



A High School English Teacher's Developing Multicultural Pedagogy

By: **Leslie Susan Cook** and Kristi Bruce Amatucci

Abstract

Cook and Amatucci study Kristi Amatucci's journey as she tries to align her conceptual development of teaching multicultural pedagogy -- learned in both her teacher training institution and as a student teacher -- with her transition year experience as a new teacher in a new school. They trace Kristi's development as a teacher by focusing on key classroom interactions, her own reflections, and her negotiation of a new system and curriculum.

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Standardization is having a profound influence on the way English Language Arts (ELA) teachers are taught to teach (Smagorinsky & Whiting, 1999). Members of colleges of education who choose to be a part of the NCATE accreditation process know Standard 4 well, which asks if teacher candidates are prepared to work with “diverse higher education and school faculty, diverse candidates, and diverse students in P-12 schools” (NCATE, 2002, p. 29). Yet, educating future ELA teachers to reach all students and colleagues, regardless of their cultural, cognitive, or linguistic diversity, proves to be a complex process. The exposure and experience that course work, field work, and clinical teaching in diverse settings provide are not guarantees that the candidates will incorporate conceptualizations of diversity that benefit their students.

So what does it look like when a beginning teacher aligns herself with an institution's conceptual framework promoting multicultural education? How does she explicitly incorporate these principles into her teaching practice? ELA teachers who are also life-long learners travel the twisting path of concept development (Smagorinsky, Cook, & Johnson, 2003; Vygotsky, 1986/1934). Beginning teachers quickly learn that the approaches presented in teacher education programs often take years to integrate into the classroom and are sometimes subsumed by the schools and districts in which they begin teaching. The bends in the road along the way to conceptual integration can include such things as state writing tests (Johnson, Smagorinsky, Thompson, & Fry, 2003) and centralized curriculum (Smagorinsky, Lakly, & Johnson, 2002). In this study we look at the motivators that furthered Kristi's conceptual development of multicultural pedagogy during her tran-

sition from student teaching into her first year of teaching. (Except for the cooperating teachers, all place and people's names are real.) These motivators include, but are not limited to, the institutional settings in which she interacts, other individuals, and her past experiences. Data were collected and analyzed over a five-year period. The narrative interviews and class observations took place between January, 2000, and March, 2001. During the subsequent years of 2001 through 2005, our analysis, discussions, and presentations of this project continued to provide insights into our understanding of Kristi's conceptual development.

This is a multivoiced text. Kristi's words are represented in italics, and Leslie's are in plain text. Additionally, the nested contexts (Cazden, 1988) of Kristi's interactions are present as institutional voices: The College of Education's Multicultural Mission Statement, NCATE's diversity standards, and the state and local curriculum guides are additional means through which Kristi developed her concept of multicultural pedagogy.

As high school English teachers, both Kristi and I operated with the belief that literature provides a mirror for the self and a window on the world (Alsup & Bush, 2005; Glazier & Seo, 2005; Rosenblatt, 1983/1938). We both incorporated literature from diverse peoples and perspectives. Like many entering the ELA teaching profession we both had a love of literature that we wanted to share (Grossman, 1990). Yet, we quickly realized that developing students' appreciation for great works is one of many competencies we were expected to teach. As Kristi and I discovered, our enthusiasm for multicultural literature was not embraced by the new institution in which we found ourselves employed, and we came to understand that choosing to teach multicultural literature was only a piece of enacting a multicultural pedagogy.

Kristi Amatucci

Kristi's love for multicultural literature was inspired by her college coursework, her family stories, and her experiences as an ELA student. Her undergraduate major in comparative literature combined her passions for both Spanish and literature. The courses for this degree fueled her interest in literature written by people other than those represented in the British and U.S. literary canons. A desire to introduce others to the world through literature motivated Kristi to enroll in the M.Ed. program in Language Education with the intention of becoming a high school teacher.

Kristi's educational philosophy holds that experiences with literature from a variety of cultures can help students get to know themselves:

I want them to get some kind of perspective on who they are. Teenagers and people in general are really focused on themselves a lot of time—I want them to put themselves into a broader picture and think about the ways that they interact with different people and how their cultural beliefs and values influence the way they interact with other people.

Being from a small, predominantly white town in the rural, mountainous part of Georgia, Kristi grew up having little interaction with people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. Kristi stated that in her hometown the biggest difference among people was whether they were Baptist or Methodist. For her, being Baptist meant attending church every Sunday morning with her family. In Kristi's view, everyone in her town looked like a variation of her—White and middle class. She described her own schooling experience as having “a feeling of not really worrying about your safety at all. . . . Everyone knew everybody else.”

The feeling of security came also from having strong family ties in the North Georgia mountains. Her great-uncle's family stories of their Cherokee Indian ancestors who were driven out of the area by white settlers became part of Kristi's ancestral identity:

Learning about my family's history, and how it fits into the context of Georgia's history, and the history of the United States of America gave history an immediacy that it never had for me when I studied it back in high school, and even college. It was difficult to accept the fact that my ancestors profited from the elimination of the Cherokee from North Georgia. Making the situation even stranger was that at least three of the four branches of my immediate family were intermarried with individuals who were part Cherokee themselves. In addition, some of my ancestors very likely participated in a lynch mob that took a man's life in a most cruel way and forced dozens of families to disrupt their lives by moving from the area under duress.

I cannot quite feel guilt over these issues because I know that I was not directly involved in any of these decisions and choices that helped strip a people of their land or caused people to live in constant fear and oppression. However the feelings resulting from my historical perspective prompted me to a desire to serve those who have been treated unfairly or with injustice in this area of the country. This partially explains the dedication to social justice in my teaching career. I guess it boiled down to the fact that I want to help the descendents of those who might have been harmed by the attitudes and actions of my ancestors.

