beauty, benefit, and good. *Beauty* is the esthetic element that enhances certain areas of our individual lives; *benefit* is the advantage an individual and society receive from creating value; and *good* is that which influences and enhances the quality of collective and individual existence (Gebert & Joffee, 2007; Ikeda, 2001). According to Ikeda (2001), the fundamental criterion to Makiguchi's concept of value is "whether something adds or detracts from, advances or hinders, the human condition" (p. 17). To create value means to self-actualize one's full potential and create beauty, gain, and good, from all circumstances. For Makiguchi, value is a "measure of the subjective impact a thing or event has on our lives" (Ikeda, 2001, p.16). In addition, the system of value-creation pedagogy suggests that the value creator recognize him/herself as a potential catalyst or agent for effecting humanistic change. Essentially, the value creator recognizes that contributing to the welfare of both oneself and society creates value toward individual and collective happiness.

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Ultimately, the system of value-creation pedagogy is a theory of empowerment that suggests that one's lifelong happiness, and the happiness of the collective, is adversely affected by the way in which individuals create value from circumstances. Makiguchi held that "creation involves changing the ordinary order of nature into a special one through human activity, increasing its usefulness for human life" (Bethel, 1973, p. 50). Value-creation pedagogy is based on the conviction that the enhancement of one's personal and collective life relies on the agency of creating value. As his belief in the ultimate purpose of life is the lifelong happiness of individuals, happiness, as he explained, is the capacity to discover and create value from all circumstances, including negative ones.

According to Gebert & Joffee (2007) Makiguchi believed that value-creation is the ability to "significantly influence the interconnected web of life" (as cited in Hansen, 2007, p. 66). In addition, as an educator, Makiguchi demonstrated "an impassioned drive to study and create change, a deep empathy for students, a willingness to take risks, and a desire to construct pioneering theories to explain sociological phenomena"(as cited in Hansen, 2007, p. 69). With courage, integrity, hope, and compassion, Makiguchi developed his ideas and theory of value-creation through a strong commitment toward educational praxis. Makiguchi advocated the importance of praxis using an experience-centered teaching approach. He believed that teachers needed to assess their own "cases of success and failure by analyzing their daily teaching experiences" (as cited in Ikeda, 2001, p. 10), as a way to extract principles of education. Makiguchi's own praxis produced his six transformative indices of value-creation

1. from unconscious, emotional modes of living to a life of self-mastery, consciousness and rationality;

2. from a life of less to one of greater value creation;

3. from self-centered to a social and altruistic mode of living;

4. from dependent to independent modes of living in which one is capable of making principled-based judgment;

5. from a life dominated by external influences to a life of autonomy;

6. from a life under the sway of desires to self-reflective modes of living in which one is capable of integrating one's actions into a larger sense of purpose. (Ikeda, 2001, p.20)

As a student of Makiguchi, Ikeda expanded on Makiguchi's own praxis as an elementary school teacher to highlight these transformative expressions. To develop personality through value-creation, essentially, is to transform human consciousness. Hence, to create value in the face of Bellah et al.'s findings of contemporary social conditions is to build a reactionary culture of awareness and contribution in response to the growing social isolationism.

Modern history of educational movements, according to Ikeda (2001), have unfortunately placed personality development at a "subordinate position and viewed as a means to other ends" (p. 70), reducing the educational system to a "mere mechanism that serves the national objectives, be they political, military, economic or ideological" (p. 71). Further, only a "certain type of personality, not the full development of personality, has been sought" (p. 71). Ikeda believes that the development of personality is grounded in respect for the dignity of the individual and it is best understood in terms of human happiness as first explained by Makiguchi. Like Makiguchi, Ikeda also cautions that *happiness* not be confused with pleasure and careful attention must be applied in its conceptualization. The notion of happiness can be understood as full realization of one's

potential. This realization is the awakening to one's ability to create positive value for

oneself and others. According to Ikeda, "the individual can only become fully realized

through interaction with others" (p. 68), hence, a life of value-creation. Therefore,

genuine happiness, "can only be realized in the bonds and interactions between people"

(p. 74). Through his Buddhist view of human life and happiness, Ikeda explains:

> Enmity, contradiction and discord may seem unavoidable aspects or relations among humans and our relations with nature and the universe. But, by preserving in spite of these conflicts, transforming them and restoring and rejuvenating the bonds among us, we can forge and polish our individuality and character. (p. 74)

Therefore, personality development or happiness stems from one's ability or competence

to create value.

To Ikeda (2001) the mission of education today is the mission of every individual

and the awakening to this awareness is the "highest priority in all our endeavors" (p. 95).

The development of personality requires the return to "the core issue of human values"

(p. 72), but specifically, to regard human beings as the basis of value. Central to value-

creating pedagogy, according to Ikeda, is the tenet that "all children should be afforded

the opportunity to develop their potential limitlessly and to lead fulfilling lives undeterred

by the destructive influences in society" (p. 37). Thus, value-creation "is the capacity to

find meaning, to enhance one's own existence and contribute to the well-being of others,

under any circumstance" (p. 100). Within a global citizenship educational framework,

Ikeda lists key elements, or intercultural competencies, as I choose to call them, for

value-creation

- the wisdom to perceive the interconnectedness of all life and living;
- the courage not to fear or deny difference, but to respect and strive to understand people of different cultures and to grow from encounters with them; and

- the compassion to maintain an imaginative empathy that reaches beyond one's immediate surroundings and extends to those suffering in distant places (pp. 100-101).

Ultimately, Ikeda places compassion as a fundamental component to one's competence to interact with others, the world, and to ultimately create value. To Ikeda:

> [Compassion] does not involve the forcible suppression of our natural emotions, our likes and dislikes. Rather, it is to realize that even those whom we dislike have qualities that can contribute to our lives and can afford us opportunities to grow in our own humanity. Further, it is the compassionate desire to find ways of contributing to the well-being of others that gives rise to limitless wisdom. (pp. 101-102)

Furthermore:

> Compassion consists in the sustained and courageous effort to seek out the good in all people, whoever they may be, however they may behave. It means striving, through sustained engagement, to cultivate the positive qualities in oneself and in others. (p. 102)

Essentially, value-creation pedagogy is the cultivation of individual character that entails the ability to think critically, to make informed decisions, to empathize, to stand against evil, to believe, and offer hope. Ultimately, according to Ikeda, educational endeavors must create the value of respecting humanity in its entirety.

According to both Makiguchi and Ikeda, a value-creating society requires a shift away from egoistic ways of living toward one of mutual respect and communal living, a direct assault on radical individualism. According to Ikeda (2001), the development of educational reform today must be framed within social and ethical context. He cites Rousseau's "inner impulse of compassion" as the essential foundation of a society (p. 45). To comprise a comprehensive strategy for education today–one that opposes the destructive nature of radical individualism and egoistic ways of living–it must resonate with the depths of the human heart.

Ikeda's (2001) philosophy of education calls for a deepening of "human bonds that transcend differences of race and nationality" (p. 77) and insists on finding meaning to one's existence by contributing to the well-being of others. Education, to Ikeda, is fundamentally a humanitarian quest. It is through the competence of educators to create value from human interaction that they are able to resist the social pathology, self-indulgence and antisocial behavior that is threatening collective existence. Ikeda asserts that, "the humanity of the teacher represents the core of the educational experience" (p. 105). It is with this understanding that I argue for greater discourse in developing a paradigm of education that leads toward human transformation. Intercultural competence provides individuals with the competencies to culturally communicate, interact, and live harmoniously with others. For this reason, I argue that intercultural competence is one form of personality development that encourages greater social cohesion and a shared sense of community. Through dialogue, critical reflection, cultural exchange, social participation, and compassion, each encounter is an opportunity to create value. One's ability to effectively negotiate meaning and create value is a fundamental purpose of intercultural competence.

Critical pedagogy: Influence on my teaching practice.

As the focus of the study was to examine my belief systems, characteristics, behaviors, and ethical orientation as a teacher in the context of a researcher-created high school Multicultural Literature course, it is important to note the major theoretical frameworks that have guided my practice as a teacher. My purpose in creating the Multicultural Literature and Practicum course was to facilitate greater understanding and

harmony between ethnically and racially diverse groups. Although entitled, "Multicultural Literature," my definition of multiculturalism stemmed from my understanding of multiculturalism from a critical pedagogical point of view. In fact, one of the most important works on multiculturalism that influenced me in my graduate work was Sonia Nieto's (1992) *Affirming Diversity: The Sociopolitical Context of Multicultural Education*. Through this work, I came to understand the complex interplay of cultural interactions within schools. It provided me the tools of analysis and critical reflection of multicultural education practices at my school. As I participated and interacted with culturally diverse high school students, I became increasingly conflicted and frustrated with the common "cultural tourism approach" (Aldridge, Calhoun, & Aman, 2000) to culture. Exemplified through the implementation of multicultural assemblies, festivals, months, and holidays, I observed minimal significant effect on students understanding each other within inter-cultural contexts.

In addition to my graduate studies at the beginning of my teaching career, I also had the opportunity to voluntarily participate in school funded intercultural and anti-bias training programs, mainly provided by the Anti-Defamation League. Participating along with students, it was here that I observed the agency of the student voice as a well-spring of information regarding the cultural complexities as experienced by students in their daily lives. I felt more could be done at the curricular level that addressed these complexities and treated diversity more profoundly than the superficial approaches employed. As a result, I fomented my desire to create a multicultural literature course that would not only help students read more critically, but to think more critically about

themselves and the world around them. As I saw it, a course like this could only be taught through the fundamentals of critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy, as I learned in graduate school, was a way for teachers to look at various aspects of power and its relationship to the forces that affect schools. It asked how knowledge is constructed and how these constructions are legitimated and perpetuated by the dominant culture, while other constructions of knowledge are not (MacLaren, 1989, p. 169). Critical pedagogy also taught me about the legitimacy of my own voice, helped me develop the courage to question my role as a teacher, the role of others, and to question the very nature of education.

Through my understanding of critical pedagogy and empowerment, I took it upon myself to design and create a literary analysis course for high school seniors, which utilized a problem-posing method of literary analysis pertaining to issues of cultural bias, discrimination, prejudice, and intolerance. In my research for this study I found that Pattnaik (2003) referred to this as an "issue-based curriculum" (p. 208). The purpose of the course was to give students the opportunity to critically reflect and engage in dialogue not only about literature, but also of educational, economic, and social issues that affect American culture today. I have also been pleased to find in my research that an effective practice in teaching a socially-just curriculum was to conduct critical readings of texts to examine the role of race, prejudice, and privilege within society (Jones, 2006). In addition to literature, I wanted students to critically evaluate the role of media, their own school, their own communities, and their own beliefs, while embedding an action-based curricular practice that emphasized interethnic, intercultural insights that promoted

cultural understanding and harmony. Thus far, I reflect, the course has had tremendous results in the intellectual and ethical growth of culturally diverse students.

Although much of what I have designed for the Multicultural Literature course could be traced and connected to existing theories and approaches from teacher research and critical pedagogical studies, much of what I designed was not systematic, but rather, what felt right at the time. Although I knew that my intent for the course could be *backed-up* with empirical theoretical models, I have never needed to write, explain or label it until this dissertation process.

From a review of literature, few studies exist that examine intercultural competence and compassion, at the high school level directly. Uniquely, much of what I have employed and practiced for the past eight years paralleled Conklin's (2008) modeling compassion in a critical, justice-oriented approach for teacher education. Within a culturally-responsive pedagogy framework, Conklin and numerous scholars have stressed the importance of the educator's characteristics such as building on the students' prior knowledge and lived experience, building on students' cultural knowledge, viewing students in terms of their strengths rather than deficiencies, maintaining an affirming mind-set toward students, and viewing students as agents of change, who are capable of higher order thinking (Ayers, 1993; Banks et al., 2005; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). In addition, Conklin (2008) is supported by cited authors who claimed the importance of *caring and compassion* as key elements within the relationships between the teacher and the student (Boyle-Baise &

McIntyre, 2008; Goldstein, 1999, 2002; Goldstein & Freedman, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Noddings, 2005; Witherell & Noddings, 1991).

In the formulation of Conklin's (2008) pedagogy of modeling compassion in critical, justice-oriented teaching approach, she emphasized

- bringing attention to the conditions of society that lead to suffering;

- valuing and building on students' existing culture, knowledge, and lived experiences;

- to have a compassionate understanding of students' knowledge and experiences;

- honoring students' beliefs and experiences;

- valuing students' voices, creating a community of openness and intellectual rigor;

- sharing one's own cultural background, beliefs, and experiences; and

- using students' and one's own experiences as starting points to explore justice-oriented themes.

From my experiences of teaching the course for the past 8 years, I can point to various manifestations of aspects of critical pedagogy such as codification, cultural capital, the dialectic, dialogue, discourse, hegemony, the hidden curriculum, critical literacy, and praxis. However, my teaching practice also reflects humanistic principles located within my *own* philosophical, conceptual, and religious orientation as a Buddhist grounded in the system of value-creation pedagogy. With certainty, I can reflect that both critical and value-creation pedagogies have merged within me as a system that

directly addressed the development of intercultural competence within students. For this reason, the study examined and describes these through an intersubjective analysis of my own teaching practice in the context of intercultural competence development.

Through my combined reflection and understanding of critical pedagogy, value-creation pedagogy, and intercultural competence, the plight for liberation against oppression is not solely defined in socio-political terms. Although critical pedagogy can only help individuals realize the historical and political relationships of power and oppressive forces that affect their everyday lives, I always have always operated with the assumption that oppression also exists at deeper, more personal, ethical, or spiritual levels. Freire (2006) wrote:

> In order for the oppressed to be able to wage the struggle for their liberation, they must perceive the reality of oppression not as a closed world from which there is no exit, but as a limiting situation which they can transform. This perception is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for liberation; it must become the motivating force for liberating action. (p. 49)

As a teacher working with students in intercultural training activities, designed to promote cultural understanding, I observed that much of the cultural misunderstandings and tensions between students were a result of concepts and ideas about ethnicity, race, and culture that perpetuated the very oppression that critical pedagogues seek liberation from. The stereotypes and prejudices held by students, in my mind, required the "expulsion of the myths" (Freire, 2006, p. 55). The exposure of many of these oppressive ideas through traditional literature and history courses have created an opportunity for me, in my course, to listen to the voices of youth as they come to realize their potential to participate in social transformation. I find that believing that transformation is possible is a fundamental competence for contributive intercultural living. As I have interacted with

students through my course, I have observed that the "motivating force for liberating action" can be achieved by *creating value* for students, which in turn, helps develop their compassion.

Significance of Intercultural Competence in Education

In response to the increased demands and realities of modern societies in relation to increased human diversity, numerous educational models have been proposed (i.e., multicultural education, race theory, global citizenship). Each emphasizes the recognition of cultural identity in terms of inclusion within social relationships. The vast literature in educational approaches suggests the "promotion and appreciation for a pluralistic society" (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998, p. 303). As multicultural education has grounded its efforts on developing tolerance and acceptance of cultural difference, it has also built on the philosophical notions of "freedom, justice, equality, equity, and human dignity" (Banks & Banks, 2004, p. 187).

The wide variety of educational approaches that surround the topic of intercultural education give rise to the notion of cross-cultural competence, more widely known as *intercultural competence*. Originating mainly from psychological models of emotional competence, intercultural competence identifies the development of effective communicative and interpersonal skills that allows for successful interaction with individuals of different cultural backgrounds. These skills require the absence of prejudice and enhance the ability to recognize others through one's common humanity.

The emergence of intercultural competence (IC) as a field of study in education is a direct result of the shifting demographics of societies. A number of contemporary

educational reformers and social critics have emphasized the need for greater consideration of the socio-relational dynamics of social life. According to Fullan (2003), "the single factor common to successful [school] change is that relationships improve" (p. 18). The need to improve social relations at fundamental levels of human interaction requires an understanding of how individuals function and create meaning from contact with others. The study of cultural interaction recognizes that human behavior is categorized through the identification of shared characteristics among individuals labeled as groups or cultures. Culture helps educators and social researchers to recognize the differences between people, to distinguish between cultural forces and barriers that define an individual's social location, and to create a paradigm by which researchers can interpret human interaction. Hence, the notion of intercultural competence seeks to identify ways in which individuals effectively navigate through the complexity of cultural diversity.

In the following sections, I will present an overview of various definitions and approaches of intercultural competence. I also draw attention to the moral and ethical recognition of ethical principles that are inherent in intercultural competence development. For purposes of this study, intercultural competence is approached not only as a developmental process of a skill-set, but also as an ethical paradigm that promotes the interconnectedness of cultural diversity and social interaction.

Definitions of intercultural competence.

It is useful to begin an examination of intercultural competence (IC) in terms of its intended outcome. Jokikokko (2005) referred to intercultural competence as "an

ability to encounter cultural differences in a positive way" (p. 70). Similarly, to Loenhoff (2003), a simplistic notion of IC was the "reasonable interaction" between individuals of different cultural backgrounds (p. 193). Interactions or encounters are often characterized through one's ability to successfully communicate. According to Deardoff (2006), intercultural competence was "the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations" (p. 247). Premised on the idea that cultural differences often manifest in the inability to successfully communicate and function with others, giving rise to cultural misunderstanding and conflict, the basic feature of intercultural competence applies to communication.

Fantini (2001) described intercultural competence as "the abilities to perform effectively and appropriately with members of another language-culture background on their terms" (p. 2). However, for effective communication to exist, Deardoff (2006) attributed successful communication to "one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes" (p. 247). While communication surfaces as the key feature in the literature reviewed, the scope of intercultural competence is not limited to only communication competence, but rather, the recognition of the relational complexity within communicative experiences.

According to Le Roux (2002) and Lynch & Hanson (as cited in Le Roux, 2002), effective intercultural competence educators not only possessed knowledge for effective communication, but actively demonstrated "respect for differences, an enthusiastic eagerness to learn about other cultures, an acceptance of different viewpoints on reality and a flexibility and willingness to adjust, change and reorientate where required" (p. 43).

Similarly, Byram (1997) described intercultural competence as the ability to perceive relationships between different cultures and to interpret each in terms of the other, either for oneself or for others. This widening scope of intercultural competence that goes beyond communication is demonstrated through a listing of traits, proficiencies and adeptness to intercultural interaction.

As a form of consciousness.

To several scholars, the recognition of relational processes requires more than a skill-set, but rather, according to Byram (1997), a consortium of consciousnesses known as *savoirs*:

> Savoir 1: knowledge of cultural groups and processes of interaction.
>
> Savoir 2: ability to interpret events and situations.
>
> Savoir 3: ability to acquire new cultural knowledge and ability to make use of the knowledge.
>
> Savoir 4: critical cultural awareness.
>
> Savoir 5: curiosity and openness. (pp. 58-63)

These forms of awareness or consciousnesses are manners by which individuals construe meaning from intercultural interactions. Therefore, intercultural competence is not solely a listing of communicative skills, but a collection of reflective abilities that help make sense of cultural differences. To further this point, Cui and Awa (1992), not only described intercultural competence through the dimensions of interpersonal, social, and managerial skills, but also identified personality traits that value empathic understanding in their conceptualization.

Torres & Rollock (2007) suggested that intercultural competence is "proficiency regarding culturally relevant areas and group-specific skills that facilitate cultural

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interactions" (p. 11). The proficiency of "culturally relevant areas" can be related to the

forms of human understanding that Wiseman, Hammer, and Nishida (1989) defined as

understanding the other, understanding culture and the positive regard for the other.

Again, within such definitions, there is a continued recognition of the sensibility or

mindfulness to others that are culturally different. Inherent in one's mindfulness toward

others, emerge ethical qualities of respect and positive regard.

As the notion of intercultural competence has developed as an instrument to

respond to the problems associated with cultural conflict (i.e., racism, discrimination and

prejudice), communication has become only one aspect of intercultural competence.

Overall, intercultural competence has concerned itself with the totality of social

interaction. Rather than approaching cultural difference through deficit-models of

diversity, the study of intercultural competence seeks to identify and develop the

competencies of individuals that bring value to diversity, achieve greater sensitivity,

enhance social cohesion, stimulate personal growth, and provide an impetus toward a

greater commitment to social justice.

An approach toward culture.

The notion of culture has many different meanings. However, for purposes of

understanding the traditional conceptualization of intercultural competence, culture, is

approached in terms of behavior patterns shared by specific ethnic, racial, and socio-

cultural groups that traditionally make-up the discourse of social diversity. Many

approaches to intercultural competence are distinguished through a culture-specific

orientation of culture versus more universal applications of culture.

The debate of a culture-specific approach to intercultural competence continues to be raised by a number of authors. Culture-specific intercultural competence emphasizes the experience and knowledge of individual cultures. This approach may be useful when dealing with a limited number of interacting cultural groups. However, a major critique of culture-specific orientations by authors of intercultural competence suggests that the limited view of culture "enforces[s] narrow categories of competence" (Rathje, 2007, p. 257). Although a number of authors have approached intercultural competence in terms of specific cultural groups such as ethnicities and nationalities, Auernheimer (2003) argued that this approach is too simplistic (as cited in Rathje, 2007, p. 258). Similarly, to frame individuals within an intercultural context through nationalities, Rathje (2007) argued becomes difficult to "distinguish between inter-national intercultural situations and intra-national ones" (p. 259). The framing of culture through "narrow categories," Rathje (2007) warned, "would therefore do little to promote the validity of the concept [of culture] itself" (p. 258).

Culture-specific intercultural competence is an area of considerable debate. What continues to make the notion of culture ambiguous is the variety of "possibilities" (Rathje, 2007, p. 258) within a culture. In contrast, a growing number of authors are approaching intercultural competence through a culture-general or universal orientation of culture.

A universal notion of culture.

In response to culture-specific models of intercultural competence, Hansen (as cited in Rathje, 2007) moved away from specificity and reconceptualized culture in terms

of a "collective" (p. 261). To Hansen, culture is a mutual interaction within specific cultural groups. In agreement, Rathje (2007) affirmed that "Hansen's model allows for multiple levels of cultural involvement that can overlap or even contradict one another" (p. 261). As opposed to culture-specific intercultural competence, a generalized view of intercultural competence is free of individualized notions of culture. Rathje (2003) believes that intercultural competence requires a "life-world" (p. 260) comprehension of culture.

In education and health professional development, McAllister, Whiteford, Hill, Thomas, & Fitzgerald (2006) approached intercultural competence through a universal or "culture-general" notion of culture that entailed "the ability to use a range of knowledge and skills (especially communication and problem-solving skills) to understand and address cultural issues in practice in a way that results in an outcome that is satisfying (or at least acceptable) to everyone involved" (p. 369).

Along this vein, Abdallah-Pretceille (2006) argued that cultural diversity can no longer be approached through the paradigm of culture. She maintained that continued emphasis on the processes and interactions of cultural groups based on differences leads to "exoticism as well as to cultural dead-ends" (p. 476) through its narrow focus, prompting further stereotypes and prejudices. For example:

> The abstract and globalizing knowledge of cultures obstructs the recognition of the singular individual, the subject of education, and it overshadows the training dynamics by acting as a filter or even a screen. (p. 477)

Therefore, according to Abdallah-Pretceille (2006), what exists is the need for individuals to approach diversity through an effective process of communication and exchange:

> To learn to see, to hear, to be mindful of other people, to learn to be alert and open in a perspective of diversity and not of differences, calls for the recognition and experience of otherness, experience that is acquired and that is practiced. (p. 478)

Ultimately, what is required of cultural understanding is the "capacity to think in terms of conjectures and hypotheses" (p. 477).

Additionally, Rathje (2007) offers the notion of "multicollectivity" as constructive in approaching culture:

> Although membership in certain groups automatically leads to segregation from others, the fact that individuals are part of multiple collectives at the same time mitigates differences while fostering a network-like stability. Considering the centrifugal forces of cultural differences, it is then rather the establishment of normality than generally agreed-upon norms or values that gives cultures their cohesion. (p. 262)

For Abdallah-Pretceille (2006), interculturalism, requires a shift in analysis from structures, to one of "complex, unpredictable and random situations, processes, of a science of diversity" (p. 479). This radical assertion is helpful for understanding the complexity of intercultural competence in terms of social interaction. Thus, intercultural perspective, requires comprehending that culture is created in relation to others–as the "product of ongoing negotiations with the outside world, negotiations through which a horizon is established, an identity that can only be defined as a continuous creation" (Schnapper, 1986, p. 151). As suggested, intercultural competence requires a shift in the conceptualization of culture in that intercultural competence is more than a skill-set or prescription of abilities; it is an intrinsic rationalization for cultural interaction and exchange.

Intercultural Competence: Learning and Development

In an approach to enhance international education in community colleges and state colleges in Minnesota, Emert and Pearson (2007) suggested that intercultural

competence is developed through pluralistic course-content integration and study abroad programs. Intercultural competence is defined as the "awareness and understanding of culturally diverse others and situations, as well as the presence of behaviors that promote productive and effective communication among and across cultures" (p. 68). However, Emert and Pearson divide intercultural competence into three categories: knowledge, attitude and skills. Knowledge is described as 'knowledge of self' such as the "cognitive information that an individual takes into an intercultural situation" (p. 69). Skills are referred to as 'actions' that allow for successful intercultural interactions.

Tesoreiro (2006) examined intercultural competence through a developmental framework of an international social work education program. Areas of focus included personal growth, professional development, intercultural sensitivity and ethical perspective. The intercultural competence training program placed great emphasis on the development of intercultural sensitivity. The program's development of intercultural competence is based on Fook's (1996) approach to reflective practice and Bennett's (1993) model of intercultural sensitivity through intercultural communication. According to Fook's (1996) reflective questioning of one's practice experience, intercultural competence was developed by evaluating one's experience in terms of

- emerging themes and patterns;
- one's feelings, thoughts, actions, interpretations and explanations of an event;
- the assumptions underlying one's interpretations and views;
- where these assumptions derive from;
- gaps and biases in the explanations;
- cultural positions; and

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- language, categorizations used, etc. (as cited in Tesoreiro, 2006, p. 131).

Furthermore, Fook combined the reflective practice with human-rights based approaches

such as "empowerment and anti-oppressive practice [that] builds knowledge as it

examines the creation of knowledge biases to make meaning of personal experience"

(Tesoreiro, 2006, p. 131). What is key to these analyses was the recognition that

intercultural competence development relied heavily on the relationship between

knowledge and meaning.

In addition to Tesoreiro's (2006) analysis of the program, Bennett's (1993) model

of intercultural sensitivity was included as a framework for developing intercultural

competence. According to Tesoreiro, Bennett's model approached intercultural

competence with the understanding that students' behaviors and beliefs are

"developmental, malleable and capable of transformation" (p. 132). This is significant

for this study because the research revealed that beliefs within the teacher and the

students can be transformed through an intercultural competence process, a process that

allows for a:

> Sophisticated recognition and acceptance of difference with a radical shift from a rather absolutist
> view of the world to a more contextual view that accommodates ambiguity of meaning and
> appreciates this through competent engagement with those who are different. (p. 132)

Essentially, intercultural competence required the development of respect, the acceptance

of difference, and the positive reception of these differences. This was achieved not only

in adopting the characteristics of intercultural competence, but through an active

engagement with others that seeks to illuminate a profound reverence for others–one that

employs profound reflection and ability to amplify the worth of others. The development

of intercultural competence relied on the creation of learning opportunities. In effect, with

great relevance to this study, what legitimates intercultural competence development is the knowledge of how to utilize these learning opportunities or experiences as sources for cultural change.

A pedagogical orientation.

Another useful way to conceptualize intercultural competence is through its manifestation as pedagogy. It is important here to distinguish between intercultural competence and the teaching of intercultural competence. As mentioned above, intercultural competence can be described as skills, behaviors, attitudes, and knowledge that facilitate positive interaction across cultures. Definitions have mainly described it as individual knowledge. However, the complexity of intercultural competence reveals that competence development requires a greater in-depth look at how this knowledge is conveyed to students.

Through a critical pedagogical approach toward intercultural competence, Shi-Xu (2001) maintained that individual knowledge is traditionally assumed to entail abstract concepts of cultural knowledge and interpersonal skills. What is often missing from intercultural competence educators and programs is the recognition of the cultural, historical, and political aspects intricately woven within intercultural contact. As social life, primarily from a Western viewpoint, is characterized through social margins such as "cultural-Other," "we/us," "they/them" (Shi-Xu , 2001, p. 286), African-Americans, Latinos, etc., and as a consequence, many of these delineations "are often coupled with notions of deviance and inferiority" (Shi-Xu, 1994a, 1995, 1997). What tends to remain nonexistent in intercultural competence discourse are the power relations manifested in

cultural diversity. In doing so, the order of "unequal-power context" such as the relationships between historically dominant and non-dominant cultural groups, continues to be reinforced through the *exoticism* of cultural knowledge. Therefore, a critical, discursive approach to intercultural competence pedagogy, according to Shi-Xu (2001), must aim "ultimately to make the teaching and learning process itself part of cultural change" (p. 286). Rathje (2007) also agreed that intercultural competence requires the ability to transform intercultural interaction into culture itself (p. 263).

Shi-Xu (2001) approached the notion of culture as *discursive culture*. Defined broadly, Shi-Xu described culture from a socio-constructivist epistemology that saw culture as "having many complex and dynamic properties or dimensions" (p. 283). Specifically, that culture is the process of, first, meaningful practices that are attributed to situated groups such as race, ethnicity, gender, etc.; second, the development of cultural identity; and thirdly, the embedded political-power struggle within "unequal relations" of culture (p. 283). With this in mind, culture is not approached as a fixed entity, but rather, as mutable. To accomplish this within an educational context required the deconstruction of the dominant structures of knowledge by examining the relationship between knowledge, power, and discourse (p. 287).

Shi-Xu (2001) proposed that intercultural educators "begin to adopt new discourses that will directly challenge the existing discourse of domination, exclusion and prejudice and embraces instead themes [or discourses] of diversity, equality, common goals and above all rational-moral motivation" (p. 280). These pedagogically informative discourses help conceptualize intercultural competence as more than a set of skills in

effective communication. Embracing the challenge to address social injustice by facilitating a new system of cross-cultural dialogue, and by what Jokikokko (2005) suggested as the importance of dialogical relationships, hope, idealism, and the courage to think and act, is the essence of intercultural competence pedagogy.

An ethical/moral consideration.

The predominant outcomes of intercultural competence are effective communication and social cohesion. Cohesion between individuals, regardless of cultural background, is what allows for successful communication and interaction. As society becomes increasingly complex, specifically in relation to social diversity, the role of schools to educate students about such complexity is becoming increasingly important. The knowledge, skills and ability to comprehend the nature of human relationships that enhance social cohesion has manifested in new theoretical approaches that place universal principles and values as central to such awareness. As Bellah et al. (2008), calls for greater attention in reclaiming a "moral ecology" (p. 112), intercultural competence is an endeavor that attempts to maximize social interaction for the benefit of society and world; it is an endeavor for a better future.

The relationship between intercultural competence and a moral framework points to the teacher's ability to act on the basis of his or her own ethical foundations. Jokikokko (2005) insinuated this in describing intercultural competence as "an ability to investigate and question one's own actions, values, prejudices, attitudes and perspectives, and constantly reflect on what is right or wrong in each new situation" (p. 75). The concept is also consistent with reflective practice and key elements of teacher research.

The notion of a rational-moral motivation to intercultural competence is not clearly

addressed by researchers. For this reason, the moral and ethical implications of

intercultural competence must be studied further. This, by and large, requires a re-

examination of intercultural knowledge through a moral and ethical lens.

Many reform movements in education today are confronted with the challenge to

address the needs of a changing society. Emerging literature has begun to focus on the

importance of social relationships in schools and the role of a moral and ethical impetus

(Bellah et al., 2008; Fullan, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1999). The purpose of intercultural

education is to foster greater understanding and communication between cultural groups.

Tolerance, respect, understanding, acceptance, and empathy are among the resulting

aspects of intercultural learning. As explained above, intercultural competence is the

ability to effectively possess and create the opportunities for intercultural development.

When dealing with the development of these affective and cognitive qualities, I argue,

expressions such as *respect*, *acceptance*, and *empathy* are not free from moral/ethical

implications. The notion of a moral/ethical component to intercultural competence has

opened new ways for thinking about how to approach issues of diversity in today's

schools. As intercultural competence seeks to help build human relationships by

developing genuine concern for others, one of the purposes of this study was to expose

the relationship between intercultural competence and intercultural competence pedagogy

within my own ethical underpinnings shared and developed through such interaction.

Examining moral judgment development in college students, Derryberry and

Thoma (2000) found that students developed more positive attitudes about issues of

diversity when they possessed a foundation of moral principles. In addition, Narvaez, Bock & Endicott (2003), found that these moral principles resulted in higher competence of intercultural sensitivity. Expanding on Derryberry & Thoma's (2000) findings, they also suggested that "the shift from norm-based to principled reasoning reflects students' ability to examine the fairness of social systems; it also reflects the understanding that social systems are cultural constructions and can be changed" (as cited in King & Magolda, 2005, p. 10).

Jikikokko's (2005) work with Finnish teacher education students revealed that an ethical orientation is a precondition for intercultural encounters. Factors such as "openness, tolerance, [and] appreciation of diversity" (p. 75) are among several of these preconditions. Several intercultural competence researchers have also cited the importance of similar factors such as Kealey (1990), Kim (1992), and Salo-Lee (1996).

The work of Shi-Xo (2001) suggested that an intercultural pedagogy approach to intercultural competence opens new discourses, including that of, "diversity, equality, common goals and above all rational-moral motivation with respect to the Other" (p. 279, in abstract). The rational-moral motivation described is the attempt to, "mobilize people's critical consciousness to change the *status quo* for a better future, so that they are ready to consciously try again and again to engage in new discourses with the cultural Other" (p. 290). Hence, the basis of value-creation is established as mentioned previously. Intercultural competence essentially involves the aim to "change the entire cultural attitude and practice of society at large" (p. 287) by creating new meanings to cultural interaction. As Shi-Xo expressed it, the practice of social transformation or desire

for change involves a "moral-will" (p. 287). Therefore, Shi-Xo recommended that further research in intercultural competence development required the discourse of a rational-moral motivation that informs pedagogy.

Rational-moral motivation can be explained in various ways. What is critical to this study, I argue, is the understanding that one's moral motivation stems from a system of beliefs, a system of value that rationalizes one's endeavors to develop intercultural competence. As educators and researchers, it is important to ask, what is the ultimate purpose of intercultural competence? Why should educators endeavor to develop intercultural competence in others? Essentially, the answers to these questions originate from a far more profound phenomenon that is not adequately addressed through empirical research. Full comprehension of the moral motivations of intercultural competence educators, I argue, requires a qualitative look at how one's abilities to empathize for others relates to the altruistic and optimistic desire to achieve a greater society that values the worth and dignity of others.

The process of social interaction within a cultural context operates at profound faculties of human experience, often resulting in an acquired mutual empathy and compassion for others. The desire for greater social cohesion that confronts issues of racism, prejudice and intolerance is bedrock to intercultural competence. Educators engage in activity that seeks to mend issues of social justice stemming from the educator's philosophical and ethical assumptions of right and wrong. My personal experience working with high school students through an intercultural approach guided this research. From observations, I found that intercultural misunderstandings and

inconsistencies, including conflict, arose from the fundamental inability to demonstrate empathy–a function of compassion.

Role of empathy and compassion.

Intercultural competence education creates a value system that harmonizes differing points of view. I argue that a critical, ethical orientation to intercultural competence provides the justification or rationale for developing concern for others. Concern for others is often manifested in social interactions through characterizations of sympathy, empathy, and compassion. Many multicultural education programs, and those closely associated with them, such as intercultural education, intercultural communication, and intercultural competence, have highlighted the significance of empathy in effective cultural interaction (Banks & Banks, 2004; Batson, Sager, Garst, Kang, Rubchinsky, & Dawson, 1997; Carrell, 1997; de Souza, 2006; De Turk, 2001; Emert & Pearson, 2007; Jikikokko, 2005; Le Roux, 2002; McAllister et al., 2006; McGregor, 1993; Sercu, 2006; Stephan & Finlay, 1999; Tesoriero, 2006; Weiner & Wright, 1973).

Empathy is defined as the "identification with and understanding of another's situation, feelings, and motives" (American Heritage Dictionary, 2008). Empathy is a major component of intercultural competence development that is effective in reducing prejudice. In further exploration of empathy in multicultural contexts, Banks and Banks (2004) divided empathy into two components: cognitive empathy and emotional empathy (p. 786). Cognitive empathy occurs when people take the "role of another and view the world from that person's perspective" (p. 786). Emotional empathy is explained as

primarily consisting of "compassion-related emotions that arise from a feeling of concern for the suffering of others" (p. 786). Developing both forms of empathy is seen as key in combating issues of prejudice, racism and intolerance.

In relation to intercultural competence specifically, empathy is prominent in various studies. For Belenky et al. (1986) intercultural competence is about "developing the ability to identify and challenge one's cultural assumptions, one's values and beliefs, and developing empathy and 'connected knowledge' (as cited in McAllister et al., 2006, p. 368). In describing intercultural competence through the categories of knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors or skills, Emert and Pearson (2007) included empathy as fundamental to one's attitude (p. 69). In examining the framework of an international social work education program, Tesoriero (2006) identified the relationship between intercultural competence and social work explaining that, "Working effectively and ethically with others who are different, for fair and just outcomes, is a long-established imperative in social work. It is the core rationale for the skill of empathy" (p. 127). Tesoriero further described how an adaptive ethnorelativist paradigm of intercultural competence made empathy central to a cultural adaptation process. Through this paradigm, empathy is viewed as the "ability to shift cultural frames when communicating so that common meaning can be created" (p. 138). However, he mentioned that empathy is temporal and offers the position of pluralism as an alternative framework.

Either considered a characteristic, skill or attitude of intercultural competence, Broome (1991) discussed the importance of empathy in the process of shared meaning with the cultural Other through a relational approach, "By developing an empathetic

attitude towards communication and by seeking to co-create relational meaning in these situations, we increase the prospect for mutual engagement in effective and productive communication" (p. 247). The field of intercultural communication has long held empathy as a competence. Carrell (1997) found that the infusion of cultural knowledge in an intercultural communication curriculum has a significant impact on the development of empathy. Not only is empathy internalized as an attribute, but it also empowers interculturally competent communicators to "revolutionize their communities, to campaign for social justice, and perhaps, to instigate global peace" (pp. 242-243). Essentially, I posit that empathy, or as I call it *compassion*, is the driving force behind the theoretical models of intercultural competence development and value-creation as mentioned above.

It is here that the notion of empathy takes on a different meaning and is often misunderstood. As scholars from various disciplines have defined empathy in various ways, its ambiguity cannot be ignored. While empathy has long been considered central to intercultural competence, very little is found about the way it functions to create the opportunities to build a moral/ethical contract between individuals. What is essentially required is knowledge and understanding of how empathy, or compassion, as I choose to call it, can be harnessed as a paradigm that instigates shared cultural meaning and purpose.

Compassion and Empathy in Education

For purposes of this study, it is important to delineate the difference between empathy and compassion. As mentioned above, empathy has long been considered an

important aspect of intercultural education as well as intercultural competence. But missing from the literature reviewed is clear articulation of the way empathy alone serves as the catalyst for the desired outcomes of intercultural competence. I argue that empathy alone is not enough to encompass the ultimate function of intercultural competence. While empathy allows individuals to feel, to see, and to understand the perspectives of others, the traditional definitions of empathy do not imply anything beyond recognition of the Others' social positioning. In many ways, it is described as a reflective ability or tendency. However, if scholars are to advance the field of intercultural competence, researchers must identify the greater rationalization of its purpose. Empathy in intercultural exchange cannot, and should not, be considered a stand-alone temporal emotion or reflective ability, but must be seen more as a commitment to better the social conditions of society. Empathy allows individuals to see and to feel, but it is compassion that compels individuals to act in response to what is felt. Compassion, ultimately, is to resist forms of oppression or negativity that cause individuals to suffer. Therefore, for purposes of this study, I approached empathy as a function of compassion; and intercultural competence, I argue, is the vehicle by which compassion can be developed and fostered.

From the review of literature, as well as from my personal experience in teaching multicultural literature to high school students through an intercultural framework, empathy, I argue, is only one aspect of intercultural competence education. Through the various definitions, empathy is clearly stated as the ability to see and feel things from the point of view of others; however, empathy alone does not necessarily imply a willingness

to act. It is considered an important element in the communicative experience of intercultural interaction, but empathy research does not speak to the motivation, drive, and desire that transforms empathy into compassion.

In diverse settings, the knowledge of power relations between social groups is an essential element in intercultural exchange (DeTurk, 2001). Through an understanding of cultural history, conflict and manifestations of oppression, the critical, intercultural competence educator is able to identify these social incongruities. Through an empathetic approach, the educator recognizes that cultural inconsistencies or misunderstandings are a source of suffering caused by prejudice, stereotypes, and bigotry among groups. However, recognition and empathy are not enough. Intercultural competence seeks to mend these incongruities; therefore it must also provide the impetus *to act* against the forces that cause these sufferings. For this reason, a framework of compassion provides scholars, not only with understanding of the suffering caused by unequal power relations between cultural groups, but provides educators with a source of inspiration to eradicate these injustices within society. Compassion is rational-moral motivation, and therefore, to engage in intercultural competence education, is the act of eradicating or overcoming the suffering among cultural groups. It is for this reason, I argue, that compassion is intricately related to intercultural competence and value-creation pedagogy that requires greater empirical and pedagogical discourse.

Models of compassion.

One of the most notable thinkers of compassion in education was Rousseau. According to Rousseau (1762/1979), individualism divides people, but compassion arises

when individuals create bonds of genuine mutual concern through shared sufferings. Rousseau argued the point that the desire for self-interest, one that is rooted in reason, was not the uniting bond among humans, but rather, it is a profound common feeling that responds to suffering. The task of reforming social life, according to Rousseau, is the understanding of how an individual's deep feeling for others counters self-interest:

> But when the strength of an expansive soul makes me identify myself with my fellow, and I feel that I am, so to speak, in him, it is in order not to suffer that I do not want him to suffer. I am interested in him for love of myself, and the reason for the precept is in nature itself, which inspires in me the desire of my well-being in whatever place I feel my existence. (p. 235)

The combination of both human tendencies of self-interest and identifying oneself with others formed Rousseau's notion of compassion.

Movements in democratic education have also helped frame the notion of an ethic of compassion in education. According to Dewey (1916), democratic virtue plays an important part in individual life. For Dewey, social responsibility, or a commitment to the common good, requires the development of an individual's inner potential by responding to the needs of his/her community. Through what Dewey refers to as *intelligent sympathy*, sympathy is approached as more than a feeling, but rather, "a cultivated imagination for what men have in common and a rebellion at whatever unnecessarily divides them" (as cited in Rockefeller, 1991, p. 242). It essentially involves the desire to recognize and respond to the welfare and suffering of others. Although Dewey did not believe that compassion, by itself, was a sufficient guide in ethical life, he saw it as an element, along with experimental intelligence, as a way to interrelate social responsibility, moral life and benevolence (Rockefeller, 1991). In addition, Purpel's (1989) "prophetic voice" lent itself to a greater call for compassion in

democratic communities. According to Purpel, "The prophetic voice speaks most directly to issues of justice and righteousness; it is a voice that not only roars in protest at oppression, inequity, poverty, and hunger but cries out in pain and compassion" (p. 81). He further described the voice as a call for "outrage and responsibility in the face of injustice and oppression" (p. 81). Essentially, for Purpel, education is responsible for cultivating the desire to act against injustice.

According to Mathew Fox (1999), a consequence of compassion is discovering the essential interdependence of all life. In discovering this interdependence or *communion*, individuals are open to each other's suffering. As Fox (1999) asserted, the eradication of suffering is a central concern, not only as an intellectual enterprise, but as a moral obligation.

Finally, the notion of compassion can also be appropriated to 20th century educational philosopher, Paulo Freire's (2006) notion of *radical love*. According to Freire's dialogical approach to teaching, love is a "commitment to others" (p. 89). In terms of oppression, the act of love, according to Freire, is a "commitment to their cause– the cause of liberation" (p. 89). Through his elaboration of the dialogical process between student and teacher, transformation is essentially motivated by love that elevates people to a condition of compassion, which in this case means, the act to relieve their suffering.

Definitions of compassion.

A review of literature surrounding the notion of compassion revealed great ambiguity and lack of a common definition of compassion by social scientists and

educational researchers. Quite frequently, compassion is open to interpretation based on fundamental views through its approach by varied disciplines (i.e., philosophy, spirituality, moral education, and psychology). This section will serve as an overview of the variations of definitions of compassion.

Webster's Dictionary (2008) defined compassion as "suffering with another; a sensation of sorrow excited by the distress or misfortunes of another." This common definition of compassion is often associated with sympathy, pity, mercy and commiseration. However, the American Heritage Dictionary (2008) defined compassion as the "deep awareness of the suffering of another coupled with the wish to relieve it" (American Heritage Dictionary, 2008). This definition varies from the first in that it links the feelings of sympathy with a desire to act. Under this definition, compassion connotes more than a passive engagement with another, but urges a commitment to relieve suffering. This important distinction is significant for the framework of this study.

Many Western scholars approach compassion from its Latin origin of the word. The Latin verb *pati*, which means "to suffer" or "to bear," and the prefix *cum*, which means "with" implies that compassion is "to suffer with." From this meaning, compassion is more commonly associated with other terms such as sympathy or empathy. While sympathy is concerned with *feeling for others* and empathy is understood generally as the "intellectual identification" (American Heritage Dictionary, 2008), of another's suffering, both terms are commonly characterized as belonging to the realm of feelings. In many ways, these feelings, especially to the Western mind, connote an element of passivity and authority on the part of the sympathizer or empathizer over the sufferer.

Although more contemporary notions of empathy suggest that care and sympathy result in a response to these feelings, very few studies and definitions suggest this relationship.

As more contemporary research begins to draw from non-Western schools of thought, the notion of compassion as an educational model can adequately be informed from an Eastern view. For example, in Chinese and Japanese Buddhist texts, the Chinese characters of compassion, *ji*, and *hi*, translate from the Sanskrit meaning to "give happiness" and "to remove suffering" (Kriger, 2000). While one conception of compassion suggests a more emotional state, the other suggests not only feeling of solidarity with the sufferer, but also implies the act of intervening with the suffering. This fundamental difference, I argue, is what demarcates compassion from empathy.

Compassion is frequently described and characterized as a feeling of pity for others. This description has lent itself to numerous interpretations by ethicists, philosophers, and social scientists. Despite these various perspectives, the call for greater attention to compassion, as well as empathy, as a paradigm that responds to the social problems faced by the world today, is a movement in the direction of justice, equality, and dignity of life that exemplifies humanity. Ultimately, I believe that compassion in education is the process that awakens individuals to the nature of existence that reveals a common bond as fellow human beings.

Compassion as a Framework for Moral Education

In *The Role of Compassion in Moral Education*, Ruiz and Minguez-Vallejos (1999) proposed compassion as a new paradigm for moral education. By integrating compassion, the authors suggested the formation of an *ethic of compassion*. Rooted in

Kohlbergian theory, moral education is viewed as, "an intellectual organisation of the beliefs and values which uphold a particular system of values on the part of the student so that a greater self-sufficiency in moral judgment is developed along with morally more responsible and mature behaviour" (Ruiz & Minguez-Vallejos, 1999, p. 6). However, the authors illustrated that moral education is not solely an intellectual enterprise, but should take on a more active role in recognizing and protecting the dignity of others. Through compassion, individuals develop, "a feeling mediated (affected) by reason: the other person is worthy of compassion, is not a mere suffering object but a subject with a wounded, abused or frustrated dignity who demands a response" (Ruiz & Minguez-Vallejos, 1999, p. 6). Accordingly, moral education ultimately results in more than a cognitive response; it includes one's ethical/moral orientation. In their approach their later framework of compassion as a moral and political commitment, Ruiz & Minguez-Vallejos (2001) explained that compassion is more than a "sterile *feeling of pity*," but rather, a commitment in "working to change the structures which create suffering and situations of marginalisation and dependency" (p. 164). In combination with reason, compassion gives rise to a sense of commitment that makes suffering an imperative to act upon.

Ruiz & Minguez (2001) rely on Mate's (1991) concept of compassion:

Compassion is, in effect, a feeling and as such is something special and substantial. However, it is a feeling *mediated by reason*: the other is worthy of compassion, not a mere object of suffering, but a subject with his dignity wounded, abused or frustrated. Dignity is recognized as an end and is not used as a means, as Kant wished. This dignity with which the other shows himself is the dignity required of man, the human species. Thus, compassion is the tangible or natural mediation between the particularity of the sentiment and the universality of human dignity … Compassion is the name for an inter-subjective ethic, not symmetrical but rather in accord with the true asymmetry. (as cited in Ruiz & Minguez, 2001, p. 159)

In this sense, compassion is an all-encompassing composition of the human intuition that

validates the worth and dignity of the individual. Through their proposal for a new

paradigm for moral education, Ruiz and Minguez (1999) cite Spanish philosopher

Aurelio Arteta's description of compassion:

1. Compassion is founded on the dignity and limitations of man. It is only because man has dignity that he is capable of compassion. Without compassion, nobody would feel pity for him and he would not feel pity for others. Only if the dignity of others is recognized and respected can misery, suffering and oppression be considered as an offence towards man and endanger our compassion.

2. Compassion has a name. Only individuals suffer, with grief that is far from abstraction. There is no such thing as compassion for Humanity, only for the humanity of each individual. Collective wrongs are expressed in the shape of personally felt sufferings.

3. Compassion is universal; it is for and with everybody and must be given unconditionally. The compassionate person sees every man as his neighbor. A man only has to show that he is in need to claim, in all dignity, the right to compassion.

4. Compassion is a virtue and not only an emotion or spontaneous feeling beyond control of reason. It is not a negation of life or the resigned acceptance of a wrong; rather it is a protest against everything which darkens this life and finally destroys it. Compassion inevitably expresses itself in the fight for justice.

5. Compassion is for the weakest, for those whom society condemns to misery and the status of outcast, those whose dignity has been taken away. (as cited in Ruiz & Minguez, 1999, p. 7)

Ultimately, for Arteta, Mate, Ruiz and Minguez, compassion is a form of commitment,

protest and responsibility. It is through this framework that I argue compassion as a

paradigm for intercultural competence.

Intercultural Competence and Compassion

This study assumes that learning occurs through interactions of shared meanings

between individuals (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, McDermott, & Snyder, 2002). As

individuals interact through cultural negotiations, cultural meanings arise from these

interactions. As I have observed, working with high school students through a critical

pedagogical approach that enhanced collaboration, sharing of values, exposure to beliefs

and perspectives, and an understanding of themselves within a cultural context, provided

the opportunity for compassion to serve as the unifying force that established equality

within the classroom. In terms of social relationships, compassion is a shared meaning

that equalizes the relationship between individuals and does not assume authority, nor

power within relationships. As Ikeda (2000) described it succinctly:

> Compassion does not mean looking down on someone from a position of superiority. It is not a
> vertical but a horizontal relationship. It is a feeling of sympathy toward others as fellow human
> beings. And it is based on respect… We invite a friend into a compassionate life-space and
> warmly embrace them; we sit down in the same room and discuss life as equals. We discuss
> things and learn from one another as fellow human beings, and together we strive to improve our
> lives. (p. 196)

Therefore, compassion is fundamental to intercultural competence. As intercultural

competence is an educational framework that seeks to harmonize social living, its

ultimate educational purpose is what Ikeda (2001) explained as: "the wisdom to perceive

the interconnectedness of all life and living. The courage not to fear or deny difference;

but to respect and strive to understand people of different cultures and grow from

encounters with them" (p. vii).

Intercultural competence is helping extend the boundaries of cultural differences

toward a more encompassing approach toward culture. Thus, intercultural competence

through a paradigm of compassion opens a new discourse for scholars. In context of

cultural, ethnic and racial differences, compassion and intercultural competence must

work reciprocally as an attempt to address the injustices from which these differences

negatively manifest. Essentially, culture is the matrix of human experience. To locate

oneself within a cultural context that approaches culture through the process of revealing

common human experience provides concerned scholars with the framework to help

develop an understanding of the interconnectedness of humanity. The ability to effectively and progressively live with diverse groups of people will inevitably shape the future of society. Developing this ability must become a central focus for all educational endeavors.

Contributing to Teacher Research

Praxis, according to Freire (2006), is "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 51). The theoretical frameworks described in the previous sections illustrated my own conceptual frameworks that are fundamental to this study as they capture authentic praxis. While part of my motivation as an educator stems from my belief that the conditions of society can be transformed by developing individuals' compassion, the way in which this belief manifests throughout my interactions with students is a direct result of praxis. The three theoretical frameworks that have merged and informed my teaching experience and attitude include value-creation pedagogy, intercultural competence, and compassion. As I sought to answer the two research questions that specifically addressed my belief system, actions, attitudes, behaviors, and ethical orientation as a teacher, a methodology that allowed for a self-conscious analysis that explored "the interplay of the engaged self" (Ellis & Bochner, 2000, p. 742) was the most appropriate way to examine praxis. For this reason, I employed autoethnography as a personally engaged, interpretive research methodology that viably addressed the intersubjective elements of my own praxis. Through intentional self-reflexivity, the purpose of this study was not to posit a new pedagogy, nor was it an attempt to justify any specific theoretical framework, but rather, was a way to share what I found to be

successful in my classroom as revealed through unique and educationally compelling feedback received from students for the past eight years.

As a current high school teacher, the opportunity to collect and analyze data from my own experiences with students was also an opportunity to expand the field of qualitative or interpretive teacher research (Apple, 1986; Bussis, Chittenden, & Amarel, 1976; Cazden, 1986; Cochran-Smith & Lyle, 1993; Edelsky & Smith, 1984; Erickson, 1986; Erickson, 1989; Evertson & Green, 1986; Heath & Branscombe, 1985; Perl & Wilson, 1986; Shulman, 1986; Yonemura, 1986). For this study, I utilized the concepts and definition of teacher-research as explained by Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1993).

Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1993) defined teacher research as the "systematic, intentional inquiry by teachers about their own school and classroom work" (p. 24). Past interpretive or qualitative studies of teacher-research conducted by classroom teachers and researchers have helped expand the insights into the relationship between theory and practice. As a starting point for teacher-research is the presumption that:

> Teaching is a highly complex, context-specific, interactive activity in which differences across classrooms, schools, and communities are critically important. Interpretive research provides detailed, descriptive accounts of customary school and classroom events that shed light on their meanings for the participants involved. (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 6)

According to Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1993), teachers are uniquely situated to conduct interpretive research into teaching by nature of their jobs. The phenomenal nature of classrooms, through the lens of a teacher, sets teacher research apart from the type of research that examines education from the outside in. Teacher researchers are:

> Uniquely positioned to provide a truly emic, or insider's, perspective that makes visible the ways that students and teachers together construct knowledge and curriculum. When teachers do research, they draw on interpretive frameworks built from their histories and intellectual interests,

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and because the research process is embedded in practice, the relationship between knower and known is significantly altered. (p. 43)

This is precisely what makes this dissertation significant. As an autoethnography, I draw from the frameworks of value-creation and intercultural competence, while extracting "educational [and ethical] principles" (Ikeda, 2001, p. 10) from the daily interactions with students.

In terms of cultural diversity, Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1993) suggested the importance of making knowledge problematic. In their reference to Project START, a student-teacher training program, students were asked to make cultural diversity problematic by questioning unexamined cultural assumptions (i.e., histories, cultural backgrounds, linguistic backgrounds, etc.). In addition, they were invited to examine their assumptions of student, parent and other teachers' behaviors and motivations. In so doing, pre-service teachers were able to "uncover their own interpretive frameworks" and were given the opportunity to "explore the implications of these connections in ways that are tentative, evolutionary, and personal" (p. 74). Through a variety of excerpts of teacher journals, essays, and studies, Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1993) found that a teacher's ability to respond to cultural diversity in the classroom is "inevitably located in her own preconceptions, experiences, and assumptions about learning and teaching" (p. 75). In relation to this study, this example demonstrated a close parallel to my personal approach in creating and teaching the Multicultural Literature course. Perhaps the greatest similarity to Cochran-Smith & Lytle's (1993) examination of the Project START program to my multicultural literature course is approaching cultural diversity as problematic and the creation of contexts in which "difference itself is interrogated" (p.

76). This required the "calling into question labels, practices, and processes that are so ingrained in our language and metaphors for teaching and learning that they have become reified" (p. 96).

It is my hope that this study not only will contribute to the discourse of value-creation, intercultural competence, and compassion, but that it will demonstrate the agency of the teacher as researcher.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study stemmed from my experience in working with high school students for 12 years. Through my experiences as a Spanish, English and multicultural literature teacher, much of the literature reviewed in this chapter revealed functions and explanations of what I had observed through my daily interactions with culturally diverse students. This study describes how intercultural competence benefits from a framework of compassion. It strives at informing the processes of intercultural competence that go beyond cognitive reasoning to explaining the processes that transform students' ethical and moral orientation. Compassion is a way to think about relationships with others, it is a way to resist radical individualism, and is also a source for a global and altruistic way of thinking and a way to create value from social meanings.

Through an autoethnographic study of my self-created high school multicultural literature class, within a middle-class, Los Angeles suburb, the study exposed a deeper area of teacher research that revealed how teaching students to become interculturally competent individuals developed and manifested in compassionate thinking and behavior.

Although any discourse of an ethical and moral framework within an educational endeavor will invite extensive critique, limitations may be drawn from sounding too idealistic. However, an approach to intercultural competence through a paradigm of compassion must be viewed as an act of agency. It is the earnest commitment to extend the boundaries of empirical research, influence the knowledge of pedagogy, and help inform scholars about ways to combat radical individualism and lack of commitment within society. Ultimately, an educational endeavor that propels a genuine sense of human connection and unites its efforts to confront injustice and suffering is a matter worth exploring. The goal of this study was to offer practitioners and researchers insight into the manifestations of compassion by engaging high school students through the development of intercultural competence. Through the described paradigm, the study identifies how intercultural competence provides the impetus for shared commitment, responsibility, awareness of interconnectedness, and leads toward greater social cohesion.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Background

The subject of this inquiry emerged from my 12-year experience working as a high school language and literature teacher with a culturally diverse student population. In 2001, I created a high school English elective titled, *Multicultural Literature and Practicum*. The purpose of the class was to survey the issues and complexities of cultural diversity through various forms of literature. Throughout my graduate study experience dealing with critical pedagogy, second language acquisition, and secondary education, as well as my familiarity and fascination with topics of racism, discrimination, and prejudice, I felt that my course could help young adults learn more about themselves and the world they live in. After six years of teaching the course, I discovered that many students who participated in my classes demonstrated a growth process that resulted in greater levels of respect and altruism, not only toward each other, but also beyond the classroom. Another observation I made was the number of students who returned from college to express their gratitude for the course. Each year, different students of varying cultural backgrounds either met with me in person, wrote me a letter, or sent an email that their lives were somehow transformed by the experience. Obviously, I could not make the assumption that this was the experience for all students, but if each year my course produced students that continued to say the same thing–as a reflective teacher I began to think that there was something unique about the course, perhaps something unique about what or how I was teaching, that was managing to change the lives of others. Ultimately,

as an educational researcher and high school teacher, the examination of transformative learning experiences through cultural analysis and competence became an area of great interest.

Throughout these last six years, my process of self-reflection, research and analysis, have identified various prominent themes in my teaching experience: cultural competence, interculturalism, transformative learning, critical pedagogy, reflexivity, empathy building, and compassionate development. The present study explored how my own development as an interculturally competent educator, grounded in my own ethical orientation of compassion, has affected the development of intercultural competence and compassion within students. The study answers the following questions:

- How do my belief systems influence my pedagogical interactions that produce positive outcomes in the Multicultural Literature class?

- How do I create transformative learning experiences through intercultural competence development and value-creation pedagogy?

The following study employed the constructivist paradigm as a foundational and theoretical model through which "knowledge is symbolically constructed and not objective; that understandings of the world are based on conventions; that truth is, in fact, what we agree it is" (Hatch, 1985, p. 161). The appropriate methodological approach for such a theoretical paradigm required a qualitative method that uses hermeneutic principles that guided the study in interpretive and co-constructive research processes. The proposed study narrates, dialogues, and analyzes, the relationships between my own ethical orientation and the intercultural competence development of my students; therefore, the autoethnographic method of inquiry that treats data through an analytical,

critical, and interpretive lens is quite useful within a cultural context. This chapter

presents a description of the research design, setting, selection process of the study's

population, procedures for data collection, and an overview of the procedures for data

analysis.

A Word About Autoethnography

Since autoethnography is still an emerging genre of qualitative ethnographic

research, it is important to explain its characteristics, problems, evaluation, and benefits.

According to Chang (2008), "Human beings are regarded not only as bearers of culture

but also as active agents who create, transmit, transform, and sometimes discard certain

cultural traits" (p. 20). Autoethnography is an emergent form of ethnographic writing

that involves drawing from one's own experiences to help understand culture. It is a

qualitative approach that utilizes an engaged writing practice that illustrates the

interactive processes of cultural exchange. Grounded within a theoretical framework, the

primary participant in autoethnography is the self. The justification for this form of

inquiry is that an analysis of individual experience is an analysis of social experience as

Mykhalovskiy (1996) suggested. According to Stanley (1993), social experiences are not

acquired independently of others (as cited in Holt, 2003). Rather, social experience is

accumulated through the dialogue, contact, negotiation, emotion, and transformation,

located within that social space.

The genre of autoethnography originated from a movement that extended the

traditional notions of empirical inquiry and analysis. Using Tierny (1998), Holt (2003)

contended that autoethnography is "intended to confront dominant forms of

representation and power in an attempt to reclaim marginalized representational spaces"

(p. 16). The use of personal experience through a reflexive process of cultural interaction

provided scholars with data to look deeper into social experience. Holt (2003) expanded,

"By writing themselves into their own work as major characters, autoethnographers have

challenged accepted views about silent authorship, where the researcher's voice is not

included in the presentation of findings (e.g., Charmaz & Mitchell, 1997)" (p. 2).

Auotethnographies are "ethnographic in their intent" and make use of basic ethnographic

approaches such as data collection, data analysis/interpretation, and reporting (Chang,

2008). Although the autoethnography movement challenges the dominant recognition of

empirical inquiry by liberating researchers from the limitations imposed through its very

dominance, the ultimate goal is "cultural understanding underlying autobiographical

experiences" (Chang, 2008, p. 49).

The controversial status of autoethnography stems from the necessitation to

confront the perceived limitations in traditional procedures of qualitative research.

According to Sparkes (2000), launching autoethnography as an acceptable form of

inquiry is challenging because such research is "at the boundaries of disciplinary

practices" (p. 21). One of the greatest claims against autoethnography is the use of the

self as a vehicle to generate study (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). However, Sparkes (2002)

questioned why a narrative of the self is "so offensive" (as cited in Holt, 2003), for the

qualitative self *is* the primary research instrument in ethnographic research. Criticisms

against autoethnography that warn against the threat of self-indulgence, over-

introspection, excessive individualization and narcissism (Coffey, 1999; Sparkes, 2000),

essentially raised the questions of validity and verification; but Sparkes (2002) argued

that such concerns demonstrated a misunderstanding and mistrust of the genre itself.

Ellis & Bochner (2000) agreed that such criticisms resulted from the resistance to change

the prevailing attitude toward research. Holt (2003) suggested that "such criticisms, in

turn, function to preserve the very types of dominant viewpoints that those using

autoethnographic approaches may wish to question... it is quite ironic that the method

itself becomes marginalized by the academic review process" (p. 16). Conceptually, it is

for this reason I have chosen to follow Chang's (2008) methodology of autoethnography

coupled with Cochran-Smith & Lytle's (1993) notion of teacher research and knowledge.

According to Chang (2008), what makes autoethnography ethnographic is its:

> Intent of gaining cultural understanding. Since the self is considered a carrier of culture, intimately connected to others in society, the self's behaviors – verbal and nonverbal – should be interpreted in their cultural context. Therefore, autoethnographic data analysis and interpretation involves shifting your attention back and forth between self and others, the personal and the social context. (p. 125)

Autoethnography is about generating knowledge about culture. In terms of

classroom research, the actions, practices, words, beliefs, attitudes, and interactions

between teacher and students are all part of the classroom culture or as what Schulman

(1986) described as "classroom ecology." According to Cochran-Smith & Lytle (1993),

"teacher researchers are both users and generators of theory" (p. 17). For this reason, the

self-narrative, story-telling feature for teachers through autoethnography goes far beyond

mere narration, but rather, demonstrates the intricate process of cultural analysis and

interpretation by the teacher within the classroom context. In teacher research, questions

that teacher-researchers often generate "emanate from neither theory nor practice alone

but from critical reflection on the intersection of the two" (p. 15). Most educational

researchers recognize that classrooms are complex sites of socio-historical, political, psychological, and cultural interaction. The meanings that are derived from within these contexts by teachers and students constitute the learning process. As educational researchers often attempt to analyze and interpret knowledge and theory from the outside in, I argued, that teacher research through autoethnography offers a way to derive information from the inside out: "Rather than laws about what works generically in classrooms, we need insight into the particulars of how and why something works and for whom it works within the contexts of particular classrooms" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 15). This is why I argued that the stated limitation of validity raised by critics contradicts the very disciplinary practices and methods they seek to preserve.

One way to look at the strengths and limitations of autoethnography as a method of inquiry is to examine its scholarly review process. The review process of autoethnography requires a careful willingness to stretch the long-established restrictions of qualitative research. A fundamental truth about autoethnography is that it emphasizes the writing process to obtain data. In beginning an autoethnography, the researcher and the proposal reviewers must agree that a universal criterion for evaluating writing does not exist (DeVault, 1997). Autoethnography involves an authentic, intrinsic, and emotional process that require evaluation of its emotional and intellectual impact (Richardson, 1995; 2000). Essentially, the criteria traditionally used to evaluate qualitative research should not necessarily guide the academic review process to judge autoethnography (Garratt & Hodkinson, 1999; Sparkes, 2000). According to Sparkes (2002), it is important for evaluators of this research method to resist the desire to "seek

universal foundational criteria lest one form of dogma simply replaces another" (p. 223).

This places evaluators in a risky position because the method is still quite new.

Not limited to only these forms of personal narrative review techniques,

Richardson (2000) identified five factors that included analysis of both evaluative and

constructive validity techniques:

1. Substantive contribution. Does the piece contribute to our understanding of social life?

2. Aesthetic merit. Does this piece succeed aesthetically? Is the text artistically shaped, satisfyingly complex, and not boring?

3. Reflexivity. How did the author come to write this text? How has the author's subjectivity been both a producer and a product of this text?

4. Impactfullness. Does this affect me emotionally and/or intellectually? Does it generate new questions or move me to action?

5. Expresses a reality. Does this text embody a fleshed out sense of lived experience? Autoethnographic manuscripts might include dramatic recall, unusual phrasing, and strong metaphors to invite the reader to 'relive' events with the author. (pp. 15-16)

Autoethnography as a methodology broadens long established evaluative systems into

new arenas of qualitative research. As more scholars are willing to engage in the

challenge of this emerging field of study, the academic review process of

autoethnography continues to grow.

To conclude this brief description of the proposed research design, I highlighted

some of the benefits of autoethnography. Although scholars new to autoethnography

may initially feel inadequate or insecure about conducting this form of inquiry, it is

important to revisit the essential purpose of autoethnography. According to Reed-

Danahay (1997), autoethnography links the self to culture within a social context. It is a

process of inquiry that is grounded within a theoretical framework that establishes the

researcher as the storyteller of cultural exchange. Wolcott (1994) suggested, "qualitative

researchers need to be storytellers, and storytelling should be one of their distinguishing attributes" (as cited in Holt, 2003, p. 5). For Glesne and Peshkin (1992) "the subjectivity of the researcher is seen as a resource for understanding the problematic world they are investigating, as something to capitalize on rather than exorcise" (as cited in Holt, 2003, p. 15). Essentially, the autoethnographic method requires the extensive process of editing, reviewing, and critical evaluation. For Holt (2003) "the reflexive techniques that examine the sensitivity of the researcher to the particular subculture under investigation may provide constructive approaches to validity in autoethnography" (p. 12). Therefore, I contend that autoethnography is a natural extension of ethnography as a subgenre that is sufficiently viable to conduct the critical self-examination necessary to answer the proposed research questions. The knowledge and information gained through such inquiry contributes to the growing need to develop new lenses by which researchers attempt to understand culture and education. In addition, it captures the phenomenological interface between teacher-student relationships that allows for the subjective experience to become available for greater insight and usage of data. For Sparkes (2002) autoethnography is a method that adds value to the sociological conceptualizations of the learning experience and encourages empathy and interconnectedness beyond the author. In addition, autoethnography as a teacher research method gives teachers agency as it reveals the voice that has been missing from education research for so many years.

Research Design

As stated above, the autoethnographic method of qualitative research is quite new

and not without controversy, mainly for its reliance on the researcher's subjective

experience. Critics question the validity of results and interpretation because it does not

subscribe to traditional hypothesis-driven or positivist research (Holt, 2003; Krizek,

2003). However, proponents of autoethnography feel the method is particularly

important in examining reflexive social phenomena that manifests within participants

situated in cultural contexts. For purposes of this study, the primary source that guided

this research was Chang (2008). For Chang (2008), autoethnography subscribes to four

assumptions:

1. Culture is a group-oriented concept by which self is always connected with others.

2. The reading and writing of self-narratives provide a window through which self and others
   can be examined and understood.

3. Telling one's story does not automatically result in *cultural* understanding of self and others,
   which only grows out of in-depth cultural analysis and interpretation.

4. Autoethnography is an excellent instructional tool to help not only social scientists but also
   practitioners–such as teachers–gain profound understanding of self and others and function
   more effectively with others from diverse cultural backgrounds. (p. 13)

To examine the association of my ethical orientation of empathy and compassion through

the formulation of intercultural competence, the inquiry required a methodology that

adequately inspected the phenomenological processes of interaction that existed between

teacher and student. According to Chang (2008), autoethnography is increasingly

becoming a "useful and powerful tool for researchers and practitioners who deal with

human relations in multicultural settings" (p. 51). In addition, autoethnography offers

three benefits to empirical research

- research-method friendly to researchers and readers;
- enhances cultural understanding of self and others; and
- contains the potential to transform self and others to motivate them to work toward cross-cultural coalition building (p. 52).

Human relations often exist in the abstract. The need to examine such phenomena

through an autoethnographic method of inquiry allows the researcher to discover new

dimensions of educator-researcher interaction through ethical and cultural contexts.

Therefore, the study emerged from a phenomenological approach that sought to

demonstrate these relationships in a concrete setting.

While the study utilized various forms of traditional qualitative analysis, the study

was primarily designed as an autoethnography with ethnographic components to show

the relationship between the educator/researcher's own ethical orientation and the

development of intercultural competence within students.

The studies of intercultural competence cited in Chapter 2 primarily utilized a

theoretical and ethical analysis of the characteristics identified within intercultural

competence development. A number of the studies described the importance of

intercultural competence development in a culturally diverse world, the necessary skills

in cross-cultural communication, as well as the political, social, and educational benefits,

of cross cultural relationship building. However, a limited number of studies actually

demonstrated the praxis of intercultural competence. According to Ellis & Bochner's

(2000) description of autoethnography, this research dissertation, I contended, is the

production of a text, written in first person, that demonstrates the emotion, dialogue, and

self-consciousness inherent through cultural interaction; it examines the social and relational context through my own experience in working with high school students through intercultural competence development.

In autoethnography, the primary participant is the researcher. According to Chang (2008), the basis of autoethnography's lies on "intentional self-reflexivity" (p. 45). It is a social scientific approach to inquiry that allows for the narrative data of my teaching experience to be subjected to cultural analysis and interpretation. I have operated under the assumption that culture and individuals are complexly interconnected and the process of self-reflexivity was approached from both objective and subjective conditions of analysis. As described by Chang (2008), autoethnography requires a balance between "ethnographic in its methodological orientation, cultural in its interpretive orientation, and autobiographical in its content orientation" (p. 48).

The study began with a general autoethnographic research design that holistically evolved into a qualitative research paradigm as the study progressed. For purposes of this study, the data for answering the research questions were mainly derived from two Multicultural Literature and Practicum course units, "Race and Ethnicity" and "Sexuality and Gender." Students' initial views and attitudes toward these topics were collected through teacher-generated questionnaires, surveys and observations. The information was then incorporated throughout the process of inquiry and reflexivity of the teacher. Systematic self-observational and reflexive methods provided data from all interactions.

Setting

An overview of Multicultural Literature.

I created Multicultural Literature 9 years ago at Cinema City High School

(CCHS), a fictitious name. The idea came to me through my involvement with cultural

sensitivity and diversity programs that were being developed at the school. Through my

participation with several other like-minded teachers, I had the opportunity to introduce

diversity retreats, peer training programs, and cultural assemblies for the school.

Partnerships developed with professional organizations included the Anti-Defamation

League, Museum of Tolerance, and independent intercultural consultants. Through the

various culture-sensitivity activities, I observed amazing individual transformations of

students who completed these programs. I hypothesized that the level of dialogue that

students engaged in was the principal vehicle toward this transformation. I noticed that

students exhibited greater levels of empathy and compassion as they engaged each other

in meaningful dialogue about issues of prejudice. In my interest in finding a way to

incorporate this type of dialogical learning into the curriculum, I inquired about the

process of creating a class. Naturally as an English teacher, I decided to create a class

that allowed for intercultural dialogue using literature as the academic vehicle.

Through my graduate studies at LMU, I had become personally fascinated with

the *Cultural Paradigms in Education* course. The examination of cultural factors that

affect the lives of all individuals opened up a new world for me. I felt that high school

students, primarily seniors, could highly benefit from learning about cultural factors prior

to going to college. As an alumnus of CCHS I was very aware of the history of racially

motivated events and incidents at the school and within the community. As an ethnic minority that went through the entire Cinema City school system as a student and was now working as a teacher, I highly sympathized with underrepresented students regarding claims of prejudice at the school site.

Through the process of research, diligence, and aspiration, I wrote up and submitted the curriculum for Multicultural Literature and Practicum. The principal, the school board, and eventually the UC Regents smoothly endorsed the course proposal. The course was proposed as a 12th grade English elective and, when first introduced, it began with only one section with approximately 28 students. The following year, a second course offering was added to the master schedule. Due to the popularity of the course in its initial years, more students began to request the class. In its fourth year, the class offerings increased to four sections averaging 33 students each. In its eighth year, there are five course sections with one other teacher teaching one section.

Ultimately, multicultural literature has served as a catalyst to teach students about the issues associated with cultural interaction through the review and analysis of prejudice, discrimination, racism, and homophobia. From the outset of the class, I loosely defined the term *literature* as *the written word*. This broad definition of literature is applied through the various texts reviewed including short stories and poetry, however, my form of literary analysis also included newspaper and magazine articles, internet documents, textbooks, essays, and speeches. Much of what I selected for my students to read was designed to initiate dialogue within the class; I also included provocative video clips regarding themes and issues related to the course units. Through a discussion-based

format, I taught students about the various examples in society in which cultural factors become divisive. By reading about issues of immigration, racial prejudice, and homophobia, and while deconstructing common terminology of difference, the topics generated in the discussions have helped formulate contradictory opinions about injustice among students. But also, it helped students examine their own biases and gave them the opportunity to hear the thoughts, stories, and experiences of others. In Multicultural Literature, students not only learned to read the written word, but they were able to evaluate opinions that are often the source of injustice. Essentially, what I wanted my students to learn was "to read the world" (Freire, 1994, p. 139)–and the ability to do so is the core of intercultural competence.

Cinema City.

Cinema City High School is located in a suburb of Los Angeles County. According to the City of Cinema City's demographic profile, the estimated city population for 2010 was 42,150 and its current population diversity is demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1
Cinema City Demographic Profile

Profile	Population Percent
White	58%
African American	12%
Asian	12%
Latino	8%
Other	10%

Note: Obtained from the Cinema City > Community Development Planning website.

The median age of Cinema City residents was estimated at 38 years of age with the income distribution demonstrated in Table 2.

Table 2
Cinema City Estimated Income

Income Level	Percent
Under $24,000	16%
$25,000 - $49,999	25%
$50,000 - $99,999	35%
$100,000 - $149,000	14%
Over $150,000	9%

Note: Obtained from the Cinema City > Community Development Planning website.

The educational attainment of Cinema City's residents is demonstrated in Table 3.

Table 3
Cinema City Resident Educational Attainment

Education	Percent
Less than high school	13%
High school graduates	15%
Some college	31%
Bachelors degree	24%
Earned graduate degrees	17%

Note: Obtained from the Cinema City > Community Development Planning website.

Cinema City Unified School District.

Cinema City High School is administered by the Cinema City Unified School District, which manages five elementary schools, an Office of Child Development (managing a preschool and daycare throughout the district), one adult school, one middle school (grades 6-8), one continuation high school, one senior high school (9-12) and an independent study school.

Cinema City High School.

According to the 2008-2009 CBEDS report, Cinema City High School's enrollment was 2,273. Considered by many teachers as one of the more culturally diverse high schools in West Los Angeles, the demographic population is demonstrated in Table 4.

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Table 4
Cinema City High School
Students by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Population Percent
White	23.2%
African American	22.7%
Asian	10.2%
Latino	37.7%
Filipino	2.7%
Pacific Islander	.09%
American Indian	.03%
Multiple/No response	2.3%

Note: Obtained from the 2008-2009 CBEDS profile.
Note: The Asian category includes subcategories of Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Thai, and Vietnamese.

There were 33 languages represented among the student population. Of the total number of students, 9.5% of students were classified English Learners. During the 2008-2009 school year, 27% of students received free or reduced lunch. The average pupil teacher ratio was 35:1 and the average class size was 35. The number of prior year dropouts was 29. The prior year number of graduates CSU/UC eligible is 39%. The high school employs 107 teaching faculty, whereas 90.1% are fully credentialed. In the 2008-2009 school year, 50 were male and 57 female. The ethnic breakdown of the teaching staff is shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Cinema City High School Teaching Staff by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Percent
White	71%
African American	10%
Asian	6%
Latino	10%
Filipino	0%
Pacific Islander	2%
American Indian	0%
Multiple/No response	0%

Note: Obtained from the 2008-2009 CBEDS profile.

The school administration consisted of a principal and three assistant principals. The principal and three assistant principals were self-described as White. Classified staff equaled a total of 117.

2008-2009 Multicultural Literature Course

In 2008-2009, there were 157 high school seniors enrolled in five sections of Multicultural Literature, four sections of which I taught. This enrollment figure showed that 30% of the senior class was enrolled in the course. The course is a senior English elective among the other choices of British Literature, Science Fiction/Fantasy, Myth/Legend, and AP English Literature.

Participants.

I served as the primary participant in the study. Through my teaching experience and interaction with students, my intentional self-reflexivity demonstrated how knowledge of cultural understanding of self and others was revealed through a cultural context.

About me.

I am 37 years old, Latino male, born and raised in the United States. I come from a Costa Rican immigrant household, where Spanish was my first language as it was the only language spoken in the home. I spent my entire life in Cinema City and attended all levels of public education K-12 in the Cinema City Unified School District. After graduating from Cinema City High School in 1990, I attended a local community college for three years. During this time, I was highly active in student clubs serving as President of Club Latino United for Education (CLUE), Vice Chairperson to the Interclub Council,

and worked as a Counseling Aide in the college's Latino Center. Active in student life, I also participated in political student movements such as fighting against tuition increases, anti-immigration measures, the demand for a Chicano Studies Department at UCLA, and participated in activist and educational conferences for Chicano/Latino high school students.

After my third year, I transferred to UCLA and received my bachelor's degree in English. Upon graduation, I sought a job as a substitute teacher at Cinema City High School in 1996. At the same time, I enrolled in the Loyola Marymount University's combined masters and credential program in secondary education. After my first year as a substitute, I was offered the position of a full-time Spanish teacher. For the next five years, I taught Spanish 1, Native Spanish, and AP Spanish Literature. During such time, I remained highly active with extracurricular activities primarily as sponsor of the student club Latinos Unidos. Upon completing my masters and credential in 1999, I continued teaching Spanish until I requested to move to the English department in 2001 where I taught English 9, English (ELD), and Literati. I also became involved in founding the first Multicultural Club (which later evolved into the Student Intercultural Advisory Committee). In 2001 I was awarded recognition as Cinema City Unified School District Teacher of the Year and later named one of the Los Angeles County's Teacher of the Year. In 2002, my proposed course *Multicultural Literature and Practicum* was approved and was given one section in the master schedule (see Appendix A). Since the class was first offered, it has evolved into five course offerings due to its unexpected

popularity among the students and is presently elected by approximately 30% of the senior class.

For the past eight years, I have taught Multicultural Literature while also serving as the Director of Student Activities. As Director, I am a part of the school site leadership team and engaged at various levels of the school. This dual role has placed me in a shared position of literature teacher and school leader. As a result of teaching Multicultural Literature and Practicum, I began to notice a pattern among the student comments regarding their experiences in the course. Many students shared with me that their perspectives and biases were challenged and changed to the extent of becoming more aware and sensitive to the needs of others. Through my own process of self-reflexivity as an instructor, I began to question why so many of my students, present and former, had shared similar impressions of the course. It was not until I was a doctoral student, that I had the opportunity to formally conduct an analysis of my own teaching experience in relation to the transformational processes realized within my students. Although the primary participant of this proposed study was myself, the self-reflexive process was achieved through my direct interaction with students. Therefore, all students enrolled in my Multicultural Literature and Practicum courses are co-participants as well.

Students.

At the beginning of the course in the Fall 2008, the gender and age distribution of my students is illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6
Multicultural Literature
Students Gender & Age
Distribution

Category	Number	Percent
Gender		
Male	43	33%
Female	87	66%
Age		
	16	22%
	17	73%
	18	4%

The self-described ethnic profile of the 130 students enrolled in my four sections

of the Multicultural Literature course are demonstrated in Table 7.

Table 7
Multicultural Literature
Students by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Percent
White	24%
African American	17%
Asian (includes Pacific Islander, Filipino)	14%
Latino	29%
Multiracial	11%
Other (including Middle Eastern, African, Indian, Pakistani)	5%

Note: As reported on a teacher-generated questionnaire.

Ninety-two percent were US born, 8 percent foreign born; 77% claimed English

as their first language, 15% Spanish, and 5% other (including Polish, Arabic, and Italian).

Student religious preference is characterized in Table 8.

Table 8

Multicultural Literature

Students by Religion

Religion	Percent
Christian	29%
Catholic	29%
Jewish	8%
Atheist	8%
Muslim	3%
Buddhist	3%
Hindu	1%
Agnostic	2%
Other (including Mormon, Unitarian)	6%
Would rather not say	1%

Eighty nine percent of the students lived in the United States all their lives; 8%

lived in the U.S. for 10-19 years; and 3% for less than 9 years.

Data Collection

My request to conduct this study received formal permission from the principal

through a signed letter drafted by the researcher; participants received permission through

parental permission letters that were sent home with each participant (see Appendix B-

D).

Data collection began with my role as a participant-observer. Reflexivity of my

own teaching practices was conducted through a variety of methods. Autoethnographic

data collection utilized a series of self-observational methods to record thoughts,

behaviors, emotions, routines, circumstances, interactions and experiences. For purposes

of this study, I used Chang's (2008) suggested methods of autoethnographic data

collection:

- Personal Memory Data

- Self-Observational and Self-Reflective Data

- External Data.

Personal memory data was obtained through three suggested processes: chronicling the past through timelines of events, experiences, and interactions; inventorying the self through thematic categorizations relevant to the study; and visualizing the self through diagramming, charting or drawing, to help "unpack the image for readers through writing" (Chang, 2008, p. 81). The first step in this study was to establish a chronological background and context of my teaching practice using self-reflective and external data such as memoirs, personal journal entries, notes, course documents, past student assignments, electronic mail, and formal and informal documents from my past 12 years of teaching stored in my electronic files. Particular attention was placed on external data that explained the creation, rationale and outcomes of my Multicultural Literature course.

While collecting self-observational and self-reflective data through my daily interactions with students, Chang (2008) recommended a practice of systematic self-observational methods such as interval/occurrence recording for frequency of thoughts and behaviors (Rodriguez & Ryave, 2002); interactive self-observation of patterns of behaviors; erotic mentoring (Rushing, 2006) by engaging students in personal interest interactions to parallel my own experiences with others; interactive introspection (Rodriguez & Ryave, 2002) to describe and review emotional experiences; and the use of more traditional methods of ethnographic research such as field journaling to record personal thoughts and impressions. To obtain this data, I kept two types of journals. The first journal was an on-site journal that recorded spontaneous thoughts, feelings,

impressions, and events as I interacted with my students. Throughout each day of the study, I utilized passing periods, downtime, and my free period to record such entries. I also used a personal voice recorder when writing time was limited, using my classroom office to record any thoughts and impressions. The second journal was my personal electronic memory-data journal, which included my overall reflections of the day's events. These data helped demonstrate my behavior, attitude and actions, as I interacted with students. In addition, the reflective data from these journals provided the groundwork for recording and examining my own ethical orientation throughout my interactions.

To collect external data, more traditional ethnographic methods were employed such as individual interviews (Angrosino, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Ellis, 2004; Fontana & Frey, 2000; Schensul, Schensul & LeCompte, 1999; Spradley, 1979; Woolcott, 2004); group interviews or focus groups (Fontana & Frey, 2000) to explore group norms and attitudes; the use of "grand tour" and "mini-tour" (Spradley, 1979) questioning of interviewees to explore open-ended and unfamiliar topics; textual artifacts (Muncey, 2005) such as official and self produced documents, letters, personal journal, personal communications, announcements, contracts, blogs, student essays, poems, journal entries, and questionnaires; and other artifacts (Chang, 2008) including photographs, memorabilia, videotapes, CD's, past student projects, etc. This also included external data derived from other individuals closely associated with the study including students, parents, colleagues, staff, etc. To demonstrate student feedback data about my teaching practice, I collected current and past student assignments, journal

entries, reflections, quick-writes, assessments, essays and projects. Other reflexive and external data included artifacts of past projects, essays, and written assignments from former students, as well as my own personal journal entries from past years.

In addition, data was obtained from a self-generated online blog I created for my former students. As themes were identified through analysis of this data, further verification measures included identifying key students and groups to conduct in-depth interviews and focus groups.

Data Analysis

According to Chang (2008), autoethnography requires a balance between analysis and interpretation. The study demonstrated an autoethnographic perspective of the self with an ethnographic perspective of the students. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994), "The processes of analysis, evaluation, and interpretation are neither terminal nor mechanical. They are always emergent, unpredictable, and unfinished" (as cited in Chang, 2008, p. 125). Therefore, the following strategies of data analysis as suggested by Chang (2008) were employed throughout the study

- search for recurring topics, themes, and patterns across data forms (Chang, 2008);

- look for cultural themes (McCurdy, Spradley, & Shandy, 2005);

- identify exceptional occurrences (Chang, 2008);

- analyze inclusion and omission (Chang, 2008);

- connect with present and past (Chang, 2008);

- analyze relationships between self and others (Austin, 1996);

- compare myself with others (Foster, McAllister, & O'Brien, 2005);

- contextualize broadly (Chang, 2008);

- compare with social science constructs and ideas (Creswell, 1998; as cited in Chang, 2008); and

- frame with theories (Chang, 2008).

To answer the research questions, the self-reflective and external data were analyzed using patternization and thematic coding to identify my belief system, characteristics, behaviors, attitudes, actions, and interactions that I displayed as a teacher, as well as identifying occurrences of positive and negative outcomes of my teaching practice. Analysis of external data also included a historical document review of collected files, projects, assignments, and personal journal entries through thematic coding.

Further rigor of data is demonstrated through a balanced triangulation of the self-observational data, personal memory data, external data of the students; as well as using Richardson's (2000) five factors of evaluating personal narratives (as mentioned above) to inform stylistic quality.

The writing of autoethnography required the development of my own writing style as it emerged from data collection procedures. It is important to note that my writing style evolved as it was steered by the research questions. According to Chang (2008), it is common for autoethnographers to combine various writing styles such as:

- Descriptive-realistic writing (Bochner & Ellis, 1996).

- Confessional-emotive writing (Ronai, 1996; Lamott, 2000, 2005).

- Analytical and interpretive writing (Wolcott, 1994; Mead, 1972).

- Imaginative-creative writing (Chang, 2008).

Through an experimental approach of each writing style, I settled on creating my own

writing style that effectively and constructively answered the research questions.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

Introduction

The following chapter contains the findings of the self-analysis of my own

teaching of the Multicultural Literature course that I created eight years ago, and continue

to teach today. In determining the rationale for this study, Cochran-Smith and Lytle

(1993), explained that when it comes to teacher research, "we need insight into the

particulars of how and why something works and for whom it works within the contexts

of particular classrooms" (p. 15). Throughout my years of personal reflection and

recurring experiences with students, what prompted me to engage in this research study

were the issues of teacher-student relationships, cultural diversity, and pedagogy, that

have played major interests in my life as a professional and as a graduate student.

Through an autoethnographic approach, I examined the following research

questions:

- How do my belief systems influence my pedagogical interactions that produce positive outcomes in the Multicultural Literature class?

- How do I create transformative learning experiences through intercultural competence development and value-creation pedagogy?

To examine these questions, I employed the autoethnographic method to bring

forward my inspired voice to, not only analyze, but display how certain elements of my

teaching practice influence the many positive outcomes expressed by my students. My

positive experience in working with culturally diverse students using pedagogical

practices grounded in various intercultural competence approaches and value-creation

pedagogy, along with strong ethical and philosophical assumptions that make up my belief system, allowed me to expose what Geertz (1973) referred to as the complex "webs of significance" (p. 5) that are present within a classroom. In addition, this chapter shows how the phenomena of my interactions were revealed through my "ethical consciousness" (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 439) and how it provided a window to examine the underlying forces that were very much part of the phenomena.

The data from this autoethnographic study was derived from various sources (i.e., personal memory, journal entries, observations, and other external data); however, the essence of the study is the relationship between personal thoughts and student outcomes as a result of praxis. Through the analysis of personal reflections, student surveys, class discussions, student-teacher dialogues, and genuine interactions with students, I present themes, exemplars, and relationships that emerged from the following five key patterns of findings: a) evidence of a value-creating/culturally-responsive pedagogy, b) evidence of the empowered voice of the teacher and students, c) the process of intercultural dialogue, d) the outcome of transformative learning experiences, and e) evidence of caring, empathetic, and compassionate development on the part of students.

Although some scholars may consider the autoethnographic method as "unruly, dangerous, vulnerable, rebellious, and creative" (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 433), I found that examining the "particulars" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 15) that I present as findings through this subjective journey, was the most effective way to demonstrate my praxis as a classroom teacher "under the control of reason, logic, and analysis" (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 433).

Value-Creating/Culturally-Responsive Pedagogy

As mentioned in the literature review of this dissertation, the three theoretical frameworks that guide this study include intercultural competence, value-creation pedagogy, and compassion. I mention this because these are the principal frameworks by which I created and taught the Multicultural Literature course for the past eight years. I begin my findings section by demonstrating the link from these frameworks to my daily practices and interactions as shown in the data.

Intercultural competence, as defined in Chapter 1, is the socially and ethically oriented ability to effectively negotiate cultural interaction through a skill-set of communicative, interpersonal, social, and managerial abilities. As a result, these competencies bring value to diversity, enhance social cohesion, stimulate personal growth, and promote a commitment to social justice. According to value-creation pedagogy, education requires "a deepening of human bonds that transcend differences of race and nationality" (Ikeda, 2001, p. 105), and insists on finding meaning to one's existence by contributing to the well being of others. Through my own individual understanding of these frameworks, I link these two through my conceptual framework of compassion, or the ethical driving force that compels me to act in response to empathy.

Through my own personal reflection, synthesizing, and fusing of intercultural competence, value-creation pedagogy and compassion, the data show that these frameworks emerge as a pattern that has played a significant role in guiding my educational praxis throughout most of my career, and specifically throughout this study.

The following data demonstrated three themes that emerged from personal and student data: classroom environment, classroom atmosphere, and teaching behaviors. These themes provide examples of how the theoretical frameworks manifest in my daily practice and interactions with students.

Classroom environment.

Although a description of the classroom environment may traditionally be located in the methodology chapter of a dissertation, I include the following description as data because it was generated directly from my observations and anonymous student responses. The classroom environment data provide this study a layer of analysis that helps explain in greater detail the mechanisms that are, in part, influential to some of the subsequent patterns discussed in this chapter (i.e., Empowered Voice, Intercultural Dialogue, and Transformative Learning).

In addition to the anonymous student evaluations from the current years of the study, 2009-2010, as well as external data from past years, I specifically collected student data in 2010 from a reflection assignment regarding students' thoughts, views, and impressions about the physical classroom environment. The data suggested that in my own attempt to create a classroom atmosphere that was free, safe, and open, the physical space of the classroom environment illustrated this attempt. The following personal communication (p.c.) is a narrative I composed to demonstrate this relationship:

> The physical classroom environment is important to note because, as I reflect on my own practices, it does not solely fall upon my actions directly with students. In analyzing my overall teaching of the course, I find that the physical space of my classroom is my indirect attempt to help foster openness and expression.
> My classroom is uniquely situated in an independent building from the main hallway structures, not sharing any walls with neighbors. The classroom doubles as my literature classroom as well as the Student Council room as I additionally serve as the Director of Student

Activities. Because of the tiered floor levels for the seating arrangement, I suspect that the classroom was originally built as a music room. Currently, there are a total of 34 desks, aligned in 6 rows of five desks each. A single desk is located on the floor level. All desks face forward, toward the podium, with the exception of the desks along the far right and far left walls. These desks face inward toward the center of the classroom. The floor level is made up of two round activity tables and the teacher's podium front, center. I always felt the orchestra-style seating symbolically reminded me of the importance of looking up at the students, rather than looking down upon them. This became important to me as a graduate student, as I had studied the notion of dominance and the "hidden curriculum" (Giroux & Penna, 1979) throughout the subtleties of classroom rituals (MacLaren, 1999) and structures in critical pedagogy and educational psychology courses. In addition, looking up at the students in such a manner also reinforced my philosophical view to humble myself before them, to not impose a subconscious authoritarianism upon them, but rather, to remind me of my role as a guide instead of an all-knowing figure.

Artwork and past student projects are abundant throughout the classroom and the walls. These are mainly remnants of past "Resource Projects" from students I had collected in eight years. My podium shows an image of a tree whose branches open like a book; floating around the tree branches are images of the lamp of knowledge, a scroll, a graduation hat, an alphabet, and the infinity symbol. The painting of my podium was a gift by two art students who surprised me with it at the end of the school year in 2006.

Hanging from one of the light fixtures is a string of 21 flags from various countries; hanging from the second light fixture is a string of *papel picado* left over from a *Dia de los Muertos* celebration. Along with the busy walls, this combination makes the room appear quite colorful. Practically every open space on the walls have been covered with past student work, posters, artwork, quotes, and fliers. The only open space on the walls now available is only accessible with a tall ladder. Spread about the classroom, from the teacher's desk, the walls, doors, and above the white board, are favorite famous quotes. Again, traced back to my graduate work, keeping a print rich environment is healthy as it promotes literacy (Krashen, 1985). My purpose in using the quotes is not so much to promote literacy per se, but to simply give my students something reflective or inspirational to read if they ever decide to tune out. Some quotes located throughout my classroom include: "You are responsible for your actions," "Stop the Violence," "Dare to Try," "The Harder You Fall, The Higher You Bounce," "Fight the Fires of Hate," "Evil is the stone on which the good sharpens itself," "If you can dream it, you can do it" "Kindness is wisdom," "An eye for an eye makes the whole world blind," "Keep the dream alive," and "Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery, none but ourselves can free our minds."

In addition, the walls and bulletin boards are filled with fliers and posters of various school programs, historical figures, activities, and diversity organizations. Some posters belong to various organizations promoting diversity and tolerance such as an anti- "That's so gay" poster, "Eliminate the Hate", "Save Darfur," and "Cesar Chavez Day." Along the rear wall is a 25-foot, student-created timeline on the history of homosexuality, starting from ancient Egypt to the present. Below the timeline is a 15-foot graffiti art piece made on four ¾ inch plywood panels that reads, "Achieve," along with two inspirational quotes from Abraham Lincoln. Along one of the walls is another student art piece, using a collage format, highlighting the words "Justice," "Dignity," "Integrity," "Wisdom," "Unity," "Freedom," "Peace," and "Love." Along the front wall of the classroom, below the white board is another former student project, a 15-foot banner that reads, "Diversity," in which each letter is made up of pictures of multicultural students. Various bookshelves and tables also display past student projects related to environmentalism, Japanese interment, gay marriage, multicultural cookbooks, understanding Islam, the Buddhist concept of the ten worlds, various handbooks, and other student generated brochures.

Finally, in one section of one of the classroom walls I lump together the school's ESLR's, the mandated Uniform Complaint policy, and the electronics and hat policies. Missing from the walls, quite consciously, are lists of rules or any reference to classroom discipline policies. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., narrative, December, 2009)

In a reflective anonymous assignment, I asked students, "What were your first impressions of the classroom on the first day of class?" Students overwhelmingly commented on their appreciation of the artwork and decorations of the classroom. They used words such as "colorful," "busy," "welcoming," and "inspirational." One student wrote, "Mr. V's classroom is very colorful and mind-blowing. Looking at all the posters really makes you think about the world we live in" (Anonymous, December, 2009). One theme that emerged from students' comments was the way they described how the classroom décor made them feel pleasant, knowledgeable, and motivated. For example, one student shared the common opinion that, "The class and the classroom felt cozy and all the posters and flags gave a sense of world respect and awareness" (Anonymous, December, 2009). Another student wrote, "It looks like a cozy classroom where you can express yourself freely" (Anonymous, December, 2009).

Ultimately, my purpose in decorating the classroom in such a way is simply to get students to think about various issues, to reflect on themselves, and perhaps become inspired. My attitude is that it all helps indirectly. My bottom-line assumption is that a decorated classroom is an exciting classroom–and what I demonstrate on my walls is simply an extension of my pedagogical practice.

Colleagues have often commented as my classroom being one of the most colorful. I find this a compliment, as I've always been somewhat critical of the use of space in a classroom. Early in my career I wrote in my personal journal:

> When I enter some of my colleagues' classrooms, I can't help to feel bored. The walls don't speak of enthusiasm for the material or subject matter. I could only hope that the students are finding some excitement in their lessons. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, March 12, 1999)

In my opinion, every inch of the learning space can potentially result in a teachable

moment. Each art piece or poster could become a classroom discussion or an opportunity

for reflection. In my personal journal I wrote:

> It would be silly to think that students will be engaged 100% of the time, therefore, why not let their eyes wander onto something useful, perhaps interesting, maybe educational. Personally, I find my classroom joyful to walk into every morning. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, December, 2009)

One student summed up the majority of student responses with:

> It was actually pretty cool to see all aspects of cultures, races, beliefs, etc. in a classroom environment. It was comforting because that isn't showcased and respected in most places. I overall enjoy the classroom environment it feels like "home." (Anonymous, December, 2009)

In other descriptions, students often described how the décor helped produce a safe and

comfortable environment, such as, "I feel the way it is set up helps people feel more

comfortable" (Anonymous, December, 2009). Another student wrote, "It felt very warm

and peaceful, I couldn't wait to find a seat" (Anonymous, December, 2009). These

comments correlate with those that described the classroom atmosphere as free,

expressive, open and safe, as I will discuss later. Thus, I find, the classroom environment

plays a significant role in developing the classroom atmosphere.

One of the elements of culturally responsive pedagogy is to create a climate of

respect and caring in which I educate students about diversity. The classroom décor

attempts to reflect that diversity through imagery and words. The classroom is mainly

decorated with past student projects as it is my attempt is to validate former and current

students' unique identities and contributions.

Essentially, this positive feedback, once again validated my efforts to create such

a learning space. Although several students described the classroom décor as "chaotic,"

the overall attitude showed an "inviting" aspect of the overall classroom environment.

Perhaps one of the most meaningful comments that helped validate my efforts was when

a single student wrote:

> It's like little pieces of inspirational history are all over the walls. You can go up to any poster or art piece on a wall and you will learn something new and get inspired. This whole classroom is an art piece and every year with the new students, it keeps growing. All the students have a chance to become a part of the history of this class. We become part of Mr. V's art piece. (Anonymous, December, 2009)

Classroom atmosphere.

Using the inductive analysis method (Hatch, 2002), I examined 124 anonymous

student evaluations at the end of the 2008-2009 school year and 139 mid-year anonymous

student evaluations for the 2009-2010 school year. In addition, I briefly reviewed

external data from a past questionnaire saved from 2006 and 2008. The questions in the

various questionnaires ranged from, "How do you describe Mr. V's classroom

management?" "Describe your impressions, thoughts, reactions, about the Multicultural

Literature course. Be honest" (C. R. Valverde, p.c., anonymous questionnaire, June,

2009), "How do you compare this course to other courses you have taken?" (C. R.

Valverde, p.c., anonymous questionnaire, June, 2010), "Describe Mr. V's teaching style.

What strategies or methods does he employ? Are they effective or ineffective in any

way?" (C. R. Valverde, p.c., anonymous questionnaire, June, 2010), and "Does Mr. V

build trust within the classroom? If so, explain how" (C. R. Valverde, p.c., anonymous

questionnaire, June, 2008). The data produced three subthemes in relation to classroom

atmosphere: openness and freedom, trust, and teaching behaviors.

Openness and freedom of expression.

Richards, Brown, and Forde (2004) stress the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy that takes place in a student centered, supportive context in which individual strengths of students are harnessed to promote student achievement. According to Makiguchi (1930), value-creation pedagogy is premised on the idea that:

> Education is the process of socializing the individual, where "society" is understood as a kind of organism, the encompassing and embracing organization of the human spirit. People are connected as individuals to this group known as society. The individual and group mutually influence each other. Thus, so long as we live in society, individual happiness is unthinkable without a concern for society; in the same way the flourishing of society is unthinkable if the happiness of the individual is disregarded. (as cited in Tsuji, 1979)

With these as my personal theoretical frameworks that guide my instruction, I attempted to create a learning atmosphere that is completely student-centered whereby I seek to "connect" students to each other through open reflection and dialogue. The data showed this intent in students' comments.

Based on the anonymous student evaluations, several word patterns described the overall students' perceived mood, tone, and unique qualities of the learning space. The most common word patterns that emerged included "free," "open," and "express." The general attitude by students was that, "The classroom is a free, peaceful, and safe environment" (Anonymous, June, 2009). Similarly, another student described the atmosphere as, "…a very open environment where everyone/anyone can share their opinions" (Anonymous, June, 2009). A majority of comments reflected a positive attitude toward a sense of freedom, openness, safety, and expression that was evident throughout the classroom atmosphere and in identified elements of my teaching practice. One student wrote, "You let us speak our minds" (Anonymous, June, 2006) and another

described, "… it's the only place where I could speak my mind, kind of like a safe house where I could state my opinion and people could listen (Anonymous, June, 2009). Reflecting upon my own teaching practice, the students' recognition of the liberty to freely express their views was consistent with my conscious effort to generate a tone of openness in the class. Through the data analysis as well as from my experience of having taught this course for eight years, I found that I consciously make efforts to create positive interactions and/or encounters by giving students the opportunity to effectively communicate with each other through open dialogue. One student described the class as, "… an open, welcoming environment that encourages us to speak and act and care (Anonymous, June, 2006).

My personal attempt to create openness played a major part in the classroom atmosphere as it helped create the opportunity for students to see and hear alternative viewpoints. For example, one student wrote, "people were able to speak their minds and express their feelings… helped us think outside the box and learn to be more open-minded" (Anonymous, January, 2010). In another example, a student succinctly summarized the overall attitude about classroom atmosphere:

> This Multicultural Literature course is really a course I have never experienced with any other of my classes throughout my entire life in school. I am very impressed with the kind of class this is because many people have opened up, and it just shows how comfortable they feel talking about certain personal things with people they might not even know, but they feel safe and secure to do so. I believe that that is what makes this class so unique, the environment of the different people, cultures, etc. and how open other individuals are. (Anonymous, January, 2010)

I found that freedom and expression directly correlated with my conscious efforts to create such an atmosphere. It is something I consciously strive for. During the first week of the 2009-2010 school year, I reflected in my nightly journal, "I have to slowly

build the tone of the class, let them get to know me, but for me to begin getting to know

them as well" (C. R. Valverde, p. c., journal entry, September 2, 2010). In describing the

first day of class I wrote:

> While going over the syllabus, I revealed a lot about myself. I shared my name, my nationality, my education, my experience working as a teacher, my roles at the school, etc. But I also became philosophical with them at times. For example, I explained my philosophical views on what constitutes literature and the conveyance of meaning. I spoke about my attitude about 'busy work' as something I do not believe in; on a brief tangent, I even revealed my displeasure with the way the educational system is run. I also asked them not to make me in charge of their bodily fluids – I told them that no one should ever control one's body in such a way. I gave them the 'green light' of simply getting up and taking the hall pass without asking. But I also talked about respect and abusing privileges. I mentioned that the class would 'run like a college course,' therefore expecting their collegiate maturity. I told them I wasn't there to baby them knowing that they are almost 18 and would soon be adults. I told them I would do my job and they were to do theirs. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, September 2, 2009)

My reflection demonstrates that an aspect in creating an open atmosphere was my

willingness to be open with my students. To create a culture of openness, I made

conscious efforts to share personal experiences whenever the opportunity arose. This

practice resonated with students as they identified this aspect of my teaching throughout

many of the comments. For example, one student wrote, "He uses personal experiences

and is gently diverting our discussions to more meaningful topics" (Anonymous, June,

2008) and another student wrote:

> You were able to have students open up about experiences they faced by telling your own hardships or victories. Giving us great quotes to have us think about what our discussion was going to be about was cool too. (Anonymous, June, 2006)

By modeling openness, the atmosphere for students to openly share their

thoughts, ideas, and opinions, not just about the literature but about anything that was of

their concern, helped establish the tone most commonly found in the classroom

atmosphere data. The data suggested that the freedom promoted active sharing, helped

build trust, and fostered the development of stronger interpersonal relationships with my students.

From early in my teaching of the course, I found that students, primarily high school seniors, seemed starved for a space to share their views. In part, much of their longing for an expressive space, according to past conversations with students, was a result of not having been given much opportunity to discuss and share their views and opinions in other learning contexts. In fact, I recall a student last year who told me, "Your class is the first class that ever asked me what I thought about something" (Anonymous, June, 2009). It is only through personal memory that I can describe the level of surprise or shock students seemed to experience during the first few weeks of each school year when I engaged them in sincere dialogue. It was comments such as these that helped me understand my students a little better, providing me the impetus to further engage students in an open and expressive manner. I share this information with the reader because it is relevant to this self-analysis of my teaching. It describes my reflexivity and the subjective impact their feedback had upon me.

My objective in generating a free and safe atmosphere resonated with students at very fundamental levels. For this reason, I actively worked to create an atmosphere of freedom, expression and respect by displaying certain behaviors that were consistent with my personal beliefs. For example, common responses included, "He actually interacted with us, not just give us commands and gave us the freedom to say what we want" (Anonymous, June, 2008) and "we were able to discuss topics that "we" feel are important" (Anonymous, June, 2009). One student elaborated on freedom by writing,

"He provides us with freedom, but not the 'freedom' of just sitting in a class doing nothing… it's the freedom to think and make ourselves heard" (Anonymous, January, 2010).

Other common word patterns that emerged from the classroom atmosphere data included "relaxed" and "comfortable." As one student wrote, "I like this course because everyone gets to express their opinions and share things, including personal stuff with the class. That shows a lot of honesty and comfort in the class" (Anonymous, January, 2010).

