

## Self- and Sociocultural Representations of Future Teachers

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*The purpose of this study is the analysis of the reflective journals of university preservice teachers as they engaged in their first experience of observing and teaching in a classroom. The journals are analyzed from the perspectives of self- and sociocultural representations of the preservice teachers (as well as how they perceive the self- and sociocultural representations of students and cooperating classroom teachers) as they examine pedagogical theory in relation to classroom practice. Themes emerging from analysis of the journals include gender issues, the teaching styles of cooperating teachers, and discipline and classroom management. Finally we utilize Paolo Freire's concept of "conscientization" as a tool for analyzing the variety of preservice teacher self- and sociocultural representations evidenced in their journals.*

Much has been written about the teacher as a reflective professional and the need to design programs to encourage reflection in teacher education. In the past it was thought that mastering technical skills was the primary goal of classes in teacher education. However, the development of reflective habits in preservice teachers is an equally important goal connecting what the preservice teacher learns from their own student experiences from their course work and what the preservice teacher sees being practiced in the classroom. It is important that future teachers learn important reflective strategies in their courses at the university and take those strategies with them into their classrooms. In this way the habit of self-reflectivity and critical thinking can be developed (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1989).

Reflective journaling encourages both teacher education students and teachers to listen to and honor the journal writers' voices when reading their journals. Further, it provides an opportunity for preservice teachers to confront the assumptions and beliefs that underlie their practices through writing in their journals (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992). Prior experience in school is a potential resource for preservice teacher reflection. Reflection on prior experience is like looking

at a picture book filled with memories about how teachers have acted in the past and how the beginning teacher might act in the classroom (Aitken & Mildon, in Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992).

The reading of reflective journals allows professors to learn from their education students what aspects of the class they find useful, appropriate, or detrimental to teacher development. Journals allow preservice teachers to communicate their impressions of what they see practiced in the classroom and how they see themselves in the context of their own budding practice. Preservice teachers often make note of times when they see both their "good teacher" and their "bad teacher" from their past experiences as they interpret their observations. In this way professors may offer students an opportunity for therapeutic self-knowledge and a way to reflect on the social structures of knowledge and practice (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). Finally, reflective journaling allows students to choose ways of representing themselves both personally and socially. Therefore, preservice teachers can reflect not only on the mastery of technical skills, but also on their personal feelings and thoughts about their experiences and about how they will

represent themselves in the social context of schooling and the broader community.

### **Background**

Preservice teachers in a required general methods course were required to keep a reflective journal of their first experiences observing and teaching in a classroom. All of the preservice teachers in the study are in their third (of four) year of training at the university; their field experience occurred primarily in an urban setting. Of the 60 students in two sections of the course, 25 agreed to be participants in the study. Approximately two-thirds of the students in the study are female and one third are male. Most live in the “inner ring” suburbs (those in direct proximity to the city). Most of the students in the study (and in the course) are “returning students” (those taking a break from their educational careers or from other professions). Participants are predominantly Caucasian and primarily English speaking.

The secondary methods class is a prerequisite for the content area classes that preservice teachers take in the College of Education. It is the responsibility of the course instructor to teach the class and to observe the preservice teachers in their school placements. The goals of the class are to develop reflective practice, to develop knowledge of “best practice,” to teach models of classroom management and models of teaching and learning, to help students develop a personal teaching philosophy, to give students an opportunity to reflect on how they were taught, to give students an opportunity to “micro-teach” with their peers, and to give students a place to voice their experiences, ideas, and opinions.

Assignments for the class include developing a personal teaching philosophy, writing a pre-teaching classroom management plan, unit and lesson planning, making a personal inventory of the students in their placement class (e.g. age, ethnicity, and economic background), keeping a reflective

journal of their experiences, connecting planning and practice to national, state, and local standards, teaching one unit at their placement, writing a post-teaching management plan, and presenting a professional portfolio. Readings include a text on creating unit and lesson plans, constructivist theory, questioning theory, and a classroom management text on implementing “democratic discipline.”

Each preservice teacher submitted two reflective journals of no predetermined length per semester to her or his professor via e-mail. The journals provide a space for both introspection and outward manifestations of his or her thoughts.

