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What student teachers learn about multicultural education from their cooperating teachers[☆]

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Abstract

Teacher education has struggled to better prepare beginning teachers for an increasingly diverse student population. This research examines the role that cooperating teachers play in developing multicultural/equity pedagogy knowledge and skills among student teachers. Five cooperating teachers working in California, USA, each of whom had extensive and successful experiences teaching multicultural/equity pedagogy curricula, were asked to describe how they encourage their student teachers to engage in the materials and strategies they promote. Generally, the cooperating teachers reported that their most successful student teachers were those who came to understand the difference between expecting high-quality work from their students and sympathizing and identifying with their students' plight as low-income Latino children. More specifically, they noted that student teachers had difficulty leading instructional conversations in small groups of students. © 2006 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

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1. Introduction

Teacher educators now understand that a beginning educator's knowledge about teaching is drawn from many sources (Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Smylie, 1989; Wilson & Berne, 1999). They have also come to understand that many of those sources do not include university-based coursework.

In the 1970s, for instance, those who trusted in a competency-based teacher education believed that professional knowledge was gained largely through mastery of discrete skills specially prepared for the

classroom context but practised at the university (Houston & Howsam, 1974). This effort was short-lived, and the decline and eventual fall of competency-based teacher education turned on several factors, but it failed chiefly because it underestimated the importance of context in learning to teach. No amount of programmed instruction on specific "teaching behaviors" could convince educators, preservice or in-service, that such skills would generalize.

More recent work in the area of "reflective teacher preparation" suggests that even after competency-based programs had withered and a new kind of teacher education—one less determinate and more styled to encourage student teachers to consider teaching's larger social implications—had taken its place, the effects of university-based

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teacher preparation were again “washed out” by direct work in the schools (Zeichner & Tabachnik, 1981).

We teacher educators should not be surprised that the practice context of teaching—where we find the children and youth who new teachers routinely claim are the primary reasons they want to teach—is capable of steamrolling whatever knowledge university-driven teacher education has had to offer (Feiman-Nemser & Buchmann, 1985). But what specific features of the practice context seem to have the greatest effect on student teachers?

Student teachers (STs) generally report that their cooperating teacher (CT) most influenced their development as educators (Guyton & McIntyre, 1990; McIntyre, Byrd, & Foxx, 1996).¹ Yet, for many years, only a handful of studies examined why CTs (e.g., Brimfield & Leonard, 1983; Freibus, 1977; Iannacone, 1963; Price, 1961) serve as such an important source of professional knowledge. These early studies found that cooperating or “master” teachers became the focal point for beginning educators; STs understood and relied upon the tacit agreements common to most mentor–apprentice relationships (Coy, 1989), and they took direction from their CT. CTs, for the most part, knew how to teach the students the STs would soon face. They modeled for the ST the pedagogy that seemed to work, and STs were told to emulate the strategies and tactics of their CTs. The traditional mentor–apprentice relationship was serving its historical purpose, even if some teacher educators worried that such preparation failed to distinguish teacher education from the “trades”.

These studies pointed the way toward a broader research agenda that included a partitioning of the pedagogical influences on a ST. Yet even later studies generally left unexamined the influence of a CT. To wit, Griffin's (1989) widely cited and comprehensive work on student teaching only marginally addressed the influence of the CT, and recent ethnographic research on student teaching (e.g., Head, 1992) has not placed the CT in a primary role during student teaching.² This lapse in

attention seems now to have been reversed as recent research and policy has once again placed the CT at the center of the learning-to-teach puzzle (Borko & Mayfield, 1995; Bullough, Kauchak, Crow, Hobbs, & Stokes, 1997; Cope & Stephen, 2001; Koerner, 1992; Ritchie, Rigano, Lowry, 2000; Shantz & Ward, 2000).

Such a renewed focus is warranted. What a ST finds in an effective CT is a deep familiarity with a highly localized knowledge—those pedagogical techniques that work at *this* school, for *these* kids, at *this* grade level, and so on. The typical practicum in teacher education elevates, perhaps inadvertently, the status of this local knowledge.

When teacher educators set as the primary task for preservice teachers the mastery of teaching in a single teacher's classroom (i.e., student teaching), the direct experience in a specific context with a specific group of children counts as crucial knowledge for STs. The CT who understands the school's cranky laminating machine (the purely technical), who can recognize at once why a particular student has missed an algebraic concept (reflection-on-action) or who can cut right to the heart of a playground argument and render quick justice (reflection-in-action) holds the keys to the knowledge that beginning teachers want and need. The range of highly contextualized skills that effective veteran teachers develop in their STs is exactly the type of yet-to-be-coded expert knowledge teacher education must impart to its charges. STs seem to agree that this knowledge is best learned from a CT.

But what of the generalized, so-called theoretical knowledge that emerging teachers explore in their university-based courses? In most cases, STs will not begin their careers in the schools where they student taught, the precise classroom *a fortiori*, so it seems reasonable that they would show a deep interest in curriculum and instruction that promises to work in many contexts. Teacher educators who encourage a strong foundational understanding of learning and teaching presume that such knowledge will ensure that their students can succeed in a wide range of teaching contexts. Yet in spite of the hopes of teacher educators, graduates from their programs have not typically agreed, and beginning teachers have been less than enthusiastic—and in some cases scathing—about what they learned (or failed to

¹Of course, asking novices their views on the value of the components of their preparation program is just one source of data, but such a finding is worthy of attention if only because a participant's belief about the value of a particular component may drive one's commitment to the skills and concepts learned from that component.

