A Personal Case of Culturally Responsive Teaching Praxis

"Modeling in culturally responsive teaching is a moral imperative and a professional necessity."

Thus far I have functioned primarily as an "off-stage" narrator for the story of culturally responsive teaching that was constructed in Chapters 1–6. I shift roles for this chapter. I will now step onto center stage to share some personal experiences. They are about some of the characteristics of my own teaching beliefs and practices that I think exemplify culturally responsive praxis. The story these experiences convey is incomplete in that it illustrates some but not all principles of culturally responsive teaching, and my conceptual understanding, multicultural knowledge, and instructional capabilities are continuing to grow.

INTRODUCTION

Invariably, teaching is a personal endeavor, and what it looks and feels like in actual practice is best conveyed through personal stories. These stories transmit an affective ambiance and level of clarity that defy even the best of abstract or conceptual descriptions. They inform, enforce, and encourage with a potency that is impossible in reporting research, explaining theory, and summarizing collective practices. Personal stories of practice move understanding of concepts and principles beyond cognition to embrace the psychoemotional energy, the exuberance, and the ethical convictions that are embedded in all good teaching. The power of the personal story, then, provides the reasons for this chapter. While other discussions have provided a wealth of varied information about culturally responsive teaching, they have looked at it largely from the outside. This discussion provides some glimpses of it from the inside out. In other words, it takes the reader into the dynamics of teaching, where the heart of
culturally responsive pedagogy lies. The ideas and actions described constitute, in part, my pedagogical creed for teaching ethnically, racially, and culturally diverse students. Concern for marginalized students of color in pre-K–12 schools, such as African, Asian, Latino, and Native Americans, is the primary motivating force for my teaching ideas and actions. These beliefs and their concomitant behaviors (or close approximations) are appropriate for the preparation of prospective and practicing teachers in professional development programs, and for improving equity of learning experiences and achievement outcomes in their classroom instruction. Teachers in all educational levels should create, clarify, and articulate clearly defined beliefs about cultural diversity generally and in education specifically because personal beliefs drive instructional behaviors. If teachers have positive beliefs about ethnic and cultural diversity, they will act in accordance with them, and vice versa. Therefore, beliefs are critical components of culturally responsive teaching.

My students are predominantly European Americans, especially those in teacher education. However, my graduate students include a wide variety of ethnic groups, both nationally and internationally. They are Taiwanese, Chinese, and Chinese Americans, Japanese and Japanese Americans, Africans and African Americans, Filipino Americans, Latino Americans, Korean and Korean Americans, Cambodian Americans, Jordanian and Greek citizens, biracial and biethnic Americans, and European Americans. The students also are in various stages of their professional education. Some are enrolled in teacher certification programs. Others are experienced teachers who are returning to school for master’s and doctoral degrees. Of these, some will remain in classroom teaching, some will assume administrative positions in K–12 education, and others will become college professors. Many of my students are interested in cultural diversity and social justice issues. They also are concerned about how they can teach differently to improve the learning outcomes for students from a variety of ethnic, cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds. Consequently, culturally responsive teaching is an important item on their professional agendas. It is for me, too, as well as modeling methods and messages in my own teaching that I expect of others.

BEING SUPPORTIVE AND FACILITATIVE

Whether in formal classroom settings, advising situations, or informal contacts on and off campus, I try to be supportive and facilitative of students’ intellectual, personal, social, ethnic, and cultural development. Students working on assignments, tasks within the context they are puzzled. My factual information; transfer of knowledge; learn about the cultures among Latino, Asian, They are to derive from quality of teaching an end product in mind. Students with parameters, example, I might specify the number and types of simulated lesson plans (e.g., person, event, problem) on “cultural diversity that should accompany,” cultural traits that can be used to teach the

Even my doctoral students for their research. The “This is your degree and you tell you what to do, but tell me what you want to do.” This helps students from the focus and develop their priorities onto them. I advisees to conduct research. Nor do I try to proach over another. I let the topics and procedures, dissertation-writing proceed with their “do-overs.” I ensure that this means some going the easy. Networks to access expertise is within the normal advocate for students.

