Addressing diversity: A case study of teacher educators' views and instructional practices at a Midwestern university

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ADDRESSING DIVERSITY: A CASE STUDY OF TEACHER EDUCATORS’
VIEWS AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES
AT A MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY

A Dissertation
Submitted
In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Approved:

Dr. Gregory Stefani, Chair
Dr. Robert Boody, Committee Member
Dr. William Callahan, Committee Member
Dr. Radhi Al-Mabuk, Committee Member
Dr. Kent Sandstrom, Committee Member

Alina Slapac
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May 2006
ADDRESSING DIVERSITY: A CASE STUDY OF TEACHER EDUCATORS’ VIEWS AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES AT A MIDWESTERN UNIVERSITY

An Abstract of a Dissertation

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Approved:

Dr. Gregory Stefanich, Committee Chair

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ABSTRACT

It is well documented that while the student population is becoming more and more diverse, the teacher population remains mostly white, female, monolingual, and monocultural (Banks, 2001a; Darling-Hammond, 2002; Nieto, 2000a). Consequently, teacher education programs have the important role of addressing diversity throughout curriculum, field experiences and faculty recruitment.

The purpose of this qualitative research was to gain more understanding, from the teacher educators’ perspectives, about the way diversity is being addressed at a Midwestern university by examining teacher educators’ various methods of instruction, and their course materials, which focus on diversity issues and the needs of diverse learners. The case study methodology concentrated on three full-time, tenured professors from Special Education Department, who are teaching the same required course entitled “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners” for the preservice teachers. The primary strategies of data collection were individual interviews, class observations and the study of written documentation such as vitas, syllabi and extra materials used during the classes.

The cross-case analysis of the data was related, through the emergent themes, with the postmodern perspective. The results emphasized the benefits of using postmodernist aspects (such as knowledge construction, and local narratives and the proliferation of difference/the “Other”) when teaching diversity issues with a strength-based approach within the curriculum and specific instructional practices for a transformative, meaning-making learning experience. Even with different approaches to
teaching, all three professors linked their knowledge, beliefs, and values with the practicality of it, challenging students to use constant reflection in their learning experiences. The findings raised the issues of presumed neutrality in the classroom, and the possibility of renaming the course as “Recognizing the Strengths and Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners.” Among the further recommendations, the following were mentioned: more inter- and intra-departmental information, collaboration and dialogue regarding diversity; cross-curricular teaching and curriculum changes with the inclusion of field experiences in diverse classrooms; and faculty recruitment from diverse backgrounds. More research regarding how to teach a course on diversity issues was also recommended.
DEDICATION

To my parents, husband, parents-in-law, grandparents, sister, and to all my friends who believed in me and shared with me this journey of completing my dissertation through their love, care, compassion and constant support. This dissertation is a finished product because of them.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study exists because of the amazing mentorship of the people who believed in me, and I would like to address my special thanks to all of them. This dissertation would have not existed without the three educators who participated in my study who instilled in me the sense of hope in education because of their commitment to diversity and inclusion, and their approach to special education and disability studies. They taught me not to be afraid to challenge the traditional perspectives of dealing with diversity issues. Their enthusiasm and insights have been a wonderful inspiration to me.

I am grateful to all my committee members for their professional guidance, expertise and their wonderful support throughout the process of writing this study. Special thanks to the chair of my committee, Dr. Gregory Stefanich, who supported me throughout all the years of my doctoral studies, for his professionalism, wisdom, and care for the quality of this dissertation, for his mentoring, advising skills, and promptness of responses. I also extend my appreciation and thanks to Dr. Robert Boody for his positive attitude towards writing a long study and for the comprehensive feedback on my methodology and postmodern aspects of my study; to Dr. William Callahan for encouraging me to pursue the education doctoral program and for always believing in me; to Dr. Kent Sandstrom for his helpful recommendations and expertise in qualitative research and postmodernism, and for making me reflect more on my work to find and challenge the answers to difficult questions; to Dr. Radhi Al-Mabuk for his wonderful insights regarding my dissertation.
I wish to express my gratitude to my father-in-law, Dr. Ronald Roberts, for his insights on postmodernism and his unconditional support; to Dr. John Smith, for his great feedback on the literature review; Dr. Rori Carson and Dr. William Waack who, early in my thesis, encouraged my enthusiasm of writing a study about diversity issues in teacher education program; to the staff of Rod Library, and especially to Mr. Keith Welch, for their constant help. I wish to extend my profound appreciation for Mrs. Janet Witt, for her wonderful help and great recommendations during the previews required by Graduate College. With fondness and admiration, I am profoundly indebted to my husband, Forrest, for his love for me, infinite patience and support during the completion of my doctoral program, and for his help with the layout of my dissertation; to my mother, Stela, for her love, wisdom, and for making all the obstacles bearable; to my father, Florin, my sister, Francisca, and my mother-in-law, Carol, for their love, encouragement, and advice during the doctoral program and dissertation process; to my grandmother, Aura, for always being proud of me and for all her prayers; to my dear friends, Olga Kostareva and Dr. Sangmin Kim, to Dr. Gerri Perreault and Dr. Calvin Phillips for their patience and help in answering my questions regarding the dissertation process and for their continuous encouragement; to my dear friends, Andreea Bell, Gabriela Tatar, Madi Tanase, Madi Tincu and Dr. Rolanda Maxim for their personal and professional insights.

This dissertation is about values, struggles, beliefs, knowledge, imagination, creativity, teaching skills, and my love for diversity and diverse learners. I hope that this study will make teacher educators reflect on their practices regarding diversity and
provoke them not only to dream of changes and improvements in addressing diversity in teacher programs, but also to strive for making those dreams come true.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Indications for Study

“Dealing with diversity is one of the central challenges of 21st century education.”
(Darling-Hammond & Garcia-Lopez, 2002, p. 9)

Educators need to consider the notion of diversity seriously because there are a growing number of students in schools from diverse backgrounds, taught by teachers who are monolithic (uniform in terms of race, which is predominantly white), monocultural, and monolingual (Banks, 2001a; Darling-Hammond, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Nieto, 2000a). The demographic changes occurring in the U.S. between 1981 and 1990, for example, reveal an increase of 63% in immigrants, primarily, from Latin American and Asian nations. Corresponding changes have taken place in the population of public schools, as illustrated by the fact that 50 of the largest 99 school districts in the United States had enrollments of more than 50% students of color by 1992 (Nieto, 2000a). Given these demographic shifts, greater emphasis needs to be placed on diversity in teacher education programs, particularly in the curriculum (Banks, 2001b; Gollnick & Chinn, 1998; Gollnicka, 1992; Nieto, 2000a; Sleeter & Grant, 2003), field experiences, and clinical practice of preservice teachers.

The terms diversity and multiculturalism are, sometimes, wrongly perceived as synonyms. Talbot (2003) defines diversity as “a structure that includes that tangible presence of individuals representing a variety of different attributes and characteristics,
including culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and other physical and social variables” (p. 426), while **multiculturalism** is a state of being in which an individual feels comfortable and communicates effectively with people from any culture, in any situation, because he or she developed the necessary knowledge and skills to do so. Multiculturalism is not an inherent characteristic of any individual, no matter his or her race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender; rather, it is based on an individual's ability and openness to learn (p.426).

In this study, I am using the operational definition of **diversity** (see definition in the section Definition of Terms) provided by the National Council of Accreditation for Teacher Education (NCATE) in their “Professional Standards for the Accreditation of Schools, Colleges, and Departments of Education” (2001). I believe that it is crucial to understand the terminology when it comes to being aware that we, as educators, have to be able to understand and address the needs of diverse learners.

The broad context of this study is the Teacher Education program at a Midwestern university, in particular the Special Education Department which offers a required course on diversity for preservice teachers. Three teachers were purposefully selected as participants in the study as they have full-time, tenure-track positions. A case-study methodology was chosen to gain more understanding about how diversity is addressed at this Midwestern university. The study describes teacher educators' views about diversity examining their personal and professional experiences regarding diversity. The study also focuses on how the three teacher educators address diversity in order to prepare the preservice teachers to meet the needs of diverse learners, and their abilities to teach from multicultural and global perspectives.
Statement of the problem

Although most teacher programs emphasize the importance of preparing teachers for cultural diversity, only 8 (13.6%) of the first 59 teacher education institutions that sought accreditation under the 1987 NCATE standards were in full compliance with the minimum multicultural education standards for teacher education programs (Gollnick, 1992a).

This lack of compliance is clearly an issue for teacher education programs, and many scholars emphasize cultural diversity and the cultural context of teaching and learning as being essential in these programs. Teacher education programs should be prepared to address diversity through all its components: race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, language, religion, but also exceptionalities (gifted/talented or disabilities). Teacher education programs must evolve to address the needs of all diverse learners, not only the needs of changing racial and cultural student population. Programs should also engage teachers in learning experiences to enhance their effectiveness in diverse classrooms (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003).

In a relatively large institution, instructors continually modify and reframe instruction. Global issues like diversity can in turn be neglected. This study is an effort to gain insights into different ways of addressing diversity as a specific element of a teacher education program in a Midwestern university. Our nation is becoming more diverse (for example, using Iowa as an illustration, the population of students with disabilities is approaching 15%) and significant numbers of our graduates are teaching in communities with student diversity. Also, the number of immigrants continues to grow, increasing to
3,052 in 2002, with immigrants from Bosnia-Herzegovina and Mexico comprising the largest groups (the Iowa Department of Education, 2002). The racial and ethnic distribution also shows that Hispanic PK-12 enrollment increased by 381.6 percent since 1985-1986, while "the number of Asian American and African American students in Iowa's public schools increased by more than 50% each" (Iowa Department of Education, 2002, p. 54). These data show that Iowa's population is becoming more and more diverse.

A faculty survey (see Appendix A) administered in March 2003 to all 260 members of a teacher education program at a Midwestern university yielded a 50% return rate. Two questions in the survey addressed diversity: "To what extent do you have knowledge related to preparing candidates to work with diverse learners?" and "To what extent do you integrate diversity into your teaching?" Although the results show that 51.3% chose very much as their response to the first question, only 34.5% chose very much as their response to the second question.

Other diversity related issues revealed in the open-ended responses of the survey included: "diversity does not receive enough attention and is not integrated into various aspects of the program;" and "students are not well prepared to meet challenges of an increasingly diverse society." Some faculty also noticed that there "is not enough consistent emphasis in all classes on addressing race, gender, ability, and social clash issues related to teaching and learning or covering multicultural education" (Unpublished survey, March 28, 2003). Diversity was also mentioned among one of the greatest needs,
in terms of more opportunities of working with diverse learners in field experiences and clinical practice.

**Research Questions**

This study will focus on the following research questions:

1. How do the personal and professional experiences of teacher educators affect their instructional practices related to diversity?

2. How do teacher educators address diversity in the course “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners”?
   (a) What course expectations regarding diversity are reflected in the syllabi of three classes on “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners?”
   (b) What aspects of diversity are facilitated throughout the instruction?

3. What is teacher educators’ conceptual awareness regarding standards related to diversity for teacher education programs?

**Significance of the Study**

Issues concerning teacher training were raised in the reports of the National Commission on Excellence in Education the Carnegie Forum and the Holmes Group. These reports observed that schools were failing to educate all children partly because of the training methods that schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDEs) provided for their student teachers, and partly because the candidates enrolled in teacher programs were mostly white, monolingual, middle-class females (Cooksey, 2002).

The purpose of this study is to gain more understanding, from the teacher educators’ perspectives, about how diversity is being addressed in a specific course by
examining teacher educators' various methods of instruction, and their course materials, which focus on diversity issues and the needs of diverse learners.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Limitations

The following are considered to be limitations of the study:

1. The study was limited by the lack of generalizations that could be made from case study methodology in data gathering. Although the data-gathering process included multiple analytic approaches to enhance validity, the participants of the study were purposefully selected as they were all teaching the same course on diversity.

2. The study was limited to the three teacher educators' views regarding diversity and their own design, implementation and evaluation of the curriculum for a course on diversity offered by the Special Education Department.

3. Teacher educators' definition of "diversity" in a holistic perspective was different than the way diversity is defined and addressed in the standards for teacher education programs, considering the fact that the course "Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners" is offered by the Special Education Department.

4. This study possessed the typical limitations of case study research in that there is the possibility of incorporating biases into the study, which might have influenced the findings and conclusions. There was little basis for statistical generalization. However, the limitations of the case study research were effectively overcome by using multiple strategies for data collection, by providing, thorough cross-
case analysis, a rich description of the cases for the transferability of information to establish the uniqueness of each case.

**Delimitations:**

The following are considered to be delimitations to the study:

1. This study was limited to the three full-time teacher educators who were teaching the same course “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners,” and who were willing to participate in the study.

2. This study was limited to classroom observations, field notes, semi-structured interviews and perusal of the teacher educator’s artifacts.

**Definitions of Terms**

For the purpose of this research study, the following terms will be used:

- **Candidates/Preservice teachers.** “Individuals admitted to, or enrolled in, programs for the initial or advanced preparation of teachers, teachers continuing their professional development, or other professional school personnel” (NCATE, 2001, p. 52). Another term with the same meaning is “preservice teachers.”

- **Clinical practice.** “Student teaching or internships that provide candidates with an intensive and extensive culminating activity. Candidates are immersed in the learning community and are provided opportunities to develop and demonstrate competence in the professional roles for which they are preparing” (NCATE, 2001, p. 52).

- **Cultural capital.** “The knowledge that is associated with the dominant group and has the most status in a society. As defined by Pierre Bourdieu, it can exist in three forms: dispositions of the mind and body; cultural goods as pictures, books, and other
material objects; and educational qualifications. According to him, cultural capital is the best hidden form of hereditary transmission of capital” (Nieto, 2000a, p. 383).

**Diversity.** “Differences among groups of people and individuals based on ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, gender, exceptionalities, language, religion, sexual orientation, and geographical area” (NCATE, p. 53).

**Equal education.** “Providing the same resources and opportunities for all students” (Nieto, 2000a, p. 383).

**Exceptionalities.** “A physical, mental, or emotional condition, including gifted/talented abilities, that requires individualized instruction and/or other educational support or services” (NCATE, p. 53).

**Field experiences.** “A variety of early and ongoing field-based opportunities in which candidates may observe, assist, tutor, instruct, and/or conduct research. Field experiences may occur in off-campus settings such as schools, community centers, or homeless shelters” (NCATE, p. 53).

**IDEA (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Public Law 101-476).** “Under the amendments in 1990, the definition of special education was expanded to include instruction in all settings. This included the workplace and training centers”; includes also “students with autism and traumatic injury”. Related services now include rehabilitation counseling and social work services”; the issue of providing services to children with attention deficit disorders (ADD)” (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998, p.166) is also addressed.
Inclusive education. “Something that supports, impacts, and benefits all learners” (Kluth, Straut, & Biklen, 2003, p. 3).

Inclusion. “An educational orientation that embraces differences and values diversity;” “a revolution, a social action, and a critical political movement;” “a way to boost academic opportunities and successes for all learners in public schools” (Kluth, Straut, & Biklen, 2003, p. 3).

Multicultural education. “The educational strategy in which students’ cultural backgrounds are used to develop effective classroom instruction and school environments. It is designed to support and extend the concepts of culture, differences, equality, and democracy in the formal school setting” (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998, p. 3); “Because it uses critical pedagogy as its underlying philosophy and focuses on knowledge, reflection, and action (praxis) as the basis for social change, multicultural education promotes democratic principles of social justice” (Nieto, 2000a, p. 384).

NCATE. A non-profit, non-governmental organization in a coalition of more than 30 national associations recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. It is an “accrediting body for colleges and universities that prepare teachers and other professional personnel for work in elementary and secondary schools” to ensure that “accredited institutions produce competent, caring, and qualified teachers and other school personnel who can help all students learn” (NCATE, 2001, p.1).

Pluralistic society. There are three basic models for understanding pluralism in our society: Anglo-conformity. A model of pluralism based on the concept that all newcomers need to conform to the dominant European American, middle-class, and
English-speaking majority. Cultural pluralism (alternatively called salad bowl, mosaic, or tapestry). A model based on the premise that people of all backgrounds have a right to maintain their languages and cultures while combining with others to form a new society reflective of all our differences. Melting pot. A model that maintains that differences need to be wiped out to form an amalgam that is uniquely American but without obvious traces of the original cultures (Nieto, 2000a, p. 384).

Standards. “Imply something common, or agreed upon” (e.g., national curriculum standards) or “denote a degree of quality” involving “emotional/evaluative connotations” (Andrew, 1997, p.168-169). “Written expectations for meeting a specified level of performance. Standards exist for the content that P-12 students should know at a certain age or grade level (NCATE, 2001, p. 57).

Symbolic violence. “As used by Pierre Bourdieu, this term refers to the way in which the power relations of the dominant society are maintained in the school primarily through the curriculum” (Nieto, 2000a, p. 385).

Methods and Procedures Overview

This study provides a deeper understanding of how diversity is being addressed at a Midwestern university, in three different sections of the same course entitled “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners,” taught by three full-time professors at different times. A qualitative, case study approach was utilized. To enhance validity, the following data gathering methods, respectively multiple sources of evidence for triangulation purposes were used: field observations, in-depths interviews, participant verbatim language (obtained from the quotations from documents), and mechanically recorded data (the use
of tape recorder). For accuracy purposes, I used low-inference descriptors by recording as precise and detailed as possible teacher educators’ lectures and interactions with students, their instructional practices, the dialogues, and the classroom settings. Member checking was also used by checking informally with the teacher educators involved in the study for data accuracy during data collection and analysis. Participant review was accomplished by asking each teacher educator to revise and edit their own responses of the interview transcripts or the transcripts of the classroom observations.

**Organization of the Study**

This study was conducted for the purpose to gain more understanding, from the teacher educators’ perspectives, about how diversity is being addressed at a Midwestern university by examining teacher educators’ various methods of instruction, and their course materials, which focus on diversity issues and the needs of diverse learners. In Chapter 1, I provide an overview of the study’s foundation and purpose, research questions, definitions, limitations and delimitations, and methods and procedures. Chapter 2 presents the review of literature related to (1) how “diversity” is defined from a postmodernist perspective, (2) other definitions of diversity, as they are described in standards, (3) the implementation of diversity in teacher education programs, through curriculum, field experiences, and faculty recruitment, and (4) measuring preservice teachers’ commitment, dispositions and skills to teach diversity with or without multicultural training. The review of literature in this chapter provides the theoretical foundation upon which this study is based.
Chapter 3 describes the methodology and procedures used to complete the research study and answer the research questions. Included in this chapter are the following: the design of the study, validity, generalizability and reliability considerations, the site selection and the selection of subjects, the procedures used to collect the data, and the explanation of how the data were analyzed.

Chapter 4 offers an overview of the three participants in my study, including their experiences related to diversity, their philosophies of teaching, the ways they define "diversity," and the goals and objectives for the course "Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners."

Chapter 5 explores the emergent categories, themes, sub-themes and core themes that evolved during data analysis. Chapter 6 provides the outcome of the study and its relation to postmodernism, suggesting a critical analysis for teacher educators interested in diversity issues. Conclusions and recommendations for practitioners are also included in Chapter 6.
CHAPTER 2
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
Defining Diversity through Postmodern Lenses

Why Postmodernism?

*Let us wage a war on totality; let us be witness to the unpresentable;*

*Let us activate the differences and save the honour of the name.*

(Lyotard, 1984, p. 82)

The idea of using postmodernism to define and explicate “diversity” aroused my interest while I was reading an article by Ron Burnett (1991) about Roland Barthes’ “Camera Lucida” and the photographic images. The article explores the relationship between photographs and images, where the photographs can claim their autonomy, and the images “are part of the mental process, the result of an interaction between photographs and the viewing subjects” (Burnett, 1991, p. 2). Images are seen “as carriers of meaning” and “they cannot exist outside of their context of use” (p. 3). The lack of fixity through a continuous interpretation and re-interpretation of the image (for example, different viewers can argue for different interpretations) reduces the possibility of establishing clear boundaries of the image in relation to the viewing process. Burnett (1991) states:

What is important is where we choose to place the boundaries. The boundaries of the photographic print are in part shaped by the distance of the spectator from it. The closer one gets to the print, the more boundary is disrupted. The print has not changed but our relationship to it has. There is here, potentially, an endless series of relationships. The pivots for meaning will be found not in some “pure” visual apprehension, but in the conjuncture of boundaries to produce the visual, that is, the way the conjuncture is understood, related to, constructed. (p. 12)
The relationship between photograph and image, and the lack of control over boundaries, meanings and authenticity, brought into my mind the relationship between postmodernism and diversity. The view of representation is no longer a reflection (like in modernism) but a construction of the viewer which can decode the message as an active consumer. The postmodern photographer, as a manipulator of signs, exposes the photography’s ambivalence in an attempt to find meaning and unity (Hutcheon, 2002). The metaphor of “diversity” as a photograph facilitates the understanding of the meaning of diversity through postmodern lenses that promote fragmentation, multiple perspectives, and tolerance towards differences. This study encourages its readers to understand diversity issues within the postmodern framework, where the notions of class, race, gender, ethnicity, disability are socially and culturally constructed. and the proliferation of differences/the “Other” is extremely important.

Defining Postmodernism

As a particular cultural experience, postmodernism was viewed as “the cultural logic of late capitalism” (Morley, 1996, p. 53). It has also been argued that postmodernism is the culture of a post-Fordist, and of a post-industrial economy or society (Kumar, 1995; Morley, 1996). It is true that much of what is called ‘postmodernism’ grew up as a form of criticism attacking “grand narrative” expositions of literary texts. Postmodern analysis has grown in the social and behavioral sciences as well, and has come to challenge “structural functionalism” in sociology, anthropology, and psychology. The debate about postmodernism started with “the exchange on the topic of modernity between Jürgen Habermas and Jean-François Lyotard:”
Both agreed that modernity could not be separated from notions of unity and universality or what Lyotard dubbed 'metanarratives.' Habermas argued that the project of modernity, rooted in the context of Enlightenment rationality, was still unfinished and required completion; Lyotard countered with the view that modernity has actually been liquidated by history, a history whose tragic paradigm was the Nazi concentration camp and whose ultimate delegitimizing force was that of capitalist 'technoscience' which has changed for ever our concepts of knowledge. Therefore, for Lyotard, postmodernity is characterized by no grand totalizing narrative, but by smaller and multiple narratives which seek no universalizing stabilization or legitimation. (Hutcheon, 2002, pp. 23-24)

Lyon (1999) argues that although the distinction between postmodemism (and its relationship to modernism), when the emphasis is on cultural, and postmodernity, when the accent is on social is being made, it is impossible to separate the cultural from the social: "There is a strong sense in which the social has become more cultural. 'Postmodernism', refers here to cultural and intellectual phenomena, to the production, consumption and distribution of symbolic goods" (pp. 9-10). Also, in everyday life, "the postmodern may be seen in the blurring boundaries between 'high' and 'low' culture; the collapse of hierarchies of knowledge, taste and opinion; and the interest in the local rather than universal" (Lyon, 1999, p. 10). If modernism preferred the functionally integrated nature of society, where the social system was viewed as a whole with the parts relatively autonomous as subsystems (an idea emerged from the writings of Marx, Spencer, and Durkheim in the nineteenth century), postmodernism preserves fragmentation instead of wholeness.

In his definition of postmodernism, Jencks (1989) emphasizes pluralism by taking into account the characteristics of post-Fordism and those of an information society; also, where eclecticism accepts tradition:
The Post-Modern Age is a time of incessant choosing. It’s an era when no orthodoxy can be adopted without self-consciousness and irony, because all traditions seem to have some validity. This is partly a consequence of what is called the information explosion, the advent of organized knowledge, world communication and cybernetics. It is not only the rich who become collectors, eclectic travelers in time with a superabundance of choice, but almost every urban dweller. Pluralism, the ‘ism’ of our time, is both the great problem and the great opportunity: where Everyman becomes a Cosmopolite and Everywoman a Liberated Individual, confusion and anxiety become ruling states of mind and ersatz a common form of mass-culture. This is the price we pay for a Post-Modern Age, as heavy in its way as the monotony, dogmatism and poverty of the Modern epoch. But, in spite of many attempts in Iran and elsewhere, it is impossible to return to a previous culture and industrial form, impose a fundamentalist religion or even a Modernist orthodoxy. Once a world communication system and form of cybernetic have emerged they create their own necessities and they are, barring a nuclear war, irreversible. (p. 7)

Postmodernism denies the belief in progress and rationality, or the modernist distinctions of ‘high’ and ‘low’ culture, and focuses on beliefs of “irrationality, indeterminacy, and anarchy” (Kumar, 1995, p. 107). Tendencies towards difference, discontinuity, dispersal, decreation are also associated with the postmodern age.

Beyond this, postmodernism “questions all the key commitments of the European Enlightenment” (Lyon, 1999, p. 10). The Enlightenment ideals were progress; optimism; rationality; the search for absolute knowledge in science, technology, society, and politics; and the idea that gaining knowledge of the true self was the only foundation for all other knowledge. Rational inquiry was a means for attaining progress into a “world of order, security, social understanding and happiness” (Ward, 1997, p. 8). The modern project was designed to eliminate uncertainty and ambivalence as “reason was opposed by the imagination, artifice by the natural, objectivity by subjectivity, calculation by spontaneity, the mundane by the visionary, the world-view of science by the appeal to the uncanny and the supernatural” (Kumar, 1995, p. 86).
Postmodern Social Theories

Another way of defining postmodernism is by describing two positions and the theories that are related to them: radical postmodernism, and strategic postmodernism.

a) Radical postmodernism. According to Lemert (1997), radical postmodernism represents “a group of social theories that consider modernity a thing of the past, or, at least, in its last historical moments; social theories that consider the present situation to be characterized more by hyperreality than reality” (p.67). Radical postmodernism does not disregard postmodernism completely, but reveals the main theme: the decline of ‘meta-narratives’ as being part of the postmodern culture.

Local Narratives and the Proliferation of Difference/the “Other.” According to Corker & Shakespeare (2002), meta-narratives encompassed “foundational theories (theories of knowledge, morality or aesthetics) and grand stories of social progress which have been central to the legitimation of modern knowledge, culture and social institutions” (p. 5). Instead, postmodernity implies “the shift from meta-narratives to local narratives, and from general theories to pragmatic strategies” (Corker & Shakespeare, 2002, p. 5). Also, Baudrillard’s theories of representation choose to characterize postmodern society with its “ideology of disembodiment” as “an implosion of the social into hyperreality, or a collapse of the distance between an ‘original’ object (signifier) and its ‘simulacra’ (the signified) (Corker & Shakespeare, 2002, p. 6).

One of the powerful voices of radical postmodernism, was Jean François-Lyotard (1924-1998), who, in The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge (1984) explains the decline of meta-narratives (Corker & Shakespeare, 2002; Lemert. 1997;
Lyotard, 1984), "which have lost their authority to justify modern social practices" (Corker & Shakespeare, 2002, p. 5). Lyotard (1984) argues that the culture of meta-narratives (science, and other forms of knowledge) are not completely legitimate or universally true, and that the relationships between knowledge and power are consequently altered. When considered legitimate, the power of meta-narratives suppressed differences. Lyotard advocates the uncertainty and incompleteness of knowledge, by emphasizing the value of postmodern knowledge which "lies in making us aware of and tolerant toward social differences, ambiguity and conflict" (Corker & Shakespeare, 2002, p. 5). By acknowledging the local narratives, Lyotard (1984) emphasizes in fact the importance of the "Other," and the proliferation of differences within particular (spatial or temporal) contexts, where knowledge is historically, culturally, and socially constructed.

Another relevant voice of radical postmodernism was the sociologist Jean Baudrillard (1929-). In his early writings, Baudrillard (1929-) emphasized the value of semiotics as a social study of the signs, using the Marxist theory of the economic values of consumable commodities. He also used sources from media culture to argue that the saturated reality is in fact a 'simulacrum' (Lemert, 1997; Ward, 1997):

It is the reference principle of images which must be doubted, this strategy by means of which they always appear to refer to a real world, to real objects, and to reproduce something which is logically, and chronologically, anterior to themselves. None of this is true...images precede the real to the extent that they invert the causal and logical order of the real and its reproduction. (cited in Ward, 1997, p. 62)

Baudrillard's concept of 'hyperreality' conveys a world intensified through the mediated cultures, which are simulations of reality. The world is invaded by these
“floating images and narcissistic codes of mass media” (Corker, & Shakespeare, 2002, p. 5) where technology and cybernetics take control. This cultural transformation in a code-oriented society leads to a loss of meaning, and consequently to the reign of artificiality.

According to Baudrillard, we entered the age of the “simulacrum,” where “simulations no longer refer to any reality; they create the idea of a reality which they simultaneously claim to represent” (Seidman, 1994, p. 210). The hyperreality with its own simulacrum as a reflection of the actual reality has no determinate interpretation because “it no longer measures itself against either an ideal or negative instance” (Wicks, 2003, p. 285). If the society is seen as a ‘spectacle’ where “everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation,” and where “the spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people mediated by images” (Baudrillard cited in Lemert, 1997, p. 38), then the positive outcome would be that gender or disability would be seen, in Baudrillard’s view, as simulations. For Baudrillard, the postmodern age of simulacrum brings seduction and surrender, instead of the forms of revolt and oppression of the modern culture. The society with its social classes, ethnic, gender or racial identities is manipulated into the world of signs, codes and meanings, where the specific institutions of capitalism become irrelevant. In contrast, the mass media images, linguistic signs and meanings exert their power through the seduction of the individual (Seidman, 1994).

b) Strategic postmodernism. According to Lemert (1997), strategic postmodernism represents “a group of social theories that seek to reconstruct the cultural, social, and political history of modernity in order to expose the deceptions of modern age” (p. 68). The representative theorists are the three social thinkers: Michel Foucault,
Jacques Derrida, and Jacques Lacan. Their shared theoretical views focused on the reinterpretation of the classical social thinkers (Nietzsche, Husserl, Freud), on the power of language or discourse, and on the rejection of any "universal essence, totality, or center as a basis for social thought" (Lemert, 1997, p. 43). Also, a connection between Foucault, Derrida, and Barthes is established through their theories of postmodernism in which they announce the 'death of man', or the 'death of subject', or the 'death of author'.

One of the key themes for the strategic postmodernism is 'deconstruction'. Deconstructionism was a method of analysis, which claimed to destabilize the myth of fixed meaning, and to highlight the irreducible excess of language: “Texts are open, 'dialogic' structures, shot through with 'aporias' (ramifying contradictions) and 'heteroglosia' (a plurality of voices)” (Kumar, 1995, p.131). According to deconstructionists, power and hegemony, hidden in fixed terms, must be understood and demythologized. Jacques Derrida (1930-) challenged structuralism and the hidden structures in the hidden order of culture and language by 'deconstructing' texts and language. Derrida (1975) explored the indeterminate view of language and “the ways of thinking of how meanings are established, specifically that meanings are organized through difference in a dynamic play of presence and absence” (Corker, & Shakespeare, 2002, p. 7) and called it differance, a combining word from difference and deferral (Corker, & Shakespeare, 2002; Lemert, 1997). Derrida (1975) also rejects the binary meanings or oppositions embedded in structuralist texts. Through deconstruction, Derrida revolted against political and linguistic authority arguing for a disruption of hierarchy by
claiming that the meaning of signs is never fixed or static. For example, ‘normativism’ is not viewed in antagonism with ‘impairment’ but rather in an assertive relationship, as they need each other for their own definitions (“a person without an impairment can define him/herself ‘normal’ only in opposition to that which s/he is not”, Corker & Shakespeare, 2002, p. 7). Further, Corker and Shakespeare (2002) present a Derridean perspective on disability, arguing that disability belongs to ‘normativism’ as a social construct, therefore Derrida’s ideas on deconstruction lead to an ethical response to difference:

This is important because of the large numbers of people with impairments who identify as neither ‘normal’ nor ‘disabled’, but nevertheless are individually engaged in resisting the hegemony of normativism in their everyday lives. (p. 7)

Derrida’s strategy of subverting the hierarchical discursive dualities in an effort to delegitimate its discursive force brings the second term in the opposition (for example, ‘absence’ in the binary opposition ‘presence/absence’, or ‘negative’ in ‘positive/negative’, etc.) as being no longer subordinate to the first and superior sign. By challenging the linguistic meanings in the social and political hierarchies through deconstructive subversion of the hierarchical oppositions, Derrida “allows marginal and excluded signifiers and forms of subjective and social life to gain a public voice and presence” (Seidman, 1994, p. 204). Through the politics of subversion, language and knowledge, “embedded in institutional frameworks and political hierarchies,” Derrida emphasized the importance of the “signifying and discursive practices [that] empower and give privilege to certain individuals, groups, and forms of social life” (Seidman, 1994, p. 204).
Knowledge Construction. Michel Foucault (1965; 1970; 1972; 1973; 1977) is a representative of strategic postmodernism through his power/knowledge theme. The power/knowledge theme expresses “the social theoretical idea that, in modernity, power actually works indirectly through knowledge, rather than directly as over abuse, domination, and control” (Lemert, 1997, p. 67). Power and knowledge appear in an interdependent relationship, within historical contexts of the social institutions, such as the penal system, mental hospitals and psychiatry, and the social sciences where the social practices function as dominated and manipulative, through surveillance, categorization, monitoring, measurement, and evaluation as forms of regulation and techniques of normalization. These diverse forms of regulation achieve their purpose as disciplinary mechanisms. For Foucault (1926-1984), as a historian and social theorist, modernity used knowledge to discipline, and even if this was an exercise of power, it was viewed as a form of education. The teachings in medicine, mental health, criminology, sociology, and sexology that Foucault referred to established the modern culture, as they did not operate as forces from the top down (Lemert, 1997). Foucault’s “death of man” gives us the chance to study the “discursive practices of the human sciences that constitute and construct man” (Kumar, 1995, p. 130). By using the linguistic practices, we could construct new meanings based on knowledge and values necessary for ‘tearing up’ the labels used in our contemporary society. Foucault believes in the possibility of choice, change and refusal of power relations by ‘shaping our own subjectivity’ and finding our ‘true selves’ that could make us challenge the hegemonic and disciplinary powers. In order to free ourselves from the structures of power, we need to focus and
reflect on our subjective experiences, our knowledge and critical abilities, and our alternative discourses (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Foucault, 1977).

Both Derrida and Foucault are similar in their purpose to challenge the power relations, although they use different approaches. Derrida (1975) uses deconstruction and the politics of subversion to disrupt the linguistic, social and political hierarchies, whereas Foucault (1965; 1973; 1977) advocates for the individuals’ ability, maturity and subjectivity to challenge the disciplinary knowledge and the dominant discursive regimes. Derrida’s deconstructive criticism “animated by a vision of a society that celebrates the sheer proliferation of different individual and social forms of life” (Seidman, 1994, p. 205) and Foucault’s power/knowledge relationship that focus on the dynamics of the domination and resistance in disciplinary-based societies and “the exclusion or marginalization of discourses that represent oppressed groups or communities” (Seidman, 1994, p. 215) could bring reflection for our teachers in postmodern times. By making us aware of the influence of power and knowledge in society, the human difference (through the critique of the normalization techniques), and the deconstruction of linguistic meanings and discourses embedded in political hierarchies, Foucault (1977) and Derrida (1975) could offer the theoretical framework for teachers who want to talk about ways of empowering marginalized groups or certain individuals, the exclusionary effect of labels, and moral responsibility.

Barthes (1992) like Derrida was also interested in the view of language and thought. The ‘death of the author’ draws attention to the meaning of the literary work: “It is language which speaks, not the author” (Barthes, 1992, p. 115). Other significant
statements: “The birth of the reader must be at cost of the death of the author”, and “The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centers of culture’ (cited in Ward, 1997, p. 147) carry the idea that any text is actually a vessel for meanings. Even if the author doesn’t exist independently of language, the reader also has the important role use his own interpretation of the text, filtered through history, geography, or culture (Barthes 1992; Ward, 1997). The coherence of the text is given by the reader with his/her invented meanings:

The Text, in the modern, current sense which we are trying to give this word, is fundamentally to be distinguished from the literary work: it is not an aesthetic product, it is a signifying practice; it is not a structure, it is a structuration; it is not an object, it is a work and a game; it is not a group of closed signs, endowed with a meaning to be rediscovered, it is a volume of traces in displacement. (Barthes, cited in Lemert, 1997, p. 80)

Therefore, the text is open to new meanings and the author has a limited control over the text and its signs. Barthes (1992) also explains the term ‘intertextuality’ and its purpose of allowing the text to gather meaning by the use of citations, references, codes, or other cultural influences. The reader is no longer a passive subject/recipient, but an active inventor who has the chance to recompose the text through a plurality of meanings (Lemert, 1997; Rosenau, 1992; Ward, 1997). Consequently, hegemony is erased at the same time with the erase of any authorship or concrete content: “...postmodern international relations experts consider hegemony suspect because it implies an impersonal form of author or agency, effective inasmuch as it succeeds in never appearing organized, deliberate, or intentional” (Rosenau, 1992, p. 31). Hegemony appears to be natural, inevitable, and impersonal and that makes it difficult to resist.
Thus, by abandoning the author, postmodernists transform the text and re-orient the reader. We, as readers of the texts are given priority over authors, by recreating the text. This way, the conventional sociological variables such as sex, race, class, disabilities, cannot be labeled through prior assumptions, but understood and admired through the voices of differences. The various interpretations underline the blurring of boundaries, leaving the readers to have the roles of making up new meanings. Referring to disabled people and mapping culture, Titchkosky (2002) emphasizes the important value that postmodernist theory brings for our contemporary society:

Mapping culture gives rise to the experience that disability can be interpreted in a multiplicity of ways, each of which holds symbolic social significance, the very sort of significance which makes up the meaning of the bodies and lives of disabled people and non-disabled identities. The postmodern turn, with its focus on the uncertain and ambiguous character of social life and identity, allows for uncovering interpretive relations that lie at the heart of making up the meaning of disabled people. (p. 110)

The representation of social life as a “text,” “the questioning of reality and of the adequacy of language to describe reality” (Harris, 1999, p. 153), the idea that knowledge is culturally constructed through discourse, and the abandonment of science because “it precludes diversity and leads to intolerance” (Harris, 1999, p. 155) bring new levels of awareness in terms of values and praxis, and of the contributions we can make by using the postmodernist theories for positive changes in thinking and interpreting our world.