²The lack of focus is surprising, given the surge of interest in framing teacher development as a community of practice (Lave &

(footnote continued)

Wenger, 1991; Wang & Odell, 2002). Is a community of practice not what forms the CT/ST relationship?

learn) in university courses, arguing that the university played little role in preparing them to teach (Ada, 1986; Martin, 1997). CTs, for their part, often share this view and routinely call for a larger role in the development and implementation of teacher education (Kahn, 1999). Veal and Rikard (1998) found that many CTs believe that the university supervisor, as well as most of what STs learned at the university, was superfluous in learning to teach. In sum, a common view among many teachers is that experience in front of a classroom of students is the *only* fruitful method for learning to teach.

In the past decade or so, teacher educators have recognized anew that the local knowledge STs gained from their CTs or from simple experience teaching had trumped university-based coursework. Consequently, teacher educators, policy-makers and K12 (i.e., primary and secondary) educators began to reconsider seriously the role of the university in preparing teachers. One response common in the USA was the initiation of professional development schools (see Abdal-Haqq, 1998, for a review). Professional development schools became the most forthright manner by which university-based teacher educators tried to inject, vis-à-vis CTs, “their” knowledge into student teaching (Carnate, Newell, Hoffman, & Moots, 2000; Dever, Hager, & Klein, 2003).

A second response, again based on the primacy of the practice context, has come from a large and growing number of policy-makers and analysts (mostly from outside the field of teacher education) who suggest that university-based teacher preparation be scrapped altogether. Arguing that learning to teach is largely experiential and that teacher education actually prevents potentially expert teachers from earning a state license, policy groups such as the Abell Foundation (2001) have spent their considerable resources trying to undermine the value of university-based teacher education.

This movement appears to be gaining momentum. For instance, a new organization in the USA, the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence, is already offering the teaching license by examination only in several states, with plans to expand nationwide. Most troubling for university-based teacher educators perhaps is that the US Department of Education has chosen to fund this organization (http://www.abcte.org/press_releases.html).

A third response has seen teacher educators carving out new spaces in teacher preparation that they believe are crucial to educational practice but that are not yet part of most CTs’ knowledge base. In other words, teacher educators now recognize that the many of the principles and skills beginning teachers must learn are learned best—or at least preferred to be learned—from a CT in a practice context. In response, teacher educators have developed courses and topics that are not yet part of the broad range of skills that CTs routinely share with preservice teachers. Instructional technology is one example of such knowledge (Dexter & Riedel, 2003). Multicultural education is another.

The development of knowledge in multicultural education, in particular, has become a primary theme in contemporary university-based teacher education (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Cockrell, Placier, Cockrell, & Middleton, 1999; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Even more to the point, the study of multicultural education, as well as great attention to the structural inequities and biases in schools, has become largely the domain of university-based courses in teacher preparation.

For the teacher education program seeking to prepare its students for culturally and linguistically diverse students, two components are particularly common: one, a placement in culturally and linguistically diverse schools, and two, university coursework that devotes special attention to multicultural education and educational equity (e.g., Bennett, 2002; Grant, 1994). Some might agree that university-based teacher educators do not routinely believe that CTs or other educators working in the K12 setting impart their version of multicultural education to their ST. Recent research has discovered that CTs do not generally focus on social reform or justice when working with their STs (Clarke & Jarvis-Selinger, 2005), and teacher educators have been quick to point out the contemporary schools’ failures with regard to the implementation of a multicultural education (Banister & Maher, 1998; Villenas & Deyhle, 1999).

Not all university-based teacher educators think this way, but many university-based writers and policy analysts, who may also work with beginning teachers, have been highly critical of the way in which schools have failed low-income students of color (e.g., Gitlin, Buendia, Crosland, & Dombia, 2003). Teacher educators have so far chosen the university classroom to address the deeper and critical knowledge required for making education

more meaningful for such students (King, Hollins, & Hayman, 1997).

Some might also agree that university-based teacher educators have come to see the preparation of teachers for culturally and linguistically diverse students as a *moral* purpose (cf. Barrage, 1993). Indeed, Birmingham (2003) has recently argued that placing STs in culturally diverse schools links teacher education to a large and important moral question, one that may require an entirely new method for reflecting on what STs find in such schools. Johnson (2003) pointed out how efforts to implement multicultural education quickly transform into forms of social activism.

The structures and standards in teacher education have also been shaped to better serve the preparation of teachers for diverse students. In the USA, for instance, the last 10 years have seen remarkable changes in the accreditation requirements for teacher education programs. The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education standards clearly mandate an extensive set of knowledge and experiences preservice teachers must have before they are licensed (NCATE, 2001).

In response to the wider expectations for preparing teachers to work with children of color, the curriculum in teacher education is now well represented by a wide set of books and papers on multicultural education, all designed to engage preservice teachers in a discussion about what is needed to help erase the achievement gap for low-income students of color (Bennett, 2003; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Fecho, 2004; Grant, 2003; Nieto, 2004; Sleeter, 2003); it might seem surprising that some of these texts are now in their fourth or even fifth editions. The development of these new curricula is quite remarkable. In the span of less than two decades, teacher educators found a new focus and a nascent if inchoate moral vision for their work, one that held a particular attraction for new academics in teacher education—increasingly of color themselves—who had taken full advantage of graduate preparation in well-developed ethnic studies programs and who were inspired by the work of the critical theorists in education.