### **Rationale**

In our roles as professors of education we work in both the public school arena as well as the university classroom, and we rely on our experiences as teachers as well as on the literature in the field to instruct our students in what we regard as “best practice.” As we read the students’ reflective journals we saw repeated instances of dissonance and assonance among three aspects of their experience: what they saw happening in the classroom, what they remember from their own educational experiences, and what they had been taught at the university. As we read the journals of these inexperienced teachers, we saw them struggling to form their self- and sociocultural representations as teachers by comparing what they observed in the classroom in light of their prior experiences and what they had learned at the university.

It is perfectly clear that the knowledge culled from prior experience in school is there as a potential resource to be drawn upon by all who face the demands of teaching. This knowledge provides a set of norms for the would-be teacher, a veritable scrapbook of memories about how teachers in the past have acted and, therefore, how one might oneself act in a similar situation (Aitken & Mildon, 1992). By asking

preservice teachers to reflect on specific teachers from their own educational past who had an impact on them, good and bad, the preservice teachers acquired a structure for identifying the teacher as one who helps with finding new ways of thinking and an appreciation of the world (Cohen, 1991). As their observations of classroom teachers progressed, respondents often saw in their cooperating teachers ways in which they did, as well as did not, want to represent themselves.

### **Rationale for Narrative Research**

Narrative research is a form of empirical qualitative research that generally refers to any data that are in the form of natural speech. The purpose of narrative research is to show human existence in action in a particular context. Human action emerges through the interactions of a person's previous learning and experiences, present situated interests, and proposed goals and purposes (Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995).

This study is a description and analysis of preservice teachers' reflective journals that refer to preservice teachers' self- and sociocultural representations. Our methodology was based on inductive data analysis. We depended completely on quotes from the participants' narratives to support our choice of themes to examine. Themes emerged from the preservice teachers' journals either from repeated use from several participants or from ways that the themes are stated that make them seem significant to us. The similarities are prescribed by the cultural context of the students' experiences both inside and outside the university classroom. We also looked at the differences among the ways in which students describe their experiences, make meaning of their experiences, represent their experiences socially and culturally, and how they choose to represent themselves within their sociocultural milieu. Therefore, we looked for categories, collected provisory data, organized and classified

data, and analyzed from a particular to a general category. The interpretation yielded many themes, from which we chose to study three: gender issues, teacher styles, and discipline and classroom management.

### **Theoretical Framework: Self- and Sociocultural Representation**

While self-representation refers mostly to a mental map or a sort of individual cognitive system which is a fraction of the context of this system (Mannoni, 1998), sociocultural representation organizes the symbolic process in relation to a social interaction (Doise, 1990). In other words, self-representation refers to the self while sociocultural representation connects to a collective representation that is shared with someone else. According to Jodelet (1989, 1993), social representations are first of all transmitted, socially shared, and built through experiences, knowledge, and way of thinking which can be "out there" or learned. Secondly, social representations aim to organize practices, actions, and way of communicating. Thirdly, social representations contribute to establish the vision of participation to a social and cultural community (Carignan, 1996).

In fact, representation is a form of social knowledge that allows us to decode, think about, and understand events in our daily life. This knowledge of common sense has to be built from our experiences and also from information, knowledge, patterns, and beliefs received and transmitted through heritage, tradition, education, and social communication. Social representations are also related to the notion of critical thinking oriented through communication, comprehension, and mastery of social environment. Furthermore, the social imprint of content and processes of representation refers to the conditions and contexts in which representations circulate and emerge to the functions they serve.

This concern should have an impact on education in which the tendency is usually focused on cognitive representations as the primary mode for an individual to organize her/his thinking (Legendre, 1993). Representations are also one of the most important aspects influencing teachers' decisions, managing classrooms, and solving problems. Brophy and Good (1974), as well as Rosenthal and Jacobson (1968) have examined the role of the teacher's expectations on the students' behaviors.

In addition, teachers' representations influence not only students' behaviors and attitudes but have an impact on different dimensions of classroom life. Representation is a sort of referential or a network of categories which plays the role of a norm, gives a direction, justifies actions, but also gives an opportunity to transform, reorganize, and restructure one's environment (Dubet, 1994). Future teachers' visions or teaching conceptions are "present" before their teacher education and their social representations remain in their professional activities. The traces that remain are often static and may be related to the notion of stereotyping. Allport (1979) says that a stereotype is a belief that we associate with a category that justifies our conduct toward that category.