I think graduate schools their own professional
working on assignments often want to know, "What exactly do you want us to do?" When I respond, "I don't know other than for you to put forth genuine effort, do your best, and address all aspects of the assigned tasks within the context of our class goals, readings, and discussions," they are puzzled. My assignments never deal with merely reproducing factual information; they focus on application, analysis, interpretation, and transfer of knowledge. For instance, my students are not asked to learn about the cultural values and stages of ethnic identity development among Latino, Asian, Native, and African Americans as an end in itself. They are to derive from this knowledge implications for improving the quality of teaching and learning. While I do not have a single specific end product in mind that everyone is to accomplish, I do provide the students with parameters within which they are expected to perform. For example, I might specify several questions to guide their analyses, such as the number and types of learning activities they need to develop in creating simulated lesson plans. Or I will identify the categories of information (e.g., person, event, place, image, etc.) to be included in an observation log on "cultural diversity in our daily lives" and the kind of information that should accompany each entry (such as multiethnic samples, description, cultural traits the observations illustrate, and how the observations can be used to teach that).

Even my doctoral students initially want me to tell them what to do for their research. They often ask, "What should I do?" My response is, "This is your degree and/or dissertation, so the question is not for me to tell you what to do, but to help you do what you want to do to the best of your ability." This response is not meant to be insensitive, but to let students know from the outset that I want to help them find their own focus and develop their own skills, rather than imposing my professional priorities onto them. Unlike some professors who expect their graduate advisees to conduct research that is a continuation of their own, I discourage this. Nor do I try to direct students toward one methodological approach over another. But whatever their choices are relative to research topics and procedures, I do insist on high-quality performance. In the dissertation-writing process, I am notorious among my advisees for demanding "do-overs." I give generously of my time, support, and other resources to ensure that my students achieve highly. In many instances, this means going the extra mile with them and mobilizing professional networks to access expertise that is beyond my personal abilities. For me, this is within the normal duties of an adviser, if he or she is genuinely an advocate for students.

I think graduate school is the time for students to begin developing their own professional interests and intellectual independence. In work-
ing with them toward these ends, I try to be simultaneously friend, mentor, model, critic, teacher, and confidante. This does not mean that I aim to be a “buddy” and neglect my teaching responsibilities. Rather, I try to model the importance of students and teachers interacting with each other in multiple ways and on many different levels. This, to me, is essential to effective teaching and learning since both encompass more than academic skill development. In performing these diverse roles, I hope to help students grow in similar directions and act accordingly in their own careers.

I think living and learning should be filled with significance, enjoyment, inquiry, and action. And I believe all of these are best achieved when personal struggles for academic betterment and the joys of achievement are shared with others. In trying to facilitate these accomplishments for myself and my students, I am driven more by the need to abide by my own professional ethics and personal morality than by any policies and practices recommended by external sources. Personally, this means being genuine and authentic in all that I do. Professionally, it means making my classes and other “teaching” situations intellectually stimulating and exciting. It also means empowering students by teaching them how to improve their own decision-making, cognitive-processing, problem-solving, imaginative and creative, and self-reflecting skills. A persistent commitment to ethnic and cultural consciousness of self and others, and how that contributes to improving teaching and learning, permeates all of these efforts.

**RITUALS AND ROUTINES**

Some common rituals exist across my classes that are symbolic of my values and pedagogical priorities about preparing teachers to work well with ethnically and culturally diverse students (especially African, Latino, Asian, and Native Americans) who are marginalized and underachieving. One of them is to build a sense of community among students and create a classroom ambiance characterized by inquiry, discourse, personal involvement, and novelty. I begin doing this on the first day of classes with some mind-boggling and very unorthodox “ice-breaking” conversations and experiences. On one occasion I asked the students to form pairs and to look at each other closely enough to identify subtle physical features. This excluded things like hair and eye color, height, race, and gender. After a short period of time, the pairs took turns describing each other to the rest of the class. On the surface, this sounds like a simple task to do; in fact, it is very difficult and unnerving. Many people in the United States do not look closely enough at one another to discern individual traits.

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This is especially the idea that teachers within a particular experience.

In another first experience, a student to public school “of their American, or K–12, examples of values. Each student the next one was someone who had been a model for the students that the students shared. I asked whether other people looked alike, and what that meant for K–12 students.

Therefore, on the key elements of every teaching experience or event personal and professional. Seeking to improve the students of color always made evident how it relates to me. Engaging in what others might refer to as “ideological declaration.” The ice-breaking activities classes are going to from what they are experiences; (2) pressing issues and relate to me and one another’s spirit de corps, at least we assist one another of our success. These in all subsequent ins...
This is especially so cross-racially. The exercise was intended to convey the idea that teachers really do have to look closely to see individual differences within ethnic and cultural groups, and to teach this lesson through experience.