To my mind, there is no need to argue whether teacher education should maintain a focus on the preparation of teachers who can better serve diverse students. The long-standing achievement gap between White, native English-speaking students and bilingual or bidialectal students of color should trouble those in the USA and elsewhere, where the

public schools are yoked to the belief that academic achievement is the most effective—and maybe only—way to liquefy racial and class divisions. Teacher education, which serves to introduce and indoctrinate new professionals to the classroom, should certainly play a role in advancing such a hope.

Of course, not all teacher educators have been successful in this effort, and teacher educators themselves have reported these failures in no uncertain terms (Goodwin, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1999; Shor, 1987), but the energy given to helping preservice teachers become more effective and devoted teachers for low-income children of color should be considered one of the greatest—yet still unfulfilled—dreams of higher education in the USA.

Given the moral importance of this topic and the fact that so many teacher educators have embraced multicultural education as a knowledge base they wish to share, it is important to understand the specific contours of this knowledge and how preservice teachers may come to understand it. Specifically, how do university-based courses and experiences in multicultural education enhance, undermine or, more likely, work in some combination of the two, to shape what STs learn in their ubiquitous student teaching experience? In particular, what are the insights STs gain directly from their CTs?

Over a decade ago, Grant (1994) argued that multicultural education must be infused throughout a total teacher education program rather than being addressed through an add-on workshop or single-course approach. Preservice programs, he suggested, should include an immersed field experience with CTs who have a thorough knowledge of multicultural education. This recommendation seems incontrovertible, but few, if any, studies have examined what CTs with such knowledge attempt to share and why.

I have noted that teacher education strategies for preparing new teachers for student diversity include a wide range of curricular initiatives (e.g., King et al., 1997; Larkin & Sleeter, 1995), field placements (Zetlin, MacLeod, & Michener, 1998), and a range of techniques for “reflecting” on the subjugation of minority students in US schools (Zeichner & Liston, 1987), but the role of the CT in advancing such knowledge has not been examined.

This topic deserves attention for two reasons. The first is the evidence demonstrating the importance of

the CT in the development of the beginning teachers' knowledge base. We know that STs are paying close attention to the pedagogy of their CTs; therefore, if CTs offer STs a view of multicultural education at odds with the universities, history suggests that the CTs' view will carry the day. The second is the general belief that teachers (both ST and CT) often view courses on multicultural education as superfluous (Chan & Treacy, 1996; Téllez & O'Malley, 1997). The latter finding is especially troublesome because the principles shared in such a teacher education course (i.e., the use of subject matter related to student culture, as well as a critical perspective on race and class issues in US society) seem to be effective instructional strategies for improving student achievement among students of color (Au, 2000). This kind of schooling is the goal of many thoughtful and transformative teacher education programs in the USA and elsewhere (Santoro & Allard, 2005).

If preservice teacher education is unsuccessful in providing new teachers with the knowledge and skills needed to implement multicultural education, the prospects for poor students of color are further dimmed. This potential fate, combined with the renewed interest in what STs learn from their CTs, led me to wonder about the role CTs might play in fitting new teachers with the capacity to engage in a multicultural education. How might CTs, those with years of experience in developing curricula and methods to better meet the needs of English-learning students of color, alter the student teaching experience? Do they focus primarily on technical aspects of multicultural education or are the larger issues of inequity addressed? Moreover, do CTs promote a multicultural education that corroborates or contradicts what STs learn in the university classroom? Through this study, I sought to understand how experienced CTs assist STs in learning to teach multicultural education.

2. Methods and data collection

2.1. The CTs

No scale exists to rate teachers on the quality or quantity of their knowledge of, skill for or dedication to multicultural education. Thus, one educator's definition of *effective* multicultural education will surely be different from another's. Consequently, a chief limitation of this article is its inability to verify the quality of the CTs' vision of

multicultural education, the implementation of that vision, or the capacity to share what CTs know with their STs.

Further, I can offer no guarantee that the CTs I chose to interview represented the most exemplary or even used the most common pedagogy representative of multicultural education. However, I can share a description of these teachers' experiences and preparation in multicultural education (most of them preferred the definition *equity pedagogy*) and provide examples of what they considered to be successful experiences in multicultural/equity pedagogy. With such descriptions, circumspect readers can assess for themselves whether these CTs were engaging in an adequate version of multicultural/equity pedagogy.

First, the CTs selected all worked at a school where multicultural/equity pedagogy represented a significant professional development priority. The school had been a professional development school affiliated with a university for more than 7 years. This affiliation brought with it a full-time curriculum coordinator position whose primary role was the development of instructional and pedagogical techniques designed for cultural relevance and critical awareness. In addition, the school had close and lasting ties with the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence, acting as a testing ground for many of the center's initiatives.

Both the curriculum coordinator and several experts in multicultural/equity pedagogy, who were either affiliated with the university or independent experts, guided the development of the multicultural education/equity pedagogy curriculum at the school. The curriculum and instructional design became part of a curriculum demonstration project illustrating multicultural/equity pedagogy (Sleeter, 2001). In fact, the school's professional development program had recently received a federal award for its work in teacher learning.³

The specific CTs were chosen on the advice of school's curriculum coordinator and the building principal, each of whom indicated that each of the CTs had been active in the equity pedagogy curriculum development project. Six teachers were recommended for the study; one chose not to participate owing to a lack of time in her schedule (Table 1).

³Additional information could further support the extraordinary efforts of these teachers, but such information could compromise the promise of confidentiality.

Table 1
Relevant demographic features of the CTs included in the study

Teacher ^a	Years teaching	Student teachers (career)	Ethnicity	Grade level	Language program
FAITH	6	4	European-American	4	SEI
SOCORRO	29	20	Mexican-American	1	TWI
CARIDAD	3	1	Chilean-American	4	BE
HOPE	10	7	European-American	5	BE
ESPERANZA	25	9	Mexican-American	1	BE

All are women.