On the other hand, representations that are still dynamic should be considered like the core of a broader system: *le noyau central* (or core) of a complex and larger system of values and references (Mannoni, 1998). Sociocultural representations include shared knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, realizations and values that are ready to structure the action. Sociocultural representation is more or less the elaboration of an object by a group of people that establishes some modalities for further action and communication (Moscovici & Abric, 1984; Abric, 1994).

Through their reflective journals, what preservice teachers expressed as their lived experiences can reveal what theory means in

practice. In other words, their life histories such as those lived in their field experience are person-centered, the voice of a person: a sort of self-story that represents a singular strength.

Although self-representations refer to a teacher as an individual, in our study it refers to individual, professional, and collective references to the self. The interrelation and the interinfluence of self-representation or a subjective "self image" of the self (Volodarskaia, 2001), professional and sociocultural, admits a constant comparison between teachers in a group, and teacher as self (a sort of triangulation of meaning). These future teachers themselves, through their reflective journals, define, propose, and construct the sense of their "contextualized" self and sociocultural representations that are ready to be used within their praxis. For example, a future teacher can define "her" sense of being a creative teacher in "her" inner-city elementary school, but "her" sociocultural representation will connect to a collective representation that will be shared with some other teachers.

## Findings

### *A Search for Meaning*

Preservice teachers sent their journals from the field during a time when there were no class meetings and no discussions regarding the content of their journals. The researchers' perspectives were formed after preservice teachers created and transmitted the journals to the professor. From our perspective we observed three levels of novice teacher practices and reflections: what, how, and why.

*What.* The first level is the "what." At the first level most students described the activities and events in the classroom with little or no reflection: on the surface without analysis. For example, students are rather comfortable in describing situations in the

classroom even if they feel uncomfortable in the setting: "Of the 18 students in the class, only six focused on the teacher throughout his discussion." They show little reluctance in explaining their feelings: "All in all, I was uncomfortable with the whole experience, with a few small exceptions. I don't think that I am comfortable with this particular class."

*How.* The second level represents preservice teachers' information sharing and descriptions of the classroom and reflections in the form of suggestions: "If this were my classroom, I would actually start giving these students more freedom. In my opinion, this would challenge them further." At this level the student provides only a little information and very little self-reflectivity. "The walls are covered with maps and famous historical figures, of which are all men. ... but I feel that there should be famous women also on the walls." In fact, this level focuses on description and reflections complaining about cooperative teacher methods and practices. At this level, student teachers suggest some different practices and strategies: this is the level of the "how."

*Why.* The third level is the level of the "why." It refers to description of classroom events, reflection on events, confrontation of events, and construction of new strategies and methods for changing the nature and the meaning of activities in the classroom (Smyth, 1989). This is a level where change happens and where interaction between reflection and action occurs. For example, one preservice teacher raised an important principle for inquiry: "One hypothetical principle I noted while observing the classroom was: the more the groups are comprised of friends, the more work is accomplished."

From our observation few student teachers reached this last level of understanding. The vast majority of our students' representations of their field experience

stayed within the levels one and two described above. The student teachers try to find their own ways or singular voices between the representation they internalized of being a good teacher and the one of being a bad teacher (from the past and the present) as well as the responsibility it implies. They are also confronted with teaching models they learned at the university and ones they experience with their cooperating teacher. They have to find their own ways to deal with contradictions between discourse at the university and practice in the classroom while at the same time understanding past and current experiences.

Within their journals preservice teachers focused on three primary themes. The first theme was gender issues. This theme focused on the differential treatment of males and females in classrooms, teacher expectations relative to gender, and sociocultural representations of gender. The second theme was the cooperating teachers' teaching styles. This theme examines preservice students' comments on the teacher as a caring person, a creative teacher and preservice teachers perceived competency of the cooperating teacher. The third theme was discipline and classroom management. Within this theme the preservice teachers reflect critically on the cooperating teachers' management styles.