The connection between Kristi's family history and her commitment to a multicultural pedagogy cannot be ignored. Attention to diversity was already a part of Kristi's identity before she came in contact with the institutional voices that mandated its inclusion in her program. A reversal of

what Lortie (1975) described in his discussion of apprenticeship of observation was also a factor in Kristi's philosophy of teaching. Though shaped by her own experiences as a student, Kristi was determined not to replicate her experience with her students. Kristi characterized the K-12 school she attended as having "a narrow single vision." She mentioned that she had never read a book by an African American author until her senior year, when a teacher suggested she read *Black Boy* (Wright, 1945) during her stay at the Governor's Honors summer program for literature. In her high school, even the experience of reading books by women was not common. Kristi commented that her 11th-grade English teacher recommended *The Awakening* (Chopin, 1899), the only book she recalled reading by a woman while in school.

Her early interviews indicated that, as a teacher, she would not repeat those practices from her own education and that she was committed to searching for more representative literature for her students. "It wasn't until I started taking education classes that I realized that the teacher-centered, direct, everyone-sits-in-rows-and-I-tell-you-what-to-do—I didn't know there was an alternative to that." Particular classes during her Master's program moved her away from a "right or wrong" way of interpreting literature to a reader-response approach (Rosenblatt, 1978) in which each person has a unique, evidenced-based interpretation of the text. She also began to see that what students read in school influenced how they saw themselves:

Well, first of all, I feel it's really important for students to see their cultures reflected in what they read in school so that they know that their cultures are valued. And so I also think that it's important to read about groups different from themselves to broaden their understanding of people.

Given her teacher education program's emphasis on culturally relevant teaching and Kristi's previously mentioned teaching philosophy, it was not surprising that Kristi often made connections between reading and cultural awareness.

University Teacher Education Program

The original Multicultural Mission Statement, adopted in 1995 by the College of Education where Kristi earned her graduate degree, emphasized an experiential and inquiry-based approach to pedagogy in order to "combat all forms of discrimination in our society" (University of Georgia, 1995). Goals for the original mission statement included an expectation for graduates of teacher education programs to:

Be informed of how myths and stereotypes associated with other peoples exhibit cultural biases;

Be shown how all peoples have made major contributions to economics, education, mathematics, politics, art, science, and social and cultural institutions;

Be taught how to identify and discuss indicators of discrimination within specified American institutions. (University of Georgia, 1993)

As part of an NCATE evaluation in 2001, the college adopted six additional strands for preparing professionals to work in diverse, global communities. These strands included the following:

- I. Examining and understanding our own cultural assumptions and how they affect teaching and learning;
- II. Recognizing that language diversity is enriching and not something requiring remediation;
- III. Learning to recognize stereotypes and other manifestations of discrimination and prejudice in curriculum materials and school practices;
- IV. Identifying and understanding the impact of differential access based on ethnicity, age, class, gender, and ability;
- V. Developing cross cultural understanding and practice that embody and reflect that understanding;
- VI. Promoting the development of curricula and classroom practices that promote social justice for all students. (University of Georgia, 2001)

Beginning in the mid- to late 1990s, individual departments invested in curriculum transformation. An annual multicultural conference was established, and both graduate and undergraduate students in the College of Education were required to take coursework with multicultural content. Despite their differing conceptions of multicultural education, professors of education in this college were expected to demonstrate a commitment to diversity. Having been at the university since the implementation of this multicultural mission, Kristi was a part of this movement to transform educational practices and outcomes.

English Education Program

Kristi's graduate coursework was primarily in the English education program (see Table 1). Of the five courses she took in this program, four had

syllabi that claimed a critical stance to the teaching of reading and writing. Kristi said that two of these classes had a significant impact on her teaching: Culturally Diverse Children's Literature (Pre-K-8) and Guiding the Reading of Young Adults. These courses shared a book on their required reading list, Rogers and Soter's (1997) *Reading Across Cultures*, pointing to the emphasis on a multicultural view of language learning. Kristi also mentioned reader response theory, an approach used for readings in five of her classes, as having a powerful impact on shaping her views of how students read poetry.

Among her other coursework, a course in the foundations of education encouraged a critical view of the public school institution in America. A text used in this class, *The Dreamkeepers* (Ladson-Billings, 1994), asked teachers "to rethink teaching and learning for African Americans" (p. xii) and emphasized culturally relevant teaching. The Special Education survey class's syllabus prompted students to take a look at their own view of students with disabilities. The emphasis on personal reflection in her coursework continued throughout Kristi's internship and subsequent years of teaching.

Kristi's university teacher education cohort was involved with a mentor teacher group (UGA-NETS). Over sixty teachers from surrounding counties worked with two university professors in the Department of Language Education to prepare approximately 25 English teachers each year. As of 2001, the program had over 125 graduates, 75% of whom had chosen to teach after completing the program. Mentor teachers met regularly, published and presented together, and supported each other toward National Board Certification. The mentor teacher program provided a significant bridge for Kristi, as both her cooperating teacher and her mentor during her first year of teaching were core members of this professional group.

County High Schools

Kristi did her student teaching and landed her first teaching job in the same county. The county was home to the large university, which was also the main employer for the area. The school district served over 12,000 students in 19 schools, including two public high schools. In the previous 10 years the district had struggled to integrate the schools through a school choice plan. Of the over 1,700 teachers and professional support employees, 60% held advanced degrees.