Comments such as these are significant to me as a teacher because they validate my pedagogical intent to develop an atmosphere that fosters dialogue and sharing. More than provide feedback about my teaching, many of the students' comments throughout the years have played a significant role in making me feel rewarded about my teaching. It is the type of feedback that energizes me as a teacher; and I would not be completely honest in this self-analysis if I did not admit that the positive feedback is exactly what I wanted to hear. The majority of the students' comments regarding the classroom atmosphere not only made me feel good about myself, but through their feedback I identified some of my behaviors that I display as a teacher that were quite meaningful to students. One significant response to me as a teacher comes from the type of student who rarely participated in class discussions. She wrote:

> This teacher created an atmosphere where everyone felt safe enough to express their opinions. Being a shy, reserved student it was initially hard for me to share my opinions, however, the atmosphere was so welcoming that I have seriously changed into a person who is not afraid to say what I think. (Anonymous, June, 2006)

These are voices that often go unheard, but a brief comment like this helps me see the type of growth that may be occurring in other students as well. Being conscious of

the various comments of students, even the lone voices, provided me with the feedback of

knowing what works or does not work. The fact that I actively sought and elicited this

type of student feedback even before this study, was simply my way of obtaining the

necessary feedback of knowing whether I was being effective or not.

Uniquely, throughout the course of this study, I had the opportunity to interact

with a parent of a former student who reinforced what the student data has shown. In my

journal I wrote about the encounter:

> Tonight at the College Fair, I had the opportunity to sit with Mrs. Serrano. I have known her for
> many years and our families were connected from the past as she had grown up with my older
> brothers. I also had her son in my class two years ago. I told her about being a doctoral student
> and shared what I was studying. She had been walking around the classroom looking at past
> projects when I decided to tell her about my study. I explained that I was trying to figure out what
> was going on in my classes. I told her about how students claim they have changed or
> transformed, more than just intellectually but at other levels too. She said, "You know what it is
> about your class? I think it's that you give students the opportunity to express themselves." (C. R.
> Valverde, p.c., journal entry, September 14, 2009)

I found this comment to be quite revealing as it came from a parent rather than a student.

What she had observed from whatever stories and ideas her son was bringing home about

the class, she was able to identify this characteristic that also emerged as a theme in the

data. Mrs. Serrano seemed appreciative of me having given her son this opportunity and

ended by complimenting, "You're doing a great job with these kids" (C. R. Valverde,

personal communication, September 14, 2009).

Building trust.

Many of the student comments described me as respectful, able to listen, being

available, trustworthy, honest, welcoming, and caring. These characteristics are

consistent with the teaching attributes that are described as culturally responsive. Most

significant among the data was the theme of trust. The data suggested that as a result of

creating and maintaining an atmosphere of openness and freedom, the development of

trust was meaningful to the students. For example, one student wrote, "…he trusts us to

make the right decisions and allows us to communicate with our classmates"

(Anonymous, June, 2008) and another wrote, "He builds such a strong trust among the

students that anyone as shy as I am feels comfortable enough to share their thoughts"

(Anonymous, June, 2009). Amusingly, another student wrote, "Yes, you can tell him

anything and it will be between you and him. He wouldn't say anything even if they paid

him" (Anonymous, June, 2009).

Building trust with students has always been an important part of my teaching

practice. My active engagement in developing trust stemmed from the relationship

between my personal memory as a student and the theoretical frameworks that guided me

as a teacher. According to Ikeda (2001), "the individual can only become fully realized

through interaction with others" (p. 68). This had always resonated with me from

memories as a high school student. It was in high school that I realized how much

teacher trust played in making me feel safe and comfortable within a classroom. Through

my own personal reflections, building a strong learning atmosphere was based on my

own memories of experiencing positive learning experiences as a student. For example,

in a personal journal entry I wrote:

> I remember Mr. G, my senior Creative Writing and Speech teacher, who would sometimes tell us
> stories of his wrongdoings when he was young. He trusted us in not getting him in trouble in
> some way, plus we admired him so much that it was the last thing we would want for him. He was
> the first teacher who didn't mind cussing in class. As a teen, nothing could be more liberating than
> to be able to say "fuck" and "shit" in a class discussion without getting into trouble. But I also
> remember the courage Mr. G displayed in the types of discussions he let us have and the freedom
> he granted us. He uniquely made it known that the trust he showed toward us, was expected to be
> reciprocated. Through his own openness of his experiences, I somehow grew closer to him – I
> admired him – but most importantly, he made me want to work harder at getting a good grade in

class. The same goes for my other high school teachers such as Mr. M in Physics, Mr. Z in English, and Mr. H in World History. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, August 16, 2009)

Throughout college, I discovered that the learning and teaching style that was most conducive for my own learning was predicated on the level of trust I felt with my professors. Each of my most memorable teachers, in some way or another, caused me to develop a respect and sense of trust for them. For this reason, the student data that emerged from this self-analysis regarding trust was quite encouraging for me as a teacher.

In demonstrating trust, another student shared:

To be in this class, you have to be willing to share your opinions and stories and speak out. It's scary to do that with people you hardly know, but because of the course and its atmosphere, I think people understand it and therefore start to trust it. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

I found that the development of trust was a precursor in establishing an overall atmosphere of freedom and openness. Personal reflections early in my teaching demonstrated this level of personal concern and awareness:

In developing a rapport with students I often ask individual students, at different times, about their family, heritage, their clothes, their favorite music. I often show interest in knowing what type of music they like to listen to. By knowing this, I somehow get a better reading of the student. Many times they bring a CD the next day wanting to share it with me. The kids like rap, r & b, rock, alternative and some even like classical! What has truly blown me away this year has been the music from my Middle Eastern kids. I really enjoy it and when the kids see that in me, they feel good. Most of the time, this develops into a new level of respect and trust between us. This lays part of the foundation I will teach the student through. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, January 23, 2002)

Additionally, the data pointed to more specific comments that demonstrated some of the effects and impressions of trust in the classroom atmosphere. A significant number of comments described how the classroom atmosphere, under a tone of respect and trust, helped create a sense of community. For example, "Over time, Mr. V built camaraderie among students who may have not known each other before, and afterwards I felt comfortable talking with anyone in the class because of the things we shared and found in

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common" (Anonymous, June, 2006). Comments such as these were supported by additional comments such as, "I trust Mr. V out of all the teachers, he has a bond with all his students" (Anonymous, June, 2008) and "Mr. V comes off like a 'big homie' or a father-like figure due to his caring and concern towards each of our individual feelings" (Anonymous, June, 2009). I find these comments significant because trust allows for the creation of value, and for Makiguchi, value was a "measure of the subjective impact a thing or event has on our lives" (Ikeda, 2001, p.16).

Teaching characteristics and behaviors.

Student feedback had always helped me evaluate my own teaching style. For this reason, asking students for feedback about my own teaching, even prior to this study, showed how I gauged my own impact on students. Throughout my teaching of sensitive topics such as racism and prejudice, the student comments were valuable in helping me establish an open and safe learning atmosphere. From the data, one subtheme that emerged was students' descriptions of specific teaching behaviors or teaching style. For example, one student wrote, "Mr. V's teaching style makes the whole course come together. You feel a sense of acceptance and safety. Everything like the discussions are organized and respectful. His ways of teaching are very effective" (Anonymous, June, 2009). Other comments shared similar characterizations of my teaching. For example:

> He has an open style of teaching. Not to a point where we can just yell out curse words, but if we feel that cursing is our only way to let something out, he totally understands and respects us in such a way… and he makes sure that we know that. He has taught me to respect myself and that will go a loooooooooong way! (Anonymous, January, 2010)

Similarly, another student shared:

> The teacher made us open up… made our minds think, changed our beliefs, opened our hearts, and just put us in a class that could completely trust in one another and have a great time. It has been a pleasure being in your class! ☺ (Anonymous, June, 2009)

Here, the student described how my style of teaching helped produce a free and open atmosphere. Additionally, she mentioned how my characteristics of respect and encouragement have impacted her. Furthermore, another student wrote:

> Mr. V has succeeded in giving us the perfect amount of freedom. He throws out a topic, gives some background information and lets us virtually hash it out. We are allowed to say or not say whatever we want, and that freedom is effective in making everyone's opinion feel important. Encouraging youth to discuss improves communication skills, and allows kids to experience a class, not simply take one. (Anonymous, January, 2010)

According to value-creating pedagogy, Ikeda (2001) asserted that, "the humanity of the teacher represents the core of the educational experience" (p. 105). Several other student comments reflected elements of my "humanity" through some of my behaviors. For example, "[he] made himself so available to his students. I feel that I can have a discussion with Mr. V about anything. So that is why how Mr. V builds trust with his students like no one else" (Anonymous, June, 2009) and "He is open to everyone… He also said that if we knew anyone facing problems, such as homosexuals, that we should tell them to go see Mr. V" (Anonymous, June, 2009). Similarly, another student shared, "He's there to talk to whenever you want. I feel that he really understands kids at this age" (Anonymous, June, 2009).

Other teacher behaviors identified by students included how they perceived my judgment toward them. For example, "Mr. V isn't closed minded and he's open to anything and doesn't judge" (Anonymous, June, 2009), and "he makes sure no one judges anybody for their opinion" (Anonymous, June, 2009). In the same way, another

student wrote, "He gives people the confidence to speak their mind and really express themselves by not judging and respecting what they think" (Anonymous, June, 2009).

In other comments, students specifically described some of the process by which I achieve an atmosphere of openness, freedom, and trust. For example, "[what was unique was] throwing random problems to the class and the class discussions about them and finding solutions. Mr. V also put his knowledge into the class and used real life experiences" (Anonymous, June, 2009). Other students gave similar responses, such as "the way he calmly addresses every topic makes everyone feel so comfortable" (Anonymous, June, 2009), "he has a sense of respect for us" (Anonymous, June, 2009) and "by encouraging his students and that their opinions should be heard and not betraying that trust by cutting them off" (Anonymous, June, 2009). In another example, a student described the classroom atmosphere as a result of treating students in a mature manner. For example:

> The reason I enjoy the class so much is because it feels like a college course. He allows people to say what they want and doesn't censor anybody; it makes us feel respected and as if we're being treated like an adult. (Anonymous, January, 2010)

The data overwhelmingly revealed a cause and effect relationship with my intent to create a free and open atmosphere and the feedback that results from my intentions.

Another subtheme that emerged from the data was the students' appreciation for the opportunities that were given for open dialogue and expression. Through journal questions, lecture questions, informal discussions at the beginning of class, questions throughout lectures and discussions, the number of opportunities helped foster the described atmosphere.

Additionally, the student data revealed particular methods or activities that contributed to the classroom atmosphere. One such strategy during the first week of school was the ROPES activity I had learned years ago through my intercultural training with the Anti-Defamation League's World of Difference program. An activity that gives students the opportunity to develop their own guidelines for class discussions, ROPES allows me to have a student-generated framework that validates the openness, freedom of expression, and safety. From an audio recording of the ROPES activity, I directly mentioned to students:

> In order for this class to work, there's going to be plenty of times where we're going to talk about controversial issues; issues that each and every single one of you is going to have an opinion about. Some of you are going to voice that opinion. And some of you might not agree with that opinion. But with what I just saw right now between Rebecca and Tiffany, it was very respectful. And I think that's the key. Okay, it's that what we need to have at least an agreement in this class, is that if we're going to have these kinds of discussions, if we're going to have these kinds of debates, then we have to have a level of civility for them to work. You see, this is not a political forum, this class. This class is a free exchange of ideas. And that I want you to understand. That's what true education, in my opinion, is all about. It's an exchange of ideas. So I really want you guys to feel free to let us know what you think and so that we can share, and learn from it. Not with the purpose of bringing people down, or debating their topics, their ideas, but that's how dialogue is developed. It's by going back and forth with people and ideas that you don't necessarily agree with. And that's how we grow as people, as human beings. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, September 9, 2009)

For every year I have taught this course, I used the ROPES activity. From past experiences, ROPES gave students a sense of ownership for the class. It gave students the opportunity to create the culture of the class, thus the classroom atmosphere, to resonate with their beliefs. The guidelines that are most commonly produced through the activity are guidelines such as, R- "respect," O- "open-mindedness," P- "participation," E- "expression, and S- "share." ROPES helped give students certain protections, such as confidentiality. Several students mentioned the agreement of confidentiality that often appeared as the word "private" as a classroom guideline. Private referred to the class

agreement that personal and private information shared in the class would remain with only those in the class. One student wrote, "whatever is said in the classroom stays in the classroom" (Anonymous, June, 2008). Similarly, another wrote, "He makes the class a confidential place. Nothing leaves the class" (Anonymous, June, 2006). Uniquely, throughout the years of teaching the Multicultural Literature course, several students in the course emerged as protectors or enforcers of the guidelines by consistently reminding us of them whenever needed. It is quite exhilarating to see students take ownership for their behavior. The ROPES activity continues to play a vital role in helping create the desired atmosphere.

Another subtheme that emerged was the mention of the activity known as *Let it Rip Friday's*. A number of students referenced the tradition of Let It Rip Friday's as playing an important role in establishing a tone of openness. Using the borrowed phrase from the conservative former radio talk show host Larry Elder, I incorporated Let It Rip Friday's three years ago as an activity where students are given the opportunity to make announcements, ask questions, and bring up any topic of choice. In the 2009 student responses to the question, "What made this course effective or ineffective?" a group of students referenced Let It Rip Friday's as being an effective strategy of the class. For example, one student wrote, "I love Let it Rip because it taught me that other people are always going to have different opinions and accept them" (Anonymous, June, 2009), and "Let it Rip Friday's taught me how to accept and respect others' point of views even though I might not agree with them" (Anonymous, June, 2009). Another student observed:

> Let it Rip Friday's are the best because the class can discuss whatever they want. Sometimes it's hard to start a discussion, but by the time the bell rings, everyone still has their hands up with things unsaid. (Anonymous, June, 2009)

I incorporated Let it Rip Friday's because it helped provide me with an outlet or relief from class discussions that were often highly emotional regarding racism, discrimination, and sexuality. At the same time, it continued to exercise respectful class dialogue. Discussing heavy topics Monday thru Thursday, if I was not careful, often produced a type of fatigue within students as evident through their body language in class discussions. The Friday relief helped me manage these emotions, giving students a balance, so-to-speak that maintained the freedom of expression. I found this to be important as too much of something could eventually cause students to shutdown. I will expand more on Let it Rip in the Empowered Voice section of the study.

The Empowered Voice

I first learned about the student and teacher voice through my study of critical pedagogy. According to Shor (1992), critical pedagogy is defined as:

> Habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional cliches, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse. (p. 129)

As I had embarked on teaching the Multicultural Literature course, my goal was to develop critical consciousness within my students. However, as I learned from Freire (2006), part of this critical consciousness required *praxis*, or the "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p.51). As discovered through this study, my act of journaling served as evidence of praxis. It served as examples of my voice, the

teacher's voice, as I interacted with students on a daily basis. In addition, the student feedback from student evaluations served as evidence of the student voice.

I observed both patterns: the empowered teacher and student voice throughout most forms of data. For example, the teacher voice data was mainly present in personal reflections, memory, and observations. The student voice data was mainly located in the end of the year anonymous student evaluations, observations, classroom dialogues, and other documents. As I reviewed many of my personal reflections in conjunction with the student data, I observed a clear relationship between my thoughts, beliefs, motivations, and the themes generated from the student comments in their evaluations. The outcomes suggested that the more conscious I was about my own consciousness as a teacher, the greater the impact I was having on my students.

Through the analysis of data from the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 school years, as well as supporting external data, the following narratives demonstrated how the teacher voice led to the expression of the student voice in my daily activities with students in the Multicultural Literature class. I begin by describing a brief overview of how my voice, the teacher's voice, evolved throughout the early years of teaching the Multicultural Literature class. Second, I include a succinct description of how the creation of the Multicultural Literature course was an extension of my evolving teacher's voice. Thirdly, I include examples and activities in which the student voice best emerged as data within this study. As the reader will see, the overall data showed the intrinsically linked relationship between the development of the teacher voice and that of the student voice.

Teacher voice.

Foundations of my voice through growth, reflection, and experience.

hooks (1994) could not have said it better when she suggested that teaching

practice "comes easiest" to educators who believe that an aspect of their vocation is

"sacred" (p.13). I have come to realize that many of my convictions about teaching are

also shared with hooks in the commitment to develop the intellectual and spiritual growth

of students. I always viewed my position as a teacher as sacred, feeling at times, a high-

minded sense of responsibility to not only teach students content knowledge but to

inspire them to become greater human beings, to respect others, to appreciate life, to

hope, and to contribute back to their communities. What has driven me as a teacher, a

student, a parent, and a citizen, is the belief that true education is the value or benefit we

gain from experience, knowledge, and unity; it is what makes life greater, what propels

society forward, what awakens our interconnectedness with others, and what brings

happiness to our lives. Working under this framework as a classroom teacher has made

education to me more than a profession, more than a social and political act, but rather, a

kind of personal and spiritual journey that is rarely discussed in educational discourse.

Like hooks, I enjoy the reflective space. One of the greatest themes that emerged

from the personal data was the role of journaling throughout my practice, before and

during this study. Journaling gave me the opportunity to document, contemplate and

exercise my voice within a context that was personal, candid, and authentic. Throughout

this self-study, my reflections provided an insight into a dimension of teaching that I

believe can only be conveyed through the personal, candid and authentic voice. The following are several of my significant findings.

One finding that emerged from my personal data was how my own personal reflections gave me the opportunity to exercise my thoughts and beliefs as I evolved as a teacher. At times my reflections were technical, sometimes formal, informal, and at other times–outright creative. Regardless of its style, journaling gave me an outlet to help organize my ideas, beliefs, and attitude about how I saw myself as a teacher. I reviewed journal entries that dated back to 1999, when I first began journaling as a third year teacher. These reflections demonstrated an evolution of thought that helped explain my attitude and motivation toward education, teaching, and most importantly, the development of the student.

One theme that I observed from my own reflections was my constant concern about my role as a teacher. From early in my experience, I clearly did not see my teaching as merely an academic endeavor, but rather, a process by which to examine the educational system. For example:

> One of the most rewarding things I've done in my life is teach high school students. Helping young people make sense of the world, has, as a result, developed my own personal understanding of life. As a teacher, I've found myself attempting to make sense of our educational process as well as coming to terms with the perpetuating problems of education today. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, February 12, 2000)

In addition, part of my growth showed that I was very conscious of how my teaching experience influenced my beliefs about student learning:

> My short experience as a teacher has taught me a lot about the nature of people. Each day I am exposed to different personalities and attitudes. In my attempt to educate a diverse population of students, I have learned that my approach and techniques must be diverse as well. So many aspects must be considered each day; for example, learning styles, learning modalities, proficiency levels, learning disabilities, etc. But at the same time, a teacher must consider realms that are not so easy to classify or label such as student appreciation, interest, value, and happiness. Teaching is

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more than the transfer of knowledge, but the building of character, respect, cooperation, and identity. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, November 7, 2001)

As I continued to develop as a teacher, the journaling showed how my burgeoning thoughts, ideas, and beliefs, some theoretical and some philosophical, prompted me to learn more about my students. Furthermore, the data revealed that listening to students' opinions, interacting with them using their own frames of reference, and simply getting to know my students better, helped me develop greater, more meaningful opportunities for positive interactions. In 2001, I wrote:

> When I first began teaching five years ago, it was clear to me that teaching was not simply the delivery of information. A book or a script can easily deliver information but teaching was more about human relationships. I soon found that the better I associated with the students, the easier it was to teach them. This does not mean listening to Eminem and watching Scary Movie–although it helps in most cases–it means understanding the student at a much more human level. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, March 2, 2001)

Essentially, my reflections demonstrated my growing concern to learn more about my students in order to improve my ability to connect with students so that I could create value, or happiness, within my classroom. I wrote:

> One of the important things I do as a high school teacher is try to understand young people. I keep up with the latest fads, slang, movies, songs, and pop culture as a way to understand, perhaps a bit, the point of view or frame of reference of today's teenagers. By doing so, I am able to draw examples that are, perhaps, more meaningful or closer to their familiarity of the world. As adults, it is easy to forget that teenagers have not yet experienced the world we have experienced; many still do not see it from a rational point of view but rather from an emotional one. All people, all students, see the world differently based on their lived experiences. No two people have the identical lived experience, however, we do share the issues, stories, and culture that shape us into a community. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, July 26, 2004)

In contrast, several reflections showed how my views on teaching began to differ from that of more veteran teachers using more traditional approaches. I found that other teachers viewed student-teacher interaction very differently than I did. For example:

> When I first started teaching a veteran teacher shared a quote with me: "Don't' smile until Christmas." She was explaining that students learn to behave better and respect the teacher more when the teacher maintained an aura of seriousness for the first part of the year. At first, I agreed

with the statement, but it wasn't until I finally interacted with students that I saw how shallow such a statement that was. I could not help but to smile when I first met my students. It was a joyous event in my life. As a result, students met my smile with theirs. I found that students began respecting me more for my sincerity, than the amount of respect they applied toward teachers who instilled fear into them. The first day of school each year is largely made up of threats and regulations. Students are bombarded with each class set of rules and expectations. In fact, what students learned each first day of school was what *not* to do. Very little time was given on what they *should* do. Unfortunately, the focus is more negative than positive. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, February 25, 2003)

Through my own experiences with students, I did not see the need to use intimidation to achieve respect. The very act of being kind, sincere, and friendly had produced alternate results than that of the advice given to me by my colleague. This difference demonstrated a significant development in my fundamental beliefs about interacting with students.

In a questionnaire for the LA County Teacher of the Year (TOY) recognition in 2001, I was asked, "What would you say is your strongest attribute as a teacher?" I responded:

I would have to say my ability to hear students' voices. When I hear their voices, their thoughts, I use that as my basis for teaching. I feel nothing could make a better connection than to have whatever you are teaching be grounded in their reality, not mine. When we make connections to students' daily lives we, as teachers, have the capacity to either create a positive or negative experience from them. It is here where I choose to create value. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., TOY questionnaire, January 19, 2000)

The student voice, for me at the time, did not have a theoretical model attached to it. It simply meant that listening to what students had to say gained me entry into their lives, providing me with a source of information that helped me better connect with them.

However, part of this development also stemmed from my graduate studies during my first four years of teaching. As I grew as a teacher, I also began to associate theoretical frameworks that I was learning with my daily experiences. Through this association, I began to question the methods traditionally employed by teachers. For example, in one of my early journal entries I wrote:

> Erickson's theory of psycho-social development states that at the adolescent age, individuals attempt to organize, construct and make sense of the world they live in. However, how much do we give students these opportunities in our schools? Are we asking Johnny to think or remember? How much of the information that we cover in our classes is achieved by critical thinking as opposed to rote memorization? (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, April 16, 1999)

Here, I begin to link certain theoretical concepts, such as my own students' psycho-social development, to my daily interactions. My journaling showed that as I learned more about education through my education courses, the more I struggled to make sense of everything. Through this process, I began to raise questions about the nature of schooling.

Extending on the notion of attempting to make sense of things, other theoretical frameworks began to influence my thinking early in my teaching. My discovery of Dewey, Rousseau, Freire, hooks, Darder, Makiguchi, Ikeda, Banks, Vygotsky, critical pedagogy, multiculturalism, critical race theory, and interculturalism helped illuminate my thinking about my role as educator, for example, the questions Dewey raised about education. In discussing the need for a theory of experience, Dewey (1938), asked:

> How many students, for example, were rendered callous to ideas, and how many lost the impetus to learn because of the way in which learning was experienced by them? How many acquired special skills by means of automatic drill so that their power of judgment and capacity to act intelligently in new situations was limited? How many came to associate the learning process with ennui and boredom? How many found what they did learn so foreign to the situations of life outside the school as to give them no power to control over the latter? How many came to associate books with dull drudgery, so that they were "conditioned" to all but flashy reading matter? (pp. 26-27)

It was these types of questions that began to rattle heavily in my brain. I could not help notice myself engaged in some of the "automatic drill" that Dewey spoke of. I began to wonder if I was truly having an impact or whether I was helping students extinguish their "impetus to learn." His questions made me thirsty to explore an outlet, to create some opportunity, to use my position as a teacher to make a greater impact. In fact, I had become a teacher to inspire, not to become the repository of facts and information.

Additionally, along with my evolving views on education, my recent conversion to Buddhism only added another source of influence upon my development. This spiritual aspect of my development pretty much cemented everything that I had learned up to that point. As I learned about Buddhist principles of life, interconnectedness, and compassion, I began to view education as a process by which to attain human happiness. I wrote in my journal:

> Before I am a teacher, before I am a parent, before I am a friend, I am a human being. As a human being, I understand the value of all life, both the good and bad, for all things, be they good or bad, may bring value to a person who chooses to recognize it. I recognize that all human beings are capable of finding the good in everything that is bad. This is called happiness. It is neither a façade nor an escapist attitude. It is ability, a skill, that all people are capable of attaining with correct guidance, support, and motivation. What I speak of is the fact that we all can develop the ability to welcome challenges, overcome them, and grow from them. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, July 18, 2004)

Here, I began to see that happiness, as expounded by Buddhism, was more than a euphoric feeling of joy, but rather, an ability to create value from any circumstance. This view slowly began to embed itself into my personal belief system of teaching. My voice as an educator was gradually evolving as I began to develop more of a philosophical understanding of my role as an educator.

Along with the theoretical frameworks mentioned above, Buddhist teachings helped provide me with a lens by which to ethically evaluate my role and impact as a teacher. A significant theme that emerged from my personal data was how much of my teaching was philosophically grounded. Primarily based on my discovery of Buddhist Japanese educator of the 1930's, Tsunesaburo Makiguchi, Makiguchi's notion of value-creation pedagogy emerged as significant and contributed to my views on the student voice.

I found that Makiguchi's views helped enhance several of the other frameworks I was slowly adopting into my practice. According to Makiguchi (1930):

> The aim of education is not to transfer knowledge; it is to guide the learning process, to equip the learner with the methods of research. It is not the piecemeal merchandizing of information; it is to enable the acquisition of the methods for learning on one's own; it is the provision of keys to unlock the vault of knowledge. Rather than encouraging students to appropriate the intellectual treasures uncovered by others, we should enable them to undertake on their own process of discovery and invention. (as cited in Bethel, 1989, pg. 168)

It was through writings such as this that I began to find ways in my own teaching that would "enable" students toward ways to get them to discover and invent. As an educator, according to Gebert and Joffee (2007), Makiguchi demonstrated "an impassioned drive to study and create change, a deep empathy for students, a willingness to take risks, and a desire to construct pioneering theories to explain sociological phenomena" (as cited in Hansen, 2007, p. 69). Through courage, integrity, hope, and compassion, Makiguchi developed his ideas and theory of value-creation through a strong commitment toward educational praxis. Makiguchi advocated the importance of praxis using an experience-centered teaching approach. He believed that teachers must assess their own "cases of success and failure by analyzing their daily teaching experiences" (as cited in Ikeda, 2001, p. 10) as a way to extract principles of education. Makiguchi's ideas taught me that if I was to create value for my students, I needed to begin by listening to them.

Essentially, my journaling reveals how the amalgamation of theories, philosophies, and experiences, began to shape my own overall personal philosophy toward education. For example, in 2004, I wrote:

> True education is holistic. The most effective way to teach a subject is through the context of the students' lives. To learn biology, the purpose for studying it must be a part of a grander view of life. Students need to view biology as a way to appreciate life and understand its mechanisms. History must be taught continuously relating to the present and how historical events play a part in their lives today. History must connect to the life of the student or else it becomes irrelevant

information. Literature is where students must learn about human nature, life's struggles and human potential. Aside from the curriculum, it is vital that teachers share themselves with their students. There is nothing wrong with letting our views be known. Whether they contradict the status quo or agree with it, you too are more than a teacher when you engage your students as fellow citizens, as fellow human beings. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, August 3, 2004)

Another aspect of the data revealed that as I learned and grew as a teacher, I slowly began to desire change. I did not know what at the time, but I wanted to act upon everything that I had been learning. I found the voices of Darder, Giroux, MacLaren, and Nieto, quite inspiring as they helped me view the student and teacher voice as liberatory devices. I found it quite moving to read that for Darder (1991), the purpose of education was to "struggle for freedom and a better world" (p. 121). I felt that Darder directly spoke to me as she helped me understand various power relationships through critical pedagogy and the need for empowerment. She wrote:

> With this in mind, a critical pedagogical approach must appropriate students' own histories by delving into their own biographies and systems of meaning. But this can only take place if the conditions are created in the classroom for students to speak their own voices and to name and authenticate their own experiences. (p. 80)

It was voices such as these that helped me make sense of turning theory into actual practice.

My theoretical and philosophical beliefs fed the notion that education plays a greater purpose than to simply teach random bits of information and put our children through what Makiguchi (1930) referred to as "examination hell" (p. 8). I was convinced that teaching was more than just reading textbooks and issuing grades. For example, one reflection shows this:

> As teachers we make choices each day that influence the lives of our students. But often, these choices lack direction and we fail to realize that before us we have the hearts and minds of young people who will eventually become the leaders of our society. For a teacher to only see a face and a name in a student, he/she has reached a point in their career that fails to produce any value in the lives of the students.

> As a society we do not feel the ideals that directly benefit our lives. We are people who enjoy and exercise the rights of freedom, democracy, and the pursuit of happiness, but we do not see these rights requiring work in order to preserve them.
>
> Are we content with the current state of affairs? What comfort is there when I open the Sunday Times to read the list of American soldiers who died this past week? And what about the nameless casualties? What comfort is there when the economic future of this country appears to be bleak? What comfort is there to see the university doors start to close with higher fees and less financial aid? What are we offering our children and their children's children? (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, April 16, 2003)

These types of reflections always left me unsettled. The more I looked at school, my students, and myself, I would ask, "Is this it? Is this the best we can do? Is this the best I can do?" I simply wanted more. In making the case to revitalize education, Makiguchi wrote:

> Education properly addresses social ills. The metaphor is an appropriate one. If the physician is one who treats ailing individuals, and the politician one who administers to the body politic of the group, then the educator must also be seen as the doctor to society. But whereas the physician and the politician practice remedial medicine in the main, the educator is decidedly preventative in outlook. The former concern themselves with the present and the problems as they occur; the educator looks to the future in an effort to steer clear of trouble altogether. (as cited in Bethel, 1989, p. 92)

It was through words such as these that Makiguchi made his impact on me. I could not help feel a tremendous sense of grandeur and excitement contemplating the potentialities of teachers! It was from such readings that I began to feel revitalized. I wanted my life to mean more, I wanted to have a greater impact, and it was here that I began to search for an avenue by which to satisfy part of this desire.

The multicultural literature course as an expression of the teacher's voice.

In my third year of teaching at CCHS, I became involved in an intercultural training program that was offered to teachers by the Anti-Defamation League's World of Difference Program. Through various workshops I began learning about activities that taught about racial bias and intolerance. Along with a few other colleagues, we expanded the intercultural training to students by creating the *Student Intercultural Advisory*

Committee, a student led organization that would participate in intercultural training seminars and, in turn, would attempt to promote many of the intercultural values through peer education programs.

From my experience of working with high school students in intercultural activities (including conferences, seminars, and retreats), I began to see the transformative effects of this training on the lives of students in rather short periods of time. From individual workshops to overnight retreats, my colleagues and I managed to engage students at uniquely deep levels of reflection, intercultural awareness, and compassionate growth. Students would return to school fully motivated to create activities and opportunities for their peers to challenge stereotypical thinking, combat racism and discrimination, and resist prejudice and intolerance. This involvement gave me the opportunity to reflect on my own personal biases, hear the experiences of others, and challenge my own stereotypical thinking. The experience also allowed me to participate and observe the impact of intercultural dialogue.

One thing I began to notice from my intercultural training activities was that to achieve a truly intercultural mindset required me to think about and question my own ethical thinking. When reflective activities got me to openly discuss stories with others, share our experiences, and simply listen to each other, I could not help feel pangs of sympathy for others. When I began hearing about individuals' experiences with prejudice, mistreatment because of their race or gender, or about the pain of stereotyping, the more I began to feel a greater connection toward the students. I also noticed that despite our cultural differences, in heartfelt dialogue, what connected us were the

experiences we shared in common. It was not that each shared similar stories, but each demonstrated similar feelings of pain. It was through these intercultural dialogues that I saw my level of compassion deepen, but most importantly, I saw a growing compassion develop between the students.

As a teacher, I began to wonder about how to harness the power of intercultural dialogue into a more academic setting. Upon completing my fifth year of teaching Introductory Spanish and AP Spanish Literature, I found myself tired, uninspired, and agitated at the idea of what I had become as a teacher. I requested a transfer to the English department to finally teach in my credentialed area, which was granted to me in my sixth year of teaching. In my new position as an English teacher, I explored the idea of creating a literature course in which the literature would serve as the catalyst for intercultural dialogue similar to the intercultural activities described above. As I had experienced enormous growth, awareness, and empathy within my own experience in intercultural activities, I wanted to create a class that would have the same impact on students.

Inspired by the works of Freire, Darder, Rousseau, Makiguchi, and Ikeda, I saw myself as a potential agent of change. While having taken a *Cultural Paradigms in Education* course in my graduate studies, I decided to model a literature course that would use literature to teach about cultural paradigms. I began the process of writing up the curriculum of the class originally titled, Multicultural Literature and Practicum. This experience was quite stimulating as it helped me feel compelled and empowered to reach a greater audience through my teaching. In my journal I wrote:

> As adults, do we decide to ignore our responsibility or do we take charge of it? As a society we must come to the realization that we all have to come together to make the world a greater place. This means dialogue, education, and value creation. This requires commitment, but most of all, courage. We have to fight against those negative tendencies that cause harm to humanity. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, November 29, 2000)

A number of reflections pointed to an emergent change in my attitude that was developing at this same time. For example, while a member of the Site Improvement Council, I once wrote:

> More and more, my role as a member of the school community is evolving. This year, I'm learning more about the politics of education and about myself than in the last three years. At times I find myself doubting my ability to stand up against authority. All of my life I was taught to accept the decisions of others and to be 'obedient.' But now, I find myself in a perfect place to fight against destructive practices at the school. It is an exhilarating but scary position to be in but my confidence is growing and my faith is becoming more powerful. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, November 21, 2000)

I began to develop a growing hunger to do more in my teaching, to influence the school in some way, to have a greater impact. I felt that creating a course that would attempt to empower students, especially cultural minorities, through cultural awareness, was a radical idea. My attempt to create and add an actual course into the system made me feel radical. Upon inquiring with the Assistant Principal of Curriculum, it was no more than a questionnaire and a little research to create a class. Approved by the principal, the School Board, and sent off to the UC's for final approval, the course was finally approved in the spring of 2001.

My internal motivation throughout the process of creating the course was the belief that this class needed to strive, "not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world" (hooks, 1994, p. 15). As idealistic as it may sound, I was driven by the desire to make the course my contribution to change the world. It was an ultimate exercise in sharing my voice. Fueled by the writings of Daisaku Ikeda (2001), I

was motivated to answer his call for a paradigm shift away from "viewing education as serving the narrowly defined needs of a society to a new paradigm that sees society serving the lifelong process of education"(p.35). Creating the course was not only an academic endeavor, but also, a spiritual journey for me as an educator. In my personal journal I wrote:

> One of our shortcomings as human beings is that we rarely see the long-term results of our interactions with people, even if they were trivial and seemingly insignificant. As an educator, I feel blessed because I have had these opportunities in these past six years more than most people have in their lifetimes. After having graduated over five to six years, students have returned to thank me. Some thank me for having taught them well while others come to thank me simply for having made them smile or for having simply listened to them when they had a problem. Having worked with teenagers, the experiences have allowed me to understand the value of my life. I went into teaching to 'make a difference' and that is exactly what I am doing. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, June 6, 2002)

In retrospect in creating the course, the experience was perhaps my greatest moment of feeling fully empowered as an educator. I had managed to add to the curriculum, define part of my job as a teacher, and establish the opportunity to exercise greater freedom in developing the lives of my students. I was having an impact at my school and it simply felt exhilarating.

I knew that the transformative experience I sought to create in this course was something I would have to justify in the curricular language of designing and getting approval for the course. Eventually I managed to write a curriculum that revolved around literature but sought to identify greater concepts located within the literature. Using language such as:

> This course presents a literary and socio-cultural analysis of representative work by American, as well as worldwide, authors who illustrate the ethnic and cultural diversity of our global society. Multicultural Literature and Practicum is designed to explain the concepts associated with the major issues that affect cultural diversity in society through literature. Particular stress is placed on examination of different literary genres as serious art forms, as well as sources of information that explore human nature and our struggle to cope with the complexities of our social diversity and environment. It is these complexities that shape our culture today. Therefore, the course is

designed to develop critical thinking and intercultural competence through the analysis of texts. (see Appendix A)

I knew that references about cultural diversity, human nature, and environment would appeal to colleagues and the community as many of the cultural programs initiated at the school were well supported by the administration. However, even the language itself made me nervous as it was something I was promising to teach, never having taught it ever before. Regardless, I moved forward.

The Multicultural Literature (ML) course was well received by most colleagues and the school board. During my first year I taught a single section of the class with 32 students. Due to its popularity among students, I was given two sections the following year. In its fourth year, enough students requested the course to give me four full sections of the class. Now, in its eight year, the course has expanded to five sections offered at the high school; one section taught by another colleague.

Through my own personal reflections and memory, many of the reasons for its popularity among students are based on the feedback I received from current and former students, as well as from comments by colleagues and parents. Although the course reflects a unique blend of literary analysis, critical thought, and educational theory, the basis of the course is firmly grounded on my own personal educational philosophy that I evolved throughout the years.

Thus far, teaching the course has led me to enjoy an inspirational, heart-warming, and self-actualizing teaching experience. The interactions with students, the impactful moments, and the appreciation displayed have instilled in me a sense of sacred satisfaction. As a teacher, but most importantly, as a human being, these signs of

gratitude and appreciation continue to allow me to manifest my own self-actualization as a person. It is what gives me strength, joy, a sense of victory, but also cultivates my compassion. The feedback and the experiences that are being created in my classroom, I feel, are a direct result of what I believe about my students. This relationship is an example of how positive pedagogical interactions are better understood when researchers reflect on the phenomena of the teacher's belief systems. By feeling valued, I feel confident, and that in itself is enough to make me want to understand the dynamics of my teaching practice, to work harder as a teacher, and engage in this exercise of reflexive inquiry.

During these past eight years, I have grown as a teacher and as an individual. The clarity, the drive, and the enthusiasm I felt when I first started teaching this course is not the same as what I feel today. As I have evolved as a teacher, as I become older, I begin to realize new things, see things in different ways, and my teaching practice is directly affected by this evolution. However, as I reflect, the one thing that has remained a constant throughout my experience of teaching the ML class is the number of powerful and meaningful moments I have shared with my students each year. As revealed through conversations, evaluations, emails from former students–through a bond that continues to exist beyond the classroom, beyond space and time–students have shared with me their sincere thoughts and impressions that the class and I had on their lives. This prompted me toward this research endeavor. Former students spoke of the impact of having a space to express themselves freely. They shared with me personal transformations that they

experienced and valued as profound moments in their development. The following

sections demonstrate brief examples of how this relationship manifested through the data.

Class discussions as an expression of the teacher's voice.

Throughout the data, my emphasis on developing the student voice was evident in

themes of teacher behaviors and beliefs, class activities, discussions, and student-teacher

interactions. Several instances display the relationship between my voice and the

development of the student voice. In teaching the Multicultural Literature course, I find

that the healthy nature of class discussions provides the greatest exercise for the student

voice. Through the topics, themes, and experiences discussed, students freely shared

their thoughts, beliefs, and experiences, primarily about issues that were meaningful to

their daily lives.

A significant element in the Multicultural Literature class that helped promote

both the student and teacher voice was general class discussions. The most common

feature of my class is class discussion. Since my course is a senior English elective, I

have the luxury of knowing that my students are no longer subject to benchmark testing.

Although my class adheres to the California State Standards the pace and intensity of

addressing such standards are not subject to any school-imposed pacing guide. In

addition, since I created the course, and another teacher was teaching only one additional

section, I have enjoyed a relative amount of freedom and flexibility in approaching my

curriculum. This, in fact, was a significant finding as I recognized that what I do in my

Multicultural Literature course could not easily be applicable or generizable toward other

courses.

When I first proposed the multicultural literature class, nothing was more important than to create a curriculum that emphasized the type of intercultural dialogue I had learned and experienced in my activities with intercultural training. The purpose of the course was to give students the opportunity to critically reflect and engage in dialogue not only about literature, but also of educational, economic, and social issues that affect American culture today. Dialogue, sincere dialogue, is what I remember most about my own educational experiences. Being able to listen to others' perspectives, share my own, and operate in a safe learning environment caused me to transform my consciousness toward the cultural "other" as well as confront many of my hidden cultural biases. For this reason, I continue today with the determination to replicate my own learning experience for my students.

According to Stanley (1993), social experiences are not acquired independently of others (as cited in Holt, 2003). Rather, social experience is accumulated through the dialogue, contact, negotiating, emotion, and transformation, located within that social space. In reviewing the data, these social experiences were being facilitated through my class discussions.

Dialogue plays an important role for me as a teacher because it gives me the opportunity to share an authentic discourse with my students. I have always felt that dialogue made me feel students' greater humanity. It was through the process of standing before them, looking into their eyes, sharing personal stories, and empathizing with their struggles that I developed a greater connection with the students. In comparing to other English classes, one student wrote:

This course is unique because it was not a normal English course that I was used to taking. I'm used to reading a book and then writing an essay on it and learning grammar. This class was unique and effective due to the extensive dialogue. We wrote essays, read stories, and completed projects like in a regular English course, but the discussions we had really added to the class because we learned from each other and that in itself is a unique experience. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

Although I taught students vocabulary, critical reading approaches, forms of analysis, and a variety of multicultural authors and literary genres, most of what I taught to students did not come in the form of prepackaged knowledge. For the most part, my attitude toward teaching multicultural literature was more than simply a survey of different authors and stories, but rather, I focused more on understanding the students and the social and political implications of what the literature revealed about them. I knew that I could easily create prepackaged lessons, make PowerPoint presentations, and simply 'tell' students what authors may have intended to say in their works. But in my opinion, this simply did not seem right. All I would be doing is attempting to 'fill the empty bucket' of my students with teacher-generated information. I simply did not feel authentic and I consciously drew away from teaching in such a way.

In reviewing class discussion data, one significant theme that was observed were my own underlying philosophical assumptions about the purpose in utilizing class discussions as a means to exercise the student voice. By my fifth year of teaching, I had realized that class discussion and sincere dialogue not only helped give students a voice on the subject matter of the course curriculum, but also helped create connections among students; connections that, to me, seemed to outweigh any academic duty that was expected of me through the traditional educational system. Part of this attitude was

expressed in the following journal entry, in which I react to Makiguchi's ideas located in Bethel (1989):

> We cannot deny our interdependence with one another; no one lives in a vacuum. Since our lives are continually tied in with those of others, we cannot ignore the concerns of the community. There are many people today that live their own private lives, unaware of the benefits they have received from society. Such people are unwilling to put up with the inconvenience of others and fall into a narrow egoism. It is my hope as an educator that once awakened to how society provides for everyone's happiness, the student realizes that the best means toward their own happiness is to become a productive participant in society. Without this reciprocity a fair and humane society is not possible. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, October 15, 2001)

In my opinion, exercising the student voice brought value to the lives of students. It was more than an academic endeavor or activity, but rather, a way to teach students about the connections between them. In many ways, it was, in my mind, the process of countering what Bellah (2008) called, radical individualism, or Makiguchi's (1989) reference to narrow egoism.

Furthermore, my underlying beliefs about the student voice were evident in external data such as that found in my response to a 2001 questionnaire for the LA County Teacher of the Year recognition. When asked, "What is your philosophy of education?," I wrote:

> If we are to move toward a world of peace, culture and education, people must learn to live better with each other. Education is more than the transfer of knowledge; it is a human exchange of ideas that serves as a catalyst for change. Each day before I go to work, I do my best to align myself with these principles and consider every interaction with students and colleagues as an opportunity to create value in their lives. Whether it is in a form of a question during a literary discussion or an informal lunchtime conversation, I consider each instant of the day a 'teachable moment.' This motivation comes from my deep compassion to see others become happy. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., TOY questionnaire, February, 2001)

In this response, I clearly demonstrated my belief that education is mainly about interaction rather than the acquisition of knowledge. Ultimately, the purpose of this interaction is to initiate change, both in the lives of students and in society. In the same response, I further explain:

When the learning process is void of egoism, arrogance and faulty communication, it manifests great benefits in the lives of students as well as in others. Living in true harmony requires peaceful cooperation. This type of cooperative existence begins with personal behavior and logical living. We cannot ask students to listen if they do not have the experience to appreciate what is being said. As educators, we cannot expect to teach if we are not open to be taught by students; and we cannot expect to make students happy if we are not happy ourselves. Education requires the awakening of our great inner potential and it starts at the beginning of each moment. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., TOY questionnaire, February, 2001)

My attitudes shown above give a brief window of understanding of how I approached the development of the student voice. They are concise samples of how my underlying belief system explains why I have made *class discussion* my primary teaching strategy throughout my years of teaching the Multicultural Literature course. Based on my experience of teaching the Multicultural Literature course, my own praxis and reflexivity have allowed me to witness a transformation of thinking, acting, and attitude toward cultural differences among my students.

On numerous occasions I observed that many students had developed an ability to listen, reason, negotiate meaning, and develop empathy toward others. The multicultural literature course, in many ways, had become an engaging forum of learning and expression, unique in the experience of students that began to "manifest itself in the participants as a kind of palpable personal development" (Rathje, 2007, p. 257). This development took a unique form in my classes, a development evidenced by students' ability to identify cultural differences or inconsistencies between cultural groups, their ability to appreciate and accept differences, their desire to learn, their ability to speak openly, and their willingness to care for others.

Student voice.

Based on my findings, the student voice has always played a significant role in my teaching. As shown in the other sections of this chapter (i.e., value-creating/culturally-responsive pedagogy, intercultural dialogue, and transformative learning), giving students the opportunity to freely express themselves through guided teaching techniques such as open-ended questioning in discussing cultural diversity themes required certain key features that helped promote this expression. For example, in addition to the general emphasis on class discussions, three key features emerged from that data that helped promote the student voice. These included the ROPES activity at the beginning of the school year, the Let It Rip activity throughout the school year, and the Resource Projects at the end of the school year. The following are examples of data that demonstrated how these activities manifested the student voice.

ROPES.

A significant theme that helped establish the student voice within my classroom was the class guideline exercise known as ROPES. ROPES is an activity borrowed from the Anti-Defamation League's World of Difference Institute training manual which serves as a technique for workshop facilitators to set-up ground rules among the participants. An activity that gives students the opportunity to develop their own guidelines for class discussions in my Multicultural Literature class, ROPES allows me to create a student-generated framework that helps validate the openness, freedom of expression, and safety required to promote the student voice.

During the 2009-2010 school year, I introduced ROPES on the heels of President

Obama's first Joint Chief's Address and the act of GOP Rep. Joe Wilson yelling out,

"You lie!" In one class period, I began the discussion by asking students what they

thought about the incident. Some of the students' comments touched upon the type of

signs that were being displayed of Obama at anti-healthcare rallies. Some students found

the discussion interesting while others simply listened. Regardless of their comments,

what I had essentially induced was the discussion of disrespectful and inappropriate

behavior.

In this discussion, one African-American student, Tiffany, blamed all

Republicans, implying they were racist for the behavior shown toward Obama; while

another White student, Rosanne, took offense insisting that her family is Republican but

not racist. Conscious of the slightly heated display by Rosanne, I did not want the

discussion to become a debate about racism or about conservative versus liberal, so my

attempt was to equalize both arguments by validating both comments. In doing so, I used

the brief exchange to segue into the ROPES activity. Demonstrated below is an example

of how I (CRV) introduced ROPES in a natural setting:

CRV: Understood. And here's the thing, you know Rosanne, but we're listening to you and
        you're using your family as your basis for Republicanism. You know, and …

Rosanne: (Interrupting) There's also a lot of extremes.

CRV: Exactly. Even…even on the left, within liberals, there are people that are extreme and
        will say really bad things about conservatives. You know? And that's not right. The
        thing is that we have the far people on the right, the far people on the left, the question is
        that, we've always had that in our country. But when it comes to politics, when it comes
        to discussing our future as a country, we've kind of tended to come together as
        Americans. We've come together and say we all have one goal in mind, and that is to
        preserve the freedoms and liberties of our country here. You know, and so the thing is
        that, is that what is going on now? Or are we trying to silence people, is the question.

So the reason I bring this up is because I want you to think about that as we begin to develop this course, this class here. Okay? In order for this class to work, there's going to be plenty of times where we're going to talk about controversial issues; issues that each and every single one of you is going to have an opinion about. Some of you are going to voice that opinion. And some of you might not agree with that opinion. But with what I just saw right now between Rosanne and Tiffany, it was very respectful. And I think that's the key. Okay, it's that what we need to have at least an agreement in this class, is that if we're going to have these kinds of discussions, if we're going to have these kinds of debates, then we have to have a level of civility for them to work. You see, this is not a political forum, this class. This class is a free exchange of ideas. And that I want you to understand. That's what true education, in my opinion, is all about. It's an exchange of ideas. So I really want you guys to feel free to let us know what you think and so that we can share, and learn from it. Not with the purpose of bringing people down, or debating their topics, their ideas, but that's how dialogue is developed. It's by going back and forth with people and ideas that you don't necessarily agree with. And that's how we grow as people, as human beings. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, September, 2009)

As the discussion progressed, a student raised his hand and reverted back to the original topic about Obama, claiming there was a lack of respect. Again, attempting to steer the discussion away from Obama, I quickly mentioned, "We'll have plenty of time to discuss Obama but right now, I'd like to get you guys to think about something else." Seeing that my comment insisted on a change of topic for the class, students listened intently. I went on:

CRV: But before we get to those discussions, I want to get to the understanding that we're going to somehow come to an agreement as a class, as a unique period 2 Multicultural Lit class. Right? That's going to come up with certain guidelines that we're going to be able to agree on.

So what I have for you today is, what I would like to do with you, is an activity that actually comes from the Anti-Defamation League World of Difference intercultural training program. It's an activity where I give you guys, the opportunity to create the guidelines for the discussions of this class. Okay? Now think about this, I'm giving you guys the opportunity to come up with your own guidelines. Rather than me, as a teacher, coming to you and say, 'These are the rules' (snapping my fingers rapidly). Okay? What I'd like to do right now is to get you guys to formulate those rules, or what I like to call guidelines as far as how we're going to conduct ourselves for the rest of the year.

So, what I have on the board is the word ROPES. It's an acronym but it's also a metaphor. Now think about what a rope is. Think about it. Imagine a rope in front of you. What's a rope? What's it made out of? What's it consist of?

Student: Small strands put together!

CRV: A bunch of strands put together, you know, when you look at a rope it's a bunch of tiny threads. You can take them apart, one by one. If you notice, when you take one strand by

itself it's very easy to break. Right? Because it's weak. But what happens when you put those strands all together, and you start to twist them a little bit?

Students: It stays together!

CRV: "Exactly. Well, that's what our guidelines are going to be about. We're going to try to bring together some guidelines from all the various strands, or various ideas out here, and we're going to try to come together so that we can hold this class together. So that we have an idea that we're going to make this happen here. So that's what the idea behind ROPES is. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, September, 2009)

I asked for a student volunteer to write the suggested guidelines on the board. I felt it was important to have a student visible in the front of the class besides me. I went on to choose Adam to write on the board and began to elicit suggestions from the class. I started:

CRV: Think about words that start with R that we could use as guidelines.

Without fail, like in past years, the first word usually suggested by students was 'respect.' I asked them to explain respect. I asked them to expand on it. Most explanations defined respect as the act of listening, giving others the opportunity to speak, or to not cut off. As a way to confirm their suggestion of "respect" as a guideline for the class, I go on…

CRV: Is respect a good guideline to have? Should it be one of our guidelines?

Students: (In choral fashion) Yes.

Throughout the exercise, other words that emerged from the students included: "reasonable," "respond," "reflect," "optimism," "openness," "opinionate," "participate," "enthusiasm," "safety," "setting the example," "self-control," "supportive," etc. To draw a closer connection to the students about the value of the guidelines, I decided to draw from my memory of a small episode that had occurred the day before:

CRV: Jennifer, was that you yesterday when somebody dropped their pens over here, you said something? (Hoping that she would finish my sentence)

Jennifer: I said, I really liked this class. That was really nice (She giggles).

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CRV: I thought about that when the word 'supportive' came up. It's kind of interesting but some of you may have noticed it and some of you maybe not, but I think Demi, I think you dropped your stuff. Oh was it you (girl next to her), you dropped your pens and like three people came to help you. They kind of just got up and responded. And then Jennifer, all over says, "Oh this class is so nice." And I don't know if you noticed it or not but I was over here paying attention and it was kind of neat to see, that number one, people responded just naturally, to say, let me help you. And them somebody from the other side of the room recognized that. You know, it's like we have an impact on each other when we don't know we're having an impact on each other. And I think that was kind of cool that you said that (looking at Jennifer)

I concluded the activity by asking:

CRV: All those in favor to adopt these guidelines say I.

Class: (Choral fashion) I!

CRV: Settled. You will all have your own copy tomorrow. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, September, 2009)

The ROPES activity is significant in providing students with voice as the development of their own guidelines helps them take ownership for the class. The class no longer belongs to me as the teacher, but rather, belongs to them. The very fact that they created the guidelines or 'rules' gave them the opportunity to reflect on what was appropriate and what was to be expected. ROPES has always played a significant role in my classroom, as it has become the most vital activity of the school year.

Several weeks after having introduced and adopted ROPES as class guidelines, I was reminded of its impact on students one day when a student, Sophia, asked if she could speak to me in private. I captured most of the details as a journal entry:

One day after class, Sophia asked if she could talk to me in private. As I walked away from the podium quite intrigued, and brought her into my office, all I could wonder was the importance of the matter. I really couldn't think of what she might have to tell me, even as I tried to anticipate it, I simply waited for her to tell me once we were both inside.
She started, "I thought this was supposed to be nonjudgmental and that we could be free with what we're saying."
"Well it is. Why? What's going on?" I asked.
"Well, it seems that when I have said things during discussions, certain students will whisper to their neighbors."

"Well that's not okay, but is there something specific that you heard, perhaps so I could understand better what you're saying?"

"It's nothing specific, but it's about how they talk after I've said something."

To my surprise, Sophia was critiquing the class! At that point, I knew that I needed to address her concern. My fear was that if I failed her, especially after taking the time to express her thoughts to me, I could lose her participation for the rest of the year. I have seen it before where students start the year pretty talkative during discussions but somewhere down the line I lose them. I've never known exactly why, but here I had an opportunity that was spelled out in front of me.