The (De)centering of Identity

The concept of identity becomes a means to explore and reconstruct diversity because its issues help us understand the multiple aspects of diversity (Gilroy, 1996; Murphy, & Choi, 1997; Ward, 1997). Identity entered into crisis in the modern period
where “the Cartesian view of the self as a solid, integrated, individual entity that has an unchanging essence of its own” (Wicks, 2003, p. 129) was rejected. Since the nature of the self became questionable, the interaction with the social context was promoted. The postmodern theorists such as Lacan and Foucault “propose that the stable, unified self has always been an illusion” (Ward, 1997, p. 108); instead, they would favor disintegration, superficiality or fragmented desires of the self. Image replaces identity, while consumerism and mass culture represented through “fashion statements, shopping and lifestyle choices have pushed authenticity out of the equation” (Ward, 1997, p. 108).

As a psychoanalytic theorist and practitioner, Jacques Lacan (1901-1981), who belongs to the school of strategic postmodernism, rewrote classical Freudian psychoanalysis using the mirror-stage in a child’s development. In his famous essay called “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I” Lacan (1977) establishes that the mirror-stage, which occurs between the ages of six and eighteen months, falsely brings a bounding between the sense of a whole and well-formed self and the ‘exterior,’ fragmented image, as the infant identifies with the image that he sees in the mirror, and with the reflection of himself. Ward (1997) explains the false creation of selfhood as follows:

Instead of simply coming from within, your identity is formed out of a situation in which you see yourself for the first time from the outside. For Lacan this means that alienation and division are built into our identity from the outset. The result in adult life is that you are in a constant but fruitless state of desire for some mythical inner unity and stability you thought you saw in your childhood reflection. We spend our lives trying (and failing) to make ourselves ‘whole’ (p. 136).
Lacan (1977) believes that the mirror-stage is a shocking experience, as the sense of self-identity is deluded through constructed images and reflections. The illusion of completeness, of ‘whole self’ is fragmentary, as the identity is formed out of a situation. The mirror image that represents the awareness of the self is in fact, as argued by Lacan (1977), a self-constructed entity, and an incomplete ego.

Postmodernists consider identity as a social construction, where the norms must be created and internalized before being legitimate. Based on Wittgenstein’s ideas, “postmodernists stress that individual identity is a product of linguistic practice, rather than an essence” (Murphy & Choi, 1997, p. 46). In other words, identity is always subject to reinterpretation, as language has multiple signifiers and knowledge is not absolute: “The point postmodernists are trying to make is that because language mediates all knowledge, persons are involved directly in constructing every facet of reality, including their own identity” (Murphy & Choi, 1997, p. 46).

Linked to the linguistic practice, all forms of identity are incomplete; they exist subjectively, and are under the influence of interpretation. The norms have no longer the power to dictate the status of an identity. Hall (1991) defines his view about identity as being “a process of identification [that] happens over time, is never absolutely stable, is subject to the play of history, and the play of difference” (p. 15). With the decentering of the self and the social construction of identity, postmodernists open the contemporary dialogue for identity politics as a mode of resistance to hegemonic discourses and practices. For example, the first issue raised by postmodernists, which relates to the question of self, can be used to unravel the concepts of race, ethnicity, and gender.
(Gilroy, 1996; Murphy & Choi, 1997). For example, although race "is understood to reflect an unequal relationship between the members of society in terms of wealth, power, prestige, and status" (Murphy & Choi, 1997, p. 48), the solution would be to reconstruct the inferior status through social relationships by rejecting the idea of assimilation. In a free and democratic country, this should be possible as identity could have many forms, with people being able to choose what they want to be. Unfortunately, race becomes "real as a social force when individuals and groups behave toward each other in ways, which either reflect or perpetuate the hegemonic ideology of subordination and the patterns of inequality in daily life. These are, in turn, justified and explained by assumed differences in physical and biological characteristics, or in the theories of cultural deprivation or intellectual inferiority" (Marable, 2000, p. 449). Without a doubt, "overcoming natural inequality is more difficult than challenging symbolically sustained inferiority" (Murphy & Choi, 1997, p. 48). Postmodernists hope that society could be egalitarian if dualism were erased, to give the minority groups a chance to challenge the dominant group.

The second issue related to identity deals with "identity as sameness," where the dynamics of identification relates to the way "a subject or agent may come to see itself in others, to be itself through its mediated relationships with others and to see others in itself" (Gilroy, 1996, p. 40). Also, "identity as sameness can be distinguished from identity as subjectivity because it moves on from dealing with the formation and location of subjects and their historical individuality into thinking about collective or communal identities: nations, genders, classes, generational, 'racial' and ethnic groups" (Gilroy,
If we could comprehend identity as socially constructed and not as biologically designated, where for example, discourses about racial inferiority were rejected, we might be able to create a society where "the integrity of difference is preserved" (Murphy & Choi, 1997, p. 49).

The third issue encompassed by identity brings the question of solidarity with the characteristics of connectedness and difference "as bases on which social action can be produced." (Gilroy, 1996, p. 40): "Attention to identity as a principle of solidarity asks us to comprehend identity as an effect mediated by historical and economic structures, instantiated in the signifying practices through which they operate and arising in contingent institutional settings that both regulate and express the coming together of individuals in patterned social processes" (Gilroy, 1996, p. 41). That is why, by explaining the concepts of "pluralistic society" and "decentralized identity" and undermining supremacist ideologies, postmodernist theorists believe in creating alternatives for tolerance and respect for differences.

**Proliferation of Differences**

Postmodernists argue that "an open society, based on real pluralism, can be established" (Murphy & Choi, 1997, p. 3). The various social roles and identities are challenged in a pluralistic society, where the recognition for difference is very important (Lash, 1990; Murphy & Choi, 1997; Trey, 1998). Denying a stable identity is almost a defending *differance* against sameness, in Derrida’s terms who considers that any text is unsettled as the text is subjected to different interpretations: "Boundaries between knowledge and world, or text and interpretation, no longer exist; the mind is always
renewing and redefining the texts it tries to contain” (Lyon, 1999, p. 19). As language has
different discourses and meaning is fractured and fragmented, the norms, which are
instituted by language, can be accepted as natural. For postmodernists, “difference is not
something abnormal” and “is the absence of what is anticipated” (Murphy & Choi, 1997,
p. 4). According to Murphy & Choi (1997), the negative connotations attached to
difference need to be questioned:

Rather than focusing on the aberrational, postmodernists want to avoid reifying
culture by emphasizing difference. Accordingly, difference signals a contest over
norms and the idea that societies do not have to be culturally monolithic for them
to survive. Difference represents a call for inclusion without assimilation. Persons
or groups can be accepted on their own terms as different, and not have to fear
marginalization. As opposed to cultural chauvinism, difference relates to a
reciprocity of perspectives and tolerance for alternative norms. (p. 5)

An example of promoting difference in terms of gender is given by Irigaray
(1993) who claims that: “in order to obtain a subjective status equivalent to that of men,
women must therefore gain recognition for their difference. They must affirm themselves
as valid subjects, daughters of a mother and a father, respecting the other within
themselves and demanding that same respect from society” (p. 46). Irigaray (1993)
admits that as long as “the patriarchal social body constructs itself hierarchically,
excluding difference”, the respect for tolerance and difference will be underlined by
women who need to find their own subjectivity. The patriarchal systems threaten female
identities who need to discover the cultural means to live in accordance with their needs,
their desires, their rights and obligations.

Another example which explains the existence of difference as “a stage on the
path of complete integration” (Murphy & Choi, 1997, p. 16) relates to the assimilationist
perspective. Even if Marxists and other radicals embraced the myth of America as a "melting pot", postmodernists argue that "through assimilation the racial myths of racial inferiority can be disproven," "if the proper social conditions are created" (Murphy & Choi, 1997, p. 16). The values of multiculturalism paired with the values of an open society are keys to understanding race and social relations with respect. Seeing society as an ongoing construction, postmodernists argue that by celebrating, recognizing and protecting the differences, a pluralistic society is possible (See Definition of Terms for "melting pot" and "pluralistic society").

Choi (1997) believes that we cannot progress into instituting pluralism by celebrating the differences, unless we understand race as socially and culturally constructed. Still, a clear justification for assimilation is needed otherwise chaos will evolve. Postmodernists claim that the side effects of assimilation such as hierarchy, marginalization, and other forms of oppression could be reinterpreted if ambivalence is explored (Bhabha, 1994; Murphy, 1997). Inquiring "how is repression possible if there is no justification for domination?" (p. 122), Choi (1997) answers:

Accordingly, one race is recognized to be an open "text" and not an essence. the metaphysics of oppression can be attacked. Once human interpretation is recognized to be at the heart of existence, sustaining an identity becomes a matter of praxis (...). Surely, seen in this light, the assimilationist ideas such as "natural inequality" or "genetic inferiority" are silly. Indeed, subsequent to postmodernism, dominating others on the basis of metaphysics is no longer acceptable. To those who benefit from unequal social hierarchy, postmodernism must be scary. However, those who believe that there is "meaning for struggle," and hope for the future, might want to assess closely the tenets of postmodern identity. (p. 122)

The work of artists like Pablo Picasso, Jackson Pollock and John Cage maintain the idea that order can exist without a centralized, hierarchical structure. From music,
postmodernists (Gilroy, 1933a; Kramer, 1997; Murphy, 1997, Murphy & Choi, 1997) take jazz as an example, because it "symbolizes and anticipates new non-dominating social relationships" (Gilroy, 1933a, p. 79): "Like a jazz ensemble where musicians both play against and with one another, order is possible that is replete with contradictions, oppositions, and innovations. In contrast to realism, formalization is not a prerequisite for the survival of order" (Murphy, 1997, p. 25). Again, contrasting differences and experimentation are able to create harmony. "Jazz is an example that undermines monolithic culture" (Choi, 1997, p. 124) or a model of radical pluralism (Gilroy, 1933b) which symbolizes democracy by bringing 'unity within diversity.'

Disorder is also given a special identity by postmodernists, who argue that the negative connotation of disorder would exist as long as it is always explained within the dichotomy order-disorder, where order becomes "a cultural icon, the epitome of reason" (Murphy & Choi, 1997, p. 6). A solution would be to construct different modes of representation of order and disorder to be able to defy the traditionalistic point of view in which every specific arrangement of social factors is seen as chaotic if it is deviant from the norm. Also, postmodernists invoke the presence of the Other as integral to maintaining order: "Since all persons are Others, their mutual recognition is the thread that holds society together. Thus, society is without a core; a constellation of others constitutes order" (Murphy & Choi, 1997, p. 6).

Levinas (1989) argues that diversity can be united on the basis of discourse, where "the relationship with the other is the relationship with the mystery" (p. 43). Like language, which is active, and can have a variety of forms, the Other's identity can also
be interpretive. For order to exist, recognition of differences is necessary: “Only when there is an other,” you can know who you are (Hall, 1991). Order is also established by legitimizing the Other: “A self and other can be linked by nothing but their mutual recognition and tolerance of their respective differences, without chaos automatically ensuing” (Murphy & Choi, 1997, p. 74). Thus, personal freedom and having responsibility for the Other should be viewed as complimentary in order to preserve differences and the overall pattern of social organization.

Postmodernists argue that a pluralistic, democratic society can be secure only if reality is contested, including that of assimilation and integration. They also advocate “decentering” the society: “that is, the aim to illustrate that order can survive in the absence of the usual reality sui generis” (Murphy & Choi, 1997, p.75). The ideal of having a melting pot in the American society, meant, in fact, the abandonment of ethnic heritage by minorities in order to embrace the American traits (Choi, 1997, Murphy, 1997; Murphy & Choi, 1997). Still, the idea of integration and assimilation didn’t necessarily give in return social advantages. The solution would be to have a ‘proper social imagery’, in which differences are recognized and appreciated through the relationships of one to the other:

Without proper social imagery, public order cannot be restored. In a manner similar to collage, persons must be informed that they are essentially tied to one another. The individual does not exist without the other; identity presupposes difference. Every individual action, accordingly, implicates others. Therefore, there is no reason to assimilate, for order is constituted by sameness and difference. One does not exist without the other. Personal identity and collective solidarity occupy a similar plane, and thus social order is not antagonistic to human action. Because turning to the other does not require assimilation, order does not require adherence to a reality sui generis. (Murphy, 1997, p. 27)
Conclusion: Postmodernism and Education

In trying to define diversity using postmodern lenses, I drew upon the main themes that postmodernists refer to in their theories: the knowledge construction and the power/knowledge relationship, deconstructionism, the decentering of identity, and proliferation of differences. I also found it useful to define postmodernism itself by explaining what radical and strategic postmodernism encompass. The linguistic turns (for example, 'the death of the author') and terms (for example, 'difference/differance') emphasize and help us understand that we inevitably become the readers of all texts—the ‘death of the author’ gives us the chance to construct meanings.

The plurality of perspectives, deconstructionism, and the differentiated identities emphasize the absence of any centralized or ‘totalizing’ force. The abandonment of grand narratives permitted, in Lyotard’s view, the existence of ‘little narratives’ (petits recits), which “do not depend on external, objective validation but are internal to the communities within which they occur” (Kumar, 1995, p. 136). This means that the ‘collective identities’ of class, gender, race, sexuality, disabilities are reconstructed and given names like ‘minority’ cultures in a promotion of the ‘politics of difference.’ As identities are fluid and shifting, with no fixed structures, the labels like ‘woman’ or ‘black’ are denied.

Even if deconstructionism was criticized for its apolitical detachment and resignation, for its attitude of irony towards the concepts of subject and agent, for the dissolution of the subject (Kumar, 1995), the postmodern dissolution of the social makes
us reconstruct the traditional concepts of democracy, where the plurality of perspectives along with the politics of identity and difference could be bearers of human rights.

Therefore, in a more practical sense, within the context of education, teachers should strive to erase the labels which emphasize painful differences. Some recommendations emerged from the postmodernist framework are:

1. The teacher must be reflexive about his or her motives in teaching diverse students. What kind of shared reality is being created in the classroom?

2. Diverse labels applied to students should be deconstructed. This means they must be comprehended as historically temporary modes of understanding the categories applied to students. How are gender, disabilities, race, class, and religion categories created and maintained? How are power relations maintained by the use of labels?

3. How can students approach their own biographies with an understanding of how their labels may change over a lifetime?

4. How can cultural hegemony be challenged or indeed can it be?

5. The teacher must include within the instructional practice the possibility to provide voices or narratives from those without power.

According to Best & Kellner (1997):

postmodern culture tends to be more inclusive rather than exclusive, celebrating plurality, difference, and the acceptance of otherness. To be sure, some forms of identity politics are separatist and privilege the standpoint and interests of other groups in an exclusivist fashion, but the participatory democratic strain of the more progressive aspects of the postmodern mitigate against such exclusivity and separatist politics. Attacks on hierarchy and domination in postmodern theory thus provide the basis for a more egalitarian and democratic vision in diverse areas of human life. (p. 280)
I should add that the linguistic turn which challenged the realist assumptions about language, power, and representation gives us the chance to see the importance of uncertainty, ambiguity, and the erosion of boundaries. The aspects of gender, race, class, and disabilities are a reality of a diverse, unequal, consumer society, where dedifferentiation would become useful to people seeking democratic alternatives if we learn how to increase fragmentation and divisiveness. As readers of this contemporary and complicated ‘text’, we have the ethical obligation to reconstruct the truth as process and make it meaningful as meaning evolves.

Other Ways of Defining "Diversity"

Standards for Teacher Education Programs

The purpose of this subchapter is to describe some of the standards that are used by teacher education programs, and relate more or less to diversity. Andrew (1997) bitterly points out that “in this era of standards, writers use the term in many different ways, seldom bothering to unpack the differences in meaning; standards become the answer to all questions” (p. 168). This subchapter does not suggest a critical view of standards, but it examines the nature of standards, and their meanings as stated by NCATE (National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education), NBTS (National Board of Professional Teacher Standards), and INTASC (Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium). Andrew (1997) remarks: “taken as a whole, the three-legged stool links NBTS, NCATE, and INTASC and establishes common standards for the process of teacher preparation and teacher development. NBTS sets goals and
standards; NCATE and INTASC enforce minimum standards for teacher preparation and licensing” (Andrew, 1997, p. 170).

NCATE

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) was founded in 1954 by five organizations with the mission to improve teacher preparation programs. These organizations were: the American Association of Colleges for Teacher education (AACTE), the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC), the National Education Association (NEA), the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), and the National School Boards Association (NSBA; NCATE, 2001).

As a non-profit, non-governmental organization, NCATE members come from 30 professional associations and organizations of teachers, including representatives specialized in content area, or local and state policymakers (Yinger, 1999). The responsibility of NCATE is to accredit schools, colleges, and departments of education (SCDEs), thus replacing AACTE, which used to have this scope. NCATE’s authority to accredit SCDEs is officially recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education and by the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (NCATE, 2001).

NCATE collaborates also with 40 states, which require reviews of the teacher education programs in their SCDEs to undergo NCATE assessment or state assessment by using the NCATE standards. Another partnership developed by NCATE is working with INTASC and NBPTS “to develop compatible standards throughout the professional teaching career” (Yinger, 1999, p.102). This would help “create a professional continuum
for teaching that links program accreditation to initial licensure and to advance
certification standards" (Yinger, 1999, p. 102).

NCATE and Standard 4: Diversity

Starting with 1997, the Standards Committee of NCATE’s Unit Accreditation
Board revises the standards every five years in the following areas: “research on teaching
and learning, research on effective teacher preparation programs; research on regional
accreditation, including a comparative matrix of NCATE accreditation and regional
accreditors” (NCATE, 2001, p. 7).

The NCATE standards “measure an institution’s effectiveness according to the
profession’s expectations for high quality teacher preparation” (NCATE, 2001, p. 7) in
liberal arts and professional studies. The following categories are represented by the
standards: “(1) design of professional education (e.g., conceptual framework, curriculum
design, quality of instruction, quality of field experiences); (2) candidates in professional
education (e.g., qualifications, diversity, assessment of competency); (3) professional
education faculty (e.g., qualifications, diversity, assignments, professional development);
and (4) the unit for professional education (e.g., governance, resources)” (Yinger, 1999,
p. 102).

There are six standards divided as it follows: the first two (Standard 1: Candidate
Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions and Standard 2: Assessment System and Unit
Evaluation) belong candidate performance section, whereas the following four standards
(Standard 3: Field Experiences and Clinical Practice, Standard 4: Diversity, Standard 5:
Faculty Qualifications, Performance, and Development, and Standard 6: Unit Governance and Resources) belong to unit capacity section.

Each of the six NCATE standards contains three components: (a) the language of the standard itself; (b) rubrics that delineate the elements of each standard and describe three proficiency levels at which each element is being addressed; and (c) a descriptive explanation of the standard. The standards apply to both initial teacher preparation and advanced levels (NCATE, 2001, p. 8).

In 1995, the NCATE Standards for Accreditation underwent significant revisions, among which multicultural education and diversity were specified of considered to be incorporated by SCDEs into all aspects of the teacher preparation program. Thus, SCDEs who voluntarily would seek NCATE accreditation are required to demonstrate to a visiting committee that teacher candidates were trained in multiculturalism and student diversity (Cruickshank & Associates, 1996).

In March 31, 2000 the Unit Accreditation Board adopted the 2000 revision of the Unit Standards, which were ratified by the Executive Board on May 11, 2000. As a result of the revisions, Standard 4: Diversity was included within the section Unit Capacity. The language of the standard statement reads as follows:

The unit designs, implements, and evaluates curriculum and experiences for candidates to acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn. These experiences include working with diverse higher education and school faculty, diverse candidates, and diverse students in P-12 schools. (NCATE 2000 Standards, p. 6)

The Supporting Explanation of the standard provides the rationale and the benefit
of including multicultural education/diversity in teacher candidates’ training, field experiences and clinical practices, and candidates and faculty recruitment:

America’s classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse; more than one-third of the students in P-12 classrooms are from minority groups. The families of an increasing number of students are immigrants, many with native language other than English and from diverse religious backgrounds. Growing numbers of students are classified as having disabilities. At the same time, minority teachers are less than 15 percent of the teaching force. As a result, most students do not have the opportunity to benefit from a diverse teaching force. Teacher candidates need to develop proficiencies for working with students from diverse backgrounds and with exceptionalities to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn. Regardless of whether they live in areas with great diversity, candidates must develop knowledge of diversity in the United States and the world, dispositions that respect and value differences, and skills for working in diverse settings. (NCATE, 2001, p. 31)

Standard 4 on diversity focuses also on the experiences and knowledge that the preservice teachers (candidates) are being introduced and challenged with during their classroom instruction and field experiences. Although the standard does not state specifically, one of the challenges that teacher educators would encounter in their diverse classrooms is to adapt the curriculum, their teaching strategies, their assessment tools, goals, objectives, and materials to the needs of their learners:

They [curriculum, field experiences, and clinical practice] are based on well-developed knowledge bases for, and conceptualizations of, diversity and inclusion so that candidates can apply them effectively in schools. Candidates learn to contextualize teaching and to draw upon representations from the students’ own experiences and knowledge. They learn how to challenge students toward cognitive complexity and engage all students, including students with exceptionalities, through instructional conversation. Candidates and faculty review assessment data that provide information about candidates’ ability to work with all students and develop a plan for improving their practice in this area. (NCATE, 2001, p. 29)

A practical guide for teacher for preparing preservice and inservice teachers for culturally diverse classrooms that meet the NCATE diversity standards is recommended.
by Smith (1994). The fourteen knowledge bases described are the following: (a).

Foundations of Multicultural Education; (b) Sociocultural Contexts of Human Growth and Development in Non-Mainstream Ethnic and Racial Cultures; (c) Cultural Learning Styles; (d) Language, Communication and Interactional Styles of Non-Mainstream Cultures; (e) Essential Elements of Culture; (f) Principles of Culturally Responsive Teaching and Culturally Responsive Curriculum Development; (g) Effective Strategies for Teaching Minority students; (h) Craft Wisdom; (i) Effects of Policy and Practice on Culture, Race, Gender, and Other Categories of Diversity; (j) Culturally Responsive Diagnosis, Measurement, and Assessment; (k) Sociocultural Influences on Subject-Specific Learning; (l) Gender and Sexual Orientation; (m) Experiential Knowledge. For each identified knowledge base, Smith (1994) suggests major resources and references for teacher educators, where they can find definitions, models, and research data.

NBPTS

The National Board of Professional Teacher Standards (NBPTS) was created in 1987, but its importance as an independent, nonprofit, nonpartisan and nongovernmental organization was stated in the report “A Nation Prepared: Teachers for the 21st Century” (May 16, 1986) released by the Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy’s Task Force on Teaching as a Profession.

The NBPTS mission statement is “to advance the quality of teaching and learning by:

• maintaining high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do,
• providing a national voluntary system certifying teachers who meet these standards, and
• advocating related education reforms to integrate National Board Certification in American education and to capitalize on the expertise of National Board Certified Teachers” (NBPTS, 2003).

Their first policy statement, “What Teachers Know and Should Be Able to Do” (NBPTS, 2003) describes five “core propositions” for effective teaching, individual teacher growth, and individual teacher assessment. These five areas of focus could be used for a common or standard curriculum framework “for all initial teacher preparation efforts, for teacher licensing, and for experienced teachers to assess their own work and professional growth” (Andrew, 1997, p. 170). Consequently, criteria for high levels of performance are based on these five core propositions and are used by the National Board Certification. Teachers are certified if their teacher preparation efforts reflect professional growth; this certification is complementary to the state licensing. Thus, through authentic assessment, teachers need to “construct a portfolio that represents an analysis of their classroom work and participate in exercises designed to tap the knowledge, skills, disposition and professional judgment that distinguish their practice” (NBPTS, 2003).

The five core propositions are the following:

• Teachers are committed to students and their learning.

• Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.

• Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
- Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
- Teachers are members of learning communities (NBPTS, 2003).

In a broader sense, the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that are required for professional excellence imply also teaching effectively diverse student population and adapting the instructional practices in order to meet their needs. Statements like: “Accomplished teachers foster students' self-esteem, motivation, character, civic responsibility and their respect for individual, cultural, religious and racial differences” or “Accomplished teachers are models of educated persons, exemplifying the virtues they seek to inspire in students - curiosity, tolerance, honesty, fairness, respect for diversity and appreciation of cultural differences - and the capacities that are prerequisites for intellectual growth: the ability to reason and take multiple perspectives to be creative and take risks, and to adopt an experimental and problem-solving orientation” (NBPTS, 2003) relate to the notion of “diversity” and how an effective educator should address it.

**INTASC and Standard 3: Diverse Learners**

Created in 1987 as a program of the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) is “a consortium of state education agencies and national educational organizations dedicated to the reform of the preparation, licensing, and on-going professional development of teachers” (INTASC, 2004; NCDPI, 2004). INTASC, like NCATE, is advocating performance-based assessment called competencies to measure minimum standards. Each standard is further described through “knowledge,” “dispositions” and “performances.” There are ten core standards, but there are also subject-matter standards for discipline-based
knowledge. The ten core standards focus on content pedagogy, student development, diverse learners, multiple instructional strategies, motivation and management, communication and technology, planning, assessment, professional growth, and school and community involvement (INTASC, 2004; NCDPI, 2004).

Standard 3 refers to the needs of diverse learners and how to adapt instruction to meet their needs. It is stated as follows: “The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners” (Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium, 1992, p. 19). Therefore, the competencies that the teacher candidate needs to accomplish imply adjusting instruction to accommodate learning differences, providing services to meet the exceptional learning needs, using different types of interaction and assignments appropriate to students’ stages of development, learning styles, etc, and respecting individual differences (INTASC, 2004).

Andrew (1997) argues that although the functions of NCATE and INTASC are important as gatekeeper organizations (their role is to enforce minimum standards for teacher preparation and licensing), there are two problems in identifying them as a key strategy for realizing the report’s goals. First, they will not promote improvement beyond minimum standards. If they work, they may serve to enforce a common curriculum, eliminate subpart individuals or institutions, and perhaps bring a few institutions up to minimum standard. They do not make good programs better, nor they bring better candidates into teaching. Other strategies are necessary for recruiting and preparing more good beginning teachers. Second, they can become inordinately wasteful of time and resources if one loses sight of their limitations and organizes massive efforts around gatekeeping functions (pp. 170-171).

Further on, Andrew (1997) suggests that in order to improve
preservice teacher preparation, teacher licensing, and experienced teacher
development is to connect these three activities with a common definition of good
teaching and improve quality by a system of standards and assessments that does
two things: (1) enforces minimum standards for preparation of teachers and entry
into teaching, (2) establishes high standards with voluntary tests for identifying
teachers who excel (pp.174-175).

I agree with Andrew's (1997) point of view as standards in teacher education
program should not only be looked upon as a rigid system of criteria. Furthermore, there
is no clear evidence that, for example, the assessments for state licensing of beginning
teachers are valid and reliable. Standards should enhance the quality of teacher education
programs, but they should be complementary to “high academic standards, superior
teaching, substantive coursework, a well-organized and guided clinical experience, and a
high success rate of graduates” (Andrew, 1997, p. 174).

“The Problem of Criteria in the Age of Relativism”

This subchapter represents a bridge between the themes of postmodernism and the
criteria used in teacher education programs. It came from a better understanding of what
“relativity” means, not as a dichotomy relationship of certainty-chaos, but as a challenge
to criteria and standardization. J. Smith and D. K. Deemer (2000) wrote the article with
the same title in regard to “any discussion of criteria for judging social and educational
inquiry” which should “confront the issue of relativism” (p. 877). The authors discuss
some of the conditions under which issues of criteria and relativism are addressed by
using a brief historical review of the quasi-foundationalists and non-foundationalists’
perspectives, and by emphasizing the meaning of “relativism” itself. In the authors’
view, we need to understand relativism as “nothing more or less than our condition in the
world-it announces that as human beings we are, and can be nothing but, finite” (Smith &
Deemer, 2000, p. 878). Further on, they underline that “relativism is not something to be transcended, it is merely something with which we, as finite beings, must learn to live” (p. 885). By acknowledging the limits of individual and collective judgment within social spaces, we affirm that reality is socially constructed and consequently, our inquiries and productions should be practically and morally responsible.

Therefore, within educational settings, in which knowledge is socially and educationally constructed, categorizing or labeling children using categories such as Special Education or labels such as LD (learning disabled) or ADD (attention disability disorder), show that if we use “the metaphors of constructing” our inquiries are practical and moral, not epistemological:

For those who operate with the image of researchers as “discoverers,” LD is a natural category—there always were LD children, and the reason we have recently discovered them is that our inquiries have become increasingly sophisticated. For those who use the language of making or constructing, LD is a constructed category—a way we have chosen, for whatever social/historical reasons, to categorize children. The point is not that we dispense with categorization, which in any case is impossible for the finite human mind. To the contrary, the point is to examine and fully discuss why we construct the world as we do. This is a discussion that is practical and moral, framed by contingent social and historical circumstances, and certainly not epistemological in any theory-of-knowledge sense of word. (Smith & Deemer, 2000, p. 886)

Smith and Deemer’s conclusion is subdued, that unless we comprehend our finite condition of being into this world, we can make erroneous and immoral judgments or establish wrong criteria. By recognizing “the need for and value of plurality, multiplicity, the acceptance and celebration of differences” (Smith & Deemer, 2000, p. 894) relativists go along with the nonfoundationalists’ perspectives, for whom “the issue of criteria for
judging inquiry is a practical and moral affair, and not an epistemological one” (Smith & Deemer, 2000, p.894).

If we repose the questions that came out from the postmodernist framework (such as How are gender, disabilities, race, class categories created and maintained? How are power relations maintained by the use of labels?), we should be optimistic that when we challenge the old hierarchies of class, gender, race, disabilities, we embrace a moral attitude. In this age of relativism, truth itself has become more difficult to be defined, consequently any criteria, categorization, labeling, should be challenged. On the other hand, as Lyon (1999) argues: “Situated knowledge(s), positional standpoints, critical stances—these all suggest that the search for a center, for some criteria of judgment, for something to unify and make sense of the fragmented and the fluid, persists in social theory” (p. 103). Along with that, the postmodern teaching practices reflect the moral responsibilities of our choices within discourses that embrace reflective teaching, creativity, social interactions, and the nurture of communities on principals of community solidarity, social justice, plurality, multiplicity, acceptance and celebration of differences, and open dialogue (Deemer & Smith, 2000; Parker, 1997).

How teacher educators could challenge the criteria that is already established for them through teaching standards, grades, assessment, standardized tests, etc. is almost an everyday issue. In an argument about the advantages of introducing cultural studies in colleges of education, Giroux (1996) advocates for expanding the definition of pedagogy in order to move beyond a limited emphasis on the mastery of techniques and methodologies. This should enable students to understand pedagogy as a configuration of textual, verbal, and visual practices that seek to engage processes through which people understand themselves and
the possible ways in which they engage others and their environment. Pedagogy represents a form of cultural production implicated in and critically attentive to how power and meaning are employed in the construction and organization of knowledge, desires, values and identities (p.52).

In other words, we, as educators should refuse “to hide behind claims of objectivity” and “link theory to practice in the service of expanding the possibilities of democratic life” (Giroux, 1996, p. 52).

The need to construct an ethical language should be in counterpart with the need to reconstruct “the traditional binarisms of margin/center, unity/difference, local/national, public/private” “as more complex representations of identification, belonging, and community” (Giroux, 1996, p. 53). By rethinking our actual inquiries (Smith & Deemer, 2000) and pedagogical practices, we actually challenge the boundaries set up through legitimization and criteria within social and educational contexts. We, as educators, have the chance to promote ethical and moral values and foster a more equitable society. Maybe one direction would be to assess students’ motivation or civic engagement, than to evaluate them by judging them based on the test scores (Fuller, 2004). Understanding relativism as seen in the postmodernist framework, and our finite condition as human beings, we should reconstruct our individual and collective judgments and inquiries with ethical and moral commitments. This is, in fact, our role of progressive educators who “emphasize the importance of radical democracy as a political, social, and ethical referent for rethinking how citizens can be educated to deal with a world made up of different, multiple, fractured public cultures” (Giroux, 1994, p. 53). Understanding the differences, we, in fact, respect the “other.”
Implementing Diversity in Teacher Education Programs

There is an emphasis in the literature on the importance of diversity in teacher education programs and also, on the dilemmas that teacher educators are facing when it comes to improving their practices to address the needs of diverse learners (Banks, 2001a; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Gallos, Ramsey, & Associates, 1997; Gay, 1997; Gollnick, 1992a,b; Irvine, 2003; Nieto, 2000a; Sleeter, 1992; Sleeter & Grant, 2003). Suggestions for comprehensive and holistic revisions and restructures of preservice teacher education programs are being made (Brown, 1992; Garibaldi, 1992). For example, Gollnick (1992b) argues that “in reconceptualizing the curriculum, teacher educators must critically analyze the content to ensure that it reflects the diverse perspectives of the country’s multicultural population. The multiple voices of students and communities must be incorporated.” (p.70). Nieto (2000b) suggests that “teacher education programs need to (a) take a stand on social justice and diversity, (b) make social justice ubiquitous in teacher education, and (c) promote teaching as a life-long journey of transformation” (p.182-183). By taking a stand on social justice and diversity, teacher education programs must address diversity as a resource in the service of learning (Banks, 2001a; Darling-Hammond, 2002; Nieto, 2000a). Social justice could be valued if diversity were implemented at all levels: within curriculum, field experiences, course assignments and readings, textbooks and materials, instructional strategies, tracking, recruiting and hiring of staff: “In sum, diversity would become part of the normal experience for all prospective teachers” (Nieto, 2000b, p.183). To promote teaching as a life-long journey of transformation, Nieto (2000b) argues that teacher education
programs should provide opportunities for their students to face and accept their own identities, to become learners of their students' realities, to develop strong and meaningful relationships with their students, to become multilingual and multicultural, to learn to challenge racism and other biases, and to develop a community of critical friends. Referring to the future teachers, in her conclusion, Nieto (2000b) advocates collective and institutional efforts to be able to make positive and valuable changes in teacher education programs:

What they learn in their teacher education programs can have an enormous impact on the attitudes and practices that teachers bring with them to the schools where they work. If teachers and prospective teachers learn to challenge societal inequities that place some students at a disadvantage over others, if they learn to question unjust institutional policies and practices, if they learn about and use the talents of students and their families in the curriculum, if they undergo a process of personal transformation based on their own identities and experiences, and, finally, if they are prepared to engage with colleagues in a collaborative and imaginative encounter to transform their own practices to achieve equal and high-quality education for all students, then the outcome is certain to be a more positive one than is currently the case. (p. 186)

Scholars and researchers advocate training in open inquiry, reflection, guided experience and study to help student teachers to understand the world better, by analyzing it from multiple perspectives in order to reach diverse learners (Banks, 2001a; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Grant & Sleeter, 2003; Harrington & Hathaway, 1995; Rosenfelt, 1997; Sleeter & Grant, 2003). Going beyond their personal boundaries, learning would become not only the basis for developing knowledge but also a unique experience for the teachers themselves as they are trying to see it through the eyes of their learners.

A particular example for preparing teachers for diversity is expressed in an article by Gloria Ladson-Billings (2000), where her concern is towards the needs of African
American students. The author offers some strategies for improving the education of teachers, as "no single course or set of field experiences is capable of preparing preservice students to meet the needs of diverse learners. Rather, a more systemic, comprehensive approach is needed" (p. 209). The strategies are the following: "the use of autobiographies, restructured field experiences, situated pedagogies, and returning to the classroom of experts" (p. 209). By situated pedagogies, Ladson-Billings (2000) believes in preparing future teachers to serve in their communities, being aware at the same time of the diversity of student populations in other schools. Returning to the classroom of experts involves academic achievement by setting high standards for all students, cultural competence, by "acknowledging the legitimacy of students' home language and using it as a bridge to American Edited English" (p. 210), or by using the "curriculum content selections that reflect the full range of humanity extant in students' cultures" (p. 210), and sociopolitical critique.

In her article "Fighting for Our Lives: Preparing Teachers to Teach African American Students," Ladson-Billings (2000) promotes antiracist teacher programs, recommending reassessing admissions procedures, reexamining course work, restructuring field experiences, and recruiting and retaining African American scholars. In more general terms, by addressing the needs of all diverse learners, NCATE diversity standard (NCATE, 2001) underlines the importance of developing coursework, field experiences and clinical practice, and recruitment of students and faculty as important tenets of addressing diversity from multicultural and global perspectives. Therefore, the following sections review some of the literature and research, which outline also the
characteristics of standards on diversity (NCATE: Standard 4: Diversity), or, on the contrary, the standards might lack the complexity of the issues that diversity brings in the classrooms.

Curriculum

Numerous teacher education programs across the United States seek to comply with the NCATE standards to provide accountability and improve teacher preparation. Those programs are being challenged by two NCATE standards in particular: the composition of candidates for licensure and the composition of the faculty. In response to these standards, programs attempt to increase faculty's levels of awareness and enhance their accomplishments for infusing culturally responsive and responsible pedagogy across curriculum. As a result of the changes in demographics, all educators must face the reality of culturally and linguistically diverse students in the classrooms (Gallavan, Troutman, & Jones, 2001; Parla, 1994; Wiggins & Folio, 1999). The goal should be “to assume the responsibility of preparing all teachers, regardless of race, to teach in culturally diverse classrooms” (Garibaldi, 1992, p. 23).

Literature show the importance of integrating multicultural education into the curricula of all general studies or academic foundation courses and methods courses of teacher education programs, even if this would imply developing a new knowledge base for diversity (Banks, 1988; Gay; 1997). Garibaldi (1992) considers that “including additional academic knowledge related to diversity and multicultural contexts that can be incorporated into their [student teachers] professional education curricula and their clinical teaching experiences” (p. 24) is a responsibility of all schools, colleges, and
departments of education (SCDEs). However, researchers (Garibaldi, 1992; Golnick, 1992) plead for a holistic approach to teacher training where the knowledge base, is as important as planning and organizing instruction, educational assessment, classroom management, building communities, textbook selection, and fields experiences for the benefit of diverse learners.

**Knowledge Construction and Teaching Strategies**

As the diversity within the demographics of the United States can be noticed at a micro-level, within the demographics of schools, teacher education programs have the crucial role to prepare effective teachers "to understand diversity, and to develop an equity-oriented pedagogy" (Darling-Hammond, 2002, p. 1). Therefore, teacher education programs should prepare preservice teachers to address diversity as a central theme within classroom practices and adapt instruction for all learners to meet their individual needs.

A real concern in the literature refers to the nature of knowledge and the way it is institutionalized within teacher education programs (Armaline & Farber, 1995; Banks, 2001a; Hurn, 1993; Irvine, 2003). Do teacher education programs enable students to be reflective, culturally responsive, caring and critical practitioners (Banks, 2001b, Irvine, 2003)? Do preservice teachers view knowledge as a social construction, and consequently do they view class, race, gender, disabilities, talented/gifted as socially constructed paradigms? Curriculum should allow students to analyze diversity within social, political, or cultural contexts. According to Banks (2001a), school knowledge "must describe events, concepts, and situations from the perspectives of the diverse cultural, racial,
gender, and social-class groups within a society, including those that are politically and culturally dominant as well as those that are structurally excluded from full societal participation” (p. 201).