Both her student teaching site, and Kristi's first teaching position had approximately 1,400 students. Clarke Central High School had recently been

Table 1: Kristi's Coursework with Textbooks and Basic Assumptions

Course title	Required texts	Summary of course purpose
ELAN7430 Language and Learning in English Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *<i>An unquiet pedagogy</i> *<i>The language of interpretation</i> *<i>Just girls</i> - M. Finders 	Looked at "theory and research that guide the teaching of language."
ELAN7730 First and Second Language Acquisition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *<i>The development of language</i> *<i>Language development</i> *<i>How languages are learned</i> 	Looked at language growth throughout the lifespan. Examined dialects and theories of 2nd language acquisition.
ELAN7318 Culturally Diverse Children's Literature (PK-8)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *<i>Reading across cultures</i> *<i>Using multiethnic literature in K-8 classrooms</i> *various children's chapter and picture books 	Looked at ethnicity, disability, and gay/lesbian issues in children's literature.
ELAN7410 Guiding the Reading of Young Adults	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *<i>Reshaping high school English</i> *<i>Reading across cultures</i> *<i>You gotta BE the book</i> 	Examined the role of reading and being a reader. Encouraged teachers to question their own view of self as reader in order to connect to students.
ELAN7420 Critical Pedagogy in Composition Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *<i>Strategies for struggling writers</i> *<i>Standards exemplar series: For the profession by the profession. A guide for discussion</i> *<i>Writing with passion: Life stories, multiple genres</i> *<i>Creating writers: Living writing assessment and instruction</i> *various articles chosen by professor 	Encouraged a critical look at writing pedagogy by exploring different approaches to teaching writing.
EFN203 Foundations of Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *<i>The one best system</i> *<i>Pillars of the republic</i> *<i>The dreamkeepers</i> *<i>Savage inequalities</i> 	Took a critical look at schooling in America from a historical point of view.
EPY201 Child and Adolescent Development for Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *<i>Child and adolescent development for educators</i> 	A basic intro to child psychology with emphasis on behaviorist, information processing, and psychoanalytic theories.
ERSH6200 Statistics for Educators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *<i>Reading statistics and research (How to lie with statistics strongly recommended)</i> 	Introduction to statistics for teachers in order for them to read and use statistics for professional growth.
SPED2000 Survey of Special Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *<i>Human exceptionality: Society, school, and family</i> 	An introduction to learners with disabilities. Encouraged preservice teachers to examine their own views toward those with disabilities.

commended by Southern Association for Colleges and Schools (SACS) for, among other things, its "diverse population." In the final report recommendations for improvement at Clarke Central included addressing "the needs of Limited English Proficient (LEP) students," considering "all options to improve literacy and communication skills," and acquiring "the means to provide free transportation for after school tutoring four days a week" (instead of only two). Cedar Shoals High School's goals in a 2001 SACS report included "working with the University's teacher education program and the P-16 initiative, which is making strides in better preparing teachers for the realities of today's diverse classroom." In the early 2000s the state Department of Education placed both high schools in the city system in the "needs improvement" category for not meeting specific achievement benchmarks.

Within these and other contexts Kristi accumulated experiences and recounted them in interviews. The classroom experiences that Kristi shared and those we analyzed in this article do not attempt to represent all experiences leading her to a conception of multicultural education that she formulated during the period of research. Rather, they illuminate one local and specific time period in her life as an early career teacher. Focusing on her beginnings, we watch how the concept of multicultural education became meaningful for her and her students.

Through collaboration, analysis, and retrospection, we addressed the following questions: (1) How did Kristi make meaning of her students' reactions and interactions to what they read? (2) How did these experiences influence her content selection and pedagogical approaches for her students? (3) How did Kristi's understanding of the concept of multiculturalism develop?

Framing Literary Experience

As an early career teacher and graduate student, Kristi opened up her classroom and herself during a vulnerable period of time that included her internship and first year of teaching. As a former high school ELA teacher and a doctoral student in the same department, Leslie initiated the study, collecting and analyzing data. The study was designed as a narrative inquiry case with Kristi's accounts from her internship and first year of teaching providing the bounded system we used for analysis (Stake, 1994). Conceptualizations of the way meaning is constructed undergird the interdisciplinary uses of narrative inquiry (Conle, 2000; Kramp, 2004). The design provides a way to explore the process of concept development because

it recognizes that people construct stories to make sense of things, to figure out meaning, and to establish connection.

Through recursive analysis (Gale, Chenail, Watson, Wright, & Bell, 1996) and backward and forward mapping (Tuyay, Floriani, Yeager, Dixon, & Green, 1995), we focused on how one teacher's life story intersected with a national movement to incorporate diversity requirements in teacher education. We explicate how this conjunction continued her developing concept of multicultural pedagogy.

This study affords a view of my single case as idiosyncratically replicable. Even though others will not develop concepts in exactly the same way I did, looking at my experience illuminates for new teachers, mentors, and teacher educators some of the processes new teachers are likely to move through. Critics argue that case studies, which are generally not replicable, lack the rigor of traditional quantitative research. This study shows that much can be learned concerning the development of new teachers through just such studies, particularly when close analysis is used to identify patterns that are useful in understanding the processes of concept appropriation exhibited by new teachers.

Teacher education programs espousing multicultural mission statements risk a surface commitment to issues of diversity unless research examines how teacher candidates later incorporate concepts into the classroom. A concept such as multicultural education, which is often difficult to identify, gains meaning through experiences. For example, teachers with a fragmented concept of multicultural pedagogy risk "tokenism" (Alsop & Bush, p. 7) by failing to integrate texts by authors from diverse cultures throughout the year. Through narratives of classroom experience, we explored how Kristi made sense of this often controversial concept as an early career teacher.

Kristi's process of narrating experience was selective. In our interviews, she framed events as she was able to generalize them. Consciously or unconsciously, Kristi ordered classroom experiences in a particular way to create stories that held coherence for us. Through a process of reflection and reconstruction, Kristi performed the narratives of classroom experience, and through the dialogic nature of the interviews constructed meaning that became part of her biography (Goffman, 1974). Interviews and observations provided snapshots of the process of concept formation. Our analysis and Kristi's retrospective writing examined those frozen experiences for the connections to other places and times, both past and future. Looking at concept development through a case study format historically situated Kristi's

beginning classroom experiences within a culture, a profession, an institution, and an individual's life trajectory.