### *Gender Issues*

We consider gender issues in the traditional sense of the differences that are perceived in the actions of and the treatment of females and males within the classroom. In their journals preservice teachers were concerned primarily with students' attitudes and behaviors toward one another and with what they considered to be inequities in the educational setting. Concerning boys' and girls' attitudes/behaviors, one preservice teacher notes:

The way the students were seated seemed to reflect pairs or groups of friends. The boys were much less well-behaved than the girls. When asked to speak some of the boys blushed while their friends made fun of them. Boys seem to be at a very awkward time in ninth grade: too cool to be studious, too boyish to be cool.

Another preservice teacher recalls stereotyped categories, which is an attitude of categorization of molding and normalizing a group's characteristics and behaviors. From this perspective, as with that of Allport (1979), a stereotype defines categories created by an exaggerated belief in order to justify our conduct in relation to the category. That preservice teacher said,

We often hear that girls do not like science. This classroom can be proof against this statement. The girls seem to have an underlying interest in the subject, but need to be taught in a way that fits their learning style. To be taught in a way that stimulates them would allow them to fully enjoy a subject in which they are often accused of not being able to excel.

The journals also noted instances of gender injustice and inequity.

I found the activity to be very well organized; after all, the teacher I'm working with has been teaching since the mid-70s. Although if I were to make any changes I'd find it more meaningful to make the boys feel injustice rather than the girls. My reason behind this is that it seems the girls in this country already face a great deal of injustice and bias in everyday life, whether they are aware of it or not and it would only be appropriate if the boys got to experience this inequality first hand. This also incorporates my idea of making stu-

dents, in this case the male students, upstanding people in society.

Another preservice teacher said, "I was upset by the snickering, sneering boys. I thought that they were unnecessarily rude. Am I too idealistic?"

One preservice teacher noted an instance of gender and null curriculum,

The walls are covered with maps and famous historical figures, which are all men. The men are from different backgrounds (African Americans, Caucasians, and Native American Indians, etc.) but I feel that there should be famous females also on the walls to give the female students somebody to look up to and respect.

### *Cooperating Teachers' Teaching Styles*

There are varieties of cooperating teachers' teaching styles observed by student teachers. We see excerpts on a caring teacher, a creative teacher, and a competent teacher.

*About being a caring teacher.* A caring teacher is strongly concerned: a caring teacher is concerned about students. This teacher is person-centered or student-centered because she/he seeks some deeper personal understanding as well as favors introspection, reflective feeling, and thinking. From this perspective, a student teacher who observed a cooperating teacher noted that she "felt a huge sense of responsibility taking the role of the teacher." She explained how she will play her role: "I was strongly concerned about making sure that the students understood" and "I felt the responsibility of being there in advance in order to have the materials for the class ready." We agree with Louden (1991) when he points out that reflective teachers are able to solve problems professionally and to criticize their own practices. According to

this perspective, a preservice teacher wrote that he was reflecting about the impact of his pedagogical strategies: "that I was concise, loud enough to be heard, and to articulate well. ... I was able to anticipate almost everything that happened, such as students forgetting their books." He also wants to provide an opportunity for confronting the assumptions and beliefs that underlie his practices. "During all my teaching, I made sure to have an activity to accompany my questions and finished by asking feedback from the students. I feel that it was through the questions and through the activities that my students internalized most of the material taught."

Finally, some preservice teachers reflect not only on the mastery of pedagogical skills but they also encourage their own students to enter into the process of empowerment by the action of being active learners: "I should make sure that students are active in their own learning by assigning them projects."

Student teachers were not only impressed about caring cooperating teachers, but were really inspired by some of their cooperating teachers' imagination and creativity.

*About being a creative teacher.* For preservice teachers a creative, cooperating teacher demonstrates good practice by her/his openness to students' concerns and ways of being imaginative and by using many techniques and approaches. "Her greatest teaching quality is her creativity. Nearly every day she has a new game or a new technique. I have observed the class play bingo, jeopardy, and have a talk show like discussion."

For some preservice teachers, the idea of creativity seems important. However, some fear not being creative enough or not being able to spark their students' interests. These preservice teachers have the impression that focusing on creativity is imperative for the modern teacher because schools are rapidly changing and teachers must think of new

ways to spur their students' desire to learn. "These techniques are fun and they seem to grasp the students' attention. ... [Students] reacted to these activities in a very positive way. ... It certainly says a lot when a teacher can motivate the students to learn, while also allowing them the opportunity to enjoy learning."