^aAll names are pseudonyms.

2.2. Interviews

In order to understand the guidance CTs provided in fostering multicultural/equity pedagogy among STs, each CT was interviewed on two separate occasions. A skeletal interview protocol (see Appendix A) was used to open the interviews, but other issues and questions emerged as the CTs and researcher asked for clarifications about the questions and answers given.

The overarching process for the interviews was guided by Wengraf's (2001) biographic-narrative-interpretive method for lightly structured interviews. Whereas the interview method often resulted in biographically structured data, the goal of the study was not to uncover the CT's biography—although this information became both interesting and important—the primary purpose of the interview was to elicit the CT's vision of equity pedagogy and capacity to share this vision with their STs. A biographic structure to the interview, however, grew in value as the CTs tended to weave their own experiences into the ways they worked with their STs. Indeed, their responses around multicultural education took on the gravity of a deeply held moral purpose, a theme to be more fully examined later in the article.

The first interview lasted between 1.5 and 2 h. Those interviews were then transcribed and analyzed using the techniques for theme discovery in qualitative data (Miles & Huberman, 1994). After deriving several themes from the data, each CT was interviewed a second time and given a chance to read over her earlier responses as a form of member checking. Questions and clarifications that emerged from the initial interview were also included in the second.

The second interview focused more on specific interview questions that were designed to elicit

questions that addressed the CTs' beliefs about their capacity to share their knowledge of equity pedagogy with their STs. The interview data from the second response was then analyzed and organized by themes and categories.

Interviews took place at the school, local coffee shops, or the teachers' homes and were audio-recorded while I took notes. Each CT received a \$50 gift certificate to a local bookstore for her effort. Finally, the researcher made several visits to two of the CTs' classes, making field notes on features of their curriculum. These visits were designed not to inventory systematically the curriculum of the CTs' (such a task would demand an entirely different study), but rather to understand more fully the form of instructional conversations the CTs promoted.

2.2.1. The school

The 688-student school serves a largely Latino (Mexican-American) student body in grades PK-6 (93% "Hispanic"). Eighty percent of the school's students participate in the federal free or reduced-price lunch program and more than 65% of the students are classified as English Language Learners. Although these figures are similar to those of many other schools in California, Las Lomas⁴ is unique because many of the students' parents are year-round, local employees in agribusiness, with jobs ranging from picking strawberries to line workers in canneries who might thus be considered "migrant" workers. Nearly half of the parents reported having less than a high school education.

The school's language-teaching programs reflect the ambitious goals of educators who want to meet the language needs of all students. Three different "streams" (traditional bilingual education, two-way immersion, and structured English immersion) offer

⁴A pseudonym.

parents a wide range of options.⁵ The school's commitment to developing students' skills in Spanish is reflected in its devotion to bilingual and two-way immersion education. This commitment, however, is not recognized in post-Proposition 227 California, where the standardized tests are given only in English. Consequently, the school's achievement data reveal scores in the bottom 10 percentile of all California schools. The advent of No Child Left Behind legislation was to have dramatic consequences for the school curriculum, an issue examined later in the article.

2.3. *Equity pedagogy: definitions/practices*

In response to a question inviting them to respond to the conception of multicultural education, each CT said that she preferred to use the term *equity pedagogy* because it more accurately described their policies and instructional programs. In order for readers to gauge their own definitions of equity pedagogy against those of the CTs, I present the following comments taken from the interviews. Naturally, the CTs reported much more than the following points, but these statements are emblematic of their views.

3. Conceptions of multicultural education/equity pedagogy

HOPE: [Equity pedagogy is a] curriculum that draws upon and affirms language, culture, experiences that includes class, race, poverty, and language. That's the first piece. You need to know them. You need to know them first hand. My second one is know thyself. You need to be continually examining your life experiences, your culture, your class, your race. And then you need to examine how your work in the classroom affects your perspectives of history. I struggle with this every day that I wake up. You know, I come from a highly affluent community. I have had a ton of opportunities in my life to travel between the classes.

CARIDAD: We were working up towards writing an expository essay, and we had read about different immigrant groups from different time periods. One group we had read about was Mexican

immigrants in the 1920s. Another was Chinese immigrants. And the third was European Russian Jews. They were to choose among these groups to write a five-paragraph essay. [I want the class to think of] writing as way to get your voice out in the world. It was really powerful about what they said regarding the particular history they chose to study. And some of them referenced their own family history: "This is just like my family", they said.

SOCORRO: I base it on my vision of the world. We are all special as we were meant to be. Life is a gift. [We need] caring and love so that we can all be all that we can be. And for each of us to define what we want to be. And so taken that, I listen to what needs to done as far as the standards are concerned. And then I ask the children what they are interested in.

FAITH: We do a constitution study in which [try to combine] the ideal together with the reality. They [students] just cannot understand how we could have this constitution and have slavery or have this constitution and not allow women to vote. It is so fascinating and in the Instructional Conversation (IC) is where you can see that. It's just they are trying to put the ideal together with the reality. And they're so intelligent. We don't give 4th and 5th graders the credit they deserve. What they can figure out and understand is pretty amazing. Plus they bring their background into it. That's one of the reasons why the ICs are so powerful and relevant to them because they guide them with their questions.

ESPERANZA: I always start with what they know. I always infuse my curriculum with the knowledge the kids bring to school. It begins and it ends with them. In my classroom, you are going to see a lot of the kids' culture reflected, but you are also going to see real mainstream American reflected there because I think that our kids have to have that. Because otherwise they are dead in the water.