The following stories of classroom experiences come from interviews I narrated shortly after they occurred in time. Telling the stories of my classroom made them real and helped me reflect more carefully on my moves as a teacher. When the experiences no longer exist within the confines of the classroom, but within the larger world, these moves became more obvious. Storytelling, however, can be dangerous. Narrating the stories was powerful; characters could have been silenced or distorted by the framing of the storyteller. Still, telling stories was a valuable way of making meaning, a way to make sense of both familiar and unfamiliar situations. Meanings attributed to classroom interactions with my students during the earliest days of my teaching sometimes arose not entirely from what actually occurred but from the ways in which the occurrences were framed.

The Poetry Unit

During Kristi's student teaching, her mentor teacher encouraged her to plan a poetry unit for the 9th-grade classes and gave her the freedom to do whatever she wanted. Kristi carefully designed this unit to reflect her classes' demographics and to expose them to new cultures and ideas. She described her process:

The first step I took was I looked at our 9th-grade textbook and made a notation of all the poems and different, some non-fiction pieces and other stuff that looked interesting to me and that I thought the kids would like. And I also wrote about the kids in my class so that I could get it down, so that I could see actually the racial and the gender representations in the class because I wanted to make sure to include poetry that I thought they would identify with and find relevant to their lives.

After narrowing down her list of poems from the textbook to use for whole class discussions, she decided on the final project for the unit. She borrowed an idea from a journal article she had read in which a teacher had his "low-achieving students" make their own poetry collection in book form. Kristi sought out poetry books that would appeal to young adults from the university's Curriculum Materials Center and the county library (see Table 2 for the list of books). These books, which were placed on a cart in the room for the students to access while they were working on their projects, covered topics such as sports, feminism, and loneliness. Kristi's formal unit plan included the following "County School District Language Arts Curriculum" goals:

Table 2: Books Chosen by Kristi for the Poetry Unit

Books (Editor & Year)	Description	Poets Represented
<i>City in all directions: An anthology of modern poets</i> (A. Adolf / 1969)	A collection designed to show the "sights and sounds of big cities everywhere"	e. e. cummings, Lawrence Fellinghetti, William Carlos Williams, Victor Hernandez Cruz, Vladimir Mayakovsky
<i>My Black me: A beginning book of Black poetry</i> (A. Adolf / 1974)	A collection of poems reflecting thoughts on being Black	Langston Hughes, Lucile Clifton, Nikki Giovanni, Imamu Amiri Baraka (Le Roi Jones)
<i>Cool salsa: Bilingual poems on growing up Latino in the United States</i> (L. M. Carlson / 1994)	Poems that deal with issues of being Latino in America	Sandra Cisneros, Ramond del Castillo, Pablo Medina, Pat Mora, Berta G. Montalvo, Gary Soto
<i>Poetry after lunch: Poems to read aloud</i> (J. A. Carroll / 1997)	A collection "meant to encourage that collaboration between poetry's oral and most ancient roots"	Naomi Shihab Nye, William Stafford, Angela de Hoyos, Gary Soto, Maxine Kumin
<i>I wouldn't thank you for a valentine: Poems for young feminists</i> (C. A. Duffy / 1997)	A collection of poems by women from different cultures, portraying the female experience from childhood to old age	Juanita Bell, Jean Binta Breeze, Nellie Wong, Elaine Cusack, Alice Walker, Joyce la Verne, Nishio Katsuko
<i>My friend's got this problem. Mr. Candler: High school poems</i> (M. Glenn / 1991)	Poems accompanied with pictures of high school students telling their stories through the poet's eyes	Mel Green
<i>Pierced by a ray of sun: Poems about the times we feel alone</i> (R. Gordon / 1995)	An international look at the feeling of loneliness through poetry. Includes many translated poems	Ranier Maria Rilke, Cynthia Rylant, Michelle Boisseau, Rumi, William Butler Yeats, T'ang Wan, Malka Heifetz Tussman, Adrienne Rich
<i>Going over to your place: Poems for each other</i> (P. B. Janeczko / 1987)	Poems that reflect the rich variety of life experiences - music lessons, a first kiss, and arm wrestling	Phil Hey, Keith Wilson, Adrienne Rich, Nikki Giovanni, Elizabeth Bishop, William Stafford, Mark Strand, Chris Petrakos
<i>Preposterous: Poems for youth</i> (P. B. Janeczko / 1991)	A collection of poems dealing with the problems that teenagers and youth face	Langston Hughes, Gary Soto, Wanda Coleman, Charlotte Mortimer, Gwendolyn Brooks, Paul Zimmer, William Stafford
<i>Wherever home begins: 100 contemporary poems</i> (P. B. Janeczko / 1995)	A collection of poems dealing with life in America and developing a sense of place	Keith Wilson, Elizabeth Bishop, Dana Gioia, Alice Fulton, Gary Soto, Naomi Shihab Nye
<i>Crazy to be alive in such a strange world: Poems about people</i> (N. Larrick / 1977)	Poems that address the various states of the human condition	Walt Whitman, William Carlos Williams, Nikki Giovanni, Leonard Nathan, Margaret Suda, John Updike, Shel Silverstein
<i>I like you, if you like me: Poems of friendship</i> (M. C. Livingston / 1987)	Collection of poems about friendship	Randal Jarrel, Gwendolyn Brooks, Myra Cohn Livingston, Alonzo Lopez, Hsin Ch'i-chi, Issa, Charlotte Zolotow
<i>Love is like a lion's tooth: An anthology of love poems</i> (F. McCullough / 1984)	A collection of love poems that address the various stages of love	Azande (from the Congo), Hsiao Yen, Kabir, Denise Levertov, Christina Rossetti, Frank O'Hara, Robert Bly, Emily Dickinson
<i>Rhythm road: Poems to move on</i> (L. Morrison / 1988)	A collection of poems that exemplify the movement of poetry	C. S. Lewis, Denise Levertov, Carl Sandburg, May Swenson, William Carlos Williams

Reads poetry for pleasure

Gains preliminary knowledge of figurative language

Responds to a variety of poetry from personal experience

Practices the development of original poetry with emphasis on formulaic poetry

Participates in the writing process

Speaks so others can hear and understand.