Scholars and researchers who think of classrooms as inclusive of diversity, advocate a transformative curriculum, through which students from marginalized groups could also feel empowered (Armaline & Farber, 1995; Bang, 2002; Banks, 2001a; French, 2002; Pettis-Renwick, 2002; Rosenfelt, 1997; Sleeter & Grant, 2003). According to Banks (2001a), the main goals for a transformative and empowering curriculum should be reflective-decision making, and personal and civic action. In other words, preservice teachers could reconstruct the knowledge gained through the use of multiple voices (textbook, speakers, teachers, field experiences, assignments, additional readings, etc) by critically analyzing the examples, situations, perspectives, and interpreting them with their own values.

There are, of course, various examples in the literature of models of or approaches to the multicultural education (Banks, 2001a; Gay, 1997; Rosenfelt, 1997; Sleeter, 1995; Sleeter & Grant, 2003). I have chosen one way of addressing diversity within curriculum, which is recommended by Rosenfelt (1997) and could be applied to teacher education programs. I think that her “model” could help preservice teachers to be actively involved in their learning by reconstructing the knowledge and filtering it through their own values and moral choices.

Rosenfelt (1997) identifies four concepts from which instructors can develop units within their courses:
• Race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability must be seen as socially and historically constructed concepts rather than innate categories of identity;
• One must consider postmodern challenges to scientific views of objectivity (which I explained in the chapter on criteria and relativism);
• One also needs to understand the politics of representation in language and the media, by examining contemporary events;
• Finally, tension between community and diversity (differences among groups or among commonalities must be emphasized by deconstructing the binaries of equality/difference, nationalism/assimilation, community/diversity).

Rosenfelt (1997) also suggests different materials for analyzing each concept such as various critical readings or films from areas such as literature, music or sciences.

I already explained in the previous chapter on postmodernism, how the postmodernist ideas and concepts could be used to address diversity. Along with Rosenfelt’s (1997) suggested strategies, there are other examples of different approaches to diversity that could improve teaching practices. Students could explore the categories of difference (race, gender, class, language, etc) by analyzing how they interact in their construction and deconstruction, or they could use their autobiographies and reflect upon them, trying “to determine their own stage of cultural identity and become sensitive to their ethnic and cultural behaviors and characteristics” (Banks, 2001a, p. 309).

One way to explore, for example, the social construction of “power” would be by deconstructing it in terms of the hegemonic power of dominant culture and oppressed groups, cultural capital, privilege, production/reproduction, symbolic violence, equality
(such as educational or economic opportunities) and marginalization (Apple, 1990; Armaline & Farber, 1995; Garcia, 2002; Hurn, 1993; Rosefelt, 1997). Preservice teachers should discuss the relations between power and knowledge, and understand that "one way in which powerful groups legitimize their power is through the construction of knowledge, which includes concepts and propositions that justify their privilege position, and explain why marginalized groups deserve their low status in society" (Banks, 2001a, p. 160). Students could use critical thinking and decision-making when analyzing their own values, beliefs, and assumptions and reconstruct new meanings their cultural knowledge.

Advocates of multicultural education argue that autobiographies or "identity quests" would help students explore and reflect upon their own ethnic, racial, cultural journeys and empower those from marginalized groups (Banks, 2001a; Gallos, Ramsey, & Associates, 1997; Garcia, 2002; French, 2002; Narez, 2002; Nieto, 2000a; Sleeter & Grant, 2003). Addressing identity through curriculum should be done in a sensitive and responsible manner by avoiding the stereotypes, labels or prejudicial viewpoints, and by examining preservice teachers' beliefs about diversity (Garcia, 2002; Nieto, 2000a; Rios & Gonzales, 1995; Sleeter & Grant, 2003).

Teacher education programs should prepare students to embrace diversity by accepting and understanding the differences and see them as fundamentally interrelated (Garcia, 2002; Irvine, 2003; Steele, 2002). To acknowledge the differences is also a positive way to fight assumptions, biases, and stereotypes. (Banks, 2001a; Garcia, 2002;
Irvine (2003) Although referring to students of color, Irvine’s (2003) explanation about recognizing that “difference makes a difference” could have implications for all learners:

[It] should change how we think about teaching and learning. When differences are perceived as deficits, deficiencies, or dilemmas, students are treated as lacking in the qualities and attributes necessary for school success. When teachers ignore differences and refuse to change their belief systems and adapt their instructional approaches, students of color fail to achieve. (p. 86)

A vast literature can be found regarding the instructional strategies recommended for teacher education programs. The most useful ones seem to be the following: using students’ backgrounds for a deeper cross-cultural understanding and sensitivity; hands-on activities; critical reflections and inquiry by analyzing case studies with peers or reflecting on their own experiences; “guided reflection” after each field experience; critical reflection by analyzing issues such as racism, institutional discrimination, exceptionalities, class, sexism, stereotypes, power, prejudice, oppression. Other suggested strategies for dealing with controversial issues are: (a) analyzing movies; (b) discussing documentaries; (c) listening to diverse speakers on campus; (d) cooperative learning and collaborative teaching; (e) role plays; (f) simulation and games; (g) critical-thinking and problem-solving activities; (h) journal writing; (i) readings on diversity; (j) living with children from different backgrounds; (k) tutoring; and (l) conducting community service (Banks, 2001a; Irvine, 2003; Nieto, 1999).

Cultural awareness through instruction is also tackled by Arends, Clemson, & Henkelman (1992) who recommend research, repertoire, reflection, and relationships as significant steps towards a thematic structure of the training programs for teacher candidates. In other words, context is important for both teachers and students; thus
teacher candidates should develop a repertoire of teaching strategies to address different goals, should “analyze and reflect on their teaching methods and on particular teaching situation” (p. 170), and should build qualitative relationships with students, colleagues, and supervisors. This thematic structure could be read as synonymous with the tenets of NCATE Standard 4, where, by working with diverse faculty, diverse candidates, or diverse students in P-12 schools, teachers candidates have the opportunities to develop relationships and proficiencies in terms of knowledge, skills, and dispositions for accommodating the needs of all learners.

Promoting reflection and critical inquiry within instruction is often mentioned in the literature (Buckley, 2000; Lynch, 1997; Grant & Sleeter, 2003; Sleeter & Grant, 2003). Arends et al. (1992) recommend various strategies to enhance reflective teaching and decision making, such as “weekly proseminar, self-help laboratories, maintenance of individual journals, coaching, and special seminar papers” (p. 172). In an attempt to make us aware of the importance of understanding history and the meaning of race, Takaki (1998) “invite[s] us to see ourselves in a different mirror:”

(...) will Americans of diverse races and ethnicities be able to connect themselves to a larger narrative? Whatever happens, we can be certain that much of our society’s future will be influenced by which “mirror” we choose to see ourselves. America does not belong to one race or one group...Americans have been constantly redefining their national identity...(p. 63)

Therefore, the “mirror” could also be a metaphor for the search of our identities, and teachers could use this metaphor as an instructional strategy that induces reflection.

Banks (2001a) states how teacher education programs could be effective for the preservice teachers who will work with diverse learners:
Teacher education needs to be reformed in ways that will provide opportunities for teachers to critically examine their personal knowledge and values. Teachers also need to uncover and examine the knowledge and values that underlie, justify, and legitimize practices in schools, such as the classification of racial and ethnic groups, special education programs, and programs for gifted and talented students. (p. 161)

Instruction in teacher education programs should also address diversity by being challenging, effective for all students, and consistent with democratic and humane values. We have the amazing opportunity to "see ourselves in a different mirror" (Takaki, 1998, p. 63) and make a change by being truthful to ourselves and the world by using knowledge, reflection and action (praxis) as practitioners on the quest of educational equality.

Community and School Collaborations

An important factor for a successful learning environment is collaboration at all levels: among teachers, between teachers and school representatives, teachers and stakeholders in the community (Kluth & Straut, 2001a). Teacher education program should also promote collaboration and communication among students, students and school faculty, or educators in P-12 schools (NCATE, 2001). Other recommendations in the literature refer to teacher education student involvement with parents and communities representing diverse cultures (Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Teacher Education, 1997).

Kluth and Straut (2001a) also note collaboration within the classroom, where student teachers should use pair work/team work. For example, that it is very important to give students with significant disabilities the opportunity to work with their peers, and not to sit in a corner of the classroom getting help from a paraprofessional. Challenging
students to build their own classroom culture (Cazden & Mehan, 1989; Garibaldi, 1992; Kluth & Straut, 2001a), such as “expected behaviors for different classroom contexts (for example, a lesson, taking a test, individual or group activities, or recess)” (Garibaldi, 1992, p.26-27) and community would not only contribute to developing a meaningful interaction between teacher and students, but it would also increase the chances of having a valuable curriculum. Cooperation should also be encouraged within family communities (Arends, Clemson, & Henkelman, 1992; Brown; 1992; Garibaldi, 1992) or through “various aspects of membership and participation in the multicultural community” (Arends et al., 1992, p. 172).

When referring to the relationship theme, Arends et al. (1992) emphasizes the fact that developing multicultural awareness through relationships within the teaching staff and students, or other collaborations and cooperative programs in diverse settings, or within curriculum, helps significantly to promote cross-cultural sensitivity.

Assessment

Multiple forms of assessment that are sensitive to diversity are suggested as being useful in diverse classrooms (Garibaldi, 1992; Grant & Sleeter, 2003; Kluth & Straut, 2001a). Garibaldi (1992) considers that:

More attention should be devoted to the critical relationship that exists between educational assessment and teacher perceptions since sufficient evidence exists to demonstrate that many students are treated and judged inequitably because of teachers’ beliefs and attitudes rather than objective measures of student performances. (p. 31)

Scholars suggest to rely on the strengths and interests (rather than the deficits) that students have within and outside the academic context (Kluth, Straut, & Biklen,
2003), to use modified or alternative grading system and specific monitoring system for student progress such as curriculum-based measurement, test-teach-test or portfolio assessment (Grossman, 1995; Miller, 2002), to respect diversity and not evaluate students in terms of “winners” or “losers” as it is the case with standardized norm-referenced tests (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998; Grant & Sleeter, 2003), and to maintain high expectations for all students (Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Gollinck & Chinn, 1998). It is also recommended that in order to be sensitive to diversity, teacher educators should adapt their assessment procedures toward nonbiased assessment by taking into consideration “the contextual, cultural, linguistic, and gender differences among students” (Grossman, 1995, p. 254), and by being very careful when choosing the assessment materials, and interpreting the data obtained.

Classroom Management

Literature shows that one of teacher educators’ concerns is how to manage their classroom (Cabello & Burstein, 1995; Garibaldi, 1992; Miller, 2002). Teacher education programs could significantly focus on this aspect, and student teachers could definitely have a real experience in their practicum, by establishing “a successful behavioral management focus on the academic and social needs of the students” (Miller, 2002, p. 86). Miller (2002) suggests teacher educators to establish low-intensity (class rules, praise, ignore undesired behavior), medium-intensity (contingency contracting, token economy systems, self-management strategies) and high-intensity techniques contingencies (different programs that help students improve their academic and social performances in the classroom). The low-intensity techniques could be combined, and
medium and high-intensity techniques should be introduced gradually until successful management and positive classroom environment are achieved. A useful advice regarding classroom/behavior management in a diverse society is given by Grossman (1995):

Because many educators contribute to students' behavior problems by relating to them in a discriminatory manner, they can begin by correcting their own ethnic, socioeconomic, and gender biases. Rather than interpreting students' behavior from their own perspectives, educators can avoid misperceiving and misunderstanding students' behaviors by taking students' behavior styles into consideration. Finally, they can use classroom/behavior management techniques that empower rather than disempower students. (p. 326)

Thus, teacher educators should reconsider their own perspectives and interpretations before employing any techniques; they should also learn how to accommodate management techniques "reflecting cultural, socioeconomic, and language factors" (Cabello & Burstein, 1995) to student characteristics.

Textbook Selection

Teacher education programs are also responsible for the selection of professional education textbooks, "that address issues pertinent to multicultural populations" (Garibaldi, 1992, p. 34). In twenty-four states, textbooks must be adopted by the state, so teachers are assigned the textbooks they need to use (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998; Hernandez, 2001; Starr, 1989). Although there are still biased textbooks, teachers should counteract them by providing multiethnic instruction and bringing additional materials in the classroom to use them in open discussions. Gollnick and Chinn (1998) describe six forms of bias that could be found in classroom materials: invisibility "the underrepresentation of specific microcultures in materials" p.322), stereotyping (assigning "traditional and rigid roles or attributes to a group", consequently denying "the
diversity and complexity of individuals,” p. 322), selectivity and imbalance (“when issues and situations are interpreted from one perspective, almost always the perspective of the dominant group,” p. 322), unreality (“unrealistic portrayal of U.S. history and contemporary life experiences,” p. 323), fragmentation and isolation (addressing “nondominant groups and related issues in a fragmented and isolated manner,” p. 323), and linguistic bias. For example, some textbooks provide gender or cultural stereotypes. Teachers should choose textbooks and instructional materials that are sensitive to diversity (Gollnick & Chinn, 1998). Hernandez (2001) also enumerates the most common types of bias that appear in the instructional materials: inaccuracy, stereotyping, omissions and distortions, and biased language usage, and offers some guidelines for bias-free instructional materials, regarding content, illustrations, and language.

Field Experiences

The “Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel on Teacher Education” (1997) recommends that students in teacher education programs should be involved in communities “representing diverse cultures, characteristics, and ability levels” (p. 22). The report also suggests that the students should also have clinical practices and field experiences, which can give them the opportunities to work with and effectively meet the needs of diverse learners (Blue Ribbon Panel Report, 1997; Hollingsworth, Teel, & Minarik, 1992). Studies show that students develop and form positive attitudes towards diversity if their teacher education programs examine diversity issues from various perspectives and if they can apply the theoretical input into their field experiences (Valle, 2002; Zhou, 2002).
Another problem discussed in the literature is that many white students in teacher education programs seem to have unfavorable attitudes towards diversity, choosing to teach in locations where white students are the majority (Wade, 1998). For example, "most of the prospective elementary teachers are white females in their 20s who have spent the majority of their lives in suburban communities" (Wiggins & Follo, 1999, p. 95). In essence, they choose to teach within their ethnic comfort zones.

Other scholars recommend different approaches to prepare students to teach in culturally diverse settings, such as an emphasis on pedagogical techniques or on field experiences (Wiggins & Follo, 1999). One of the recommendations stated in the "Report of the Blue Ribbon Panel" (1997) in terms of diversity emphasizes having diverse learners in clinical practice and field experiences "in order for the student teacher to observe and apply effective practices with diverse populations and to link knowledge of the subject area with knowledge of the learner and the learning process" (p. 22).

Clarken and Hirsat (1992) argue that "it is not enough to place students in culturally diverse settings; appropriate teaching should be modeled at these sites by master teachers and university faculty" (p. 6). Other scholars also sustain this point of view of having mentor teachers to act as models (Grant, 1994; Holm & Johnson, 1994; Ilmer, Snyder, Erbaugh & Kurz, 1997; Nel, 1992).

Wiggins and Follo (1999) consider that more important than early field experiences in diverse settings is seeking "to influence the attitudes and beliefs of all students, including those who student teach in suburban and monocultural classrooms. This is more likely to occur if students have considerable experience with multicultural
issues throughout their teacher preparation program, and if these experiences effect change in more than just student' knowledge about diversity” (p. 96). Many scholars agree on the importance of understanding cultural norms (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Wiggins & Follo, 1999) and these kinds of experiences with multicultural issues would definitely lead to a better understanding of them.

Faculty Recruitment

One of the issues about teacher education programs is that, ironically, while student populations grow diverse, the preservice teacher population is becoming more homogenous, that is, primarily white and middle-class (Andrew, 1997; Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 2000; Kluth, Straut, & Biklen, 2003). One challenge for teacher education programs arising from the mismatch of teacher and student cultures would be to facilitate intercultural sensitivity (Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 2000; Gomez, 1993). Andrew (1997) also argues that preservice teacher preparation is very important for recruitment and selection. Therefore, the reputation of teacher education programs would have positive outcomes in attracting very good candidates. There are also universities who are willing to spend lots of money on programs which would improve diversity among faculty, and by finding jobs for employee spouses so that families will not have to leave the state (for example, Iowa State University; Iowa State University, 2000).

Measuring Preservice Teachers’ Commitment, Dispositions, Beliefs or Skills to Teach Diversity With or Without Multicultural Training

This section describes some studies that focused on measuring teacher educators/ preservice teacher educators’ commitment, dispositions, beliefs or skills to teach
diversity. The researchers' findings, recommendations, and points of views are valuable sources for teacher education programs to consider. As each study is unique in terms of context, sampling, procedures, instrumentation, analysis, and conclusions, I am going to present the summaries and/or the most important findings of each study.

Leithwood and Montgomery (1980) suggest observations and interviews with teacher educators, studies of the syllabi, which would lead to the development of various materials, and also to ways of evaluating the classroom activities. McDiarmid (1992) analyzed through interviews and classroom scenarios, the responses of twelve teacher trainees before and after their multicultural workshop. Their responses focused on attitudes, stereotypes, views about history, pedagogical techniques, and teacher behaviors towards culturally different learners.

However, there were not significant differences in the responses before and after the multicultural training. McDiarmid (1992) notices: “Responding to scenarios is obviously not the same as teaching. What people say they will do and what they do are frequently different (...) I claim that what they notice in the scenarios and how they reason through various teaching tasks tells us about what they are capable of doing” (p. 85). Based on the conclusions of his analysis, McDiarmid (1992) expressed his concern about the future of multicultural education, and raised questions for practitioners about the content and pedagogy of multicultural programs.

An example of measuring teacher trainees' commitment to teach diversity without any previous multicultural training is Timmons' (1998) ethnographic study. The researcher attempted to “chronicle two elementary teachers’ classroom management, focusing
particularly on the teachers’ approach to cross-cultural issues” (p. iv). Without any pre-service training in multicultural instruction, teachers came with different strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners. The researcher concluded that it is necessary “to maximize teachers’ effectiveness in multicultural classrooms” by increasing “cross-cultural training in both pre-service and in-service teacher education” (p. v). Timmons (1998) also supported one recommendation: “the use of cultural immersion experiences in teacher education programs, allowing student teachers to develop culture general skills which they can apply in multicultural classrooms and model for all students” (p. v).

DiLucchio (2002) studied four student teachers’ over a 9-month period in order to identify how they constructed and reconstructed knowledge about race, class and culture by participating in Project START (Student Teachers as Researching Teachers). The Project was part of the fifth year preservice program in elementary education at the University of Pennsylvania, the institution where the students were also completing their coursework while they were having their field experiences in urban and suburban public schools.

Data for the study included interviews, documents, and observations. DiLucchio (2002) recommended more research “to explore what students write, read, and talk about concerning issues of race, class, and culture as they complete graduation requirements in a preservice program” (p. iv). She also concluded that “teacher education programs cannot be politically neutral or marginalize issues of race, class, and culture; they must keep these issues in front of students, integrated throughout their university coursework and fieldwork” (p. iv).
Ross and Smith (1992) conducted case studies of six preservice teachers to assess their perspectives about the problems that confront diverse learners in classrooms, their commitment to teaching diverse learners, and their beliefs about the causes of failure for diverse learners. The subjects were six student volunteers, all white, of which five were females. All subjects were enrolled in a research course and in their first field placement/seminar. The first interview was focused on students' general perspectives about teaching, with a minor emphasis about teaching diverse learners. The second interview was conducted after the students completed the research course, and began their field experiences. This time the interview focused on students' perspectives about teaching diverse learners. Before taking the research courses all students' stated that individuals were responsible for their success or failure. After they completed the research course, students' opinions changed, as all six indicated that they believed that other factors could have an impact on learning, such as cultural background, school curriculum, or teachers' practices.

This study (Ross & Smith, 1992) shows the importance of combining knowledge base about multicultural education/diversity with field experiences in diverse settings, where students should have the opportunity to adapt their teaching methods to the needs of diverse learners.

The researchers concluded that even though the students had two more years of teacher education "with an ongoing emphasis on multicultural education, the attitudes and orientations of the sample students suggest that teacher education programs, even within monocultural institutions, may be able to help many students develop the
knowledge and attitudes necessary to work with multicultural students” (p. 102). One solution, according to Ross and Smith (1992) would be to “videotape discussions that focus on issues of diversity and education and share the tapes with students of alternative backgrounds” (p. 101).

Interesting questions yet to be answered were posed in the researchers’ conclusion: “Will students sustain the changes in attitudes initiated during the teacher education program? Will they continue to grow in their ability to see the perspectives of diverse learners? Will their knowledge influence what they do in classrooms as they teach diverse learners?” (p. 102).

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1992) used two teacher-research-based teacher education projects in Philadelphia, Project START (Student Teachers as Researching Teachers) and the Philadelphia Writing Project (PhilWP) “to provide opportunities for teachers to examine dimensions of race, class, gender, and ethnicity as they relate to teaching, learning, and schooling” (p. 106). The purpose of the study was to develop questions and courses of action valid for teachers, student teachers, and teacher educators who work in particular communities. Data was gathered from different excerpts of teachers’ essays, journals and studies of the beginning teachers and experienced teachers involved in the two projects. Using inquiry as a method of constructing knowledge and issues on cultural diversity that were considered to be problematic, the researchers found common themes and similarities.

Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1992) suggest that by making knowledge, differences, and reform problematic, teacher students and teacher educators are facing the problems
encountered by other teachers in similar situations, and are able to find solutions by sharing each other's experiences:

No one can tell teachers precisely how to meet the needs of all students, and no one can empower teachers to respond to cultural diversity. Teachers themselves can work with teacher educators and fellow teachers, however, to examine their assumptions and interpretive frameworks and then to decide on the actions that might be appropriate in their particular contexts. (p. 112)

With the goal of examining teachers' beliefs about teaching in culturally diverse classrooms, Cabello and Burstein (1995) implemented a 2-year program for teacher who received a master's degree in Special Education and a Learning Handicapped Credential. Their data collection was based on experiential activities (for example, how to adapt instruction to students' individual needs); teachers' reflective logs; pre- and post-questionnaires on teachers' beliefs about the influence of culture in the classroom; interviews with the teachers after the program; examining their portfolio, in terms of backgrounds, experiences, interests, and their contribution to the program. The knowledge, experiences, and reflections accumulated within 2-year period, modified some of the initial beliefs about teaching diversity. The researchers recommended that for a successful teacher educators' preparation, knowledge and skills should be complementary with practice and reflection. Cabello and Burstein (1995) concluded their study as follows:

Being culturally sensitive, however, is not sufficient to be an effective teacher. The primary goal of teaching, after all, is to provide appropriate instruction for all students. Instructional approaches succeed or fail for a number of reasons; ultimately, success depends upon instruction matching the learning needs of individuals or a group of students. In finding that match, teachers must consider the student as a whole, including his or her cultural, linguistic, cognitive, and emotional needs. (p. 292)
Although their program was focused on providing knowledge and experiences for culturally diverse classrooms, their conclusion shows an interest in all learners.

Sleeter (1992) advocated staff development as being a part of the whole-school reorganization process, rather than a separate activity that focuses on changing teachers as individuals. Her ethnographic study was a 2-year staff development project with 30 teachers from 2 school districts being trained in multicultural education. The researcher tried “to examine the relationship between multicultural education, teachers as individuals, and schools as institutions” (p. 104) considering staff development as part of a reform process. After the multicultural training the impact on classroom teaching was still limited, although most of the teachers showed enthusiasm towards the program. Teachers identified the following factors as preventing from doing more with multicultural education: time, class size, the required curriculum, the structure of the programs in the school, disjuncture between school and low-income and minority communities, and the administrative and bureaucratic context which was in the detriment of the teachers. The researcher concludes:

By itself, staff development has a limited impact on changing teachers’ ability to deliver an education that is multicultural. Staff development is a necessary part, however, of a systematic plan to restructure schools in ways that support and work with oppressed groups. (p. 147)

Summary

In this chapter I provided an overview of the literature related to diversity and teacher education programs. First, I reviewed postmodernism as a theoretical framework with its social theories and their themes, and then I defined “diversity” using
postmodernism. In the second part of this chapter I focused on teacher education programs, and the standards that refer to diversity as a constant component. In the final part of this chapter I concentrated on how diversity is implemented in teacher education programs.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to gain more understanding, from the teacher educators' perspectives, about how diversity is being addressed at a Midwestern university, respectively in a specific course that focuses on diversity issues and the needs of diverse learners. The purpose of this chapter is to describe the design of the study, the site selection, the selection of subjects, and to delineate the specific procedures regarding data collection and analysis.

Design of the Study

I have chosen the case study methodology for my research. My case study would fit in the category of "layered or nested" case study where "more than one object of study or unit of analysis is included in fieldwork" (Patton, 2002, p. 298). For example, I focused on three teacher educators' personal and professional experiences concerning diversity and their instructional practices as units of analysis. The commonality here is that they are all teaching the same class: "Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners". Usually, case studies explore in detail a single phenomenon, program, event, person, or institution by collecting data through different data collection procedures over a period of time (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Creswell, 1994; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 1994). A more technical definition is provided by Yin (1994) who considers that, in general, a case study is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon with its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" (p. 13), "when the investigator
has little control of events" and "when how or why questions are being posed" (p. 1). There are also other terms preferred instead of "case" study. For example, Miles and Huberman (1984) prefer the term "site" to "case" as we cannot study individual "cases" without considering the context in which we study the events, the processes, or the outcomes.

In general, there are different purposes of using case study design such as: to develop a concept or a model; to describe and analyze a situation, event or process; to criticize social and cultural beliefs and practices; to evaluate a program; to identify policy issues; to contribute to large-scale research projects; or to serve as a precursor to quantitative research (Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Marshall & Rossman, 1989; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997).

Yin (1994) enumerates and describes five different applications of the case study:

The most important is to explain the causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies. (...) A second application is to describe an intervention and the real-life context in which it occurred. Third, case studies illustrate certain topics within an evaluation, again in a descriptive mode-even from a journalistic perspective. Fourth, the case study strategy may be used to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated is not a clear, single set of outcomes. Fifth, the case study may be a "meta-evaluation" — a study of an evaluation study. (p. 15)

In relation to Yin’s (1994) applications of a case study, the purpose of my case study inquiry is to explore how diversity is addressed through curriculum, instructional strategies, materials and assessment in a single course that is taught by different professors.
Validity, Generalizability, and Reliability Considerations

In case study research, as in most qualitative analysis, there are three problematic issues: generalizability, external and internal validity (Wellington, 2000). Qualitative researchers suggest that these could be enhanced through triangulation, by using the multiple methods of data collection when studying and analyzing the same phenomenon (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998; Denzin, 1978; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 2002; Yin, 1994). Denzin (1978) identified four basic types of triangulation: (a) data triangulation (the use of variety of sources); (b) investigator triangulation (the use of different evaluators and researchers); (c) theory triangulation (the use of multiple perspectives on the same data set); and (d) methodological triangulation (the use of multiple methods). In terms of methodological triangulation, it is recommended to intermix interviewing, observation, and document analysis. Patton (2002) warns qualitative researchers that

a common misunderstanding about triangulation is that the point is to demonstrate that different data sources or inquiry approaches yield essentially the same result. But the point is really to test for such consistency. Different kinds of data may yield somewhat different results because different types of inquiry are sensitive to different real-world nuances. Thus, understanding inconsistencies in findings across different kinds of data can be illuminative. Finding such inconsistencies ought not to be viewed as weakening the credibility of results, but rather as offering opportunities for deeper insight into the relationship between inquiry approach and the phenomenon under study. (p. 248)

Mathison (1988) recommends that in case the data are inconsistent or contradictory to rely on a “holistic understanding” of the situation in order to construct “plausible explanations about the phenomena being studied” (p. 17).
As the purpose of my study is to describe and analyze how diversity is addressed in a course entitled "Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners," and as this course is being taught by three professors, I chose the layered or nested case study design. I relied on multiple sources of evidence for triangulation purposes in order to enhance validity and gain more understanding about different ways that diversity is being addressed. Using Stake's (1995) categorization of case studies, mine would fit into the "instrumental" type, as its aim is to develop our understanding and knowledge about how diversity could be defined and addressed by different teacher educators. Still, as Stake (2000) points out, it is hard to distinguish between instrumental and intrinsic studies at times, as the latter is undertaken because "the researcher wants a better understanding" (p.437) of a particular case, and not an abstract phenomenon. In other words, "because the researcher simultaneously has several interests, particular and general, there is no line distinguishing intrinsic case study from instrumental; rather, a zone of combined purpose separates them" (Stake, 2000, p. 437).

According to Bogdan and Bliken (1998) multi-case studies refer to the "study of two or more subjects, settings or depositories of data" and they can have different forms:

Some start as a single case, only to have the original work serve as the first in a series of studies or as the pilot for a multi-case study. Other studies are primarily single-case studies but include less intense, less extensive observations at other sites for the purpose of addressing the question of generalizability. Other researchers do comparative case studies. (p. 62)

Therefore, my goal is to describe multiple realities constructed by the teacher educators who emphasize the concept of diversity in their class.
In case study research, as in most qualitative analysis, issues of generalizability, construct validity, external validity and reliability have to be carefully considered and maximized (Bogdan & Bliken, 1998; Stake, 1995; Stake, 2000; Wellington, 2000; Yin, 1994). Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose the use of terms “truth value” (credibility) for internal validity, “transferability” for external validity, and “consistency” for reliability. Nevertheless, the question remains the same: to what extent are the findings of a qualitative case study to be trusted? Researchers advice that generalizability as well as validity of a case study could be enhanced through triangulation, that is the use of multiple strategies of data collection for the same phenomena (Bogdan & Bliken, 1998; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1994). In this regard, Stake (1995) points out:

The real business of case study is particularization, not generalization. We take a particular case and come to know it well, not primarily as to how it is different from others but what it is, what it does. There is emphasis on descriptive uniqueness, and that implies knowledge of others that the case is different from, but the first emphasis is on understanding the case itself. (p. 8)

Other ways of improving the generalizability of the findings are: providing a rich or ‘thick’ description of the case(s) for the transferability of information, “establishing the typicality or modal category of the case—that is, describing how typical the program, event, or individual is compared with others in the same class,” so that users can make comparisons with their own situations”, and “conducting a cross-site or cross-case analysis” (Merriam, 1988, p. 177). According to Merriam (1988), “internal validity deals with the question of how one’s findings match reality” and the question that the researcher needs to ask is if the “findings capture what is really there” and if “the
investigators observe and measure what they think they are measuring” (p. 166). To assess the validity, some assumptions need to be underlined: that people construct and interpret the reality, which is holistic and multidimensional; and that the investigators’ findings and interpretations are also constructions (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, Merriam, 1988). In other words,

in this type of research it is important to understand the perspectives of those being involved in the phenomenon of interest, to uncover the complexity of human behavior in a contextual framework, and to present a holistic interpretation of what is happening. (Merriam, 1988, p. 168)

Therefore, in order to improve the generalizability of the findings and to enhance the internal validity I will provide in Chapters 5 a holistic interpretation of how diversity is being addressed in Special Education Department at a Midwestern university. My cross-case analysis will consist of rich descriptions of each case study through the emergent themes and sub-themes emphasizing the multiple perspectives of each participant on diversity and diverse learners.

Reliability and validity are strongly connected as Guba and Lincoln (1981) argue: “Since it is impossible to have internal validity without reliability, a demonstration of internal validity amounts to a simultaneous demonstration of reliability” (p. 120). Some of the techniques used to ensure reliability or in Guba and Lincoln’s (1985, p. 288) terms, the “dependability” and “consistency” of the results are: triangulation, investigator’s position (what are “the assumptions and theory behind the study,” Merriam, 1988, p. 172) and audit trail (a detailed description of how data were collected and the decisions made throughout the research; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Merriam, 1988). In order to ensure reliability, I used triangulation (multiple strategies of collecting
the data), a detailed literature review on how diversity is being addressed in teacher education programs combined with postmodern theory that would influence the conclusions and recommendations of the study. The audit trail (the description of how data were collected) is provided further in this chapter.

McMillan & Schumacher (1997) suggest nine strategies for enhancing validity for data collection and analysis technique with advice of combining any of them: (a) prolonged field work; (b) participant verbatim language; (c) low-inference descriptors; (d) multiple researchers; (e) mechanically recorded data; (f) participant researcher; (g) member checking; (h) participant review; and (i) negative cases. Some of these strategies, such as triangulation, the use of multiple sources of evidence, peer examination or member checking are recommended also by other researchers (Creswell, 1998; Merriam, 1988; Yin, 1994) in order to enhance validity.

For each case study in my research I emphasized its uniqueness and “maintained vigorous interpretation” (Stake, 1995, p. 9) by using field observations, in-depths interviews, participant verbatim language (obtained through quotations from documents), and mechanically recorded data (the use of tape recorder). For accuracy purposes, I used low-inference descriptors by recording as precise and detailed as possible teacher educators’ lectures and interactions with students, their instructional practices, the dialogues, and the classroom settings. Member checking (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Stake, 2000) was also used by checking informally with the teacher educators involved in the study for data accuracy during data collection and data analysis. Participant review was also accomplished by asking each teacher educator to
revise and edit their own responses of the interview transcripts or the transcripts of the classroom observations.

Site Selection

The selection of the site was based upon the location and the easy access of the researcher. The site of the study is a mid-sized state university with an enrollment of approximately 13,000 students. There were approximately 3,000 students enrolled in Teacher Education Program at the College of Education for 2003-2004. The faculty in College of Education includes approximately 260 teacher education faculty, of which about 220 professors teach students who are going to apply for licensure.

The Special Education Department includes ten full-time professors and four adjuncts. The course “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners” is a required course in the Department of Special Education for the preservice teachers, and eight sections of this course are being offered for the Spring semester 2004. Therefore, this course is being taught at different times and days by six instructors, all of them with earned doctorates. Sections 1-5 are for elementary students, and sections 6-8 are for secondary students. The majority of students are juniors and seniors. One class is an honor class with only 9 students, the rest of the classes have 50 or less students enrolled. The classes I have chosen to observe have 50, 30, respectively 9 students. As my purpose is not to compare and contrast the case studies, but to gain more understanding of different instructional practices regarding diversity, the varied number of the students, and the difference in sections and times are not considered to be limitations of the study. Therefore, teacher
educators' views about standards in general and their applicability would add valuable information to the study.

Selection of Subjects

Purposeful or purposive sampling is usually used for case study research (Bogdan & Bliken, 1998; McMillan & Schumacher, 1997; Merriam, 1988; Patton, 2002; Stake, 2000) being “based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore, one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most” (Merriam, 1988, p. 48). Therefore, the emphasis of purposeful sampling is on in-depth understanding through the “information-rich cases” (Patton, 2002, p. 46). Goetz and LeCompte (1984) prefer the term “criterion-base sampling” which “requires that one establish the criteria, bases, or standards necessary for units to be included in the investigation; one then finds a sample that matches these criteria” (Merriam, 1988, p. 48). In this regard, my own study would fit into two categories established by Goetz and LeComte (1984): “unique-case selection” and “comparable-case selection” as I consider that each case is unique, since the professors involved in the study bring their own experiences, knowledge, creativity, instructional practices into the classroom; and it is a comparable-case as the teacher educators who are participating in the study are teaching the same course related to diversity and the needs of diverse learners.

The teacher educators identified for this study are full-time faculty members on tenure-track positions. They were purposefully selected as they are responsible for teaching a required course for all education students under the title “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners”. This is a 2-credit course. This course listed in the university catalog is
the only one which indicates through its title that the issues of diversity are being addressed comprehensively. The description of the course found in programs and courses catalogue is as follows: “Introduction to pedagogical, curricular, and social considerations involved in educating diverse learners in the general education classroom” ([Midwestern university], 2000, p. 184).

Besides the class observations, the three faculty members responded to interview questions and provided additional documents such as personal vitas, syllabi, and class materials (articles, handouts, course reading package, etc.).

Data Collection and Analysis

Data Collection

According to Merriam (1988),

data collection and analysis is a *simultaneous* activity on qualitative research. Analysis begins with the first interview, the first observation, the first document read. Emerging insights, hunches, and tentative hypotheses direct the next phase of data collection, which in turn leads to refinement or reformulation of one’s questions, and so on. It is an interactive process throughout which the investigator is concerned with producing believable and trustworthy findings (pp. 119-120).

In a qualitative case study, validity and reliability are derived throughout the whole process of data collection and analysis, “from the researcher’s presence, the nature of the interaction between researcher and participants, the triangulation of data, the interpretation of perceptions, and rich, thick description” (Merriam, 1988, p. 120).

To enhance validity, I used different strategies of data collection: semi-structured interviews with the teacher educators who teach the course “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners” (220:150), field notes, classroom observations, and the study of written documentation such as the instructors’ vitas and syllabi (content, activities,
assignments, goals and outcomes, course expectations) and other additional materials used in class. My role was of passive observer, as I did not want to influence the classes’ discourses with my own personal and practical knowledge as an international doctoral student and former assistant professor in an international setting. My field notes were both descriptive and reflective with an emphasis on ideas, impressions, constant comparisons between field notes, speculations about what the outcome of the study was going to be, about the themes and patterns emerged, or connections between pieces of data.

**Interviews.** I conducted one semi-structured interview with each professor in Spring 2004, and Fall 2004. The interviews lasted approximately 90 to 120 minutes in length. A sample of the semi-structured interview is provided (see Appendix C) although exact interview questions evolved naturally either from the classroom observations and teaching artifacts that were collected or during the interview for clarifications and detailed explanations. The subjects were interviewed in their offices, as they felt comfortable and familiar with the setting. The interviews were audiotaped, with the approval of the participants. The tapes were removed from the interview setting immediately after all interviews were recorded, coded with the designated code known only to me and placed in separate, large manila envelopes. These envelopes were placed in a locked file cabinet at my home. Transcriptions files along with the tapes were also placed in the coded envelopes and locked in the file cabinet (see Appendix D).

**Classroom observations.** Another reliable data source in case study methodology is classroom observations. The purpose of classroom observations was to see the
professors teaching styles, expectations, their instructional methods and materials related to diversity, their syllabus, activities that they chose for each class and assessment procedures. Tape recording and note taking were used for each class observed to enhance accuracy of the data.

**Documents/Physical artifacts.** All teacher educators provided additional materials: their personal vitas, and artifacts used during the course sessions (articles, handouts, in-class assignments, worksheets, videotapes etc). One of the participants in my study also had additional materials on WebCT where students were able to print them out before each class. I collected physical artifacts and observed the classes for approximately one semester.