I told Sophia that I was sorry for not having noticed. Although I was not aware of the discomfort she had felt or had heard the comments by other students, I felt that a simple gesture of apology could help her feel validated.

"Listen, thank you for bringing this up because you're right, they shouldn't be criticizing you if they were. I'll bring it up with the class so that we can talk about it. I will not mention it was you, I'll keep you anonymous, but if in the discussion you would like to say something, please do."

"Okay," she said with a half smile. It was this smile that communicated to me that I had made her feel better and it also meant that I needed to address the issue effectively the next day.

As the next day arrived, Sophia was absent. Although I was prepared to discuss the issue with the class, even allotting time within my lesson plan, I decided to wait until she returned. The rest of the students had no idea I had made these adjustments, but I thought it was important for her to be part of dialogue.

The following day Sophia was present and I started the class by distributing copies of the ROPES guidelines we had come up with during the first week of school. I asked students to read them carefully as this was their personal copy to keep in their notebooks. Next I began to discuss the importance of listening and respecting each other's opinions: "In this class we will always have different opinions, but what is going to make us successful, make this class successful, is how we are able to listen to each other's comments; not to criticize them, but to learn from them and to respect them," the students listened attentively.

Sophia watched me intently throughout the discussion. I wondered if she would speak up about something, but her facial expression seemed to show a sense of satisfaction in how I was handling the situation.

As most students nodded and agreed with what I was saying about the guidelines, I asked, "Does anyone have anything they would like to say or add?" No one raised their hand and that was my cue to move on to the day's lesson. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, October, 2009)

Although Sophia's episode briefly demonstrated only a single interaction between a student and myself, what made it significant data for this study was how Sophia's concern, or the voicing her opinion, actually manifested into an activity that helped reinforce the ROPES guidelines for the entire class. It was this type of reciprocity between the teacher and student that helped me produce greater trust and a safe environment to exercise the student voice.

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For every year I have taught the Multicultural Literature course, the ROPES activity has served as a foundation on which to build the student voice. It is an activity that gives students the opportunity to create the culture of the class, thus the classroom atmosphere, to build a sense of ownership, as it resonates with their own beliefs and opinions, not just the teacher's. Uniquely, each year, several students in the course, like Sophia, emerge as protectors of the guidelines by consistently reminding us of them whenever needed. It is quite exhilarating to see students take ownership for their behavior.

Let it rip Fridays.

Let It Rip Friday's (as also described in the Value-Creating/Culturally Responsive Pedagogy section of this chapter), emerged as the single most commonly mentioned and meaningful activity that demonstrated the student voice. Let It Rip Friday's is a tradition I started a few years ago. I actually borrowed the concept from the KABC 790 radio show, "The Larry Elder Show." Elder referred to Friday's as Let It Rip Friday's in which callers could bring up any issue they wanted. I thought it would be healthy to bring this into my class despite that it would cut my teaching week to four days. I tried it at first as an experiment, asking students to bring up any issue, make any announcements, share any stories, or ask any question they wanted. I wanted to create a completely free environment in which students would talk about what was relevant to their lives.

I usually began Friday mornings with my coffee mug in hand, moving all papers away from the podium, sitting on my stool facing the students, leaning on my elbows and say, "Let it rip!" I find that there is never really a shortage of topics to discuss; however,

even if there were, I am always prepared with a short list of topics usually obtained from current events of the week.

To demonstrate the openness of this activity for purposes of this study, various topics that emerged naturally in a 50-minute session during the 2009-2010 school year are shown in Table 9:

Table 9

"Let It Rip" Topic Progression

Discussion Topics

Describing an insurance company commercials on television that shows acts of kindness;
to describing video clips of stupid criminals;
to the most critical issue facing young people today;
the existence of break-up agencies;
one student brings up race relations;
a news story about an AIDS vaccine;
to Magic Johnson being HIV positive;
to the film Lorenzo's Oil;
to a student asking, "Is preventing AIDS good for society?";
to people with AIDS having unprotected sex;
to "What if we had a cure for cancer? Would we overpopulate the earth?" to
the lack of resources from the earth;
to the 'octo-mom';
to large poor families in third world countries;
to the Catholic sin of birth control;
to religious hospitals denying certain procedures;
to nature finding ways to control the population;
to texting as an epidemic;
to giving them my fatherly texting speech;
to losing the human connection through texting;
to the benefits of texting;
to texting etiquette;
to the use of pagers;
to sexting;
to the school electronics policy;
to having a student comment at the end, "I love this class! It makes me excited to come back."

(C. R. Valverde, p.c., audio recording, October, 2009)

As the topics progressed, students often shared an anecdote, a memory, or personal experience that they were reminded of by the conversation. The Let It Rip sessions would mainly look like one large open conversation between the students and me. After observing me, a colleague once commented that Let It Rip Friday's seemed

like a form of "group therapy." As I asked him to explain, he mentioned this because he saw my class as a place in which students could freely open up and share their inner most thoughts and opinions about their views on various topics. In my mind, it was a space in which I afforded students the opportunity to exercise their voices.

Throughout my experience of using the Let It Rip activity for the past several years students would always have something to talk about, evident in the number of hands that shot up willing to begin the session. Every Friday was different. Sometimes students would start off with a birthday announcement causing a sudden choral break out of the entire class singing Happy Birthday, on other days students would begin with a question, sometimes philosophical, sometimes relating to school or their personal lives. On other occasions, students would often ask for advice from others about issues they were experiencing.

During the course of this study, several significant events occurred during Let it Rip Friday's that demonstrated the level of freedom and candidness that emerged from these discussions. Although I trust and respect the guidelines of confidentiality set up by the students early in the school year, I admittedly have found myself in situations that required me to carefully steer and manage certain topics and discussions to keep from producing negative effects and behaviors.

For example, one significant event that occurred during a Let it Rip session was when a student in my 5th period asked about a particular drug. Kenny mentioned to the class that he was interested in trying ecstasy. He asked the class if anyone who had taken it had thoughts about it.

At first, I found it quite peculiar that Kenny felt so open to share his intentions to the entire class, however, regardless of how the discussion would turn out, I decided I was going to allow it to progress knowing that I had a plenty of negative things to say about ecstasy. However, the very first comment from a female student managed to set-off perhaps the most poignant and profound discussion thus far of the school year.

The student, Lana, mentioned that her experience with ecstasy was a positive one. She went on to explain that by taking it one time when she was having problems with a best friend, actually saved her friendship. At hearing this, I could not believe my ears in the ignorance of her statement, however, I allowed it to move on by calling on a number of students wanting to comment on what Lana had just said. A vast majority of the class suddenly turned on her sharing stories of drug addiction, negative experiences, and disapproval for what she was implying. With the number of these types of comments, Lana began to feel attacked. A small minority of students, coming to her aide, attempted to endorse the use of the drug that only made opposing students become more agitated. What resulted was a uniquely divisive, heated discussion on the pros and cons of drug use which started to draw upon deeply rooted views and personal, sometimes painful, memories of experiences with loved ones. In a matter of minutes, the Let it Rip session took on the tone of a moral debate which I knew could lead to resentment if not carefully geared toward a more positive ending.

As the facilitator to the discussion, I maintained the air of respect by consistently reminding them not to speak over others, being respectful of other people's opinions, reminding them to discuss rather than to debate. The discussion was the most intense of

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the year thus far, which eventually ended with one student breaking down in tears after she shared about how much she cared for everyone in the room and could not bare the thought of anyone getting hurt.

When the bell rang, there was no real closure because time had run out. I had mismanaged the time and I knew that students were going to walk away for a weekend feeling unsettled about our discussion. On the following Monday, despite the major lesson plan to wrap up the novel we were reading, I needed to make sure that the feelings of discomfort and uneasiness that emerged during Friday's Let it Rip were settled. The air was too tense when the class had ended and I could not stop thinking about it over the weekend. I was convinced that if I left it untouched, perhaps attempting to forget it by moving along with the lesson, I was afraid that it would ruin the positive tone that had been created in the class thus far.   Although I had given the students a voice in attempting to dissuade Kenny from trying drugs, I knew more had to be done. It was on that following Monday that I decided to use my voice, my management of the discussion, to produce a greater, more positive effect on the students than what had resulted from Friday's discussion. The following is the transcription of my Monday's closure to the discussion:

> CRV: I wanted to bring some closure to *Enrique's Journey*, but before we get to that, um… I gotta be honest with you. I…I need to say this because Friday, I could not stop thinking about this class. Okay? I mean, I went home and I thought about it on Saturday, I thought about it on Sunday, and then when I came back today, I had several students approach me. Several students approached me about 5th period's discussion on Friday (Class listened intently), and it was mixed messages. I don't think I've ever had such an emotional response to a discussion as we did on Friday and it was really something, and I know some of you weren't here, but I just want to say that. Number one, I know it was hurtful for some people. I know it was painful for some people to be a part of this discussion, because of personal reasons, because of things they may have experienced. It was also liberating for some people to share out their life experiences. And it was also very educational for people to hear others and their experiences. And I think this is why I

hope that what you guys are doing is creating that kind of class, where you guys are learning from each other and I'm really… I'm really glad that you respected each other that day as well. You were so open about your thoughts and ideas and everything. And so, I just want to say that I thank you, first of all for that experience, and I also think that we are moving along in a great way guys. I think that this class is really special. I haven't had this experience in any of my other periods and I think you guys are really unique. Let's keep this going. I really think this is important. We're really creating something unique and special in this class, and… that's all I ask for.

I really want to ask that you guys look at yourselves and think about, you know, each other, and appreciate each other. Notice that this is your senior year, and I've always said this to my seniors, don't have any regrets in your senior year because once you guys graduate, you're not going to see each other again. You say that you'll have a few friends here and there but after a few years you will go your own ways. But what I mean about not having any regrets is, if there is somebody that you really… you're thankful for or there's somebody that you really appreciate… let them know. Let them know that, you know? If there's somebody that you … ah… want to make contact with or you just want to breakthrough whatever it is that's been going on for years or whatever, with someone you might've had an issue with, try to overcome that in the next few months. Because, again, this is a very special time for you guys as high schoolers, as seniors, and I think that this class is becoming something special to where you can get to that point with each other. So, those are my final words. I don't know if anyone wanted to say something else just to bring closure to Friday's discussion.

Cody: It's not about Friday, but it's about this class. As you guys know, we lost on Friday (football team) and it was very hard for me to walk off the field. You know, taking that senior walk. And then the next day, I woke up and I was very sad, you know? I didn't know what else to do so I just called my aunt and I asked her if I could spend the weekend with her. Cause, usually, when I want to get away I go to her house. And so she said I could come over but I would have to babysit because she needed to go to a funeral of a friend who had died of a drug overdose. Several family members came over, and my uncle was just talking to me about life lessons and he was telling me, 'it's your senior year and don't take anything for granted.' To live life to the fullest because they lost their high school friend and they were mourning over it. And this is like their fourth friend from high school to die. And he said something, ah… if you're hanging out with friends and they're doing something bad or shouldn't be doing, don't do it. If you're about to make a bad decision, don't do it because… 'Karma's a bitch.' It's going to come back and bite you.

He was telling me about how in the 80's he used to deliver drugs for his father and like he had no other choice or else he said he'd be killed. Probably just to scare him, but he had to deliver drugs to Sacramento to the South. Everything started from Sacramento. And then one day he got caught and went to jail for like seven years (a student whistles). But now he's back 12 years now, and he was just telling me to live my life. And I don't know, I was just thinking about this class. Cause, we're starting to become a family (several students "Ahh;" laugh in delight but in agreement) It just made me think of this class of how I could relate this class to outside of school. I mean… I've never been a part of anything like this.

CRV: Thank you Cody.

Cody: And I'm thankful for this.

CRV: Thank you Cody for sharing. (A number of students applaud; several hands raised) Louie's hand was first, and then Jacqueline.

Louie: Ah yeah, ah, I think that we had a very very good discussion. I continued it with people over the weekend also, even on Saturday, with some other people who aren't in this class but are in your other periods. And they were like, I heard about your Let It Rip. They were amazed about what we had. And I just want to thank everyone who shared their personal story. It was like, very inspiring. It doesn't make me wish I had a story like that to tell but like it gives me confidence that if we are talking about something that affects me, I feel like I could do that and won't feel awkward about it.

CRV: Cool. Thank you (short pause). Earlier today, this one student from another class said, "Mr V. how come we can't get all of the other periods together to work with period 5? To have one big group, one big group discussion? (Some students smile, others laugh). Interesting. We would need the Multipurpose Room, but it's possible. So… (looking at a student raising her hand) go ahead Jacqueline.

Jacqueline: A lot of the things that happen outside of school, I'll relate them to Multi. In Y & G (after school program), we're always talking about things and every time someone will say, "Well, in Multi, our teacher Mr. Valverde said…" and they know you because of your daughter's participation a few years ago. They would say, "Oh I remember him, he was a father of one of our delegates," and what not, and they would bring a lot of information from here. One thing I want to say is that if we're talking about someone in here, whatever happens in this room, unless you have permission from that person, that we not use the person's name, because when we use names we start judging people.

CRV: Right, right. Thank you for saying that because we need to protect people's confidentiality. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, October, 2009)

Although the actual topic about drugs was not readdressed at the time, students decided to share their appreciation for the class. Although I was worried that Friday's discussion had left on a bad note, the students that chose to speak up first on Monday surprisingly took a different route than what I had expected; and essentially helped reinforce the bond of trust among them. Cody, Louie, and Jacqueline's sincere comments, their student voices, managed to establish a greater sense of trust and comfort to the overall classroom atmosphere. Eventually the tone of the class began to shift and students observably becoming less tense:

CRV: (Calling on a student raising his hand…) Malcolm.

Malcolm: Well I wasn't here so like what was the main question that got things started on Friday?

Alicia: (A neighboring student turns around and says…) Kenny, you want to take this one?

Kenny: Basically, I was like um … thinking about trying ecstasy. And I asked if anyone had any personal experience or experiences that they could share with us. (Raising his voice slightly) Boom! (Implying the bomb that set everything off!)

CRV: It started with that and then it evolved into other things. (Calling on another student) Go ahead Tommy.

Tommy: (Slightly changing the subject) I just want to say that we should have, like on Friday's, our discussions should be something different than what we talk about in school. Like sometimes we'll have conversations about politics and that kind of stuff and I don't like that because … on Friday's we should talk about stuff that we don't normally talk about.

CRV: Bring it up! That's why when I say, "Let it Rip!" you guys bring it up. Okay? (Calling on two students raising their hands) Rachel and then Shawnee.

Rachel: I left class crying on Friday, and about 10 minutes after I came back to talk to you and you...you thanked me for saying what I said, um, and, (Looking directly at Lana who had encouraged the use of ecstasy) this one's for you Lana… its just that we care. Like, no matter what, we do… and …(she chokes up, begins to sob) no matter what, we care, no matter what" (in a full blown sob).
(The silence was deafening. Everyone's head seemed to look down, others looked back at Rachel but did not stare. From the other side of the room, Cody says aloud…)

Cody: Hey, I love you Rachel.
(Cody gets out of his seat and walks over to Rachel and embraces her in a hug. The rest of the class seemed to chuckle, breaking the uncomfortable silence. From among the students one girl says …)

Girl: Cody (affectionately)!.
(From across the room, Luther interjects…)

Luther: Cody's my hug homie. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, October, 2009)

Essentially, an overall moment of compassion was shared among the entire group. The hug and the verbal exchange may have occurred between two students only, but the moment, the feeling, the emotion, was shared by everyone in the room. It was, in my opinion, the authentic student voice at its highest. There were watery eyes everywhere, including myself, but I held back. I did not want to seem emotional. I simply absorbed the moment and it was magical. Soon everyone seemed to become alive. Some talked to their neighbors about what they had just witnessed. Rachel had conveyed a message of care to one student, and she ended up causing another to respond to her through a hug.

That act alone caused the class to react favorably, changing the tone to a lighter mood. It was a chain of events that simply is indescribable at this level of my writing. I can only say that it was one of those defining moments that I longed to create within the class.

After a bit of the chatter died down, I hushed the class again as I saw Rachel's hand go up once again. Since she was not able to finish her thoughts before she started crying, I thought it was important to give her more opportunity to speak. I asked everyone to listen:

> Rachel: (Wiping her tears, she continued where she left off) No matter what, no matter… we care.
>
> Luther: (In a comforting tone) We got you.

Students accepted Rachel's final words. Loud sighs were heard throughout the room as Rachel managed to bring an added sense of closure to the drug discussion:

> Malcolm: This all made me think. What makes people like… want to try it? I mean…. Are they scared?
>
> CRV: I don't know if people really want to deal with question right now, since you weren't here on Friday, but if anyone wants to address it, I'll leave it open. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, October, 2009)

From the observable behavior and chatter of the students, the tone of the class seemed to change direction. Eventually, with the limited time left in class, not worth starting the lesson plan, I decided to help raise the energy level of the students by finishing off the period with a mini-Let it Rip session. The drug discussion episode had finally come to a close, and with what I had just encountered, I was completely satisfied with moving along. Moments such as these, emotional moments, somehow add a unique layer to the classroom atmosphere. Students began to feel more comfortable, safer, and willing to share.

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Agreeing with my colleague, perhaps Let it Rip is a form of *group therapy* that simply gives voice to students. An example of this openness and comfort was demonstrated in precisely what occurred right after. As I opened up Let it Rip by my traditional calling out loud, "Let it Rip!" to my surprise, a student decided to capitalize on this 'open moment' by asking the class for some advice regarding an issue she was going through:

Natalie: One of my good friends stopped being my friend for a guy. And when she was going through a hard time, through a divorce, she said that I wasn't there for her but then when I told her that one of my really good friends died she didn't say shit to me. So like I want to forgive her, and I don't necessarily want to be friends with her, but I don't know how to come to peace with myself, and (begins to sob; class becomes quiet and still again)

Kenny: (Raising his hand) I would think that you should tell her how you feel, tell her that you really thought that her leaving you for a guy was really messed up, however you feel. And then, see what she says and talk about your problems and tell her that you, you want to forgive her. That you want to make peace, but like you said, you didn't necessarily be in friendship with her.

Luther: (Raising his hand) Honestly, one of the keys to life is accepting. So, you need to accept her and yourself. So, for all your flaws and all your good sides. Whether or not, she's going to be who she is, so accepting is the only thing you *can* do. If you accept her, that's the only way things can improve. You gotta accept yourself, that's the only way you can approve of yourself. Cause you gotta accept the flaw, and that's when the flaw's behind you. Once you do that, then you can move on.

CRV: Hmm, thank you Luther for sharing that wisdom.
(Several students continue to share their advice with Natalie)

Lana: (Looking directly at Natalie) If you're not able to have a conversation with her to make it where the both of you are at amends, think about all the other people that consoled you during that time. And think about the strength you got from them. And just … use that as your energy. Even though she wasn't there for me all these other people were there for me. So this is just the energy to help me get over the pain I'm feeling from her. Do you know what I mean? (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, October, 2009)

As a participant-observer of these types of dialogues, the level of civility, care, and compassion demonstrated by students have always impressed me. This classroom dialogue was only a small window of what my classes look like, but it shows the profundity of emotion and candidness in giving students the space for the student voice.

Through the students' desiring to share and help one another through heartfelt advice, something powerful is created within the class. Those students not participating in the direct interactions, sit intently listening to every word spoken, witnessing the acts between others, but still gaining from the experience.

What makes this event powerful is not only how the student voice is being harnessed in the classroom discussions, but the content of what students are saying. Allowing the students to open up in such a way resulted in heartfelt emotions that were shared with each other. It gave students the opportunity to engage not only as individuals, but collectively toward a common good that established a tone of respect and care. It is precisely these types of events, these open discussions, that prompted students to write similar comments in their final evaluations such as:

> We were able to be heard, and also hear others. We don't usually get a voice in regular classes, or an opinion. With this class we got both. We are able to express ourselves everyday about topics some of us never get to talk about. Mr. V's an amazing teacher and I really respect him. I am so glad I was able to take this class. (Anonymous, June, 2006)

Let it Rip sessions took on many different forms. By December, I had students wanting to lead the discussion by sitting at my podium while I took a student desk. For example, one Friday during my sixth period, while I was still talking on the phone from a call I had received during the passing period, Marisol walked up and sat at the podium. Using the gavel left behind from the Leadership class I also teach, she banged it several times and declared, "Let it Rip!" Thinking it may just be her kidding around, after hanging up the phone, I simply sat a student's desk to see how far she would be willing to take the lead. To my surprise, she used the privilege of sitting at the podium to begin the Let It Rip by sharing with the class an email she thought was racially insensitive.

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Reading it from her phone, the email was a comic rant on how it made fun of Spanish accents (i.e., "chopping" used as the word "shopping"). She asked the class what they thought, and the discussion became an open dialogue where students shared their views. They listened attentively, they participated, and all I did was simply watch them interact. With her eloquent and authoritative style, Marisol had completely taken over. She later shared with me that this was her first time ever leading a class and she smiled proudly as she said it felt "good."

On another occasion, my first period student, James, also the president of the Student Union activist club which he had recently founded, asked if he could start the Let it Rip session one Friday morning. I of course handed it over, sat in his desk, and he began by asking students what they thought about the school's electronics policy. A topic traditionally riddled with discontent comments, James began to elicit ideas that could be proposed to the school administration. Eventually, for those first few minutes of the period, the Let it Rip became a source of knowledge for James. He managed to give students voice in the matter, which later resulted in James' 6-month campaign to modify the school policy.

On other more simple occasions, Let it Rip simply gave students the opportunity to express themselves in other ways. For example, one afternoon, a traditionally quiet student, Janet, asked if she could perform the national anthem on her harmonica. It was a wonderful performance met with thunderous applause. A simple light moment, but an unforgettable at that!

One theme of appreciation that I observed was in the number of graduated

(former) students returning to Let it Rip sessions. During the 2008-2009 and 2009-2010

school years, several former students contacted me for permission to sit-in on a Let it Rip

Friday's. For example, in November of 2009, I received the following email from a

student who had checked out of the school three months before graduation due to a

nervous breakdown:

> Hello Mr V, it's Romina. I know it's kind of out of the blue for me to be emailing you, but I was wondering if I could show up to your class tomorrow for let it rip Friday. I miss them a lot, not to mention I missed a good 3 months of my own. Anyway I tried a few weeks ago but they said I couldn't "interrupt" your class with my visit. Please get back to me and hopefully if the answer is yes the receptionist will give me a visitor's pass.
> Thank you for your time.
> Romina (C. R. Valverde, p.c., email, November, 2009)

During the first three months of the school year, I had an additional eleven students from

previous years come in on Friday's to participate. Some asked for permission ahead of

time and others managed to sneak in without having to go through the proper procedures.

One night, while sorting past data I came across Romina's email. Reflecting on it, I wrote

in my nightly journal:

> The Let it Rip Sessions have been a definite success. Here is a student who after graduation wanted to come back. Although she was not what is traditionally considered a 'good student,' she reveled in Let it Rip. She often said what was on her mind and it seemed to serve as a release for her. Although she missed the last three months of the school year because of a nervous breakdown, my class was something she looked forward to and longed for.
> I find it an honor to have students come back. It feels great when I come across a former student either back at school as a visit or around town and they take the time to tell you how special the class meant to them. Or about the impact I may have had on them. This is always an empowering experience! It's a high, sort of when an athlete makes the last shot to win the game. They are the types of experiences that validate every ounce of compassion I may have demonstrated to him or her.
> Clearly, I felt, that there is something about me that made Romina feel safe, comforted. For the remainder of the school year, Romina would occasionally sneak into the school on Friday's, simply to be in my class. Never did I view her as a person in violation of any school rule. Am I to call security and have her removed? To me, she was a young girl attempting to find herself in a confusing world, and somehow, the things I would talk about in the class would make sense to her. A hunger for learning, a hunger to have a voice – she was displaying a seeking spirit that in no ethical way possible could I be the one to extinguish it by not letting her in. The very

act of sneaking into a school with the purpose to learn more seems to me, well, perhaps one of the noblest acts I've ever witnessed. Eventually, this experience has led me to ask, just when exactly do I stop being my students' teacher? (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, August 28, 2009)

Throughout the years, I always felt it an honor to have my former students stop by to say hello. But I find it even a greater honor to have former students come back to participate in class discussions. The visitation of former students has been a constant since I started teaching the Multicultural Literature course, but what most had expressed to me was their admiration for Let it Rip.

Overall, Let it Rip Friday became an open and unabashed time for the discussion of any topic raised by students. Under the guidelines of ROPES, class discussions were orderly and respectful. Student appreciation of this activity was evident in the various end of the year evaluations and observations, as well as other external data. It became a seminal part of the overall experience for students, one rarely found within the educational system. Most importantly, Let It Rip not only gave students the privilege to exercise their voice, it continuously provided me with a glimpse into the lives of my students, into their psyches and identities, allowing me to understand them better, hence, to teach them better.

Resource projects.

The third most significant theme that highlighted the student voice in the Multicultural Literature class was the end of the year resource projects. The resource project (see Appendix E) is a project in which I ask students to take some aspect of culture and create either a resource or a learning experience for others. Throughout the

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years of teaching the course, the projects have significantly evolved from simple 5-

minute class presentations to full on 45-minute assemblies.

The following is my description of the resource projects to a colleague who was

scheduled to teach another section of the course:

> Originally, the resource project idea came about from the idea to teach students to become contributive members of society. I really wanted to focus on the "involved citizenship" school outcome because this is where interculturalism becomes *practicum*. Mainly in universities, this term involves putting theory into practice. Since students were learning about how much injustice there is to find within our culture through the readings, discussions and lessons, I wanted to give them an avenue to become creators of something valuable. I wanted them to become value creators. In other words, the purpose of the resource project is to design a learning experience for others. I originally limited them within the concepts of culture, race, ethnicity, immigration and sexuality, but I found that many students had yearnings to contribute to something else, so I didn't want to stifle that. When I explain the project to the students, I ask them to bring awareness to a group, educate them about an issue, become involved in a movement or create something of value for the school. Essentially, everything they chose to do reflected some aspect of our culture.
>
> I try not to give examples of past projects at the beginning. I usually introduce this project in October, which will be due in May. I explain that they are to think about a project throughout the school year, but be ready to commit to one by February. They turn in proposals detailing their idea along with a time frame. You can make this proposal design as formal or informal as you like. It is here that I give them feedback and pose potential challenges they may face. The resource projects have evolved beyond the classroom walls as students have written books that have been published, put-on assemblies, created exhibits, produced art and have taught lessons at local elementary schools. For me, this becomes the most exciting time of the year because many students become passionate about their projects and many of them end up discovering their hidden potential. It really is amazing to see the students create these projects through a genuine sense of concern and desire to make a difference.
>
> The purpose of the resource project is to engage students in becoming teachers themselves. This project is their opportunity to investigate a favorite topic related to the issues discussed throughout the year and create a resource for others; something that will be useful in educating people beyond the classroom. I challenge them to think, "How will students years from now still benefit from your assignment?" The assignment gets them to step outside themselves. Rather than thinking about doing it for a grade, students are aiming toward influencing other people. The things they come up with are amazing examples of authentic and project-based learning.
>
> The month of May can become a busy time as they present their projects to their classmates. The presentations are to illustrate to the others what it is they created as a resource. Some presentations have lasted 15 minutes while others have lasted 2 days. You have to do a good job at managing your time because a class of 34 now takes me 4-5 weeks of presentations. For the last two years, resource project presentations have gone all the way through their finals. Keep in mind that some projects may require your help in the planning phases. Let me know how I can help you with this. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., email, July, 2008)

In my lesson plan notes to introduce the projects, I also explain:

> Resource projects are your opportunity to transform people's thinking, a way for you to contribute to your community, or to participate in a cause you believe in. There are very few limits to your

project. It must reflect individual passion and commitment. The purpose is not to impress me, but to impress your peers, to have an impact, and giving us, or members of the community, the opportunity to learn about something you think is important. It is your time to shine, your time to make a difference. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., lesson plan notes, October, 2008)

Through an overview of the end of the year anonymous student evaluations as well as external data, the resource projects emerged as a theme throughout. When I asked students on the end of the year evaluation, "How did the course help you feel valued and respected?" several students referenced the resource projects. For example, "… by allowing me to present and teach something to the class that I felt was important to me, the resource projects" (Anonymous, June, 2009) and "… control of my own resource project" (Anonymous, June, 2009). Other comments showed how I, the teacher, had an affect on their feeling valued and respected by the simple interactions I engaged with them through the resource projects. For example, "He told me he really liked my resource project and wanted a copy" (Anonymous, June, 2008), and "… when students present resource project and he asks questions" (Anonymous, June, 2008).

When I asked students, "What did you find most beneficial about the course?," the referencing of resource projects also emerged as a theme. For example, "the resource projects, " (Anonymous, June, 2008), "Discovering world issues and how we can make a difference (resource projects)" (Anonymous, June, 2009), and "Definitely my resource project in the end of the year. I got very personal with my topic and felt very good advocating it to my fellow classmates. I felt like I had a voice, and that was my time to advocate and be an influence to others" (Anonymous, June, 2008). In one example, a student elaborated on the impact of the resource projects, "Anybody can make a difference, no matter how minimal it is. The resource projects are a perfect example.

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Each and every resource project make at least a bit of difference" (Anonymous, June, 2009).

In my mind, the purpose of the resource project was to engage students in becoming teachers themselves. This project was their opportunity to investigate a favorite topic related or unrelated to the issues discussed throughout the year and create a resource for others; something that will prove useful in educating people beyond the classroom. I challenge them to think, "How will students years from now still benefit from your assignment?" The assignment gets them to step outside themselves. Rather than thinking about doing it for a grade, students are aiming toward influencing other people. Ultimately, the project helped students exercise their views, thoughts, and opinions; in other words, the student voice and the things they come up with were amazing examples of authentic learning.

To demonstrate the diverse student voice through the resource projects, following is a listing the types of projects that were self-elected by the students during the 2008-2009 school year:

Drug Awareness - presentation and discussion; shared own personal experiences about drug use a s a way to bring awareness; shared stats, laws, etc.

Book of Poems and Songs - Contributive thought book; two students wrote and shared personal poems and reflections about diversity, life as a teen, etc. One student performed a song on guitar.

Guns: Myth, Law and Facts – PowerPoint and discussion; student discussed the culture of weapons in the US; wanted to dispel many of the myths about guns; was gun proponent but for peaceful means.

Autism: Road to Recovery – presentation and musical performance; student used his own disability to bring awareness of others; many did not know he had autism; performed a rock song to display his happiness and gratitude for the class and his classmates.

Middle School Stereotype Activity – working with kids; students selected a lesson from the TeachingTolerance.org website and set-up a lesson at a middle school class; MS students responded favorably; provided the class with insight about MS thinking and concerns.

Life in Ghana (guest speaker) – presentation and discussion; student wanted classmates to meet and hear from an African perspective, about Africa and about the US; students inquired about guests' views on various issues.

Poverty in Colombia Website – presentation and discussion; student created a website to bring awareness of the issue based on her first trip to mother's country last December; she was very impacted about the poverty and what we take for granted here in the US.

Hazing – audio recording and guests; led a short lesson using video clips, stats, stories of hazing; wanted to bring awareness because college groups often haze and wanted them to be careful next year.

Domestic Violence – self-made video and discussion; two female students; video showed various people giving opinion about domestic violence; warning signs; severity and commonality of the problem.

Japanese Internment – experience of pilgrimage and discussion; student participated in a pilgrimage to Manzinar with family; showed video clips of pilgrimage; to bring greater awareness of a rarely talked about topic; she didn't think history classes had done enough.

Mexican Drug War – PowerPoint, video and discussion; student wanted to show the worsening crisis of the problem; how it spills over; wanted to connect the casual use of drugs (i.e., marijuana) as contributing to the problem.

Gay for a Day – self-made video and social experiment; two male students using a hidden camera walked the school holding hands capturing people's facial reactions; later interviewed these individuals; one of the students commented: "Although we may have read articles about discrimination of being gay, no one knows what gay people go through until they step into their shoes." Classmates were fascinated with project; great discussion.

Lost Generation – lesson and discussion; to bring awareness of how older generations perceive today's generation as a "lost generation" unconcerned about others' social welfare.

Homosexuality in LA – self-made video and discussion; clips of interviews from people around town and their attitudes on homosexuality, gay marriage, gay adoption, etc.

Minorities Becoming Majority – maps, stats, PowerPoint and discussion; showed maps of demographic changes of the US from past to present.

Drunk Driving – PowerPoint and discussion; to bring awareness of the dangers, laws, consequences of drunk driving;

High School Survival Guide – guidebook and discussion; student wanted to give younger students advice about ways to be successful from a high school senior's point of view; created an open-ended book for current and future seniors to comment in the book as well.

5th Grade Unity Activity – student used ADL cultural sensitivity exercises with 5th graders to create understanding about cultural stereotypes; shared with classmates the concerns of 5th graders; realized that race and ethnicity is still not an issue for them.

Minority Businesses – video and discussion; to bring awareness of how certain businesses are not found in black neighborhoods (i.e., Trader Joe's, Whole Foods, etc.); video showed various people's thoughts about developing minority neighborhoods.

Race from Dorsey HS Perspective – video and discussion; talking heads video of students from Dorsey as a way to compare how their attitudes differ from students at CCHS; showed that Dorsey had greater divides between blacks and Latinos; also showed Dorsey students' stereotypes of CCHS as being a "white" school.

Gerrymandering – PowerPoint and discussion; as a white student raised in Norwalk, felt that his family had little voice in the political process; wanted to bring awareness of how gerrymandering affects all cultural groups.

Fieldtrip to Museum – arrangement and docent; student organized a trip for 15 classmates to visit MOCA where she volunteered as a docent; singled out students who had never gone to a museum; raised the funds for costs; created a fieldtrip; I attended as well.

Poverty in the Philippines – awareness campaign and fundraiser; two Filipino female students wanted to help a local charity from their community; placed collection boxes in classrooms; made announcements and classroom presentations. Amount raised still pending.

Book on Life Experiences – female heterosexual student with lesbian mother, also inter-racial, wrote anecdotes and views on growing up, shared views on sex, her thoughts on the N-word, etc.

Homelessness – self-made video and discussion; student participated in a rescue mission; to bring awareness about the things we take for granted; showed ways we can help the homeless.

Japanese Internment – students' grandfather guest speaker; shared personal experience of being a child and having to move to Tule Lake Camp; the separation of the "no-no's", life in the camp; conditions; returning home having lost property.

Abortion – discussion and activity; bring awareness of how divisive the issue is; generated dialogue about teen abortions, dangers, the importance of birth control.

Gangs – presentation, discussion, movie and personal experiences; two black students shared about personal experiences growing up around gangs; why people join, the dangers, etc.

Japanese Internment – informational brochure and guest speaker; guest who lived in camp in Wyoming; shared about life on the camp; returning home; the silence of his community, reparations, etc.

College Campus Safety – PowerPoint, video, and brochure; daughter of USC Police Chief shared ways to stay safe on college campuses.

Liberalism of Generation – study of people's attitudes on various issues; compared attitudes of older generations vs. younger; level of permissiveness; lack of morals, etc.

WWII Survivor – guest speaker; grandfather of student; experience of being in war; fought in D-Day; briefly mentioned liberation of Jews; service under Patton.

Musical Assembly – diversity through music; two students wanted to show how music can bring people of various cultures together; put-together a mini-assembly; invited students and teachers to dance "electric slide."

Religious Panel on Homosexuality – student invited a Buddhist leader, Christian pastor, and Muslim organization leader to discuss various views on homosexuality.

Elephant Orphans – awareness campaign and fundraiser; wanted to bring awareness of elephant orphanage in Kenya; poaching of elephants; placed collection boxes in classrooms, raised money for orphanage.

4th Amendment Rights – presentation and discussion; wanted to help classmates understand their rights against mistreatment from police; alluded to ways of fighting racial profiling, etc.

Multicultural Literature Blog – presentation and demonstration; created a blog with articles, Youtube clips, and discussion boards for current and future students to continue class discussions in blog format.

Interracial Relationships – presentation and Guest from MASC; discussed the continued attitudes against interracial relationships; brought in president of interracial organization.

Child Abuse – Powerpoint and guest from Child Services; to bring awareness of ways to protect children from abuse.

LBGT Support Handbook and Coming Out – presentation and discussion; student created handbook of various openly gay students on campus sharing their stories; included herself in the handbook; this was her first "coming out" publicly

History of Riots – handbook; handbook describes various history of riots; included theories of riot behavior; mentioned she wanted to continue my lesson on the LA Riots.

Adoption – brochure, presentation, and guest speaker; to bring awareness of the adoption process; problems with the system; guest speaker was another teacher who shared frustration with the system.

Domestic Violence Children's Book – reading, presentation, and discussion; children's book shows character as a victim of abuse and a way to do something about it.

Heal the Bay – presentation, brochures, and guest speaker; to bring awareness about our local environment; ways to help; guest explained the Heal the Bay organization.

Emergency and Universal Healthcare – self-made movie and discussion; motivated by father as a doctor, the need for universal healthcare.

"Man Code" – brochure, presentation and discussion; rather comical approach of how "men" have certain cultural codes they follow; great discussion! Demonstrated the unwritten perceptions shared by many men; females found it fascinating.

Culture of Fear – presentation, self-made video, discussion; using Barry Glassner's 2000 book; to show how the media influences us into fear; video showed various news clips that demonstrate.

When is War the Answer? – presentation, brochure and discussion; gave a presentation of history of peace movements throughout the world; discussed peaceful revolutions; history of US's use of violence.

Gangs – presentation, statistics, guest speaker (former gang member); to discuss why people join gangs; first-hand experience from guest.

Racism in Sports – video clips, presentation and discussion; focused on European soccer racism; bring attention that racism is still a worldwide problem.

Supernatural – presentation and guest speaker (psychic); student wanted to show how society rarely talks about the supernatural; showed how psychic views life.

Purpose of Life – presentation, quotes, discussion, personal revelation; in response to having lost a close friend in a recent accident, wanted to question the purpose of life; created an activity for students to share ways to inspire better living, appreciating others; invited classmates to contribute to a quotes board.

American Dream artwork – presentation, art activity, discussion; two students created a large mural of the American Dream showing various colored hands reaching for the sky; will donate it to the local library; created an artwork activity for classmates to place handprint collage to show individuality rather than a "melting pot."

Animal Cruelty – video, display board and discussion; to bring awareness of the mistreatment of animals by food industry; the silence of this problem.

Selfishness – discussion of selfishness and altruism; student led a discussion on why people choose to be selfish rather than altruistic; discussion lasted the entire period!

Self-injury – cutting presentation, discussion; to bring awareness of self-mutilation as a psychological condition; was in response to a student she found cutting herself in the school bathroom; shared various theories and approaches.

Students' Rights – presentation and discussion; student researched laws and Ed Code that demonstrates the rights of students in schools; students were fascinated!

Elder Abuse – presentation, brochures, and guest speakers; in response to a childhood memory of seeing a neighbor being abused, wanted to bring awareness of the issue; guest speakers included the CC Senior Center coordinator, and two County workers.

Reincarnation – book review, presentation, and discussion; having read two books on past-life regression, to teach about the various beliefs of reincarnation; generated a dialogue about spiritual views, karma, etc. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., resource project list, June, 2009)

These project themes demonstrated the authentic student voice as they were given the option to choose their projects. Observably, the project themes indicated a level of social awareness and concern that exceeded those addressed through the course curriculum. In my opinion, the list shows the various topics that students were most concerned with, topics of great social importance, topics rarely discussed in school, yet topics that students were hungry to learn about and willing to share with others.

Coming out: Exercising the student voice.

Other resource projects from past years that demonstrated a significant aspect of the student voice also included the *coming out* of five gay students in the last four years of the course (as I will mention later in the Transformative Learning section of this chapter). In part, much of this was due to the level of respect and openness that was created throughout the year. For example, one of the projects listed above, *Gay for a Day*, was a self-made video and social experiment by two heterosexual male students as a way to bring awareness of the levels of discrimination and intolerance many gays experience throughout society. After the project, I reflected on the project in my personal journal:

> John and Andrew's project was truly a surprise to me. Although they came to me with the idea month's prior, I was uncomfortable with the fact of secretly filming students without their knowing. Deep inside I thought it was an excellent idea for a resource project because of the creativity and … "shock" value it could produce. To catch other students' reactions to a gay couple walking through school would be an amazing thing to watch but I was apprehensive at giving my full blessing for the project. I explained that the students filmed would have to be notified. But I have to admit that I thought heavily about the value of producing such a project and the impact it could have on the class. This is why I did not say yes or no to them. I simply advised them of my expectations and they needed to follow them to the best of their ability. They assured me they would.
>
> When the project was finally presented, I could not believe my eyes that both students had decided to serve as the actors in the video while a third party filmed them as they walked the school holding hands. Clearly, the reactions by bystanders were real and authentic. To admit, one part of the video seemed a bit choreographed during an interview with a student openly anti-gay. However, the kid's responses were exactly what he felt. What made me overlook the choreography of the scene was the fact that the interviewee by John and Andrew was a kid known to have walked the halls in November carrying a sign saying, "Ha! Prop 8 Passed." The kids in my class knew him, and he had obviously given permission to be used in John and Andrew's video. That was powerful! But I was also amazed by John and Andrew's courage to put themselves out there like that. To put themselves into a role that they clearly knew of its struggles in society, even if it were for a few minutes, and especially in high school, seemed quite awesome. Thinking back, I would never have been able to do what they did. I was far too ignorant about homosexuality and … well… perhaps insecure about how my masculinity was perceived.
>
> I was right; the class received the project extremely well. I could not conceal my excitement for the project during the presentation. I know that I've always preached to students about becoming empowered but this project was proof that something that I had said somehow got thru. I guess I was very proud of not just John and Andrew, but because these students honored me as their teacher to be so courageous in doing something for the benefit of others. To me, this is true compassion! (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, June 3, 2009)

I later interviewed both students to learn more about their reasons for conducting the project. Andrew commented, "Although we may have read articles about discrimination of being gay, no one knows what gay people go through until they step into their shoes" (C. R. Valverde, p.c., interview, June, 2009). Overall, the classmates were fascinated with the project, which through the discussion, it was revealed that these students not only exercised their own student voices, they exercised the voice of many gay students in the school and in society.

In another resource project listed above, "Homosexuality in LA," two more students decided to use the resource project to bring greater awareness about people's views and attitudes about homosexuality. The self-made video of interviews from people around town and their attitudes on homosexuality, gay marriage, gay adoption, etc., created an enormous amount of dialogue. To learn more about their reasons for choosing the topic, I interviewed both students. The following is an excerpt of the transcription of the interview:

CRV: Why did you choose the topic of homosexuality for your resource project?

Janice: It's not the topic I first wanted, but then became interested in this one.

Annie: Me too, it's not the topic I originally wanted to do but… after watching the video that the girl did a few years ago (past resource project), I just thought I could do a much better job. And just get like real… really good results and I just thought it would be a really interesting thing to kind of learn about. And I wanted to see that if the way that I felt, um people's views have progressed about homosexuality, I wanted to see if that was actually how it really was. Because,… like… I don't know, before this class, I kind of thought a lot more people were accepting of homosexuals, and I was expecting that Prop 8 wasn't going to pass and like it did, and I was like wow, I guess there are a lot of people out there that are still really not accepting of it. And with our project, the majority of the people were accepting…But it seems like because we're in LA it seems like they're past that point where a lot of people are able to accept it, but I guess it's just that it's really different in other parts of California. And I guess I wish I could've seen what it was like in other areas.

Janice: (Interrupting) … like going to Northern California, to travel there and see if they're more conservative and more against homosexuality.

Annie: I mean, my uncle's gay and he's, not like my blood related uncle, but he's kind of like an adoptive uncle I guess, and he's gay and he grew up in North Fork, a place by Yosemite. Yeah, and um, his dad is like a complete conservative, totally against homosexuality and he was so scared to tell his dad. I don't know when he came out to his dad but even now, its…it's like a subject for him. He's uncomfortable talking about it and he's not uncomfortable for being gay, he's got boyfriends and they've come to the house, for dinner and stuff like that. He's just, if I were to ask him, like, what was it like for him growing up, like with his dad, I don't think he would want to talk about it at all. 'Cause I was going to use him for the project but then I think he's kind of uncomfortable talking about that kind of stuff. Because I think it was just such a bad experience for him.

CRV: What does it mean for you knowing that doing a project like that, knowing about him? You know, knowing that he goes through these kinds of issues?

Annie: Um, its always been something that I was really accepting of and I was always brought up to be okay with it and I remember when he told us that he was gay, when I was in 3rd or 4th grade, and I don't know, it didn't mean anything to me. When he told us he was like, 'I really hope you guys are okay with that, I hope it doesn't affect the way you feel about me.' And I guess it didn't really mean anything to me. I didn't think it was a big deal at all. But I guess that's just the way I was brought up. I guess I feel it was good for me to do something like that. Because he goes through these struggles everyday and kind of like understanding what he goes through and all that… personally I don't understand it when people are against homosexuality. Because I just feel like it's your being against someone else's life, like the way they are living. If it doesn't affect you at all, I don't know, it's like I don't see why people are against it. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., interview, June, 2009)

Again, here two heterosexual students decided to use the resource project as a way to give voice to individuals they were concerned about. Annie's relationship with her adoptive uncle, considering his past experiences, actually motivated her to bring greater awareness of the struggles of gay people to her classmates.

Finally, one last significant example of how the course gave students the opportunity to exercise the student voice was when I interviewed Melanie who actually used the resource project as her opportunity to publicly come out to the class. Melanie decided to create an "LBGT Support Handbook" for students thinking about coming out in high school. In her handbook, she profiled and interviewed several openly gay students at the school, which discussed their frustration at the levels of intolerance found within

the school and in society. However, as Melanie explained and read several passages to

the class during her presentation, when she reached the final page, she showed a picture

of herself which a caption that read, "My name is Melanie and I am gay, queer, lesbian,

homosexual, it doesn't matter. I am me and I am proud." It was at this moment that the

class, along with several of her friends who had been given permission to observe her

presentation, erupted into applause.

I conducted an interview of Melanie to better understand her motivation for the

resource project. The following is the interview in its entirety:

CRV: I want to ask, why did you choose your resource project?

Melanie: Well, I wanted to choose a topic that meant a lot to me. Um.. I wanted something
         different, not just something regular. I had a hard time choosing as I wanted to do coming
         out stories or I just wanted to do something that would get the voice of people that are
         …um… don't really get to speak out as much out there.

CRV: What made you … what inspired you to do it? I mean, there are so many things you
         could've chosen…

Melanie: Well, yeah, I don't know I've always been, I've always had a big opinion on things that
         are gay and equal rights and all that kind of stuff. I was raised in a very liberal home,
         mom's like very liberal, and so um yeah… I wanted to do something that I connected
         with.

CRV: But at the same time your project connected with other people.

Melanie: Right.

CRV: Was that part of your intent?

Melanie: Um, yeah, because I knew how I felt and I could've just wrote what I felt but I wanted to
         see what other people, in the same group that I'm in, had to say.

CRV: If you notice, there were few people in that class that day because of some event that was
         going on, but the fact that you presented, there was some really neat dialogue going on,
         and some people were saying some interesting things. Did anyone say anything that,
         during that little time period right after you presented, that stuck in your head?

Melanie: Um… well personally, what Linda said … um… because part of my presentation was
         coming out to the class and I was so nervous and I was getting hot and like my heart was
         beating, and after I came out, I like loosened up and Linda brought that to my attention.
         She said that basically she could tell that that was a big weight lifted off my shoulders.
         And little things like how Angie was saying how proud she was… I just got a really good

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reaction! (smiling) And like, some of the people I hardly ever talk to in class, like Carol, gave me a hug after. And … and Chris… it was just quite positive.

CRV: It was really neat to see their reaction. Did you get any other reactions outside of class?

Melanie: Well, um, like people obviously spread the word. Um… like people were texting each other, 'Melanie came out to the class,' and so I was randomly getting hugs and all kinds of stuff. Really good things.

CRV: What did it mean to you to see people reacting in such a way?

Melanie: It shows that … um… the world is changing. 'Cause I don't know, I don't think I would've done this had it been any other time, you know? It shows that people are becoming more a… what's the word? 'Accepting,' of everyone. And that's good to see.

CRV: That is good to see. (Pause) Ah… let's think back a little about the class and about the resource project. You know, when I assign the resource project, I don't know what students are going to choose. You know? But, … you've seen me since the beginning of the school year, why do you think I assign this assignment?

Melanie: I don't know (half smiling).

CRV: So this is a question about me; the way you interpret me. Why do you think I assign this assignment?

Melanie: Because … I think that with every generation our minds, they change just a little bit, and … its um good to see where we're leading to. Like, where we're going, what we think, and… a lot of people say that my generation is like the 'Me' generation. Like, selfish and materialistic and superficial. But I think this resource project proved that we actually do think about other things, and we do care about the world we're living in, and I think maybe… you want us to know what was in our minds; what we could bring to the table.

CRV: At any point did you ever worry or think about my grading?

Melanie: Ah… not really (laughs).

CRV: Explain that, why not?

Melanie: I mean um… cause to me it didn't feel like … it wasn't about the grade to me. I wanted something that… I wanted to point out something that came from my heart pretty much. And as long as I put in the effort and knew what I was talking about, then I was not really worried about the grade.

CRV: (Smiling contemplatively) That's exactly what I wanted you to feel. And I didn't want anybody to worry about grades. If you step back, look at the quality of work that came out without even worrying about grades! Your response is very similar to what other people have shared. (PAUSE) Think back about some of the other projects you have seen from the class. Did any of them affect you in any kind of way?

Melanie: Christie's.

CRV: Christie Wilson?

Melanie: Christie Wilson. Just how bringing in her cousin, that was very powerful to me (Christie's cousin is a lesbian who spoke to the class about her life experiences; very empowered woman with many positive things to say). Because I don't know if I would've originally came out to the class the way I did, because I thought I was just going to put it in the book, but seeing her so comfortable with herself kind of inspired me to do that. Um… I loved everybody's project.

CRV: Well, I just want to say, that as a teacher, what you've done for a project and using the class to come out like that, I know that you've been open with your friends, like you said you were, but publicly like that… it's probably got to be one of the best and greatest honors that I could ever have. (She smiles) And it's something that is unforgettable as a teacher. (Pause)
        And so, I'm trying to explain what it is that's going on in this class that made you feel so comfortable that you could do such a … such a huge leap, you know what I mean? And, I guess in a nutshell, how would you put it? What is it that went on in this class that made you feel so okay with this, so comfortable?

Melanie: Well, um… not even just like the actual curriculum but this class has such a great vibe that we're all pretty much comfortable with each other. And, not to sound corny, but it was kind of like a little family. I don't know, I was just comfortable. So, even though it was a big deal for me to come out I knew it was going to be okay. And then just that fact that this class touches on issues that you don't really talk about throughout high school. I mean like talking about racism, not much and um… homosexuality that's not really touched upon in other classes. So you know…

CRV: Thank you. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., interview, June, 2009)

My belief in education is that it serves far greater purposes than to simply teach random bits of information that have very little meaning in the lives of students. My belief is that education, true education, has the responsibility to contribute to the welfare of humanity. Therefore, my role as a teacher is to use my abilities, talents, and knowledge to effect change in society, to arouse the potential within individuals, to inspire progress, and to continuously challenge any attempts to weaken or threaten these educational and transformational opportunities. Therefore, my motivation as a teacher is dependent on the feedback from students.

Ultimately, the student voice served two main purposes throughout my teaching experience. First, it allowed me to hear students' opinions, both positive and negative, about the Multicultural Literature course and about my teaching. This gave me the

opportunity to find new strategies, to know what worked and what did not; but secondly,

the student voice that demonstrated growth, learning, and inspiration, was the type of

feedback that helped me self-actualize as a teacher. It is the motivational praise that

makes me feel good about myself, and in turn, helps the continued development of my

own voice as a teacher.

Intercultural Dialogue

One of the major patterns that emerged from the personal and student data was

intercultural dialogue. As mentioned in the Empowered Voice section of this chapter,

class discussion was my primary method of instruction for various reasons. When I

created Multicultural Literature, I knew that I wanted to teach students the abilities to

listen, reflect, critically analyze, respond, and develop a greater understanding of social

injustice. As I had learned from my intercultural training, as well as participating in youth

oriented intercultural programs, group dialogue played an essential role in getting

students to hear, see, and share alternative perspectives about issues of racism, cultural

intolerance, discrimination, and prejudice.

According to the Compendium Thematic Space: Cultural Trends and Policies in

Europe (2010), intercultural dialogue is defined as:

> A process that comprises an open and respectful exchange between individuals, groups and
> organisations with different cultural backgrounds or world views. Among its aims are: to develop
> a deeper understanding of different perspectives and practices; to increase participation (or the
> freedom to make choices); to ensure equality; and to enhance creative processes. ("Council")

Using literature, combined with various teaching methods and practices, I find myself

discussing with students issues of racism, discrimination, sexism, and prejudice at very

profound levels. The safe and nurturing environment, as revealed through the data,

promotes a willingness and courage to share personally held views and experiences, which at times, become highly emotional, reflective, and impactful events. As I engaged them in topics of immigration, race, ethnicity, prejudice, and homophobia, I witnessed students becoming highly critical of social inequality, more aware of their own views and biases, and more tolerant of cultural differences. For many students, their participation in intercultural dialogue often induced critical thinking, emotional responses, and ethical thinking. In addition, the data revealed the impact of my role as their teacher, as they trusted me in helping shape their identities.

In reviewing the data for this study, my reflexivity and praxis revealed several themes that are discussed below. Such themes include my views on using intercultural dialogue as a teaching approach, my practice of intercultural questioning, and the natural process and nature of specific discussions on race and sexuality.

Discussion approach.

As mentioned in the Classroom Atmosphere section of this chapter, I explained my findings regarding the various elements that contribute to a classroom atmosphere that is free, open and safe. As I reviewed the data for intercultural dialogue, there was a direct relationship between the classroom atmosphere, or tone of the class, and my personal beliefs and practices regarding intercultural dialogue.