*About being a competent teacher.* After having pointed out the importance of being a caring and creative teacher, preservice teachers focused on the importance of being competent in terms of knowing the subject matter very well, conducting toward comfortable relations in the classroom, and using a diversity of approaches. Charlier (1989) suggests that different dimensions affected teachers' representations: among them he focused on the value of content knowledge as well as the equitable relationship between students' autonomy and teacher's control. One preservice teacher said, "I was confident that everything was planned. I definitely think that my lesson went well because of the way I organized it. I felt well prepared and knowledgeable about my topic." Otherwise, they should feel comfortable about the way they organize their classroom. Another preservice teacher said,

I was very comfortable because I knew the name of the students. ... In my classroom setting I will use cooperative learning group projects in order for the students to be active in their learning. By supervising the students very closely I will make sure that each student is engaged and participates in the group projects. I think that I conveyed the information in a way that is conducive to learning.

Finally, teacher styles should consider a diversity of pedagogical approaches. Charlier (1989) argues that the conception and the selection of learning and teaching

strategies are intimately related to the teacher's self-representations. One preservice teacher wrote,

Within a classroom there are many different students with different learning styles and intelligences. Because of this a teacher has to be aware and know each of his/her students. The implication of this is that as teachers we need to be aware of how this information can be utilized in the classroom. This utilization can be used in various forms for many different areas. However, this does require effort and imagination on the teacher's part. There is no right way to implement different learning styles or intelligences into the classroom. But teachers can make extensive use of learning centers, activity stations, group discussion, and alternative practices. That is why we as teachers should be able to recognize these differences and allow our students to celebrate their abilities and help them with their weaknesses.

### **Discipline and Classroom Management**

Student teachers reflect frequently about discipline and classroom management. Before and during their field experience students were assigned reading from a classroom management text. This is how the text defines discipline.

Discipline is the dimension of teaching that addresses student demeanor. Democratic discipline is the activities of school and classroom discipline that operate within a framework that is reflectively defined by the ideal or democracy and ethics. It is humanistic and provides for addressing the worth and dignity of all students through consciously incorporating the basic principles of freedom, equality, and justice across the activities of teaching

and schooling. It promotes students' experiencing the foundational elements of our democracy, including but not limited to due process, equal opportunity, free speech, participation in governance, right to grievance, and inclusion (Hoover & Kindsvatter, 1997, p. 193).

Here are some examples of preservice teachers' reflections on discipline in the classroom. One said,

Of the 18 students in the class, only six focused on the teacher throughout his discussion.

Two students had their heads down for the entire class, one student was taking a test, and the others looked up occasionally while performing various acts (grooming, nails, reading other books). Occasionally, someone would noisily rummage through their book bag, three of the boys thumped rhythms on their desk, while one student began to sing out loud. The six students were the only ones who raised their hands to volunteer their answers to questions, while many of the other students gave their opinion without being called upon and then acted disgruntled if the teacher did not acknowledge their response. However, when called upon by the teacher to give an answer, only two students did not respond—the rest of the students answered correctly or were very close in their thought process to the main idea presented.

We also found a contradiction between discourse and practice. One preservice teacher noted,

Self-discipline is not a high expectation of the schools' faculty and administration. Attempts to apply discipline often fail to achieve the desired results. For example, security was called to

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remove a student to the principal's office, but security insisted the student stay because there was no way to control the student at the office.

Another preservice teacher wrote,

About 40% of the students had not done the reading and several did not even have their books with them to do the vocabulary. Again, today's class was mainly chaotic. As is her/his pattern, (Teacher) began the class by requiring most of the students to stand, due to talking or dress code violations. ... In the other classrooms that I have observed, it takes about five minutes to get the class under control and ready to learn. In this classroom it seems to take the entire period to reach this point.