These brief explanations offer only a glimpse into the work of these teachers. Their instructional program came as a result of years of work on a curriculum that assisted their students in understanding the pernicious ways racism altered social relations. The upper grade CT made a particular effort to assist students in understanding how economies were related to the subjugation of minority people. Generally, however, their instruction revealed a combination of using student knowledge as one foundation for instruction and carefully designed lessons in equity pedagogy as

⁵Although Proposition 227 in California legislatively erased bilingual education in the state, schools may still apply for a waiver to conduct bilingual or two-way immersion programs.

another. My observations in two of the CTs' classrooms corroborated their descriptions. And although a complete treatment of the curriculum is beyond the scale and scope of this article, these brief descriptions should be an indication of a larger vision, one that worked on ST knowledge development as well, the focus of this research.

I should also note that all but one CT specifically commented that her own success in equity pedagogy was a work in progress and could never be fully complete. Each admitted some success in preparing STs who understood and could implement multi-cultural/equity pedagogy, but they were also clear in pointing out their own remaining challenges. To wit, each CT (including the 25-year veteran) reported that creating a pedagogy that both advances academic skills and connects students to their culture is their greatest professional challenge. Nevertheless, each believed in the importance of assisting STs towards this goal, even if the time they spent supervising STs was insufficient to ensure expert skill. Esperanza shared this theme:

It is all individualized. It's all the pieces of the teaching practice. You know, I've been teaching for 25 years, and I still don't have it all understood. Just being able to put all those pieces in place. It's so layered.

4. Results

Analyzing the results of the interview data was particularly challenging. The interview topics ranged over several compelling topics as the teachers took care to describe not only how they came to engage in their pedagogy but also how their own background and preparation had produced it.

However, when the data analysis was sharpened to focus primarily on the skills of STs, three primary themes emerged.

Maintaining high standards/caring paradox: Each of the CTs reported that their STs commonly had problems distinguishing between demanding high quality work from the students and recognizing the economic and educational challenges that the students faced. One CT was particularly cogent in representing this theme:

SOCORRO: I know that any people who are vulnerable... if you do too much for them they will say, "Oh, okay, somebody else will do this for me." I tell them that the kids are doing so much for each other that when you [i.e., the ST]

come in beginning to do too much for them, they just go *incapacitado* (limp). And when I begin to call them on it, they get the sense that I am being too mean because there is a myth about *Mexicanos* being too harsh on other *Mexicanos*. I have always said, "Paint this kid a different colour and what would you do? Would you do the same thing to that child?"

This comment was, of course, made by one of the Mexican-American CTs, who had experienced this attitude among her STs, irrespective of their ethnicity.

It is not uncommon, of course, for STs to be challenged by a balance between genuinely friendly relations with students and the maintenance of high standards for both academic work and behavior (a challenge that is often described as failing in the area of classroom management or discipline), but these CTs addressed this theme with a much larger social context.

As this theme emerged in the data, I wondered if the CTs had noticed differences between their ST of color, particularly those who are Mexican-American. Surprisingly, none of the CTs reported that being of color or bilingual seemed to alter this challenge.

Another CT had noticed this same difficulty among STs—the inability to distinguish between high expectations and caring—and shared with me, in no uncertain terms, the same language she reported using with her ST.

HOPE: STs are less likely to give strict limits, strict consequences, have high expectations, which is actually a huge disservice. [Teachers must be able to say] this is what I want, and you are going to do it. They sometimes perceive of that as being the big white "meanie." But we can't allow the system to dumb down instruction because they are poor impoverished kids. Screw that.

This finding corroborates Thompson's (2002) conclusion that many beginning teachers tend to develop curricula and expectations for low-income students of color that underestimate their academic capacities.

Another one of the CTs reflected this view, reporting that STs often "think that what these kids need is more love" (Socorro). Even as she is careful to point out to her STs that her students did need to be loved, she argued that many STs misunderstood what that meant. She then related

her own experience as a Mexican-American parent, recalling telling her son's teachers, "You teach them, and I'll love them". More importantly, she widened the scope of this sentiment when speaking to her STs and suggested that her attitude was similar to many of the parents at the school. The families at the school, she shared, are typically two-parent households, with the support of grandparents and other relatives. They are poor, she admits, but the children are generally well adjusted, cared for, and loved. Therefore, she argued that STs are quite wrong in assuming that additional love and caring are needed to improve the children's educational experiences.

Stone's (1981) visionary book, *The Education of the Black Child in Britain: The Myth of Multiracial Education* underscores this point, suggesting that promoting the self-concept of students of color (a lesser type of "love" I would argue) in place of academic standards "becomes a way of evading the real, and uncomfortable, issues of class and privilege in our society" (p. 8). One cannot know for certain that the STs who worked with Socorro and the other CTs in this study were displacing the uncomfortable issues of race and class with a focus on student self-esteem, but their attention on caring for the children prior to considering their academic needs is noteworthy.

In a related point, another CT suggested that ST "can get real idealistic", which is, of course, not an uncommon criticism of ST working in any context. But their criticism was more to a point than typical. Three CTs reported frustration with university coursework that seems to discourage skills practice (e.g., word recognition and letter-sound exercises, mathematics facts and drills) STs, they argued, often entered the classroom with the view that all skill instruction was a way of being "mean" to the kids. It took months, one CT lamented, to convince her STs that "Drill and fill is different than drill and kill".

Hope, who taught in the upper grades, was even more unambiguous about ST and their propensity to mistake high standards for a lack of caring.