One of the most important aspects of intercultural competence is communication. According to Jokikokko (2005) intercultural competence is the "ability to encounter cultural differences in a positive way" (p. 70). Similarly, Loenhoff (2003) characterizes intercultural competence as the "reasonable interaction" between individuals of different

cultural backgrounds (p. 193). One of the most important goals I strive for in my teaching

is in creating positive interactions or encounters by giving students the most essential tool

to successfully communicate, the ability to listen to others' points of views. I often go

out of my way to give students the space for freedom of dialogue–to treat the class as a

safe place to share one's thoughts, ideas, and opinions. In a personal reflection in 2003 I

wrote:

> I am now in my third year of teaching multicultural literature. This is a class I designed
> specifically because I felt there was a need for students to delve deeper into issues of diversity.
> The multiculturalism movement in schools has traditionally been interpreted as simply addressing
> the contributions of ethnically diverse individuals. Often referred to as the 'tourist curriculum,'
> schools will hold festivals, celebrate holidays, establish 'cultural' weeks, sell 'cultural' foods and
> satisfactorily call this multiculturalism. I was yet to see a school assembly, a costume, a taco or
> song, teach students anything about the realities that face us as citizens each day. I designed the
> Multicultural Literature course to use all forms of literature as a way to engage critical thinking
> about their identities. By giving students the opportunity to analyze and discuss issues relating to
> race, ethnicity, prejudice, anger, discrimination, justice and respect, they first learn about
> themselves. When they are encouraged to question their preexisting thinking about particular
> issues, there is a transformation that occurs within the student. Through sincere discussions,
> including the candidness of the teacher, I have found that when the curriculum revolves around the
> student's identity, he/she becomes totally engaged in the learning process. (C. R. Valverde, p.c.,
> journal entry, January 21, 2003)

The personal data showed that much of my approach toward intercultural

dialogue was rooted in constant philosophical questioning of my own role as a teacher,

but more specifically, the role of teachers and education. In a personal reflection I wrote:

> The first problem with its [education] construction is the belief that we, as teachers, are the
> deliverers of knowledge. We have to rid ourselves from the belief that we simply transfer
> information to students and adopt the belief that we serve more as 'guides' toward knowledge.
> We know that the value of the educational experience is enhanced when students discover
> knowledge by themselves. The point of departure for such an approach is to begin with sincere
> dialogue with the students themselves. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, November, 2000)

The data also showed that world events during the first years of the Multicultural

Literature course caused me to solidify my views on dialogue as an educational process

through my own fundamental principles of peace, justice, and ethics. For example, in a

reflection several weeks prior to the invasion of Iraq, I wrote:

> September 11th, 2001, marked the change of many things in our country. In some way or another, the tragedy has affected our lives as citizens of the United States. The tragic episode of our nation's history, followed by the series of events that has brought us to where we are today, has resulted in an end to innocence for our younger population. For many young people unaware of world affairs, the last year and a half has revealed the world to be a nasty, unfriendly place to live. They have been exposed, at a much deeper level, to the concepts of freedom, war, peace, life and death. Some have found comfort through spiritual guidance provided by their families, others in trusting our world leaders to do the right thing. However, my overall observance of students [at Cinema] is that of confusion, anger, despair, apathy and disempowerment.
>
> Students are living in a complicated world, which for the first time in their lives are learning about terrorism, nuclear and biological weapons, homeland security and color-coded threat levels. For many of us young adults, we find ourselves in the same boat. As complicated it has been for adults to comprehend, imagine the impact our world affairs has had on those most impressionable.
>
> I have found that teachers are finding it difficult to discuss such issues with students. Many of us are finding it difficult to comprehend these issues ourselves, much less able to discuss them objectively with students. The problem lies in our view that an objective approach to these affairs is the most appropriate. If we did away with the idea that we needed to be objective and simply explained to the students what we do know and how we feel about them, we would be doing the greater justice to our students. This impending war is due to the absence of dialogue. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, February 9, 2003)

Throughout the process of generating intercultural dialogue, personal reflection

data from 2003 and 2004, not only shows my concern for intercultural dialogue as a

process but also demonstrates my own personal struggle to maintain a balance between

what is considered appropriate, such as political topics in class discussions, and my

ability to model a free exchange of ideas. For example, several weeks after the invasion

in Iraq, I questioned my own neutrality as a teacher:

> As I attempt to teach the class, can I truly be neutral? Can I help develop empathy and understanding without modeling how to share my own personal beliefs? How can I expect students to open-up in authentic cultural dialogue if I do not reveal myself as a cultural being? My thoughts, my opinions, my fears, my concerns, are who I am. Students need to see me–not in disguise as an authoritarian teacher–but as a person, a human being. How can we teach students to question and analyze their culture, their identities, and not expect to address critical issues in the world (i.e., Iraq, Afghanistan, North Korea, Iran)? Politics is part of the dialogue; it cannot be omitted as a topic to discuss, to speculate about–and the opinion of the teacher must be authentic. This I find to be an effective method to elicit the sharing of students' opinions. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, April, 2003)

The data suggested that as a facilitator to the intercultural dialogue in my classes, I needed to become a full participant within the dialogue. This fundamental belief is later seen to have had an important impact on students as demonstrated in their final evaluations of the class.

As I sought to engage students through intercultural dialogue, early reflections demonstrated my interest and learning about my students throughout the process. The more I incorporated intercultural dialogue into my teaching practice, the more I reflected on my experiences. In my personal journal I wrote:

> I am always amazed at the reaction I get with students when I engage them in sincere dialogue about culture. Topics such as immigration, racism, stereotyping, religion and terrorism captivate their attention. You can see who is the most engaged in the dialogue by their facial gestures, questions asked and movement in their desks. Students ask honest questions with such issues and it is easy to sense their hunger for the subject. But the greatest part of dialogue is that they mainly have comments rather than questions. True dialogue!! If a student decides to share a personal anecdote about an issue, I explore that anecdote and follow up by asking, "What did you feel? What did you learn about the incident?" (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, February 9, 2003)

This enthusiasm that I began to develop for dialogue influenced much of pedagogical interactions with students. The more I learned about my students, the more I learned how to question their thoughts and beliefs, the more I learned about myself.

In my personal reflections, I often wrote poignant critiques about education and society, but I also evaluated my expectations of myself as a teacher. To better inform this study of my philosophical views on intercultural dialogue, I include here a list of teaching traits that I generated upon reflecting on my role as a teacher in 2003. I viewed these traits as personal determinations, which are later seen to have had an impact on my dialogical interactions with students through the data. In no particular order I listed:

- Throughout a lesson, I have to maintain a spirit of enthusiasm. A teacher's energy toward his profession is vital for a conducive learning environment.

- Each lesson must be personalized. A student must engage a lesson from the personal level, not from mine.

- I must always be culturally sensitive; understand nuances and project a sincere appreciation for others and their beliefs. Students must feel that I validate them as human beings rather than 'just a student.'

- I must always assess students' emotional levels; I need to *read* the students. I have to remember that emotional levels are constantly fluctuating.

- I must always be authoritative not authoritarian.

- I must clearly understand the difference between equality and equity.

- I must always practice creativity; innovation in one's lesson planning and approaches must derive from the realities of the students of a given class and a given year. In other words, lessons must never stop evolving, but rather, get better each year.

- I must smile often; body language is extremely powerful in teaching. Since our bodies are constantly sending non-verbal messages, body language plays a major role in one's approach toward students (i.e., smiling, laughing, hand shaking, hugging, etc.)

- I must create a safe environment; students must feel free to express themselves and not feel threatened about making mistakes. Many teachers do not emphasize the value of mistakes. Mistakes are natural to the human growth process. Rather than capitalizing on student mistakes and viewing them as teaching opportunities, teachers too often injure the student for making them. When students laugh and make fun of another's mistake it only makes matters worse; especially if the teacher allows it.

- I must truly understand life's interdependence and view his/her role as vital in the development of future generations.

- I must have compassion.

- I must love my job; go above and beyond, even if teachers are 'unsung heroes' in society. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, November 7, 2003)

These determinations show how the intercultural dialogue data correlates to my personal

belief system.

The personal reflections data indicated that intercultural dialogue was my primary

teaching approach. Through the various short stories, poems, newspaper articles, essays,

and other public documents, selected to address my four lesson units (i.e., Immigration,

Race and Ethnicity, Sexuality/Gender, and Religious Intolerance), I generated dialogue

by using the students' own knowledge and experiences with the themes that emerged

from the readings. By serving as discussion facilitator, rather than an *all-knowing*

depositor of information–as learned from intercultural training exercises–what evolved

from the discussions was an array of voices, opinions, and beliefs that served as the

actual learning material over the literature itself. It allowed students to openly share their

cultural backgrounds, experiences and beliefs, that provided deeper understanding of

themselves and others. Under a clear set of guidelines, generated by students themselves

(i.e., ROPES), what resulted for most students in class discussions was an open exchange

of experiences that fostered intercultural dialogue. In one anonymous evaluation a student

wrote:

> He presents a few key points of information and then lets us formulate opinions and discuss. He
> also presents little information and then lets us say what we know about it. I've also noticed that
> he rarely says his opinion on any issue. He lets us make up our own mind and share what we
> think. Mr. V learns from us too because he gets to see how teens deal with certain issues that he
> might not have thought of. I feel they are very effective because he's letting us be independent and
> not just lecturing to us all the time. (Anonymous, January, 2010)

At the beginning of each year, I spent a great amount of time getting the students

to feel comfortable in the class. Several early strategies that I employed included ice-

breakers such as Cultural Bingo and the Name Game, as well as introductory strategies

such as asking students, "If you could be an animal, which animal would you choose and

why?" These types of activities (including ROPES) helped me progressively move

toward building an atmosphere of trust and respect. At the beginning of 2009-2010

school year, an audio recording of some of my first words to students on the second day

of class, demonstrated how I began lay the foundation for intercultural dialogue in my

classes:

> This class is what you make it to be. We will cover as much as we get through. I will not set a
> specific point we must reach by the end of the semester on your syllabus other than getting to

where we finish. Your knowledge base in this class will be drawn from the discussions we engage in. My hope is not for you to be in this class because of a letter grade, but rather, with the desire to create value of what we share.

First thing, everyone close your notebooks and put your pens down. We are often sucked into this idea that we have to be ready to write everything down when it really doesn't need to be. This class is what you'll make it to be, this is why it is crucial you get to know each other. This is why we are going to spend the next few minutes getting acquainted. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, September 7, 2009)

Laying down my expectations of the class was only the first step in a number of

techniques and activities that promoted intercultural dialogue. Considering these

techniques, I reflected:

In my attempt to educate a diverse population of students, I have learned that my approach and techniques must be diverse as well. So many aspects must be considered each day for example learning styles, learning modalities, proficiency levels, learning disabilities, etc. But at the same time, I have to consider realms that are not so easy to classify or label such as student appreciation, interest, value and happiness. Teaching is more than the transfer of knowledge, but the building of character, respect, cooperation and identity. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, November 7, 2001)

Another important theme that emerged across all patterns, particularly with

intercultural dialogue, was my ethically-driven approach toward my teaching. For

example, in a personal reflection during the immigration unit in 2004, I wrote:

As the class reads about the various immigrant experiences, highlighting the relevancy of the issue in present day, you can slowly begin to point out that once people are here in the US, we have to some how shape this country into a new America. Now that people of so many different backgrounds live within the same borders, an important step in the future will be for young people to bridge the divides that separate many of our communities. This is why students should be given the chance to explore the injustices we have committed as a society against people of certain ethnic groups. In doing so, through effective and heartfelt discussion, the teacher can guide them to reveal a sense of concern for such issues. By reading and highlighting the human injustices of hate, racism, sexism, discrimination, etc., the teacher has the opportunity to challenge students to think about the very issues that make them prejudiced. I have often found it necessary to share some of my own past prejudices, as well as implied political beliefs, as a way to ignite sincere dialogue. Eventually, a tone of respect, openness and empathy begin to develop. What is key, is to point out the diversity of the students in my class, and allow them to see that they can work together toward a shared learning experience. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, October, 2004)

Although I rarely shared my political beliefs directly with students, taking an ethical

stand on what I perceived as "injustice," especially with world affairs, had in many ways,

exposed my political inclinations. Whether through my voice intonation, body language,

and types of questions during class dialogues, what I found most significant about the intercultural dialogue data was how my own personal beliefs influenced my practice of generating dialogue.

In essence, what the personal data showed was that my intent for successful intercultural dialogue was firmly a result of reflexivity and praxis. Ultimately, this interaction between my personally held beliefs and teaching practice showed to have an impact on students' overall experience in the class.

In response to the question, "What made this class unique in comparison to others?" the end of the year anonymous student evaluations from 2006, 2008, and 2009, showed that students reacted favorably to the discussion format. Much of the data showed an appreciation for learning about others. For example, many of their responses regarding learning about others included, "What made this class unique were students conversing with students. Students teach students and that's the most effective because we hear what our peers are thinking and how everyone feels" (Anonymous, June, 2008) and "The openness of the class; it taught about life and what goes on around us. It was often full of opinions from members of the class and that helped to learn about people's experiences" (Anonymous, June, 2009). Similarly, other students commented, "Discussions made it unique. Unlike other lit classes, or just high school classes in general, we learn from each other instead of just the teacher. This is what also made this class so effective" (Anonymous, June, 2006).

In similar examples, students specifically commented on their appreciation of encouragement to speak out during class discussions. For example, "People were able to

speak their minds and express their feelings. Also it helped us think outside the box and become more open-minded" (Anonymous, June, 2009) and "I think I benefited from being able to share my ideas with the people in my class. I think it helped my speaking skills and from being able to hear other points of views" (Anonymous, June, 2009). In one example, a student elaborated on the personal impact of being able to speak out:

> The thing I love about this class is we get to listen to each other and see just how smart we really are. I am a firm believer that getting an "A" doesn't mean your'e smart. Surviving life, that makes you smart. I've had a hard time in school, I know I'm very smart, but if I don't like a subject I'll just settle for a B or C, I'd rather put my brain to use on meaningful things. In this class, I was able to show that. I was able to speak my mind, speaking up is something I'm hoping will get me farther in life. This class allows us to shine as an individual, something everyone needs to learn because later in life we will need to know how to talk and relate to people. (Anonymous, June, 2006)

In some instances, the data showed how intercultural dialogue helped develop cross-cultural understanding. For example:

> This class was unique because we learned a lot about religion, race, and culture (something that isn't learned in other literature courses). Not only did we learn about these subjects, but we also shared our personal experiences which I believe made this class effective, because we learned to get past our differences and find things that we all had in common. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

At a more personal level, another student shared:

> This class was unique in the sense that we went over topics in depth that we have never gone over before. This class was effective because it made me change opinions and really helped to open up to others. I am not sure how it happened, but it did. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

In general, the extensive mention of the uniqueness of the course, specifically due to intercultural dialogue, indicated an overall appreciation for the opportunity to learn from others, share their opinions, and grow from the experience. The final comments demonstrate this: "What made this class unique were all the discussions and how open people were with one another. I think this class was effective because people were open and we learned new things" (Anonymous, June, 2008). In addition, another wrote:

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What made this class unique from other literature classes are the benefits that you gain from this class (multicultural literature class). We learn about real-life issues that occur every day in our society. The information that you learn from this class can be used to see immediate changes (for the better) in our society. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

Intercultural questioning.

One of the major factors that contributed to intercultural dialogue in the data was the theme of open-ended or non-rhetorical questions I employed throughout the course of the year. The personal and external data (i.e., lesson plans, class assignments, etc.) showed that I always accompanied each reading and topic with these types of questions. In reflecting upon my own form of questioning students in intercultural dialogue, I wrote:

> The benefit of working hard to construct knowledge is that it creates a longer-term value in the life of the student. If the knowledge was simply memorized, its usefulness is temporary, serving only as a temporary value to achieve a grade or score.
> Reflection is a powerful tool in constructing knowledge. Giving the students the opportunity to share insightful reactions to the material allows them to more deeply internalize information. Value-creating questions are those that probe the psyche or spirit of the person. These are questions that allow students to reveal their unique take on an issue; in doing so, other students listen. It gives them an even deeper understanding of the issue, of themselves, allowing them to eventually construct their own knowledge. It is a process that parents and teachers must be made fully aware of. Several questions I ask are, What do you think about ...?, How does it make you feel?, What are your thoughts on…?, How do you feel about [person's] comment?, What would you have done differently?
> We have to remind ourselves that students are bodies of knowledge, not empty buckets to be filled. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, February 9, 2003)

Rather than beginning with a prescribed set of information to be taught, I elicited students' thoughts and opinions about particular topics. The following is a series of interactions, formal and informal, that demonstrated the nature and process by which I achieved intercultural dialogue, particularly using themes of race, ethnicity, and sexual orientation.

One example of open-ended questioning was revealed in the way I taught cultural terminology. I began each year by introducing students to a set of terms that are often used in discussing cultural diversity. For example, the first term I introduced was *culture*.

At first, students would mention things such as music, language, nationality, race, foods and festivals. However, as they shared these types of responses, I would not agree nor disagree, but rather, continued to ask more questions about culture. Table 10 demonstrates the types of questions I would ask in discussing the notion of culture.

Table 10

Culture Questions Initiating Intercultural Dialogue

Questions

What is culture?
Is culture something we possess or create?
Does everyone have a culture?
When people generally speak of culture, what are they referring to?
Is culture your ethnicity?
Is culture your race?
Is culture your language?
Is culture your customs?
Is culture your beliefs?
Is your culture your nationality?
Can your culture be influenced by your …
- o SES?
- o Neighborhood?
- o Age?
- o Gender?
- o Abilities?
- o Disabilities?
- o Educational level?
- o Sexual orientation?
- o Environment?
- What is meant when we hear phrases: *pop-culture*, *rap-culture*?
- What is your *home culture*? *School culture*? Does CCHS have its unique school culture in comparison to other schools?
- What creates this culture?
- Can your home culture ever come in conflict with your school culture? If so, in what ways?
- Do we share culture or do we have our own unique culture?
- Do brothers and sisters share the same culture or do they have unique cultures? What about twins?
- Do you have many cultures or do you have only one culture? (plural or singular)
- Can you change your culture?
- Can you taste your culture? Smell? See? Hear? Can you hold it in your hands?
- Is culture permanent or temporary?
- Are you born into a culture or do you create it?
- What do you think when I say "Mexican culture"? What do you think when I say "American culture"?
- What is *your* culture?

What is culture?

As these types of questions would get students to share their thoughts and opinions, I

often engaged them by asking them further questions for deeper reflection. Some

students agreed with each other, while others disagreed. Since I would purposely not

validate any of their responses, I would occasionally continue to ask, "If you say that is

culture, then what *is* culture?"

Ultimately, I would end the lesson without a clear definition of culture. In other words, I would leave students in a type of limbo that produced signs of annoyance, frustration, and unsettledness. I found throughout most of my experience that putting students through this line of questioning would eventually result with a strong feeling of ambivalence toward the term culture. Although students would often want to go to a dictionary to settle their frustration, by not defining the term to students with a textbook definition, I managed to open the possibility of ambivalence when discussing any topic of cultural diversity. I eventually concluded the lesson by asking students to keep the definition open for the remainder of the year. I explained that through their journey in the class–they would examine different dimensions of culture and that they would revisit the concept of culture at the end of the school year. The following class discussion during the 2009-2010 school year demonstrated this interaction:

> CRV: We throw around the word culture a lot. When we talk about culture, we talk about cultural clubs, we talk about people being cultured, we talk about culture in terms of identity, when we talk about people's race or ethnicity and stuff like that. And so, the question ultimately though is, if we're using the word in so many different ways, then, what is culture?
>
> Donnell: It's an everyday thing.
>
> CRV: Really? It's an everyday day thing? Is sleeping?
>
> Donnell: That is culture.
>
> CRV: Washing the car? Is that part of your culture?
> (Student stays silent; several students call out, "no" while others laugh)
>
> CRV: Okay. Okay. So what is culture?
> (I call on other students)
>
> Linda: The customs of other people.
>
> CRV: Okay, that is culture, right? So, if we create a custom in this class, is that a culture?
>
> Class: (Some students call out) "Yeah!"

Jacob: It's a way for a family to preserve the things of where they came from.

CRV: Okay, so it's where we came from. Very good.

Chris: A country can have a culture but so can an individual have his own.

CRV: Okay, so if that is the case, what is culture?

Clare: One can have culture at home, or how we dress.

Debra: It has to do with identity?

CRV: Oh, so is culture the color of one's hair?
         (Some students smile, while others become visibly annoyed)

Donnell: Culture is the types of foods they eat.

CRV: Oh, so it's foods. So what's cultural about a Mexican family making spaghetti?

Donnell: It's been assimilated into the American way of life.

CRV: So you're saying spaghetti is American?

Donnell: No. But a lot of American food has been made American because there a lot of Italian
         immigrants.

CRV: Do you ever wonder where Italians first obtained noodles? (Several students look
         intrigued) Popular myth has it that Marco Polo returned with the idea after his travels in
         China. (Several students nod with interest) So what is culture?

Nick: It's one's ethnicity!

CRV: Okay, so then, can you choose your culture or are you born into your culture? (Pause) So
         if you're born into your culture, how can you change it? (Class murmurs loudly) So then,
         is culture static or does it stay the same?

Luis: Culture is not limited to ethnicity. There's gang culture.

CRV: Hey, listen to this (appealing to the rest of the students). What does it mean to have a
         gang culture?

Luis: Traditions and beliefs.

CRV: So can we adopt these cultures?

Bree: Yes.

CRV: Can we change these cultures?

Class: (Random students answer…) No. Yes.
         (As I see the frustration level intensifying, I attempt to gingerly ease the mood)

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CRV: So listen, we're getting some differences in opinions. Can we change culture? Can we not change culture? Some people say yes, and some people say no. But I want to go back to Mary. What were you going to say?

Mary: It's ultimately a part of you, you are your culture. Its what we are now and what we'll develop.

CRV: So its what you identify with, right? Clothing? Do you pass this down to others?

Jacob: I consider culture when I go to my friend's house and his mom makes me food from Nicaragua. I consider myself part of that culture as I'm experiencing it. But not exactly becoming.

CRV: What's interesting is that's happening here in the United States, in the country we call America. So are there different cultures that make up a bigger culture? In fact, here's an ultimate question. What is American culture? What is it? (Bell rings) Keep thinking about the question guys. We'll talk more tomorrow. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, March, 2009)

Another form of questioning that elicited intercultural dialogue was getting students to think and question other common terms related to cultural diversity. In a description for a colleague scheduled to teach another section of the Multicultural Literature class the following year, I demonstrated my rationale for engaging students in this form of intercultural dialogue. I wrote:

> I have found that students find interest in the deconstruction of ethnic and racial terms. I give them a breakdown of various words such as African-American/Black/Negro/Colored, Caucasian/White/Anglo, Asian/Oriental, Hispanic/Latino/Chicano, etc.
> I have students carefully look at the different terms used in the discussion of cultural diversity (see list). I ask them to deconstruct words and attempt to understand their social construction that was based on a time and attitude of our nation. One such example is the use of the word 'American." People of the United States call themselves Americans. Throughout our history the term American developed as the national identification we call ourselves. However, people from Latin America take exceptions with Americans because they too consider themselves American. Many do not believe that the term American as a descriptor of a person from the United States is not accurate, some even think it's arrogant to claim such a word. In Spanish, people from the United States are not often referred to as *Americanos* unless you are in an area of the border-states with Mexico and second generation Latinos who use the term. The term used in Spanish is *Estadounidense*, which accurately translates to United Statesian. Unfortunately, we do not use this silly sounding word even when our grammar rules allow it.
> The goal of the unit is to get students to realize that our words, our language, contain histories that shaped meaning. Since meaning and terminology change throughout history, I offer students the opportunity to consider experimenting with language, the creation of new terminology since new terms are being created everyday. When students are given the opportunity to create language that is original and their own, vocabulary and literature begins to take on a new meaning for the student. It becomes something moldable, something that can be fashioned. When students

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reach this realization, they go through an empowering experience as they carefully begin to analyze other common terms we use in cultural discussions.

> When cultural issues are discussed, many of the topics are socially constructed which has given rise to the creation of new words that help define or classify certain concepts. Some of the terminology we've been taught in schools or learned by common usage is socially loaded with histories, stories and ideas. As a teacher of the multicultural classroom, one must help students learn about the meanings and the power of words by helping them deconstruct the terms as well as construct them as well. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., email, July 16, 2008)

Questioning students about specific terms not only produced ambivalence toward labels, it also helped generate students' thinking about the meanings society has attributed to these terms. I find that the exercise of deconstructing terms through discussion provides me an effective way to elicit intercultural dialogue.

In the end of the year anonymous evaluations, students found the questioning approach to be quite identifiable and effective. In comments relating to effective methods and strategies that I employed as a teacher, a common theme that emerged was the recognition of my questioning, "He uses strategies like answering a question with question" (Anonymous, June, 2009), and "He questions all of our thoughts and opinions and challenges us. We read things that are debatable and are topics that are in society today" (Anonymous, June, 2009). In describing my teaching, many students shared similar descriptions, such as:

> Mr. V allows the students to teach themselves by not telling us what is the answer to the situation at hand, but he asks questions and implies statements that would guide us to come up with intelligent answers for the topic. He is very effective in his strategies because they cause you to think very deeply and contemplate other possibilities and realities. (Anonymous, January, 2010)

And,

> A lot of times it does not feel like Mr. V is teaching. I feel he is mostly proctoring discussions and instigating debate, which allows not only for us to learn from him, but for us to learn from each other. This is very effective because some of the most profound ideas can come from our minds. (Anonymous, January, 2010)

In both comments, as well as a large percentage of other evaluations, students identified

the process of learning from each other as a unique characteristic of the class.

As intercultural dialogue is about the development of a more profound

understanding of alternative perspectives, the questioning of students through open-ended

questions and sharing of experience, allowed students to hear and learn from each other

in deep and meaningful ways. A review of external data such as lesson plans

demonstrated a clear theme of reflective questioning designed to elicit intercultural

dialogue. Below is a listing of reflective questions based on several readings from the

course:

In the Land of the Free (short story) by Sui Sin Far (1912)
- How is institutional power represented in the story?
- Who is depicted as 'in power'?
- Who seems to exert power over others?
- Who is depicted as powerless and passive?
- In what ways do we see gender inequality in the story?
- In what ways are racism and/or discrimination depicted in the story?
- Whose perspective is the story told from?
- How can we view this story through a psychological lens?
- How can we draw any political implications from this text?
- Through an economic lens, how do Hom Hing and Lae Choo's economic status affect their conditions?
- How does the story affect your own social position? In what ways can you identify with any of these characters? How did this story make you feel? (C. R. Valverde, p.c., lesson plan notes, September 9, 2009)

One Nation Indivisible, Is It History? (article) By W. Booth (1998) (Washington Post)
- What are we going to become? Who are we? How do the newcomers fit in? How will the natives handle it?
- Historically, what have demographic changes produced?
- Do we see any of these changes today?
- According to the reading, neighborhoods are determined by ethnicity. Is this true?
- What did MLK say were the most segregated institutions in the US? Is this still true today?
- What is happening in schools?
- The reading mentions sitcoms and TV shows that are considered Black or White, Latino or Asian. Is this true today?
- Some people mention that diversity is a source of vitality for our country. Others believe diversity will bring a "loss of community." What do you think?
- The reading mentions the issue of bilingual education. Some people believe that we should be teaching other languages, primarily Spanish, in schools. Others believe that if they want to learn another language they should stay in their own countries. What do you think?

- Should we consider making Spanish more official? Or should we continue with English only?
- Can we live together in such diversity? Will we harness its vitality or will we grow more withdrawn from each other?
- What does this all mean for you? How will you approach diversity in your daily life? What will you teach your children? (C. R. Valverde, p.c., lesson plan notes, October, 2009)

A Class Divided –W. Peters (1985) (PBS/Frontline Documentary)
- What role does education play when it comes to issues of bigotry, racism and discrimination?
- Must you feel discrimination or be discriminated against in order to understand it?
- Are schools microcosms of society?
- Would the lesson/experiment work with adults?
- According to the Forward by Kenneth Clark, Can children "be taught to develop and express sensitive concerns for the hopes, anxieties, and humanity of others"?
- What does it mean to be "sensitive" to the concerns of others?
- Is it easier to teach children prejudice than it is to teach sensitivity?
- Are schools racially segregated today? If so, how can we control for that?
- What are your thoughts about Ms. Elliot's courage and commitment?
- How important is it for teachers to take risks in their teaching?
- Have you been taught to empathize with others? How?
- How important is the role of the teacher to teach humane values?
- What is the importance of the Resource Projects? (C. R. Valverde, p.c., lesson plan notes, December, 2009)

American Anthropological Association Statement on Race- Executive Board of the AAA (1998)
- So even though we may want to move beyond race, and according to psychologists our brains are programmed to see race, how exactly then do we move beyond?
- If race is constantly in our face, and historically the ideas behind race have usually been negative, what are we to do with the concept of race?
- Ultimately, we have to ask: Is it possible to *ignore* race? This is a question that needs to be asked.
- If we attempt to change the historical meaning of race, how do we do it? How do we 'unlearn' our historical ideas of race? How do people change their thinking?
- What does it take? (C. R. Valverde, p.c., lesson plan notes, January, 2010)

Explaining White Privilege to the Deniers and the Haters (essay) by T. Wise (2008).
- According to the writer, what Blacks were made aware of by the age of 5 is not learned by Whites until a later age. True?
- "[Whites] fail to intervene in prejudice or discrimination, not because they approve, but because they never notice it! Cluelessness, not ruthlessness, is a far more accurate description of the White psyche with respect to discrimination." Do you agree?
- Do Whites get treated with immediate suspicion when entering a store?
- Do they get harsh treatment from law enforcement for no reason?
- Do they experience difficulty hailing a taxi cab?
- Do Whites experience the clutching of the handbag in an elevator?
- Do Whites have family members that have been denied entrance to a public facility on the basis of race?
- What might be some other experiences that minorities have that many Whites will never have experienced? (C. R. Valverde, p.c., lesson plan notes, February, 2010)

Below are examples of questions that also generated intercultural dialogue based on specific topics:

"Illegal" vs. "Undocumented" (discussion topic)
- Does the word "illegal" dehumanize individuals?
- Do the words we use to describe people matter? Explain
- Is it true that people do illegal things but are not necessary "illegal?"
- Do we call thieves, tax cheats, and child molesters "illegals"? Why not?
- Does the word "illegal" take away their identities as individuals and human beings?
- Does hearing someone's use of either term tell us something about his or her bias toward the debate? Is it an indicator?
- Fears shared by anti-immigration activists cause them to be more prone to stay in their own enclaves, in houses with multiple families, don't speak English, creating a Latino subculture, lack assimilation. What do you think? (C. R. Valverde, p.c., lesson plan notes, October, 2009)

"Emancipate yourself from mental slavery / None but ourselves can free our minds" (song lyrics) B. Marley (1979).
- What are the systems that influence us in thinking negatively about race?
- Can these systems be used to challenge us to think more positively about race?
- If so, what is our responsibility?
- If culture is about our meanings and our values, can culture be changed? Can it be created into something new?
- What culture would *you* [emphasis added] like to create? (C. R. Valverde, p.c., lesson plan notes, December, 2008)

Ultimately, the type of questioning that I engage in with students helps students think critically about various issues. The questions provide the impetus to generate effective intercultural dialogue.

Discussing issues of race and identity.

In the teaching of the Race and Ethnicity unit during the 2009-2010 school year, a data theme that emerged was the genuineness and heartfelt discussions that emerged from intercultural dialogue. As the classes began to read and discuss issues of race and ethnicity, many students found the opportunity to openly discuss personal, and at times, painful experiences. For example, in the following personal journal entry, I retell a significant ten-minute event that had occurred earlier in the day. The entry not only reflects students' willingness to open-up, but it also continues to demonstrate a dimension of the teacher's voice as I share my thought process throughout the episode. The following is the entry in its totality:

Today something interesting happened. In my attempt to carefully manage my role as Director of Activities with my teaching of the ML course, I planned for my students to watch the Teaching Tolerance video, "A Place At The Table" which features high school students reflecting on their ethnic and cultural backgrounds as they each told stories of struggle. A White student discusses the potato famine in Ireland, an African American discusses his great grandmother's struggle against post slavery US by being a teacher in a Freedom School, a Native American student speaks about residential schools her ancestors experienced, a Haitian student discusses the violent childhood she experienced as a child before coming to the United States, etc.

I figured that the 40-minute video would keep the students entertained for most of each period giving me the opportunity to work on other things. I knew the video would also serve as a launching point for the Immigration Unit after they had taken their quiz on cultural terminology.

For both my first and second periods, I realized the video would end about 10 minutes prior to the bell. Rather than the students doing nothing, I decided a short debrief of the film would eat up the remaining time. I began by asking, "Any thoughts, reactions, or impressions about the film?" First period was pretty average but what happened in 2nd period totally blew my mind.

With only about 7 minutes of class, as students shared what they had in common with the various figures in the video, it was what Debra did that made it a significant event. Calling on Debra to speak, she mentioned that she had once had a negative experience with racism. At one level, I felt intrigued that she was going to share something regarding racism, especially because she is White. One thing I have come to realize is how uncommon it is for minority students to hear the White perspective on race. What I mean is that when students first begin talking about race, it is quite easy to see racism only from a White-Black dichotomy. However, if I really wanted students to develop intercultural competence, I needed to make sure that I did not pass up any opportunities to let them hear the very perspectives held by their classmates.

What is interesting about Debra, is that from about the second week of school, I began to feel a bit of resistance from her. I noticed that when I was going over cultural terms such as racism, stereotyping, and scapegoating, she would consistently look down at her paper, rarely looking up, sometimes seeming uninterested or annoyed. One day I was sitting at the computer by the door when she walked in with her classmate and I heard her last words from a conversation that started outside, "well, another boring period." I wondered if she was talking about my class or about another? Why would she be saying that entering my class? What I found most interesting is that I had been totally stoked of all of the positive feedback I had heard from many students, that for the first time this year, I was faced with the possibility that some of my students may not be enjoying the class. This is important for me to always look at. I don't know if it's due to my self-consciousness as a teacher, my fear of having my feelings hurt, or my desire to make everyone happy, that I began to wonder in the back of my mind. This was why when Debra decided to participate during the video discussion; I knew something meaningful would be said.

She shared an experience when she was in Middle School, where she was playing around with a friend. In the exchange, her friend said something to the effect of Debra having "dirty blonde hair." Taken aback, in response, she retorted that her friend had nappy hair. It was with this word that she drew offense to her friend, who happened to be African-American. The friend left and soon returned with a group of angry African-American girls which surrounded her ready to jump her. The assumption was being made that because she used the word "nappy" that a racial implication was being made. In the exchange, one African-American girl called her a "snowflake."

As Debra told the story, she became choked up and tears welled in her eyes. The classroom became hushed, not a sound or movement from 38 students. Everyone listened intently, including me, never drawing my eyes away from her as she spoke. I felt overcome with emotion myself, but I also knew that something significant was occurring in the process of creating a safe learning environment. As Debra finished her story, there was the inevitable uncomfortable silence produced when somehow the class discussion became serious. In order for the silence not to fester, I quickly responded, "Debra, thank you for sharing that story. You see, like the video, it is

important for everyone to hear each other's story." Visibly I could see that Debra was very troubled by having recalled that episode in her life. I wanted to make sure that her honesty and her openness was somehow rewarded; I wanted to help her bring some sense of closure. But in that instant, I had a decision to make. I could respond by trying to say something about her experience, something consoling, perhaps sympathetic; but I also thought, perhaps it would be more powerful if it came from a student rather than the teacher. At that moment I said, "Rather than me saying something about Debra's experience, does anyone here have anything to offer as a way to help Debra understand the behavior of those girls?" Going out on a limb, I knew I ran the risk of looking up at 38 blank faces – but my hunch was that someone would have something wise to say.

Tina was the only one who raised her hand. Tina was one of my most outspoken African American students. I called on her and she explained that the reason the girls took offense was because of the history of the word. She began to speak, and I noticed she too was choked and emotional. She had truly felt something for Debra's pain. Holding back tears, she explained that as a Black child, they are often raised to think that Whites have constantly oppressed them, and the use of certain language would bring up feelings of that anger and resentment. I was speechless at how well she explained her point. She went on to explain that the behavior of the girls was uncalled for and wrong. Debra listened intently, so did the entire class.

I quickly interjected, "Do you notice how in this experience one negative produced another negative? You see, if no one is there to break that, it becomes a never ending cycle of anger and mistrust."

Next, another African American girl yelled out, "Those girls were being ignorant!"

Noticing that the bell was going to ring, I welcomed that final comment as it gave me great pleasure to have Debra hear from other African American students about how they sympathized with her and understood her pain.

The bell rang. I again told Debra how thankful I was for her to share the story. She half smiled and said, "you're welcome." It was then that I noticed Jamal was the last to get out of his seat. Jamal is normally one of my most outspoken African American students, very Christian in his faith and the things he says. He was unusually quiet when I asked, "Jamal, what's up? You were pretty quiet today. Is everything alright?"

"Yeah, I was going to raise my hand but the bell rung." I stared intently hoping that he'd have more to say. He began, "I was going to share a story about how my parents always brought me up to accept everyone." As a child, like Debra, Jamal had friends of various ethnicities. He went on and told me a story that one Sunday, he decided to take two of his White friends to church with him and his family. It was considered a Black Church. Everything was fine, but on the next Sunday when Jamal returned without his friends, some of the congregants had asked, "So Jamal, are you an oreo now?" As Jamal told the story, he visibly became uncomfortable. His eyes, his body language had shifted as I could see he was deeply pained by this experience. I told him, "I'm sorry to hear that." But with a loss of words, I had very little more to say. "Thanks for sharing this with me. Do you still go to the same church?" "No" And we parted with a look of neutrality. Nothing more was to be said, the class was over and he needed to get to his other class.

Although these experiences occurred in a span of approximately 10 minutes, it gave me the opportunity to reflect on the level of understanding many of our teens today experience issues of race. Many of these young people do not see race in the same way I was brought up seeing it. Many of these middle class kids have never really experienced any major racial episode in their lives. In fact, most of them were born on the year of the LA Riots and very little racial controversy has been part of their lives. However, despite the lack of historical events in their lives, they still experience the remnants of our racial animosities that are still very much alive today. This is important for me to understand. Each year I cannot teach about race or ethnicity in the same way. For the past 8 years, I have had to adapt to their level of understanding, the themes they bring in, the topics and mediums of interest. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, September 29, 2009)

Through a review of audio recordings of class discussions, the data continued to show a theme of openness and sharing. In leading up to Race and Ethnicity unit, I introduced the topic of immigration and Americanism. Using Pat Mora's (1986) *Immigrants* poem as the basis of an intercultural discussion, the dialogue demonstrated the process of exchange during a discussion as students began to critically reflect and share varying viewpoints about their identities:

CRV: Okay. And in that poem that we read, it kind of reflects a little of that… remember? The hot dogs, and apple pie, the football cleats, the names Bill and Daisy, the blonde doll with blue eyes. I guess that's that stereotype that at least that person had of what American might be. (seeing a hand raised). Okay, go ahead Jessica.

Jessica: I just found it interesting that Patricia says she doesn't identify with being American. I don't either. But I identify with being a New Yorker, I'm from Connecticut and I'm from LA.

CRV: But why isn't that American to you?

Jessica: It's just not. Cause I'm not like growing things on the farm or something.

CRV: Okay. And that to you would be more American? To be growing stuff?

Jessica: I.. I don't know. Well, cause, I am from New York and the east coast originally, and that's where I want to pursue school and stuff. And I feel like the culture there is so different from the culture here. And both cultures are completely different from the ideal American culture (with hesitation in her voice). That I just wouldn't identify myself as the same thing.

CRV: But can't we all just say that we're all American?

Sheila (Interrupts) Well, yeah. Because American culture has completely changed though. It's not whether you live on the east coast or west coast, it's whether you're under democracy. Or what's basically the government is what makes you American.

CRV: Well, yeah, on paper, it says that if you're a citizen then you are an American, right? The thing that we were talking about the other day about the poem is, do people tend to *feel* American? What we were talking about was why people don't feel necessarily accepted in American society.

Sheila: I, I don't … maybe I'm completely off, but I don't really understand how people can say they … they don't feel like they fit in when they're being governed by an American society.

Alicia: It's the stereotypes. Like the poem was saying, blue eyes, and stuff. It's just that some people feel like they don't relate to that.

CRV: One thing we were talking about was, where do we get that image? Where do we get those images from? And some people were saying the media. You know? And if the media is constantly bombarding people with, 'this is American, that is American' and they're only showing one image. And if you don't fit that image, then are you really feeling American?

Sheila: I don't know. The image and media that what says is America is wrong. So… I don't know.

CRV: That's fine. (seeing she was exhausted of words, I chose another student to speak)

Shelly: About where this whole American stereotype comes from, well I, personally think why a lot of people feel this way is that the American stereotype was born in the 50's. How when you turn on the television and you see the white husband and the white wife, the two kids, the girl and the boy, and they're living in that oh so nice house; people will say, oh… that's my dream! I want that car, I want that house.

CRV: That's the American Dream too, you know? So that's changed according to Sheila. Am I right Sheila? (She nods) And let me ask you, do you feel it's changed? Has society changed? When you turn on the TV is it still like that?

Class: (Mixed responses; some yes, but one quiet student yells out…)

Ray: Yeah!

Sheila: (Stunned by Ray's response) Where? (A slight murmur arises from the group). (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, October, 2009)

Dialogical exchange such as the above reveals a casual and nonthreatening tone throughout the entirety of the class period. It is through this open discussion that I am able to listen to students' understanding of certain concepts, their attitudes and frames of reference. It is also a way to steer the discussion toward deeper reflections of tolerance and individual responsibility. One significant event from the data demonstrated this. After having read stories and watched videos about racial intolerance half way through the unit, I asked students to answer the following question in their journals, "Which is more difficult, being racist or being tolerant? What questions must we ask to truly grasp the concept of racism? Can racism be 'unlearned'?"

After a few minutes of writing, I asked the students to share their views. One student began by describing how he caught himself saying, "That's so gay," because the phrase was so easy to say. Eventually he admitted that he thought it was more difficult to be tolerant. What followed were a number of different students sharing their views, some believing it was easier to be tolerant while others believing it was more difficult. Here is an excerpt of that dialogue:

> Kristina: I agree with you guys. I think that tolerance is like respect; it requires a lot of understanding. And to be able to be understanding requires a lot of work. A lot of work.
>
> CRV: What is that "work" though? What kind of work is it?
>
> Kristina: You have to reflect in yourself. About yourself and about your society. You have to think about the other person, the other people, of whoever you have problems with. That's the work. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, November, 2009)

This type of reflection was common as students demonstrated sophisticated views on tolerance. Another student analyzed tolerance using a more psychological approach.

> Emma: I think it just comes down to human nature. When we feel threatened by something that's different or something that we don't understand, it comes down to fight or flight. So you can either ignore it and just be like, 'Oh yeah,' and like the genocide that's happening or all these terrible things that are happening you just ignore them. Or you fight it, you get angry, and you hate and so I think that's why it's easier cause it just comes down to straight up not understanding. And so instead of educating ourselves and like really getting in and seeing what's going on, and ask "Why do I hate this person?" You just hate them and you step back and its so kind of… what's the word I'm looking for… impersonal. You just kind of like dismiss them. What else I was going to say was, tolerance is really difficult, especially like… one of the questions from yesterday (Crossing the Line), that we should have free speech even hate groups. And it's really hard to tolerate that when you don't agree with it. It kind of goes against what you believe. So I think that's the part that makes it so difficult is when you see things you don't agree with. Or if you see things that make you feel uncomfortable, it's really easy to dismiss them and say, "Oh I hate that!" Instead of saying, "You know what? That gay couple does make me feel uncomfortable but I'm okay with it." It's difficult to sit with that uncomfortable feeling but… (she exhausts her point). (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, November, 2009)

Here, a student took a more personal explanation of being tolerant:

> Jacqueline: Personally to me, I think it's a lot easier to tolerate something because I was brought up to avoid. You always want to avoid what is considered bad. Like you always want to be the perfect angel and whatever. And for me, it's a lot harder to be mad and hate and

be racist. For example, when I get upset with my sister I blow up in her face or I'm just yelling at her. And that, it's over something little; something little that I could just accept, whereas I could go on living my life when I get mad, but the entire time, the entire world stopped and I'll start fighting and yelling and tears would roll. Like hateful words will come out whereas I could just accept it and go on living. And I think that would be a lot easier but people a lot of the times are … I don't know if the word is selfish, but they think what they think is right. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, November, 2009)

In the next example, one student freely expressed a more philosophical approach toward

tolerance:

Luther: I'm gonna read my journal.

CRV: Okay.

Luther: Tolerance must manage and racism is for those who are tolerant of something they must deal with. The question that needs to be asked, what is one's level of acceptance is a matter or erasing something that we do not understand rather than alienating it. Fear must be unlearned first, that is the first step. Though it is part of human nature we have the ability to go against it. And that is what we must do first.

CRV: Fear huh? That is what you say is the number one element?

Luther: That's the first step.

CRV: That's the first step?

Luther: Yeah. The step of unlearning racism.

CRV: Nice. Very interesting! (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, November, 2009)

Another student decided to share a personal story regarding an encounter with a form of

racism:

James: I think racism is easy to do. Like if you're having a problem with someone and they happen to be of another race, it's really easy to go there. Um… for example one thing that made me so uncomfortable was I was with a friend, my brother, my brother's friend, and my friend asked a girl why her eyebrows were a different color than her hair. And it was like an honest question and she responded with… 'Why are you black?'

CRV: Wow.

James: And I… I didn't know how to respond. I was like, 'What did you just say?!' That was the first thing she thought of and it was the easy thing for her to do. I guess she was caught off guard with the question and the first place she went to was race. It made me so uncomfortable. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, November, 2009)

The discussion data of race related issues continuously showed that intercultural dialogue gave students the opportunity and safety to share and reveal their own biases. For example:

> Vincent: I think it's much more difficult to be tolerant. I find it very easy to be racist because it's easy to find differences in other people. And I find myself being racist all the time, even though I'm not racist at all. I mean, I have many black friends and many Mexican friends, but when I come upon some really like a lot of people at this school who are Mexican and who are Black that really seem to piss me off. I find myself being like 'ah, these Black people.' But I don't have a problem with Black people because I have Black friends. But it just happens and also you said something about society from within. A part of it is from within society, talking about how my friend makes fun of me because I'm Jewish, and like one time I called him out. I was like, 'Why you gotta do that?' I was like, "what's the point of this?' I was like wow.
>
> CRV: What did he say?
>
> Vincent: He was like, 'Oh well it's cause I grew up racist, it's just the way I grew up. (students giggle in amusement for the story). (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, November, 2009)

As I engaged students in these types of dialogues, the data continued to show my personal reaction and thought processes behind the discussions. It also showed how students' comments resulted in altering my pedagogical interaction with them. In the following personal narrative, I demonstrated how the dialogue from the current day regarding the n-word caused me to reshape my next day's lesson:

> One of the most popular topics students bring up each year is the issue with the "N-Word." Every year, students bring the term up as early as September sometimes. This year, the first mention of it occurred during 5th period's debriefing of the Crossing the Line activity. If it wasn't for JS who brought it up, I probably wouldn't have thought about introducing the topic as soon as I'm doing now. I feel like JS sent me a sign that, by bringing up the N-Word, a number of students seemed eager to discuss it; but we ran out of time during the period. However, I did tell the students to anticipate a discussion later on when we had more time. But as I racked my brain and old files for a lesson plan for the week, the memory of the students' intenseness when they talked about the N-Word, it seemed truly authentic. Although it was no more than 4 minutes, it was signaling to me to go in the direction they wanted to go in, not mine. It was then that I decided to finally create a mini-lesson, or discussion, on the N-Word.
>   In the past, the topic naturally emerged in race-related class discussions and with an effort to allow the students to guide the discussion a bit, I would simply go with the flow. But this year, JS' comment and the fact that we ran out of time, gave me the opportunity to introduce the word in a more formal, perhaps organized way. For example, and I'm a bit ashamed for admitting it, but I've never given students anything to read about the N-Word. Years ago when I had done

an initial internet search for material on the N-word, I often found lengthy writings and articles that for some reason didn't think students were prepared enough to read. Last night, however, my research of the term came up fruitful with various essays that I thought students would find interesting.

I decided to give students the article, "A Note on the Word 'Nigger'" by Harvard professor Randall Kennedy (2004). I chose it because it was succinct in its explanation of the term itself, the history of the word, and its implications. It didn't go too much in depth and it wasn't too long to bore them, it was just right to whet the appetite for the series of discussion questions I came up with. Today I gave them the article and asked them to read it for homework with the assignment to come prepared to discuss their thoughts on the issue. Later in the afternoon, thinking about the following day's discussion, I felt I could do a little more. I remembered using youtube.com last year for clips of the LA Riots and decided to search for any clips regarding the N-word. To my surprise, I found loads of them. I finally decided on three clips: 1) O'Reilly Factor discussion, 2) News clip of the N-word featuring Randall Kennedy, and 3) a young boy delivering oratory about the word.

For the first time, I have decided to use video clips to help teach about the controversies of the term. By showing video clips I will be giving students an opportunity to view others, adults, discuss the word, and see the various dimensions of its use. This is good to layout a sort of foundation for the topic. I will pause after this first clip to get reactions. Not letting the discussion get too evolved, I will show them Clip 2. Clip 2 gives a more in depth, historical view of its use, including the use of it in comedy, music, and media. But it also shows the power of the slur and its implications, as well as the movement to abolish it. But Clip 3, I decided, served a different purpose. It showed an African-American boy about 11 years old giving a speech before a church audience in which he completely obliterates its usage. As I watched it, I could not help feel so impressed and so inspired that I want the students to perhaps feel the same way. And by hearing it from a boy younger than they, with such eloquence, I figured that discussing the clip could perhaps bring a greater sense of appreciation and add value to the discussion and their views on the topic. I can't wait to see what results! (C. R. Valverde, p.c., narrative, January 6, 2010)

The n-word discussion the next day eventually resulted in exceeding my expectations. It was from these types of class discussions and lessons that students demonstrated their impact on them. For example, in the a midyear anonymous evaluation in 2010, one student wrote:

I learned more about the N-word this year than all my previous years of high school put together. In English I came across the word in Huckleberry Finn and the topic of the N-word was dismissed quickly. In my US History class I saw the N-word in some photos we saw about slavery. The word again was only discussed briefly. In this class we get to ask questions and hear other people's answers. (Anonymous, January, 2010)

During the Race and Ethnicity unit, intercultural dialogue also helped evolve newer understandings and perspectives regarding race. In my final lecture on the concept of race, based on the readings *American Anthropological Association Statement on Race*

(1998) and Angier's (2000) article *Do Races Differ, Not Really Genes Show*, I challenged

students' thinking about race by discussing the meanings attributed to labels. The

following are excerpts from one of the class discussions that ensued during the 2008-

2009 school year:

> CRV: So eventually, what these articles now raise are very important questions which I want to present to you guys. That is, think about what is being said here. If race is something that our brains automatically perceive, something that we naturally recognize, and if the goal for many of us is to move beyond this idea of racism, then what are we to do?
>
> Alex: Ignore it!
>
> CRV: How can you if your brain sees it? (Silence)
>
> Samantha: Maybe if we don't label us as a race. You can just know that people are different but we don't have to label it as race.
>
> CRV: Okay, so the labeling. And you just said also, I think, the *meaning* we attribute to the labels.
>
> Samantha: Attributing a different meaning so that we can get past race.
>
> CRV: So you're talking about changing the meaning of race (Excitedly). You're not talking about ignoring it like Alex suggested. You're talking about changing the meaning of it, right?
> (Samantha nods in agreement)
>
> Kate: I think it would work if every single person in the whole world knew this, but since it's only like a few people that realize this, not much will happen. You will always be having people talking about it, so they could teach it, but…
>
> CRV: (Interrupting) So… what do you suggest?
>
> Alex: Brain washing the entire world!
>
> CRV: (Sarcastically) Yeah, all at once so that we can get to that one day where we can all wake up and think the same way. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, November, 2008)

During discussions such as these, I often encountered what I perceived as

profoundly analytical students, and at times, skeptical ones like Alex. However,

whenever confronted with such skepticism, I enjoyed exploring or making light of their

comments to maintain the tone of open dialogue. The following dialogue shows how one

students' skepticism allowed me to press the students' thinking about the social construct

of race:

Paul: But what if we are all the same race?

CRV: Yeah. Maybe we would look at other things to divide us. I agree.

Paul: If we didn't have the classifications of race, then we'd classify ourselves by let's say the amount of money they have and that's what anthropologists would have to show.

CRV: Well, that's how monocultural communities do it. One culture? They look at themselves through differences in different ways.

Katy: That's just how human beings are, so then how are we supposed to ever get rid of racism?

CRV: Let's assume that there is something later on. If we can get beyond this issue of race, maybe we will look at ourselves and classify ourselves in a different way. Okay? But what we can agree on is that this society today, has been shaped by this idea *of* race. Can we move beyond this concept of race to even know if there will ever be that something else in the future that will divide us? Okay. You don't think we can? (looking at Molly shaking her head)

Molly: You would have to have a homogenous culture to accomplish that.

CRV: Okay. But let me respond to something that Ashley just said. Ashley, I'm going to ask you a question. (looking directly at her) Is it possible that we have been taught to think that we can't?

Ashley: Yeah, because … I don't think enough people want to.

CRV: Why not?

Molly: Because we're not taught it. We don't think about it really.

CRV: Why not?

Molly: Because they're not learning what we're learning. Because this is not a required class. (smiling, causing a few of us to smile)

CRV: I don't know … okay so you say it's not a required class? Are you saying that it's only happening here?

Molly: It's not just that it's only happening here, but I don't think enough people think about it. But that's just me. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, November, 2009)

This level of engagement and critical thinking about changing the meanings of social

constructs also produced an authentic assessment of the class by a student's comment.

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The student pointed out that the class, in the Molly's opinion, was perhaps one of the few places that this type of dialogue was occurring.