Another preservice teacher noticed that the teacher was spending much of the class time disciplining the class. As they began to discuss the unit, [the teacher] read aloud from a newspaper article about Egypt. I thought this was a useful and interesting technique. It brought something from today and tied it with the ancient history that the class is learning. While most of the class was on task and listening while she/he read, those who were standing spent most of the time talking and wandering around looking at the wall or out the window. ... Everyone was talking and several people did not have their books. She/he spent about five minutes lecturing them about the responsibility of bringing one's books to class. Those who did not have their books could not do the assignment so they just sat there. I did not think that this was a useful tactic. I would have given them books so that they were not just wasting time sitting in the classroom. ... The teacher spends almost all the time disciplining. The learning process seems to be of less priority than the discipline process in this classroom.

However, allowing students so much time to do assignments does not appear to be as useful as it might. I think it may give students the idea that they never need to turn anything in on time. If they know it will be accepted two weeks later, why would they want to turn it in on the appropriate date? This creates a sort of irresponsibility and lack of accountability for the students.

I am having a hard time finding positive aspects of this particular class. It just does not seem like the students are learning as much as they should be. ... The kids are constantly off task, talking or not paying attention. Despite the fact that the teacher spends most of her time on classroom management, the class is always in a state of chaos. I have no idea how to assess her/his teaching when the class is run in this manner. I am, however, learning about the ways in which I do not want to run my classroom that I think is a very important issue.

I feel so badly for the students who accidentally speak out an answer and are then forced to stand. Meanwhile, all the other students who are standing are not paying any attention to what is going on. In my opinion, they are wasting their education and their mind by standing at the back of the room. ... It seems as if everything they learn is in the book and is included in their homework. There is almost no reinforcement of the readings during class time.

Some preservice teachers took exception to classroom climate and seating arrangements. One noted,

The teacher raised an issue with me this past week that has made me a little concerned when I start teaching her students. She has a seating arrangement where the students who perform well and do work in class sit on one side of the classroom and those who don't do

much work sit on the other. I was baffled by this information because I feel that by putting students in this arrangement she would be more inclined to turn her attention to one side of the room. I thought it would be more beneficial to have the students mixed up and that way those students who do not do much in class might be embarrassed if they saw a classmate seated next to them doing work. I even observed a difference of behavior from the students from particular sides of the room.

I could not help but make a biased conclusion about which side of the class contained the workers and which one did not. I noticed that the teacher stood on the side of the class where the students behaved and rarely walked to the other side of the classroom. The neglected side of the class had students that were busy doing something else or chatting with their neighbors.

It seems that many (if not all) preservice teachers were really concerned about issues of discipline and classroom management in many different ways. However, all of the preservice teachers were critical of management and seating techniques that stereotyped students, marginalized students, and were otherwise seen as unfair or inequitable (Hoover & Kindsvatter, 1997).

### **Interpretation**

These beginning teachers try to reconcile conflicts of philosophy, style, and practice among their memories of their own teachers, what they learn at the university and what they see modeled by their cooperating teacher. Charlier (1989) identifies different dimensions affected by the teachers' representations such as: 1) the value of the content knowledge; 2) the conceptions of students' emotional and social development; 3) the equitable relationship between students' autonomy and teachers' control; 4)

the type of emotional relationship between students and teacher; 5) the conception of learning and teaching strategies.

One attitude that we noted in most (though not all) of the journals was the lack of a sense of the social events and issues that shape the self- and sociocultural representations of students, teachers, administrators, and other members of the larger community that includes the classroom and the actions that are done there. Preservice teachers seemed unable or reluctant to form a self-representation that would "provide a form of therapeutic self-knowledge which will liberate individuals from the irrational compulsions of their individual history through a process of critical self-reflection" (Carr & Kemmis 1986, p. 138). This issue is made even more germane by the fact that these preservice teachers are and will be working in urban schools. They rarely spoke of the social, cultural, and economic complexity of the communities from which their students came and in which they intended to someday work.

In most instances students represented themselves as "scientific" methodologists. They seemed to believe that the ubiquitous pedagogical and management techniques associated with a scientific view of the educational process were all that were required to work with every student in every situation. Even those students who problematized their experience seemed to be focusing on how fixed methodologies and techniques might be slightly modified to suit all students regardless of their cultural identities, social relations, and economic diversities.