During data collection, my role was of passive, complete observer, as I did not want to influence the classes' discourses with my own personal and practical knowledge as an international doctoral student and former assistant professor in an international setting. My field notes were both descriptive and reflective with an emphasis on ideas, impressions, constant comparisons between field notes, speculations about what the outcome of the study was going to be, about the themes and patterns emerged, or connections between pieces of data.

**Data Analysis**

For the analysis of my three cases I started with within-case analysis, in which I identified themes within the each single case, including unique themes ("core themes"), or themes that were common or different to/than all three cases. Then, I continued my analysis with a cross-case analysis. The constant comparative method (Bogdan & Biklen.
1998; Creswell, 1998; Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) was used in analyzing the data in order to find the emerging themes and patterns across the case studies to establish larger categories. For my data analysis, I followed the steps for constant comparative method across case studies suggested by Creswell (1998), Glaser (1978), Glaser and Strauss (1967), and Barton and Hamilton (1998). Bogdan & Biklen (1998) provide the definition of the constant comparative method as follows: a “research design for multi-data sources, which is like analytic induction in that the formal analysis begins early in the study and is nearly completed by the end of data analysis collection” (p. 66). Therefore, during the process of data collection, I looked for key issues, recurrent events or activities that were coming out from the field notes, teacher educators’ artifacts, and the interview transcripts. Throughout the process of data collection, I paid attention to the constant process of selecting the categories of focus that emerged when describing the individual cases, or when doing a constant comparison among the cases. I read and reread many times the transcripts from class observations and interviews. I wrote and worked with the data and the emerging model “to discover basic social processes and relationships” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 67). Then, I “engaged in sampling, coding, and writing as the analysis focused on the core categories” (Bogdan & Bliken, 1998, p. 67).

By coding and categorizing, the data were interpreted and reduced. Another important steps were linking (“making connections between different parts of the data,” Barton, & Hamilton, 1998, p. 69), and sorting (“another way of examining similarities and differences, using different dimensions of the data, whether themes, people, or
documents," Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 69). This process helped me structure the overview of the emergent categories, themes, sub-themes and core themes.

The emerging patterns from the data were also detected through the interview transcripts, by “analyzing the content of the texts, either in terms of the actual words in the text or in terms of coded categories” which were applied to the text, or/and by “looking at the broader aspects of the interview as a social interaction” (Barton & Hamilton, 1998, p. 70). A compare-and-contrast analysis among case studies was used by (a) examining the words and phrases from the interviews and field notes; (b) alternating between data collection and analysis to find patterns of meaning; and (c) examining the coded categories and themes identified across the data. Also, (d) comparing different sources of data (triangulation) for each case study enhanced checking the reliability of the data.

I used inductive analysis or ‘layered analysis’ by grouping the specific themes under broader categories (see Chapter 5) guided by the research questions and the topical procedural questions that evolved during data analysis (Creswell, 1998). The topical procedural questions are: (a) How could I describe the participants involved in the study?; (b) What themes emerged from gathering information from the participants (analysis of interviews, field notes, physical artifacts); and (c) How would I interpret these themes within a larger context, respectively the ideological base for the study? The main categories were the following: Curriculum for Diverse Learners, Authentic Assessment, Instructional Strategies, Materials, Standards: Why and Why Not.
In terms of standards of quality and verification, I adopted the following procedures: prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the classes, including checking for accuracy with the participants in the study; triangulation through the use of multiple sources such as interviews, field notes, and physical artifacts; rich, thick description depicting in detail the participants, the setting under study and the emerged themes; and member checks. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985) member checks represent "the most critical technique for establishing credibility" (p. 314). Therefore, I clarified with the participants verbally or electronically (by exchanging e-mails) certain notions, ideas, or themes stated during the interviews or their classes for accuracy or credibility. I also asked the participant additional information that I found significant in the course of data analysis and most importantly, all three participants in the study examined the data analysis and its interpretation for accuracy and credibility. The participants in the study received an opportunity to review any material related to their participation in this research after the data analysis was completed. My status as an international student, along with my own knowledge, values, and experiences may have created personal biases throughout the interpretation of the data.

**Summary**

In this chapter I presented the methodology and the procedures used to complete my qualitative research study with the aim to answer the research questions. Included in this chapter were the following: the design of the study, validity, generalizability and reliability considerations, the site selection and the selection of subjects, the collection of
data through interviews, class observations and physical artifacts, and the explanation of how the data were analyzed.
CHAPTER 4
PRESENTATION OF THE PARTICIPANTS
IN THE STUDY

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the teacher educators who participated in the study by describing their personal and professional experiences that impact their classroom practices regarding diversity. The professors interviewed in the study have been teaching from ten to sixteen years and currently are on tenure-track positions at a Midwestern university. None of the participants had prior training in diversity, but all three had enriched personal and professional experiences that relate to diversity issues and have demonstrated their commitment to teaching and research. Their individual experiences, knowledge and values shaped and developed their identities throughout the years influencing their instructional practices. Pseudonyms were used instead of the participants' real names to protect their anonymity.

Introducing the Participants in the Study

In the following pages, I am going to introduce the professors who have different experiences regarding diversity. Through interviews and class observations they shared with me their past and present experiences to demonstrate how they dealt with issues of diversity within their teaching environment. It is inevitable that teacher educators' experiences have been shaped by the socio-political contexts. The participants in the study have expertise in special education.
Grace

Grace has been teaching since 1991 in the Department of Special Education at this Midwestern university. Prior to that she taught Secondary English and Elementary Learning Disabilities in public schools since 1979. Her impressive research agenda contains books, book chapters, articles and papers presented at different conferences focused on issues around disability studies, and qualitative research. She is currently working on a chapter on special education, called "Challenging the Orthodoxy in Special Education." The chapter provides alternative, constructivist perspectives of disability, focusing more on the social model of disability that evolved in the disability studies: "The social model makes the distinction that disability is a cultural construction. It opposes the medical model which views disability as an intrinsic, biologically determined, and pathological condition. The social model asserts that disability is the result social and physical restrictions imposed on people who are labeled as having a disability. In other words, disability itself has to do with the way society as a whole imposes restrictions on people who experience certain differences." She is also working on a chapter in a book that is called Vital Questions, which addresses pressing questions that are facing the newly emerging field of disability studies in education. Her chapter centers on "the ongoing debates over education policy and the competing discourses of special education and disability studies." Also, she gave numerous presentations at international, national and state/local academic conferences. She was one of the authors and co-director of three grants from U.S. Department of Education, on Preparing Inclusive Leaders of Schools of the 21st Century, respectively a Collaborative Program to
Prepare Masters Level Educators for Inclusive Schooling of Students with High Incidence Disabilities (Personal vita). She also received grant funding for her dissertation study on First-Year Experiences: A Cross-Case Analysis of Beginning Special Education Teachers. Grace had three project positions as trainee and as a research assistant granted by U.S. Department of Education, respectively University of Virginia between 1989-1991.

In terms of professional service, she participated in editorial boards or as invited reviewer nationally and internationally. Grace also did state and community service as consultant, volunteer mentor, secretary, president or member. At the university level, she added her contribution by co-organizing Invited/Visiting Scholars Series and supervising a Senior Scholar Program. Regarding her committee work, she has been in the roles of chair, co-chair and member of Special Education Search Committee, respectively departmental representative for College Committee on Doctoral Studies. Grace received John B. and Florence S. May Fellowship in Learning Disabilities from University of Virginia (1989-1991) and a Graduate Teaching Award in 2002.

Eric

Eric has been a teacher educator for ten years in Special Education. His expertise is on inclusive schooling for children with moderate to severe disabilities and qualitative research. Since 1998, he has also been a visiting faculty at Syracuse University, NY in the Department of Cultural Foundations of Education from Disability Studies Graduate Program, and a visiting faculty in Spring 2001 in the Department of Planning, Policy, & Leadership Studies at University of Iowa, IA. He has done a lot of
community/professional service as expert witness, consultant, field research grant reviewer, associate editor for *Mental Retardation*, and so on. His service at university, college and departmental level is impressive. His research agenda is exhaustive: books, articles, book chapters and book reviews within disability studies where the focus is on children with Down syndrome or with other severe to moderate disabilities and linking their access to literacy to early struggle of civil rights, labeling, school inclusion and segregated inclusive classrooms. He has lots of grants proposals under reviews and between 2001-2004 he received a grant from U.S. Department of Education, Washington, D.C. with other two investigators for a project on “low incidence, disability, development, and inclusive early childhood programming” (Personal vita). In 2005, he received a huge Federal grant to continue studies started on a previous federal grant about accessing literacy for children with severe disabilities. The inclusive schools chosen are in New York, California and Iowa. The grant goes for four years and the project is a qualitative research. He gave numerous presentations at National Down Syndrome Congress, at the Annual Conference of the Association for Persons with Severe Disabilities (TASH), at the Conference on Inclusion in Early Childhood Programs, etc.

In terms of Awards and Distinctions, he was twice nominated as Educator of the Year: in 2002 at the National Down Syndrome Congress, Denver, CO "For outstanding leadership and innovation and advancing best educational practices for students with Down Syndrome" (Personal vita) and in 1997 at the Inclusive Education Partnership, Des Moines, IA, "For outstanding educational leadership in building inclusive schools and
communities in Iowa" (Personal vita). His dissertation was accepted with honors at Syracuse University in 1995.

Charles

Charles has been a teacher educator for sixteen years. His research and theoretical interests are focused on the following: interventions for young children with autism and related disabilities, using peer-assisted interventions with preschool and primary grade children, strategies for accommodating students’ diverse needs in general education classrooms, facilitating teachers’ adoption and acclimation of instructional innovations, and school reform and restructuring (Personal vita). Besides his academic positions as Assistant Professor, respectively Associate Professor within the areas of special education, social sciences or psychiatry, Charles has experiences of Principal Research Associate or Research Scientist at the University of Pittsburgh, and at Allegheny University of the Health Sciences or Allegheny General Hospital. He is currently an Associate Professor in the Department of Special Education.

He has been receiving numerous grants since 1986 having the roles of project coordinator, primary investigator, project consultant, or evaluator. Some of his research projects based on grants funded by the U.S. Department were around improving instruction in inclusive classrooms, such as peer-mediated approaches for instructing and maintaining students with handicaps in regular classrooms, providing effective instruction in inclusive classrooms, the effect of structured collaboration on teachers’ adoption of new instructional techniques, or the effects of peer-coaching. Also, other research projects focused on children with autism.
In terms of publications, Charles co-authored an impressive number of articles in refereed journals such as *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, *The Behavior Analyst*, *Teaching Exceptional Children*, *Education and Treatment of Children*, *Early Education and Development*, *The Elementary School Journal*, *Focus on Autism and Other Developmental Disabilities*, etc. He also served as guest reviewer for some of these journals and others like *Teacher Education and Special Education*, *Research in Developmental Disabilities*, *American Journal of Mental Deficiency*, etc. He also co-authored book chapters on issues around social inclusion for children with autism, and peer-mediated intervention for young children with autism. He also published editorials and book reviews including program manuals in early childhood education. He also served as a grant reviewer in U.S. Department between 1997-1999, and as a member in master thesis and doctoral committees, and has been teaching Special Education classes since 1987.

He did a lot of community services. For example, he served as co-chairperson in an elementary school committee, and as President of Parent Association for the same elementary school. Among other services, he also took part of the committee for Excellence in Education. Currently he is a member of Math Curriculum Committee at an elementary school. He has given numerous presentations at national and state level, along with seminars and invited lectureships.

In 1997 Charles received the title of *Mary E. Switzer Distinguished Fellow for an Outstanding Contribution to the Advancement of Rehabilitation Research* from the National Institute on Disability and Rehabilitation Research. He was also nominated as a
Distinguished Guest Faculty Member in Special Education Program by the Ohio State University in the same year.

Experiences Related to Diversity

None of the professors interviewed had any background training in diversity (other than in special education) or any classes taken in how to teach diversity issues, but all three professors had personal and professional experiences related to diversity.

Grace’s personal experiences dealing with diversity result from her personal life (female, with a working class background) and professional life, where she dealt with curricular issues and other issues by drawing “parallels and connections between the concept of disability as a socially constructed difference and the likewise socially constructed nature of other forms of diversity such as race, gender, social class, etc.” She strongly believes that “who we are as people is who we are as educators” thus highlighting the fact that we can’t separate personal lives from our professional lives. Therefore, she is very open with her students, although “not necessarily too self-disclosing” about her personal experiences with social class hierarchy. She invites them to reflect upon their own backgrounds and experiences:

When I talk about social class, for example, what I am trying to do in a gentle way is to help them understand the differences that it makes in students’ educational experiences. A student’s social class origins often have a profound influence on how educators perceive his or her intellectual competency. Students from middle and upper-middle class backgrounds display a certain confidence in their abilities that induces educators to view them as actually being more intelligent or academically competent than poor and working class students who cannot display such confidence. And I ask them [the students in my Diverse Learners class] how many of them are first generation college graduates and what that has meant in their lives. My purpose in doing so is to help them relate their own social class standing to that of their future students, to understand motivational factors that relate to social class background and academic
achievement. These are issues I think are absolutely crucial. My purpose in sharing my status as a first-generation college graduate in my own family is to create a certain comfort level for those who might be reluctant to acknowledge that they, too, come from working class origins. In essence, I am saying, no one else in my family went to college and here's what that has meant to me. It is a difficult and ambivalent experience; it's not the same pure sense of happy achievement middle and upper class people experience because being the first to graduate from college sets one apart from the people who are closest to you and the ones you love most in the world. So while you may be happy and proud of your achievement, there is also a nagging sense of betrayal that comes with feeling that you have moved away from people who are most important to you. I finally came to terms with this discomfort and ambivalence, but it took a long time. What's interesting is that the people you feel most comfortable with are the people who come from backgrounds just like yours. Teachers need to be aware of this if they are to do a just and equitable job of educating all students regardless of their backgrounds.

Grace has constructive dialogues with her students about their socio-economic backgrounds and advises those who haven't found their place (and this happened if either they come from backgrounds that are not represented in the academe or if they have a minority status) to not quit trying:

It's important that you understand yourself in that particular context. And understand what those codes and rules are, and if you choose to use them, use them, if you don't, don't, but at least be deliberate and mindful and understand yourself. You can achieve a kind of self-transcendence in terms of understanding yourself in a given context. But as for coping and ever fitting in per se, give it up. And then you might decide to enjoy being different.

Students' personal experiences are used in classroom discussions: "I am always trying to make connections between what's important in their background, their experiences and values, and what we are learning now in the class, what ideas are being presented, explored and contested."

Grace explains one of the main reasons why diversity was not addressed within her doctoral program:
The PhD program that I was in, although it’s rated one of the top 3 in the nation, was very traditional, very white, very male, very upper middle class, very empiricist, very behaviorist, and positivistic. There were times in my life when I wish I had chosen a different doctoral program. I spent a lot of time thinking about this; but in many ways I’m glad that I didn’t go elsewhere because the struggle that came with that experience was what really helped me to find myself. It represented a huge challenge for me. My doctoral program did not include any explicit discussion regarding classroom diversity; and that silence provoked me to pursue my own search for understanding. In spite of that, the role of an educator remains the same, being well read. I think that if you have a Ph.D., you are responsible for living up to the obligations of being a true academic. You are responsible for scholarship, you have an intellectual life, and you are self-directed. I read a lot of history, a lot of philosophy (in particular), the arts and literature. My undergraduate degree was in English literature, so I wasn’t only a special educator at the beginning of my career.

The courses she taught all included an element of diversity, in particular the course on meeting the needs of diverse learners. She focuses on the social constructions of disability, race, class, gender, etc. as a means for conveying to her students the moral obligation they have for how these forms of diversity become meaningful in classrooms.

Although Eric didn’t take any classes on how to teach about diversity, he took a number of courses in cultural studies. Therefore, being exposed to a lot of ideas became part of how he thinks about diversity. In his opinion, teaching at the university level, makes you do research, and the advantage is that it “forces you to be out in schools, and the schools we use tend to be pretty racially diverse, ethnically diverse.” In terms of teaching different diversity courses, besides the course of diverse learners, Eric taught graduate classes on Methods of Instruction in Inclusive Classrooms. In addition, he teaches every summer at Syracuse University a class in Disability Studies Program on “Inclusion, Disability, and Literacy,” dealing, of course, with issues of diversity around disability.
His teaching experiences on issues of disability in different segregated schools in Illinois, and in inclusive elementary schools in Syracuse, influenced and set up the rest of his career. His dissertation (which later became a chapter in a book) was about how children with Down Syndrome experienced life in schools and how they were denied access to literacy. He continued to study literacy, and access and denial and one of the things that excites him is linking the struggle to access literacy of children with disabilities to historical struggles for human rights:

African Americans were denied access to literacy for centuries. I take a look at how in the early part of 20th century girls were set up and apart from value literacy experiences: home economics, compulsory education laws came along and forced kids who, before were enacted, might have dropped out of school or might have done other things, to stay in school. So how do school deal with it? School dealt with it by creating home economics that was kind of the first Special Education. Girls were considered to have a need for Chemistry and Sciences and these other forms of literacies or even classics. They were shouted off to home economics and they were considered to be home makers, so girls were brought to be women and home makers, and the logic was reinforced. So I link the struggle of kids with disabilities today to early struggles of civil rights.

Charles' personal experiences enhanced his knowledge in terms of teaching a class about diverse learners. In addition, he attended conferences that focused on preparing teacher educators to teach all students. For instance, his older daughter had difficulties in secondary and junior high in terms of behavior and adjustment. Therefore, when it comes to kids with different needs or behavioral challenges, children with learning problems, gifted and talented autism or Down Syndrome, he has different examples from his personal and professional life to share with his students. He recalls about his professional experiences related to diversity:

When I was in Pennsylvania back in 80s or 90s we had federal grants funded for the purpose of enabling children with autism to be successful, I went in many
school districts where they were eliminating special education programs and general education teachers happened to be faced with the challenge of accommodating with different behaviors, different learning styles, kids from poverty, kids from gifted and talented characteristics. I have done not only a lot of research but for quite a few years many districts hired me half time to do staff development in schools to help teachers improve their teaching skills. Much in my research and much in my experience, teachers learnt how to use instructional strategies that enable kids to be successful. I had some experiences with some of the instructional models like the Adaptive Learning Environment Model, which was developed in late 80s, basically to enable kids to do individual work throughout the course of the day; there were no group lessons or group units. I have worked with other models like this designed to accommodate kids with different behaviors. I had a lot of experiences and I worked in schools with teachers and principals. They say, in a typical classroom right now, by 3rd grade you have a 5-year span in ability. In 3rd grade you are going to have some kids who are at 3rd grade level now, but you are going to have some that are at 5th grade level, and some that are at 1st grade level. The question for teachers is how to accommodate that.

He also had the opportunity to work in inner city schools:

In Kansas City, 90 percent of the kids were qualified for free lunches they were coming from areas with poverty. There were major challenges in terms of kids from low-income, kids from different kinds of families. Pittsburgh had a lot of African American kids. I haven’t had much experience with ESL kids. But I had lots of experiences with kids with different kind of challenges, kids from poverty, kids who were in 2nd grade who had older siblings in gangs or they were in gangs themselves, I have been in classrooms with kids who were bringing weapons, I’ve been in schools were kids were violent.

Since he has lots of experiences regarding diversity, Charles likes to share them with his students in his classes:

One of the disadvantages of being in teacher preparation is that you don’t get out to schools and classrooms very often. Fortunately, I had about 15 years of experience in schools before I came here, so I had accumulated quite a few personal experiences to share. But I haven’t gained too many new experiences since 1999, when I began here. I think that using students’ personal experiences is important to do, but it’s hard to incorporate their experiences into class discussions/activities when you have classes of 40 -50 people. Of course, you can have students make connections between personal experiences and content in assignments, which is a good thing to do. Some of the students have quite a bit of personal experiences with diverse learners while others have very little.
The Participants' Philosophies of Teaching

It is important to describe the participants' philosophies of teaching since their values, beliefs and experiences are different and have a strong impact upon their instruction.

Grace’s philosophy of teaching can be framed around, as she stated, the most important obligations she has as a graduate educator towards her students “who are, or soon to become, educators themselves.” She focuses her teaching on two interrelated components: the development of intellectual and professional autonomy. She clearly articulates the differences between being trained (having the necessary vocational skills) and being educated, which means that students must have the opportunity too immerse themselves deeply in the political, historical, and moral foundations that inform their skills and practices. As they experience opportunities to engage the philosophical and pedagogical critiques of their field, students become increasingly able to exert intellectual autonomy and conceptual sophistication in their analyses of the challenges they confront as professionals.

She also feels obligated “to create a classroom ethic of authentic and open exchanges of ideas,” where students can express both doubts and disagreements with her and their peers as an exercise of reasoned judgment of deeply informed deliberations. Grace explains further:

Understanding this distinction assists students in affirming the independence of mind that comes not only with being able to articulate, in a clear and coherent fashion, what [italics added] they think but also being able to substantiate why [italics added] they think it. This cannot occur unless students are aware of and exposed to the contributions of other disciplines of study outside of the confines of their own field. For example, one of the issues we cover in our Critical Issues in Special Education Seminar concerns the reproductive rights of individuals with disabilities. During the course of our discussions, we explore the historical origins of the eugenics movement and its influence on the Third Reich's propaganda.
campaign leading to the forced sterilization and extermination of individuals with disabilities during World War II. Sociological, philosophical, and literary perspectives are brought to bear on this and other issues. I consider it my obligation to share with them the valuable ways in which the arts and humanities, the social and physical sciences, the law and so on can illuminate their understanding of issues and practices in their own field.

Besides intellectual autonomy, Grace considers that professional autonomy is equally important, so she is involved in students' research projects, by sharing her own research with them, and by “affording them opportunities to publish and present their own research.” Grace's commitment to intellectual and professional autonomy allows students to engage in personal transformative experiences while enhancing their possibilities as people.

Charles' teaching philosophy also relies on two principles: ensuring students’ active participation or engagement in course activities and accommodating students’ needs and abilities. Charles explains:

A goal of teaching for me is to conduct class activities that do more than generate note taking. These activities should generate the forms of critical thinking that lead to high quality learning. In the classroom these forms of thinking are generally expressed through discourse and writing. Therefore, I strive to develop classroom activities that involve students in talking and/or writing about course content.

He is involved in developing activities that generate student interest, excitement, and high quality thinking. As for the importance of accommodating students’ individual needs and abilities, Charles believes that anyone who teaches “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners” should understand that preservice teachers display a host of different needs and characteristics and that the failure to learn is more often a result of poor instruction than a deficient learner. A significant and formidable challenge for me, then, is to provide the forms/levels of instruction, assignments, and support that are needed to accommodate my individual students. This is as true for our higher achieving
students who need to be challenged as for younger students who may not do currently possess the maturity, motivation, or learning skills needed to be a successful teacher.

Eric is interested in research,

in a commitment to rethinking how we thought about disability. Right now my research is focused on rethinking literacy in disability, and I try to emphasize that in my teaching so I don’t really have a philosophy of teaching. I’d like to be more interactive, I would like my students to have some authority and control, I’d like to make sure that some of my big ideas were gotten across, it’s all about the reorientation of disability.

Defining DIVERSITY

All three participants in my study were asked in the interview how they define “diversity” taking into account the fact that this is a course offered by Special Education Department.

Grace defines diversity as “any kind of difference that makes a difference, particularly through the dominant culture.”

Eric explains diversity to his students as follows:

Look, this is a class that’s been offered by Special Education Department and has specific focus on issues of disability. As important as this idea is, I hope that this class is bigger than that. You can define that around things that I embrace: racial diversity, ethnic, gender issues, class. (…). I try to talk about it, no classroom is homogenous, when you think about socio-economic issues, what that means in terms of access and value places and denial of access. In the grand scheme, I don’t have any great insights either than follow people who focus on intro-sectionality-some qualitative researchers use that of issues of race, class, gender, and disability.

Charles defines diversity for this particular class by “teaching about the whole child and recognizing that all children are different.”

I think that teachers have to be prepared to address all the individual needs and characteristics that students have. If you have students who come from a 3rd or 4th grade classroom and maybe some have a wide range not only of academic,
intellectual needs but they have a wide range of personal needs, I think that teachers have to be prepared to teach the whole child, and if they have kids who come into the room who are emotionally damaged because of poverty, abuse or neglect, they have to be prepared to know how to reach out to those kids and teach them how to trust adults again and teach them how to feel some sense of esteem to see yourself worth. So primarily the teacher's job isn't always teaching math, teaching reading, teaching spelling, teaching writing, a teacher's job is to meet whatever needs and challenges. When you get into the 4th, 5th, 6th grade there will be a transition from childhood to preadolescence, during preadolescence, when they get ready for middle school, a lot of kids in this country are very concerned about having friends, are being concerned about being popular or accepted. A lot of kids at that age want to do things you wish kids wouldn't do until they 16-17 years old, they want to date, they want to make themselves look 5-6 years older. You have to meet their needs.

**The Course Expectations, Goals and Objectives**

Each professor elaborated on his or her own syllabus. Grace, for example, announced, in the statement of the course design, the course objectives. One of the objectives included the goal: to prepare the knowledge, awareness, and perspectives that will prepare the students to educate diverse learners. The objectives related to the exploration of divergent issues on cultural diversity, class, race, (dis)ability and analysis of these issues on different levels: epistemological, historical, sociological, and political. Secondly, the students had to be involved in the reflective debate over inclusive education and its relationship to broader issues of social justice and the ideal of democratic education. Thirdly, students had to examine pedagogical frameworks and practices that benefit or hinder inclusive education (based on Grace’s syllabus).

In our interview, Grace described the logic behind the goals and objectives of her course. Besides spending a lot of time on historical awareness, her course aims to get students think more deeply and critically than they had before, to encourage a certain amount of skepticism, to be literate in a way that allows them to read something, and question it and contest it. to think deeply about what’s being said,
what messages are being promoted. I think that certainly helps them to develop an acute sensitivity toward how it might be to experience being different in ways that make a difference in a particular social or cultural context. So, skepticism and empathy at both an intellectual and somatic level are dispositions I hope to develop, too. I want them to be able to “see” students from a broader and more deeply informed perspective in terms of what those students might be experiencing. (Grace, Interview, 24 September 2004)

The focus of Eric’s class is the children with disabilities who participate in inclusive classrooms, and their different characteristics related to intellectual, physical, emotional, sensory, behavioral, communicative, social, or academic developmental domain. The class developed around the issues and controversies involved in inclusive education. It also encouraged the students to develop their collective imagination towards classroom citizenship and wider community using effective teaching practices. Eric explained the overview of his class in our interview:

I start the syllabus off with a quote from a teacher on imagination and child’s limitations that are actually the limitations of our imagination. That really becomes part of the class, and I don’t know how far anybody takes that, how far does it go, how far do I take that quote. Hopefully that ends up being what class is about, is about rethinking the imagination so how do we imagine disability within a course of a semester, does our imagination change about that, about teaching practices, meeting with families and all these other things that are actualities of school (Eric, Interview, 23 January 2004).

The goals of the course were the following:

(1) Know and apply the meaning behind disability labels; (2) Understand the history of disability and education in order to better interpret current school practices; (3) Critically evaluate the manner in which schools widely determine intelligence and apply alternative models to the benefit of all children; (4) Uncover and critique examples of how our culture and school practices shape our perceptions of human competence and incompetence; (5) Develop a theoretical and applied understanding of teaching methods that arise out of Local Understanding v. Distant Understanding of children; (6) Develop and apply collaborative work skills; (7) Critically apply alternative models to understanding children’s behavior; (8) Critically explore definitions and trends associated with the idea of giftedness in school; (9) Contrast benefits of learning associated with
competition, individualism, and collaboration; (10) Develop a sense that teaching is ultimately always about learning. (based on Eric’s syllabus)

According to Charles’ syllabus, his course is designed “to develop the knowledge and competencies required to teach students with diverse academic and behavioral characteristics in general education classrooms” (Syllabus). For Charles, the learner outcomes consisted in having the students become familiar with the needs and the characteristics of children who receive special education services and learn about the various models for providing services to students in need of special education. A central part in Charles’ classes was to introduce his students to different methods of accommodating students with diverse learning needs, recognizing that all students exhibit unique learning needs and characteristics. The main topics of the course also addressed the issues and challenges that teachers usually face in the classroom (based on Charles’ syllabus and class observations). Charles went into detail about his choices of the goals and objectives of the course:

They have to know something about the field of special education. They have to know what special education is and they have to know what general educators are because in their first year of teaching they will have kids from special education in their classroom. They have to know what responsibilities a general education teacher has such as participating in activities, collaborating with special education teacher. This is the only class in special education, except for those who minor in Special Education. They also have to know the different categories in special education and what we call exceptionalities. They have to learn what a learning disability is, what a behavior disability is, they have to know something about children with speech communication disorder, something about gifted and talented, or about autism. (Charles, 13 April 2004)

Charles continues our conversation, explaining the choice of other topics for his course:
I emphasize learning disabilities and behavior disorders because those are the most common. They have to know something about those categories and the characteristics of the kids who are in those categories. I know that a lot of school districts don’t have a term called ‘learning disabilities’, they have to know what the characteristics of that are: poor attention span, difficulty in learning to read, difficulty remembering. We cannot ignore those characteristics because kids come to school with them. And finally they have to know some methods or some strategies for meeting those kids’ needs. For example, if you are introducing multiplication in the 4th grade and you have some trouble with kids who are still learning how to subtract and are not ready to learn multiplications, what do you do with it? You should learn how to teach them multiplications. If you have kids who have trouble with behavioral limits and rules, and cannot follow directions, you have to know what to do with those kids. So they need to know something about how to accommodate kids with behavioral or learning difficulties. (Charles, Interview, 13 April 2004)

Charles summarized the goals of his class as follows:

So the goals of the class are to teach them about the background and history of special education, to learn about the characteristics about different exceptionalities and to learn something about strategies for enabling children to be successful and to move away from the whole group of instruction. (Charles, Interview, 13 April 2004)

Summary

In this chapter I introduced the participants of the study, their professional backgrounds, their experiences related to diversity and their philosophies of teaching. I also presented each professor’s definition of diversity as I found it important for the overall purpose of this study. I ended this chapter with each professor’s expectations for their students, and their goals and objectives for the course “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners.”
CHAPTER 5
DATA ANALYSIS

Emergent Categories, Themes, Sub-themes & Core Themes

In this chapter I will explore the main categories and themes, sub-themes and core themes that emerged from analyzing the data I collected. This data included interview transcripts, the transcripts of classroom observations, and teacher educators’ artifacts (syllabi, handouts, etc.). The main categories are: (I) Curriculum for Diverse Learners and their Needs, (II) Authentic Assessment, (III) Instructional Strategies, (IV) Materials, and (V) Standards: Why and Why Not. Within the first category, the following themes became apparent: Education for Social Justice, Improving Educational Opportunities, and Special Education and Education for All Children. Another type of themes that emerged as “core themes,” influence and explicate different notions in other themes. They are unique terms invented by one of the teacher educators in the study to make connections between the classes, to exemplify different notions, or to emphasize certain features that need to be addressed in special education. These core themes are “Cultural Boundary of Comfort: Rules of Presence” and “Local versus Distant Understanding.” An overview of all the themes, sub-themes and core themes is shown in Figure 1.
I. Curriculum for Diverse Learners and their Needs.

1. Historical Inequalities.
2. Achievement Gap between African American or other Oppressed Minorities and White Students.

B. Improving Educational Opportunities.
1. High Expectations for All Students.
2. Cooperation vs. Competition.
3. Cooperative Learning (CL).
4. Multiple Intelligence Theory (MI).

C. Special Education and Education for All Children.
1. History of Special Education.
2. Overrepresentation of Minorities in Special Education.
3. Labeling.
4. Core Themes:
   a) "Cultural Boundary of Comfort: Rules of Presence".
   b) "Local vs. Distant Understanding".
5. (Dis)abilities and their labels:
   a) Communication Disorders.
   b) Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD) & Autism.
   c) Learning Disabilities: ADD & ADHD.
   d) Emotional and Behavioral Disorders.
   e) Exceptionalities: Gifted and Talented.
6. Adaptations:
   a) Classroom Adaptations.
   b) Classroom Management.

II. Authentic Assessment.
III. Instructional Strategies.
IV. Materials.

Figure 1. An Overview of the Emergent Categories, and Themes
Because my research questions focused on how instructors teach a course on meeting the needs of diverse learners, throughout my data collection I paid attention not only to the content of the courses, but also to the assessment techniques, instructional strategies, and materials that were used during the courses, including the participants' responses regarding standards. I believe that each of these elements is important in addressing diversity successfully through curriculum and instruction. By the same token, Nieto (2000a) argues:

If the purpose of education is to prepare young people for productive and critical participation in a democratic and pluralistic society, then the activities, strategies, and approaches we use with them need to echo these concerns. Schools, as currently structured, do little to prepare students for this future because the curriculum and instruction tend to contradict these goals. (p.369)

Thus, the critical analysis conducted in this study could be useful for other teacher educators' practices that address diversity in their classrooms. This analysis does not necessarily provide the only way to teach a class about the needs of diverse learners, but along with teacher educators' comments, it offers examples of how to teach a class on diversity issues successfully. As Sonia Nieto (2000a) stated: “Qualitative approaches render very distinct but equally crucial data to influence educational practice, but no case study of a single individual can adequately or legitimately portray the complexity of an entire group of people.” (p.12).

Because the amount of studies and research found in the literature on the themes and sub-themes is exhaustive, I decided to limit the analysis of each theme and sub-theme on the articles and books recommended by the professors and discussed in their course
along with other few articles and books I found significant in pinpointing the relevance of the themes.

I. Curriculum for “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners”

A. Education for Social Justice

Historical Inequalities

Scholars agree that in order for students to understand diversity issues, they should have historical knowledge about the oppressive circumstances of African Americans, Native Americans, and Asian Americans such as segregation, the eugenics movement, slavery, racial violence, etc. (Adams, Bell, & Griffin, 1997; Banks, 2001a; Freire, 1970; 1994; Nieto, 2000a). Grace addressed historical inequalities by focusing on how,

historically, those in positions of power and authority construct (interpret and characterize) perceived differences in others in such a manner that they (the powerful) can justify inequality, cruelty, and injustice. In the process they legitimate their own positions as privileged elites. It is, in other words, a way to engage in blaming the victim in the name of helping them. (Grace, 27 February 2004)

Grace pointed out in her class that students cannot understand diverse learners until they understand history, especially the historical inequalities that made a difference in terms of deprivation of educational opportunities:

We can talk all we want about cultural differences, and tolerance (which is kind of an insult, because raise your hand in here if you want to be “tolerated”), when you’d rather be cared for, accepted, and part of the community. Of course you would [rather have the latter]. We talk about tolerance all the time, but I really want you to hear and know this history [referring to the history of African Americans, Native Americans, and Mexican Americans]. You don’t hear it in many places because, frankly, we are ashamed of it. We don’t want to talk about how we got this country. How did we get this country? You read Howard Zinn, you know now, don’t you? You knew a little bit before, but you probably didn’t
have much in-depth knowledge. We got it from the forced free labor of the Black slavery, we took it from the Native Americans, and we took it from the Mexican Americans. We did it by lying and cheating, stealing and killing, and trickery, and broken promises and brutality, and introducing people to substances that would make them weaker, through spreading diseases and I can go on and on and on. (Grace, 4 March 2004)

The lack of opportunity of education as a result of social background, ethnicity and historical inequalities was brought to the students’ attention through different examples:

We keep thinking that we can just fix the problem and get over it, but these injustices go on for an awfully long time. History does have a very long legacy and it’s not easy to see. We have to understand that in the 1960s a school system in Virginia closed its doors completely in order to avoid desegregation. Now, Brown versus Board of Education was ruled on in 1954. Almost a decade later, schools had not been desegregated. Even though Chief Justice Earl Warren said that it had to be done very quickly (“With all deliberate speed”), it didn’t happen that way. So, in Virginia they decided that, No, they don’t want to do that [desegregate schools]. So, in order to avoid it, they just closed all their public schools in Prince Edward County. White kids went to private academies, and black kids missed five years of school. That was in the 1960s. So the children of those kids today had parents who were deprived educational opportunity. Do you think it hurt their kids’ life chances? Absolutely. And the legacy goes on and on. (Grace, 4 March 2004)

In her class, Grace expressed a serious concern about the need to understand the legacy of history, and along with that the difference of educational opportunities:

Regarding kids from poverty and lower social class, we have a tendency to tell them that they can do anything they want to but we don’t provide the means or educational equality for that to happen. Not that they are not capable of doing it, but certainly not within those conditions in which we allow them to live and be educated. It’s not possible to “pull one’s self up by his or her bootstraps. (Grace, 27 February 2004)

Drawing from Zinn’s (2003) article on racial segregation, Grace pointed out the fact that unlike the voluntary immigrants, such as Asians, the Irish, or Italians, who came to the United States to make a better life for themselves, African Americans did not have
the same conditions surrounding their arrival on American shores. They were brought in the United States in slave ships, as involuntarily immigrants. They did not come here to be competitive, and there was no comparison group but the white culture. Grace explained how being an involuntary immigrant made a difference: “They came here at a huge disadvantage. The goal was to make sure that they were stripped of their culture, their languages and religions, to be disempowered. Withholding the development of literacy was a major goal of white slaveholders” (Grace, 25 March 2004).

Students had the chance to talk about their own ethnicity and backgrounds, and Grace enabled them to make connections with their experiences and values, and to explore their own educational opportunities and the difference that those made in their lives.

For a better understanding of historical inequalities it is also necessary for students to comprehend some issues discussed within the sociology of education, such as economic and social reproduction theories, the theories of schooling such as human capital theory, functional and conflict paradigms, the meritocratic hypothesis and equal opportunity/education (Apple, 1990; Hurn, 1990; Nieto, 2000).

**Achievement Gap between African American or Other Oppressed Minorities and White Students**

The theme of the “achievement gap” was also discussed and challenged within the course of “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners”. Barton (2004) argues that some of the factors correlated with student achievement could be classified as before and beyond school, and in school. Before and beyond school-factors were linked to: birth weight, lead
poisoning, hunger and nutrition, reading to young children, television watching, parent availability, student mobility, and parent participation. In school-factors were related to rigor of curriculum, teacher experience and attendance, teacher preparation, class size, technology-assisted instruction, and school safety. Other researchers identify more reasons for low achievement among African Americans such as the impact of stereotypes that amplify the historical stigmas of inferiority and, in turn, provoke vulnerability and test anxiety (Aronson, 2004; Maloney & Saunders, 2004; Singham, 1998). Other factors that promote low achievement include failure to recognize and fulfill gender-specific needs (Gurian & Stevens, 2004), low expectations, pushing the curriculum down (more academic content at a lower grade level), ignorance about students’ backgrounds, and inequality in preschool experience (Hale, 2004).