The intercultural dialogue data in my classes often reached what I call *highly enriched moments of intellectualism* that not only discussed individual concepts of race, ethnicity, and culture, but also managed to take on a process of deconstruction that allowed students to raise alternative viewpoints toward the issue, including my own. Through my engagement in student dialogue, I challenged students' skepticism by validating their comments, raising questions, and offering alternative perspectives. The following exchange demonstrated how I encouraged a student to believe in change:

Paul: I think that in the article they were talking about how we learn our culture and that kind of idea. If that's the case then I guess I'm with Emily that I don't think we'll ever move on because what you showed us about categorization, our brains naturally do it. So our brain needs to categorize…

CRV: Okay, but hold on. Remember what I said, we do naturally categorize people, right? But it's what Melanie was saying is that it's the meanings that we attribute to each of the categories is what matters. So perhaps we can never get away from the idea of categories, but can we get away from the negative meanings that we attribute to each of the racial categories?

Paul: No. Human beings are naturally selfish. Even if you think you're not, you set a hierarchy about yourself, you're above; and that's pervasive in a lot of the cultures you're talking about. But with the idea of someday being all one race, well I don't think that'll happen for a really long time. For example a lot of the cultures that have just been introduced to this Western thought, that everyone's equal, I mean like… for Koreans, its not… well, you don't mix races. Because you lose your bloodline.

CRV: (Staring intently at Paul) But Paul. Equality is not only a Western thought.

Paul: I think it is.

CRV: Paul, look at all of the ancient civilizations and even the native Americans and how they lived. Okay. Think about some of those tribes that live in the Amazons to this day, and how they live amongst each other. Look at Borneo, look at all these individuals and all these other groups.

Paul: I guess that's not the equality I'm thinking of. Because there's still hierarchy, you know what I mean? Even in this nation where we say that we're all equal, we're not.

CRV: But you're saying selfish. That we're all selfish?

Paul: Yeah, okay. Maybe that was the wrong word. What I mean is that, everyone is looking out for their own interest. Or if not, they are looking at them at their status and where we are now.

CRV: Okay. What if I said that you were conditioned to think that?

Paul: Then I…I will be conditioned to think that and I will eventually pass it on.

CRV: Right.

Paul: And if that's the way we all think, then I don't know how you're going to change a thought.

CRV: So you're saying you're unchangeable? Are you really saying that you're unchangeable? (Rather animated and firm) That from now on you're going to think the way that you do now and nothing will ever influence you?

Paul: It's… it's just that it's such as an inherent thought that's been ingrained in, like you said, at such a young age that you soak everything up like a sponge. But the things you do there are very very hard things to change.

CRV: Yeah.

Paul: Without a huge period of change.

CRV: Oh, so there *is* a possibility?

Paul: There's a possibility but the probability is that there's also a possibility that a meteor will hit the earth.

CRV: Sure.

Paul: But the probability of that happening now is …(pauses) I guess it's like the *we can* versus the *we will*.

CRV: Right!

Paul: So, you know, we can do it. Things can happen but will it happen is a different question.

CRV: It is a different question. And I don't think it's been answered yet. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, May, 2009)

I realized throughout the discussions that students often times see complex issues in very simplistic ways. One of the sub-themes that can be extrapolated from discussion data is that the intercultural dialogue not only dealt with issues of culture, but through my questioning of their ideas helped lead students toward a form of ambiguity about social constructs. I intentionally left concepts open by avoiding giving students definitive

answers. In doing so, I would leave students pondering questions, which in the long run,

helped students consider newer possibilities of interpretation and consideration.

Eventually, the end of the year anonymous evaluations data for 2006, 2008, 2009,

and 2010 revealed a theme of students' appreciation for open-discussion. A theme that

emerged in their responses included an appreciation for learning from others throughout

intercultural dialogue. For example, one student wrote:

> We were able to be heard, and also hear others. We don't usually get a voice in regular classes, or an opinion. With this class we got both. We are able to express ourselves everyday about topics some of us never get to talk about. (Anonymous, June, 2006)

Similarly, two other students wrote about the student interaction of the class, "What made

it different was the amount of student interaction. I feel like although you taught us a lot

of stuff the student turned it into something great" (Anonymous, June, 2006), and

> This class was unique due to the input from the students and how everyone worked together to learn and grow. Instead of isolating everyone from one another we combined our minds and hearts to experience the class making us a family unit. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

Some students explained how the dialogue impacted their learning. For example, "We

were able to analyze so many topics and discuss them. We looked deep into situations.

We were able to learn things in a way that we would really help us understand"

(Anonymous, June, 2009). What becomes more apparent in many of their comments

were the effects of this type of learning, "I'm not only learning about other cultures, but

I'm really learning to communicate with others and create my own thinking and this has

gotten me to have more of an open mind when it comes to other ethnicities"

(Anonymous, June, 2008). Similarly, students also shared an apparent change in their

perspectives toward issues discussed in the class. For example, "The class made me think

about people's thinking and how they view things. I liked that others' feedback has

broadened my opinion" (Anonymous, June, 2009). Further, one student pointed out the effect of this teaching approach, "The teacher made us open up… made our minds think, changed our beliefs, opened our hearts, and just put us in a class that could completely trust in one another and have a great time" (Anonymous, June, 2009).

Discussing issues of sexuality and gender.

Perhaps what I consider the most significant form of intercultural dialogue occurred during the *Sexuality and Gender* unit. From personal memory data as well as student data, no other unit throughout the school year had managed to produce more significant examples of intercultural dialogue. Through the dialogical exchanges that dealt with stereotypical thinking, derogatory slurs, terminology, current news articles of gay bashing, and the simple sharing of personal experiences, I helped generate some of the most emotional, genuine, and memorable moments of my entire career.

When I first created the Multicultural Literature course, I honestly did not know much about gay-themed literature. In fact, I had never read a story or book with gay themes in my entire life, but my purpose in including it as a unit equal to other units, such as race and immigration, stemmed from my intercultural training and realization that the gay community was perhaps the most oppressed group in modern times. Like with my own upbringing with racial prejudice, I had also grown up around strong heterosexist and homophobic attitudes. Through my academic, intercultural and spiritual growth during my first years of teaching, I found that simple human interaction–dialogue–led my transformation of dispelling my own biases against gays. This experience informed my ability to understand and approach biased and prejudicial thinking within my students. It

was clear that if I was going to teach a class on issues of diversity, a class that promoted a level of respect, understanding and tolerance, I needed to confront these prejudices head on. Through the help of openly gay colleagues I collected stories, learned about the gay experience, and made careful decisions on introducing these topics to my students. In my first year of teaching the Multicultural Literature course, I often felt as if I did not know what I was doing; however, confronting students' prejudices, dispelling stereotypes, and challenging their thinking about gay issues simply felt right, even in my limited understanding as I went along.

One of the most significant themes that emerged from this data, suggested that the sexuality and gender unit had a profound effect on many students' levels of consciousness, acceptance, and tolerance. Teaching the sexuality and gender unit was, and continues to be, a process of discovery, not only about gays, but also about myself. Throughout the last eight years of teaching the course, a number of interactions and experiences with gay youth have managed to inspire my daily teaching practice. From having students share personal stories about gay loved ones, to discussions about their philosophical perspectives, to the honest sharing of homophobic views, I discovered that the act of dialogue helped bring these perspectives to the forefront of the learning experience. Through my questioning of students' hidden biases, the intercultural dialogues proceeded to reach deeper levels of discussion, more honest reflections, and in the process, more authentic learning about each other.

One theme that emerged from that data was the evidence of a meticulous and calculated approach toward introducing topics of sexuality and gender. In describing my

rationale for a colleague scheduled to teach the same course for the first time the

following year, I revealed my own rationale for the process of teaching the unit. In my

personal communication to her I wrote:

> The unit I find most rewarding happens to be the most controversial. The issue of homosexuality is a definite part of an adolescent's life; they see it in pop culture through songs, movies and television. Their understanding of homosexuality is usually defined by false and silly images as well as the pervasive general feeling that homosexuality is wrong. I must admit that more and more students who begin this class are much more open minded about the issue, but the overall negative view of homosexuality at the school site is very much part of their psyche. Within them exists a level of intolerance that manifests in negative views as well as terminology such as 'fag' or 'that's gay.'
> I begin the unit by covering another set of terms and definitions that revolve around sexuality (i.e., sex, gender, transgender, heterosexism, etc.). As I teach about the terms, many of the definitions create an unusual amount of chatter among the students. I asked them to share their thoughts and even ask them not to be scared to ask questions. Many of the questions or statements students will make are perfect 'teachable moments.' The key is to get them comfortable enough to discuss these issues. It is quite noticeable which students feel uncomfortable about the issue, but in my opinion, it is these very students that offer me a challenge as a teacher. No question is a stupid question, and if students feel comfortable enough, they will eventually ask more probing questions about sexuality. Depending on how you feel as a teacher and this subject, you can set the boundaries wherever you need to, but I like to keep this discussion as open as possible, for the simple fact that much of homophobia is a result of ignorance about the subject. In my opinion, the more students know about homosexuality and gays, the more informed judgments they can make about current issues of gay rights.
> Essentially, most of the readings for this unit revolve around the intolerance of gays. We read articles about gay bashing and harassment in schools and in society. I teach them about the atrocities of modern day lynching's that continue to occur due to homophobia. I have a great amount of video that helps enrich this topic. Because of the level of controversy, I find this unit to be one of the most exhilarating, but that's just me.
> What I have found most powerful about this unit are the guest speakers. Here, students get first-hand knowledge about being gay where they can have a face-to-face dialogue with someone who is gay. I've had CCHS students come out in my classes, I've even had transgendered individuals come speak to the class. It always amazes me how these experiences tend to help 'normalize' the issue of homosexuality. You can truly see a transformation occur within students!
> One thing to keep in mind is to enforce respect throughout these discussions. I tell students that they really don't know who might or might not be gay. I also mention that some classmates might have relatives or friends that might be gay. It is here that I teach them about the "That's so gay" statement and others like it. You will find that discussing issues of sexuality can be quite challenging, but my ultimate lesson from the unit is that gay people are human too. Much of the intolerance toward gays is due to this lack of understanding. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., email, July, 2008)

While the school often prides itself on the levels of tolerance that are

demonstrated through school clubs and activities, evidenced showed that authentic class

discussion was minimal in other classrooms. In my course, the effort and importance I placed on the process of intercultural dialogue helped create a space for students to reach newer levels of understanding. Witnessing and learning about students' views and opinions on the topic of sexuality, always gave me greater perspective in knowing how to approach their biases and opinions. I find that adolescents quite often have only a superficial understanding of sexuality, as revealed in their comments and stories. Although I am quite aware that some students entering my course are already very accepting of gays, I begin the unit's dialogue by attempting to expose their own predispositions to each other as a starting point. During the 2009-2010 school year, personal reflection, observation, and audio recording data continued to demonstrate the relationship between my personal beliefs and pedagogical interactions.

For example, each year I first introduced the sexuality and gender unit through an activity acquired from the Anti-Defamation League's World of Difference program. The purpose of the "Here I Stand" activity is to make general statements about certain identity characteristics or social views. I modified the statements to reflect the topic of sexuality. I began by explaining:

> This activity requires one to be true to oneself publicly. It is also an activity to learn more about the people around you. The purpose of the activity is one of awareness; it displays our diversity not only as human beings, but our diversity of ideas and beliefs. It is important that the activity is not meant to judge others–as judgment can lead to prejudice. Interculturalism requires openness, honesty, but most importantly, safety. Safety to share one's beliefs through sincere and genuine dialogue. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, July, 2008)

The following are the list of statements by which students are to stand if they agreed or identified with the statement:

"Here I Stand" Statements (modified)

I am comfortable talking about issues of sexuality in a large group setting.

I sometimes feel awkward when discussing issues of homosexuality.

I'm still unsure how I feel about homosexuality.

Gay people sometimes make me feel uncomfortable.

I have heard a gay joke in the last month.

I told a gay joke in the last three months.

I have been brought up to believe that homosexuality is wrong.

I have used the word "fag" in the last three weeks.

I've mistreated someone by using "gay" insults.

I would mind if my best friend revealed he/she is gay.

People are born gay.

Gay people should have the right to marry.

Gay people should be allowed to adopt.

I believe gay and bisexual people are confused about their sexuality.

Homosexuality should be discussed in elementary schools.

AIDS is primarily a gay disease.

Two men kissing are disgusting.

Two women kissing are sexy.

People are born gay.

Homosexuality is a choice.

I believe homosexuality is a sin.

I know the definition of transgender.

I have a gay relative or family member.

I have a gay friend(s). (C. R. Valverde, p.c., lesson plan notes, February, 2010)

This silent activity is always met with great interest and participation from the students. The activity always manages to produce feelings of discomfort. However, it is these moments that I found most opportune to get students to think about themselves and others.

Immediately following the activity, I began the intercultural dialogue by using the following debriefing questions:

> How did you feel about standing regarding these issues?
>
> What did it feel like to being part of a group that agreed with your opinion?
>
> How did it feel to be part of a small minority?
>
> Did any of the statement responses surprise you?
>
> Which statement did you have most trouble with?
>
> Where you ever unsure about a statement and decided to go with the majority? Explain. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., lesson plan notes, February, 2010)

I always found that this activity helped expose the diversity of views and characteristics that made up each class. As the students stood up on certain statements and others stayed seated, the participants would learn things about their classmates they had never known. I found that taking a stand on certain statements requires courage on the part of the student. However, as they participated, they saw themselves through these differences, but also began to identify with each other through their commonalities. This type of sharing helped layout a foundation by which to continue to introduce the unit.

Like the Race and Ethnicity unit, the initiation of intercultural dialogues throughout this unit mainly occurred through my questioning the students. Evidence showed that many of the questions that I raised in class discussions continued to reveal my own ethical thinking behind the pedagogical interactions. This relationship was found

throughout each of the class discussions. One example of this was the first time I

addressed the topic of homosexuality in the 2009-2010 school year. Although I began the

sexuality unit in March of each year, the topic surfaced during a Let it Rip session in

November. A student brought up the topic of gay marriage and students soon began to

share their opinions on homosexuality for the first time that year. The following is a brief

snapshot of how the topic evolved through intercultural dialogue:

Luther: I think that our generation is the one that will vote it in.

CRV: You think so?

Luther: Just based on what I see at this school and around other kids my age, I'd say there's more
that want it than don't want it.

CRV: But Luther, I hope you understand that what's going on here at our school is very
unique, different from other parts of the country and the world. (Several students nod in
agreement…)

Luther: That's true but what I'm saying is that not just [Cinema City] but I've seen it other places
with people my age.

CRV: Okay. So you're saying it's a generational thing, right?

Luther: Yeah.

CRV: Okay. (I acknowledge another student)

Cody: I respect gay people and stuff. I mean, I have no problem with them, I don't feel like
it's… I don't feel like it's right but I also don't think it's wrong. I think it's just an 'up in
the air' kind of thing. And um… my only problem with gay marriage is that I don't
know how to feel about it because… I was brought up for 17 years with the idea that it's
only a man and a woman that get married.

CRV: Right.

Cody: So it's like a new concept. I'm not trying to be against gay people.

CRV: Sure. I understand.

Cody: But I don't know how to feel.

CRV: I think a lot of people share your sentiment. Mainly because I think it's a topic we rarely
talk about. One of the things that I've discovered is that when it comes to issues of
homosexuality, most people are just unaware of what gay relationships are like. They're
unaware of the gay lifestyle, and most of the time, we're filled with stereotypes of the gay

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community. So what ends up happening is that we're shaping our beliefs based on those stereotypes, which is an unfair practice. It's an unfair way of doing that. So Cody, I hope to dispel some of your ideas of not knowing, and I'd like to give you some information when we get to that unit. A little about what's in that whole issue, and with that information, perhaps you can develop a better idea on whether you are for it or against it. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, November 4, 2009)

Through this interaction, I simply gave students the opportunity to share in front of the others. I did not press my questioning and diverted the reflection on the issue to a later stage of the class. I intentionally did this because in November, the class had not yet reached the comfortable levels of dialogue and openness that I found prerequisite to deeper reflection of issues of sexuality, mainly due to its controversial nature. However, through these brief early discussions, I began to learn more about my students in preparation for the unit later in the year.

In another class discussion during the 2008-2009 school year, a month before the Prop 8 election, students raised questions about people's beliefs about homosexuality in political and religious contexts. The following dialogue demonstrated how the discussion evolved through a basic sharing of opinions to thinking about individual consciousness:

Jessica: The problem with being against it, like, it may be someone's own personal belief, but if it doesn't really apply to you, then why are we so worried about other people?

CRV: Because it does apply to people. I know there's people that say it doesn't, but let me give you an example. A parent. A parent with kids has a lot to think about when we're saying as a society it's okay to have gay marriage. Now, if a person is not fully 100% comfortable with homosexuality, then how do they explain that to their kids? You know what I mean? And especially if the family's religion is saying that it's wrong. So that's why, when people think it doesn't matter or doesn't in any kind of way affect them, but it is a societal, cultural decision that we're making. Because we're essentially saying it's okay for gay people to get married. And that means everything. That means changing commercials on television, you know? Well, think about it. If we're going to normalize gay marriage…

Christina: I've seen a few where they have a gay couple…

CRV: I haven't seen any. (Some students agree they haven't seen any either) But can you imagine a Hallmark commercial for Valentines Day and it's two men holding hands together or kissing?

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Anon. Student: Ahhh, that's cute.

CRV: That might be a cute thing for you, but what I mean is, are we ready for that? As a culture, as a society?

Cody: I don't know if I'm ready for that. (Laughing) That's too fast!

Michael: Well, I think it's kind of violating people's first amendment a little bit.

CRV: Just a little bit?

Michael: Yeah, because I hear people's opinions about why they don't want gay marriage. They're always bringing up Christianity and God into it. But what if people don't have that belief? What if they don't believe in God?

CRV: Right. But you vote your conscience don't you? So your religion can be a part of your consciousness. Remember, when you go to the booth to vote, right, just like I did yesterday when we had our local election here, I voted my conscience. It's what I believe. And what you're saying is that I'm supposed to separate my religious beliefs the moment that I enter that booth? People can't do that. It's very difficult. I mean, in laws we can separate religion from politics, we can do that of course, but when it comes to me as a voter, as with any one of you, how do you separate that? Do you know what I mean? That's why it's a very difficult issue because that's why certain people do have their personal and religious beliefs that they take with them into the voting booth. Same thing with issues of abortion, the death penalty, and highly politicized issues with a strong religious basis as well. (I acknowledge another student)

Alicia: You said that everybody has to be ready to accept the culture of gay marriage, but a lot of people didn't accept it when slavery…

CRV: (interrupting for clarification) I didn't say we needed to be ready, I asked "Are we ready?"

Alicia: But a lot of people weren't ready when they banned slavery. Like a lot of people are not ready for what's going on now. Like, no one likes the war but …. Okay… it's just a dumb thought…

CRV: I understand. I understand. But that's the way the system is set up where we're giving people the opportunity to vote on it.

Alicia: But if religion… Church and State are separate … the law is separate. And if you're going to go vote, you have to separate that also. So what's the point of separating in political stances but people are not going to follow that when they go vote? It's not really separate.

CRV: I know. But I think it sounds easier said than done. But how does one separate their religious beliefs from what they think is right for society?

Alicia: Well, I don't know. For me it's really easy, like I'm Athiest and …

CRV: (Interrupting) That's why! (Laughter around the room). That's why. (Smiling directly at Alicia)

Alicia: But I don't see how someone can tell someone else, 'You can't marry that person!' 'And it's wrong for you to do it, and they don't believe it.' It's one's belief, like it's my belief right now, how can you be forcing somebody else not do what they want? (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, November, 2008)

Rather than simply taking students' opinions at face value, I questioned their thinking by helping present an alternative perspective on why voters were against gay marriage. I saw the discussion as an opportunity to get students to consider another point of view. As religion was brought up, I found it important for students to freely express their views on religion as it was now part of the discussion, which also gave me a glimpse of their views on such matters. Gauging their opinions on key class issues, especially on gay issues, was always helpful for me as it allowed me to better prepare for the unit later in the year.

One of the ways I helped students feel safe enough to discuss issues of sexual orientation was to reveal my own personal biases directly to the students. In a discussion following the viewing of *Get Real* (Paramount Pictures, 1998), a coming of age story of a young man struggling to make sense of his sexuality, I asked students about their reaction to seeing a gay couple show affection in the film. The film in several scenes showed two men embracing and kissing and I recalled a murmur and shifting in seats when the first scene appeared during the viewing. Several female students shared that they thought it was cute while one male student admitted a bit of discomfort having seen it for the first time. Often times when a student revealed some form of bias, I always felt it necessary to include my own biases as a way to 'level the playing field' so-to-speak, offering a tone of understanding and identifying with them. The following is an example of how I responded to the student:

CRV: I remember my initial reaction of seeing gay people kiss. And it was… it was…it was a shock because you're not use to it, you know? You're not used to seeing it. So if anyone felt shocked when first seeing it in the movie than It think it's a completely normal thing to react to because we're simply just not used to it. Um… but can I say I don't tend to react now? Well, I'm not around enough gay people to be able to say 'no I'm completely desensitized to the whole thing' No, but it takes work though. But it does take work. And I'm just wondering, when you're in front of a person who is gay, who happens to be showing affection, is that the ultimate … you could say… test of one's tolerance? Because it really puts you in a situation where one has to inspect themselves and say, 'Am I okay with this?, Can I be okay with this?, Is it in any way threatening to me as I'm standing in front of a couple showing affection to each other in front of me? So those are the kinds of challenges I think we need to experience. (Another student raises his hand…)

Tommy: It wasn't the kissing that really affected me. It was more so the sex scene that made me feel … uncomfortable. (Pause)

CRV: Right. Okay, okay.

Bill: I can agree. Like, it surprised me … I don't think about it in a negative aspect but I'd rather not see it ever again, in my personal opinion. (One student gasps) I just don't enjoy seeing it so I don't ever want to be in that situation ever again.

CRV: Have you ever stopped to wonder why you don't accept it? Or the reason why you're avoiding it?

Bill: Like, I'm not gay… I'm not gay so I don't really support it… I don't enjoy seeing it.

CRV: Okay. Understood. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, March 23, 2009)

Although I could easily have continued to question his bias, and since the film was the first introduction to the teaching material, I did not think it was appropriate to press his bias this early in the year; however, I did find it important to uncover it publicly. What was significant and useful for me as the teacher was that he exposed his attitude to the others, helping build the climate of openness and honesty that should not be met with any resistance, even if they did not agree with him. I found it important never to argue a students' bias directly as it could make them and others feel threatened to be so open later on. However, these comments gave the class and me the knowledge of the varying levels of acceptance and tolerance present within the class.

In another class discussion about homosexuality, the intercultural dialogue caused

students not only to reveal their personal biases, but some students also began to raise

deeply held questions and curiosities about homosexuality. For example:

Marie: I don't know… one thing I really don't understand, which I find really funny, is … and
this goes for mainly the guys in the class. This was about a gay couple, but it was about a
male gay couple. And I know… I know half the guys in this class have seen girl on girl
action on their computers, on their DVD's, on pictures, I don't care … I know, I know
they didn't turn around and say, "Ugh." I know they didn't say that (class erupts in
laughter). And I find it really funny, I mean what the hell, like I don't know. Cause it's
just that it's really interesting to me that there's that double rule, that girl on girl is cool,
but guy on guy is ugh!

CRV: Right. It'd be kind of interesting to look into that and see why and what's the cause of it.
Why you think girls don't think the same way? Another thing to explore is whether
women do find it sexy to see two men showing affection.

Marley: I think it's just the difference between men and women. It's like why do women like to
kick it with gay guys? Cause girls would like to kick it with like five gay guys than five
straight guys. It's just the difference between men and women.

CRV: One thing that I find interesting is that I have seen in my experience that when guys hang
out together, you know the boys kickin' it, some guys find it funny to act gay amongst
themselves. But is it funny, or is it something else?

Several Girls: That's true! That's so true! (Classroom laughter and chatter) (C. R. Valverde, p.c.,
class discussion, February, 2009)

Sharing personal anecdotes, and at times, playing devil's advocate were also ways in

which I helped evolve dialogues. In a personal journal entry, I demonstrated how I

reflected on upon my own teaching of these topics:

On Day 2 of the sexuality unit, we began a discussion on gay adoption. Students had a great deal
to say about parenting. Surprisingly, most students were in favor of the idea. It was then that I
realized the discussion could not stall by being all in agreement. Therefore, I took on the
oppositional approach. I challenged their tolerance by giving popular viewpoints *against* gay
adoption. This created more discussion and involved a new set of students waiting to weigh in on
the issue. Taking it one step further, I challenged much of the students' comments by probing at
their arguments or asking for clarification. When done appropriately, students find themselves in
a powerful moment of critical reflection. It is at this zone of proximal development that
curriculum and teaching approaches must target. It is in the realm of the unknown that education
makes it known. My goal is to elevate my instruction to make sure I achieve this zone of
comprehension as many times as possible within the class period. My job is to make them think!
(C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, March 3, 2009)

Along with my desire to get students to think, the data also showed that my questioning

guided them toward more empathetic thinking and feeling. The following example

demonstrated this:

> CRV: So in the film, didn't the relationship between the two show a little bit about the struggles that gay men have to go through?
>
> Tommy: In all honesty, I was so focused on that fact that they were gay that I dismissed everything else.
>
> CRV: Okay. Okay. Thank you for being honest.
>
> Emily: I just see that what they go through to express their feelings, and like in the end where he told everyone, I just think that it makes me feel something towards them cause you know, cause they can't…
>
> CRV: What is that something? Is it sympathy or is it something else? Is it a form of understanding or…
>
> Emily: (Interrupting) I don't know. I just want to say that I feel bad for them.
>
> CRV: Okay.
>
> Marie: That movie made me feel sympathetic toward them. When the main character was in love, I was excited for him.
>
> CRV: Okay. So you… you tended to identify with him as a person and about the desire or longing for somebody that he just wanted love, right? Isn't that what the whole film was about? I mean, he was falling in love with this guy and yet something else was pulling them away from each other. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, March, 2009)

The nature of these discussions never seemed to get overly contentious. Although

students shared conflicting views and opinions with each other, the tone of respect in the

class made it safe enough for students to be open about personally held views.

Throughout the process of discussion, another theme that emerged was getting

students to consider ways of confronting different forms of bias. In a discussion on

homophobia, after having read several articles about gay bashing, including the stories of

Mathew Sheppard and Billy Jack Gaither, I asked students to ponder the question, "In

what ways can society help lessen the injustice of homophobia?" The following is a brief

example of how discussions such as these evolved:

CRV: Now, I want to remind you that the word homophobia doesn't only mean phobia as in
       fear of, it also means prejudice against, bigotry toward, discrimination against people that
       are gay. So when we talk about homophobia in that sense, how should society respond to
       it? What are some ideas that society should work on?

Alex: Education.

CRV: What do you mean education? Explain that.

Alex: Teaching people about sexuality like we're doing in the section right now. People will
       understand it more, people don't necessarily feel what they don't understand. What they
       don't understand is what they fear.

CRV: Do you think we should be reading books to five year olds about two kings that are
       married?

Alex: Yeah.

CRV: We should?

Alex: It still doesn't matter. Two kings or two whatever.

CRV: Okay. (Calling on another student)

Lori: I just want to add on to that. That when people don't know things they make things up or
       they exaggerate things. They think they know what they're talking about but they don't at
       all. And I think that's why we need to leave all these rumors and stereotypes behind. But
       … I don't know, I'm still a little mixed with at what age you would start that.

CRV: Okay. (Calling on another student)

Julie: To me, if we don't teach about those things, and than we are only showing the
       heterosexual side of it. And if we ignore the homosexual lifestyle to me that instills
       'that's different, that's weird, and that's wrong.' So if we don't start, we won't teach
       equally. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, March, 2009)

The levels of sharing throughout the data often showed a type of dialogue that caused

students to think in profound ways. In a class discussion after a guest speaker who

worked as a sheriff and identified as lesbian, one student shared his take on fear and

ignorance during:

Michael: I also think that fear goes hand in hand with ignorance. Because you don't know the
          person but you think you do because of a certain stereotype maybe, I think the way from

getting away from that, to solve the problem with homophobia in our society, is to show how homosexuals are normal people. Like when we had the guest speaker the other day, and showed us that, 'yeah you are gay, but that doesn't mean anything. She seemed like a person with a cool life and seemed like a normal person to me. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., class discussion, April, 2009)

The end of the year anonymous evaluations showed that the intercultural dialogue throughout the sexuality and gender unit had a profound impact on their levels of acceptance and understanding of gay issues. From the various questions on the evaluations, I observed common explanations of how the course helped change their perspective or *opened their eyes* to gay issues. For example, "The class really opened my eyes to homosexuality… It has enabled me to act even more respectively towards homosexuals, and it made it easier to see them as equals" (Anonymous, June, 2009). Another student wrote, "It allowed me to open my eyes to everything they are having to overcome" (Anonymous, June, 2009). At a deeper, more personal level, one student commented, "It actually help me to understand my sister more" (Anonymous, June, 2009).

In some cases, students commented on how their own bias toward gays changed due to the course and dialogue. For example:

This class exposed my stereotypes and prejudices that I never really understood I had. Even though I have reduced my stereotyping and prejudice thoughts, I am still working on it. This class has opened my eyes to see other people's stereotypes and prejudices. This class seems to be affecting my life very positively. (Anonymous, June, 2009)

And, "having the gay/lesbian…guest speakers. It personalized it…now I'm totally comfortable with them" (Anonymous, June, 2009). For one student, I compared his comments about homosexuality at the beginning of the school year with his comments at the end of the year. In October, the student wrote, "I have mixed feelings about gays

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because I don't agree with it, but I don't really care what happens. They probably deserve equal rights, but I'm just not going to be the one to say it" (Anonymous, October, 2008) and in the June entry he wrote, "I stand very supportive of homosexuality, especially regarding its legal standing. I believe homosexuals have the same rights as any other human and it's unfair for our government to scapegoat a certain group of people" (Anonymous, June, 2009).

Furthermore, the data showed how the intercultural dialogue on issues of homosexuality and gender identity actually affected students' empathetic and ethical understanding of the issues. For example, one student shared that the class taught her to, "Just to be there for them more than I have, because of all the things they have to go through" (Anonymous, June, 2009), and another wrote, "It really made me think about things in another perspective and to walk in other people's shoes" (Anonymous, June, 2009). Additionally, students indicated a realization of the social struggle of intolerance against gays in comments such as, "every student learned to be more understanding… so that the hatred towards others dies down" (Anonymous, June, 2009).

In furthering this point, many of the student attitudes about the course revealed an overall personal growth. For example:

> I know this course helped me grow as a person. It opened my eyes to different issues and I began to see things from different perspectives. I feel at peace in this class because it shows how different people can get along despite what society says. (Anonymous, June, 2009)

Ultimately, the intercultural dialogue on issues of sexual orientation and gender, helped students ask questions, share their views, listen to others, and reshape their own through them. Many of the effects of this type of intercultural dialogue will be

demonstrated throughout other patterns brought forth in this chapter. However, it is important to note here that without these discussions, without considering students' ideas and opinions, a more tolerant attitude would not have been demonstrated in the data.

Transformative Learning

One of the most significant findings in this study was the students' self-expressed growth and learning in response to my teaching of the Multicultural Literature course. It is important to consider here that the primary basis for conducting this self-study as my doctoral dissertation stemmed from the multiple years of receiving feedback that demonstrated a significant change in the mindset and personalities of my students. As a classroom teacher, no other feedback had been more important and valuable to me, as I reflected upon my own teaching. It was these comments that not only provided me with evaluative feedback about my pedagogical interactions, but also provided me with a source of inspiration, knowing that I was having a profound, transformative impact on the students.

For purposes of this study, transformative learning is best described by the *International Transformative Learning Conference's* definition using Elias (1997):

> Transformative learning is the expansion of consciousness through the transformation of basic worldview and specific capacities of the self; transformative learning is facilitated through consciously directed processes such as appreciatively accessing and receiving the symbolic contents of the unconscious and critically analyzing underlying premises (p. 3).

In addition, I use Mezirow's (2000) definition as "becoming critically aware of one's own tacit assumptions and expectations and those of others and assessing their relevance for making an interpretation" (p. 4). The data presented below is the direct result of value-creating/culturally responsive pedagogy, intercultural dialogue, and the fostering of the

teacher and student voice. This following section of the chapter shows the "expansion of consciousness" (Elias, 1997, p. 3) through the direct words of students.

The following data demonstrated the most recurring data points, or themes, that emerged from student evaluations from 2004, 2006, 2008, 2009, and 2010. It is important to note that the selection of the data presented in the following was relevant to this study in two ways. First, the data demonstrated the evidence for transformational learning; second, it also demonstrated the type of feedback that played a significant role in my development as a teacher. It was through such student feedback that I validated my own beliefs, my own practices, and my own motivations as presented earlier in the various sections of this chapter.

In the years prior to this study, I elicited student feedback on anonymous student evaluations using the following question:

> It is easy for educators to evaluate student performance through points, percentages, and grades. However, one of the most difficult things to measure is growth within a student. Did this class cause, or failed to cause, growth within you as a person? How? (C. R. Valverde, p.c., evaluations, 2004, 2006, 2008)

The data that emerged from these anonymous student evaluations served as external data that helped support the findings for the current 2008-2009 and 2009-2010 study. In the 2009 data I asked, "What did you find to be most beneficial about the course?" and in the 2010 data, I asked, "Describe your impressions, thoughts, reactions, about the Multicultural Literature course. Be specific." Through an inductive analysis of the combined data, the various themes that emerged included a) a change in mindset and perspective, b) self-perceived growth and learning, c) becoming less judgmental and understanding bias, d) ethical and empathetic development, e) the transformative effects

of student interaction, f) inspiration, and g) coming out. I also included examples of

individual episodes that demonstrated transformative moments and interactions. Across

the various themes, none of the comments below come from the same student.

Changing perspective.

The most common theme that emerged from all the data was the description of

their growth and appreciation for alternative viewpoints. The data suggested a changed

mindset as a result of taking the Multicultural Literature class. For example, one student

wrote, "I learned to accept the fact that people's views are going to be different than

mine, and that is okay" (Anonymous, June, 2009). Compared to 2004 data, another

student wrote: "This class was great for me because it helped me look at different

perspectives on different issues / actually encouraged me to speak out toward others. Just

to voice my opinion and see what their reactions may be" (Anonymous, June, 2004).

Here, the student described how seeing alternative viewpoints empowered her to become

more opinionated. Similarly, in the 2010 data, a student shared how considering the

feelings of others actually influenced her behavior of interacting with others. She wrote:

> I never feel like I have to shy away from my thoughts because I know I can share them with
> everyone. Since I have been involved with this class I have become very aware of others' feelings
> and my own. I have realized that maybe some of the things that make me laugh may hurt someone
> else. Hurting someone makes me feel really bad so I always think before I say things. Honestly, I
> think this class should be required for everyone and words can't describe how I feel about this
> class. (Anonymous, January, 2010)

The multiple comments by students varied by use of language to describe their

experiences in the class, however, the comments presented as data alluded to the overall

theme of the findings. In another example, one student's comment described the

perspective of being a White, heterosexual student as her understanding of privilege transformed her thinking:

> Being an all white, heterosexual girl hasn't necessarily given me any advantage in my life, but rather has simply been easy. This class has shown me how difficult it really is for other people, and just how oblivious I was. However now I'm so much more informed and I know to be as kind and giving to everyone because I want others to feel appreciated for who they are no matter what. (Anonymous, June, 2009)

Here, the student recognized her privileged position as a heterosexual, White female, although she did not see how being White and heterosexual was an inherent advantage. However, she recognized that others have had it more difficult than her, and her new knowledge prompted her reach out in helping others. As a classroom teacher, this comment was significant to me because although not all students grasped every concept of diversity that I may have presented to them, they were still transformed in their beliefs toward others. Ultimately, the changes in how they conceptualized others' ideas will eventually come with maturity and more knowledge.

In descriptions of their change in mindset toward cultural diversity topics, students commonly expressed statements such as, "[The class] opened my mindset towards homosexuality, racism, and other controversial topics that are rarely discussed in an orderly fashion amongst my peers (Anonymous, June, 2009). Another student similarly commented that student projects influenced their mindset toward others, "This class did cause growth in me especially the final resource projects with gay speakers. It made me see their side of the story which I had never heard before" (Anonymous, June, 2006).

Other comments that were also significant to me as a classroom teacher was how the course and my teaching were having an impact not only on students but on others with whom students interacted. For example, one student wrote:

> You might not realize this but as this class teaches us, it teaches others who haven't taken it as well. My parents have a definite touch of racism in them. By taking this class I also influenced my parents and peers. Talking about growth, that's such a little word. I shot up like a beanstock from this class. This material we learn and the events/speakers we experience have made a huge (good) effect on me and my parents/peers. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

Self-growth.

The second most common theme from the student data was the comments regarding self-growth and learning. It is important to note that self-growth student data appeared across all data types including observations, interviews, written assignments, and personal memory. However, the following data is directly from the anonymous student evaluations that represent the students' views at the end of each school year, with the exception of the 2010 data, which was conducted after the first semester only.

The following data directly shows the students' voice as they shared comments about how their experience in the course has caused them to grow in various ways, including thinking in "different" ways, discovery of themselves, "opening" their eyes, "speaking out," and greater "acceptance" of others. For example, a group of students suggested that their experience in the class caused them to think differently. One common response suggested, "it has completely influenced my life and the way I think" (Anonymous, June, 2009). Another student elaborated on this change:

> I feel like I am a completely different person than I was before this class started. Before, I just had my views and that was it, but in this class, I felt like I had to back up everything I said which caused me to think of everything I would say and caused me to mature faster than I would have without challenges. (Anonymous, June, 2006)

Another student shared, "I've grown so much over these couple of months. I've noticed things in more mature way. I'm now starting to look or think, shall I say, outside the box, instead of being ignorant to modern situations" (Anonymous, June, 2004). In similar data, a large number of students included appreciative words directly to me, "This [class] caused me to grow because it made me think. This class has made me think more than any class I have ever taken. Thank you so much for opening my mind to many new things" (Anonymous, June, 2006). And,

> There was this song by the *Gym Class Heroes* that we listened to, that song always stayed with me, the whole lesson on sexuality stayed with me because I was so against it when we began and how my view now is so different. And I have to so much respect for homosexuals and transgender people. Thanks Mr. V. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

Another common response regarding self-growth described the students' transformation in understanding themselves as a result of their interactions with me as well as their experience in the class. For example, a student wrote, "He has taught me to love me for who I am" (Anonymous, January, 2010). Another student elaborated:

> This class caused a growth within me. Not only did it further my learning of specific topics such as stereotypes, race and religion but it also helped me to figure out who I really am. This class taught me that being different is okay and I now live and express myself without a fear of being rejected or judged. This class also taught me how to respect those who are different than I am. (Anonymous, June, 2004)

One student described how her learning from the class helped transform her way of questioning:

> This class has honestly caused immeasurable growth within me as a person. I learned so much about myself and others in my class. It forced me to confront issues and inform solid opinions about them. It taught me to QUESTION!" (Anonymous, June, 2006)

Similarly, the following student described how the class may have caused him an identity crisis but has influenced his motivation for self-discovery:

> The best way to answer this question is with a quote: 'We come into class knowing who we are, and leave not knowing what we are.' At the end of the course I might be a bit more confused as to who I am, but I leave with a hunger and question to find out. I would consider that a success. (Anonymous, June, 2004)

Another significant theme that emerged from the theme of self-growth data was the students' transformation to "speak-out." For example:

> The thing I love about this class is we get to listen to each other and see just how smart we really are. I am a firm believer that getting an "A" doesn't mean you're smart. Surviving life, that – makes you smart. I've had a hard time in school, I know I'm very smart, but if I don't like a subject I'll just settle for a B or C. I'd rather put my brain to use on meaningful things. In this class I was able to show that. I was able to speak my mind, speaking up is something I'm hoping will get me farther in life. This class allows us to shine as an individual, something everyone needs to learn because later in life we will need to know how to talk and relate to people. (Anonymous, June, 2006)

Similarly, another student shared, "I learned that being shy and nervous about speaking isn't beneficial to my life" (Anonymous, June, 2009). Comments such as these continuously demonstrated how the transformative learning process affected their motivation to share their knowledge and views.

Another theme that emerged from the data was students' impressions of how the class caused them to transform their perspectives toward themselves and others. For example:

> This class caused more growth in me than I thought possible. It was strange at first b/c I thought I would be growing through readings and lectures, which I did, but it was those class discussions that really opened my eyes. I got to see life thru the eyes of my peers. (Anonymous, June, 2004)

Another student wrote:

> This class did not fail. I do not know if I grew a great deal as a person here, but I am confident that I have changed. The way I look at events, people, and places in our society is much more open. I have gained perspective on what is truly important to me, and to others. (Anonymous, June, 2004)

Specifically referencing some of the class topic areas, one student wrote, "This class made me grow as a person because it taught me how to deal with my homophobia–and it

taught me how to see other races and their perspectives on life" (Anonymous, June, 2004).

In other comments, students specifically reference their own growth process:

> This class has been a big part of my growth process from being a young adult to an adult. I had said in our last final that before I came to this class I was blind and now that I have completed this class, I'm cured because I see things differently and in a mature way. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

Again, comments regarding a change in perspective impacted their growth and learning:

> It opened my eyes to see just how far we have to go with issues I believed to be better, already. When I interviewed for Yale, I described this class to the woman who was evaluating me. She seemed dubious at the thought of a discussion-based class. But I have found it to be one of the most enlightening classes I've ever taken. (Anonymous, June, 2006)

In the same way, another student specifically commented on the impact of the learning as it related to her life:

> 99.9% of my high school education came from this class and I'm not joking. It is really hard to explain because it is so much. Every single detail of the discussions captured my mind. I thought about it for weeks and interacted about the topics w/ my friends and family. For a first time in my life I sat in a class and hoped it wouldn't end. I always wanted to be there. My eyes were open, I became optimistic. I also wanted to learn more. (Anonymous, June, 2004)

Finally, self-growth data also highlighted the students' transformation in their acceptance and understanding of others. For example:

> It helped me to be more accepting of others, but it also made me aware of who I am. It seemed like everything I watched reminded me that I was Black. Movies I watched were dead-on with the things we talked about in this class. (Anonymous, June, 2006)

In addition, the data showed students commenting on the relationship between their self-growth and their perceived value of acceptance:

> First it helped me grow by helping me accept myself, have high self-esteem. I'm able to do so much more in society now that I have high self-esteem. Furthermore this class has helped me to have respect and acceptance for those who are intolerant or haters of certain groups. Before I used to hate them and couldn't stand them but now I'm much more open-minded and can respect other people's decisions. A necessary tool to achieve world acceptance and respect! (Anonymous, June, 2008)

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Becoming less judgmental.

Another theme that emerged from the student data was the transformative growth in understanding prejudice, including their own. Throughout all of the data, a common theme was observed in students' descriptions of how the course and my teaching taught them to be less judgmental toward others. For example:

> This class exposed my stereotypes and prejudices that I never really understood I had. Even though I have reduced my stereotyping and prejudice thoughts, I am still working on it. This class has opened my eyes to see other people say their stereotypes and prejudices. This class seems to be affecting my life very positively. (Anonymous, June, 2009)

Another student wrote:

> This class has given me knowledge about issues I could never discuss or hear being discussed in another environment. Now I try not to judge people, I stop others from saying things like "That's so gay" or other things. My mom even tells me why am I go defensive about things like that, and through everything I learned here it made me realize that I can Make a difference. I can become a better person, and I have. (Anonymous, June, 2006)

Comments such as these are varied in their descriptions, but the fundamental attitude about prejudice is inherent in the language. One student wrote:

> I learned so much about other people and myself. I have learned that although it seems that people are so much different, we are really all a lot more similar than we think. I really learned to give everyone a chance for acceptance and respect. I have learned to get to know someone before making any judgments (Anonymous, June, 2008).

Similarly, another student wrote, "I learned that we should learn to understand people and where they might be coming from before we judge them, and even after we might understand where they are coming from, we should also be accepting of them" (Anonymous, June, 2008). Students here both recognized difference; however, the attitude about difference indicated a willingness toward respecting and accepting difference. Another student wrote:

> I learned many things, but the most important one to me is that I learned not to judge people. It has helped me to get to know the person more (some of which are my closest friends now)… and really appreciate them for who they are and look past our differences. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

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In some instances, students elaborated a bit more on their understanding of their own prejudice. In one response, a student wrote:

> I have always been able to communicate with people from different cultural groups. However, this class has caused me to reevaluate and eradicate previous prejudices. Through this class I saw that the reason any of us have prejudices is because of our fears. (Anonymous, June, 2009)

Likewise, another student shared:

> I have always been able to communicate with people from different cultural groups. However, this class has caused me to reevaluate and eradicate previous prejudices. Through this class I saw that the reason any of us have prejudices is because of our fears. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

Here, the student not only revealed her gained knowledge, but described how the knowledge has transformed her behavior by confronting bias. Similarly, another student shared:

> This class has brought me to value things from other races and my own. I no longer sit comfortably when someone yells out 'nigga" or "nigger." I no longer identify people by "yah, that Asian girl" or "that black kid." I identify them by the curl in their hair, the poise when they speak, and their personality from within. (Anonymous, January, 2010)

Ultimately, what many of these comments reflect is that their understanding of their own biases as well as of others, was the precursor for greater tolerance and acceptance. This relationship is characterized in the following, "I learned that we should learn to understand people and where they might be coming from before we judge them, and even after we might understand where they are coming from, we should also be accepting of them" (Anonymous, June, 2008).

Ethical and empathetic development.

As evidenced in previous sections of this chapter, the link between the teacher's voice and the meaningful feedback that I perceived as a classroom teacher was mostly present in the student comments that described an ethical transformation. Based on my

teaching experience, I have witnessed a transformation of thinking, acting, and attitude

toward cultural difference among students. On numerous occasions I observed that many

students had developed an ability to listen, reason, negotiate meaning, and develop

empathy toward others. What I realized as the classroom teacher was that the

multicultural literature course, in many ways, had become an engaging forum of learning

and expression, unique in the experience of students, that began to emerge as a form of

"palpable personal development" (Rathje, 2007, p. 257). This development took a unique

form in my classes, a development evidenced by their ability to identify cultural

differences and inconsistencies between cultural groups, their ability to appreciate and

accept differences and similarities, their desire to learn, and their willingness to care for

others. As supported by the literature, I observed these as the very precursors of

intercultural competence development.

The following comments independently show how the ethical transformation is

best described directly from the student feedback. For example, many students described

their own growth in relation to better understanding and accepting others:

> In these few months I've gotten to know myself better, my classmates and the world. My eyes
> may not be all the way open to the injustices of the world, but I have better vision. I can say
> what's wrong and right. (Anonymous, January, 2010)

In describing their realization of their own bias against gays, students similarly

commented, "I have to admit, at the beginning, I was a little homophobic and hated

talking about sexual preference. Having learned more about these individuals I've come

to be more understanding and accepting" (Anonymous, June, 2006). In the same way,

another student wrote:

When entering Multicultural Literature in September, I considered myself to be tolerant of gay and lesbian people, but I know that I have definitely grown for the fact that I no longer just tolerate them, but have come to understand and appreciate them. (Anonymous, June, 2006)

In addition, "I've learned that we need to accept each other no matter what differences we have. I've become way more tolerant and so much more understanding" (Anonymous, June, 2008). Also, students often commented on their transformation to become a "better person." For example:

This class made me grow as a more understanding and better person. It has made me grow because it has answered some questions I asked myself. It's made me into a more caring person because of what was said in our discussions. (Anonymous, June, 2004)

In addition, "This course has changed me as a person. I have learned to be more accepting and understanding. It has changed my whole mindset and has made me become a better person" (Anonymous, June, 2006). Here, the student revealed *acceptance* not only as a form of understanding, but she also related her acceptance to an ethical endeavor of becoming a "better person." Responses such as these gave me a better understanding of the impact I was having on the students.

These comments spoke to me as a classroom teacher because it was exactly what any teacher would want to hear. At a superficial level, I took such comments as praise, simply because they made me feel good reading it. But ultimately, as I reflected on my theoretical and philosophical beliefs and underpinnings, these comments showed how my own empathetic approach toward issues of diversity managed to create the discourse for greater ethical thinking.

In the following comment, one student related the class interaction as the cause of her perceived growth and learning. But she also described how the interaction with others

evolved her empathetic understanding, thus, transforming her feelings and behavior

toward others:

> I feel like I definitely grew. Not as much the curriculum like the readings and stuff, but more the students. Everyone's stories, opinions, experiences, and situations makes you want to be a better person. The people in the class make you realize things you say and how you act. Every time I might say something mean about a certain race or something rude towards gays I think of this class. And sympathy goes towards people like Vincent who have had it so hard. If I cannot imagine saying something mean to him; I cannot imagine saying something mean towards any gay. (Anonymous, June, 2004)

Ultimately, the data suggested that students grew in ways that are not traditionally

assessed in education. The learning growth was expressed in such varying ways that it

was difficult to present the data in this study. However, the comments below are

representative of the overall transformative impact students shared in their evaluations of

the course. One student wrote, "This class has caused me to be more considerate of

others, understanding, and most important openness, openness to new things"

(Anonymous, June, 2004). Another student wrote:

> This class really opened my eyes and taught me to understand people and treat everyone equally. I admit that the class did somewhat make me look at others in a bad way but I can't really explain that b/c the feeling went away. As the months went by I became closer to people, learned to meet someone before judging, and love one another. This class makes me feel good. I would like to spread the word and tell people to take this class because I've never had a class change me so much in a good way. (Anonymous, June, 2006)

The data across the different years showed the type of transformative learning that

exercised students' ethical beliefs about others. On occasion, a theme from student

comments described a realization beyond the ethical, but of interconnectedness and unity.

The following comments demonstrated this common realization:

> It is not the grade points that are important. The most important lesson that I learned from Mult. Cult. Literature is that every ethnic group or race is struggling through their problems in life. It is not only me. I have to try to understand everyone, because we all have different views of life. We all have our own culture. Yet everyone goes through the same pain. In other words, this class has definitely caused growth in me as a person, because I've learned the most important lesson: we are

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one. There is definitely no such thing as racism or sexism. We are all united within the different cultures. (Anonymous, June, 2004)

And:

I learned to always be open-minded whether it is listening to others speak or whenever we learn new material, new information. I learned that despite the difference we see on the outside, inside we are all the same–there is just one race and that is the human race. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

In addition, I observed that a number of students commented at a deeper, more empathetic level as described in the following, "I learned that due to any race we should love one another and appreciate what we all have to share" (Anonymous, June, 2009).

Transformative effects of student interaction.

Another theme that I observed were comments made by students that described the personal impact and transformation through the student interaction of the learning environment, "What made it different was the amount of student interaction. I feel like although you taught us a lot of stuff the students turned it into something great" (Anonymous, June, 2009). Interestingly, some students who did not fully participate in class discussions, also indicated elements of transformative learning by simply listening and observing the interactions of others. For example, several students shared similar comments such as:

It really showed me how everyone else feels about certain issues that sometimes I don't agree on. It made me always think about both sides of a situation. Even though I didn't talk much, it was the listening of other people that educated me. (Anonymous, June, 2004)

And:

Even though I wasn't the most vocal person, I was listening very closely. And I must say that all of my opinions have changed about current issues into a different opinion. It was because I was persuaded, as I had to read, watch, and listen to people that had these obstacles. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

In many of the comments, students continuously referenced their interaction with others as significant to understanding themselves. For example:

> [The class] improved my ability to communicate with different cultural groups. By educational stories and learning from my classmates I was able to improve. Just simply by having my classmates tell stories and speak about their lives helped me better understand myself. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

A bit arrogant but in jest, one student described his own realization that the opinions of others are valuable to his learning:

> I've grown as a person after just two units: concept of race, and gender and sexuality. I tempered some of my extreme views on race (or lack thereof) ultimately after hearing and talking to my classmates. We base our opinions on what we experience, and not only did I learn that my opinion isn't always the right one ☺ but that there is room for everyone's opinion. The world's a lot more interesting because of the people, and 6th period would have been pretty boring with a bunch of me's. (Anonymous, June, 2006)

Inspiration.

As a teacher, one of the most rewarding findings from the data were comments made by students suggesting a form of inspiration or motivation toward greater endeavors. In several instances, the transformative effects of students' experience in the class resulted in greater confidence in themselves. For example:

> This class built great confidence within myself. Before this year I never had a strong foundation for myself. I didn't know what I believed in, where I was going, or what was going on in the world. Now I'm able to have my opinions and beliefs and be proud of who I am. I have a plan for my direction in life and I'm confident in how everything will turn out. It wasn't just the topics we discussed in class, but learning from everyone, feeling accepted by everyone and being able to open up to a bunch of (used to be) strangers is what changed me. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

Similarly, another student wrote:

> In this course I learned about the subjects we talked about but even more about myself and how I think. I learned that I have to think twice about my actions and what I say and how I treat people. And I learned to believe in myself and have the courage and confidence to stand up for what I believe. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

And:

> It's made me more aware and prepared for the real world. It's opened me up to new ideas and definitely has built up a lot of tolerance towards our society. It's also made me want to make an effort to change society as much as I can and pass on the knowledge I've received in this class to future generations. (Anonymous, June, 2006)

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Data from the various years' anonymous questionnaires continuously yielded responses

that indicated a change in their acceptance toward others, but also showed varying

degrees of an inspired growth to become more proactive toward harmful social

conditions. For example:

> I have grown as a student as a human as a person. I have become wiser, I have become more accepting, I have become someone that has set out to make others more understanding as well. I have learned to listen and to be more pro-active on the causes for which I believe in. I have grown to believe that I can change my surroundings and that I do have the power to make my surroundings better. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

In addition:

> Well I have honestly been feeling extremely inspired lately; inspired to affect anybody in any way. I have been trying to come up with a way to incorporate the music scene that I have grown to adore with the resource project, but I am struggling. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

Some of the most rewarding feedback for me as a teacher, mainly from personal

memory, was when I observed approximately eleven students in the last five years

mentioned how the class had inspired them to enter the teaching profession. Three such

examples come from actual data collected. For example, in the end of the year

evaluations I asked, "How did this class cause growth, or failed to cause growth, within

you as an individual?" One student wrote:

> This class caused a lot of growth within me as a person. This class made me want to pass on my knowledge to others. When we gave you answers to questions you made us think deeper and deeper about our answer until there was a point where we just had to say "I don't know." When in this class seeing how you teach made me realize my backup plan if I don't become a surgeon is to definitely become a teacher with this subject. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

In another year's evaluation, another student wrote, "When I told you I wanted to pursue

a career as a multicultural lit teacher" (Anonymous, June, 2006). In another unique

occasion during the course of my data collection during the 2009-2010 school year, a

female student from the previous year came by to visit me after a class. Not having

turned off the voice recorder from the previous class discussion, the following was

captured and presented with permission:

> Cathy: As you may remember from last year I told you I wanted to become an elementary school teacher so I've been taking all these classes in liberal studies. Well, I've been babysitting every single day (laughs), and I was like, 'you know what? By the time I graduate college I'm going to be so sick of children…, well not so sick but…, I honestly have the best job in the world. Like I love my job, I'm not going to lie… (interruption by another student), so I was talking to my college counselor yesterday and she was like, "So if you were to ever change your mind about your major," she said, "I could see you doing English." (Smiling) Like apparently, this is what she said, "Your face just lit up when I said that!" So I was like 'ah,' and it's because… (interruption by another student), so like I went on a rant like, "Yeah, I love English and there's this really amazing class in high school that I wouldn't be able to teach unless I majored in English and unless I became an English teacher," and so I was like, "Man I bet I can get a job there because I have a lot of connections (starts laughing) and I was just going off. And she's like, "Yeah, we're going to switch your major." And I was like, "Okay!" (We both laugh) And, yeah, I'm so excited! (She turns to another student standing nearby) I'm going to be his predecessor. Listen, I came to Cinema right? I'm going to be an English major, graduating from LMU, and like (giggles)… yeah! (Looking up at me admiringly). (C. R. Valverde, p.c., conversation, October 19, 2009)

It is from these forms of positive feedback that I have always felt that something

special was occurring in my classes. Although the data presented above reflects only

comments from anonymous student evaluations, it suggested that transformative learning

occurred throughout a number of instances and experiences. Through the number of

students that kept in touch with me throughout the years, to the number of students

returning to participate, to emails, letters and blogs, a pattern of transformation was quite

evident. These were the comments that were most inspirational and valuable to me as the

classroom teacher as they ultimately validated my beliefs, efforts, and interactions in

creating a meaningful learning environment for my students.