HOPE: They often approach the students in my class as "quaint impoverishment." They look at the students and think that maybe the remediation to this is about a cookie. The idea that charity with love is what the oppressed need.

She then went even further, exasperated over her frustration that "STs can make themselves feel good by doing something charitable".

Yet in spite of their early unbalance between high expectations and caring for children of color, the CTs reported that nearly all STs came to understand the importance of both.

Instructional conversations: The second major finding suggested a more specific challenge faced by the STs. Because the school had spent great time and energy developing a culturally responsive curriculum, their version of equity pedagogy included IC as a primary element in connecting student culture to school knowledge (cf. Gallimore & Goldenberg, 1992). Three of the five CTs (generally those who taught the upper grades) interviewed indicated that ST faced great difficulty conducting the IC portion of the curriculum. Each of the CTs relied on IC at a particular stage of their social studies units. They reported that their STs faced challenges in building on student input during the lesson itself. The STs lacked a deep understanding of the lives of the students; consequently, they often failed to make connections between the topic at hand and student comments.

In particular, the STs were challenged, it seems, by (a) their desire to dominate the IC and (b) their inability to recognize when the students were using their own culture to connect with the content, and to pursue that line of thought. One of the upper grade teachers was clear on this point.

FAITH: This is probably the most successful and the most difficult part: leading the IC. They really enjoy that, partially because they can do it four times, the same one four times. I mean the same topic. We will have 4–5 groups of kids that will go through it so they can refine their skill and so that's really helpful, I think. Because the first time it might be a little difficult or they might not, like if we are using the social studies text for instance, they might not know that this phrase is really confusing to the kids or the kids don't know this word, so that by the time they have done it the fifth time, they are right there. So that's been very helpful for them. And also on a small scale it's much easier to teach a small group and have the other teacher be managing the rest of the class. Just logistically it's been the management has allowed them to get into the deeper, more difficult parts of the conversation where they are trying to pull out the views and the information from the kids.

Another one of the CTs connected the IC portion of the lesson to the challenge of recognizing student culture.

CARIDAD: STs must ask, “What do the children bring [to the lesson]?”, and they have to learn to value their knowledge. Especially when you are having IC. It’s hard because the students will come up with things that are tangential to the topic, from where the teacher wants to go. IC are a very refined form of teaching. It’s hard to follow and then see where they are coming from and where they are leading to. It’s both their lack of familiarity with IC and the challenge of not understanding culture. It’s not knowing even where that question is coming from, that cultural gap. She [a particular student teacher] couldn’t take the lesson in the direction the kids were leading. She couldn’t make the connection.”

Finally, one of the CT put it even more plainly.

FAITH: It’s kind of hard to see that your own racism and background can influence how you lead a conversation. They [STs] want to talk too much.

The overarching problem of diffusing and diversifying the sources of knowledge presented problems for the lower grade STs as well, illustrated by the following comment made by one of the first-grade CTs:

SOCORRO: I really believe that we are in the classroom to be both teachers and learners. And I’m not “ichiban” in this classroom. I’m only number one when it comes to crises and that kind of stuff. So when the child needs an answer, I will say, go ask Juan. And so they know that everyone and everything in the class is a resource. STs come in and when I begin to direct them in that way, it’s like “What about me? What about my role? Aren’t I the teacher? Who is supposed to be teaching these kids?”

The fact that STs had difficulty in implementing IC is not all that surprising; after all, other researchers (e.g., Bean, 1997) found that IC challenged even experienced teachers who shared a common ethnic background with their students. What is unique about the CTs’ comments are the contours of the problems. General classroom management, for instance, did not come up as a challenge for their

STs. It was more about the failure to build on the cultural knowledge the students brought to the IC.

Relationship to student culture. The third theme the CTs developed was the degree to which the STs came to understand the wider cultural background of the students, with a particular emphasis on the manner in which STs understood parents at Las Lomas.

Research has demonstrated that working with parents is a challenge nearly all beginning teachers face (Meister & Melnick, 2003), but the need to understand the role of parents often presented a particular challenge to the STs in this context.

In spite of this fact, the CTs did not shield their STs from the challenges, even though they had high expectations for the teacher’s role in working with parents. One CT, in response to question about how she worked with parents who may not participate in their child’s schooling, reported:

ESPERANZA: I don’t let them get there, Kip. I have collaboration meetings with my parents. Six to seven of them at a time. Parents are standard bearers. We are partners. I make them a promise: This is what I’m going to do, this is what you are going to do. I guarantee that if you work with me, if you guarantee that you are going to come to these meetings, in equal partnership. I guarantee them that if they work with me, that their child will be reading at or above the first-grade level by the end of the year.

What is most interesting about her comments is both the emphasis she places on partnering and the seemingly contradictory demands she makes on parents. While she argues that parents are partners, she also makes clear who is making the decisions (“This is what I’m going to do, and this is what you are going to do”). She is certainly partnering with the parents in the education of their children, but she is not necessarily inviting them for their input. An earlier study found a similar phenomenon in which experienced Latino teachers made demands of the parents, who accepted the uneven power balance because of the deep trust they held for teachers (Ensle, 1996).

With regard to her STs, Esperanza related that many had trouble relating to this somewhat authoritative style in dealing with parents. They failed to understand why she took such a different approach from what they had heard and read about at the university, in which a “partner” approach was mandatory. She admitted that many STs leave

her tutelage still quite unsure that they can manage such a relationship with parents.

This lack of confidence stems from the STs and their new and unfamiliar role in the community. Esperanza argued that she could manage such a relationship because the parents knew and trusted her. Although she understood this challenge she believed that her STs must someday learn her methods.