In regard to the impact of stereotypes, Grace observed:

The issue of stereotype threat is a pretty interesting concept. I think it's very enlightening; any time we think we are being compared to somebody whom everyone perceives as being superior, we tend to under-perform, we tend to do less of what we are capable of doing, out of anxiety, out of nervousness, out of just general de-motivation. Stereotypes make a big difference and it goes beyond issues of social class. (Grace, 25 March 2004)

One of the articles related to the educational achievement gap that was discussed in depth with the students in one of the courses offers three explanations based on ideological grounds. The first cause for achievement gap described by Singham (1998) is the liberal interpretation, which considers the gap as “the result of economic disparities between two ethnic communities that can be traced back to the legacy of slavery and other forms of oppression that blacks have suffered” (p.10). Its counterpart, the conservative interpretation, focuses on the sociopathological model, which takes into
account the personal level, and not the history of African Americans. According to the conservative ideology we are a color-blind society, and it is the fault of the black community and its pathologies (e.g., “poor parenting skills, lack of drive and ambition; negative peer pressure and poor choice of models; high levels of teenage pregnancies, drugs, crime; lack of parental involvement in their children’s education,” p.10) that cause the lack of interest in education among African American students. The third view discussed in the article is the genetic model proposed by Charles Murray and Richard Herrnstein in *The Bell Curve*, where they claim that African Americans are genetically inferior to whites and that is why the educational achievement gap exists.

Singham (1998) describes other causes of underachievement such as the stereotype threat (e.g. college students who underperformed at standardized tests because they were told they were going to compete with whites; the stereotype threat disappeared in the control group where the focus was not on comparing the performance of the two groups) or the perception of the relationship between effort and reward. The academic credentials, which could lead to better employment, could still have a profound impact for African Americans:

For years blacks were denied employment and education commensurate with their efforts. It did not matter how much they valued education and strove to master it; higher levels of education and employment were routinely denied to them purely on the basis of their ethnicity. Hence it is unreasonable to expect them to see the work/credentials/employment linkage as applying to them, as most whites do. (p. 12)

On the other hand, high academic achievement often does not come with the same rewards for either poor/working class whites or people from oppressed racial minority groups. For these individuals, accomplishing academic distinction sets them apart from
their community of origin but does not earn them authentic membership into the white, middle class world. Despite their achievements, they still feel socially isolated. Grace reflects on this situation in the remarks:

Even though your family may be happy for you, even though they worked hard to support your aspirations all of their lives (to make sure you had an opportunity), now that you have attained a college degree(s) there’s a sort of alienating aspect to it. So, you can see why high-achieving black people would run into the same thing and probably in a more pronounced manner because they may be transcending at the same time social class and race constraints. That is a pretty hard thing to do. I think a lot of people from working class and minority backgrounds say to themselves: “You know, it’s not worth it.” They may really, if not regret, then certainly be ambivalent about their successes. But I think that it is equally hard for us to understand how lonely a place in the world that is. If you have never experienced social isolation, it is very hard to imagine. When you do experience it, it’s really quite depressing. A lot of people say: “I can’t go home anymore, I can’t relate, and even if I do go home and everybody loves me, no one can really understand me anymore.” (Grace, 25 March 2004)

Acting white and embracing white values could also imply that blacks are inferior to whites, which is a very offensive and unfounded statement.

Grace elaborated further into as she explore the main points of the article and the reason why there is an achievement gap between African-American and white students:

I think that it’s time for us to face what the achievement gap is all about and the article does a wonderful job, presenting a new set of discussions about that. I sat down and I came up with a list of responses about the achievement gap from what I think might be from a minority perspective. Some of the reasons why black kids don’t achieve as high as white kids (at least by standard measures) by group are:

(a) You have to act white to succeed, but acting white doesn’t help, and it requires me to reject myself, my family, my community.

(b) Why should I adopt white values when they are the ones who embraced slavery and other injustices?

(c) Whites get to set the norm; somehow whites got into a position where they are able to insist that everybody else gets measured by their standards and values. The game is rigged from the outset because is based on their culture, their language, their values.
(d) Why should I compete when it is unlikely to pay off or pay off in the same ways and to the same degree as it does for white people?
(e) Why should I set myself up for comparisons?
(f) A lot of whites are still thinking that black people are genetically inferior. It's very hard not to internalize these subtle messages, especially when I get these messages from white people who have all the institutional power
(g) Even if I do well and I become a high achiever, many people would denigrate my achievements by thinking that I am an Affirmative Action case. Also, if I become a high achiever, people would constantly point me as a role model, and I would become a public example used to indict others for their “apparent” lack of effort or ability. In other words, I would be used to impose dominating ideology.
(h) Being a high achiever is likely to be a lonely experience. I'd never really belong to their world.
I just thought that it was kind of useful thing to do. I sat down and attempted, to the extent that it is possible, to understand the situation from a minority group perspective. If I were black, how would I feel? It was my attempt to try capturing it, based on what I have learned over the years. (March 25, 2005)

Research about the “achievement gap” provides some efficient strategies that could bring successful changes in addressing the causes for African Americans’ underachievement. Singham (1998) describes a study by Treisman (1992) who investigated the factors that contributed to a huge difference in performance within two groups, blacks and the high-achieving Chinese minority. He discovered that by studying together, sharing tips and notes, analyzing problems, devising strategies, challenging each other, and learning from them black students achieved higher grades then when they studied individually. Treisman (1992) encouraged all of his mathematics students to work together on difficult problems. This strategy enabled the students to feel a sense of exhilaration and power once they solved a challenging problem leading to feelings of high achievement. On the other hand, the remedial courses, besides being boring for students by reinforcing low-level thinking skills through their drill activities, reinforce poor performance. Also, as Grace stated: “When you are subjected to a remedial model,
everybody is telling you that you are a low-achiever and it is very hard not to internalize that” (Grace, 25 March 2004). So, giving students the chance to study together, to have classes based on “active learning” methods, and to have high expectations for one another would enhance their achievement (Singham, 1998).

Other recommendations for positive outcomes include: healthy interactions between parents and teachers and support for African American families, recruitment of good teachers, adequate funding (Aronson, 2004; Barton, 2004; Hale, 2004), exploring issues intellectually through being actively involved in reading, writing and attending conferences on racism and minority cultures. Additional recommendations include: engaging in dialogue with parents, students, colleagues, and other members of the community about racism; immersing oneself in other cultures; creating a safe environment, and committing oneself to activism (providing more gifted programs, identifying evidence of exclusiveness and racism by using questionnaires for teachers and administrators); and having high expectations for all students (Maloney & Saunders, 2004; Landsman, 2004).

Since I consider that the following conclusion by Singham (1998) is very important, I am going to quote it below in its entirety. After contending the argument that looking for pathologies in minority communities or adopting a “race-neutral” socioeconomic explanation are superficial strategies that do not address the reality, Singham (1998) states that:

The educational achievement gap is not an artifact. It is real and has serious social, economic, and political consequences. Its roots lie in complex and historically rooted ethnic relationships and characteristics. But the situation is by no means hopeless. We can be encouraged by every promising experiments that
have narrowed the gap. But we have to start looking at the problem in new and deep ways, and we must avoid the temptations to seek simplistic one-shot solutions if we are going to make any real headway. (p.15)

Social Constructions of Class and Race

One way of addressing diversity is by explaining the social construction of knowledge, and, consequently, understanding class, race, ethnicity, disability, and gender as social constructions embedded in historical and social contexts. The sociology of education offers two important theories that are concerned with the roles of schools in democratic societies: functional and conflict theories.

Until the 1960s, functionalism was the predominant paradigm used to understand schooling in American society. Functionalist theory is "concerned with the functions of schooling in the maintenance of the social order" (Sadovnik, 2001, p.17). Functionals examine the roles of schools in modern, democratic societies, and argue that the modern society is based on meritocracy, where talent, ability and effort determine once status in society, rather than one's inherited characteristics. In a meritocracy, each individual has an equal chance of achieving of social and economic rewards, and education is necessary to reach this goal. Conflict theory emerged in the 1960s as an important response to and critique of the functionalist theory. Conflict theorists argued that the empirical research on the relationship between schooling, skills, and jobs does not support the notions that U.S. schools are meritocratic, democratic, and based on equal opportunity. While functionalists claimed that schooling was as an efficient and rational way of sorting and selecting talented people based on equality of opportunity, conflict theorists countered that schools do nothing but perpetuate inequality and class domination. Two neo-
Marxists theorists, Bowles and Gintis (1977), emphasized that schools predominantly serve the interests of the capitalism. Standardized intelligence tests, the tracking system, credentialism largely serve to reproduce class inequalities, enabling privileged classes to perpetuate their economically superior position (Sadavnik, 2001; Hurn, 1993).

Grace talked at length with her students about race and social class, emphasizing how both of these concepts were social constructs. Drawing on conflict theory, Grace explained the issue of race as another conceptual framework for understanding diversity:

We have these ideas about races as constituting biologically distinct groups, but they are just ideas. There aren’t real races, only mental constructs or meanings we impose on certain physical characteristics that cannot essentially be demarcated from group to group. Not only that, but there is no way to ground race as biologically or genetically determined. We constructed race; we made it up, and we made it up for political reasons, to justify differential treatment and a lot of social injustices. And it is also a way to explain inequality in a way that exonerates those at the top of the social and economic hierarchy. People who have privilege and position in a culture can buy into the fiction of race as biology, and the fiction of racial superiority and say: *You know, I really deserve this, I am superior, I am better, and I can justify my advantages at the expense of others.* We use meritocracy as an explanation for the inequality between the have-s and have-nots, so that we can continue allowing ourselves to enjoy privileges that we possess as a privileged group and rationalize not doing anything to redistribute advantages to other groups that don’t have many. We can recreate inequality without having moral qualms about it. It has worked very well for those at the top. (Grace, 1 April 2004)

Grace showed a documentary about race to the students which emphasized that race cannot be explained through genetics:

In any event, the whole “genetic inferiority” thing, the whole idea that some races are just genetically inferior has been soundly refuted. But does that mean that a lot of people don’t still believe in it? Yes, they still do. Skin color also came into discussion. It seems that about every generation someone like Arthur Jensen or Herrnstein and Murray reassert the old argument about intelligence as biologically determined and racial genetic inferiority. One of the many problems with that, as we saw in the documentary, is that who is absolutely black and who is absolutely white? We can’t really say. For example, the documentary points out that, if you
take a walk from the Equator all the way to the North Pole, the skin color changes gradually. Skin color doesn’t really tell anything, and if it does it is a matter of adapting to physical environment, right? If your ancestors lived closer to Equator, your skin will be darker. It is not genetic per se, but an adaptation. It doesn’t connect to the other characteristics that people ascribe to race. (Grace, 1 April 2004)

Inevitably, the discussion about race and genetic inferiority leads to IQ tests and their discriminatory consequences, where the objective data is often separated from values, culture, and experiences in order to recreate and sustain the approach that some races are genetically inferior. In agreement with Singham (1995), Grace and Eric emphasized that the IQ test is not “objective”, “culturally-neutral”, or experience-free, although it is engineered to be statistically valid and reliable. Instead, IQ tests are context-dependent. Referring to Richard Herrnstein and Charles Murray’s (1994) book, *The Bell Curve: Intelligence and Class Structure in American Life*, Grace underlines the consequences of standardized testing relative to the creation of inequalities:

They have an agenda in that book. Essentially, their ideologically-loaded agenda is: ‘Let’s face it folks, here are the objective facts, Blacks are intellectually inferior, whether we like it or not, there’s not a lot we can do about it, all we can do is try to minimize the effects.’ They also try to say how much they regret the facts, but assert that they are, nevertheless, the facts. Of course, if you are an epistemological realist you never have to make the acknowledgement that somehow you construct and mobilize information a way that builds your case. In any event, that’s their approach. And that approach has been taken on about every twenty years. Every generation someone makes a “new” case that some races are just genetically inferior. (Grace, 24 March 2004)

In our interview, Grace expressed her disagreement with any type of standardization, as she finds it “at odds with the goals of promoting inclusion and diversity”(Grace, 24 September, 2004). She also gave other reasons of why she dislikes standardized testing in one of her classes:
I think that standardized testing is ridiculous, is the lowest form of testing and assesses the lowest form of learning. The only purpose is to sort and select kids, and to create winners and losers, and as an educator that’s not my job. I am here to educate. For example, reading comprehension: because there are multiple-choice questions, children are trained to take these practical tests instead of being taught how to read for understanding. (Grace, 27 February 2004)

The in-class discussion about standardized testing continued and was centered on a particular article by Linda McNeil (2000) who offers specific examples of negative effects of state-mandated standardization that, in her opinion, impacts negatively on teaching and learning by damaging the process of meaning-making, perpetuated inequities for minority students, and impending reforms that might encourage more democratic discourse.

Based on the article by Singham (1995), Grace asserted that the biological definition of race that selects out only those groups historically perceived as different races does not stand as an argument, since it seems that genetically, we are more alike than different. As Singham (1995) remarks, “race is best understood as a social construct. We identify ourselves and other people by the family and community that produce us. Biology has very little to do with it” (p.273). One example that Singham (1995) gives to sustain his point is that the amount of schooling that children receive could increase or decrease the IQ scores, showing that the social conditions influence the performance not the genes.

Social class was a recurrent theme in Grace’s course and she sought to increase student awareness and understanding of its effects:

If I had to subtitle this particular class session, I would subtitle it: When you wish upon a star, it makes a difference who you are. Have you heard of the old Disney song, When you wish upon a star, it makes no difference who you are? This is
simply not true. It does matter. Social class matters tremendously. It is an issue that we don’t like to talk about as a society. Our country was founded on the ideal of social equality, you know, this whole democratic ideal, which is a wonderful one. I am not claiming that the democratic ideal is entirely unrealized, but social class I think is probably one of the last great issues that we avoid, that we don’t like to talk about, that we are uncomfortable about. We tend to proclaim over and over that we just don’t have social classes, or that it isn’t much of an issue.
(Grace, 1 April 2004)

Social class was explained and analyzed in Grace’s classes through application of Bourdieu’s concepts of cultural capital and consumer habits and, discussion of Danforth’s (1998) views on how educators maintain and perpetuate social class. It was also addressed through analyzing a documentary about high school students and their internalized social class messages. As Grace pointed out, another way of reproducing the class structure is through parents’ influences on their children’s expectations:

There is an unspoken desire for the parents of kids from working class backgrounds to protect their children from disappointment of having too many [or too high] aspirations, for expressing themselves or pushing too hard out there, because they want their kids to know their place in the world. And the kids get that message in a subtle way so that they come to school and they can’t see themselves as having possibilities and broader horizons. It is a way to protect them, and also helps to recreate and reproduce those class structures. Poor and working class parents experience a real dilemma. (Grace, 27 February 2004)

While exploring the idea of how we can change the schools to address problems like the achievement gap and, competition that creates winners and losers, Grace wondered why we have not been able to turn schools into places for passionate and engaged learners instead. She also offered an indicting commentary on why schools do not enact democratic reforms:

We have the system in place and we can criticize all day long, but the fact of the matter is that for a lot of people schools are working. They are doing the work to make sure that they [advantaged parents] are passing their advantages down to
their kids. And that is a very important thing for elite parents. (Grace, 25 March 2004)

B. Improving Educational Opportunities

High Expectations for All Students

High expectations for all students are an important component of effective teaching for transformative learning. As Nieto (2000a) observed:

Racism, discrimination and low expectations of student abilities are profoundly interconnected, and in order to develop high expectations for all students teachers need not only to show a deep care towards their students but also to confront their biases. Expectations are connected with the biases we have learned to internalize. If we expect children who come from economically poor communities to be poor readers, then we may reflect this belief in the way we teach them. Similarly, if we expect girls to be passive and submissive, we may teach them as if they were. Perhaps our sensitivity to a deaf child’s learning needs results in our belief that she cannot learn as quickly as a hearing child. Although our teaching approaches may be either unconscious or developed with the best intentions, the results can be disastrous. (p.353)

Having high expectations for all students was often mentioned by Grace and Eric in their classes, with the practical advice for their own students to avoid arranging children in groups based on who is the lowest and instead to organize them based on their interests and various strengths (Eric, 22 March 2004; Grace, 27 February 2004). Also, Grace argued that giving students a second chance is a high motivator. As a complete observer in her classes, I noticed that when she gave the papers back to her students she stressed that they should think of her comments “as a conversation”. She also gave students a chance to improve their papers, pointing out that she always encourages “continual improvement and risk taking” (Grace, 24 September 2004).

In Grace’s opinion, all kids should be “winners,” and to accomplish that goal we need to set up facilitating conditions. The idea that schools reflect larger social structures
and perpetuate the social reproduction of class hierarchy was brought home to students through discussion of the article “The Great Game of High School” (Dutton, Quantz, & Dutton, 2000). The authors introduced practical suggestions to reduce biases based on social status, including making a difference by initiating extracurricular activities and dialogues with students about the “great game” of high school, including everybody in extracurricular activities, setting up representative elections for student council from all the student groups, and recruiting faculty from a working-class background. Grace added another important practical suggestion; that is, we need to convince students who come from low-income backgrounds that they are as capable as other students, particularly by giving them extra forms of encouragement (Grace, 1 April 2004).

**Cooperation versus Competition**

Grace began a discussion in one of her classes by asking students about their different ways of being involved in competition, which Grace called “our national religion” (April 15, 2004). As expected, all the students had been involved at different levels in competition, whether through school, extracurricular activities (in sororities, favorite sports, drama classes), or in social life (with their relatives, friends, or boyfriends). We need to take into account that these nine students are in an honors class, a fact that reminds us of their competitive nature. When asked, most of them suggested or agreed that they enjoy competition; it motivates them to be the best. As an observer, I noticed that this class was based on cooperation, everybody had an equal chance to talk and be listened to due to the small number of students in this class. All the assignments were individual and the class was more lecture-discussion oriented. That said, Grace
avoided a competitive ethos in class by allowing students to resubmit their work until they were satisfied with the results. It was obvious they enjoyed the class as they learnt a lot on different important issues that were never discussed in other classes.

Grace talked to them about the problems of competition. First, Grace challenges the myth that "competition is within us" and "it's normal for human beings to be competitive," proposing instead that "our chances of survival as human beings are better when we cooperate than when we compete," competition being "a cultural, not a natural thing" (April 15, 2004). Second, Grace argues that "competition sets up a false sense of scarcity in the classroom" simply because our entire society is based on competition.

Despite accusations like having standards too low if all the kids are doing well, or are given second chances, Grace denotes that

A genuine educator really wants everybody to succeed. We got some conflicted messages that I want you to be aware of. One message is that not every kid in the room can be successful. The other message is that we want all children to succeed. And that pressure [from this contradiction] will be there and you need to be articulate about what you are doing. Your policies about giving kids multiple opportunities, your policies about letting kids work together, your teaching practices that allow kids to be successful will have to be defended. Expect that pressure to be on you; don’t react to it in an unarticulated sort of way. Watch out for that, or at least decide what kind of educator you want to be. If you are going to be for kids, be for kids. But understand that we set up that sense of scarcity and it’s impossible under those circumstances for all kids to succeed. But it is not the case that so many people have to fail in the classroom. Everybody can succeed. (April 15, 2004)

Another point brought up by Grace was that “competition is not motivating.” In a system that creates winners and losers, motivation and competition seem to be the trigger of an internal coherence: I’ll keep going until I win. This leads to a third statement, that “competition and achievement are two different tasks:”

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It goes along with the motivation. But when you are competing you will take the shortest route to that winner circle, that trophy. You are not going to do the extra reading, you aren’t going to take the risk and do something creative, all these things that people do as learners, and you may even decide that it’s not worth it to achieve [in any authentic sense] because the goal is to win, the goal is not to learn, it’s not really achievement. The process [of learning] itself becomes devalued; it takes away the genuine achievement. If getting the reward is the important thing, than the process itself becomes devalued. (15 April 2004)

By the same token, “competition does not enhance performance and achievement;” instead, it breeds anxiety and the fear of not losing.

Also, “competition brings out the worst in people, it invites mechanical behavior.” Relationships can be destroyed when competition is involved, and negative feelings appear when someone else becomes a winner. Kohn (1992) describes some strategies for manipulative behavior management used in schools by some teachers who promote competition. These strategies include pitting students against one another for the teacher’s attention and approval, and promoting individualism by having children responsible for their own work as well as by classroom arrangements, such as separating desks as if students are “on their own private islands” (p.199). Last but not least, “competition does not enhance character and self-esteem.” Grace explains:

I cannot tell you how de-motivating competition is for kids who think they don’t have a chance to win. All sort of competitions where you read so many books...do you know what happens? The kids read the shortest, easiest book they can find and the kids who are having the advantage are the ones whose parents have more time to take them to the library. The kids who are not able to do that, the automatic message to them is ‘I may as well not read’. (April 15, 2004)
Cooperative Learning (CL)

All three professors promoted and used cooperative learning in their classrooms, either through discussions about cooperation vs. competition. They noted the advantage of using cooperative learning strategies to enhance learning for diverse learners, suggesting that these strategies help students work for a common goal. Two of the professors carried cooperative learning and its benefits as a dominant theme throughout the course. As Kohn (1992) stated:

Cooperative learning (CL) is one of the most promising alternatives to structural competition not just in the classroom but in any arena. If there is a single concrete image that represents the transcendence of mutually exclusive goal attainment, it is a picture of three or four children sitting around a table animatedly exchanging information and ideas. (p.200)

As a recommended practice, cooperative learning has been used extensively in general and special education, to improve academic and social skills (Cohen, Brody, & Sapon-Shevin, 2004; Kohn, 1992). The benefits of CL are well explained in the literature through the vast amount of research that has been done so far (Augustine, Gruber, & Hanson, 1990; Kohn, 1992; Johnson & Johnson, 1990; Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003). As Slavin stated:

It has being promoted as an alternative to tracking and within-class grouping, as a means of mainstreaming academically handicapped students, as a means of improving race relations in desegregated schools, as a solution to the problems of students at risk, as well as a method of simply increasing achievement of all students. Cooperative learning can in fact accomplish this staggering array of objectives, but not as a result of a single three-hour in-service session. (p.1)

Some of the advantages of using CL in the classrooms were described by Grace as follows: learning is transformative (the whole is greater than the sum); the learner is self-regulating and self-preserving (students’ experiences are connected to their learning);
learners actively and continuously search for meaning; what is known predicts what is learned (prior experiences are used); accurate forms follow function and meaning; errors are necessary and should not be penalized; and passion, trust and interest are of foremost importance (April 8, 2004). In addition, she provided the students with a useful package on cooperative learning that contained the basic elements of CL argued by Johnson and Johnson (1989)-positive interdependence, face-to-face interaction, individual accountability, interpersonal and small group skills, and group processing, research on cooperative learning and its benefits, teacher’s role in CL, and different examples of group activities.

For class discussion of CL, Grace chose to focus on Kohn’s (1992) article entitled “Learning Together.” Kohn emphasizes the benefits of using cooperation instead of competition in the classroom, such as increases in high-achievement among students as well as enhancement of their self-esteem and quality of relationships. Other positive outcomes include emotional benefits, elimination of “nerd stigma,” greater student interest in subjects, and more stimulating intellectual interaction.

During his course on how to accommodate diverse learners through using CL, Charles discussed the history of CL, and tips for making it work; he also showed two video clips of children who were working in cooperative learning groups, and provoked his students to comment the videos. The class was focused on improving social skills through CL, respectively teaching children interdependence through this learning strategy:

The impetus toward cooperative learning in the late 70s, early 80s was that everybody said we need classrooms where kids can get along, we need
classrooms that are cohesive, secure, where we can reduce management problems, improve relationships, maybe even motivate kids to work with one another and be successful in schools. When we talk about CL, we don’t talk about kids learning any more successfully than they would in other kinds of activities, not academic skills, we are talking about creating social skills. (February 25, 2004)

Charles also discussed criticisms of CL. One concern in the literature is the danger of having low-achievers in the same group with gifted students. Charles and his students analyzed several articles chosen from School Reform and Educational Leadership on gifted education and cooperative learning. These articles offered suggestions about how to use cooperative learning more effectively to accommodate the needs of gifted students. Another concern expressed in the literature about CL is that some teachers think that CL means putting students to work together in groups, neglecting the direct teaching of social skills or monitoring (Edwards & Stout, 1990; Schultz, J.M., 1990; Slavin, 1990). Therefore, Kohn (1992) provides a framework for maximizing the benefits of CL, calling it “three interlocking domains” (p.221): control (students can become responsible for their own learning having the sense of autonomy and control over it (not because of extrinsic rewards or motivators), curriculum (having a meaningful curriculum where the curricular issues are being addressed in the context of CL), and community (“a classroom that emphasizes and promotes the value of community—that has, in fact, been transformed into a caring community-allows positive interdependence to take hold’, “without promising each student extra points for helping someone else,” p.224).
Multiple Intelligences Theory (MI Theory)

Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences surprised many educators because of its arguments that there is not a single, fixed intelligence. Gardner emphasized that there is more than one way for students to learn different topics or subjects. With imagination, skills, knowledge and creativity, educators could implement the theory of multiple intelligences and better address the individual differences that exist among children. A very important fact in implementing the theory is "linking the multiple intelligences with a curriculum focused on understanding" so that "students can take ideas they learn in school, or anywhere for that matter, and apply those appropriately in new situations" (Checkley, 1997, p.11). Claiming that there are actually eight intelligences (linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and naturalist), Gardner challenges the entire notion of the IQ test, which measures only linguistic, logical-mathematical and spatial abilities, but fails to measure for the other intelligences or virtues like creativity, civic-mindedness or ethics. If teachers realized that any topic can be taught in more than one way, and allowed their students through performance assessment to show their understanding in various ways focusing on their intellectual strengths, then the students would be more likely to turn into serious, inquisitive, and good problem-solvers. Therefore, the theory of MI would help students connect their learning experiences to the world outside the classroom, making the relationship valuable (Checkley, 1997; Gardner, 1983).

In the course "Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners," the theory of MI was brought into discussion as another way of connecting to local understanding by seeing
intelligence in kids where many others might have missed it. This would lead to citizenship, value, worth, and intelligence. After giving students some important facts about Gardner’s biographical background, Eric explains MI theory to his students, noting that “the theory is never a recipe for practice. I think that any place which makes a good effort to respond to each child and his way of knowing should craft the curriculum so it can reach the child and the fine ways that the child can show his understanding” (February 16, 2004).

Underlying the idea of multiple opportunities presented to kids through painting, music, literacy, movement, Eric shows a video on Gardner’s MI theory and on the successful outcomes of a school that implemented it. Team teaching, centers of instruction, project-based learning, cooperative learning, performance and presentations are among the few strategies that are successfully connected to MI theory and implemented in the classroom by teachers. When discussing the video, Eric offered his opinion about MI theory:

I think that the reason that the theory speaks to these audiences is because people working with these kinds of kids often notice that kids do have a lot of ability. I think that anybody who has more than a few children whether teacher, parent or relative can’t teach the kids all the same, and the fact that one kid reacts one way, means that another kid can react somehow differently. If a psychologist builds this theory around human differences, I think it opens up more possibilities, particularly that kids are not in just one way, and I don’t think there is a collection of kids that are one way. (February 16, 2004)

C. Special Education and Education for All Children

The natural implication of having the course “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners” offered by the Special Education Department is that the syllabi offered by the professors who teach it address themes regarding diversity and the needs of diverse
learners, using disability issues as examples. The following themes were presented within the area of special education: The History of Special Education, Issues of Overrepresentation and Minorities in Special Education, Labeling, Core Themes, (Dis)abilities and their Labels, Adaptations, and Collaborating and Coordinating with Professionals and Families.

History of Special Education

The professors used different approaches when it came to the history of special education. These approaches appeared to be based on the key issues they felt were important the students to understand.

Eric offered his students an approach related to human difference explaining that, at the beginning of the 20th century, special education institutions were designed to keep away the dangerous people in order to protect the community. During the 1950s, the approach to human difference changed, and the focus was directed toward people in the institutions who needed protection from the dangerous community. In the 1970s, education was viewed as important for people with disabilities, who were about to be educated but not in regular classrooms, since they were disabled. When it seemed that it was not the best approach, individuals with disabilities were offered the possibility to be closer to “normal” schooling through special education classrooms in regular schools, resource rooms, or through inclusion of children with disabilities participating in regular classrooms etc.

Eric gave a very powerful example during class when showing a video clip on Willowbrook, an institution for people with disabilities in the 1970s. The video was a
painful documentary made by the news correspondent Geraldo Rivera. Rivera publicly
exposed the inhumane and decrepit conditions experienced by the people in
Willowbrook. The video clip was followed by an in-class assignment where small groups
of students were supposed to represent Medical Doctors, Staff, Community, and Parents.
They were asked to argue why, having those roles, they allowed the horrible conditions
of disease, filth, and death. The students were actively involved in their roles, and it
seemed that the goal for this activity was achieved by raising the awareness that cultural
perceptions about disability really matter.

One step forward in special education legislation was taken in 1972 through a
court case started by a group of parents of children with disabilities. Pennsylvania
Association for Retarded Children (PARC) vs. Pennsylvania (PN) was later known as the
Paradox of Educability since the argument during the testimony was that all children are
capable of learning, and in order for that statement to be true, we must believe in it.
Therefore, PARC ruled that children with disabilities must be given access to public
education. According to Eric, PARC vs. PN changed the “collective imagination” about
disability since the results of this case and important principles from it (free appropriate
public education, FAPE, least restrictive environment, LRE, and parental participation)
influenced the education for “ALL” Handicapped Children Act (now, Individuals with
Disabilities Educational Act- IDEA).

IDEA, first passed by Congress in 1975 has undergone reauthorization numerous
times. The effort of the legislative has been the educational system for students with
disabilities because it guarantees all children with disabilities a Free and Appropriate
Public Education. The law also introduced FAPE- free and appropriate public education for every child, LRE- the Least Restrictive Environment- where children must be educated in environments that most closely resemble general education and best meet the determined needs and goals of the specific child, and IEP-Individualized Educational Program, "a plan developed to meet the special learning needs of each student with disabilities that must be written, implemented, and reviewed" (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003, p. 4). Eric emphasized that arguments were being brought about the special education categorization that instead of using the services and supports in traditional ways through special education locations, it would be better to deliver them to children with special needs in a more natural way (August 30, 2004).

Charles also introduced the important Federal Laws for individuals with disabilities to his students, followed by the classification ("continuum") of educational services for students with disabilities. The Continuum of Educational Services for Students with Disabilities has six levels from least to most restrictive: (I) General Education classroom with consultation from specialists; (II) General education classroom; cooperative teaching or co-teaching; (III) Part-time placement in special education; (IV) Full-time special education classroom in a general education school; (V) Special school; (VI) Residential school, treatment center, or homebound instruction. The educational placement is ongoing and the purpose is to reevaluate the students for opportunities to move to less restrictive environments. The special education process consists of initial referral, individual evaluation, determining eligibility, IEP, and annual review/reevaluation. A Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) is working on developing and
implementing individualized program to meet the specific needs of the child (Charles, August 31, 2004; Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003).

Regarding the special education process, Eric pointed out to his students the subjectivity that exists at all stages:

It's not necessarily as objective as you think. Just start with Pre-referral: what distresses you; it might not distress my neighbor or me. We have different ways of reacting to children. And in one classroom a kid might be seen as an extreme problem, in another classroom it might not be the case. So, in the Referral stage, just think about it: a child's Study Committee, those are people, they are not robots who walk in with an answer, they are human beings who have a set of experiences and expertise. They come in and they advise based on their experience. One person might advise tangible awards and punishments. Another person might be repulsed by sticker systems. (Eric, 8 March 2004)

In the evaluation stage, the Study Committee assesses the student on the areas of concern, such as academic struggles, communication issues, literacy, etc, but sometimes, unfortunately, instead of using the child’s strengths, they focus on the needs and the weaknesses to justify continuing the process in special education. Eric continued to emphasize the subjectivity that exists at the Evaluation stage, giving an example of an assessment use for intellectual development, found in “Special Education: A complete Guide to 109 Diagnostic Assessments” which is a very traditional IQ test. Eric emphasizes his point of view:

I think of how we continue to construct and create the idea of intelligence: often times we have no reflection of any of these complex ways of thinking about the intellect. Still, very limited. And by picking and choosing how we determine what smartness is we are bringing subjectivities. I don’t think that we can ever eliminate that, but I think it’s important to point out. (Eric, 8 March 2004)

The IEP (Individual Education Program) includes Present Levels of Educational Performance (PLEP), measurable annual Goals and short-term Objectives; how the
student’s progress will be measured; the projected date for the beginning of services,
frequency, location and duration; a list of program modification or supports with
extracurricular or nonacademic activities; individual modifications and, if necessary,
exploration of why the assessments are not appropriate for the student; and specification
of the method to be used to inform the parents about the child’s goals and progress
(Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003). Eric explains further the implementation of the IEP:

We look at needs, we look at PLEP, at the goals we want to work on and we
determine where is the child’s least restrictive environment, part of implementing
the IEP. Then we find a placement for the child in the classroom, we find support.
We monitor the IEP, is the child achieving the goals and objectives? We then
have to revise the IEP into more sophisticated goals. Often there is some degree
of evaluation that reoccurs with that child on a daily basis, by law they need to go
back to the whole evaluation process. Maybe special education has done its job,
and it no longer requires special education. This is done every three years. (Eric, 8
March 2004)

In addition to considering legislation, and the special education process, Eric’s
class discussed were also about the resources that beginner- inclusive education teachers
need to use in order to make it work. The article assigned and discussed offered related
suggestions, such as knowing legal requirements, joining professional organizations to
keep current with the developments in the field, getting current curricula materials, using
time efficiently, and consulting colleagues (Maroney, 2000). Teachers also need to make
adaptations to meet the individual needs of all students and to find effective ways to
assess students’ progress (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003).

**Overrepresentation of Minorities in Special Education**

One important issue that the observed instructors explored with students was the
issue of overrepresentation of African American Students in Special Education.
Identifying it as a real problem and a complex issue, Grace noticed: “One of the big supposed solutions that they have is to make sure we do a better job getting the disability identified correctly, so we don’t misidentify, so we don’t make a mistake to identify somebody who does not “really” have a disability. Do you see any problem with that kind of reasoning?” Grace’s concern is obvious: “I don’t know how they are going to get rid of overrepresentation. Is race socially constructed? YES. Is disability socially constructed? Yes. How then overrepresentation would be anything other than racial discrimination?”

She shows her skepticism towards the “more refined" assessment and identification procedures, and recognizes that:

Special education is another tracking mechanism, which has the presumed legitimacy of testing and disability ideology behind it. So it would look more authentic and more official. It is one more way of sorting and selecting. That’s what special education does. I have no doubt that the intent is to help, but if you don’t understand how we constructed disability and how we constructed race, there is no way to sort this problem out. The only solution you possibly can come with it is that we need better instruments. And that is not a solution.

The same concern about the disproportionate number of African Americans in special education is stated by Patton (1998) who encourages special education knowledge producers to refine their discourse, within social, political, and cultural contexts, using an ethic of caring, justice, and respect towards African Americans and their culture. Therefore, positivist epistemologies, assumptions, and beliefs need to be revised and reformulated based on the cultural knowledge and experiences of African Americans to be able to have a sound critical-theory mode of inquiry. When reflecting the article by Patton (1998), Grace remarked:

I think this is overall a really interesting and penetrating article. He calls for educators in general and special educators in particular to start looking and he
invokes critical theory and the whole missing discourse in special education knowledge. We discussed at the beginning of the semester about the difference between the realist and the non-realist epistemologies. Those folks [realists] who think you can get it right, that there are such things as objective, theory-free knowledge and those folks [non-realists] who say, No, we construct our knowledge and our knowledge is never value-free, it is always culturally loaded, it is always a matter of our understandings and interpretations, of our observations. Every time we talk about knowing something, we are talking about information that’s always within our values, our intentions. We construct the knowledge to suit us. You cannot talk about something being subjective unless it has an opposite, objective. And since we can’t be objective ever, how can we be sure? All we have is constructed knowledge. We have this issue is huge in the world of Special Education--that we completely constructed along with disability. This is our way of understanding differences, and our way of saying that this difference makes a difference in this particular social context. We created that reality and it is no less “real” because we created it. It feels as real as this table. Otherwise, why would there be all these classes out there? And these assessment instruments? And, all these people getting certified to teach and all these people out there teaching special education? Why would it be this huge special education industry out there if they didn’t all agree with this particular knowledge if it wasn’t “real” to them? We can ask what it means to exist. Does it exist as some kind of reality apart from us -- or does it exist, as a construction that we are so attached to or invested in that it is real to us? It’s no less reality because it’s constructed. Does that make sense? (March 25, 2004)

Grace agrees with Patton (1998) that the only solution to avoiding the overrepresentation of African-American children and youth in special education is to challenge the epistemological framework of special education by stepping outside the realistic, positivistic, empiricist paradigm and understanding knowledge as the socially constructed.

Labeling

Although labeling claimed its potential merits such as diagnosis that may lead to specific treatment, promoting specific programs, increasing public awareness or improving research, it has been also a contested practice. The bases of critique relate to
its social, emotional and academic side effects. Seeing labeling as an injustice, Grace believes that it is also unnecessary:

Whenever we call someone by a disability label, what we are essentially saying is that the person who is labeled has a difference that is undesirable to the rest of us. That, of course, means people who assign labels feel perfectly entitled to stand in judgment of other people's worthiness as human beings (disability means not having ability). Do we really have to impugn the worth of a person, or call into question their adequacy as human beings, or portray them as 'broken, flawed, and inferior' in order to help them. In fact it works in the opposite direction. Labels result in social restrictions, segregation (which is never equal), stigma, under-expectation, and the list goes on.

The question that both Eric and Grace posed almost ontologically is how do we define and who defines "being normal"? Grace expresses her concern: "Who gets to draw a line between ability and disability? Isn't it based on socio-cultural values, historical context, and so on?" Berube (2004) asks us "to check the history of the past two centuries whenever we think we know what 'normal' human standards of behavior and achievement might be" (p.102).

Besides stigmatization, rejection, or exclusion as results of labeling, other drawbacks could be the differentiation that occurs during instruction for children with different disability-labels. In fact, even if within each category children differ considerably, they still receive similar types of teacher intervention, and the instruction has the same educational objectives, instructional strategies or curriculum content for all children in various categorical-based classrooms. Unfortunately, children will also be blamed for their performance difficulties and not the teachers with their non-differential instruction (Sands, Kozleski, & French, 2000). Grace explains:

Once we label someone, it provides a way to let the rest of us off the hook. For example, if we label some kids Learning Disabled or Mentally Disabled
educators can then ignore the schools and classroom contexts (which they created) that make some kids' "differences" make a difference. When we, as educators, label kids, it allows us to say all the fault or problem is the kid, not how we teach, what we teach, how we structure the school and classroom, how we rank and stratify kids into top, middle, and bottom (which is not necessary...it's just that the public wants us to create winners and losers...to make school, like our society as a whole, a big competition). In other words, we could do a lot in schools to ensure that students' "differences" don't have to make a difference or be a problem. But when we label the kids, then we don't have to think about or consider our role in "disabling" some kids, i.e. setting up conditions in which some kids' difference MAKE A DIFFERENCE.