The conception of the school seems to be a microcosm by itself. Preservice teachers rarely situate themselves in an historical and societal environment. Their world/environment is a classroom. They do not realize that the field where they teach is a culturally and socially constructed reality. They first have to be able to understand this complex reality before they can see themselves as an active

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and wise reconstructivist teacher. They must see students as active participants in the production of knowledge in the classroom rather than as passive receptacles to be filled with the prescribed knowledge of the teacher and the state (Freire, 1995).

However, when entering their field, preservice teachers realize what cultural dissonance and/or social dissonance mean. It occurs often when white/Caucasian, primarily English speaking, middle class and/or inner-ring suburbanite preservice teachers enter urban schools that are often ethnically diverse and economically disadvantaged. Because of this dissonance and because of lack of reflective analysis, these student teachers have a tendency to look at the situation in terms of problems instead of recognition of cultural differences: individual problems, individual deficiency, and socioeconomic aspects of family deprivation and insufficiencies of all sorts. Reflective and critical thinking are relevant in identifying and describing non-biased schooling and classroom problems, raising appropriate assumptions, and making wise decisions and fair actions. They should be engaged in the process of developing their social consciousness, what Freire (1995) calls critical consciousness. Most often they did not question or analyze these issues.

From one side, they are able to describe positive representations of what it is to be a good teacher even if sometimes they find it difficult to reach. They cite examples of providing equitable opportunity, not allowing gender injustice and inequity, being a caring creative teacher, having fair expectations, being competent and self-confident, being a good time keeper, managing the pace of the lesson, considering diversity of intelligences of their students, being challenging, using positive reinforcement, seeking out relevant pedagogical material, etc.

Conversely, they are able to describe negative representations (what it is to be a bad teacher) which they really want to avoid

such as: insulting students, humiliating them, being a boring teacher, simply disseminating the information, repeatedly managing a chaotic classroom, spending almost all the time disciplining, inequity in the treatment of learning disabled students, negative attitudes and beliefs, irrelevant pedagogical material, inadequate seating arrangements, etc.

While it is easy for preservice teachers to explicitly define sponsoring teachers' positive and negative representations, our analysis points out three different types of representation which emerged from their categories: 1) individual representations refer to student teachers' personal values and teaching philosophies including the representation of the "self"; 2) professional representations refer to teachers' activities in this particular environment as well as teacher styles, discipline/classroom management, and learning/teaching pedagogical strategies; 3) collective representations referring to sociocultural references. These representations contribute to the construction of the future teachers' praxis within the context of their professional activities.

Our students seem to be more aware of their individual and professional representations that are mostly described in levels 1 and 2 (what and how). It is interesting to realize that different aspects of collective representation (which refer to a variety of systems of references, shared knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, beliefs, realizations, and values), if they are implicit, do not emerge nor do they reach the level of critical reflection (level 3). From the researchers' perspectives we believe significant change in preservice teachers' representations, beliefs, and practices will occur when they are faced with uncertain and different classroom events that perturb their prior knowledge and understanding for a search of new construction of meaning.

Schwandt (2000) has called for actively debating and exchanging points of view with preservice teachers. We feel that it is difficult to find ways of establishing a truthful and

open dialogue among university preservice teachers, cooperating teachers, and university professors in order to reflect, debate, and find some compromises “even if temporary” resulting from competing philosophies. In this process, each voice should be heard and considered.

Some teacher preparation programs focus on technical aspects of preparing future teachers such as a checklist teaching evaluation with technical emphases on lesson plan, lesson presentation, and cooperating teacher evaluation. We believe these methods of evaluation are limited if not mechanical. Our research study suggests critical reflections, confrontation, and reconstruction as necessary components of becoming competent teachers. Existing culture and structure of teacher preparation programs must shift from technical perspectives to emancipatory reconstructivist perspectives where becoming teacher autonomy and freedom are valued, where future teachers are encouraged to free themselves from fear of being evaluated and take risk for deconstruction and reconstruction of their practices and beliefs.

Furthermore, it is necessary to build a strong partnership and collaboration among university professors, field experience supervisors, public school administrators, cooperating teachers, and student teachers. It is our belief that with this type of communication and relationship we may transform ourselves individually as well as collectively toward changing the culture of teaching and the culture of teacher education programs.