She also included her personal goals for the unit that addressed almost identical concepts as the county's goals.

Several concept-shaping classroom incidents occurred during Kristi's teaching of the poetry unit. She recounted two times when lessons opened the floor for students' cultures to become part of the texts being studied. In one activity students read aloud identity poems written by other high school students. One of the class favorites was a poem called "African Americans." Kristi recounted the atmosphere as Kyle, an African American young man, read the poem:

And so he started reading the "African American" poem. And I don't know what happened, I don't know who started it, I don't know how it happened, but he started reading like an African American preacher. And the class started doing their response as he was reading. They would start making these noises like "Preach it brother" and all this stuff. And just spontaneously, they just all started. And by the time he finished, I mean not everyone in the class was participating, but probably half the class was just like going right along with it and it was really fun.

Within the same unit on identity poems, Becky, an African American young woman who was retaking freshman English, also expanded the text at hand to reflect her personal culture. As a response to a writing assignment after reading the identity poems, Becky wrote her own poem:

It was an identity poem showing a lot of pride in herself and there was a stanza like, "If I apply for a job, don't you dare put my application to the side just because I have long nails and extensions in my hair." And, "I have a good brain, and my GPA shows how hard I've been working" and "This is me. I'm proud of myself." . . . But when she started reading the class became totally silent. It was just like "Whoa." . . . Well she doesn't speak out in class a lot, and she has a leadership quality in the class, but more of like "Follow my example, don't, I'm not going to preach at you a lot," kinda thing. And so when she started reading everyone, at first, I guess they didn't know what

to expect and then when they saw the tone of the poem and how it was going to be, they were just silent. Listening to her. So that blew me away too.

The poetry unit reflected a period of time early in Kristi's student teaching when she had room to be creative and seek additional texts. Reflecting on the implementation of this part of the poetry unit, Kristi saw the significant impact that her choice of content and pedagogy had in creating a culturally responsive environment.

These two moments were pivotal for me. For the first time, I realized that I didn't have to be an African American to be a fully integrated part of a classroom community that included mostly African Americans. I was able to design instruction that was meaningful for students, even though I wasn't from the same cultural background as they were. In addition, the experience with Kyle's poetry reading made it clear that the students accepted me as part of their community. They created a group text in response to poetry I had selected for them to read, and the creation of that text included me. Becky's reading also helped make real for me the notion that students could produce astounding work in a classroom where they felt valued as learners.

Throughout this unit Kristi facilitated whole-class discussions around poems. The following is a retelling of the classes' reading of a bilingual poem "Legal Alien" (Mora, 1985). Here Kristi recognized her successful use of multicultural literature, the benefits of including her Spanish-speaking students, and the power of exposing her other students to the language and culture.

Kristi: *I chose that one primarily because it's bilingual. It's in their textbook, and there's the entire poem in Spanish and in English. And so I really wanted to get some Spanish language in there to show my Hispanic speakers that I valued their language and to expose other kids in the class. And we actually read both the English and the Spanish version out loud in both classes. And first period we had an English speaker read the Spanish version. She's taking Spanish and so she was all excited, she wanted to read it. And she did a pretty good job with it. And the kids responded well, I thought. And then in 5th period I think Portia read it, who's a native Spanish speaker. And I think that she really enjoyed, because she wasn't spotlighted a lot in the class because she doesn't speak English that well and this really gave her a chance to read in her comfort zone and participate in class. So I'm really proud that we did that one. Some of the students, not many of the students cited it as their favorite or one of their favorites, I think a lot of them, they didn't identify with it because it's about being a Mexican American and not fitting in with Mexicans*

and not fitting in with Americans and occupying that in between territory.

Q: It seems like they could've made a jump though from being in any position, you know?

Kristi: *Well, that was one of those days where I had hoped to get into issues like that and it just didn't go there. But I was still glad that we read it, like I said. Just so that the Latino girls could have a chance to shine and speak up in class and do their reading so—*

In this narrative of the reading of "Legal Alien," Kristi positioned herself as a student teacher who has the freedom to plan the poetry unit as she saw fit, as a former student of Spanish and Latin American literature, and as a go-between for Latino/a students and the other students in the class. Her consideration of the Latina girls in her class prompted the choice of this poem. The fifth-period class in which the Spanish-speaking student read the poem had four other Spanish-speaking students, all at "varying levels of their proficiency with English." Of those four, Portia was fluent in both Spanish and English, and both Kristi and her mentoring teacher, Ali, relied on her to translate for the others.

Her retelling of this lesson included her desire that the non-Latino/a students in the class learn something from their exposure to the language and literature. In an interview that took place after their poetry projects were turned in, Kristi told about a Latino student who came into the class and would write poems in Spanish that one of the Spanish-speaking girls would translate so that "the rest of the people in the class could get a feel for what it was about." Her appreciation for non-native speakers' difficulties in English classes encouraged pedagogical decisions that addressed individual needs and influenced the entire class.