Grace also discussed with her students the chapter "Labeling: Who Wants to Be Called Retarded?" (Kliwer & Biklen, 1996). This chapter highlights how "disability labels are ideas, not facts" and that "when we create or construct them, we do so within particular cultural contexts" (p. 83). The authors emphasize that there is a false assumptions that clinical evidence or objective judgment influence the particular classification or placement; it appears that those are not the main factors, but that the funding and specialized programming are more important. According to Kliwer and Biklen (1996), labeling creates significant problems such as stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination and exclusion of "the other:" "exclusion from competency; exclusion from central location and therefore presence; exclusion from opportunity; exclusion from acceptance and valued status; and exclusion from power and self-determination" (p. 88).

The authors invite the professional community to reflect on the meaning of labeling and the reactions of society towards it, and to understand the benefits of inclusive schooling where all children are seen as unique and competent, with their own needs and abilities and where labels are avoided. Professionals need to address questions such as: What do we think we learn from labels? Whose interests do they serve? And, does assigning a
particular disability label to a person help that individual in any way? remain to be addressed by professionals.

In regard to the idea that children are often blamed for their low academic achievement, Eric started his class by mentioning a teacher’s words about opportunities for children with disabilities: “A child’s limitations are really the limitations of our imagination.” This quote was used in all the other classes, as a continuous reminder that it is up to us—teachers, administrators, doctors, family, community—to ensure rights and resources for children with disabilities.

Labels focus on negative aspects, and one of drawbacks of labeling is that it fosters low expectations for the students with disabilities. Another drawback is the isolation of children who are moved further away from their home schools and communities if they have more significant disabilities. Often, students with disabilities are rejected and ridiculed being identified by their disability (“the cripple,” “the blind kid”) or by the program they are in (“special education”, “resource room”) rather than individually. Once labeled and excluded by the peers, it is difficult for a student to regain a favorable status (Biklen, D., 1985; Kliewer & Biklen, 1996; Sands, Kozleski, & French, 2000). Grace also takes into consideration the moral obligation of the professionals who do the labeling and categorizing:

At the very least, those who label have a moral obligation to recognize and acknowledge that disability labels are interpretations (constructions of meaning). Also, as constructors of meaning, those who label should be willing to be accountable for the moral consequences of their acts and the presumption of authority they impose.
Eric is totally against labeling, as it brings stigma with it by not accepting human differences:

All these supposedly positive ways of thinking about labels is that there is always in reaction to a society that can’t deal with human differences. So, when people say: ‘Families like labels’, well, families like labels as a way of explaining their child to an intolerant community. My interest is making the need for label less. It goes back to local understanding which is about knowing the child and responding to the child’s strength. My sense is that labels obscure a child more than to explain a child. If the kid is labeled Mentally Retarded, does that help me know that child, does it tell me how to teach something? I don’t think so. (Eric, Interview, January 23, 2005)

Related to the concept of “labeling” and disabilities, there are also core themes sub-themes that are important to be mentioned as the professors-participants in the study discussed them in detail with their students.

Core Themes

a) Cultural Boundaries of Comfort: The Rules of Presence

One cannot talk about “disability” without defining it, and I chose Eric’s non-traditional and original definition, discussed with examples of real stories or articles in many of his class sessions because it is powerful (as it is important to understand and redefine the meaning of it as social construction) and empowering (once you understand it, you are compelled to make connections with the history of special education, with the present efforts of inclusion, and even make it matter for your community). He prefers to call it an “image of disability” and the following analysis of disability notion is actually the essence of his perspective and exploration of disability:

I have this belief that we all exist in our own cultural boundaries of comfort, many of us share similar cultural boundaries, similar communities, values system etc. These are the rules and regulations that we follow by and large, and that help us to
get through a day. Most of them are probably unwritten, and we follow them every day. (August 30, 2004)

Eric explains to his students that they could break the boundary of comfort if one day they would put their books and things on his desk. That way they would break the rules of presence, by doing something that it is not viewed as “normal” the way we decided that “cultural standards of normality” are. Rules of presence could be broken at times volitionally to conform to new rules or non-volitionally.

Eric offered cogent examples of other rules of presence:

Rules of presence tell us what it means to be smart. We determined as a culture, as a community, as a society that we know what it means to be smart. Some people break those rules: a gap forms between who they are and what we have determined about what it means to be smart. So we might label that person as mentally disabled, we have this official definition that fills this gap. You might relate to other people in ways that don’t fit our general rules of presence. You might have problems with communication and this gap forms between who you are and what’s expected. You might break one rule of presence, but it is so powerful, that you might receive a disability label. One of those powerful rules is: you better learn to read the way schools want you to, at the pace that schools want you to. Otherwise, you might be labeled disabled, or learning disabled. (August 30, 2004)

Eric emphasizes how the notion of “disability” has been constructed: “For now, this is my image of how we created the notion of disability. There are particular rules that matter and those particular rules are perceived to be broken by a particular person. This causes a gap between who you are and what’s expected. It’s in that gap that you can find the notion” (August 30, 2004). The expectations we have as citizens represent the cultural boundary of comfort. According to Eric, special education grew up around this concept of community being in a privileged space, so initially people with disabilities were segregated because they were not like us. Although the discourse changed over the years

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in the sense that segregation became educationally relevant, a magic pill was not found for transforming the people with disabilities into full citizens.

One example was John McDough, who was born with Down Syndrome in 1965, and was believed to be uneducable since he had few verbal skills, limited adaptive skills and poor hygiene skills. His parents refused to institutionalize him. Later his mother remarried and moved from Los Angeles to a small town in North Carolina. The change was amazing for John, because it gave him the opportunity to feel like part of the community (people were greeting him in the street, and interacting with him). In the video clip that Eric showed to his students, John’s brother explained the beneficial change as an explosion as it was the first time in John’s life when he was accepted as a valuable member of the community outside his family. He had two part-time jobs, and weekly art and guitar lessons. He was also playing in a band, taking aerobics classes, and reading stories to children. Eric explains how John’s transformation occurred:

John found a connectedness where all these wonderful human traits were discovered and experienced. All these wonderful things we associate with citizenship. The traditional equation is: first we show you those skills, then we let you in. We let the person in when we begin to see his skills, the full possibilities of an individual with disability. It’s an amazing transformation. It suggests to me this: we need to reconfigure the metaphor of circled wagons; we need to acknowledge everybody’s place in the community. The idea of a web of relationships. When his place was assumed -disconnected - he didn’t develop, he didn’t show those wonderful traits, he was isolated and alone. When people started talking to him in the post office, only than we began to see John as he is today, as an amazing human being, as an amazing artist. Perhaps who we are as citizens occurs on this web, in this community that we can’t become a full possibility until we are on that. For most of us it is always assumed that we belong on that train. But a lot of people with disabilities are not [on it]. (April 12, 2004)
It seems that John McDough found the center, the privileged space in the community once he was accepted as full citizen, and from being an outsider he was able to be in the center of the circle, finding his own cultural boundary of comfort, and his local understanding.

b) “Local versus Distant Understanding”

Viewed as “a radically deep, intimate knowledge of another human being” (Kliwer & Biklen, 2001, p.4), local understanding “is this sort of responsive, deep way of knowing an individual, connecting that person in valued ways to the community, and from the individual how to create our practices, as opposed to practices down to the individual” (Interview, January 23, 2005). Eric pointed out that the idea of “local understanding” came from the famous anthropologist Clifford Geertz who used the term “local knowledge” and recognized in his writings that anthropology and the other human sciences have failed to explain human behavior, and culture. Therefore, a good theory should stand on community, trying to understand people from the community perspective. Based on his research, his readings, his teaching and personal experiences, Eric related the idea to disability issues, where the solutions seemed to stand on labeling, methods, characteristics, but on community and local perspectives: “Local understanding means individuals being understood by getting to know the individual. That’s a powerful thing, when so often we rely on categories to explain disability. Here people have stepped away from the category and created a context of support that allowed us citizenship” (September 20, 2004). Local understanding presumes a place in the community, where
opportunities are embraced, as we believe that all children can learn, and where instruction can build community connectedness.

The concept of distant understanding comes from a more traditional approach, from categories, labels, and theories to the individual: “Distant or Institutional Understanding has tended to value our categorical knowledge over the intimate knowledge of the individual” (September 20, 2004).

Eric believes that it should be a way to use both local and distant understanding for the individual’s benefit. It is very important to establish the ability to create a context that supports citizenship, to create that cultural boundary of comfort that is responsive, challenging, engaging, and allows risk for children with disabilities. In addition to creating opportunities and a context for citizenship, Berube proposes that we should “treat other humans as if we do not know their potential, as if they just might in fact surprise us, as if they might defeat or exceed our expectations” (p.102).

Eric provided helpful examples of local understanding through articles, videotapes, and discussions with the students. These examples were analyzed continuously in every class from different perspectives. For instance, Dan Keplinger, who had multiple disabilities and was thought uneducable, was given different chances once he moved in a little town and to a different school where he had the chance to be part of the community and became an artist. Jermaine Burnes also became an artist, because his teacher believed in him, challenging the label of behavior disorder. Sylvia Ashton Warner’s teaching practice changed while teaching a group of ethnic minority children in New Zealand. She refused to blame the children for their learning difficulties; instead.
she blamed the curriculum, the instruction, the school leadership, challenging herself and her imagination to be a better teacher. Based on the premise that every child can learn, in-class assignments and discussions focused on factors (such as values, knowledge, experiences, or skills) that might help a teacher see "citizenship" in their students rather than gaps. Therefore, local understanding brought up discussions about the context we create as educators and how we can question that context and ourselves.

(Dis)abilities and their Labels

A traditional definition of disabilities is the following: "conditions that include mental retardation, hearing impairments, vision impairments, speech and language impairments, serious emotional disturbance, learning disabilities, serious emotional disturbance, orthopedic impairments, other health impairments, autism, traumatic brain injury, deafness and blindness, and multiple disabilities" (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003, p19). It is known that disability labels can be helpful, when they provide the appropriate special education services to meet students' needs, but they can be harmful, when they trigger negative stereotypes or cause confusion in terms of the characteristics of each category (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003).

Eric explained in his class the three interrelated trends that influenced special education classification of disabilities. Before 1979, the majority of resources flowed into regular education, the so-called "first-system program". Then, the remedial programs ("the second system programs") received more resources. In the mid-1980s, the labels "reading disabilities," "behavioral disorders" or "attention deficit disorders" were defined and along with them, two interpretations:
We can see both sides of the argument. There is no absolute: this is a positive change or this is a negative change. Some people argue that we just became better. We should recognize behavioral problems as disabilities, and because we didn’t, it just shows that we were ignorant 15-20 years ago. We become less ignorant today, we recognize disabilities. Some think that we became better, others think that it’s not the point that we became better, but that we have new ways of talking about these struggles, and the new ways are not always so positive. (Eric, 1 March 2004)

Therefore, in the 1990s, there was an explosive increase of number of students labeled disabled, generally around issues of reading, attention and behavior problems.

The participants in the study emphasized and discussed the following disabilities in their classes: learning disabilities (attention deficit disorder-ADD, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder-ADHD), behavioral disorders, mental disabilities, and physical disabilities. Gifted and talented was also mentioned during the course.

Communication disorders. Charles discussed these disorders with his students, after they had read the required chapter (April 14, 2004) The term communication disorders refers to “difficulties with the transfer of knowledge, ideas, opinions, and feelings” and “may be developmental or acquired through injuries or diseases that affect the brain” (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003, p. 69). The three broad categories of communication disorders are: speech disorders, language disorders, and hearing disorders. Charles pointed out that children with communication disorders receive assistance from speech and language pathologists.

Speech disorders are identified in children who have problems with articulation, fluency, and voice. Language disorders are reflected through differences with receptive and expressive language, vocabulary, word categories and relationships, words having
multiple meanings, figurative language, language form phonology, morphology, syntax),
and language use and pragmatics. Charles explains:

Learning disability goes with language, for example, following directions. Learning to read or to write goes with language or staying on topic during the conversation, or changing the communication style to fit the context. You are going to see a lot of these characteristics. For example, kids who are having trouble with reading content, with writing, or reading a paragraph, and not being able to make the gist of it. These kinds of kids are going to have the same trouble as the kids with learning disabilities. For example, when communicating a point of view in a logical fashion, or relating a narrative cohesively and sequentially, they want to tell you a story and as they are telling you the story they want to tell you something exciting that happened to them over the weekend, and the events are not linked, they are having trouble expressing themselves. Those are kids who have typical communication difficulties. (Charles, 14 April 2004)

Charles enumerated and described the characteristics of communication difficulties as problems with the following: understanding the meaning of concepts; seeing the relationships among concepts; using compound and complex sentence; using correct grammar; thinking of the right word to convey the concept; discussing abstract concepts; changing communication style to fit different contexts; staying on topic during conversations; repairing the conversation when the listener doesn’t understand; expressing positive and negative feelings to others; following directions; comprehending a speaker’s word; comprehending nonverbal messages; taking the perspective of a conversational partner; communicating a point of view in a logical fashion; and relating a narrative cohesively and sequentially.

Among the strategies for facilitating language development, Charles emphasized teaching language in purposeful context; teaching comprehension and production; helping students see the connection or relationship among concepts; using conversation as a major milieu for teaching; giving students enough time to respond; adjusting the
pace, checking info, and checking for understanding; using self-talk to explain what you are doing or thinking; using parallel talk to explain what others are doing; using modeling to help students get practice and feedback on a particular skill; using language as an intrinsic motivator. Charles did some practical activities with his students, like how we can help students see relationships between concepts. He wrote on the blackboard: "Nutrition + healthy foods/ fresh air + exercise/ healthy body" eliciting from students to come up with ideas of how these concepts could be explained to students with communication disorders. Analogies, stories, movies or pictures were suggested to be used in order to help students understand the concepts.

**Pervasive developmental disorders (PDD) and autism.** Included in this category are the following disorders: autism, Rett’s syndrome, childhood disintegrative disorder, and Asperger’s syndrome. There are several similar and different learning and behavioral characteristics of students diagnosed with these disorders with marked delays in numerous areas of development (social interaction and communication skills, stereotypical behavior, interests and activities). Since the causes for these disorders are unknown (genetic component may be one of them), strategies for prevention have not been identified yet (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003).

A developmental disability, autism, is manifested through language and personal and social behavior, and it appears during the first three years of life. Some of its characteristics are: engagement in repetitive activities and stereotyped movements, resistance to environmental change or change in daily routines, and unusual responses to sensory experiences (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003).
With the premise that the students read required chapter from their Reader, Eric starts the class on autism with reflective questions:

What if the very definition of disability is separation and disconnection? What if the essence of a label is about human disconnection? Is it here that we find the strict need of segregation in order to create a sense of humane? Then we try integration? I am talking about, of course, autism. I would like to talk about autism and the importance of power of inclusive opportunities. (19 April 2004)

Eric explains how the German psychiatrist Leo Kanner (1943) and the Austrian pediatrician Hans Asperger (1944) first described autism given the terminology and the features of the disability. Among the cardinal features recognized for autism are the following: (1) impaired social interaction skills; (2) verbal and nonverbal communication impairment; (3) impaired imagination; (4) markedly restricted repertoire of activities and needs. The number of autistic children is growing every year, and there is a controversy of whether we became better on identifying autism, or if the environmental conditions are the main cause. At the same time, mental retardation is highly associated with autism, as recent statistics show that about 80% of people labeled autistic follow within the IQ range of mentally retarded (50% of people labeled autistic score below 50 on IQ tests and 30% of people labeled autistic score between 50 or 70 on IQ tests).

The causes for autism were also described in their classes by Eric and Charles: (1) Psychogenic origins (“refrigerator mother”), meaning that autistic children were that way because they were shown coldness and aloofness by their mother; (2) biological basis: (a) genetic/chromosomal; (b) prenatal/perinatal drama; (3) viral (e.g. meningitis). While Charles gave verbal or visual examples (showing video clips) of children with autism, discussing the characteristics, Eric showed video clips of how the media portrays autism,
emphasizing the language and the music that almost outcast the children with autism who seem not to transcend into the cultural boundary of comfort. Eric also explained what Impaired Theory of the Mind or Mind Blindness represents when one of the main characteristics of the autistic children is the lack of coherence, which translates into a fragmentation of the world. The Theory of the Mind was developed by Michael Polanyi, who argued that we, as educators, need to use our imagination to craft the particular tools that allow us to understand each other. Eric brings the example of Donna Williams, a woman who was labeled autistic but she was able to grow out of it, and wrote two books—"Nobody Nowhere" and "Somebody Somewhere" that became bestsellers about their experience of autism. Eric encourages students to read the books by underlying some ideas that Donna Williams focused on, such as, how to understand an autistic person:

She [Williams] says, 'Stop applying judgments from your perspective to interpret what a person with autism is all about. Attempt to have a theory of the mind, and by accusing people with autism of not having it, in terms of our judgments, we are demonstrating the same thing'. She understands the effects of sensory-input dilemma: here it is a fascinating scene: this teacher rewards this little kid by saying, 'Good Job', but his sensory input system falls outside the cultural boundary of comfort and his response to that reaction is quite logical: to shut down some of the input to gain some coherence he plugs his ears, and looks weird. Judging from my perspective he looks weird. Donna Williams says that we should try to understand how it feels from his perspective. She sees meaning where others see madness because she has been through the experience herself. Language on your own is not that useful, however, it is very different to be known as somebody with language than to be known as someone with no language at all. When we begin to understand that language, we begin perhaps to think about using our imagination to connect to that child.

Eric emphasized through different examples the idea of connectedness with children with disabilities by using our imagination as educators.
Learning disabilities: ADD & ADHD. The term "specific learning disabilities" was proposed in 1963 by Samuel Kirk to replace terms such as "perceptually handicapped," "brain-injured," and "neurologically impaired" which were used for mental retardation. Specific learning disabilities represent "a heterogeneous group of students who, despite adequate cognitive functioning and the ability to learn some skills and strategies relatively quickly and easily, have great difficulty learning other skills and strategies" (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003, p. 37). According to the rules and regulations for IDEA, a child may be determined to have a specific learning disability by the multidisciplinary team if there is a discrepancy between ability and intellectual achievement (not commensurate with his or her age) in one of these seven areas: "oral expression, listening comprehension, written expression, basic reading skills, reading comprehension, mathematics calculation, and mathematics reasoning" (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003, p. 37).

Eric introduced his students to ADD/ADHD through two contrasting points of view offered in the analysis of an article and a video (entitled "Beyond the ADD Myth"). The article, "Chaos in the Classroom: Looking at ADHD" (2004) presents a medicalized perspective with ADHD as a neuropsychological disorder that starts before the age of 7, characterized by inattention, hyperactivity and impulsivity that are age-inappropriate. Schlozman and Schlozman (2000) explain the potential causes, respectively brain abnormalities, including frontal lob dysfunction. The article uses descriptive criteria as important ways of diagnosing, focusing also on treatment such as behavioral and medical therapies. Based on the principles of behaviorism, the behavioral therapy has the purpose
to shape the child's behavior towards the desired one by using daily report cards, positive reinforcement, social skills groups, or individual therapy. The medical therapy includes stimulants such as Ritalin and Dexedrine which, according to the Schlozman & Schlozman (2000, p. 183) article, “continue to be first-line medical treatments, with more than 40 years of experience confirming the relative safety and effectiveness of these medications.” These authors also offer some learning and organization strategies to help teachers structure their classrooms and have good relationships with their students. Some of these strategies are organizing the assignment books well, breaking down the assignments into smaller parts, and using flash cards to learn and repeat the material. It is also important for teachers to collaborate with the clinicians, with the parents and with the students themselves for the benefit of the students.

The counterpoint of the behavioral and medical treatment is discussed through a class video featuring Tom Armstrong on issues of learning disabilities and ADD. Although Tom Armstrong does not disregard completely the drug use, he prefers the social model to explain ADD/ADHD, by arguing that schools and society in general, should take a look at the constructed meaning of ADD and become more academically responsive to diverse ways of learning, rather than use drug interventions for a large number of children. According to Armstrong, medication should be used only after other options have been considered and explored, among which would be the development of a stimulating classroom curriculum. Eric explains Armstrong's perspective:

He is not suggesting that there are kids out there with no serious attention problems. It's just that the ADD idea locates that problem in the child and it appears to foster that attitude: Let's medicate the problem to whatever degree possible. He suggests that that's not a very effective approach for children with
ADD. It leaves a lot to be desired in terms of thinking about it. (Eric, 1 March 1 2004)

After the discussion about the two contrasting points of view on ADD/ADHD, Eric required his students to work in groups on an in-class assignment based on the two points of view (i.e. the medicalized and the sociological perspective). The questions were traced from the categories discussed previously with the students: Defined, Diagnosed, Caused, “Treatment” of ADD/ADHD. Interesting discussions were raised by questions such as:

As a group, how do you feel Armstrong would respond to the characterizations of children’s serious attention problems as a neuropsychiatric disorder?”, “What does Armstrong suggest to be the cause(s) of attention problems in children? How does this contrast with Chaos in the Classroom?”, “Do you support Armstrong’s position or do you feel that reducing drug use would lead to Chaos in the Classroom?”, “Does Armstrong’s use of the term myth swing us too far away from the medical model for understanding children’s problems, or do you feel he’s on the right track? (Eric, In-Class Assignment, March 1, 2004)

Grace also chose an article by Armstrong (1996) to discuss it with her students in which the author questions the methods used for diagnosing ADD and invites the professional community to reconsider a perspective that should focus on potential rather than on disability or disorder. The author wonders if “this ‘disorder’ really exists in the child at all,” or is just “in the relationships that are present between the child and his or her environment” (Armstrong, 1996, p. 425). With the profound regret that ADD continues to be a label that creates exclusion and stigmatization, Armstrong’s expresses his concern that the behavior rating scales used as assessment tools include subjective criteria that cannot demonstrate the accuracy of ADD symptoms, and depend on the subjective judgments of the teachers and parents who could be influenced by the outcome.
of the tests, such as medication or special education placement. Research says that there are no significant differences between children labeled ADD and "normal" children, and since we do not know the exact medical or biological causes for ADD, than we need to redefine what normal behavior means and engage in dialogue within the professional community to address the ADD issue.

Charles introduced Learning Disabilities by talking about their characteristics, about signals for possible learning disabilities, and the instructional techniques and accommodations for students with LD based on the chapter "Teaching Students with Learning Disabilities or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder" (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003). Based on the chapter read, and in-class discussions, the students further analyzed a case study about a kid with severe ADD. Strategies for accommodating students with learning disabilities recommended by Vaughn, Bos and Schumm (2003) are the following: providing a framework for learning by using advance organizer worksheets; modeling processes and cognitive strategies (i.e., thinking processes) and using instructional conversations to improve learning by understanding it; teaching self-regulation and self-monitoring to understand and improve their performance; providing opportunities for extended practice and maintenance of strategies and skills; using the technologically based learning tools and aids; adjusting workload and time (by reducing the amount of work, or dividing the task into smaller sections); presenting information and demonstrating learning in multiple ways; teaching students to use memory strategies.

Charles presented a video clip to his students about a girl who was eleven years old, diagnosed with ADD, and in need of someone to coach her socially and
academically. Doctors also suggested medication, and although her parents were reluctant at the beginning, they agreed to the use of Ritalin. It seemed to work for her, and she was better academically and socially. Charles asked his students to reflect and respond to the question: “If you are a teacher, what needs does Lauren have and which ones concern you the most?” Students expressed their opinions, and among them one international student explained how her culture would deal with students with learning disabilities.

Educational interventions to meet the needs of students with ADD/ADHD were also discussed with the students.

Emotional and behavioral disorders. Charles discussed the types of emotional and behavioral disorders with his students using the recommended chapter from Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm (2003) as theoretical input (March 10, 2004). Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm (2003) classify them as externalizing (aggression, conduct disorders, tantrums, lack of attention, and impulsivity), and internalizing behaviors (shyness, withdrawal, depression, fears/phobias or anxiety). The authors argue that recognizing the category could be very useful for teachers who could find better ways for accommodating the students with emotional and behavioral disorders. Externalizing behaviors such as conduct disorders and aggression, characterized by hitting, tantrums, fighting, throwing, teasing, acting defiant or disobedient, destroying property, bullying, stealing, can be easily identified but harder to manage. Hyperactivity could be identified through attention problems, depression, anxiety or learning problems as well as through the regular feature of being overactive, or overly talkative. Socialized aggression refers to students who engage in anti-social behavior, by “harassing, stealing, and damaging property” (Vaughn. Bos, &

*Pervasive developmental disorder* is characterized by unusual behaviors (nail biting, unbelievable ideas, head knocking) and failing to adapt or interact with others.

*Imaturity* “includes lack of perseverance, failure to finish tasks, a short attention span, poor concentration, and frequent daydreaming or preoccupation” (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003, p.109). *Depression* is difficult to identify in young students, so teachers need to look for signs such as “acting sad, lonely, and apathetic; exhibiting low self-esteem; displaying avoidance behaviors’ having chronic complaints about eating, sleeping, and elimination; refusing or fearing to go to school, or other public places; talking of suicide; poor school performance; loss of interest in previously enjoyable activities” (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003, p.109). *Anxiety-withdrawal* is identified in students who display depression, concern, fear, and timidity, prefer to work alone in classroom, and can’t maintain relationships with their peers. Charles exemplified the types of problem behaviors:

We call behavior problems when one of the three things happen:

(a) A behavior is potentially harmful to the kid or the others; things like physical aggression, violence, picking on others, making fun of others, and trying to intimidate others are harmful.

(b) The second situation is when it leads other people to form negative opinions about you. One of the things we know is that kids who go through school years not having friends, and peers look at them as somebody that don’t really want to associate it. There is a really high chance for those kids as adolescents to drop out of school due to juvenile delinquency, to turn to drugs and alcohol, to turn to gangs, to have mental health problems, to have trouble finding jobs, or to have relationship problems.

(c) The last case is of kids who have trouble attending to or following directions. (31 March 2004)
Charles also introduced to his students some of the recommended practices for teachers who have kids with emotional and behavioral problems in the classroom. The problem solving approach was also discussed, with the argument that teachers should help kids to be responsible for their behavior and make value judgments when dealing with their own behavior problem.

Eric had his students read an article on wraparound services for young schoolchildren with emotional and behavioral problems (EBD). The article describes the "wraparound" project designed to meet the needs of the students with severe and complex EBD and to increase the chance of these children to be fully included in general education. Some components of the intervention program proposed by the authors are: effective instruction (connecting children through the curriculum, effective better teaching); innovative suspension program; cost free, direct services of clinical child psychologist provided in-class; a mentoring program (successful when older students are brought into the lives of younger students); use of social skills curriculum (developing empathy, controlling impulses managing anger), monthly parent meetings; home visits. The wraparound system increased parent’s participation by implementing a family-centered system, and also helped teachers to enhance their academic instruction, behavior management strategies, and the development of cultural competence. One important conclusion of the project was that teachers have to be better prepared to address the needs of children with EBD, and that parent participation in their children’s educational program is also significant (Duckworth, S., et al., 2004).

Eric explains the ecology of behavior through Systems Theory:
Each child is an inseparable part of a complex, social system. And the idea in systems theory is that if we were to understand a child's behavior, we better understand the system. To understand a child we need to understand the complexity of a system that surrounds him/her. In Systems Theory, normal behavior is when the various aspects of child's system are working together harmoniously, then the eco-system is considered to be congruent and balanced. Then the child appears normal. Therefore, a child's disturbance is not viewed as a disease located within the body of the child, but rather a discordance, a lack of balance between the child and the system. The system apparently set up expectations and apparently he was out of balance with the expectations at that moment. A gap. (Eric, 22 March 2004)

Eric further exemplifies the meaning of discordance:

Historically somebody who is incongruent, out of balance with his system, there has been a tendency to blame the child: *Something is wrong with you*, that's pathologizing with the issue, the child's behavior is about some neurological disorder. For example, Peter came into the classroom considered as having some neurological problems. His behavior simply intensifies the sense of *he is not belonging here*. So, *discordance* could be defined as a disparity between an individual's abilities and the demand or expectations of the environment failure to match the child and the system. (Eric, 22 March 2004)

When there is a Discordance, Systems Theory forces us to act on the child, but also on the context that we created to lessen the gap between the child and the context.

This way we could create Balance. Ultimately, Systems Theory describes Behavior as Communication, meaning that we need to understand the child's behavior and alter it at that level.

One approach to thinking about behavior was described by Eric through Ecological Inventory or Contextual Analysis. The components of the Inventory consist of: Lack of Knowledge (e.g., Does the student know the desired behavior?), Specific Communication (e.g., What might student be trying to tell you?, How does the student explain the behavior?, Have you asked parents/others about the behavior?), Power/Control (e.g., Has the person have anything to say in any decisions here?). Hidden
Benefits (e.g., Does the person have other ways of getting what they need?; What are they getting because of their behavior?), Survival Strategies (Is the behavior one that allows the person to survive/have control/have freedom etc.?), Cultural/Familial Norms (e.g., Is the behavior something that's normal in the context of the child? Yes, but it doesn't mean you have to accept it), and Biochemical Factors which could impact the child's behavior (e.g., diet, allergies, sleep, depression; kids who increase their amount of sleep seem to decrease their amount of depression; Eric, 22 March 2004).

To apply the concepts of Systems Theory, Eric gives his students an in-class assignment, after showing a video clip of Peter K. The assignment requires students to do a contextual analysis of what things Peter might be communicating in various circumstances. The assignment requires students to work in groups and answer the same question for different scenes: “Taking into account what he might be communicating, how would you restructure the situation to support Peter's appropriate participation? (Short-term & Long-term).” One scene shows Peter in the classroom, taking the violin from another classmate who needed to play. He is very upset and starts crying when the violin is returned to his classmate. Eric emphasizes that Peter’s behavior could mean different things: that he is trying to communicate something, maybe an interest in music; that he might not know the expectations the teacher has for him, and if so, then the context should be changed; that it is possible he wanted to be the center of attention or he wanted to be actively involved in an activity. Eric shows another scene where Peter’s classmates talk about his violent behavior. Students were afraid of him at the beginning of the school year, seeing him like an ‘alien,’ because he was looking different than them.
Eric explains that the shift in his behavior took place when teachers had higher expectations for him, when he was accepted by his classmates and starting having friends:

We see that teachers had very low expectations at the beginning of the school year and they raised those expectations. It was some kind of correlation between raising the expectations and improving the behavior. After 4 months of school, we see Peter singing along with his classmates, girls sitting next to him in the cafeteria acting friendly and protective, Peter being able to deal with new opportunities and expectations. (Eric, March 22, 2005)

In the following class, Eric revisits issues of behavior in the classroom, bringing Systems Theory at the classroom level, school-level or district-level approach. By reviewing some of these concepts and ideas, Eric also prepares the students for the next quiz. Instead of system, Eric prefers the term Context, referring to those contexts, those environments we created around the child. He further explains the Systems Theory approach:

What is kind of neat about Systems Theory is that we do not just look at the kid and say *Let's fix you, cure you, or let's just shrug our shoulders and push you up somewhere else*; it's not just about the child. Within Systems Theory, in terms of making that child fit the context we create, we can certainly look at that kid and act on that child and so forth, but it's not just that. And it seems like we moved into a moment in time where so much of how we think about children who struggle is just about the kid. To what end though? The response to that is more and more drug use to control the child's behavior. That's all about fixing that kid and not thinking about anything more complex than that. It has been discussed that medication might be useful for certain children in thoughtful ways. But amounts we are giving out now are rather incredible. Systems Theory says that we can look at the kid, we can think about medication, we can think about behavior programs, but we can also look at the contexts we created for that child. (Eric, March 29, 2005)
Although Eric admits that it is not easy to create contexts to reduce aggressive or violent behavior in schools, teachers could succeed to create climates where a sense of community is taking place.

Grace took a conceptual and philosophical approach to the behavioral "problems" in the classroom by exploring the ineffectiveness of punishment and "positive reinforcement" often used as behavioral techniques. Her point of view about punishment as a way to "control" student behavior in schools is argued as follows:

Although punishing or (sanctioning) undesirable student behavior may temporarily stem the behavior for many kids, those with serious "resistance" behaviors often become immune to the effects of punishments...they are so often in "trouble" that they come to see themselves as "problems" so it becomes their identity. They subsequently reassert their attempts at power and resistance by "not caring" if they're punished. So the same kids end up being subject to punishment over and over, developing more resistance behaviors, and generally making it their business to see how much they can annoy, embarrass, or undermine the teacher. Second, punishment simply models aggression and it sends the message that "might makes right." If we want these students to become less aggressive, then it makes no sense to be aggressive toward them, does it? Third, punishing is a preemptive tactic in the sense that teachers who use it rarely if ever attempt to understand or talk to the student to find out WHY they are behaving in such a manner. In the absence of such understanding, finding long-term solutions to the problem is not likely. Fourth, punishment simply motivates kids to NOT get caught. It does not contribute to their understanding of the moral dimensions of their behavior or its effect on others. They do not, for example, learn empathy, perspective taking, and mutuality...not to mention proactive and positive social skills. In fact, because punishment only tells students what they cannot or should not do, it obviates any discussion or teacher input into more appropriate and satisfying ways students can get their social and emotional needs met. Finally, punishment ruins positive and healthy teacher-student relationships. Kids do not want to relate in positive ways with a punishing teacher, they only want to avoid that teacher. This obviously diminishes the influence this teacher can have on their students. (Grace, 29 April 2004)
With the concern that “positive reinforcement” is often taught to students in Colleges of Education as a behavioral technique, or worse, as the best alternative to punishment, Grace pointed out the faults of this belief:

First, when students fail to "earn" the reinforcer, they perceive this as punishment (see discussion about punishment above). Second, many researchers (Kohn, Leper, Deci and others) have demonstrated repeatedly that positive reinforcers actually decrease motivation because when the teacher presents the reinforcer as a contingency for the behavior s/he desires ("if you do your work, I will give you a reward), student get the message that learning is not valuable in and of itself...It is only something that must be gotten through to get the reward. It actually devalues the task or activity for which students are provided a "reinforcer." So, it is not important to treat others with courtesy for its own sake or because it is morally valued...rather, one only does so to earn an external (and usually unrelated) reinforcer. Third, using reinforcers (like using punishment) usually precludes engaging the student(s) on a moral and social level. Again, teachers seldom if ever attempt to understand what is behind students' misbehavior. This is so in large measure because dispensing reinforcers (here's a piece of candy) is expedient and teachers are impressed by it's sometimes convenient and quick effect (although students often decide they are not going to be "seduced" by the reward, leaving the teacher at a loss as to what to try next). Most often, they raise the reward level of the reinforcer....something more expensive or treasured (and by the way, teachers often spend a lot of their own hard earned money on these "reinforcers"). Sometimes kids learn to manipulate teachers in this regard...negotiate for bigger and better rewards. (Grace, 29 April 2004)

Grace’s conclusion is that the use of “reinforcers” is demeaning and demoralizing, as it is a game of manipulating the children, which leads to an unhealthy relationship between students and teacher.

**Exceptionalities: Gifted and talented.** In the interview with Eric (January 23, 2005) he remembered he introduced the class on giftedness in his syllabus due to some outside pressure such as NCATE or state requirements. He presented his view on giftedness as follows:

Anyway, you know, a lot of our class discussions are about children who struggle with curriculum and this gap tells you who they are and what’s desired. You can
look at giftedness in the same way; how can we make our classes more responsive to fulfill the needs of somebody who is considered gifted, and local understanding helps us think about that, what's the kid all about. How can we respond to that? Actually we can rely on students, we talked about earlier in the semester about Multiple Intelligence and things like that, and then we talked about giftedness. As a teacher I had students labeled gifted, and I felt that I responded to them. (January 23, 2005)

Charles started his class with a quiz on gifted and talented based on the materials that students were supposed to read for the class. Charles made sure that his students knew the difference between being gifted (having extraordinary intellectual ability and creativity) and being talented (having exceptional skills and ability in a specific area such as art, language, music, and science). The issue of identifying students who are gifted on the basis of IQ was also emphasized:

We have to give some standardized achievement test scores and we have to give IQ tests. We have to have the school psychologist meet the kid for one or two hours and administer an IQ test. The IQ has to follow within a certain range, in a lot of states the IQ has to be of 130 or better. It doesn't matter what the performance in the classroom is, school psychologists say that teachers are terrible predictors of gifted and talented kids. For them, the IQ is important, not the performance in the classroom. (Charles, April 7, 2004)

Charles provoked his students to discuss issues regarding children who have special gifts and talents by posing questions like:

Is there anything about gifted and talented children that you read and want to discuss? How do we find these kids? How did they end up in gifted and talented programs? Have you been in a classroom where you thought that the teacher didn't have a good clue about the potential of his/her students? Why would that happen? What happens if the teacher makes an excellent recommendation? Who makes the decision that kids are eligible for gifted and talented?. etc.(Charles, April 7, 2004)

Among the strategies for recognizing and developing special talents, Charles enumerated and described the following: (1) committing yourself to the role of talent
scout by being alert to signs of talent in four areas: academic or intellectual; artistic; vocational or technical; and interpersonal or social; (2) structuring learning activities so that all students have opportunities to develop and demonstrate these special talents; (3) recognizing and nurturing areas of talents in all students; helping students to leave some signs of talent to set goals in that area; locating resources to help foster students' talents; sharing your observations of leading talents with others, for example, enlisting parents in the effort to nurture their child's talents (Charles, April 7, 2004).

Three important issues were also underlined in class: (1) that children with gifts and talents are often perceived as being the most overlooked in schools as the teachers tend to focus more on low-achievers. For example, a survey that was sent to 350 teachers in a particular state showed that most of the teachers used adaptations for low-achievers but not with high-achievers; (2) creativity is one of qualities that must be nurtured in gifted and talented students by giving them structure, guiding them, helping them to make critical judgments or good decisions; (3) it is easy to miss the characteristics of gifted and talented children, for example, they are not motivated enough to show what they can really do. The positive aspects of gifted behavior were considered to be valuable for teachers, who, by knowing them could also enable their students to develop some of the characteristics. These are the following: expressing ideas and feelings well; being able to learn at a rapid pace; working conscientiously; greater enjoyment of exploring and learning more; developing a broad knowledge; being sensitive to the feelings and rights of others; making original and stimulating contributions to discussions; seeing relationships easily; being able to use reading skills to obtain new information;
contributing to the enjoyment of life for self and others; completing assigned tasks; requiring very little drill for learning. According to Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm (2003), adequate instruction is crucial for gifted and talented students, so the authors' advice for teachers is to include acceleration and enrichment activities (e.g., experiments, field trips, independent projects) in the curriculum.