Paolo Freire (1995) refers to this mental state as semi-intransitive consciousness (i.e., recognition of a problem without taking steps to resolve it, a first step in the process of liberatory consciousness). Britzman (1991) defines semi-intransitive consciousness: “In this perspective, reality appears as given and fixed, culture (or what is humanly produced) is indistinguishable from nature (what is biologically determined), points of

view are inconceivable, and fatalism paralyzes one’s capacity to intervene in the world. Superstition shapes negotiatory strategies and these strategies are primarily defensive” (p. 26). The second perspective, a “naïve transitive consciousness” is one in which one recognizes cultural options but feels powerless to act on them. In this state, points of view are recognized without recognition of their human consequences. What we hope for our students to discover is the perspective that Freire (1995) calls “conscientization” in which unjust social structures are recognized and denounced. Most of these preservice teachers seem to exist in the state of “semi-intransitive consciousness.” It is only through the process of education that the state of “conscientization” can be achieved.

Field-based experiences are an essential component in the formation of self-representation as a “real” teacher. How can we provide more appropriate experiences for students in both the university and in the field? As teacher educators we are concerned that the experiences that we provide for our students in both the university classroom and in the field are both inadequate to the problems that they face and are anachronistic in the inattention to the processes of both sociocultural and self-representation. Counts (1991) says, “The familiar curricula pattern of orientation courses, subject matter courses, theory courses, observation courses, and practice-teaching assignments is but a conglomeration of precepts and practices inherited from the more limited environment of a former day” (p. 28). Britzman (1991) suggests that over the last seventy years the process of teacher education has not changed. If anything, it is even more mechanistic. Preservice teachers are taught to be passive recipients of knowledge. More than ever standardized measurements determine what a student must be and do. In an educational system driven by state reforms “Only learning outcomes that can be measured by standardized tests or teachers’

behaviors that lend themselves to quantification ... count in the assessment of teachers” (Kincheloe, 1993, p. 4). Preservice teachers, too, are required to conform. In fact, conformity stands in direct contradiction to critical reflective examination. Conformity limits the prospects for change in both self and sociocultural representations. In many education training classes, conforming to expected self-representations takes the place of critical thought and action and precludes change. We can improve the experiences of students by problematizing situations in the classroom and the community and asking students to propose solutions rather than by simply giving students a handbook for vocational preparation. Students must be encouraged to remember those “bad” teachers and propose solutions to the tendency to become what they abhor. They must be shown that there is no educational process that is neutral, value-free and universally applicable. They need to understand that, “Learning to teach for social justice is ... coming to understand oneself in relation to others; examining how society constructs privilege and inequality and how this affects one’s own opportunities as well as those of different people; exploring the experiences of others and appreciating how those inform their worldviews, perspectives, and opportunities; and evaluating how schools and classrooms operate and can be structured to value diverse human experiences and to enable learning for all students” (Darling-Hammond, 2002, p. 201). In our case, we can also take into account student teachers’ professional representations that are a sort of potential virtuality that would be ready for the action. We must attempt in our classes and in the field to hold to a goal of “the creation of democratic pedagogies that value the struggle for voice and make available the discursive practices necessary for the struggle of social justice” (Britzman, 1991, p. 33).

## Final Remarks

We hope to improve teacher preparation by providing more appropriate experiences for the students in both the university and in the field. These experiences would allow students, teachers, and professors to cope with competing philosophies.

Change in educational thought and practices within the academy seem to form through a process of accretion given an adherence to “scientific” protocol. While the results of such accretion provide us with valuable information, that information must be utilized to create critical awareness of the formation of sociocultural and self-representation for students who want to become teachers. Valuable information can be gleaned from the empowered voices of the students themselves. Further, those voices must be used to guide us in the creation of experiences for student teachers that challenge them to be critical, to think independently, and to strengthen the process of democratic liberation within schools and communities.

We continue to gather journals. With each set we learn more about how we may change the process of mechanistic teacher education. We will use this information to help students to become critical problem-solving thinkers and actors. Activities in both the classroom and in the field will be invented with the goal in mind that the use of democratic pedagogies allows students to form sociocultural and self-representations that are nonconforming, critical, and empowering.

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