'Coming out' as transformative episodes.

Another significant theme from my personal memory data that emerged was the

transformative experiences that resulted from the sexuality and gender unit. As I have

demonstrated throughout the various patterns described in this chapter, a large number of students described an attitudinal change toward gays, revealing greater acceptance and tolerance. However, what I would like to add to this data is the fact that in the past four years of teaching the course, five students used the class as their vehicle for publicly revealing their homosexuality or 'coming out of the closet.'

Through the end of the year assignment known as the Resource Project, a project in which the student designs and implements a resource or learning experience for others, most of these students chose to teach others about topics such as gay stereotypes, gay-bashing, gay marriage, and tolerance. In their presentations, each of the students, some quite nervous while others more confident, for the first time in their lives found the courage to publicly share their sexuality. I mention this as a significant finding as it displays not only the positive and safe environment that was created in the class, but it also demonstrated the creation of an opportunity that encouraged such a transformative, life-changing event to take place.

On occasion, I briefly described some of these experiences in my personal journal. For example:

> One student, Melissa, a female African American student would TA for another teacher and whenever there was nothing for him or her to do, the student would request to sit in during our discussions. She became a regular and soon began participating in the discussions. One day I was shocked when she actually turned in a writing assignment I had assigned regarding homosexuality. She wasn't even in the class! A few weeks later, Melissa openly admitted she was bisexual during a class discussion; not only shocking me but her friends in the class who were completely unaware of her sexuality. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, April, 2007)

In reflecting about a resource project that was presented earlier in the day, I wrote:

> In a resource project presentation today, two students used the opportunity to 'come out' in front of everyone. What surprised me the most was the reaction of the audience. Certain students voiced how proud they were of them to find the courage to reveal such a personal reality; the class

agreed by giving them a congratulatory applause. My eyes welled up with tears from the experience this class was witnessing. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, May, 2006)

Ultimately, this data showed that the intercultural dialogue on issues of sexual orientation and gender helped students ask questions, share their personal views, listen to others' views, and reshape their own beliefs through them; thus, a transformation of their thinking. Many of the similar transformative effects of intercultural dialogue were also demonstrated through the Empowered Voice section of this chapter.

From my experience as a teacher, transformative learning experiences occurred at any given moment of the day. From personal memory, they often occurred during authentic and genuine moments of interaction with individual students. By its nature, personal transformation is quite difficult to express empirically. Although the previous data showed elements of the transformative effects of the class and of my teaching, the data is limited in demonstrating the actual process of a transformative learning experience.

Therefore, for purposes of this study, I included in the following a transcription of an interview I conducted with two students who had expressed a concern about a discussion that had occurred in one of my classes the previous day in my absence with a substitute teacher. It so happened that the discussion was regarding the topic of homosexuality several months before I taught the sexuality and gender unit and it was the first time the topic emerged during the 2009-2010 school year. Upon my return, I met with the two students during lunch with their permission to audio record the meeting. In the following interview, or dialogue, the students not only discussed their concern about the class discussion, but also shared with me intimate information about their own

identities. The dialogue showed a brief example of how each of the transformative

themes discussed above were present throughout this encounter:

> Rianne: In the discussion, Kenny asked, "For all those LGBT people in the room, why are you the way you are? Why are you that way? Is it because you had a bad experience with the opposite sex?" And so it was like 'you weren't born with it,' you know? And that's when I interrupted, well not interrupted, but spoke up.
>
> CRV: Was it uncomfortable?
>
> Rianne: It wasn't uncomfortable, it just was… well, I guess it was kind of hard to be in the… I guess it was the vibe, that I don't know, it was just kind of a funny feeling. And it didn't set too well with me. It's just that I kept thinking about it when I went home.
>
> CRV: But were you thinking about the question that was raised or were you thinking about the comments of others?
>
> Rianne: The comments, the questions.
>
> CRV: And in any way were any of these comments positive, negative, you tell me?
>
> Rianne: I don't think it was intentional to hurt anyone, but I think it was more of a curiosity and I think that people's curiosity kind of hurt and hit close to me. For the simple fact that I've been struggling with my sexuality for a very long time now. And when Kenny said, "Why do you choose to be this way?" My response to him was, it wasn't a choice. It's something that just kind of happens or happened, and I (takes a deep breath)… this is where the hard part comes in. I tried to, I guess, change myself… I did and its very very complicated, but I've been trying to. I am with someone of the opposite sex because we've been together for a while. And I when we met, I had a very hard time with acceptance to myself. I really didn't know what was going on. And we became friends and we were talking about it and I just kind of opened up and said, 'This is how I'm feeling and this is what's going on. And I think I'm gay.' And he happened to be attracted to me and he didn't want to hear that. And we continued talking and one thing led to another and he said, 'Well I hope you wouldn't be because I'm very attracted to you' and he kissed me. Things just went on from there. Since then I haven't been able to grasp or really understand myself. Mainly because I have another person there and it's so complicated. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., student interview, November, 2009)

Rianne goes on to give me more background about her boyfriend. She continues to

mention that she is struggling with her situation.

> CRV: So is that where you find yourself now?
>
> Rianne: I don't know. I just don't know. I just … it's not confusion, I kind of know in a way, but it's just not accepting it because I have someone who I promised with my heart. I don't want to hurt him. And sometimes it gets to the point where you just don't want to hurt other people's feelings. It's genuine how I feel for him, but at the same time, I dream about women (smiling). And it's something I just can't help. It's just there.

CRV: Right. Are you talking to anybody right now about this? Do you have somebody to talk to?

Rianne: No.

CRV: You don't have a network or somebody?

Rianne: No.

CRV: You know you can talk to me. You (pause), you asked me to invite Damon into this. I'm just curious to know why.

Damon: Comments from last Friday were making me feel really uncomfortable because, sort of like Rianne, I know who I am and I know that I like men. So most of the comments they were saying were kind of hurtful to me. Because I couldn't really speak out against what they were saying or use my own personal experience because I don't exactly feel safe in using my personal experience because they might look at me differently or something. And I've known for a long time that I am gay. And I really don't have a problem with it. I accept it.

CRV: Does anyone know?

Rianne: I do.

Damon: She does. And I told Cody (best friend) yesterday. He didn't really make me feel good.

CRV: So are you coming out now? Are you making the decision to do this or…?

Damon: Well, a little bit at a time.

CRV: Do you feel like the people that you've told may out you in any kind of way?

Damon: No.

Rianne: I've known for years. I knew it before he told me. (Both Damon and Rianne smile at each other)

CRV: So, first of all, I want to thank the both of you guys for opening up to me like this because I've always found it special and an honor for someone to be open about it with me. I know it's a struggle. I know that it's difficult, especially in society and the world that we live in, and sometimes it's even scary of what you're dealing with. And, it's my … it's my vow to provide the safest environment possible for you guys. And it's not easy. From me as a teacher, it's not easy. You guys obviously see that and you know that. And that's why I've been thinking about what you were going to say right now. Now that I'm thinking about this… um, let me just backtrack a little bit with what has happened in this class before. We discuss the issues, and I'm very careful on how I bring up the issue of homosexuality. Mainly because I come from a place where I too was brought up homophobic. You know? I too was brought up with thinking negative things about gays. And it wasn't until my years as an adult that I started to find people and meet people and realize that my own friends were gay and all that stuff, that it challenged my thinking so much. And in all honesty, my Buddhism helped me completely dispel this whole homophobic thing that I had. I got to the point that I realized that gay people in our society are really suffering. In my opinion, they're suffering. You know what I mean?

And my job as a person, as a human being, is that we need to work at that. We need to chip away all of that negativity because if we're going to move forward in life, if we're going to make this world a better place, we need to do this. And we have to start with each other. And it starts now in a classroom like this. And I might sound idealistic and whatever, but to me, this classroom is the world. You know? And I have to work with that. Hearing you guys out and hearing about how you're dealing with certain issues or like you said you're kind of scared to bring things up, let me tell you what has happened in the past.

When I have brought up this issue, I have had students say some pretty nasty things about gays. I mean some really bad things in discussions. They don't even know that they are saying them. They don't realize their bias behind their comments. But in other years I've had some students say, "I can't stand gays" or say things like, "That shit's sick!" And as a teacher I hear that, and I'm trying to have a discussion and you hear these comments and I could very easily turn and say, "You're wrong!," you know what I mean? But what I've found was that that doesn't work. If I'm too hard, too pushy with them, then they'll shut down with me and they'll resist. And so, that's why I'm very careful when I bring up this issue. I have a whole unit that I plan that will most likely begin in February. I'm very meticulous of what I bring up first, what comes second, where I allow the discussions to go. That's why I feel a little weird that the first time this issue came up I wasn't here to be a part of it. You see, the substitute may not have known how to turn things around or take the discussion in a different way. I do that a lot with my questioning, I'm not sure if you can see that.

But here's what I want to say, I don't know what your class is going to be like. I'm always surprised with the make up of each of my classes. But to me, it's the students that are not saying things that I wonder about. Sometimes it's the ones that are the quietest. Sometimes people will say, "I think everyone's accepting of gay people," but others might be saying to themselves, 'Well I don't so I'll just sit here quietly." Sometimes I'll see that in their journals or in their reflections, they do have issues with gay people. They have these attitudes but they won't express it during discussions. But I have also seen that there is a change later on in the year when they've heard other people share their stories. They start to identify with those other individuals. They start to realize that their attitude was kind of messed up or whatever, but they start to see that. But I feel that that growth only happened because I didn't attack them in any kind of way. And nobody else attacked them in any kind of way. So they were open at least to the idea of listening.

Knowing that every year I'm going to confront this issue, I want to ask you guys, will you help me? (Both Rianne and Damon) Will you help me with this? Because I don't normally tell my students what I'm going to do, you know what I mean? But seeing that this situation has opened up, I really would like you guys to take part in helping me get others to think. But here's the thing, we can't do it through anger and we can't do it through disgust, it has to be with patience and sometimes it has to be with our own tolerance, and that's the hard part. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., interview, November, 2009)

Rianne went on to describe how the class discussion touched upon other matters such as public displays of affection between gays and why guys thought it was sexy for two girls to kiss. As I listened, I responded:

CRV: You are going to hear all of that. You're going to hear a lot of ignorance. You know, that fact that I was homophobic early in my life was because I didn't know anybody that was

gay, or at least I didn't think I knew somebody that was gay, so I never had the opportunity to understand what homosexuality was all about. And I gotta be honest with you, but it wasn't until I was able to bridge communication with others that I started to reflect about my own biases. And that's what I want from these students. And I know it can happen. I've seen students go from being complete homophobes to complete advocates. But it can only happen if we, here, have tolerance and patience for their ignorance.

Rianne: It's really hard and it's really frustrating. I tried to tell my mom and I guess it really is confusion that I do know who I am, but it's just don't want to… I don't know….

CRV: (Interrupting) One thing I can tell you is that it's all going to work itself out. You know? And I think you have to go through this. Honestly, what you're doing, although it seems like you're in a middle-state or whatever, I think it's important that you're going through this. You are solidifying, little by little, your thoughts, your ideas, and I guarantee you that someday you're going to look back at this and you're going to be glad that you overcame these obstacles.

Rianne: I just don't want to hurt anybody. When I told my mom she said we had to schedule me an appointment.

CRV: You mean with a counselor or something? (Rianne nodded in the affirmative. Damon began…)

Damon: When I told my mom she said I was my mother's "worst nightmare."

CRV: (Surprised) Wait, who said that?

Damon: My mom. "Mother's worst nightmare." My dad, well, he has a gay brother but he really doesn't accept him either, so my dad is wanting to turn a blind eye to it. That was last year. But when I told them again at the start of this school year, my mom again started crying saying "mother's worst nightmare, how could you do this to me? I want grand kids, I want blah blah blah…" (Chokes up as he can not continue speaking)

CRV: How are they now with you? I mean, are you okay?

Damon: It's like they forget. It's like I can see how much it hurts them for me to bring it up so I don't talk about it. It seems like they forget it and then they'll start to bring up prom and that kind of stuff, and like, "Who's going to be your date?" Well I don't know. I tell them that I might not go to prom and they're like "Hmm."

CRV: But have they brought it up since then?

Damon: No.

CRV: How long ago was this?

Damon: September.

CRV: They're not threatening you in any kind of way are they?

Damon: No, it's just that it's disappointing.

CRV: Do you think that it's just hard for a parent?

Rianne: (Interjects) I'm sure it is, but I can honestly say that if, Mr. V, if one of your daughters was gay, I think you would react differently.

CRV: (Nodding in agreement) I would.

Damon: I can't believe my mother called me a "mother's worst nightmare." There's no reason for that. You don't ever call your kid a mother's worst nightmare. I know of kids that disruptive, disrespectful, but their parents never call them that. All her friends say I'm not a troubled kid…

Rianne: (Interrupting) You're not. You're not trouble Damon. There's nothing wrong with you.

CRV: Rianne is right. You understand that right? I mean, please do because you're not all these negative things, you're mom is reacting in a way that she probably doesn't even know that she is. It's a shock. We gotta be honest. It's a shock to a parent because in their mind, they've lived in a heterosexual world and they think their child will be heterosexual. The thing is, is that they are going to go through a time period too that's going to be tough for them. I think that what you're doing by letting them know is a great step you have taken. And like I've heard stories of how kids have been kicked out of their homes, it sounds like they're okay right now because they're there, they're still talking to you, they may not be happy, but I think that they have to also go through a time period of acceptance. And you also have to have some patience for them, but you might experience some pretty ugly things, like those comments.
      Now, I can't speak more on that, but I do know that time tends to work in your favor, you know? But I think that when you have a situation like this, this is an opportunity to talk more with your parents as well. Bring up the issue in a more subtle way maybe by saying calmly, "Mom, have you given it some thought to what I said?" Ask her straight out, "Mom, do you still love me?" Put them in the situation where they're going to have to start questioning themselves, you see? I think you just can't let it sit. You started this into motion so you just kind of need to go with it. Now I'm not saying you have to speed it up in any kind of way, but I think you need to do that. And it seems like you already are by telling your friend, telling me, and so you're becoming more confident little by little. And I think that you may eventually do it publicly. You just might someday do it. But that's on you. That's going to happen when you are ready. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., student interview, November, 2009)

Damon went on to describe how his parents did not talk to him for several weeks after he brought it up in September. Visibly, it was emotional for him to bring it up. He mentioned that he wanted to end the silence, but simply did not know how. Rianne then mentioned how one of my former gay students had a crush on her but she too did not know how to deal with it. Here, I began to recognize my own limitations to offer any kind of advice:

CRV: There are some groups that I know of that help people that are in your situations, have you made any contact with any of them?

Damon: Well the club here at school but I stopped going.

CRV: I don't mean here at school, I mean outside of school?

Rianne: Oh no, not outside the school.

CRV: Could I connect you guys with any of them?

Rianne: I would love it.

Damon: Well my parents are always wondering where I'm going and …

CRV: (Interrupting) This would be over the phone.

Damon: But they listen to my calls too.

CRV: Wow. Well, okay. Let me see what I can do. You see, I know I have limitations when it comes to some of these things. There are obviously many more people more qualified to handle these circumstances so I want to find, I want to help you find those people, okay? And I'm going to do whatever it is to make you guys … healthy. To make you guys feel better about this situation because the goal here is, let's make this agreement together. Let's be victorious. By the end of the school year, let's win. Let's win in our lives, do you know what I mean? Let's find victories in even the smallest things, but let's do it to the point where the ultimate victory is our own individual happiness. Okay? I'm going to work toward yours, and we're going to work towards each other's, there's no question about it, but we're going to do this. It's going to be our goal. And this goal is not going to end in June, you understand? I'm going to be here so you'll know where I'm always at.

Rianne: Thank you so much. (Smiling)

CRV: So let's make that commitment and if you need anything, you've got my email, and if you want my number, get it before the end of class.

Both: Okay. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., student interview, November, 2009)

As we all stood up from our seats, both Rianne and Damon each gave me a hug on their

way out of my office.

What makes this brief discussion transformative learning data significant is that it

demonstrated how my unique personal belief system was revealed directly to the

students. I allowed myself to openly share my own bias as a way to understand and

identify with their concern. In addition, it showed how I attempted to help transform their

negative experience into something more positive. By empowering them to assist me, by empowering them to make a commitment to each other's happiness, I not only validated their concerns, but I created the opportunity for them to take on an active role in transforming others.

It is these very types of interactions, along with more formal pedagogical interactions, that I have enjoyed an inspirational, heart-warming, and self-actualizing teaching experience. As the course is an extension of my teacher's voice to make a difference, it is important to note, for purposes of this study, that although most of the transformative data were derived from the students, these transformative experiences have in many ways continued to transform me as a teacher and as a human being: By seeing students change their attitudes, confront their biases, and discover themselves; by having students return to thank me for their experience; by parental feedback; by having the unique honor of five students in 8 years *coming out* in my class. This type of feedback provided me with the knowledge that I was doing something meaningful for lives of many of my students.

Care, Empathy and Compassion

Among the major patterns that emerged from the data of this study, I observed the pattern of care, empathy and compassion within my own practice as a teacher and within many of the responses given by students. Throughout my experience of teaching the Multicultural Literature course, I have witnessed an evolution in my own thinking about my role as a teacher. At the same time, I observed that my attitude and approach toward teaching, specifically in relation to compassion, prompted a change or transformation in

students' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors through their acquired abilities to listen, reason, and negotiate meaning, primarily with the topics of cultural diversity and sexuality. The findings in this section derive from personal reflective and memory data, observations, student feedback from the end of the year anonymous student evaluations, and a teacher-created blog. A review of the data demonstrated the following characteristics: the presence of a firmly-held philosophical, ethical and theoretical belief system about compassion that guided my teaching and this study; and the development of care, empathy, and compassion, within students as revealed through the authentic student voice.

My personal belief system and praxis.

As one of the focal points of this study was to examine my belief systems, characteristics, behaviors, and ethical orientation as a teacher in context of a researcher-created high school Multicultural Literature course, it is important to note that my original purpose in creating the Multicultural Literature and Practicum course was to facilitate greater understanding and harmony between culturally diverse groups. Although much of what I had designed for the course can be traced and connected to theories and approaches that I acquired through my professional and personal development, the fundamental driving force that compelled me to create the course was firmly rooted in my personal take on the concept of compassion.

For purposes of better informing the reader of the concept of compassion, the following definitions best describe the theoretical framework on which I based most of

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my ideas, behaviors, and actions throughout my teaching of the Multicultural Literature

course.

According to Mate (1991), compassion is:

A feeling and as such is something special and substantial. However, it is a feeling *mediated by reason*: the other is worthy of compassion, not a mere object of suffering, but a subject with his dignity wounded, abused or frustrated. Dignity is recognized as an end and is not used as a means, as Kant wished. This dignity with which the other shows himself is the dignity required of man, the human species. Thus, compassion is the tangible or natural mediation between the particularity of the sentiment and the universality of human dignity … Compassion is the name for an inter-subjective ethic, not symmetrical but rather in accord with the true asymmetry. (as cited in Ruiz & Minguez, 2001, p. 159)

To Ikeda (2001), compassion:

Does not involve the forcible suppression of our natural emotions, our likes and dislikes. Rather, it is to realize that even those whom we dislike have qualities that can contribute to our lives and can afford us opportunities to grow in our own humanity. Further, it is the compassionate desire to find ways of contributing to the well-being of others that gives rise to limitless wisdom … [and] consists in the sustained and courageous effort to seek out the good in all people, whoever they may be, however they may behave. It means striving, through sustained engagement, to cultivate the positive qualities in oneself and in others. (pp. 101-102)

Both these definitions describe the fundamental drive by which I created and have taught

the Multicultural Literature course. It is important to note that although a subject's

personal drive is something difficult to describe as data, I included it because it emerged

as a significant pattern in this study.

At a personal and fundamental level, what has driven me as a teacher, and as a

human being, is my desire for young people to learn about themselves, learn about each

other, and develop greater dignity and respect for humanity. I see my role as an educator

as the creator of value by cultivating individual character through critical thinking,

making informed decisions to empathize, to stand against evil, to believe, and to offer

hope. This drive is what I call compassion. Through the number of powerful and

meaningful moments I shared with my students each year, through conversations,

reflections, evaluations, and emails from former students–through a bond that continues

to exist beyond the classroom, beyond space and time–compassion is the one thing that

has remained a constant throughout my experience of teaching the class. It is from these

experiences that I have based my own personal conceptions of care, empathy, and

compassion as demonstrated in the following section.

The external data showed that compassion plays a major role in my personal

reflections as an educator. For example, my views on compassion first appeared in

documents that I wrote during my experience in applying and being honored for the Los

Angeles County Teacher of the Year (TOY) program in 2001-2002. For example, in my

written statement to the selection committee, my first reference of compassion was

recognizing that there was not enough of it in education. I wrote:

> I truly enjoy working with adolescents. It is a time in one's life when we attempt to organize our beliefs, make sense of the world and shape our identities. I make it a habit to learn as much as I can about the lives of my students because this serves as my basis for instruction. Knowing about their lives, the sports they play, the songs they love, their likes and dislikes, their families, their friends and their troubles, helps me access a deeper realm of the traditional student-teacher relationship. When I engage students at a personal level I gain a far greater insight on how to proceed with instruction. Through sincerity, I am able to develop a mutual respect that fosters growth and happiness.
>
> Unfortunately, there is not enough sincerity and compassion within today's schools. We are seeing an increase in school violence and the detrimental effects of bullying. The media has revealed a key question for educators and that is: How do we prevent it from happening? I believe the answer to this question must not only come from educators but from all levels of society. We must all take responsibility for these circumstances and develop educational reforms with humanistic principles imbued with creativity, global citizenship and compassion.
>
> As an outcome to such reform, the question about the purpose of education must be raised. We are currently seeing enormous attention given to standards-based education. These are measurable outcomes initiated by the political sphere of society. But as critical thinking citizens we must ask ourselves, what is more productive for our future as a society? Are standards enough to wipe out school violence or deter human misery? Are standards advancing society toward a culture of peace? If we want to understand the current state of affairs in education today, we must look at the causes we have made in the past. And if we want to see how the state of affairs of education will be in the future, we must look at ourselves in the present. I am not implying that I am against standards; on the contrary, I believe they are useful forms of academic assessment. But from my observations, the trend toward standards somehow shifts the focus of teachers, administrators and the community from developing productive human beings to simply raising

grades, scores and percentages. And I must note, good test grades do not equal good human beings. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., TOY questionnaire, August 12, 2001)

When I wrote this statement, I reflected upon my own observations of world and national affairs, but primarily about the Columbine massacre and the increased standardization of public education. Respect, understanding and the need for greater interpersonal relationships between students and teachers, began to emerge as themes important in my own individual thinking. The TOY statement also showed that as I evolved my views on the student-teacher relationship, I eventually began to philosophically question the purpose of education.

One of the questions on the TOY questionnaire asked for an explanation of my philosophy of education. Never having written a philosophy prior to this, the question gave me the opportunity to solidify some of my ideas and beliefs that had been rattling in my head since I had first started teaching. In 2001 I wrote:

> A philosophy is a written and verbal form of rationalizing one's motives for doing something. It reveals the truths and principles that fuel our thoughts and actions. To explain my philosophy of education in two pages would be like fitting a mountain into an ant hole. Therefore, I hope to only touch upon the key elements and await a future opportunity to discuss these further with you.
>
> My philosophy of education derives from my Buddhist faith, practice and study. According to Buddhism, human beings are in no way different or separate from each other. Buddhism reveals that each living being has the potential for suffering as well as reaching a state of supreme happiness (i.e., enlightenment). Amid the living conditions in which each of us may find ourselves, good or bad, each person contains the potential for enlightenment. This potential state of being is not something gained nor adopted, but rather, awakened from dormancy from the inner depths of our being. In other words, it is a state that is always present within us, waiting for the right external circumstances to manifest. This awakened life condition, not to be confused with pleasure, is a state in which a person finds meaning and purpose to their existence; it is when a person affirms his/her ability to create constructive value from all experiences, positive and negative. Moreover, true happiness is not a fixed point to be achieved, but rather, a process of understanding the nature of our lives and of those around us.
>
> Happiness as the purpose of this philosophy may be easily confused as a selfish and personal goal, but if we examine it carefully as a social phenomena, individual happiness has a much broader implication. People who opt to define happiness as the accumulation of wealth or achieving a high social position have settled for something less than total well-being. We cannot deny our interdependence with one another; no one lives in a vacuum. Since our lives are continually tied in with those of others, we cannot ignore the concerns of the community. There are many people today that live their own private lives, unaware of the benefits they have received

from society. Such people are unwilling to put up with the inconvenience of others and fall into a narrow egoism. It is my hope as an educator that, once awakened to how society provides for everyone's happiness, the student realizes that the best means toward their own happiness is to become a productive participant in society. Without this reciprocity a fair and humane society is not possible.

        If we are to move toward a world of peace, culture and education, people must learn to live better with each other. Education is more than the transfer of knowledge; it is a human exchange of ideas that serves as a catalyst for change. Each day before I go to work, I do my best to align myself with these principles and consider every interaction with students and colleagues as an opportunity to create value in their lives. Whether it is in a form of a question during a literary discussion or an informal lunchtime conversation, I consider each instant of the day a 'teachable moment.' This motivation comes from my deep compassion to see others become happy.

        Teachers often employ numerous methods to deliver knowledge but students don't often share their own knowledge in the process. I choose not to believe students are 'empty buckets' waiting to be filled. Their lives are rich with information and potential, and as an educator I have made use of this. This has allowed me to develop an authentic relationship of mutual respect, caring and compassion with students. Since my students are adolescents, often confused about their identities and attempting to make sense of the world around them, this type of relationship forms a powerful bond between us that is well received and productive.

        When the learning process is void of egoism, arrogance and faulty communication, it manifests great benefits in the lives of students as well as in others. Living in true harmony requires peaceful cooperation. This type of cooperative existence begins with personal behavior and logical living. We cannot ask students to listen if they do not have the experience to appreciate what is being said. As educators, we cannot expect to teach if we are not open to being taught by students; and we cannot expect to make students happy if we are not happy ourselves. Education requires the awakening of our great inner potential and it starts at the beginning of each moment. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., TOY questionnaire, August 12, 2001)

Essentially, my overall attitude toward education emphasized four main points: the spiritual, the interpersonal, the social, and the practical. Although this was only a writing exercise for an awards program, it was significant as it demonstrated my attitude as a fifth year teacher, approximately one year before I created the Multicultural Literature course.

Upon receiving the honor of Teacher of the Year, I used my acceptance speech to publicly share more of my thoughts, which demonstrated my slowly evolving attitude toward compassion. For example:

I would like to send a message to all educators because I believe this forum is appropriate. As educators, we have a new mission in our jobs. We will have to learn to teach in the midst of the escalating tensions in the world. Our role will have to be to develop young people of character, courage and compassion. We must foster their growth now more than ever before. This will require more work, more time and more conviction. We must seriously ask ourselves the type of future we want to see for our youth. We must act now.

This is a time of great change in the psyche of the individual. The students we work for are part of a new generation facing challenges never before seen in the history of the world. They are the ones that will rise up from the ashes of war and take the world into new directions. Therefore, it is imperative now more than ever before, to develop our future leaders and citizens to become great people of compassion and value. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., TOY acceptance speech, September, 2001)

Although compassion remained an abstract concept in my own thinking, I could not help attempt to view my life, society, and my role as an educator through the *lens of compassion*. As I went on to create the Multicultural Literature course, an act which I very much feel was, in part, an act of compassion, I made conscious efforts to question it, understand it, and find justification for it. The data showed how these thoughts manifested in my reflections of my daily interactions with students. For example, in my nightly reflections after teaching specific lessons, I would write, "I noticed that students exhibited greater levels of empathy and compassion when I engaged students in meaningful dialogue about issues of prejudice" (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, April 2003). In other reflections I wrote, "More than simply acquiring new information, dialogue allowed me to feel for others, to see their struggles, to empathize, and eventually began to awaken my compassion toward others" (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, April, 2003).

Additional personal reflection data showed that compassion was a subject that influenced much of my thinking as I attempted to rationalize its purpose. In some instances, personal reflections demonstrated my commentary on how certain conditions of society, such as the media, challenged the notion of compassion. For example:

The people around me show me that they have very little faith in the future. Most live in the present with little thought of the potential in their lives. I believe the greatest reason for this is that our culture in the US promotes very little self-appreciation, appreciation of others, and faith. I am not speaking of individual cultures such as that of family and friends, but our overall culture as a society that is uniquely defined by the media's realms of interpretation. We are a pop-culture;

popularity defined by a system of processes that dictate to us what is new, what is exciting, what is news, and what is truth. What we consume by the media greatly influences our values, decisions and attitudes. Our conversations with others about issues we obtain from the media solidify our mind-set; it is from this experience that we base our approaches toward life. It is not until a person sees beyond the façade of the media that one can recognize life's grandeur where one recognizes the interdependence we have with each other: A sense of respect, and perhaps love. It is the ability to feel compassion for others. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, July 18, 2004)

In some instances, however, reflections at times expressed how the role of media had, at times, provided me with a context by which to rationalize a more compassionate approach. For example:

Regardless of the negative imagery, stories and events the media portrays about education today, there is the side to education we don't often hear about; the side we should hear about more often. In schools today, there are individuals that have come to the forefront of human purpose and have dedicated their lives, their energy, their hearts, and their compassion to lead our quest for a better world of understanding and harmony. These individuals have raised the bar far beyond cultural cohesion, but are encouraging cultural harmony. They are setting up the conditions for young people to discover their talents, beliefs, and passions. Besides the standards and exams we have set up to measure a student's "intelligence," students are flourishing in the areas we find difficult to measure. Today's schools have children itching to release their potential, waiting for those right conditions; therefore we must learn to capture those areas sorely missed. We need to learn from them, understand them, and learn to make sense of them throughout our educational endeavors. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, May 10, 2001)

The review of my personal data continuously showed that compassion was a significant pattern in my own reflections as a teacher. The data showed that I consciously grappled with the topic of compassion as I attempted to rationalize my overall role as a teacher. For example, at the beginning of the 2009-2010 school year, I reflected:

As I think about compassion I wonder. I wonder if compassion is finite or are there multiple levels of compassion? Can we, as people, show compassion in different ways? What does an act of compassion look like? In order for there to be a compassionate act, must one know they are being compassionate? (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, September 7, 2009)

Further evolution of my thoughts on compassion was demonstrated in a personal writing exercise in 2004. I asked myself, "What is my mission as a teacher?" An excerpt of this exercise included:

Before I am a teacher, before I am a parent, before I am a friend, I am a human being. As a human being, I understand the value of all life, both the good and bad, for all things, be they good or bad,

may bring value to a person who chooses to recognize it. I recognize that all human beings are capable of finding the good in everything that is bad. This is called happiness. It is neither a façade nor an escapist attitude. It is ability, a skill that all people are capable of attaining with correct guidance, support and motivation. What I speak of is the fact that we all can develop the ability to welcome challenges, overcome them and grow from them. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, November 16, 2004)

In other circumstances, I also shared some of my personal views with colleagues. For example, in a personal communication to a colleague scheduled to teach an additional section of the class, I wrote:

As a teacher, a coach, a mentor, you have to consistently remind them that as youth, they have the power to effect change. By inspiring a spirit of empathy, or how like I like to call it, compassion, certain students will begin to hear your call to action. Kids want to feel like they can make a difference and when a teacher tells them they can, they begin to listen. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, July 16, 2008)

Interestingly, the data also demonstrated how conducting this very study presented certain obstacles in relation to my preoccupation with compassion. I was concerned that my role as a researcher would deter my original sense of mission toward compassion. For example:

It's the night before the first day of school. I'm strangely anticipating the beginning of this year. It doesn't feel the same. I seem to be feeling that this year will be concentrated more with me than on the students. This could change my past dynamics. I need to remind myself why I teach them the way I do. I need to remind myself of the fundamentals – my compassion. These students did not just choose a class, but they have chosen to be a part of my life; and I have chosen to be a part of theirs.
    I don't know what to expect tomorrow. I'm going to start tomorrow with a clear head. It's time to put the researcher hat on and begin my data collection. I'm excited about starting, but I'm worried I'll lose myself in the research and lose my focus – the students. Stay centered! Stay focused! Remember, … be a part of their lives and create value! Roar like the lion! (C. R. Valverde, p.c., journal entry, September 2, 2009)

Uniquely, this data also showed how compassion had evolved in me as a motivational force for my own daily interactions with students.

Ultimately, the data showed that in more recent years of my teaching, I began to share more of my thoughts about compassion with my students. This was significant as the data demonstrated how my own ethical belief system transitioned into concrete

expressions in my pedagogical interactions with my students. For example, as an

assignment at the end of the 2007-2008 school year, I asked students to write their

"Philosophy of Life." As a gift, I decided to create a book of all their classmates'

philosophies to keep as a memory of the class. In the book's introduction, I wrote the

following letter:

> Dear Multicultural Literature Students:
> Each year that I teach this course, I am always reminded of how lucky and honored I am to work with youth. It is with young people that I find inspiration and a firm sense of purpose of my life. As you have shared your philosophy of life with others, and me, I find appropriate that I share mine with you.
>
> A philosophy is a way of rationalizing one's motives for doing. It reveals the truths and principles that fuel our beliefs and actions. My philosophy of life derives from my fundamental belief that all human beings are in no way independent of each other. It is quite evident to see that no human being lives independently of the rest of humanity, as we are dependent on each other for food, shelter, safety and happiness. No human being lives in a vacuum. Through this interdependence, I have learned that each and every single person contributes to humanity in some way or fashion. Whether one's actions are positive or negative, the actions themselves have some affect on others whether we see it or not. This belief places a great responsibility on each individual, as it is his or her choice to either contribute positively or negatively to life.
>
> In addition to this belief, I am a firm believer in the limitless potential of the human spirit. I know that each and every person contains infinite wisdom and ability to achieve their greatest potential. This is evident in the fact that ordinary people like us are constantly doing things that change our world. Knowing this, I believe that each of us has the ability to tap into our potential to create value *from* each other and *for* each other. Through human interaction, through dialogue and compassion, we can grow to understand one another at a fundamental human level of appreciation.
>
> It is my belief that this level of appreciation helps us realize that our actions have consequences and it is our responsibility to create benefit for others and ourselves. Social transformation is only possible when we are able to overcome our own biases and fears. This means that each individual must see himself or herself as a potential agent for change. It is my firm belief that if we want to make this world a better place, the fundamental starting point is our individual self. When we recognize that we are all connected, that we all depend on each other, that we all share the common desire for happiness, we can begin making the *change we want to see* (Gandhi).
>
> Ultimately, my philosophy of life is centered on the belief that each of us has a vital responsibility to humanity and it should not be wasted with egoism and self-centeredness. Life is too precious to spend it squabbling over our differences. A peaceful coexistence in which we value culture and education is dependent on our ability to minimize conflict amongst ourselves. Peace is possible. Our future is dependent on youth and I trust that you will make the right decisions for a greater future.
>
> As you read your classmates' philosophies, please reflect on how each of us views our lives differently. But despite these differences, we have managed to develop great respect for each other. Your contributions to the class, whether it was a lot or very little, allowed us to create the type of environment that is seldom seen in society. Through respect and dialogue, you learned about yourself and others. This is what I value most about your class. I thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my life with yours. I wish you the best in the future. It is now your time

to proceed with the rest of your life through courage, determination and compassion. I know you will make me proud. Congratulations!
Sincerely,
Carlos "Charlie" Valverde … aka Mr. V. (C. R. Valverde, p.c., open letter to students, June, 2008)

It is data such as these that emerged as themes to the pattern of care, empathy and compassion as it served as a foundation for my praxis. In the following section, I will demonstrate how this praxis is observed through the student voice.

Outcome of care, empathy and compassion within students.

Through an inductive analysis of all data, care, empathy, and compassion emerged as a clear pattern in students' reactions to their experience in my class. Although elements of care, empathy and compassion can be extracted from other data patterns described in this chapter, the following data specifically draws from the student voice demonstrated directly from the end of the year evaluations.

The element of care was demonstrated through various interpretations. The data ultimately showed that student growth and consciousness toward a concern for others varied greatly in their diverse responses. These varied responses revealed the levels of consciousness that were unique to the individuals themselves. However, through a broad contextualization of care, empathy and compassion, their overall comments shared a common sense of awareness, acceptance, and tolerance of the other. I include these as data because awareness, acceptance and tolerance were precursors for developing concern for others.

As demonstrated in the Transformative Learning section of this chapter, ethical thinking was a result of students' ability to see things from alternative perspectives. For many of the students, a change in perspective was the first step in empathizing with

others. For example, "It really made me think about things in another perspective and to walk in other people's shoes" (Anonymous, June, 2009), and "After some activities, I was able to see things from another group's perspective" (Anonymous, June, 2009).

Students showed that their experience in the course caused them to think more deeply about others. For example, "This class was extremely unique because everyone could speak freely without being judged or restricted. This class was very effective for all of us. This class made everyone soul search and think about other human beings" (Anonymous, January, 2010). As a result, student comments demonstrated how thinking about others helped change their ethical thinking about others. For example, "I learned how to be accepting, open-minded, respectful, and caring. I learned great things that will make me a better person in life" (Anonymous, June, 2008). In addition, "I learned that regardless of race we should love one another and appreciate what we all have to share"(Anonymous, June, 2007) and "In this course, I learned not to fear culture clashes and misunderstandings, but to embrace them as part of a learning process that the whole world has to undergo" (Anonymous, June, 2007). Similarly, another student wrote:

> The fact that we debate in the class helps. The fact that we look at what is wrong with the world and try to figure out why people think the way they do. In the end it teaches us not to judge and to be more tolerant than we were. (Anonymous, June, 2009)

Many students shared more personal examples of developing concern for others. For example, "Before this class, I was always afraid of offending someone by saying something ethnically insensitive. But not only has Multicultural Lit given me the knowledge to combat my ignorance, it has wiped away my fear" (Anonymous, June,

2008). Likewise, in the following example, a student not only recognized her own

growth, but also revealed an attitude about the class in general:

> This class really made me grow as a person. I learned so much from taking this class, not only about other races and cultures, but about myself. This class makes you open your eyes and makes you see everyone as one and as equal. We all struggle in life, so we shouldn't judge others, we should love and accept them. This class made me feel like a better person and I believe that this class could change the way people think for the better. If more people took this class the world would be a better place to live in. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

Similarly, another student wrote, "Interculturalism is something that needs to be taught to

everyone. I feel that if this was taught, this would be a start to a better society"

(Anonymous, June, 2009).

Some students specifically mentioned how the course influenced their ethical

thinking. For example, "It has allowed me to refine and establish my morals and values

and taught me to respect others' opinions"(Anonymous, June, 2008) and "[This class]

caused growth of moral responsibility. I thought that I was the only person with a lot of

problems but this class made me mindful of others' struggles" (Anonymous, June, 2008).

As Carrell (1997) found that the infusion of cultural knowledge in an

intercultural communication curriculum has a significant impact on the development of

empathy, the data from this study also showed that many of the activities, lessons, and

discussions in the Multicultural Literature class produced similar outcomes. I find that

the reciprocity between my concern for others and my teaching practices within an

intercultural context, helped transform many of my students' consciousness to feel for

others.

As Ikeda, D. (2000) succinctly described:

> Compassion does not mean looking down on someone from a position of superiority. It is not a vertical but a horizontal relationship. It is a feeling of sympathy toward others as fellow human

beings. And it is based on respect… We invite a friend into a compassionate life-space and warmly embrace them; we sit down in the same room and discuss life as equals. We discuss things and learn from one another as fellow human beings, and together we strive to improve our lives. (p. 196)

The data showed that this "horizontal relationship" was an outcome of the student experience. Another example demonstrated this:

This class taught lessons about the real world, as opposed to other courses where you learn about everything but the real world, the most important thing to learn. This class was beyond effective, it had an impact. What was taught in this class, is what education is really about. Learning about each other, ourselves, and what we could all do together, as people, as humans. (Anonymous, June, 2009)

Another theme that emerged from the care, empathy, and compassion data was the revelation that many students' attitudes about homosexuality and gays were affected throughout their experiences in the class. For example, "I became more accepting of gays" (Anonymous, June, 2009), and "The class really opened my eyes to homosexuality… It has enabled me to act even more respectfully towards gays, and it made it easier to see them as equals" (Anonymous, June, 2009). In one response to the question of whether the class had an affect on their views toward gays, one student shared, "Just to be there for them more than I have, because of all the things they have to go through" (Anonymous, June, 2009). From a more religious perspective, one student shared:

Being that I'm a Christian I don't agree with homosexuality and I do believe it's a sin. I just don't think that it's my place to tell a homosexual that they're going to burn in hell because that's placing judgment on their lifestyle. God does the judgment. I believe that Christians should have compassion and understanding on this issue. (Anonymous, June, 2007)

Finally, for some students, their change in perspective about gays also helped them advocate for better behavior towards gays. For example:

At first, I was not really fond of homosexuals. I'm not homophobic or anything but I mean I'm okay with them. But after I learned so many things about homosexuals like they are born gay and

struggles they encounter, I'm now completely fine with them. They deserve better treatment. (Anonymous, June, 2009)

The most significant data that emerged about care, empathy, and compassion were comments obtained directly from former students. In the fall of 2008, I created a blog for former students to respond directly to the topic of compassion as they reflected on their past experience in my class. I asked, "I know we never mentioned it in class, nor did we discuss it through the literature, but did you in any way see compassion demonstrated throughout the course or through your relationship with me? If so, in what way" (C. R. Valverde, p.c., blog, February, 2009)? During the data collection phase of this study, I only managed to receive eight responses to the compassion blog post. Again, student responses varied, however, the data shows that compassion is clearly part of their experience. For example:

> Compassion was perhaps one of the most important subconscious actions between the students. Considering the class structure was based on discussion, we talked about many topics that had debatable, and at times controversial opinions varying between students. However, compassion existed between all students as we talked about personal experiences and were able to tie it in with class material. I feel that compassion was mostly seen when we reached emotional peaks in the class, such as when students talked about extremely personal experiences on controversial topics such as religion and immigration; compassion was felt around the classroom when we "let it rip" on Friday afternoons, and we shared highs and lows of our day, especially as we got closer to the end of our senior year; compassion existed on the remarkable resource projects that blew people's minds away, the messages that such projects conveyed to other students. We may have not talked about it, but without compassion existing amongst all of us, this class would have not been the wonderful experience everyone reflected it to be.
> As far as you Charlie, you were the model of compassion. You guided the lectures, gave us feedback on our opinions, but allowed us to come to our own conclusions with the help of one another. You taught us to start thinking critically, to question as much as possible, and to not only voice our opinion but the importance of listening as well. I know you showed compassion to all your students because you wanted all of them to succeed in all aspects in their lives and you supported them as well. You have been one of the most influential persons in my life and when it comes to being able to teach compassion, I can not think of anyone better than you to be able to teach others about compassion in its many forms. (Anonymous, February 22, 2009)

Here, the blogger pointed out that compassion, for her, emerged during discussions, projects, other students, and through the modeling of the teacher. Similarly, another

observed that compassion was primarily demonstrated from my behavior as a teacher.

For example:

> Although compassion was never spoken about in class, it didn't need to be; compassion was that class. From my very first day in that class and I felt the compassion that Mr. V had for everyone, stepping into that class was completely different from any other. The compassion that the whole class had started with Mr. V. As a new student and someone who was new to the school and the state of California, I was exceedingly nervous the first several weeks of school, but Mr. V was so warm, welcoming, and kind, he made me feel more like an old friend rather than an awkward new student with an accent. The compassion of the class started with Mr. V. For some, the topics of class were not always easy to address, but there was a certain bond and level of trust in that class that allowed us as students to simply take a leap of faith and say what we were thinking or what was on our minds. It was an invaluable class and one I know I will never forget, and I'm sure the majority of the class will not forget. That class was a huge mind and eye-opener; I learned things about other cultures, faiths, etc, as well as things about myself. I don't think words can do justice to how much that class meant to me. Even now, as I grow closer to my junior year of college, I still relate back to things I've learned in Multicultural Lit.
> It's not always easy to have a successful discussion class, especially when there are strong opinions from all sides, but when one walked into Multicultural Lit., it was not just walking into a classroom, it was walking into a safe space where, despite the strong opposition that might welcome our own opinions, we felt free to say what we felt and believed, and in my opinion, that is an extraordinary feat. (Anonymous, March 6, 2009)

Another student shared similar views of compassion, but also described how compassion

emerged through my relationship with him. For example:

> Compassion was evident in every assignment and discussion that took place in this class. As a class based on injustice, one must feel compassionate towards the subject at hand, or else the teaching must be ineffective. By presenting us with such controversial, engaging topics, you were able to trigger a sense of compassion in each of us (at times, certain people more than others). But nonetheless, it is my judgment that each and every student who has taken your multicultural literature course, has left as a much more open and understanding person. All of this would be impossible without the presence of compassion. As for my relationship with you, you are one of the few teachers I know who is able to establish a good relationship with their students. In your classroom, you established a sense a trust, like "anything goes." I believe this is what allows students to feel open with you. The relationships student form with you is not a student-teacher relationship, but more like student-mentor. Your approach towards multiculturalism and they way you conduct your class makes students feel compelled to get involved. You not only establish relationships between you and your students, but through your primarily discussion based class, you establish relationships between your students. Relationships that hadn't existed the first three years of high school, but made finally in your class. So when asked the question of whether or not compassion was present, I would simply have to say that were it not for compassion evident in multicultural lit period 6, I would have learned nothing, and therefore not have felt compelled to contribute to this blog post. (Anonymous, May 11, 2009)

The following blogger not only described part of the process by which

compassion unfolded, but also shared her appreciation:

Having experienced this class, I can say that compassion between students and toward you, Mr. V definitely grew stronger as the course unfolded. Your class was geared toward discussions, so we were able to share and absorb very personal stories. I think that if you threw a person into your class two weeks before graduation, mid hot debate, they may not know how to handle it with the same level of compassion as a student that took the course from beginning to end. Your lessons taught us that everyone is going to hold their own opinions and views no matter what, and as compassionate individuals we can accept and understand where they are coming from without infringing upon our own thoughts. I believe being able to listen with an open and understanding mind is a main component of compassion. I also believe that your methods of teaching indirectly formed us into compassionate people. They say later in life you probably wont use half of the stuff you learn in high school, but I can say with conviction that your lesson of compassion is one that I carry with me day in and day out. (Anonymous, February 24, 2009)

One of the most personally significant blogs posted came from a student who observed that compassion was a "byproduct of something else." Here, the student carefully analyzed how it manifested through the activities of the class. For example:

Having had the privilege of being a student in your class I feel I can explain a little bit how compassion worked in it. In my opinion compassion was a byproduct of something else. The main goal of the class was to create awareness and encourage students to be more open minded about some of the controversial issues we saw or faced at the time; some of which we continue to see or face. This was done by presenting the topic at large, which ranged from gay rights to immigration and the rights of undocumented people, and fostering an open discussion on that respective topic. Now, if you don't have the right person guiding something like this, the ensuing result is going to be something far from compassion, because we all know that people have different opinions and beliefs that they hold as infallible. What was done right, in this case, was that after the topic was presented the discussion that followed was formally presented as a discussion, eliminating any misperception of a debate or argument. Furthermore, any and all students had the opportunity to speak and have their opinions heard creating an air of fairness. Hence, most of the time students were likely to hear somebody out without interrupting even if that person's opinion was different from their own, because they knew that same respect would be given to them when it was their turn to speak. I feel that when you create an atmosphere like this in your classroom, slowly but surely people will become more compassionate towards one another and of course towards the person making it all happen, the teacher. As a class that was for the most part based on discussion, I feel that the way it was handled was where compassion stemmed from with regard to the reaction many students have had after taking Multicultural Literature. (Anonymous, March 24, 2009)

In the course of this study, the blog data proved to be the most significant in demonstrating the various levels of care, empathy, and compassion, as perceived from former students, mainly because it demonstrated the lasting impression the course had on the students years later. Each of the blog posts related to compassion shared a common observance of its underlying presence throughout the class.

Finally, in my attempt to discover more about students' perceptions of effective teaching, one of the questions in the end of the year anonymous evaluations asked, "What skills or attributes do you think are necessary for teachers to teach interculturalism?" Several students point toward compassion as one of these attributes. For example:

> You have to be open and accepting to teach it. You can't push your opinions on the students. The teacher's job is to make the students open themselves and open their mouths and minds. Because our topics are so emotional, the teacher must be compassionate. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

Although much of the data presented in this section was anecdotal, it was through my own informal observations and interactions with students that led me to enjoy an inspirational, heart-warming, and self-actualizing teaching experience. It was quite enthralling to see students demonstrate a more caring and empathetic attitude toward others, as it was an underlying thrust behind my purpose in teaching. It was through this type of feedback and evidence that I sensed strength, joy, and a sense of victory that, at times, curbed instances of feeling frustrated with educational conditions, including teacher burnout. By feeling valued, I felt confident, and that in itself was enough to make me better understand the dynamics of my own teaching practice, to work harder as a teacher, to care more deeply about my students, and to dedicate such efforts toward this reflexive inquiry.

Conclusion

My practice as a classroom teacher lent itself to numerous dimensions of analysis. The findings in this chapter illustrated five patterns that demonstrated the ways in which my personal beliefs and practices as a classroom teacher affected the positive outcomes of students in my Multicultural Literature class. The significance of these findings

demonstrated that the dynamics between the teacher and student provided a focus within

which to examine the genuine and transformational experiences of students as a result of

praxis. It was through the phenomenon of interactions that educators can move beyond

the traditional forms of analysis and assessment that inform the field of education,

contributing greater knowledge and insight of the "particulars" (Cochran-Smith & Lytle,

1993, p. 15) that manifest, or have the potential to manifest, in educational settings. For

this reason, I remind the reader that according to Ikeda (2006):

> Knowledge alone cannot give rise to value. It is only when knowledge is guided by wisdom that value is created. The font of wisdom is found in the following elements: an overarching sense of purpose, a powerful sense of responsibility and finally, the compassionate desire to contribute to the welfare of humankind. (p. 173)

Therefore, these findings not only showed how the patterns and themes presented related

to and influenced each other, but they also revealed pedagogical processes that have the

potential to create greater value in the lives of students as well as in society.

    The following chapter will discuss the findings holistically, focusing on analyses

that extends across themes and patterns.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

Introduction

While most people can agree that education plays a vital role in developing the consciousness of individuals, recent and past literature has suggested that education today lacks the presence of "noncommercial values" (Giroux, 2000) where genuine concern for humanity is "elusive and almost invisible" (Bellah et al., 2008, p. 251). The disregard of humanitarian ideals, awareness of human interdependence, and failure to encourage social awareness and responsibility, continues to threaten the struggle against prejudice, ethnic segregation, intolerance, and discrimination, as well as a seemingly moral decay of society through materialism, individualism and disregard for the welfare of the community. As a result, many people wonder about the role of education in helping address these concerns.

This study was designed with the understanding that according to Makiguchi (as cited in Ikeda, 2001), classroom teachers can and must assess "cases of success and failure by analyzing their daily teaching experiences as a basis for the discovery of principles" (p. 10). In addition, the researcher recognized that scholars "need insight into the particulars of how and why something works and for whom it works" within the contexts of particular classrooms (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 15). My goal for this study was to share particular insights into the processes and outcomes that have resulted in positive student-teacher interactions that have helped students develop a heightened awareness of these challenges through my own personal experience of teaching a high school Multicultural Literature course.

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Recognizing that the outcomes I have enjoyed for the last eight years are unique

to my own experience, the purpose of this study is not to generalize specific methods or

approaches for the field of education, but rather, it is my attempt to highlight the often

unnoticed but detectable manifestations of strong, enriching human connections that can

arise through a conscious effort to uncover, inspire, and create value from the knowledge

and experiences within students themselves. It is through these manifestations that I was

able to create positive, memorable, and transformative learning experiences as revealed

through the data. As the analysis showed, students participating in the Multicultural

Literature course not only gained a better understanding of cultural diversity, but it also

prompted significant changes occurring within the personalities of students, as the

majority of them shared feedback that pointed to a dynamic and meaningful learning

experience. Uniquely, the analysis also revealed that many of these reported outcomes

by students were linked to my own set of personally held principles and motivations in

teaching the course.

The study addressed the two research questions:

- How do my belief systems influence my pedagogical interactions that produce positive outcomes in the Multicultural Literature class?