As an experience that elucidated her development of a concept of multicultural pedagogy, this incident shows culturally relevant teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1994) with an emphasis on funds of knowledge (Moll & González, 1994) were important considerations for Kristi. Due in part to her educational background in Spanish literature and language, she saw herself as an instructional leader and a guide into other cultures. Her careful planning attempted to balance curriculum requirements with her beliefs about students' cultural needs. Her on-the-spot pedagogical decisions reflected a deeper desire to give voice to the Latino/as who were not often contributors to the classroom activities. Though she did not believe that the students identified with the themes in the poem, Kristi still considered this

lesson a success because of the benefits to the Spanish-speaking young women in the class.

Teaching British Literature

Kristi confronted a counter to cultural relevancy during her student teaching with Ali, an African American woman with over 20 years of experience. During the year-long practicum, Kristi eventually took over teaching responsibilities for all of Ali's classes. As demonstrated in her planning of the poetry unit for the Freshman English classes, she was given the freedom to choose what materials she would use. In the Senior English classes, however, she was required to follow her mentoring teacher's plan. While planning for the senior English class, Ali expressed to Kristi her belief that her students, regardless of race or ethnicity, need to be exposed to the classics. This pedagogical stance is similar to what Delpit (1995) discusses in terms of "the culture of power" (p. 25) and supports Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu & Patterson, 1990). By expecting cultural capital, Ali gave students "possession of cultural resources that are valued and can be invested for social benefit" (Monkman, Ronald, & Th eram ene, 2005, p. 11).

The development of Kristi's concept of multicultural pedagogy was furthered rather than hindered by the contrasting approaches present in her and Ali's teaching. The conception of multiculturalism that Kristi experienced in the classroom runs counter to what her coursework emphasized. Kristi described Ali's approach as "*constraining*," but she recognized Ali's commitment to the students: "*She just has these things that she feels like if she doesn't teach these certain works, that she'd be failing in her job as a teacher.*"

The racial makeup of her British Literature class consisted of eight African Americans, five European Americans, two Latino/a Americans, and one Asian American. In our first interview Kristi expressed "*the importance of making sure that we are not ignoring students in our class by giving them this solid diet of dead White guys.*" I asked her if she remembered a specific time when her senior class became aware of this disparate representation:

We do a chronological approach to British Lit., and we were doing the Restoration era, the 18th century. We were reading excerpts from Samuel Peeps's diary, and the one that this particular group read was about the coronation of the king, I can't even remember which king it was. Anyway, there was this big painting in the textbook, and so I said, "If you want to see a visual representation of the coronation ceremony, it's on page whatever." And so all the kids got their books out and turned. And one African American student said, "Ms. Amatucci, where are all the Black people? Why are there no Black people in this picture?" So we got into this whole discussion about

what the Africans that were obviously still in Africa, and then some that were, the slave trade was already started by that time, and that there were slaves and servants in Great Britain. And that if they had been in England at the time of that coronation they probably wouldn't have been allowed to go for whatever reason. So that was a pretty vivid example of just how obvious it is and how the kids know that it's so disconnected from their lives. I mean when he verbalized that, it was just like, "Yeah, where are all the Black people?" And so I made a point, Equiano's slave autobiography was published I think right at the end of the 1700's, and so we read some excerpts from that. I was planning to do that anyway, and then when he verbalized it for the whole class, I was just like, "Yeah this makes no sense." There weren't many texts published by Africans or Black people at that time, but the ones I can find, the ones I can get my hands on. . .

Though Kristi respected Ali's instructional decisions, she also listened to her students' protestations. The *"frustrations of students that are forced to study things that are not relevant"* influenced Kristi's planning, and, in this case, supported her decision to include more texts published by Africans or Blacks writing during this time period. The class was compliant with Kristi's request to open their books to look at the picture of the coronation, and the picture invoked the challenge. The African American male student who asked the question "Why are there no Black people in this picture?" became a speaker for the class who verbalized the obvious disconnection of the coronation of a British King to these young adults' lives. His challenge, which Kristi did not see as threatening but rather as elucidating, launched them into a discussion about the place of Black people in English society in the 1700s.

Her identification of the class as one group led Kristi to make choices. She argued that *"they just don't see the point. They are just like, 'Why are we studying this? We don't get it. We don't talk like this. We don't act like this.'"* In this lesson, Kristi's implementation of multicultural education pedagogy included critical inquiry, culturally relevant teaching, and multigenre instruction. Bolstered by her philosophy of teaching and learning, Kristi both supported the values of her temporary classroom and resisted their constraints. Though she was aware of her mentoring teacher's beliefs about educating African American children, she welcomed her students' challenges and supplemented their curriculum with literature outside of the textbook that reflected their historical curiosity.

The First Year

During Kristi's first year of teaching she had a formational experience while teaching *Romeo and Juliet*. Instead of reading the play aloud, Kristi set up a

What struck her about their final presentations was how the students who might not have participated in a more traditional reading activity seemed to come to life and engage fully in this particular lesson.

dramatic representation activity in which the students were to choose a scene to rewrite and restage. Kristi encouraged them to play with the language and setting, putting Shakespeare's words into slang and modernizing the plot if they wanted. What struck her about their final presentations was how the students who might not have participated in a more traditional reading

activity seemed to come to life and engage fully in this particular lesson:

A kid that rarely comes to class, that a lot of times doesn't turn in written assignments or doesn't necessarily do a great job with written assignments had a chance because they didn't have to turn in anything written. It was all in that moment. He stood up there and just did a fantastic job and impressed a lot of other kids in the class as well as me.

In addition to providing an opportunity for success to a student who did not normally experience it in English class, this activity also created a forum for her more reticent girls who did not speak up in class. From Kristi's perspective, the dramatic presentation, no matter how small a role each student took, was a chance for them to build confidence in the English classroom without having to write or read from a text.