The focus on instruction and cultivating children's potential and creativity was also sustained by Eric who used an article by Smith (2003) as a starting point for conversation on the topic (26 April 2004). The author of the article argues that acceleration through working ahead on a particular subject or skipping grades, appropriate support from school, family, and peers, personalized program opportunities would be some of the important steps that need to be taken to help the intellectual, emotional and social life of gifted and talented students (Smith, 2003). The concern for being able to identify all the students with great potential, including the under-represented groups (minorities, disabled, females) is also expressed and a broad range of criteria are recommended: test scores, teacher recommendations, grades, interest inventories, work samples (Smith, 2003; Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003).

The programs for students who are gifted and talented were also described in Charles' class. The resource programs (with the most frequently used program, pull-out program at the elementary level) and the inclusion programs were identified as being the most common. The pullout program means that children with special gifts and talents are "pulled out" from the general education program for several hours per week to receive for special services. Inclusive programs mean that "children of all achievement levels are
educated in heterogeneous general education classrooms” with the inclusion programs instituted either “by default (because of lack of funding for special programs) or by design (out of recognition of the benefits, for all students, of learning in mixed-ability groups)” (Vaughn, Bos, & Schumm, 2003, p. 324). Cluster grouping is used where six to eight gifted and talented children are provided with specific training in general education classroom. Self-contained programs are those designated only for gifted and talented students (such as magnet schools) with the focus on particular academic subjects or performing arts.

The in-class assignment that Charles chose was for the students to work in groups for twenty minutes in order to identify the advantages and disadvantages of the pullout programs, and inclusion programs for gifted and talented children. Besides the advantages and disadvantages discussed by the students, a conclusion was drawn: that teachers need to know how to accommodate the needs of diverse learners so they can be certain that they do a good job challenging their students.

Adaptations

Curricular adaptations. While talking about adaptations, Eric gave handouts to his students on the subject. The main ideas were sustained with examples of students with disabilities (Peter, Nathan) for whom adaptations had been made. For Eric, adaptations are important because they:

(a) Compensate for intellectual, physical, sensory or behavioral difference (rather then the gap between the child and the context);
(b) Reduce or prevent mismatch between present abilities and those demanded in the classroom; for example, teachers using schedules for kids with autism to reduce anxiety;

(c) Allow the use of current skills while promoting development of new skills; for example, Nathan, a student with severe physical disability, is connected to a device that, when Nathan moves his arm, allows his voice out (as Nathan doesn’t speak);

(d) Make content relevant (by creating a stimulating educational environment);

(e) Promote a relationship between special education and regular education by meeting the needs of the learners and having the goals clear (Eric, April 5, 2004).

Student participation can be increased by changing curricular goals and learning outcomes. Participation can also be increased by changing the environmental conditions (e.g. where is the lesson going to take place) and social climate (e.g. who is part of the group, what kind of instructional materials are being used). Eric argues that it is very important to arrange a lesson in such a way that the child’s strengths and needs can be part of it.

The in-class assignment chosen by Eric helped students to use the theoretical input about adaptations in a more practical way. Students were supposed to read a case study about Ronnie, a student in 4th grade considered moderately to severely mentally retarded; then they had to design individual adaptations for Ronnie so that she could be part of the lesson on tundra. Naturally, the goals for Ronnie would be different than the goals for the rest of the students. Developing skills, initiating or responding could be the
core goals for Ronnie. The benefits of using technology were also discussed (April 12, 2004).

A series of reflective questions were addressed by Eric for the students:

To what degree do we need to care about Nathan, Peter, Ronnie? What is a kid worth in terms of that kid's participation to have that person a part of the regular classroom? How much imagination, how many resources, how much money? Why the 21st century witnessed expanding opportunities allowing people with disabilities to join the community as recognized citizens? (Eric, April 12, 2004)

The responses were self-explanatory: there is an issue of individual liberty and self-determination; there is an issue of most effective instruction; and there is an issue of cognitive development, and perhaps, human development (Eric, April 12, 2004).

Charles discussed the use of adaptations to accommodate students' individual needs including study skills and learning strategies. His definition for adaptations is as follows: "Adaptations are modifications in goals, strategies, activities, materials, testing; they are modifications for different abilities. They are recommended best practice in education" (Charles, February 18, 2004). For a better understanding of adaptations, Charles involved the students in more practical activities where he gave them scenarios like:

Imagine that you have a pair of kids who are looking at some pictures of a book and they are supposed to take turns in pairs and describe what they see in the picture. They are doing the activity very well and very quickly. You are also thinking that this activity is scheduled for 15 minutes, but they are finishing it in 5 minutes. Would you let the kids to continue the activity? What kind of adaptations would you use?

One conclusion (which was also drawn from a research study) was that teachers are more effective when they are spontaneous in regard to adaptations. Adaptations on
learning styles (taking into account the differences among learners) were also declared useful.

Charles continued by discussing with some of the common reasons that teachers claim for not using instructional adaptations in the classroom. The reasons are: too time consuming with respect to teacher time and preparation; difficult to implement while trying to maintain order in the classroom; the need to comprise the content and pacing of instruction for average and high-achieving students; they bring undue attention to low-achieving students; they do not prepare students for the "real world." Charles made a very good point that on the other hand, there are some teachers who use adaptations but only for low-achievers. He emphasizes once more the importance of being creative:

> When you are teaching, you have to do things that are stimulating and challenging to all your learners. Part of that is learning about your students. For example, when you do pyramid planning you are starting with kids' knowledge, their learning styles, their levels of understanding, and the kinds of activities that are going to be successful. Then you think of the instructional arrangements. (Charles, February 18, 2004)

**Classroom management.** Providing instruction that allows all students to succeed is definitely related to classroom management. The topic on classroom management is one of Charles' favorite, as he mentioned in his class, because throughout his teaching experience he had many student teachers who admitted that having it discussed within teacher preparation program helped them feel more comfortable dealing with management problems in their schools. Charles states:

> According to experienced teachers the number of children who are coming to school with behavior challenges has really increased over the last 20-30 years, now sometimes one third or one half of the kids in the room have some behavior challenges depending on the area of the country where you are teaching, and the
severity of behavior challenges has really increased, too. (Charles, 10 March 2005)

Charles talked about the basic needs that children have and the management problems that are likely to happen if the children do not have those needs fulfilled. Among them, Charles mentioned that unconditional love is probably the most fundamental; also, the need to dream, to have goals and show interest in something, they all influence children's motivation in school. Charles recognized the importance of having challenging activities for children, the importance of teaching them to make good choices, and also the importance of fostering friendships in the classroom. By addressing children's basic needs, teachers could secure the foundation of management in the classroom, including taking good care of the children and maximizing their motivation to learn:

If you have kids with needs, you are not about to teach math, and science, and you are not going to be successful in teaching them math or science until their needs are fulfilled. If you have a lot of problems in the classroom you probably won't enjoy teaching. This is a part of being a teacher, when a kid does need unconditional love; this is where you, as a teacher, provide that. You can't replace his parents, but maybe you are the only one in the kid's life who would listen to him, and care about him. (Charles, 10 March 2004)

Charles' overview on management included the results of a survey that was done in 2003 with four hundred teachers who chose as essential following directions or instructions, handling temper and getting along with others who have different beliefs/opinions.

Charles focused on teacher's expectations and the importance of teacher-student relationships. He noticed the significance of having positive relationships with the students:
Early in the year, we form expectations for kids. Those actions that tell everyone what I think of you. We can go in any classroom in America, and we find a classroom with 25 kids and we can ask them who are the top students in the classroom that teacher likes, and the kids that the teacher doesn’t like. Ask kids independently, and guess what, you’ll see incredible consistency. We do things that we are not aware that we do and how we interact with people, we give kids messages about what we think of them in a very subtle way. So, if we do that, then our actions affect kids’ self-concepts in relations, their desires, their conduct, and their interactions. (Charles, 24 March 2004).

Based on the article that students had to read for the class, several points were brought into their attention for forming positive relationships with the students: “(a) Get to know your students (talk to them, listen to them); (b) Treat children with respect if you expect them to treat others with respect; (c) Let them get to know you; (d) Find out their interests; (e) Connect students to teachers; (f) Spend time with your students (personally and academically)” while also setting careful boundaries (Charles, 24 March 2004).

Charles underlined the importance of demonstrating care and support for children by discussing ways to build good relationships with them. Among those mentioned were the following: “maintain a high rail of positive and negative statements; communicate high expectations; create opportunities for personal contact; use effective communication skills; monitor teacher expectations; evaluate the quality of teacher-student relationships; try to know each individual student” (Charles, 24 March 2004).

Two case studies, one that related to student-peer relationship, and the other related to teacher-student relationships, were discussed with the students. The case studies constituted the premise for the students’ main assignment, their management plan. The main aspect of the management plan was for students to build teacher-student relationships and classroom cohesiveness. The management plan had to include values.
and beliefs, teacher-student relationships, classroom cohesiveness and rules, and what you do when children violate rules and exhibit challenging behaviors. Students were supposed to discuss in detail one of the four themes, by creating for example, instructional activities or rules and routines (See also Section II, Authentic Assessment).

As most of Charles’ classes, the emphasis was on classroom adaptations for children with inappropriate behaviors and the required chapter was discussed with the students. Therefore, Vaughn, Bos and Schumm (2003) recommend enhancing students’ motivation with relevant activities and high-interest materials, necessary to develop their learning skills; modified assignments or expectations so that all students could succeed; offering opportunities for positive feedback by reinforcing or rewarding the students on correct answers/assignments. Academic or social skills could also be acquired through tutoring in small group or paired-situations.

Grace introduced classroom management to her students through two articles. One article was actually based on a qualitative study in which “adolescents from high- and low-income backgrounds were interviewed about their perceptions of their own and others’ disciplinary infractions and consequences in school” (Brantlinger, 1991, p.36). The results of the study showed that social background influences the behaviors and the disciplinary practices of the adolescents. For example, low-income students express their anger and frustration as a result of social inequalities, including differentiating school practices such as lower grades, tracking, being recommended for special education or harsh discipline.
Grace also discussed with her students the advantages of using a constructivist approach (instead of using behavioral techniques such as punishment or reinforcement) to "classroom management."

The central idea behind constructivist approaches is getting kids to reflect on how their behavior either helps or hinders their attempts to be the kind of person they want to be. Teachers embracing constructivist approaches center on the moral reasoning and development of students. They are careful and mindful of treating students with respect and generally acting in ways that are consistent with the moral standards we want kids to learn and internalize as central to their personhood, autonomy and identity. (NOTE: this approach does not preclude being firm, but firmness is always in the context of genuine concern and caring for the students). Although constructivist teachers will allow students to experience the natural consequences of their behavior, they never use "consequences" as punishers. Instead they sometimes allow, and then help students (in an empathetic way), to understand why some ways of behaving are better and more satisfying than others. They also help kids express their feelings and motivations, resolve conflicts among themselves, learn to understand the feelings and perspectives of others (develop empathy), and take others' feelings and values into account as they make choices about their own behavior. In other words, students are encouraged and actively guided toward articulating their own needs, the needs of others, and how they might be part of creating the kind of classroom (or world) that they want to live in. Simply put, the questions "What kind of person do I want to be?" and "What kind of classroom and world do I want to be part of creating?" are the organizing frames of teachers' interactions with students. (Grace, 29 April 2004)

Collaborating and Coordinating with Professionals and Families

In the interview with Charles, he stated his belief and in-class emphasis on the importance of collaboration between special and general education teacher, or between teachers and students' families:

I have taught the students in the class about the importance of the collaboration. I have talked with them numerous times about the importance of collaborating with general education teachers, and we are still going to do a little bit of that next week and a week after. An example is that management plan that they just did. I took their management plans and I gave them to my special education people in my special education class who are going to be special education teachers and I had them read these management plans and I had them respond to: ‘Ok, if you
were a special education teacher in this building how could you support these people’s management plan? What could you do in the special education room, what could you do in their room if they invite you in, what can you do at school level?” And I’m going to give these back to them tomorrow and I’m going to say to them, ‘your management plan, you cannot do it by yourself. You only have these kids for one year and you don’t even have them all day because they go to other people in the building. Some of them go to a special education room. The special education teacher would love to collaborate with you and support your management plan.’ (Charles, Interview, 13 April 2004)

Due to the set-up of the course, only 2 credits, it was difficult for Eric or Charles to invite guest speakers. They do have teachers or parents as guest speakers in other classes, and they collaborate and help each other with advice on assignments in order to get students involved. Nevertheless, preparing students for community and school collaboration is a topic that was discussed often during the course: “That whole idea of imagination and disability is that imagination, collectively has tended to be that disability does not have much of a place in the community, so in terms of re-imagining we also have to take a look at school community, that’s what the class is really about” (Eric, Interview, 23 January 2005). In the recommended article, Eric’s students had the opportunity to become more familiar with the importance of collaboration in schools, how collaboration could be effective, what teachers need to learn about working with others, resources, or the biggest challenges that collaborators face (Brownell & Walther-Thomas, March 2002).

Regarding collaboration, Grace focused on the ethical aspect of it more than on the structural, technical approach in her course. She also welcomed co-teaching, curriculum changes and cross-discipline communication. One of her hopes is that technology courses will include adaptations for people with disabilities or adaptive
technology as another way of collaboration across disciplines and communication among faculty (Grace, Interview, 24 September 2004). In one of her classes, she also gave advice to her students of how to communicate with the parents and how to avoid criticism as an educator:

It's sometimes difficult to communicate with parents, I think particularly when you start out, understanding just how deeply parents feel about their kids. I guess my friendly advice is that there's always a way to tell parents what the children need without criticizing the child. Always avoid criticizing people’s children--it is horribly painful to parents and generally unproductive. I have never had difficulty approaching the parents when I approached it as ‘YES, I’m here for your child, whatever it takes; and YES, you and I know that he needs help working toward this’, but always avoid criticism. And never convey to a parent the sense that you are intimated by, or annoyed by your job. It is a mistake. Never do that. It is a little harder to abstract or understand parents’ positions when you don’t have your own kids at home. But we have to be mindful of the fact that all parents are hugely invested in their children, as they should be. (Grace, 27 February 2004)

Grace also reminded her students to always let the parents know their children’s achievements:

There are lots of messages sent to kids that are kind of invisible for us to see. You’ll notice that kids come to school from these very different backgrounds; it is very important for you to get to know your parents as much as you can, possibly at the beginning, on good terms. Because for many parents, all they ever hear from schools (especially if their child is in special education), is what the kid can’t do. If you can tell parents something about what they can do as well as what they can’t do it yet, it means a lot to parents. It’s just an amazing thing. They don’t hear that very often about what their kids can do. (Grace, 27 February 2004)

Another advice for her students as future educators was to learn to know the parents well and be careful when reporting problematic things about their children, as the parents might be abusive, and they could harm their child.

II. Authentic Assessment

All three professors used authentic assessment in their classes. Besides the class observation, the interviews with the participants offered additional information for the
researcher and clarified the professors’ choices for particular assignments. All three professors expressed their regret that the course does not have field experiences/practicum for students in different schools. Grace stated her belief that “learning is experiential and it takes place within a social context so students need to be in those situations to see and understand” (Grace, Interview, 24 September 2004). Charles recognized the benefit of hands-on experiences for his students: “I had 150 students each semester, 50 per section, and without a practicum, without some kind of assistance, I try the best I can to create assignments that get at the heart of the issues that we are talking about. Certainly, the practicum would do that much better” (Charles, Interview, 13 April 2004). His ideal assignment, in case that practicum would have been possible, would be “to make them do an assignment that involve real teachers and real kids, then come back and discuss with them” (Charles, Interview, 13 April 2004). For Eric, field experiences would have been another source of in-class discussions and learning:

It would be nice if we could link this course to some kind of field experiences. Even if it is not necessarily link to inclusive disability school, there are always kids who present challenges to the system and we can talk about issues that come up in class, the relations of field experiences. (Eric, Interview, 23 January 2005)

In terms of assignments, each professor was pleased with his/her choices. Both Grace and Eric chose a film review as one of their course assignments, but the criteria and the procedures were different. Grace’s critical review was required to be around five to eight pages with the focus on how the film depicted people from marginalized groups in terms of culture, race, social class, (dis)ability, gender, sexual orientation. Taking into account the historical and cultural context of the film, the students were asked to provide
a critical analysis of the film based on their ideas and perspectives, paying close attention to the social power relations between members of the dominant group versus the ones from the marginalized groups, the educational side and the message of the film, the cinematic strategies and the specific impressions, insights, and attitudes that could derive from the viewing the movie (based on Grace’s Syllabus). Grace explained in the interview the choice for her assignments:

One thing that’s important to me is that students have an opportunity to write. I want them to improve their ability to read, speak and write. And so my assignments did involve writing, so I don’t administer multiple choice tests for that reason. I give essay exams, so they have papers to write and they get feedback on those papers. They have and opportunity to resubmit their papers and continually improve them. My sense as an educator is that I am trying to bring them as far as I can within the amount of time that I have with the students. So I am encouraging continual improvement and risk-taking. I had them write critical review because I want them to think deeply about how disability and diversity in general are depicted in popular films. I want them to bring all the knowledge they had from our discussions in class to their analysis, where analytical, critical thinking has to go into their writing. The same with the book review assignment and the essay exams. What I aim for there is for them to be able to articulate in their own words the issues and ideas that we discussed in class. I want them to find their own voices in terms of “how do I [the students] understand this? And it helps me understand how they thing about these issues. (Grace, Interview, 24 September 2004)

Grace is also an advocate of giving second chances for her students and being tolerant to mistakes, taking them as learning opportunities. In one of her classes, she advised her students as follows:

You have to always be tolerant of ambiguity and be willing to make those mistakes because that’s how you learn. You also have to learn to let kids make mistakes. And instead of seeing of something to be avoided either on your part, or on their part, it has to be something that signals, Ok, here’s what I’m ready to learn, here’s what they’re ready to learn. It is just simply an opportunity. Mistake is an opportunity. And I think that so many kids, particularly the ones for whom the academic skills don’t come easily, sanctioning errors makes them not want to try, it’s a motivation killer. How much more refreshing would that be for the kids
to say: *Oh, ok, let me show you how to do this*, instead of: *That's wrong, that's wrong...Learning is a social activity.*” (Grace, 27 February 2004)

Throughout his readings, discussions and assignments, Eric wanted his students to be able to explore the various ways of understanding of human difference. His Cinematic Portrayal was one of them. The students had the chance to apply the theme of local versus distant understanding to Hollywood’s vision of human difference, diversity, and deviation. While critiquing the movie, students had to summarize the plot with emphasis on the role of disability or human difference within that plot. They also had to describe and give examples of how the primary character with the disability or distinct human difference was initially revealed to the audience through other characters’ local or distant understanding. Descriptions of any changes of understanding from distant to local had to be explained with the focus on what influenced the changes and how those changes altered the way the character was treated. Finally, the students had to explain if they felt that the movie provided a local or distant understanding of disability or human difference to the audience (based on Eric’s Syllabus). In the interview, Eric clarified what local understanding is about and what students should look for when analyzing a particular movie:

The assignment is about the attitude the student himself brings into a situation. Local understanding is about knowing an individual deeply in a direction of possibility and potential. So, what we do, we spend some time talking about what local understanding teaches you to bring into situation, and then I ask them to apply those ideas to a situation: who shows local understanding, who doesn’t, what’s the difference between those two. And there again, a mistake that a lot of students make with that analysis is the assumption that a family automatically has local understanding, and other people don’t...That’s something that I struggle with, it is not local understanding as I define it, it is not about loving a person. you can love a person and be overprotective, eliminate risk, and so forth, but local understanding is really about enabling an individual towards independence or
interdependence, is about risk, is about all these things that we talk about in the class. Anyway, in the absence of practicum, I am trying to get students to apply some of the ideas to something they observe, and a movie makes some sense to that. They really like those movies. (Eric, Interview, 23 January 2005)

Another assignment chosen by Grace was a Book Review, where students had to write five to eight pages of critical review. In their paper, the students had to relate their knowledge and understanding of the book with the issues discussed in class, such as social justice, diversity, and public education. The influence of the book on their professional dispositions and practices as future educators were also to be described (based on Grace’s Syllabus). Grace’s opinion about authentic assessment was shared with her students:

I think that portfolios or narrative reports are important. I think that authentic assessment in general or qualitative assessment makes kids involved in learning while they are part of it. It takes more time but it’s quality of learning, and it stays with the kids for a long time, what they learn they don’t forget because it has meaning. They forget when there is no meaningful context. So we end up re-teaching, re-teaching, and that takes more time. When you hear the argument that portfolio assessment takes time, think of its lasting consequences instead. So we can do things easily and efficiently, but I am not sure if it accomplishes the quality or lasting effects we as educators are looking for. (Grace, 27 February 2004)

Eric’s second assignment represented a Media Portrayal of Human Difference. Using the popular media such as magazines, TV shows and news, commercials, radio, songs, movies, and newspapers, students had to write ten analyses/critiques of different media portrayals with focus on tolerance/intolerance, human strengths and value/weaknesses and deficits, suggestion of possibilities/dwelling on limitations, the type of language/images/music used for the portrayal. In the end, students had to describe the feelings that the portrayal promoted (sympathy, fear, revulsion or empathy), and
explained if the stereotypes were challenged or strengthened (based on Eric’s syllabus).

In the interview with Eric, he expressed his concern in terms of the understanding of his students’ media portrayals:

I like that assignment because it makes students think about what is the language used here. As much as I talk about that assignment, a lot of students don’t quite get it. I want them to kind of step outside the content of the article, the advertisement itself, and think like: What is the language used? What is the imagery like? What ideas are conveyed by the language? What does it mean, for example, ‘confined to wheelchair’? How would they interpret the language? I know a lot of people who find the wheelchair liberating. (Interview, Eric, 23 January 2005)

Charles explained to me in the interview his alternative assessment plan:

There are multiple forms: mid-term and final, there are three assignments, six quizzes, and participation. Some of the things they do individually, some of them they do in groups, and so they do have to collaborate. It’s funny when I have them collaborate in-group projects there is always someone who is not very involved. I prefer alternative assessment. If I had field experience, I think that I can have them do a work sample or have them do something there is more cut-and-dry. I would say I use multiple forms of assessment. (Charles, Interview, 13 April 2004)

Charles made clear the choice of his assignments (a lesson plan and a management plan) as follows:

There are a couple of things that guided me. The first one is my knowledge of what classroom teachers are being asked to do right now, real teachers. I go to conferences, I read journals, I go out in schools, and not long ago I was out in schools full time. So I know those kinds of things that classroom teachers are being expected to do in the classroom. So, I am trying to have that as guidance. (Charles, Interview, 13 April 2004)

For his Lesson Plan, Charles had his students complete it independently. The lesson plan had to include adaptation activities to fit the learning needs and styles of the children. He explained the choice of this assignment in the interview:

The first assignment is to develop a lesson plan for teaching a unit to students who have various needs. If you look at that assignment, what you see is that all
the parts of that is what practicing teachers right now are being told is the best we have to offer for accommodating diverse learners. School districts are giving in-service programs on this. Teachers are being informed that this is the best practice right now. So I am trying to give them assignments that are very resembling what teachers are asked to do in schools today. (Charles, Interview, 13 April 2004)

By trying to be up-to-date and informed within the education field, Charles is willing to change his assignments according to the requirements at state level. He also takes into consideration how students responded to the assignments:

I have stayed with the case studies for about 3 years now, because I learned that students like case studies. I had them do this management plan in groups, this is my 3rd semester, because I learned that is valuable for them, they reported that they like it and so that’s the second thing related to activities. We try to find things that people respond to well. (Charles, Interview, 13 April 2004)

Charles recognized also the uniqueness of each group of students, and the need to adapt the assignments and in-class activities to meet their needs: “The students are also different. This group is different from the other groups; they don’t like to talk as much in class, so I don’t try to do as many class activities. I gave them small group and individual activities and put more emphasis on trying to make them talk in the class” (Charles, Interview, 13 April 2004).

I presented Charles’ requirements for his assignment Management Plan within the theme Classroom Management (see above). For grading, Charles took into consideration the originality of the plan, its complexity, the link between values and strategies, and the grammar. He allocated time at the end of several classes for students to work together on their management plans. He commented on the assignment in class: “I am very flexible. So what I am asking you to do is just think what would be meaningful and valuable for
you. Obviously the assignment has to relate to accommodating diversity" (Charles, 24 March 2004).

All three professors included in-class exams as other forms of assessment. For example, besides the weekly quizzes in which the students had to complete six assignments that related to the weekly readings, Charles had mid-term and final exams, which consisted of two tests of multiple-choice questions that covered the information learned through class discussions, the required textbook, the supplemental readings/handouts, and students' notes (based on Charles' Syllabus). For Grace, the mid-term and final examinations consisted of five discussion questions. Students were allowed to choose three questions on each examination. Both examinations covered the material from class discussions and the assigned readings (based on Grace's Syllabus). Eric gave students three quizzes based on the readings and in-class discussions, and six in-class assignments where students had the chance to work in groups.

In terms of grading, Charles and Eric give points for participation, whereas Grace believes that by doing that "you set up this artificial incentive to talk whether you have anything to say or not". She explains her decision in our interview:

I wouldn't want to advantage the more outgoing students over the less outgoing students just because they are going to talk in class. It's been my experience that some of those quieter students who make one or two comments all semester, the quality of their comments is fantastic. I would rather have one or two comments of some depth, quality, than have someone who talks to hear himself talk. Although I am tolerant of both types, I don't value one over the other. (Grace, 24 September 2004)

For all three professors the grading was based on accumulation of points from all the assignments. Eric offered an extra-credit/in-class assignment make-up for those
students who missed an in-class assignment or simply wanted an extra-credit to improve their overall grade. The assignment consisted of the analysis of two journal articles by comparing and contrasting them, and adding their point of view regarding the articles.

III. Instructional Strategies

For Charles, having students actively involved in the class is very important. He explains why:

I think that it is a way of taking some responsibility in their learning and then growing their confidence when they are speaking in class and have opinions about things. I believe that these are things that people who are going to be teachers should understand that is really important to actively participate in classroom discussion. Some groups are better than others, this group has been more of a challenge, but when I look at the quality of their writing, it is very high. When I looked at their comments on gifted and talented, there are a lot of wonderful comments. There are some students there who are very bright. (Charles, Interview, 13 April 2004)

Although he analyzed case studies and videotapes with his students, and did some lecturing, Charles believes that group activities for the real world of teaching. In the interview, he gives an example of a meaningful group activity:

Last class the activity they did in small groups was talking about the disadvantages and advantages of meeting the needs of different talents. And the way I needed to make it meaningful for them is that I told them that’s what school faculty do: each school decides for itself what methods they want to use to accommodate gifted and talented students. The discussion that they had in small groups last week would go on in school with faculty in trying to take a decision in how they are going to meet the needs of diverse talents. So I tried to give them activities that I think are similar to what real teachers do in schools. I tried to convince them that is something you going to have to do when you are schools (Charles, Interview, 13 April 2004).

Similar to Charles’ instructional strategies are Eric’s, in terms of video analysis, lecture or group discussions:
I do lecture; in most classes I have some lecture, some small group activities that lead to larger group discussion; and video analysis. I also have very traditional quizzes. I had 150 students. I tried to figure out how to keep us true to our readings in a way that is manageable, not only in terms of numbers but in terms of time. I know some people would have groups of students work together around an issue and then more students present, but if you have 50 students in a class, even if their presentations are two minutes long, it takes like three class periods. (Eric, Interview, 23 January 2005)

He also likes to refine the activities each semester to make sure that students are actively involved.

Grace describes her style as Socratic, aiming for meaning-making and the distinction between teaching/being a technician as she was describing to her students:

I make a distinction between training and education. I would make a distinction between actual teaching and being a technician, too. And I think a lot of teachers are given the impression through teacher education programs, through the professional socialization with their colleagues once they get out there in the schools, and by society as whole, that they are there to transmit skills, and they come to see themselves as a technician. In other words, that if they execute the right techniques the kids will learn. That’s really not a very appropriate way to see teaching. Teaching is about meaning-making, it is an act of intellectual engagement. And you have to think with both your heart and your head, the two have to be connected. A teacher needs to watch very carefully, needs to think deeply about what kids are doing, needs to think about what they themselves are thinking. They also need to think about how they can connect knowledge and understanding with particular kids and their background and understanding and their culture, how they can make this permanent and meaningful, how they can teach something that’s meaningful and still make sure that the skills they need are imbedded in those activities in careful ways. Teachers need to be able to switch gears right in the middle of teaching if they know they are not connecting to a particular kid or a particular class. That is high level thinking. It is harder than rocket science, it is hard stuff because teaching is a very uncertain kind of undertaking. Teachers really have to watch, weigh things, and be very fluent in their knowledge. I think that’s one of the reasons that teachers fall back on teaching as a technical endeavor -- those worksheets, doing those exercises in the textbook -- because it puts the demand solely on the students, not that they [the students] shouldn’t have responsibility for their learning, but it shouldn’t be one-sided -- you know, Do your worksheet, or else...kind of thing. It should be very much that the kids and the teacher are engaged in constructing knowledge together, and you have to really pay attention to what you’re doing, make learning
a meaningful experience and connect to people where they are. If you are not
doing that, you are not teaching. And that's difficult stuff, teaching is an uncertain
undertaking. (Grace, 27 February 2004)

Grace prefers in-class discussions where she engages the students on ideas and
questions, or on video analysis such as documentaries. In our interview, she went into
detail about her selection of activities:

I use some documentaries in class because I thought they were particularly well
done. I am very selective about those choices. They have to generate discussion
and they have to fit exactly in their readings and the issues we are covering in
class. Mostly I am discussion-oriented teacher, more of a Socratic approach, I ask
them questions, and I raise issues. I don't use a lot of technology, like Power
Point presentation, that's not me. (Grace, Interview, 24 September 2004)

She does not have in-class assignments using group-work as she finds it time-
consuming, and she feels that she has the sense of obligation to give everything to the
students through discussion and critical analysis:

I am very acutely aware that those students pay tuition and they deserve to get
everything from me that they can. You know, I owe them that time. I need to do
my job, and I'm not going to sit around and put them in discussion groups and
have them chat around issues. That doesn't mean that some group activities are
not useful and very productive, though. I simply feel that I can get to the heart of
matters more directly in the small amount of time I have with them without using
group activities, per se. To put it another way, I think of the entire class as a
group. Part of me, is that obligation to deliver, you know, they are paying, they
have access to what I have, and I am going to give it to them, because I owe it to
them. (Grace, Interview, 24 September 2004)

Grace also pointed out her belief that personal values are very important when it
comes to teaching: "This is amazing, how much impact professors' beliefs have on their
teaching, their personal values in fact influence everything in their teaching. And at that
point the instructional strategies matter far less than who you are as a person" (Grace,
Interview, 24 September 2004).
IV. Materials

All the participants used various materials as props (to make a point, to give an example, to have a start for discussion and analysis, to use as assignments) during their course. Besides the textbook/articles, the materials were the following: videotapes, handouts, transparencies, study guides, supplemental readings, case studies. Charles also used WebCT to post important information, class notes, assignment requirements, or additional information.

Using or choosing not to use a textbook was an important step in preparing the course. Two of the participants (Eric and Charles) chose a textbook/reader, but they felt that they needed supplemental material such as articles, videotapes for analysis, case studies for the course. For Charles, a textbook that would be in accordance with the objectives of the course, needs to provide two important things:

One is it has to explain the characteristics of kids with different exceptionalities. It has to talk about kids who have learning difficulties or behavior difficulties because the only way that a teacher recognizes these kids is to recognize the characteristics. It also has to give a lot of strategies to accommodate their needs. The current textbook has both of them, characteristics and accommodations. (Charles, Interview, 13 April 2004)

For Eric, choosing a textbook was always a difficult task, as it seemed that students did not enjoy teacher-oriented type of books. He decided to use a Reader on educating exceptional children selecting some particular progressive articles and a few more traditional ones for comparison and contrast and to discuss with his students different issues on disability from different perspectives. Grace preferred the articles to a textbook, as she always draws her arguments from many sources, using history, literature, social theories, and arts as references.
V. Standards: Why and Why Not

As described in the Subchapters of this study related to standards for Teacher Education Programs, respectively standards of NCATE, NPBTS, and INTASC related to diversity, one of my interests was to see if the participants were aware of these standards, and if they were using them as guidelines within their course. All three participants were aware of the standards in general, but only one participant discussed about INTASC standards during the course. The other two professors did not use them at all within their course. For example, in regard to NCATE standards, Eric affirms:

I haven't necessarily seen a need for NCATE. I wouldn't even know where to look. They hired me here in part to help students think about issues of children with disabilities in general education, and I brought to the position of history, experience, and research, and other people's work and so forth... and through all that I kind of laid out different principles that seem vitally important, so within the structure we have here I emphasize certain principles. Are those the ones that NCATE emphasize? I don't know. If they do it's great, I am not opposed necessarily that I do. (13 September 2004)

Although Eric has not used the standards as guidelines for his course, he discussed with his students the article on standards for diverse learners by Paula Kluth and Diana Straut (2004). The main argument in the article is if we can develop standards to make the curriculum, instruction, and assessment responsive to learning differences. The authors respond by laying out five conditions. Eric adds: “Or does standard mean something different than the sort of individual idea that we bring to disability in education?” (September 13, 2004).
According to Kluth, & Straut (2001, 2003, 2004), there are six conditions that educators have to take into consideration when they use standards as a scaffold and guidance for their curriculum. These are the following:

(a) Standards are developmental and flexible (for example, educators should curricular adaptations to meet the needs of diverse learners);

(b) Standards require a wide range of assessment tools (such as, authentic assessment);

(c) Standards allow equitable access to meaningful content (the content should be engaging, relevant, and if possible, articulated across the state or the district in a common framework; in Eric’s words: “if the context is important to the majority of children, than it should be available at least in modified form to all students. Instead of blaming the child, let’s take a look at the curriculum” (September 13, 2004).

(d) It takes a caring community to implement standards (co-teaching, the involvement of special area teachers, school communities, and families should work together for a successful integration of standards within the curriculum);

(e) Standards are essential for diverse classrooms (in order to make them valuable and useful, teachers should have high-expectations for all their students and make them accessible to every learner);

(f) Standards are a catalyst for other reforms (in an attempt to strive for academic excellence, standards may “motivate political leaders to attend to the need for more social supports in schools, better staff development opportunities. increased teacher
planning time, more computers and other types of technology, increased funding, and smaller class sizes (Kluth, & Straut, 2003, p. 46).

Regarding the familiarity and the use of standards, Grace confirms that she is not using them to design any of her courses because she does not like the reductionist way that the “standards are both expressed and often used”. She explains further:

It implies that if the professor ‘covers’ all of these standards, then he or she has really ‘taught’ the substance of what they are supposed to capture. In my view, that is not necessarily true. I think a listing of standards reflects a technical-rational approach to teaching and I disagree with this framework. As a constructivist, I do believe that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts (the standards imply a list of parts). Moreover, I suspect if one needs these standards to teach, he or she is not as informed or knowledgeable as he or she should be.

Charles thinks that there are definite advantages in using INTASC standards as a guide for course objectives or course activities, or as a guide for methods of evaluating students’ performance as they prepare students to teach in the real world: “I have talked to them about the Iowa teaching standards and about INTASC. Early in the class I gave them an outline about the material we were going to cover and then I gave them a list of the INTASC standards. Then we talk about the relationship between the two, and I talk about why they are important” (April 13, 2004, Interview).

In conclusion, two of the participants do not use or have any intention to use the standards as guidelines within their course, whereas the third participant felt the need to talk more about INTASC standards as they could help students understand them before they have to use them as guidelines in their own teaching.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Outcome of the Study and Its Relation to Postmodernism

In Chapter 2, in defining diversity, I used the ideological perspective of postmodernism viewed as “an assault on the belief in rationality and reason, as well as in the stability of meaning” (Alvesson, 2002, p. 178) that “recognizes, even welcomes, uncertainty, complexity, diversity, non-linearity, subjectivity, multiple perspectives and temporal and spatial specificities (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999, p. 22). Further, I have connected the emergent themes to postmodern concepts to draw attention to other possible and successful ways of addressing diversity in teacher education programs. The cross-case study methodology revealed the participants' rich and holistic insights and perspectives on teaching a class on diverse learners and their different approaches to diversity issues. The concepts of postmodernism that were unveiled as significant in the relationship with the emergent themes, sub-themes and core themes are the following: knowledge construction with the knowledge/power relationships where “knowledge claims must be set within the conditions of the world today and in the multiple perspectives of class, race, gender, and other group affiliations” (Creswell, 1998, p.79); the replacement of “meta-narratives” or absolute truths with local narratives; and the proliferance of differences, including marginalized people and groups (the “Other”). In the following pages, I am going to relate some of the postmodern concepts to the emergent themes and their characteristics in an attempt to do a critical analysis and
provide recommendations that teacher educators could be aware of when addressing diversity in their classes.

Knowledge Construction

While rejecting positivism and deconstructing its modern notions of universal truths and instrumental reason, objectivity, and certainty, postmodernists advocate for difference and diversity, with “consciousness, identities, and meaning as socially and historically constructed” (Leistyna, 1999, p. 224). According to Foucault (1973; 1977), the postmodernist thinker of the strategic postmodernism, knowledge has an inseparable relationship with power and ideology. Foucault’s hope was that, by challenging and understanding the historical constructions of the institutional practices and the structures of society, he implicitly unraveled, and deconstructed their oppressive qualities (Foucault; 1977; Wicks, 2003).

The knowledge construction and the power/knowledge relationship were discussed in depth in Grace and Eric’s classes, “understood as reflecting human interests, values and actions that are socially constructed” (Slattery, 1995, p. 36). For example, Grace constantly challenged her students to understand how disability, race, class, gender and ethnicity were socially and culturally constructed. In her lectures, she also accentuated historical inequalities and their impact on educational opportunities, highlighting the differences in power and privilege. Through all her classes, Grace showed the need to deconstruct texts (e.g., articles, documentaries, concepts, theories) to bring to the surface “concealed hierarchies as well as dominations, oppositions, inconsistencies, and contradictions” (Creswell, 1998, p. 79). Eric focused more on
disability as a social construction, emphasizing the subjectivity of interpretation of
scientific knowledge as a form of standardized categories and tests. His concepts of
cultural boundaries of comfort and local versus distant understanding were the keys to
deconstructing and reconstructing meanings in his classes.