In addition to challenges in developing a relationship with parents, this theme also revealed several challenges that simply seemed to relate to culture in general. Hope, in particular, suggested that her STs were challenged to reconcile the value she placed on the students' cultural heritage and her capacity to treat them as individuals.

HOPE: It's incumbent upon me as the CT to broaden their interests, and broaden their understanding of the kids. I also find it hard to help them to understand that we do not treat all students equally. Equity in teaching is doing whatever it takes to get everyone to the same place. I spend a lot of time talking about my students and their lives. I want you to understand that this is why I do this with Ramon and why I don't do it with everybody else.

Fatih, too, was often troubled by her STs' inability to learn culture. They always began their lessons on what they would say. She implored them that although planning is critical, a teacher must "step back and really let the kids talk. It's okay to sit there for a moment and not say anything." Only the best of her STs learned to balance student culture and their teaching.

One of the CTs further complicated the student culture her STs must learn by altering her normal holiday celebrations out of respect for a few students in her class. Listening to her story, it is no wonder her ST at the time appeared confused by her decision. Because the school is largely Mexican-American, the staff made a point of celebrating *Día de los Muertos*. One year, however, Socorro reported a conflict:

SOCORRO: I also have some very religious Christian families who are very wonderful and caring and they have their children learning Spanish here in the classroom. But when they asked me what we were going to do for Halloween. And then we had parent conferences and they were thinking of pulling their children

out; they didn't want the costume parade. They don't mind the children doing the cute Halloween stuff. But no skeletons. So then she [a parent] asked about *Día de los Muertos* more in detail, and I could sense that they didn't want that to happen. And so I said to her I have no need to do it. And I said this might be a wonderful time to show, to do a whole lesson on being *aliados* (allies) to each other. We agreed (the children and I) that we were going to be allies to these five children. We had play centers. The children saw it as fun, not as a punishment.

When STs learn about the importance of creating culturally relevant curricula, one might expect them to understand that the *Día de los Muertos* festival would fit this view exactly. Yet this CT seemed to cater to a small group of students, complicating the entire notion of multicultural education.

As this question of gaining culture grew in prominence and the CTs began to reflect more deeply on it, Esperanza, nearing the end of her second interview, paused, sighed, and said:

ESPERANZA: The best student teachers that I have seen have become bicultural, multicultural. Not only do they learn the language, they learn about the traditions... It's not something you are doing because you want children to learn, it is something you do because you want to.

This quote, among all the others, seemed to best represent what the CTs wanted to convey to their STs: that learning the culture of the students, a mandatory task in their view, was not something you could take on as though you were learning how to design a lesson. For the CTs, this is not a *professional* undertaking; it is a *moral* one.

5. Discussion

The expert CTs in this study found their protégées troubled, at least initially, by the balance between holding high expectations and caring for the largely poor, Mexican-American children at Los Lomas. STs also were challenged to conduct IC with students whose culture was often unfamiliar to them. And finally, the larger task of learning/acquiring culture seemed to be most confusing. The CTs suggested that STs sometimes failed to understand that acquiring a new culture was far more than simply "linking" new lessons to prior knowledge.

These findings point to several issues teacher educators may wish to consider, yet the study is not without limitations. I have already suggested one, but others come to mind. The most obvious shortcoming is that I did not talk with STs for their views on what *they* learned (or failed to learn) from their CTs. I agree that interviews with ST may yield compelling data regarding their experiences with their CTs, but I did not interview the STs for two reasons. First, I did not want the CTs to focus on any particular ST. Instead, I wanted them to consider their broad experiences with STs and think about their general success. Even when I asked them directly to compare their STs of color with those who are white, they rarely mentioned a difference. I also wanted them to speak as candidly as possible regarding their STs' acquisition of multicultural education/equity pedagogy. Had I told them that I was going to speak later with some of their former STs, I believe that they might have been troubled by the juxtaposition of their intentions as CTs and what STs believed they learned from them. (In fact, I told them explicitly that I would not be talking to any STs regarding this study.)

Another limitation turns on the study's lack of generalizability, and I freely admit that this sample of CTs is not at all representative. Recall that these teachers had the benefit of direct and intense scrutiny of their curricula over several years, partly the consequence of having a full-time curriculum director on-site who helped coordinate readings, speakers and curriculum development conferences, all oriented towards developing more equitable and multicultural instruction.

On the other hand, it would not be very productive to talk with CTs who had made no efforts to alter their curriculum and instruction on the basis of their students' ethnicity and class. By interviewing these CTs, I was guaranteed thoughtful and comprehensive responses to questions about STs' success in learning to teach equitably. Perhaps these CTs offer teacher educators a look at what *could* be the case, a goal to work toward rather than the common experience.

With these limitations in mind, I believe that the results have relevance for university-based teacher educators. The first question is whether we find coherence between what these CTs promote and the focus of university-based courses on multicultural education. Like all learners, teacher education students look for coherence in what they are

learning.⁶ They actively seek out information that triangulates for them, input that squares with their experiences, and, like their in-service counterparts, they search primarily for “what works”.

Based on my own teaching and a review of the general texts and syllabi in the field, I suggest that these CTs present as strong a moral case for equity pedagogy as I have heard. On this score, it would be hard to find a contradiction between these CTs and university-based teacher educators. This finding supports Grant's (1994) hypothesis; that is, a truly multicultural teacher education program must place STs with expert CTs to achieve genuine reform. The data seem to suggest that not only were the STs gaining knowledge and skills but that the CTs made very clear the larger social goals of equity pedagogy.