Before this experience during my first year of teaching, I considered the selection of multicultural literature to be the most important part of enacting a multicultural pedagogy. The experience during which my students modernized and acted out scenes from Romeo and Juliet helped me realize that multicultural pedagogy is much more than just adding texts written by authors from various cultural backgrounds. We were using a canonical text, but we were approaching it in a way that made it culturally relevant for the students. What we did with a text became just as important as my selection of texts. This experience was also important for me because, in creating the acting component of the assignment, I acknowledged that diversity along cultural lines was not the only kind of diversity in my classroom. Using acting in the classroom was a way to recognize the cognitive diversity in my classroom as well as the cultural and language diversity.

In the first year the full-time demands of the classroom prevented the focused search for multicultural literature, but it did not keep her from praxis that enabled multiple voices to be heard and represented in the classroom. Even though she was not always conscious of the growth, her concept of multicultural education continued to expand.

Integrating concepts learned in a teacher education program was difficult during the trials of early-career teaching. Schools, districts, and state and federal law often constrain good teaching, and many new teachers lack adequate support. The lack of time and resources created a panic mentality. During stressful situations, I found myself copying the ways in which my own high school teachers taught rather than in the way stressed by my teacher education program. I returned to a more traditional methodology that often shut down my students. Though my theoretical background and personal beliefs support encouraging and sustaining student motivation, as an early-career teacher, I focused on the intricacies of figuring out classroom management techniques and learning how to handle the paper crunch. The concepts I studied in college frequently seemed of little import in the face of daily challenges.

Interviews from the first year revealed multiple incidents where Kristi was blending her academic concept of multicultural education with her classroom practices. Kristi recounted a 10th-grade lesson she borrowed from her mentor in which her classes discussed male and female stereotypes. After splitting her 10th-grade classes into halves, she asked each side to read either an excerpt from *Reviving Ophelia* (Pipher, 1994), a book that looks at adolescent girls' development, or a piece from *Raising Cain* (Kindlon, Thompson, & Baker, 1999), a book about the emotional life of boys. Reflecting on the lesson in an interview, Kristi was concerned about how the debate style worked:

It was still a little bit what I would call chaotic, like people talking over each other and kind of yelling out to get their thoughts out above everybody else's instead of taking turns. But I think probably a lot of it is just cultural, and I'm calling it chaos when to them it's not chaos.

She repeatedly mentioned the "chaotic" nature of the discussion. Her assertion that "it's just cultural" positioned her as an outsider, as someone who did not share the discussion habits of her students who were yelling out their thoughts and not taking turns. Yet reflection on the incident brought her to a new conceptual understanding of what was going on. She subsequently found a term, *gumbo ya ya*—borrowed from Creole, meaning "everybody talks at once"—that fit well with what she experienced in the classroom.

I consider this a moment when I began realizing that what I considered to be chaos was actually not chaotic to my African American students. It made perfect sense. This lesson also represents a moment of student engagement. During my first year, when student disengagement was often the standard response, this day stands out simply because my students were highly engaged.

A lesson that I had designed to take half an hour lasted for an entire 90-minute class period. I witnessed a "chaotic" conversation that worked and once again felt that I was experiencing an epiphany. Gumbo ya ya was not something I had to fight against. By allowing it to function in my classroom, I was honoring a cultural practice that felt strange and exhilarating to me but was commonplace for many of my students.

Despite her insecurity about returning to a more traditional methodology, observations during Kristi's first year of teaching indicated that Kristi provided space for open discussions and assigned authentic assessments such as the multigenre projects surrounding the novel *Night* (Wiesel, 1960). Yet, in interviews, Kristi expressed concern for her previous commitment to the power of literature to transform students' thinking.

*I think with *Night*, so many of them, it was so far removed and it was so unreal to them, and in a way I think watching that documentary makes it even more unreal, in a way. Like you would think it would make it more real because you see the images, you see the people, the survivors, you know, there were lots of interviews with them, but we needed some kind of bridge you know to get us there. I don't know, they just, I don't know, I'm frustrated. I'm disappointed. And I don't really know I don't have a clear idea you know what that bridge could be.*

Like many first-year teachers, Kristi relied on former classmates and colleagues to get her through the tough times. Kristi talked often about the support network provided by the mentor teachers affiliated with the English Education cohort (cf. Graham, Hudson-Ross, Adkins, McWhorter, & Stewart, 1999). She also discussed the pressure from other colleagues to cover the classics. She wanted to move away from "that coverage mindset," but she worried that her students might be held accountable for books like *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee, 1960). In her first year narratives, however, novels, poems, and short stories were not often the focus. Students themselves became Kristi's main concern. In talking about one student who "worried her to death" she typified many of the young men in her classes:

I know his sister had him arrested last weekend for bothering her, and I know that his mom is never at home, and I know that he really wants to graduate, and this is his last shot to do that. I'm thinking of somebody in my second period now. But the more I listen to them, and the more I actually try to dig a little bit and find out what's going on, the easier it is to not see a bunch of bad kids but to see individuals who are struggling a lot of times who don't get a lot out of school . . . It's just easier to see, it's easier to understand when you listen.

Kristi's first year initiated the need to develop a stronger student-centered pedagogy and to learn more about who was in her classes and what their lives were like outside the classroom.

It is too common for first-year teachers to feel a strong disconnect from their teacher education courses. Zeichner (2005) points out that "the failure to establish clear links between teacher standards and pupil learning even broadly defined" is often used by critics of teacher education programs as reasons to bypass performance-based teacher education (p. 499). Yet, the experiences Kristi recounted throughout the year, which included her practicum and first year of teaching, followed a trajectory toward an informed concept of multicultural education. Though she admitted that her teacher education program held little import on a day-to-day basis, the progression of events that included the poetry unit, the British literature incident, and the time spent learning about her students' lives indicated that she was indeed committed to multicultural principles as outlined by NCATE, the College of Education's mission statement, and her coursework syllabi.