- How do I create transformative learning experiences through intercultural competence development and value-creation pedagogy?
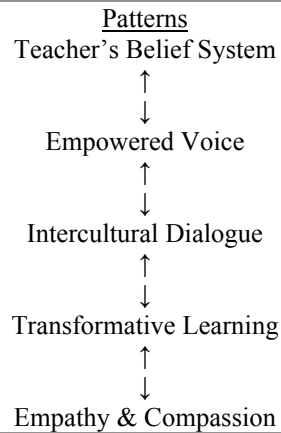
The five patterns that emerged from the study, as presented in Chapter 4, indicated that

each was mutually dependent on one another. While the patterns overlapped through

various pedagogical interactions, there was a clear linear process that began with my

theoretical, philosophical, and ethical principles and ended with the outcomes

demonstrated through student comments. The cause and effect relationship between patterns suggests that the identified pedagogical interactions are dependent of one another (see Table 11).

Table 11
Mutual Dependency of Patterns

Patterns
Teacher's Belief System
↑
↓
Empowered Voice
↑
↓
Intercultural Dialogue
↑
↓
Transformative Learning
↑
↓
Empathy & Compassion

Throughout the study, these patterns showed how various levels of intercultural competence development were promoted within an intricate process that began with a rational-moral orientation of the teacher and was exercised through student-teacher pedagogical interactions.

My Reflections as a Teacher and Scholar

To study oneself is a unique process. In most of my experience as a teacher and student, I spent a great amount of time studying the views of others. Whether through theories, studies or approaches, I had very few opportunities to carefully look at myself within the context of teaching. To engage in this study required a level of introspection that forced me to be open and honest with myself; it challenged me to look into my past, through reflections and journals, and reveal the intimate nature of my own thinking that has evolved throughout my years of teaching.

Part of what inspired me to conduct this self-analysis, I admit, comes from pride and joy I have felt for the past eight years teaching the Multicultural Literature class. My joy stems from the fact that the class itself was an idea that materialized from the specific experiences I had enjoyed with students through participation in intercultural activities. Since the class was first implemented, I have had the unique honor of experiencing a rewarding and self-actualizing, joyful experience that has filled me with a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment.

Teaching high school seniors, I feel, is a unique position to be in as I am one of their last teachers in the K-12 system. It is a special position to be in because it gives me the opportunity to, not only impart academic knowledge, but also to serve as a guide or mentor through the many complexities of this important transition. Within this space, I am able to convey my personally held convictions and principles that I have developed within my life, stemming from my spiritual journeys, my work as a classroom teacher, and my evolution as a scholar. One such principle that I express through my endeavors is the belief that my fundamental purpose in life is to work for the benefit of others. I share this here because the study exposed some significant elements of my teaching (i.e., thoughts, beliefs, impressions, etc.) that offered a small glimpse into what drives me as a teacher in my daily interactions with students. These are the elements that, I feel, are the most fundamentally important, yet rarely discussed and studied in educational discourse.

Through the review of the literature of intercultural competence, I discovered that some scholars point to the importance of understanding a teacher's internal motivation. For example, Shi-Xu (2001) identified rational-moral motivation as the instructor's

attempt to, "mobilize people's critical consciousness to change the *status quo* for a better future" (p. 290). It is best described as one's "moral-will" (Shi-Xu, 2001, p. 287) to work toward the improvement of social life. Uniquely, this study showed that although my original goal in creating and teaching the Multicultural Literature class was to teach students about cultural diversity, my rational-moral motivation stemmed from the process of reflecting upon my teaching practice against theoretical, philosophical, and ethical frameworks that have inspired me throughout my career.

The study shows that the driving force behind my practice arose from personally held assumptions of my responsibility as a teacher to guide, support, and inspire students to discover themselves, the world, and realize their capacity to effect change for the betterment of society. It is an attitude that grew from the constant questioning and reflection as I interacted directly with students, hence, defining myself, and my sense of purpose as an educator.

Throughout the initial process of this study, I discovered that many educational approaches and theories regarding cultural diversity primarily identified various aspects that bring value to diversity, achieve greater sensitivity, and enhance social cohesion. Much of the literature explained the importance of these aspects in relation to a greater social and political context. However, only a handful of scholars examined the behaviors and beliefs of educators directly engaged in intercultural, pedagogical interaction.

Based on a personal intellectual curiosity to better understand my own teaching practice, I chose this study and methodology with the intent to understand and share certain aspects of my practice that generated overwhelmingly positive feedback from

students. In the literature, one aspect of intercultural competence is the "ability to investigate and question one's own actions, values, prejudices, attitudes and perspectives, and constantly reflect on what is right or wrong in each new situation" (Jokikokko, 2005, p. 75). As a classroom teacher, this unique experience gave me the opportunity to reflect on my own thinking about my daily interactions with students. It also gave me the ability to expose certain aspects of my teaching that revealed my own principles of education.

This form of inquiry was significant in that it illustrated praxis within a high school intercultural context. Demonstrated through the patterns of data, the study found that the basis by which my classes thrived was a result of a rational-moral motivation that I had developed throughout my growth as a teacher and scholar. The data showed that my process of reflection in light of theoretical, philosophical, and ethical principles acquired throughout my experience, was consistent with the patterns that emerged.

The initial pattern of a value-creation/culturally-responsive pedagogy laid much of the groundwork for my teaching of the Multicultural Literature course. Value-creation relies on the idea that value is a "measure of the subjective impact a thing or event has on our lives" (Ikeda, 2001, p.16). It is the ability to self-actualize one's full potential and create beauty, gain, and good, from any circumstance. Culturally-responsive pedagogy advocates the importance of a "culturally supported, learner-centered context, whereby the strengths students bring to school are identified, nurtured, and utilized to promote student achievement" (Richards, Brown, & Forde, 2004). Through my creation of a classroom environment and atmosphere that fostered openness, expression, and trust among students, the study showed these manifestations responded deeply with students,

thus creating value in my life as a teacher and created value in the learning experiences of students.

According to Ikeda (2001), "The individual can only become fully realized through interaction with others" (p. 68), which in effect develops a life of value creation. While value-creation entails the genuine happiness of learners, it can "only be realized in the bonds and interactions between people" (p. 74). Through this analysis, I discovered that my own conscious effort to create a joyful and memorable learning experience for my students is based on this principle. In addition, as demonstrated through the various patterns, my consciousness to engage students in reflecting on themes related to cultural diversity, such as prejudice, racism, homophobia, and social injustice, helped provide me the opportunity to create value. Listening to their views, allowing freedom of expression, giving students the opportunity to hear each other's perspectives, in effect created the "bonds" that helped influence this endeavor.

One of the tenets of value-creation is that "all children should be afforded the opportunity to develop their potential limitlessly and to lead fulfilling lives undeterred by the destructive influences in society" (Ikeda, 2001, p. 37). Thus, value-creation, "is the capacity to find meaning, to enhance one's own existence and contribute to the well-being of others, under any circumstance" (Ikeda, 2001, p. 100). The patterns that emerged within this study pointed to a clear process of engagement that offers insight into what is shown to be quite impactful on the lives of students. From the way I arranged the classroom environment, to the processes of engagement with students, to the outcomes

demonstrated, the study revealed that much of the positive feedback is directly linked to my own expectations and rationale to create value in their lives.

Although through this study I shared only my own motivations of teaching, the exposure and sharing of my own set of principles, beliefs and frameworks, raised the question about why teachers do what they do. What makes this significant is that educational discourse often misses the internal motivation of the teacher. It is an area of analysis that is often missing, first, because it is difficult to identify and assess; but secondly, because its relevance is not always seen as important enough to the process of teaching. In my opinion, the failure to recognize this aspect of teaching is a clear underestimation of the power and influence of personal convictions held by effective teachers. It is an area that can illuminate the frameworks by which teachers operate that could eventually assist educational scholars and teachers in developing more effective teacher education programs and improve learning. Pedagogy entails more than just the art of instruction, but rather, the drive that propels teachers to work harder at improving themselves as well as having an impact on students.

My Reflections on Teaching the Multicultural Literature Course

Dewey (1916/1966) mentioned that education must be "closely connected in practice with actual social life so that it can transform unconscious living into fully conscious participation in the life of a society" (p. 18). In addition, Makiguchi (1930) argued that educators should not only view "learning as a preparation for living, but enable people to learn in the process of living" (as cited in Ikeda, 2001, p. 20). The study

showed that the design and curriculum of the Multicultural Literature course provided the appropriate context in which to teach high school students about cultural diversity.

Beginning with the originally stated goals for the creation of the course, to the selection of readings, and the incorporation of activities and strategies, the study found that high school students find great interest in and appreciation of the topics of race, ethnicity, cultural identity, sexuality, and gender identity. Through the reading and discussing issues that exposed racial prejudice, homophobia, especially through the context of social injustices that were historical and present in life today, the material resonated with students at very personal and emotional levels. For many students, the course was the first time current events were studied and this newly introduced material helped students examine their own biases, prejudices, attitudes, and behaviors. Much of what I selected for my students to read was specifically designed to initiate sharing and dialogue that stemmed, not from preconceived ideas, but from their personally held views that often resulted in opinions that were contradictory with each other. The formal introduction of these issues in a class setting showed that students found interest and relevancy to their own lives.

The activities and topics promoted intellectual stimulation as students learned to think critically about social conditions, to understand alternative perspectives, to discover a place in a society, and to discover how to contribute to their improvement. The context of the course was itself the catalyst for personal reflection, which in many ways was the first time that students had been given the opportunity to self-reflect in a course. This finding was significant in that in our challenge as educators to make education more

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responsive to the challenges we face as a society, as human beings, is not being sufficiently introduced to students in their K-12 experience. As the literature stated, there is an agreement among scholars that individuals are retreating into zones of social isolation evident through society's decline in civic membership, community consciousness, social capital, and overall loss of concern for others (Bellah et al., 2008; de Souza, 2006; Giroux, July, 2000; Ikeda, 2001; Ruiz & Minguez-Vallejos, 2001; & Poppo, 2006). As Ikeda (2001) called for a paradigm shift away from "viewing education as serving the narrowly defined needs of a society to a new paradigm that sees society serving the lifelong process of education" (p. 35), the Multicultural Literature course was one way in which I attempted to address these concerns.

While much of the literature reviewed, specifically in relation to intercultural competence, suggested very little about the actual activities that promote levels of intercultural competence, the design and content of the course was a unique example of how I managed to create an educational experience in which students gained a deeper understanding of themselves, of others, and of the world they live in. From an educational perspective, this finding raised the question about the content we use in K-12 education to prepare children to confront many of the challenges of society.

In the greater context of education, the study raises other important questions: Is the curriculum adequate enough to teach students about present-day issues? Are we giving students the opportunity to think in creative and self-reflective ways about social concerns? And, is this, in fact, one of the goals of education in general? Ultimately, the

study pointed to a greater need for discourse of the relevancy of curriculum design and content.

Creating an Effective Learning Space

Another important aspect that this study shows was the importance of the classroom atmosphere. The Multicultural Literature course was designed with the intent to create a learning environment in which students would critically reflect on their own lives and experiences related to cultural diversity. However, the study showed that many of my students came with what Ikeda (2001) calls a "decisive lack of passionate engagement with life, an isolation and withdrawal from reality" (p. 39). Through the responses and participation of students, I learned that students have an insatiable thirst to be heard. Through careful review of the data, I learned that this isolation is not due to an aspect of students' personalities, but rather, due to the traditional learning environments that are not fostering the "passionate engagement with life."

The data collected from student responses to their overall impressions of the class, demonstrated that the Multicultural Literature class created a space where students could show and share their unique identities, and served as an expression of their individuality. Through my own spirit of enthusiasm for the class and my students, the study showed that I created a sense of belonging and commitment that was unique to students' experience in schooling. In addition, students found this experience unique to the way other courses were structured. The feedback from many demonstrated that the classroom atmosphere and overall experience was distinct to their traditional learning experience, such as in the comments:

> This Multicultural Literature course is really a course I have never experienced with any other of my classes throughout my entire life in school. I am very impressed with the kind of class this is because many people have opened up, and it just shows how comfortable they feel talking about certain personal things with people they might not even know, but they feel safe and secure to do so. (Anonymous, June, 2009)

And,

> We were able to be heard, and also hear others. We don't usually get a voice in regular classes, or an opinion. With this class we got both. We are able to express ourselves every day about topics some of us never get to talk about. (Anonymous, June, 2009)

The comments of appreciation for an open, free, and expressive learning atmosphere by students indicated that students highly valued these opportunities. For many, it is the type of environment they most thrive in. From the larger perspective of education, this raises several important questions for teachers: How do teachers create or improve healthier learning environments? Do the current structures of learning environments promote the spirit and freedom of expression? How can educators harness students' desire for expression, freedom, and respect, to produce more dynamic and responsive learning?

In addition to the data, I find that a positive, open, and expressive learning atmosphere allows me to assess my students away from the traditional forms of student evaluation. Through the process of collecting student feedback, I was not only able to discover more about myself as a teacher, but I increased understanding of my students at a deeper level. In fact, I also discovered that part of my teaching practice had already built-in this form of assessment as I engaged in ways to obtain student feedback even prior to the study.

What is meaningful about the classroom atmosphere findings is that they correlate with the predominant outcomes of intercultural competence, such as effective

communication and social cohesion. Cohesion between individuals, regardless of

cultural background, allows for successful communication and interaction. This cohesion

was possible because the learning atmosphere of the classroom enhanced human

relationships through the freedom and openness that had been developed by the students

and me. As society becomes increasingly complex, specifically in relation to social

diversity, the role of schools in educating students about such complexity is becoming

increasingly important. Thus, the knowledge, skills, and ability to comprehend the nature

of human relationships is vital, especially within a classroom setting.

On Building Relationships

As stated in the literature, one of Bellah et al.'s (2008) critiques of contemporary

social life in the US today is the need for a "language" to deepen the understanding of

human relationships. Specifically, the authors pointed to education as an ethical means by

which we can help curb the "culture of separation" (p. 277) of modernity. One of the

important aspects of this study showed that my teaching behaviors, along with the course

content, established positive, respectful, and conducive relationships among the students

and myself.

I have now taught high school for 13 years and the Multicultural Literature course

for 8 years. In such time, I discovered that all aspects of teaching, including classroom

management, discipline, and instruction, are dependent on the type of relationships I

build with my students. Through my own personal response to the student data that the

study uncovered, I discovered that for most students, it is the small things that count, such

as an informal conversation, a congratulatory remark, an occasional scolding, or even a

simple laugh; it was these small and seemingly insignificant encounters that contributed to powerful moments within their learning experience.

The study revealed that students expressed a clear appreciation for my behavior and treatment toward them, such as my display of trust and warm respect. As the data suggested, much of my behavior towards students was primarily due to my own philosophical beliefs, my recognition of value-creation, and my knowledge of culturally-responsive pedagogy.

As the literature I reviewed showed, a number of the studies pointed to the political, social, and educational benefits of cross cultural relationship building (Abdallah-Pretceille, 2006; Byram, 1997; Cui & Awa, 1992; Deardoff, 2006; Jokikokko, 2005; Le Roux, 2002; Rathje, 2007; Shi-Xu, 2001; Tesoreiro, 2006; & Torres & Rollock, 2007); however, the studies, and the lack thereof, also suggested that cross-cultural relationship building is complex, not easily studied nor understood. What makes this study significant was that the process by which I engaged students through the Multicultural Literature course created positive relationships between the student and the teacher, as well as among the students themselves, and that process produced healthy and conducive learning environments that promoted cultural understanding. This aspect of the study raised interest in the importance of relationships, or the principle of relationships, in the classroom as the building blocks for demonstrating and teaching about social cohesion, interdependent living, and a shared sense of humanity. It also suggests that attention to relationship building in the classroom carries a great deal of significance to individuals willing to engage it.

I can honestly say that within my 13 years of teaching, I have enjoyed a heartwarming and fulfilling career working with high school students. This joy emanates from the simple discoveries, not from textbooks, but from basic and genuine human exchanges that I experienced through my daily interactions with students. As educators, we often do not see and do not measure the subjective impact of learning in schools; we give even less attention to the intricacies and significance of human relationships in the learning process. It is here that educational discourse lacks an adequate "language" of understanding these relationships.

The findings of this study showed that the positive outcomes demonstrated by the students through the Multicultural Literature course represented a small example of how relational teaching is a significant part of the learning experience. The findings point to the inherent power in the reciprocal relationship between student and teacher; one that begins with the recognition that all students are endowed with limitless potential and merit the respect and dignity deserving to all human beings.

On Dialogue

The literature I reviewed suggested that engaging and examining student intercultural activity can better inform educators in understanding the values, behaviors, views, and subconscious foundations that arouse cross-cultural dialogue and promote positive cross-cultural interaction (Banks, 2001; Giroux & Simon, 1989; & Zeilchner & Hoeft, 1996). The data from this study powerfully indicated that open, free dialogue was the greatest contributing factor that promoted a positive learning environment. Across all five data patterns, dialogue emerged as the fundamental core principle of my teaching.

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As revealed through the inquiry, intercultural dialogue was the primary contributing factor that helped create the opportunity for students to learn about themselves, social life, and to see things from different perspectives. According to Abdallah-Pretceille (2006), intercultural reasoning, "emphasizes the processes and interactions which unite and define the individuals and the groups in relation to each other" (p. 476). Through students' comments, dialogue was the source by which openness, freedom of expression, trust, the empowered voice, and relationship building emerged.

The significance of this finding is that the open dialogue format is rarely identified as an effective strategy in teaching and learning within the K-12 system. The findings emphasized that dialogue, primarily intercultural dialogue that addresses issues of cultural diversity, allowed for students to discuss highly controversial topics such as racism, prejudice, homophobia, and discrimination in a safe learning environment that helped them gain greater in-depth understanding of each other and their own personally-held biases. This produced greater reflection, critical analysis, reasoning, and principled thinking that other learning strategies only briefly induced. This finding brings greater attention to the process of dialogue and discussion as an important teaching tool for educators.

I have learned from my discussion-based format of the Multicultural Literature class that the function of dialogue placed me, the teacher, at an equal learning level with the students. As I offered readings, shared information, and invited discussion about the material, students took part in the processes of sharing their own opinions, attitudes and

experiences. Through my display of interest, enthusiasm, and further questioning of their responses, their views became sources of information that not only gave students the opportunity to express themselves, but generated an overall feeling of ownership for the material and the class. As a result, the reciprocity between teaching and learning from each other helped create an important bond that is rarely discussed and analyzed in educational discourse.

According to Jokikokko (2005) intercultural competence is the "ability to encounter cultural differences in a positive way" (p. 70); it is also characterized as the "reasonable interaction" between individuals of different cultural backgrounds (Loenhoff, 2003, p. 193). This study found that intercultural dialogue progressed positively and reasonably in my Multicultural Literature class while discussing issues of cultural diversity; however, I believe that what is far more relevant to scholars and educational discourse was the process of dialogue itself and what it revealed about the discussion method of teaching.

As I reflected on these findings from the engaged view of a classroom teacher, as well as researcher, I found that through the process of analyzing the data, several significant realizations emerged as my own set of principles that I applied to the discussion method. I found that:

- Dialogue gives students the opportunity to learn more about their peers, about different personalities, and different value systems. Considering these differences, matched against their own, helped generate greater open-mindedness.

- Dialogue gives students the opportunity to see and hear the experiences and struggles of others, directly from others.

- Dialogue gives students the opportunity to transcend their self-centeredness to fully participate in a contributive environment and genuine event in their learning.

- Discussion helps remove many of the anxieties that students often face in traditional instructional approaches. By allowing the students' views and opinions to be shared as knowledge, open dialogue removes the stigma that there is only one way of viewing things.

- Dialogue gives me, the teacher, the opportunity to hear and see students' views, attitudes, and opinions on matters. It provides me with the feedback by which to structure future lessons.

- Dialogue provides me information of what is working and what is not.

- Dialogue gives students the opportunity to ask questions, not just of the teacher, but also of each other, whereas much of their experience with learning has been one-directional.

- Dialogue helps clarify information for students. It allows them to hear concepts and issues explained from people other than the teacher.

- My participation in authentic dialogue, as an equal participant, gives students a sense of trust and respect that is rarely encountered in their schooling, one that often dismisses the need for discipline.

- Speaking up gives students the opportunity to formulate their own understanding of issues, and as a result, allows them to hear themselves articulate their feelings and thoughts about particular issues.

- By listening to others, discussion allows them to branch out their thinking, consider alternative viewpoints, and reassess their original thinking.

- Dialogue offers a myriad of answers to a myriad of questions. It goes beyond the linear approach of traditional instruction; it pushes knowledge forward in an authentic and productive manner.

- Dialogue offers students validation of their opinions, not just by the teacher, but also by the others. It is where students feel most valued.

- For some students who find difficulty in writing, dialogue allows them to use their speaking skills to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding.

- Dialogue and discussion do not always require the full participation of all students within the class. The act of listening is an important element of participation.

Simply listening to discussions can produce greater levels of thinking and self-reflection.

- Dialogue provides me with the arena to bring greater meaning to the literature; it makes it come alive through reflection and commentary.

- Dialogue is not set in stone; it is unpredictable, at times unbridled, but under the guidelines of respect that students have agreed upon, the variability of the discussion makes for exciting teaching and learning in which anything could happen.

Reflecting upon these realizations about the discussion method, I found that incorporating and dedicating more time to open dialogue within classroom settings can significantly enhance learning. Dialogue is a necessary tool that equips students for the real world; it allows for students to negotiate meaning in authentic, social settings that enhances interpersonal relationships. As the findings suggested, dialogue was the driving force behind the success of the Multicultural Literature course. It was the key principle by which students attributed their transformative learning.

Toward a Pedagogy of Compassion

Through the course of my analysis, I observed that students are powerfully latent with possibility to transform themselves, and each other, if guided appropriately through firmly grounded ethical principles of the teacher and the students. As revealed through the data, students showed a greater ability to see alternate perspectives as the relationships in the classroom developed and were nurtured through my own expression of empathy and compassion for the students. These alternative perspectives often led to a stronger connection among all of us, prompting concern and, at times, activism toward social injustice.

I found that nurturing empathy and compassion first required the promotion of the precursors such as respect and understanding. The class experience, the study showed, allowed students to experience learning objectively and subjectively. The data showed that many students demonstrated becoming "fully realized through their interaction with others" (Ikeda, 2001, p. 68). Although not all students demonstrated significant impact from their class experience, the vast majority did. Consequently, I recognized the limitations in empirical research to collect data that demonstrates personal, subjective impact; however, the data in this study showed that for the majority of students who did demonstrate personal impact, the final analysis suggested that any such impact, in adequate form, and with such frequency was quite significant for a high school setting.

One important aspect of my teaching that I wish to convey in this discussion is that my thoughts, ideas, and actions that manifest in my pedagogical interactions began with my fundamental core expression of compassion to create value for my students. According to Ikeda (2001), the highest ideal of value-creation is:

> The wisdom to perceive the interconnectedness of all life and living. The courage not to fear or deny difference; but to respect and strive to understand people of different cultures and to grow from encounters with them. The compassion to maintain an imaginative empathy that reaches beyond one's immediate surroundings and extends to those suffering in distant places. (p. 97)

As an educator, I envision an "imaginative empathy" that reaches beyond the classroom. It is a belief, perhaps a form of faith, that helps me view my role of teacher as greater than myself. According to Smith (2003), consciousness transformation that develops compassion and altruism occurs through personal transformative experiences. Through this, I worked at creating the proper conditions to engage students in heartfelt interactions that promoted the precursors of compassion. I found that it is the conscious awareness to

create a positive learning environment that promotes the foundation by which empathy and compassion develop and thrive.

My intent in this study was not to present data of compassionate acts from my students as outcomes, although some evidence may point to these. However, through my own reflection and introspection of the data, I was able to recognize my own compassion that transcended the overall study. As compassion is defined as one's intent to relieve the suffering of others, either at a personal, social, or global context, it is important to clarify here that this did not begin in the classroom. Essentially, my compassion began within me as a person. It manifested in the way I thought and acted toward others, how I conducted my life on a daily basis, how I structure my lesson plans, and how I motivated myself to work for the happiness of others. Therefore, my role as a teacher, as a guide, and mentor, was not to simply carry out acts of compassion through my own life, but it was to help educationally set the stage for greater compassion to flourish.

Ultimately, I found that this study gave me the ability to see my own expression of compassion as a teacher through the five patterns described in Chapter 4 and the various principles of education extracted from my experience. My pedagogical interactions, the empowered voice, intercultural dialogue, and the observed transformation of students that led toward empathy and compassion all tie back to my fundamental core beliefs. It is here that I share with the reader that my act of teaching, and my act of engaging in this study, was in itself a demonstration of my own pedagogy of compassion.

About Autoethnography

My journey in conducting this doctoral dissertation was not an easy one. To study myself was a process that required a careful dance between participant and researcher. It was quite difficult to examine subjective data about myself, attempting to objectify it by categorizing it into themes, to discover patterns, and eventually share them by deeming what was significant and what was not. Thus, the greatest challenge was in selecting appropriate data to present as findings when, in my mind, all data was significant to me as the classroom teacher. Whether it were through student reflections, assignments, informal conversations, classroom discussions, or remarks on student surveys, each held a special and significant meaning, as it was feedback that derived genuinely from the minds and hearts of my students.

According to Stanley (1993) autoethnography is based on the assumption that social experiences are not acquired independently of others. Rather, social experience is accumulated through the dialogue, contact, negotiation, emotion, and transformation, located within that social space. I chose the autoethnographic method for this inquiry primarily because it allowed me to study and reveal *my* experience, the social and personal space, objectively and subjectively. The complex nature of my research questions exposed the relationship between my own ethical foundations and showed how these manifested in my pedagogical interactions; therefore, the study required a level of intimacy that is usually missing in traditional forms of research. For this reason, I found that autoethnography was quite liberating as it helped me, as a researcher, expand the parameters of experience and truth that are often restricted in other methods of research.

Through my experience as a classroom teacher and scholar, I found that the voices of teachers themselves are often missing in educational research. The autoethnographic method, particularly as a vehicle of teacher research, allows the voice of the teacher to become the resource to understand the problematic world they are investigating, as something to "capitalize on rather than exorcise" (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Essentially, this autoethnographic study provided me with the opportunity to participate in a form of empirical research from my empowered position as a teacher.

In earlier sections of this dissertation, I mentioned the various controversies and critiques of autoethnography. One of my greatest challenges in this endeavor was to be consistently mindful of these critiques throughout the research and writing process. The most common critiques of autoethnography include self-indulgence, over-introspection, excessive individualism and narcissism (Coffey, 1999; Sparkes, 2000). Since the study was specifically about my teaching experience, my thought processes, and my own ethical thinking, through my own voice as a teacher and researcher–without a doubt, the study is in fact *auto*, as Latin for *self*. However, any claim of indulgence and narcissism were expectantly tempered by the extensive data that is located throughout the study, but primarily the data exposed through the voice of students.

Although I agreed with Coffey (1999) and Sparkes (2000) about over-introspection, a careful balance was made that weighed personal reflection with student data in a careful and well-balanced manner. In addition, I used Chang's (2008) methodology for autoethnography as well as Cochran-Smith and Lytle's (1993) aspects of teacher research to stay within the accepted evaluative and constructive validity

techniques that are integral to autoethnography. Ultimately, the nature of this study was the study of the self within a classroom setting that carefully intertwined as I told my story. The claim of "self-indulgence" can only be tempered with complete honesty. It is up to the reader to determine whether this balance was met, but it is important to keep in mind that the subjectivity of the researcher was the resource itself.

As the study specifically looked at my own thought processes as I created and taught the Multicultural Literature course, I found that the study objectively highlighted certain key features or principles that were successful for me as a high school teacher. I explained these features throughout Chapter 4, not with the intent to self-indulge or prop myself up as a good teacher, but rather, as a way to give the field of education a new voice and a new perspective. And as stated in the conclusion of Chapter 4, I can only trust the reader in believing that my underlying motivation to conduct this dissertation was, in my heart, my own act of compassion.

Although autoethnography does in fact come with many challenges, and risks, its educational value and impact can only be measured through the subjectivity of the reader. As mentioned before, autoethnography is a method that is "designed to be unruly, dangerous, vulnerable, rebellious, and creative… under the control of reason, logic, and analysis" (Ellis & Bochner, 2006, p. 433).

As this study illustrated how my own ethical thinking influenced my teaching, another benefit of the autoethnographic method was the recognition that within autoethnography exists an ethical sphere of influence that "centers attention on how we should live and brings us into lived experiences in a feeling and embodied way" (Ellis &

Buchner, 2006, p. 439). Therefore, the method itself carries the potential to teach, learn

and inspire those willing to participate in its outcomes.

Recommendations

Based on the study, I would make four recommendations for educational settings.

To begin, I would like to share that I am often quite mystified by the attempts of society

to address educational concerns without the input of teachers. Educational reforms and

mandates are decisions usually far removed from the actual sites of instruction.

However, I discover that school-sites and the daily experience of teachers are filled with

infinite realms of possibility to extract principles of education. Therefore, I recommend

that educational discourse focus on and open new ways of incorporating the knowledge

and experience of classroom teachers as sources of information that provide greater

insight into what motivates teachers to do what they do.

Second, educational discourse must move toward recognizing the multiple levels

of learning that are not fully encompassed in traditional forms of assessment and

research. Particularly in the high school setting, the voices of students should not be

ignored as possible sources of feedback regarding instruction and learning. The student

voice offers the possibility of gaining better understanding the relationship between the

teachers and students; it offers a lens by which to assess the subjective impact of student

experiences and provides educators with knowledge of what is meaningful to the lives of

students.

Third, like Makiguchi (as cited in Bethel, 1989), I recommend that teachers learn

to rationalize their own endeavors of teaching by engaging in a discourse of educational

purpose. If our concerns for the future of society are to be addressed, educational

discourse must include a return to the fundamentals of education and the common

expectations we hope to achieve; not only for the benefit of society, but for all humanity.

In addition, the discourse of purpose in education must also include all people and

emerge from their daily realities.

Fourth, educators must open a discourse of compassion in education. It is only

through our own concerns and desires to create a better future, and prevail in a struggle

against social injustice, that we can learn to manifest new strategies and approaches that

can effectively address the needs of society. Compassion, more than a mere emotion, is a

driving force that propels individuals to eradicate the suffering of others. It is a power

that can be harnessed; engaging in its discourse is the essential first step in developing a

pedagogy of compassion.

Questions for Further Inquiry

Ultimately, this study raised more questions than it can answer. However, many

of the questions it raised are in fact the same questions this study began with. In their

analysis of contemporary social life in the United States, Bellah et al. (2008) asked two

questions worth restating as areas for future research:

- What responsibility does one have for the long-term social effects of the work ones does?

- What duties does one have toward the vast agglomeration of anonymous individuals that surrounds the circles of family and friends with whom one is personally involved? (p. 178)

Essentially, these questions require researchers to examine and investigate the

subjectivity of teachers within an expansive educational context. In addition, they force

researchers to find new ways of investigation to bring greater value to the responsibility

and behavior of teachers. This in fact raises more questions about appropriate

methodologies and data analysis that give credence to teacher knowledge and research.

And beyond methodologies, it raises fundamental ethical questions that must be

addressed within modern context.

Specifically, the study raised questions about the meaningful impact of teachers'

belief systems on their pedagogical interactions with students. It is a question that can

ultimately help address various concerns about teacher motivation, as it will help

educators better understand the impetus to teach effectively and powerfully. The study

also raised the question of specific learning strategies such as the power of dialogue in

learning contexts. Further inquiry in this can lead to the development of more informed

techniques and approaches that will prove useful in daily classroom instruction.

While these questions require a great deal of attention, I am also reminded by an

important concern raised by one of my students in a reflection:

> Nowadays it seems as if students are just being trained to pass tests and be competitive. No one really learns simply for the sake of learning, or simply out of curiosity. Today it's about getting the top grade, getting into that one college, getting a job. Maybe if the pressure to succeed and win weren't so great, people would pay more attention to greater concerns. (Anonymous, June, 2008)

This raises the question of whether our current approach to education is addressing the

needs of students or the needs narrowly defined by competitive and political forces that

have gripped educational focus for so many years. Clearly, future educational research

must move from placing student development away from a "subordinate position and

viewed as a means to other ends" and reducing the educational system to a "mere

mechanism that serves the national objectives, be they political, military, economic or

ideological" (Ikeda, 2001, pp. 70-71).

Finally, the study also helped raise more fundamental questions about education itself that may be worth further investigation: Are educational systems generating the appropriate knowledge, skills, abilities, and values within youth that are necessary for the challenges society faces? Are educators firmly grounded on a common purpose, a search toward common goals of humanity, or a sense of interdependent living? Clearly, future educational discourse requires the attention of such inquiry that will perhaps guide educators toward addressing the vital, urgent and humanistic needs of society.

Conclusion

As the literature stated, the aims of education today limit a serious approach to address the global and social issues confronting the world today, causing individuals to "live in a world of isolation of the individual within the self and the loss of interest in others or in society…" (Ruiz & Minguez-Vallejos, 2001, p. 155). However, this analysis suggested that if we are to move toward a society that serves the needs of education, we must begin by including the knowledge and experience that is available from those who most closely work with children.

Although this study was a self-analysis of my own teaching practice within the context of a Multicultural Literature class, I have demonstrated that my findings contain far-reaching and overwhelming implications for educational discourse. One of my goals was to bridge philosophy and theory with practice and in doing so, help elevate educational discourse to new levels of insight into human/ethical interaction. It appears that the findings of this study have suggested that ethical thinking, particularly in response to cultural diversity, contains an array of possibilities in informing scholars and

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teachers about methods and strategies that arouse deeper self-reflection, greater moral judgment, and that can eventually help individuals manifest ethical transformation that is seldom addressed in education.

Finally, I conclude this study with the recognition that in developing education that works for the happiness of others and benefits all of humanity, educators must have the courage not to succumb to the forces that lead us astray from challenging the obstacles of our collective humanity, and to reveal Dewey's (1916) "inner impulse of compassion" (as cited in Ikeda, 2001, p. 45) that exists within us all. It is a responsibility we must boldly and gratefully accept.

Multicultural Literature

Cinema City High School
Carlos R. Valverde (310) 842-4200 or **carlosvalverde@ccusd.org**

CCHS Mission Statement

Cinema City High School is an engaged and caring academic community where diversity is valued and respected. We are committed to educating and inspiring all students to become life-long learners and contributing members of our global society.

Cinema City High School believes:

1. **Each member of our school community plays an integral part in making student success a certainty.**
2. **That all students are provided the necessary resources and opportunities to become successful Collaborative Workers, Adaptable problem Solvers, Critical Thinkers, Involved Citizens, Quality Producers and Self-guided Achievers.**
3. **That all students are immersed in vigorous, standards-based curricula that promotes higher level thinking skills.**
4. **That all students are capable of learning and as such, we educate the whole person providing students the necessary support to achieve their fullest potential.**
5. **That we value diversity and promote tolerance and espouse understanding and compassion.**
6. **That the aesthetic value of our campus is an important part of student achievement.**

COURSE DESCRIPTION: This discussion-based course presents a literary and socio-cultural analysis of representative work by American, as well as worldwide, authors who illustrate the ethnic and cultural diversity of our global society. Multicultural Literature and Practicum is designed to explain the concepts associated with of the major issues that affect cultural diversity in society through literature. Particular stress is placed on examination of different literary genres as serious art forms, as well as sources of information that explore human nature and our struggle to cope with the complexities of our social diversity. It is these complexities that shape our culture today. Therefore, the course is designed to develop critical thinking and intercultural competence through the analysis of texts. There will be opportunities for student writing and project-based learning of both critical and creative nature. Such activities will serve to focus and expand student responses to the materials of the course and will also serve as a basis for instruction in composition and project-based learning. Enrichment for literary material will take place in the form of intercultural training, research, program designing and implementation of intercultural activities that promote positive human relations among all people in the community and the school site.

CALIFORNIA CONTENT STANDARDS: "Power Standards"

1. **Students read and understand grade-level-appropriate material while analyzing the organizational patterns, arguments, and positions advanced (Reading Comprehension 2.0).**
2. **Analyze an author's implicit and explicit philosophical assumptions and beliefs about a subject (Reading 2.5).**
3. **Critique the power, validity, and truthfulness of arguments set forth in public documents (Reading 2.6).**
4. **Students read and respond to historically or culturally significant works of literature that reflect and enhance their studies of history and social science (Literary Response and Analysis 3.0).**

5. **Analyze the way in which the theme or meaning of a selection represents a view or comment on life, using textual evidence to support the claim (Narrative Analysis 3.2).**
6. **Students write coherent and focused texts that convey a well-defined perspective and tightly reasoned arguments (Writing 1.0).**
7. **Students deliver focused and coherent presentations that convey clear and distinct perspectives, critical research strategies, and demonstrate solid reasoning (Listening and Speaking Strategies 1.0)**

<u>**CONTEXT FOR COURSE:**</u> Multicultural Literature is designed to launch students into an intensive and comprehensive study of literature in relation to the English Department's goals and State Standards. The course is intended to provide a strong foundation of critical thinking, reading, writing, and interpersonal communication skills. Students will work individually and collaboratively in an effort to realize the Cinema City High School's Student Outcomes and mission statement. Specifically, this course is intended to help students become self-guided achievers, quality producers and involved citizens. Upon completion of this course, students will have a strong foundation to build from for the rest of their lives.

COURSE GOALS:
- Through the literature and discussions, demonstrate an understanding of the major issues that affect cultural diversity in society: culture, ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, age, language, religion, socioeconomic status, demography, stratification, prejudice, racism and inter- and intra- group differences.
- Through the literature and discussions, develop and demonstrate an understanding of some of the major issues affecting society as the primary ethnic and cultural groups that have traditionally made up the United States experience them.
- The student will *reflect* on the above in light of his or her *own* social, ethnic and cultural experience and the experience of the literary authors as well as by guest speakers and video presentations.
- The student will engage in intercultural/conflict resolution activities to enrich their knowledge of the above so as to become positive and contributive role models for the school community (i.e., practicum.).

EXPECTATIONS
All students will:
1) read literature accurately and perceptively.
2) have read required work by the assigned date.
3) identify the key ideas and attitudes that have led toward modern perceptions of human multicultural experience.
4) express such insights about literary works in clear, forceful prose which utilizes adequate historical and literary perspective and vocabulary.
5) demonstrate ability to create and perform an oral presentation and speaking before an audience of peers.
6) bring the necessary materials to class.
7) be open, ready and willing to share new ideas and personal experiences.

Grades will be based on the number of points that you accumulate. Points are given in the following areas:

1. Homework   10 points per assignment
2. Quizzes   20 points per quiz
3. Exams   30-50 points
4. Participation   15% of total grade
5. Research Paper & Multimedia (1st semester)   100 points
6. Resource Project (2nd semester)   200 points
7. Journals   50 points (collected every 10)
8. Final Exam   TBA

Points will be converted to a percentage equivalent to a letter grade:

100% = A+	87-89% = B+	77-79% = C+	67-69% = D+	59% or below = F
94-99% = A	84-86% = B	74-76% = C	64-66% = D	
90-93% = A-	80-83% = B-	70-73% = C-	60-63% = D-	

PARTICIPATION: A major part of this class will revolve around class discussions. Through discussions one shares, analyzes and argues relevant information, therefore, <u>participation is a necessary part of this class</u>.

MATERIALS: All students are required to bring their reading assignments, notebook, paper, and writing instruments to class every day.

HOMEWORK: Homework will not be given daily, however, it is imperative that homework assignments be completed on time whenever homework is assigned. Late homework will not be accepted. The only time you can turn-in late homework is in the case of an excused absence. If the student is absent, it is his/her responsibility to find out about the missed assignment from a classmate. The student will then have 2 days to turn it in.

ABSENCES AND MAKE-UP WORK: It will be your responsibility to make up all homework if you miss class due to an excused absence. All make-up work must be completed within **two days** of your return to class for full credit. <u>There will be no make-up of any work if you are truant</u>. If you are absent on a quiz/test day, you have the choice of making it up within two days of the absence or your next quiz or test will count double. <u>There is no make-up if you are truant</u>.

TARDINESS: Excessive tardiness is a negative behavior that demonstrates that your inability to address the issue reveals your little regard for the integrity of the learning environment. The teacher will abide by the school tardy policy. Excessive tardiness and absences will affect overall class grade.

CLASSROOM ATMOSPHERE:
Have respect for yourself, your classmates, your teacher, and your classroom. Remember:

     1. The use of electronics during class time (i.e., music players, cell phones, etc.) is a sign of disrespect toward the teacher and undermines your educational experience.

2. Graffiti or writing in the textbook, on walls, and on desks of any kind not only helps to destroy the integrity and quality of education, it is also illegal.

3. The discussion of cultural experience naturally involves the sharing of personal experiences. It is vital that all class participants **respect and honor their classmates'** candidness.

4. The teacher will conduct this class comparable to a college level literature course; **collegiate maturity is expected**.

5. Most importantly: <u>kindness</u>, <u>courtesy</u>, and <u>respect</u> to everyone. We're all in this together!

<u>HALL PASSES:</u> You are expected to use the restroom, water fountain, and other facilities during passing periods or before or during lunch. Passes will be given to the school nurse or Health Center if the need arises.

<u>MORE ABOUT Multicultural Literature:</u> "Literature" is a term used to describe written or spoken material, anything from creative writing to more technical or scientific works. Why do we read literature? Literature represents a language or a people; culture and tradition. However, literature is more important than just a historical or cultural artifact, it introduces us to new worlds of experience.

Ultimately, we may discover meaning in literature by interpreting what the author says and how he/she says it. Through our literary circle, this decoding of the text is often carried out through the use of literary theory, using mythological, sociological, psychological, historical, or other approaches. "Whatever method we use to discuss and analyze literature, there is still an intrinsic value to the works. Literature is important to us because it speaks to us, it is universal, and it affects us. Even when it is ugly, literature is beautiful" (Esther Lombardi, 2006).

INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE: Upon reading, discussing and analyzing literature, one of the goals to this course is to enhance the notion of interculturalism. Interculturalism is a philosophical approach that encourages the dialogue and cultural exchange among individuals of various cultural backgrounds. This requires a willingness and openness to share and learn about the cultural "other" in a safe learning environment. The 'cultural dialogue' that ensues is meant to expose the commonalities between varying cultural groups through comparisons. Eventually, students learn to develop their own intercultural competence by enhancing their appreciation, respect, understanding, and communication with others. While multiculturalism implies the collection of varying and distinct cultures, interculturalism seeks to bridge these distinctions through commonalities.

"A real book is not one that we read, but one that reads us."
W.H. Auden (1907-1973) English-born poet and man of letters.

APPENDIX B

[Sample] SCHOOL PERMISSION REQUEST LETTER

September 1, 2009

Ms. *******, Principal
****
Cinema City, CA *****

Dear ****:

As part of my doctorate program at Loyola Marymount University, I have prepared an autoethnographic research study for my final dissertation. The study is an autoethnographic account of my teaching practice as I help students develop their intercultural competence skills in the Multicultural Literature class. The study will attempt to demonstrate how teacher reflexivity, ethical orientation, and knowledge of pedagogical frameworks can result in positive, transformative learning experiences within a culturally diverse context. The audience for the dissertation is LMU professor's Dr. Shane Martin, Dr. Cathy Belcher, and Dr. Edmundo Litton, however, upon completion of the dissertation, the results may be considered for publication. I would appreciate your permission to use the school site, classroom, and students (upon parental permission), during the 2009-2010 school year to complete the study.

I have included a copy of the parent consent form for your review. Briefly, the consent form describes that I am the primary participant of this study, not the students. However, I will need to examine curricular impact, growth, class climate, and formal/informal interactions with students. There will be times when class lessons, lectures and discussions can be audio and/or video recorded, and I will examine written assignments for textual evidence. Video recordings will be of me, not of the students, for reflective inquiry. Anonymity of the school and students will be protected with the use of fictitious names throughout the study. To maintain confidentiality, the storage of written, audio, and video data while at the school site will be kept locked in a teacher file-vault located in the classroom office. Upon the end of the day, data will be stored at the researcher's home. In addition, electronic data (i.e., journal entries, transcriptions, notes, etc.) will be protected using password-protected files on my personal flash drive. School computers and file systems will not be used throughout the study. Upon completion of the study, the data will be stored for no less than one year in case of further review or revisions.

Two copies of this request are enclosed. Please sign both copies and return one to me, keeping the other one for your files.

Once again, thank you for your support throughout this process.

Sincerely,

Carlos Valverde
Cinema City, CA
(310) 559-5694

I (we) grant permission for the use of Cinema City High School in a dissertation study.

_____

Signature of principal

_____

_____

APPENDIX C

[Sample] INFORMED PARENTAL CONSENT LETTER
(For participants under the age of 18)

September 8, 2009

Dear Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of Student Enrolled in Multicultural Literature:

My name is Carlos Valverde and I am your son/daughter's Multicultural Literature teacher at Cinema City High School. I am currently in the process of earning my doctorate in educational leadership at Loyola Marymount University. To complete my final dissertation, I request your permission to allow your son/daughter to participate in my study which has been approved by *********, CCHS Principal, and ********, CCUSD Asst. Superintendent of Educational Services. The following is a description:

Purpose: The study is an autoethnographic (self-narrative) account of my teaching practice as I help students develop their intercultural competence skills in the Multicultural Literature class, which I created eight years ago. The study will attempt to demonstrate how teacher reflexivity, ethical orientation, and knowledge of pedagogical frameworks can result in positive, transformative learning experiences within a culturally diverse classroom. Ultimately, I would like to identify important teacher characteristics that help students communicate, learn, and function positively with individuals of diverse cultural backgrounds.

Description of Project: The teacher is the primary participant of this study. However, throughout the course of the year, I will need to examine students' thoughts, reactions, and impressions of the class climate as I interact with them on a daily basis. I will examine these interactions through direct observation, review of written assignments, as well as audio recordings of class lessons and discussions. Videotaping may occur but only of the teacher during lessons or discussions. As you know through the course syllabus, topics of the class include culture, terminology, ethnicity, race, immigration, gender, sexual orientation, and religious intolerance. These topics will serve as the themes in which I will assess my own characteristics in relation to the students.

Number of Participants: Since the study will examine student-teacher interaction, I am inviting all students enrolled in my Multicultural Literature to participate. However, if you do not give your consent, your son/daughter will be omitted from the study analysis and this in no way will affect his/her grade or status in the class.

Possible Risks: As a formality, the approval process requires me to inform you of any possible risk(s) to the participant of a study. In this study, some students may initially feel uncomfortable sharing or participating in class discussions during audio or video recordings. I will make every effort to conduct this study so as to minimize any possible harm. Students will give their own consent for participation, and will be reminded that they can omit themselves from the study at any time.

Possible Benefits to the Participant: Students who participate in this project will be introduced to the process of ethnographic and qualitative research on teacher development. They may enjoy the opportunity to reflect on their experiences and they will have the opportunity to ask questions about the research or about Loyola Marymount University.

The results of this research will help educators better understand the broad range of teaching practices.   This information could help researchers design more effective ways of improving learning environments.

Voluntary Participation: Although we are seeking your permission for your son/daughter to be invited to be part of my research, <u>your permission does not obligate the student to take part in the project</u>. <u>He or she will be free to stop</u> participating <u>at any point</u>, and will experience no negative consequences for stopping.   Refusal or withdrawal of participation will not involve any penalty or loss of benefits to which participants are entitled.

Records of Participation in this Research: All of the information participants provide the research will be protected and held in confidence within the limits of the law and institutional regulations of Loyola Marymount University. The videotaped, audio taped and/or photographed footage in the process of these research procedures will be used for teaching and/or research purposes only and that the identity of students will not be disclosed. Footage will be transcribed and only text will be included in the research results. The tapes will be destroyed after the completion of this research project. You have the right to review the tapes made as part of the study to determine whether they should be edited or erased in areas involving your son/daughter.

Student responses, comments, and interactions will be <u>presented anonymously</u> through the use of fictitious names. On the days of data collection, all information will be stored in a locked cabinet.   The only individuals who will have access to this information will be the dissertation committee led by Dr. Shane Martin, Dean of the School of Education. Those directly involved with this research project have been trained in methods to protect confidentiality.

Publications Associated with this Research: The results of this research may eventually appear in publications but individual participants will not be identified.

Contact People:
Participants or parents who want more information about this research may contact me at any time at <u>carlosvalverde@ccusd.org</u> or (310) 842-4200. If you have any further questions, comments, or concerns about the study or the informed consent process, please contact John Carfora, Ed.D. Chair, Institutional Review Board, 1 LMU Drive, Suite 3000, Loyola Marymount University, Los Angeles CA 90045-2659 (310) 338-4599, <u>John.Carfora@lmu.edu</u>.

Additional Information: If the study design or the use of the information is to be changed, I will inform all participants and their parents to re-obtain consent. Please note that circumstances may arise which might cause me to terminate the participation of specific students before the completion of the study.

PARENTAL / GUARDIAN CONSENT
(For participants under the age of 18)

- I have read and understood the nature of Mr. Valverde's research study.

- I understand that my child/ward's participation in the research study is strictly voluntary and choosing to participate will not affect the students' status in any way.

- I understand that additional information, including the nature and details of the researcher's doctoral study is available upon request.

- In signing this consent form, I acknowledge receipt of a copy of this form, and a copy of the "Subject's Bill of Rights".

I hereby …

authorize

do not authorize

Mr. Carlos Valverde, M.A., to include my child/ward in the proposed research study.

Participant's Printed Name _____

Parent / Guardian Signature_____ Date _____

Witness_____

Thank you for your support and consideration.

_____
Carlos Valverde, M. A.
CCHS English Teacher

APPENDIX D

[Sample] STUDENT PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

September 8, 2009

Dear Student:

As a doctoral student at Loyola Marymount University, I am currently collecting data for my dissertation study regarding the 2008-2009 Multicultural Literature class at Cinema City High School.

The data I will be examining includes journal entries, class assignments, essays, reflections, as well as recorded class discussions and personal interviews. The study will attempt to demonstrate the student-teacher relationship in context of intercultural learning and teaching. Conclusions from the study hope to inform the field of teacher education regarding new teaching strategies.

Please note the complete anonymity will be kept throughout the entire process of the study. Actual names will be replaced with fictitious names. Under the guidance of dissertation committee chairperson, Dr. Shane Martin of the LMU School of Education, the data collection process will abide by all ethical standards and guidelines as set forth by the Institutional Review Board of Loyola Marymount University.

The information obtained from the data assumes no anticipated risk to the participants as anonymity will be protected. Your permission to allow said information from the data is strictly voluntary. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a subject, please contact the Loyola Marymount University research compliance officer or Dr. Martin at www.lmu.edu.

I hereby give Mr. Carlos Valverde, Teacher at Cinema City High School and doctoral student at Loyola Marymount University, the permission to read, quote, and cite my past journal entries, class assignments, essays, reflections, as well as recoded class discussions and personal interviews, for purposes of the dissertation. I understand that anticipated risk may include some discomfort and/or embarrassment during discussions and interviews, but I am aware that I can release myself from the study at anytime.

I hereby …

        authorize
        do not authorize

Mr. Valverde to include me in the proposed research study.

_____
Print Name

_____
Signature

_____
Date

Multicultural Literature and Practicum
C. Valverde

Resource Project

(200 points)

The purpose of this assignment is for each student to create or participate in a resource that assists others to learn about a topic/issue of your choice from those discussed in class. This project is designed for you to become mentally and physically involved in activity that will bring awareness and/or knowledge to others. This is your opportunity to learn, explore and educate those around you.

Choose a topic that interests you or that may have caught your attention at some time in class discussions. You may also choose a topic that we will discuss in the future (Mr. Valverde will provide a list). This is an opportunity for you to use your talents and creativity to become involved in or produce something of value. By taking a piece of information and making it accessible to others or participating in a cause, activity or movement is *practicum*.

Your project may fall into one of three themes. Please read the following to give you a better idea about the design of the project.

Contributive Project:

Help a class, academic department, institution, business, etc. become more culturally inclusive about cultural concepts, ideas, approaches, information, and historical events. Contribute to the daily operations of an existing entity by providing information that will benefit the cultural outreach to its intended audience (i.e., students, customers, patrons, clients, etc.). This is a resource that will assist in learning more about a particular topic. Your goal is to educate others.

- Resource Directory
- Web page
- Lesson plans
- Book, unit or program
- Awareness campaign
- Event (i.e., lecture, readings, assembly, conference, lesson, etc.)

- Film (creative or documentary)
- A play
- Conduct a study (stats, opinions, surveys, documentation, etc.)
- *[your creative project]*

Transformative Project

Create a project that <u>changes or challenges the basic assumptions</u> of a cultural topic. This project allows others to view concepts, issues, themes, and problems from various perspectives and points of view. Focus on ideas that are considered harmful or questionable for society; an idea that needs changing. Expect this project to be somewhat controversial. Some projects, depending on their nature, may have an unexpected impact on its intended audience; be prepared for this. Your goal is to attempt to transform people's thinking.

- Art piece
- Multimedia presentation
- Exhibit
- Awareness program or event (i.e., lecture, readings, assembly, conference, lesson, etc.)
- Film (creative or documentary)
- A play
- A publication
- Conduct a controversial study (stats, opinions, surveys, documentation, etc.)
- *[your creative project]*

Social Action Project

This resource project entails your direct participation in a social movement. It includes all of the elements of the transformative project but requires you to take action related to your concept, issue, or problem. This project will require you to become directly involved with an issue for a period of several weeks/months. This project is designed for individuals who feel passionate about their topics, enough to become involved and devote hours of participation. This project must demonstrate:

- A daily log
- Write-up: *Why did you choose your course of action? What does it mean to you? Explain*
- Your contacts (i.e., names, phone numbers, websites, etc.)
- A multimedia presentation about your experience.

Some ideas include:

- Create a movement

- Organize a campaign
- Write a proposal (stats, opinions, surveys, documentation, etc.)
- Join and volunteer with a nonprofit organization (w/ parental permission only)

** *All projects must be presented to the class in May.*

A project-proposal is due by Wednesday, February 10, 2010.
All projects are due: Wednesday, May 5, 2010

Late projects will be penalized. Good luck and have fun with it!!
Do not wait for the last minute! ☺

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