But beyond a general moral obligation to equity pedagogy, the CTs in this study taught their STs using strategies quite different than what one finds in university-based courses. And in many ways, the CTs were carrying out their traditional role: they were sharing local methods and strategies, coaching their STs towards skill in working with a specific set of children, helping them to understand a specific curriculum in a particular context. Except that instead of general strategies, they were working towards competence—even excellence—in multicultural education. Again, the importance of the CTs' local knowledge is crucial (cf. Clarke & Jarvis-Selinger, 2005).

Unlike traditional courses in multicultural education, the CTs could draw their STs' attention to case of the classroom, the very place that the STs wanted to be successful. In contrast to a generalized approach, the STs learned how to conduct IC via direct modeling and coaching. The CTs also demonstrated nuances to equity pedagogy that a more generalized approach could never do. For instance, when Socorro decided to skip her *Día de Los Muertos* celebration in response to a concern by a minority of her parents, one can understand why. She mentioned that her ST at the time understood exactly why she took such action, and I have no reason to doubt her.

⁶Sometimes in teacher education we want our students to face compelling contradictions (cf. McFalls & Cobb-Roberts, 2001), but contradictions between university instructors and CTs are not of this variety. Regardless of the indeterminacies of equity pedagogy, Ritchie et al. (2000) suggested that STs can develop wisdom from CTs through observation, inquiry, reflection and practice within a community where members are prepared for “positioning” and shifting power relations.

Given the depth and immediacy of the knowledge these CTs shared with their STs, could university teacher education still have a role to play? I have argued that university coursework can attend to the generalizable skills new teachers miss by spending the bulk of their time in one or two teachers' classrooms. Yet it seems that the skills, strategies, curricula, and moral imperatives the CTs were sharing would transfer to other student populations. Moreover, given the CTs' success in promoting equity pedagogy, teacher educators might ask that if all STs could be placed in classrooms like these, what could the university course offer them?

Perhaps this is the point: If we could promise that all STs would have the quality of experience these CTs provide, then university courses in multicultural education or equity pedagogy might become redundant. But not all STs have such a classroom placement, and thus we carry on, imparting our moral and pedagogical advice about the importance of meeting the needs of all diverse students when the STs are typically more interested in what to teach tomorrow. Tensions between the moral and the technical, the specific and the generalizable, the procedural and the novel will vex us always.

At this point, I believe that many university teacher educators might be willing to face a difficult question: If I were successful in developing or finding CTs who can do what these CTs did, would I relinquish my program's course or courses in multicultural education? If the answer is *no*, we risk redundancy or irrelevance. If it is *yes*, then it might be wise to consider how we can take advantage of our special and privileged position in the university. Not tethered to a single school or even school system, we can work across systems, even nations, to share what we have learned in these varied contexts and make those contexts meaningful for our students. At the least we can help set the context for the specific, technical, procedural and, yes, moral knowledge they will gain from an expert CTs. And we should consider how much time they need to spend at the university, remembering that CTs are generally pleased when STs are in the classroom more than in university courses (Kahn, 1999). Might these practices gather into the next wave of reform in teacher education?

In spite of the promises found in curricular and policy reforms, teacher education in the US and Europe now faces an uncertain future (see Furlong, Barton, Miles, Whiting, & Whitty, 2000 for a review of challenges faced in the UK). Teaching internships

and alternative licensing, both of which largely detour teacher education, are finding favor as effective ways to advance the educational achievement of low-income students of color in the USA (Hawk, Burke, Brent, Warren, & McCarley, 1998). Consequently, teacher education must reappraise its efforts to prepare teachers for diverse students or face irrelevancy.

Controversy over the causes of the achievement gap between the dominant culture and those who are marginalized is most pronounced in the USA, but this is probably only because of its role as a well-developed democracy. And although we might not all agree that a US-style democracy is worth exporting, democracies are now flourishing in some unlikely places. For instance, Clarkson (2005) describes the redesign of a teacher education program in Macedonia where ethnic tensions rose to the surface more than once. Democracies depend largely on the public (i.e., free or very low-cost) schools to create an equitable society; therefore, who is privileged to teach and how they are prepared features prominently in any democratic effort. We must wonder, however, if formal professional schoolteacher education is a necessary ingredient.

Teacher educators must now justify their role as never before. The argument that teaching is best learned through "practical" experiences continues to gain ground. If university-based teacher educators are once again undermined by the practice context, this time on the multicultural education score, what is left? Time alone will tell whether multicultural education will be added to the list of skills "best" learned during student teaching.

The CTs' fate in this story is more certain. Soon after I completed the interviews, Las Lomas came under intense pressure to raise its standardized test scores, which had been both very low and very flat over the past several years. Recently, the district leadership, in response to both the school board and the state, has enforced a "scripted" curriculum in literacy. The curriculum director, so important to the school's development, retired early to avoid enforcing the new materials. STs placed at the school now ask why they learn about so many diverse literacy practices at the university when all they are asked to do is follow the textbook's instructions. Perhaps all teacher educators, university and school-based alike, have found a new moral purpose.

Appendix A. Interview Protocol

1. How do you, when you are teaching, engage in equity pedagogy?
2. What do you believe have been your successes in engaging in this form of teaching?
3. What do you believe have been your challenges in this area?
4. What initial strengths do ST seem to have in equity pedagogy?
5. What initial weaknesses do they seem to have in equity pedagogy?
6. What are the primary goals for your ST in the area of equity pedagogy?
7. What do they seem to have the most trouble with?
8. What do you seem to be most successful in imparting and why?

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