Discussion

As a graduate of the master's degree program in secondary English education, Kristi belonged to a generation of new teachers influenced by the introduction of multicultural education goals in their teacher education programs. Experiences in multicultural settings are often unfamiliar to the majority of U.S. teachers, predominantly White, middle-class women who grow up in racially homogenous neighborhoods and schools (deMarras & LeCompte, 1999). Kristi reflected the willingness of many new teachers to implement multicultural principles. Her commitment to diversity led her to the classroom and provided the background experiences that shaped both how she viewed herself as a teacher and how she defined the concept of multiculturalism. Furthermore, it was the tension between the varying conceptions of multicultural education in the English Language Arts classroom that continued to inform her developing multicultural pedagogy.

The definition for multiculturalism varies depending on context, and like me, many practitioners operate under an incomplete notion of what multicultural education entails. We began this study focused mostly on the selection of multicultural literature for the classroom and analysis of the discussions that surrounded class readings. Over my teaching career, I have come to understand the concept of multiculturalism as more complex than just the selection of multicultural texts. Now in my fifth year of teaching, I understand

multicultural education as a process, a recognition that continues to deepen and expand. As a new teacher, I faced opposition to multicultural education within my school. I needed time and experience to understand that a multicultural approach to an English Language Arts curriculum involves more than including selections by multicultural authors.

Taking a multicultural stance in the classroom involves valuing the other, working for social justice, and teaching tolerance that goes beyond curricular decisions. I see issues of multiculturalism influencing my curriculum decisions in numerous ways. I teach diverse teenaged students. The culture of their homes and mine, the culture of our district and school, the culture of the texts we read—all influence the learning that occurs. For example, the families of some students I teach expect that upon reaching age 16, their son or daughter leave school in order to contribute more fully to family finances. This cultural norm does not match either my own cultural norms, which value education above monetary contributions among teenagers, or the cultural norms of our school, a central objective of which is to decrease the drop-out rate among our students. We are living multiculturalism. We transact with and through our cultural differences and similarities. The ways in which I teach are influenced by the cultures of my students, just as their learning is influenced by mine.

The various settings in which new teachers interact have a certain amount of power to constrain and enable them. As Kristi's first mentoring teacher and her departmental planning policy at her first teaching position illustrate, no matter how hard a teacher education program strives to incorporate particular concepts and theoretical perspectives, when new teachers try to practice what they have learned, they often confront conflicting ideas (see also Johnson, Smagorinsky, Thompson, & Fry, 2003). Implementing concepts learned in teacher education becomes especially difficult when there are no support systems for early career teachers. Networks like the one at Kristi's first teaching job offer extended professional conversations. After her third year as a classroom teacher, Kristi also participated in a four-week summer invitational institute with the Red Clay Writing Project, which focused on social justice. Conceptual home bases (Smagorinsky, 2002) such as the teacher-mentor network in Kristi's program, affiliation with local and national efforts like the National Writing Project, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, an induction program, a small teacher collaborative, an outreach effort or partnership, or electronic discussion also offer settings where concepts can be reinforced. Yet the danger lies in assuming that a conceptual understanding has been realized with only limited exposure to people and places.

But where does the wider significance of this case study lie? What can be learned from the analysis of particular moves I made as a new teacher? Early-career teachers develop teaching identities and integrate concepts learned in teacher education programs in neither a steady nor predictable fashion. In my own case, appropriating concepts learned in a teacher education program took place according to individual contexts and experiences. However, commonalities exist in the experiences of other new teachers. Analyzing the commonalities can elucidate the process through which new teachers develop a working pedagogy. Furthermore, this study echoes the call for support of new teachers as they appropriate concepts from teacher education classes.

This study began as an exploration of how one early-career teacher chose multicultural literature for her students. In the process we discovered how an English teacher's commitment to diversity entails much more than finding literature to match students' racial, ethnic, or language background. Interaction with texts, verbal or non-verbal, that Kristi shared with her students created the opportunities to enact multicultural pedagogy such as culturally relevant teaching, reader response theory, multigenre instruction and assessment, writing-to-learn, critical inquiry, student-centered teaching, and funds of knowledge.

We discovered how an English teacher's commitment to diversity entails much more than finding literature to match students' racial, ethnic, or language background.

The university's commitment to multicultural education fostered the continuation, rather than the initiation, of a life-long process of concept development by naming it. On the surface Kristi's prior experiences with diversity appeared limited: She represented the class and ethnic majority of American teachers. During student teaching it seemed that Kristi was being encouraged to develop a philosophy much different from that of the university's; however, the dissonance actually expanded her conception. What began for Kristi as a commitment to introduce her students to the world through literature became a journey to learning about herself, her students, and how to reach them where they live. This process of developing a multicultural pedagogy in her English classes was supported by the intersection of Kristi's life narrative and the university's burgeoning commitment to diversity that provided conceptual reinforcement.

A concept such as diversity insists that we consider how the individual learns through interaction with others. Rather than elevate the academic concept above the experiential-based pseudoconcept (Vygotsky, 1986/1934; Cook, Smagorinsky, Fry, Konopack, & Moore, 2001), we argue that Kristi's

life trajectory as it intersected with various contexts must be considered in order to understand how she incorporated issues important to her students. Choosing key classroom interactions around literature and reflecting on them as framed experiences provided us with a way to follow her development along her conceptual pathway.

Looking back at the transcripts of interviews and conversations conducted in my classrooms four and five years ago produces a mix of reactions. While admiring my own survival tactics, I shuddered at some of my naïve assumptions. I wondered where my earliest students are now and how they are doing. A need to express gratitude to my first mentors flooded my being. I have learned from looking back at these snapshots of my development as a beginning teacher. In my fifth year of teaching, I am still appropriating those concepts learned in my teacher education program.

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