Among the methods used by Grace to enhance students' learning and meaning-
making were contextual understanding (e.g., asking students to talk about their own
ethnicity) and dialogue which facilitated critical and ideological analysis. By discussing
case studies and analyzing videotapes that reveal specific examples of children working
in cooperative groups, or of children with different disabilities engaged in classroom
activities, Charles also creates a contextual understanding and critical thinking, where
students are actively involved in their learning. Also, another perspective on
power/knowledge configuration is the relationship that Grace has with her students, when
she always assures them that “to know is to produce meaning, and the production of
meaning is the production of power” (Kilgore, 2004, p. 47). The relationship teacher/
students based on meaning-making erases the boundaries between them, giving them the
chance to collaborate in a real-world context. We need to acknowledge that teaching from
a postmodern perspective also means deconstructing the dichotomy teacher/student in
order to honor both teachers’ and students’ role as equally important, with the common
goal to have a transformative learning experience when the active learner is engaged in
critical reflections. According to Parker (1997)

Learning, the acquisition of knowledge, becomes the ability to control or
manipulate; knowledge itself is not a state but an activity, a strategic intervention
in a discourse context, one whose result is to persuade others to speak and act in a
certain way or to re-contextualize their own claims to know. (p.148)
All three professors in my study created a balance of lectures, dialogues, critical and reflexive inquiries, group activities, and cooperative learning, giving the chance for all students to be involved in their learning experiences, and not being intimidated by the leadership role of their professor. Consequently, the relationship of power situated in the classrooms were actually defined, changed, and reconstructed by each professor and his/her students. Actually, postmodern pedagogy claims the involvement of “some degree of rejection of social positions like teacher and student, resulting in the emergence of a local, collective knowing and learning” (Kilgore, 2004, p. 46). For pedagogical practices this means that the professor and his/her students are engaged in a “situated, collective learning process with difference at its core” (Kilgore, 2004, p. 51). Therefore the technocratic model embraced by the positivist tradition defined through “depersonalized solutions for education that often translate into regulation and standardization of teacher practices and curricula, and rote memorization of selected facts that can easily be measured through standardized testing” (Leistyna, 1999, p. 226) is replaced, in the postmodern teaching, with multiple perspectives, and discourses that are valuable not only through the language that expresses it, but also through the environment in which they were created (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999).

Local Narratives and the Proliferation of Difference/the “Other”

The incredulity toward metanarratives as “unified historical narratives and overarching philosophies of history” (Slattery, 1995, p. 37) that was challenged by Lyotard (1984), one of the significant theorists of the radical postmodernism, brings instead the acknowledgement of context, particularity, and difference where knowledge is
historically, culturally, and socially constructed. Also, the local, collective ways of knowing that focus on multiple ways of truths instead of universal truths emphasize the proliferation of difference, respectively the “Other” and help us comprehend “the arbitrary nature of our assumptions about the way people are or ought to be, by offering alternative understandings” (Kilgore, 2004, p. 46).

Kilgore (2004) argues that “making difference central and then constructing a shared learning experience that aims to transcend hegemony while suspended within it is not an easy task” (p. 51). Nevertheless, we are witnesses of a celebration of otherness through the course on diversity issues taught by three professors, each of them with their different teaching style, different curriculum, and materials to enhance students’ learning.

The core themes that emerged during data analysis (cultural boundary of comfort and local versus distant understanding) are central to the explanation of otherness. Through Eric’s examples of local narratives that are internal to the communities within which they occur, it seems that the localized and situated learning experiences are valuable as they contribute to the effectiveness of the change process where “the difference does no longer make a difference” (Grace’s definition of diversity, 24 September 2004) and where children with (dis)abilities can become authentic members of the community (Grace’s definition of inclusion, 24 September 2004). These two core themes bring hope for children with (dis)abilities who could be understood instead of “measured” through situated knowledge and care within the community where the exclusionary Other does no longer exist; instead, there is the child viewed in a particular context and in relationships with others in a wide community of citizens.
Foucault challenged the concept of “normalization” as “a complex set of processes involved in defining modern norms of self-discipline, rationality, and instrumentalism” (Apple & Carlson, 1998, p. 12) in the dichotomy with the “Other,” the abnormal. Although Foucault was concerned about the modern prison and the criminal and delinquent Other, and although he did not specifically address the dualism of normalization/the Other within the educational context, its significance could be transgressed within the practices of schooling, where we need to be aware of the messages transmitted through the normalizing discourse. For example, Apple and Carlson point out that

since class, race, and sex/gender Others are most likely to be identified as abnormal, these dualisms participate in the construction of highly inequitable class, race, and sex/gender power relations in this society. This is one of the reasons we need to think critically about relations that cut across and interrupt these categories themselves. (1998, p. 12)

The dualism of normalization/the Other could also be noticed within special education where identifying, classifying, and labeling children produce “life sentences” through stigmatization, rejection, or differentiation during instruction according to the disability-labels. Apple and Carlson (1998) explain the consequences of normalization, such as the emphasis of hegemonic power with its reproduction within social and institutional practices:

We find normalizing power in the classification, sorting and labeling of students as normal or abnormal learners that is as high-ability or low-ability students, as academic or vocational students, as “regular” or special education students, and as “responsible” and “irresponsible” or delinquent students. By erecting these dualisms in discourse and practice, public schools have served a powerful role in producing instrumental and conforming citizens and workers. (p. 12)
Making the students aware of what the Other means, emphasizes in fact the power of the Other. In Eric and Grace’s classes the Other no longer represent the marginalized children with special needs. On the contrary, by celebrating the Other’s strengths and abilities, and making educators question their own teaching practices, their attitudes and values, their own creativity and imagination, we become the abnormal, we become different. Therefore, the Otherness becomes the center not the margin, when Eric talks or shows videos to his students of successful stories of hope, where children (later adults) with (dis)abilities are welcomed into their community and how their lives were changed as a result. Eric and Grace invite educators and preservice teachers to engage in self-reflective practice to learn how to listen to children with (dis)abilities, how to make them feel good about themselves, how to give them chances to be winners by focusing on their strengths and abilities, and by believing in them. The recurrent motif of Eric’s classes was a teacher’s statement: “A child’s limitations are really the limitations of our imagination.” All of his classes explored the power of that statement means within the education field, demonstrating that if our collective imagination could change, then children with (dis)abilities participating in inclusive classrooms, would have the chance to be citizens in wider communities. Grace called for educators to give up categorizing students according to their ability levels, which leads only to perpetuating the process of creating winners and losers:

When I was a teacher in a high school program for kids labeled LD, I once asked a science teacher why he didn’t simply read the test to the entire class rather than send my students down to my classroom to have me read the test to just my students? “Oh, no”, he replied horrified, “that might make the test too easy”. Essentially what he was saying was that his goal was not that kids learn, but that he created a stratification of winners and losers in his class. He somehow had to
set things up so that some kids could not do well. I thought this was bizarre, since my role as an educator is creating the conditions for all kids to learn. I want them all to make progress. I don’t care how they compare to each other; and I certainly don’t want to create winners and losers, make learning a competition, and so on. (Grace, 13 February 2005)

Charles addressed the “Other” by emphasizing in his classes the importance of knowing all the characteristics of different disabilities and exceptionalities, and including the specific strategies and accommodations that enable all diverse learners to be successful.

I believe that by relating the postmodern themes to the case studies we could open the possibility of dialogue and exploration of the value of diversity and diverse learners. There is no magic formula or modus operandi for good teaching on diversity issues, but as the three case studies revealed through the professors’ alternative approaches to diversity issues, we can use the postmodernist themes (even if we do not define them within our classes), and we could reevaluate our practices to make a difference in teacher education programs.

“Linking Ways of Knowing with Ways of Being Practical”

Evidently, the fact that all three professors taught the same course on diversity and diverse learners offered by Special Education Department influenced their approach to diversity with a focus on exceptionalities. Eric and Charles were similar in their approach to diversity by addressing it through different issues and challenges from special education and disability studies. The materials (articles, required chapters, videos, case studies, in-class assignments) used by Eric and Charles in their classes emphasized the importance of recognizing that all children are different (Eric) and the benefits for
preservice teachers to know to accommodate the needs of all diverse learners in general education classrooms (Charles). Although Grace discussed with her students the contested practice of labeling, the overrepresentation of minority in special education, or the debate on inclusive education, her primary focus was to examine issues on cultural diversity, race, social class, not only on disability. The teaching style of each professor was also different: during her classes, Grace adopted a Socratic approach combined with lectures, Eric and Charles also lectured, but focused more on in-class assignments in cooperative groups.

In the article "Linking Ways of Knowing with the Ways of Being Practical", van Manen (1977) poses the question of "How can or should teachers make practical use of the knowledge available to them?" (p. 205) or "How can knowledge make the curriculum more effective, more efficient, and more productive?" (p. 210). The author discusses Habermas’ concern about empirical-analytic knowledge, which is reflected in “educational practice [that] has become an instrumental preoccupation with techniques, control, and with means-ends criteria of efficiency and effectiveness” (p. 209). Instead of this nonreflective learning where claims are taken for granted, Habermas, as a representative of critical theory, proposes critical reflexivity and communicative action based on cognitive arguments (Morrow & Torres, 2002). He also underlies in his work the importance of understanding social reality, and “the intimate interrelationships between reflexive learning, the formation of critical citizenship, and the potential revitalization of democratic public spheres in diverse settings” (Morrow & Torres, 2002, p. 140). Returning to the participants in my study, we can notice that Grace used critical
theory when addressing diversity issues through a variety of frameworks (epistemological, historical, sociological, and political) stressing on social justice and the ideal of democratic education. Eric also used critical theory when talking about power relations within special education through the standardized testing and the social stigma of labeling. Charles used critical reflexivity in a more practical way, through developing competencies for his students (such as, instructional and management strategies) to accommodate all students in general education classrooms.

Habermas also advocates for truth as an emancipatory method for social justice and democracy (van Manen, 1977). For example, Grace and Eric's classes were designed to develop awareness and perspectives on social power relations, marginalization and oppression or on the contested practice of labeling through critical reflexivity. Their search for truth appeared through their practice by being political in the classroom and exposing their students to issues of diversity that have moral and ethical consequences.

Van Manen recommends "the practical use of knowledge in an increasingly reflective manner " (p. 207). Teacher reflection is also encouraged as part of learner-centered approach or in fostering traits and dispositions of the learners, and is believed to facilitate positive change in teachers and students (Cook, 1998). Cook (1998) also recommends for the teachers themselves to reflect on their own practices in order to gain more understanding and to apply the insights to future teaching experiences.

Although the three professors presented commonalities and differences in terms of curriculum, teaching styles and instructional strategies, values, experiences regarding diversity, philosophies of teaching, materials used in their classes, their purpose in
addressing diversity was to induce reflection and meaning-making. Consequently, all
three professors linked “the ways of knowing” (their knowledge, values, beliefs) with
“the ways of being practical” (using reflective practice through their in-class discussions
and activities, and assignments and mid-term and final exams). The three professors in
my study were different in their discursive approaches to diversity, respectively special
education: Grace used critical theory by focusing on social justice issues and the
awareness of historical inequalities and educational opportunities; Eric embraced a
pragmatic, communicative, ethnographic approach, being interested not in the language
of special education per se (e.g., the labels) but in how teachers can really respond
through their imagination, and instructional skills to children’s needs by using their
strengths, and abilities; and Charles used a more practical approach, emphasizing the
importance of knowing and dealing with the issues that teachers are confronted with in
their everyday practices with diverse learners (such as classroom management,
recognizing the characteristics of different disabilities, or being able to provide
accommodations in the classroom to meet the needs of all diverse learners). With the
view of knowledge as culturally and socially constructed, reflection in the postmodern
perspective, could also have radical implications (as we have noticed in Eric’s examples)
when it deals with the local knowledge through the celebration of “the Other,” or
through the sense of community and citizenship or teacher’s imagination that could
change the world of a child with (dis)abilities.

It is clear that, even if all three professors in my study used different approaches
to teaching (such as, critical theory - Grace and Eric- or a more hands-on, experiential
approach to learning - Charles), influenced by their own attitudes, beliefs, knowledge, values, all of them linked the educational knowledge with the “process of analyzing and clarifying it” along with “the cultural experiences, meanings, perceptions, assumptions, prejudgements, and presuppositions, for the purpose of orienting practical actions” (van Manen, 1977, p. 226). The three professors who taught the same course “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners” at different times with different groups of students addressed diversity by focusing on the “interpretive understanding both of the nature and quality of educational experience”, and by challenging their students to make, through constant reflection of their learning experience, practical, moral and ethical choices “on the basis of justice, equality, and freedom” (van Manen, 1977, p. 227).

Critical Interrogations

The purpose of this study was to examine the three teacher educators’ practices for addressing diversity in their classroom, recognizing the limitation that diversity was narrowed to and focused the most on special education issues, and the linguistic discourses specific to this area (which was inevitable since the course “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners” was offered by Special Education Department). It was obvious through the analysis of the interviews, classroom observations, additional materials and the emergent themes that all three educators had different approaches to diversity and challenged their students differently to deconstruct certain issues/categories/labels. Some critical interrogations for the preservice teachers and practitioners would probably be the following: Is one of those three discourses better than the other two, or could we benefit from all the discourses? Or are they mutually
exclusive? And most importantly, what does a teacher educator need to know to be able to address successfully diversity issues and the needs of diverse learners in their discourses?

Also, other more specific critical interrogations would inquire the following: Does labeling always or necessarily lead to stigmatization and negative effects? Aren’t there any useful or beneficial aspects of labeling? What distinguishes “helpful” disability labels from “harmful” ones (e.g., their stigmatizing impact; the Other is setting apart from the community, being perceived as deviating from the norm; the focus on children’s deficits, not on their strengths)? Are there any times/places/discourses when labels are helpful (e.g., when they “describe conditions that call for specific treatment,” when they “indicate eligibility for services,” or when they represent “a necessary step toward obtaining help”; Peterson & Hittie, 2003, pp.10-11)? Are we less ignorant about “disabilities” then we were in the past? Or, are we ignorant in new ways? Don’t the instructors in the study also have their biases and their areas of conceptual and philosophical blindness? (e.g., can every student actually be a “winner,” or can we always be cooperative or there are times in life when we have to be competitive?). The answers would not rely on either/or as they are not a matter of binary constructions/discourses, but in a postmodern framework, the postmodernist practices which welcome multiple perspectives and the plurality of voices, would inevitably embrace different approaches to diversity, to a plurality of statements, to different instructional strategies, philosophies of teaching, and teaching styles. According to Parker (1997)
what the postmodern teacher recognizes is that we have a choice in education; that every decision to teach this way, or assemble that collection of subjects on a curriculum, or organize one's classroom according to this set of principles or anecdotes, is ungrounded in reality, has no ultimate, compelling justification. Every decision involves potentially endless levels of choice which we can contrive to forget or conceal but which deconstruction is always ready to uncloak. We are responsible for those decisions in a most extreme way. We have a responsibility for our decisions that the world cannot excuse since the world is, itself, an outcome of our deciding so to take it. (p. 144).

Teaching about diversity issues and diverse learners is definitely not an easy task. The complexities of issues explored by the professors with their students in the classroom could be addressed through different frameworks (e.g., philosophical, sociological, political, etc.) while representing, obviously, the values, beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, and personal and professional experiences regarding diversity of the individuals (professors, students) who discuss them.

The advocacy of polyvocality within the postmodern discourse, the commitment to reflective teaching, the deconstruction of the readings, the highlight of 'the Other', the challenge of the metanarratives and the old hierarchies of class, race, disabilities, gender, and the relationship between power and knowledge, where "learning (the acquisition of knowledge) becomes the ability to control and manipulate" (Parker, 1997, p.148), are all characteristics of postmodern educational practices. The question of whose discourse was more effective when addressing diversity would be considered, in the postmodern condition, an assertion of the hegemonic, determinate discourse that could not guarantee its effectiveness over the others. The postmodern teacher can decide upon his/her own style, voice, instructional practices, with the commitment of having a moral and ethical attitude towards diversity and diverse learners. As Parker (1997) stated, "weaving a
textile of new metaphors to create possible realizations of human life is the artistic 
adventure of postmodern educator” (p.158), therefore we need to be hopeful that all three 
different approaches to diversity and diverse learners had a positive impact on the 
learning experiences of the preservice teachers.

(De)constructing and Reconstructing the Name of the Course

“Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners”

By revisiting the data analysis and the emergent themes, it makes sense to wonder 
what impact the title of the course has on the students, and what the students actually 
expect when reading it. We need to pay close attention to the messages that language 
conveys, as it always bears a symbolic meaning.

Smith (2001) explores how academics have constructed disability in professional 
journals, such as Exceptional Children and Disability and Society. He presents insights 
using the reciprocal relationship between language and disability construction arguing 
that “how academics frame or construct disability informs the way they conduct and 
apply research, with implications for policy and practice” (p. 56). Smith (2001) also 
presents the construction of two contrasting perspectives (deficit-based and strength-
based), taking into account the terminology, the descriptors, and the research approaches 
with examples for definitions of disability and inclusion (as treatment or integration), and 
the consequences of the contrasting perspectives of disability used in the two popular 
journals. He concludes that “the differences among disability issues research can be 
inspected through positivist and postmodern assumptions and loosely summed up as
repair versus rights, and deficit versus strength-based” (p. 71). Smith (2001) defines the deficit approach as a “medical model” which has considered students in light of what they cannot do, the students’ limitations, and possible remedies or treatments. Placement considerations in classroom are more like that in a hospital. The medical model continuum of services runs from hospital or residential setting (exclusion from the building) to self-contained classrooms in the school of full inclusion classrooms. (p. 70)

In contrast to the deficit approach, is the strength-based approach which “has considered students in light of what they can do, their interests and other skills, and the settings and adaptations that will enable the students to learn and maximize abilities” (Smith, 2001, p. 70).

Of all three professors, Charles had the most traditional approach to the issues of diversity, where the main focus of the course was to make students familiar with the needs and the characteristics of children who receive special education services and learn about the various models for providing services to students in need of special education. Another goal for his class was to introduce the preservice teachers to different methods of accommodating students with diverse learning needs, recognizing that all children exhibit unique learning needs and characteristics. The most comprehensive assignments (the lesson plan and the group management plan) were designed to help students use the theoretical concepts in practice, taking into account the state requirements and standards.

The rich description of the data analysis showed that Charles’ classes focused on the medical or deficit model by explaining the selection, the classification, the services for students with disabilities, and how to accommodate students’ learning needs, whereas Grace and Eric’s classes concentrated on the strength-based approach that emphasized
the richness and complexity of the lives of children with (dis)abilities, their abilities and competence, and their feelings and hopes. By using the strength approach when talking about the characteristics of children with disabilities, Grace and Eric did not necessarily dismiss the advantages of diagnosis and intervention, but they brought into our attention the uniqueness and complexity of every child.

Therefore, I recommend a change of terminology by modifying the name of the course “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners,” where “needs” express lack or incompetence, continuing the exclusionary effect of the children labeled disabled, by focusing on characteristics of different labels and the strategies for accommodations in the classrooms. Instead, the course could be named “Recognizing the Strengths and Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners” and would promise preservice teachers an understanding of the strong, independent, competent, and unique children. This change would also introduce students/preservice teachers to the importance of exercising and valuing their own imagination, and their hearts and minds with the moral commitment of educating all diverse learners.

Other Recommendations

The participants in the study brought their own perspectives when asked during the interview about the changes they think that need to take place in teacher education program for diversity to be addressed at the extent it should be. Grace believes that a more informed faculty about issues of diversity, setting up the conditions for collaboration, co-teaching and curriculum changes, would help address and challenge those issues not only in the classroom, but also at departmental and college levels. Also,
by having conversations about diversity through faculty and student forums, visiting scholars, or discussions about the curriculum, diversity could be part of the culture of this Midwestern university. The need for an informed faculty, exposed to ideas in general and not just to diversity issues, would be a necessary step for a successful change:

If we are going to change around here in terms of diversity, we have to change hearts and minds first. Certainly history tells us that changing structures, changing rules and laws help us bring those hearts and minds around. What should come first—the hearts and the minds, or the structures that change the hearts and the minds? Should we outlaw discrimination, and if we do, hearts and minds necessarily follow? Or are we better off having discussions about diversity and exposing people to ideas? (Grace, 24 September 2004)

Grace articulated the importance, as educators, of being skeptical and critical in our assumptions and teaching practices. We need to change our comfort zone to exercise the power of addressing different concepts, such as historical inequalities, or labeling debates. Only by teaching with critical reflection, can we enable preservice teachers to analyze, question, reflect, challenge, deconstruct and reconstruct discourses that produce a transformative and meaningful learning experience.

The word “critical” has a lot of baggage in our culture because we have a national ethos of considering anyone who “critiques” as being “negative” and therefore we can dispense their messages simply by calling them “negative”. We can simply consider them, in other words, as unpleasant or even self-indulgent and unproductive people. On the contrary, I spend some time in all my classes addressing this issue. (Grace, 24 September 2004)

By introducing themes like historical inequalities, the social constructions of race, class, disability, and ethnicity, and the overrepresentation of African Americans in special education, and by promoting critical reflection and awareness of history, and sociological theories besides (dis)ability issues, Grace is certainly in unison with Apple and Carlson (1998) who argue that “these are times in which new forms of community are emerging.
and in which marginalized groups are taking more control over their own identity formation. It is a time of breaking silences, crossing-borders, and re-visioning both the way our institutions are organized and the interests and purposes they serve” (p. 1).

Grace also emphasized the value of having the entire faculty from the special education department committed to inclusion as a unifying ethic. She further recommends introducing adaptive technology in technology courses within general education classes and reorganizing the teacher education program to allow all these changes to happen. Grace also advocates for faculty recruitment from diverse backgrounds, with more women in leadership positions (Grace, 24 September 2004).

In terms of improvements for addressing diversity in teacher education program at this Midwestern university, Eric emphasized the need for more field experiences and for more time spent in the classrooms with diverse children. He also recommends cross-curricular teaching and strong leadership that could promote the awareness and implementation of diversity issues. Eric also believes in the benefits of “reading autobiographies, of having more discussions on diversity issues, and more poetry” in the classroom and in teacher education program in general (Eric, Interview, 23 January 2005).

Charles hopes that there will be ways to bring together special education with general education through cross curricular teaching, having professors work together by taking into account students’ individual differences, and making accommodations to meet the needs of diverse learners in order to maximize students’ learning experiences (Charles, Interview, 13 April 2004).
One way in which we can interpret the professors' comments regarding improvements for teacher education program would be within the context of a postmodernist framework. For example, the professors who teach diversity classes in special education or general education could include the politics of difference into their curriculum by interconnecting relationships across ideological categories such as class, race, gender, and disability (Leistyna, 1999). Educators should also be cautious when selecting the curriculum (which is never value-free or objective) to include issues of diversity and to challenge the power relations or the dominant codes. Therefore, teacher educators' and students' beliefs, values, and attitudes cannot be dismissed in order to be able to include the students “as colleagues in learning and partners in the change process” (Horn, 2000, p.60). Giroux (1995) suggests “addressing curriculum as a form of cultural politics that demands linking the production and legitimation of classroom knowledge, social identities, and values to considerations of power” (p. 107). Also, both professors' and students' personal experiences could be connected to the issues discussed in class, whether by talking about their own ethnicity, race, social background with the goal of being self-reflective on these issues.

All three participants in the study thought that it would be useful to have cross-curricular teaching during “Meeting the Needs of Diverse Learners” course, which could also imply collaborating inter-and intra-departmental to improve the curriculum. Also, the cross-curricular teaching could mean co-teaching when possible, where each professor could deliver and focus on his/her area of strength or as in Grace's case, the cross-curricular teaching could evolve within the class. For example, Eric introduced
concepts and examples from the media or psychology along with ones from education/special education. Grace also used issues, themes or concepts not only from special education or disability studies, but also from history, sociology, philosophy, and literature to produce a meaning-making and transformative discourse.

“Early childhood institutions and pedagogy are often seen as neutral phenomena, subject to the technical application of value-free and universally true knowledge produced through scientific method” (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999, p. 42). According to the postmodern perspective “there can never be any knowledge that is objective or independent of context and power” (p.42). Consequently, we need to be aware that within knowledge/power connection, “knowledge loses a sense of innocence and neutrality” (Alvesson, 2002, p. 61). This means that we cannot and should no longer pretend to take a neutral point of view in the classroom. Therefore, the issue of presumed neutrality in the classroom is of foremost importance when talking about diversity issues. Grant and Sachs (1995) expressed their concern that most of the preservice teachers in education classes take a neutral position while teaching: “This idea of neutral discourses must also be examined” (p. 95). The authors argue that a postmodern condition would “raise questions about neutral as even a position that a teacher could take. In other words, when a teacher takes a neutral position or offers a neutral discourse, he or she is merely presenting a perspective” (Grant & Sachs, 1995, p. 96). I think that when we deal with diversity issues we cannot be neutral in our discourse, as through our arguments, values, attitudes and beliefs we actually make a statement that has moral consequences, and can make a difference in the lives of our students. As Grace pointed out: “When we are
diversity issues, we are dealing with politics. And I think we certainly should. Our work is political, education is political, it's essential, and it's moral. Let's just come to terms with that and let's not be afraid to have difficult conversations" (Grace, 24 September 2004). Eric also brought into his classes critical theory in order to “expose power relationships and rewrite possibilities” (Eric, 23 January 2005). On the other hand, Charles never thought of “using education as a political tool, although he declared having his “own values and beliefs about the pedagogy of teaching and educating children: “I believe that our society (and our educational system) accentuates or promotes differences across races, social classes and students with and without disabilities. And I do share this perspective in the classes that I teach” (Charles, 18 May 2005). Kanpol (1995) encourages educators to use “the similarity within difference framework of mutuality, cooperation, connectedness, and care, despite the clear celebration of my whiteness, your blackness, and/or her femaleness, whatever color, gender, or age” (p. 181). As an advocate of the multicultural border pedagogy, Kanpol (1995) further explains that by incorporating a similarity within differences theme when addressing diversity issues, educators would be able to consider the multiple and always varying and displaced differences of peoples (both extrinsic, such as color, gender, etc., and intrinsic, such as the values, norms, rules, and beliefs that make up religious and moral platforms) within a context of reconceptualizing similarities of power, domination, oppressive, joyful, and spiritual forces that frame the dominant and nondominant cultures. (p.182)

Using postmodern concepts or themes to connect with diversity issues also provides a framework for accommodating diversity through the acceptance of difference, of values, of complexity and multiple perspectives and voices, and of situated meaning-
making of educational discourses as a characteristic of democracy. Apple and Carlson (1998) explain the benefits of postmodern perspective for education:

This acceptance of difference of both beliefs and values is one of the hallmarks of democratic cultures, and some aspects of postmodernism in this sense represent a reaffirmation of democratic values in the face of claims by bureaucratic and professional "experts" to authoritative knowledge. If used appropriately and self-critically, a number of aspect of postmodernism also represent a new freedom to move eclectically from one theoretical discourse to another, letting them rub against one another in creative ways but without condensing them down into new totalizing discourse. (p.2)

No doubt, by selecting postmodernism as a vehicle for democratic values, we, as educators, recognize our personal agency and responsibility for respecting all diverse learners by producing value-based, moral, and political discourses that induce critical and reflective thinking and learning.

My recommendations for further research would include research questions like: What would the students' experiences regarding diversity issues have been in the same course taught by three different professors? What impact did the courses have on each different group of students? Since all three professors expressed their concerned regarding the lack of time for more topics and details in diversity, how would the curriculum for teaching diverse learners in a special education have differed if the course had been for three credit hours, instead of two? How beneficial would field experiences have been for a course in diversity? And, most importantly, how many courses should a teacher education program offer in diversity and diverse learners in both general and special education for the students/preservice teachers to be successful practitioners?
REFERENCES


Harris, M. (1999). Theories of culture in postmodern times. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.


### APPENDIX A: FACULTY SURVEY

**Note:** This survey is meant to be anonymous, so please do not put your name on it.

**Directions:** Please rate the degree to which you believe that you possess or do each of the following.

**Scale:**
- 1 = Not at all
- 2 = Slightly
- 3 = Moderately
- 4 = Considerably
- 5 = Very much

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<tr>
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<th>Question</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>To what extent do you integrate diversity into your teaching?</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>To what extent do you think that curriculum helps candidates to</td>
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<td>demonstrate knowledge, skills, and dispositions related to diversity?</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>To what extent do you think that field experiences and clinical practice</td>
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<td>help candidates to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and dispositions</td>
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<td>related to diversity?</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>To what extent does your teaching encourage the development of</td>
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<td>reflection in candidates?</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>To what extent do you have knowledge related to preparing candidates</td>
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<td>to work with diverse students?</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>To what extent have you had experiences related to preparing</td>
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<td>candidates to work with diverse students?</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>To what extent does your teaching encourage the development of</td>
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<td>professional dispositions in candidates?</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>To what extent do you teach candidates how to develop and teach</td>
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<td>lessons that incorporate diversity?</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>To what extent do you teach candidates how to develop a classroom and</td>
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<td>school climate that values diversity?</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>To what extent do you expose candidates to alternative instructional</td>
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<td>strategies to meet the needs of diverse learners?</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>To what extent do you adapt your instruction for different learning</td>
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<td>styles of diverse learners, including students with exceptionalities?</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>To what extent do you model technology utilization into your teaching</td>
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<td>as a means of accommodating diverse learners?</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>To what extent do you regularly assess your own effectiveness as a</td>
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<td>teacher educator preparing students to teach diverse learners?</td>
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<td>To what extent do you use multiple forms of assessments in determining</td>
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<td>your effectiveness as a teacher educator preparing students to teach</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>To what extent do you use your data to improve your practice?</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>To what extent do you provide field experiences or clinical practice in</td>
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<td>settings with exceptional populations and students from different ethnic,</td>
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<td>racial, gender, and socioeconomic groups for your candidates to develop</td>
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<td>and practice their knowledge, skills, and dispositions for working with</td>
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17. To what extent do you regularly & systematically (individually or with other university faculty) collaborate with P-12 faculty to improve teaching & learning for diverse learners?  

18. To what extent do you regularly & systematically (individually or with other university faculty) collaborate with other university units to improve teaching & learning for diverse learners?  

19. To what extent do you regularly & systematically (individually or with other university faculty) collaborate with the broader professional community to improve teaching & learning for diverse learners?  

Directions: Circle the level which most corresponds with your beliefs in reference to the following statements.  

Scale: SD = strongly disagree  D = disagree  A = agree  SA = strongly agree  

20. Candidates in practitioner preparation are well prepared to address students diversity when they begin teaching.  

21. Candidates interact in classroom settings on campus and in schools with professional education faculty, faculty from other units, and school faculty from diverse ethnic, racial, and gender groups.  

22. Candidates interact and work with candidates from diverse ethnic, racial, gender, and socioeconomic groups in professional education courses and projects on campus and in schools.  

23. I actively seek information or participate in programs that address students diversity in my professional associations.  

24. I am actively involved with P-12 schools that offer programs that address students' diversity.  

25. UNI provides opportunities for faculty to develop relevant new knowledge and skills for meeting the needs of diverse learners.  

Open-ended questions  

26. What do you consider to be the major strength of the current Teacher Education Program in preparing its graduates to teach in a classroom with diverse learners (and why)?  

27. What do you consider to be the major weaknesses in preparing its graduates to teach in a classroom with diverse learners (and why)?
APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The structural dimension:

To what extent is the structure of the pre-service teacher education program in consonance with the NCATE standards?

a) For example, do you consider that the structural dimension is in consonance with the Conceptual Framework (shared vision, coherence, commitment to diversity, commitment to technology, candidate proficiencies aligned with professional and state standards) of the NCATE?

b) Do you think that is there a shared vision and purpose in preparing educators to work with P-12 schools?

c) Do you think that the current teacher education program has a coherent system throughout curriculum, instruction, field experience, clinical experience, and assessment?

d) Do you think that diversity is addressed across the curriculum, instruction, field experiences, clinical practice, assessments, and evaluation?

e) Do you use technology as a tool across the curriculum, instruction, field experiences, clinical practice, assessments, and evaluation?

f) Do you think that candidates’ proficiencies are aligned with professional and state standards, including assessment?

The curricular dimension:

1) To what extent was your teaching practice in consonance with the NCATE standards?

2) As a result of your participation in the NCATE process has your teaching changed? How would you describe these changes? Have they enhanced your teaching? (For example, the use of multiple forms of assessment, integration of diversity and technology, variety of instructional strategies, active involvement in the professional world of practice in P-12 schools)?

3) As a result of this NCATE process did you find your department coordinating more with other departments on curricular issues?

4) Do you perceive yourself as a better professor now? Why?

5) Do you perceive the participation in the NCATE process changed the performance of your peers and colleagues? How that affected your peers?

6) To what extent did you need to change the curriculum by implementing NCATE standards?
The evaluation dimension:

To what extent did implementing NCATE standards change your evaluation and assessments in the department?

The communication dimension:

1) To what degree is there improved intr- and inter-departmental communication, collaboration, and cooperation in the College of Education as a result of NCATE accreditation?

2) How often did you meet?

3) Do you meet systematically and regularly with colleagues in P-12 settings, faculty in other college or university units, and members of the broader professional community to improve teaching, candidate learning, and the preparation of educators?

4) Did you meet in teams?

5) Are you happy with the initial results?

Conclusion:

1) Do you like this NCATE process?

2) To what extent do you see this process as being helpful and not necessarily imposed?
APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A.
1. How long have you been a teacher educator?
2. How long have you been teaching?
3. What is your particular area of preparation and expertise?
4. How many different diversity courses have you taught? How many total sections?
5. What personal experiences have you had that have been helpful in teaching a class about diverse learners?
6. What professional experiences (preparation, research, attending conferences) have you had that have been helpful in teaching a course regarding diverse learners? Did you have any prior training in diversity? What type (ethnic, gender, class, language, disabilities, the gifted/talented)?
7. Do you think that addressing diversity is one of the major weaknesses in this current teacher education program? Prompt: Explain.

B.
8. How do you define diversity taking into account the fact that this is a course offered by Special Education Department?
9. What are the goals and objectives of this course?
10. What was the reason that you chose a particular textbook/no textbook for this class?
11. What was the criteria upon which you decide the activities and the assignments for this course?
12. What aspects of diversity do you think that are discussed in depth within this class? Prompt: Explain why you have chosen these particular concepts, contexts, or perspectives.
13. What instructional strategies do you use in your diversity class (open inquiry, reflection, case-study analysis, etc).
14. Has teaching diversity class made a difference in the instructional practices that you use in other classes?
15. To what degree do you model and employ collaboration in the delivery of your course?
16. To what degree do you feel you prepare your students for community and school collaboration?
17. What kind of assessment do you use (standard-based/alternative assessment)? Prompt: Why?
18. Are you familiar with NCATE, NBPTS, INTASC standards? Do you see any advantages as using them as guidelines within the course?
19. Do you think that if you had field experiences for this course would have enhanced student teachers’ understanding about working with diverse learners?
20. What changes do you think that need to be done in teacher education programs for diversity to be addressed at the extent it should be?

21. Are there any modifications that you would make if you taught this class again?
APPENDIX D:

HUMAN PARTICIPANTS REVIEW
INFORMED CONSENT

Project Title: Addressing Diversity: A Case Study of Teacher Educators’ Views and Instructional Practices at a Midwestern University

Name of Investigator:
ALINA SLAPAC ________________________________

You are invited to participate in a research project conducted through the University of Northern Iowa. The University requires that you give your signed agreement to participate in this dissertation research study. The following information is provided to help you make an informed decision whether or not to participate.

This is a qualitative dissertation research study designed to describe teacher educators’ views about diversity and their different methods of instruction regarding diversity and to gain a deeper understanding of how diversity is being addressed at this midwestern university for a particular required course.

As a researcher, I would like to observe your classroom instructional practices, interview you about your personal and professional experiences regarding diversity, and collect classroom artifacts that would better help me to gain an in-depth understanding of your teaching practices. If you decide to participate, interviews will be arranged at times and at places that are convenient and comfortable to you. I will need to tape record the interview(s) to assure that accuracy is maintained. Two sessions of interview might be needed, one related to personal and professional experiences regarding diversity, and one related to your instructional practices. Each interview will not exceed 90 minutes, so the total amount would be 180 minutes (the interviews will be scheduled in different days). Only if needed, and for clarification purposes, we might have another interview which won’t exceed 60 minutes.

During the observations, I will sit quietly in pre-arranged seat in your classroom where I will take notes. I will not interact with you or your students during these observation times. Later, during a prearranged time, I will ask you questions about the teaching events that I observed. During this interview, you will be given an opportunity to tell me about personal and professional experiences regarding diversity, and your teaching practice. Occasionally, I will ask for artifacts (such as a copy of your course syllabus, a copy of any tests, assessments or surveys that you have used in the course of instruction) that might help me to better understand lessons and the procedures in your classroom. If you have any other artifacts that you feel are pertinent in this study, please feel free to give those to me, also.
I will also ask for your vita for accuracy purposes as supplemental documentation concerning your personal and professional experiences in regard to diversity. Your name will be kept strictly confidential and a pseudonym will be used instead. Your vita will be kept in my locked file cabinet except when being used for data analysis.

There will be minimal risks: the focus of the research is on the way diversity is addressed through the various methods of instruction. Disclosure of information about personal and professional experiences may create mild discomfort or anxiety. There are no other foreseeable risks or discomfort resulting from participation in this study. In fact, this study may provide you opportunities to gain valuable insight about your professional practice as a result of the reflective nature of this topic.

There will not be any direct benefits, except possible increased reflections on your instructional decision-making process, methods, and materials. Through reflection caused by this study on diversity, you may refine your instructional practices.

Any information obtained in connection with this study, the field notes, the tapes, and their transcriptions, will be kept in a locked file cabinet by the principal investigator except when being used for the purposes of data analysis. Pseudonyms will be used in data transcriptions, tapes will be destroyed after transcription, and reporting will not allow identification. No one will be identified or identifiable through the information that is presented.

Your participation in this project is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions of any kind. As the investigator, I will be available to answer any questions you have about your participation. I can be contacted at (319) 504-6248. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Gregory Stefanich at the Department of Curriculum and Instruction, University of Northern Iowa by telephone: (319) 273-2073, or email: Gregory.Stefanich@uni.edu. In addition, you may contact the Human Participants Coordinator, University of Northern Iowa, (319) 273-2748, for answers to questions about the rights of research participants and the participant review process.

Agreement: Include the following statement:

I am fully aware of the nature and extent of my participation in this project as stated above and the possible risks arising from it. I hereby agree to participate in this project. I acknowledge that I have received a copy of this consent statement. I am 18 years of age or older.

(Signature of participant) (Date)