In another first-day exercise, I asked several randomly selected students to publicly declare their ethnic identities and give “personal evidence” of their claims of ethnic ownership. If they said, “I am Italian American, or Korean-African American,” then they had to provide some examples of values, beliefs, and behaviors that signal these ethnic identities. Each student was probed in depth about his or her ethnicity before the next one was asked anything. The first student asked to share was someone who had had another class with me. She was familiar with my routines, and I knew she would handle the exercise very well. She served as a model for the other students who followed. Her modeling was not so much about the content of what she shared as it was a signal to the other students that they would live through the “inquisition.” After all the students shared, I asked the rest of the class what they thought was going on, whether other people’s revealing of their ethnicity prompted them to do likewise, and whether there were any messages in this exercise for teaching K–12 students about ethnic and cultural diversity.

Therefore, on the very first day of class students are introduced to some key elements of my pedagogical style. They learn from the outset that every teaching exchange involves describing, documenting, and analyzing experiences or events; sharing individually and communally; engaging in personal and professional reflections; learning by doing; and constantly seeking to improve classroom instruction for the benefit of underachieving students of color. This is my advocacy in all of my teaching and it is always made evident. In explaining what is happening in class, why, and how it relates to which aspects of culturally responsive teaching, I am engaging in what some other scholars call “transparent teaching” and still others refer to as “praxis.” That is, combining knowledge acquisition with ideological declarations, illustrative actions, and critical analysis. These ice-breaking activities also are intended to (1) let students know that my classes are going to be conducted in a manner that may be quite different from what they are accustomed to in most of their other college learning experiences; (2) provide a demonstrated example of how I engage with issues and relate to students, and how I expect students to interact with me and one another; and (3) begin creating a sense of camaraderie, an esprit de corps, a climate of caring, and a community of learning where we assist one another in the struggle to know and share in the celebration of our success. These features of my instruction are continually developed in all subsequent instructional interactions.
Teachers need to use an established routine to give order and direction to their instruction. It provides a framework for students to make better sense of what is happening, and a set of dependable guidelines for moving through learning engagements. Three examples of possibilities are provided. My instructional mantra is “know, think, feel, do, and reflect.” These phases of learning do not have to occur in the same sequence all the time, but all need to happen before a teaching exchange is completed. In examining issues related to race, culture, ethnicity, and education, my students are expected to acquire some knowledge; examine their own and others’ thoughts about the knowledge acquired; clarify feelings and beliefs about the issues and topics being studied; consider some ways to convert their knowledge, feelings, and opinions into transformative actions; and review and critique their learning processes to discern broader insights, messages, and implications for improvement embedded in them. Esteem, empathy, and equity are the organizing principles for Tiedt’s and Tiedt’s (2010) culturally responsive pedagogy. The esteem emphasis is designed to validate students and improve their perceptions of themselves. Equality activities develop understanding of and appreciation for multiple ways of living and learning. Equity recognizes that all students do not come to learning situations with the same resources and preparation. This diversity is acceptable as a natural feature of humanity and is a consistent criterion for selecting a wide variety of learning opportunities and experiences for culturally diverse students. Weber’s (2005) approach to teaching is a five-phase process that includes (1) questions to identify diverse learning possibilities; (2) targets, or specifically stated goals to avoid confusion about what is to happen in learning activities and how; (3) expectations that convey intended performance quality levels; (4) moves or actions that engage students in the creative construction and application of knowledge; and (5) reflections, which are opportunities to revisit learning tasks for guidance in future activities and growth potential. Teachers do not have to adopt any of these particular teaching routines, but they should create some recurrent protocol that provides order, regularity, and dependability to their instructional procedures. These routines help students make better sense of and engage in teaching encounters, as well as ensure that they will participate in different types of learning. I believe teaching is better when it takes place within well-established conceptual and procedural frameworks that include multiple and diverse layers of learning opportunities, especially about topics that are new and troubling to students, as is often the case with ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity in education.
LEARNING COOPERATIVELY AND SUCCESSFULLY

I do not believe in competitive learning or punitive grading. Rather than encouraging students to compete with one another for grades and using grades as controlling devices, I design my classes for all students to be maximally successful. I try to provide opportunities for every student to achieve the highest grade possible (although I would prefer not to give grades at all). I do this by designing learning experiences and projects to demonstrate learning that has several different components at multiple levels of complexity. None are about merely regurgitating factual information. I am more interested in students understanding what they read, analyzing critical issues, and applying the knowledge they acquire to teaching situations. When we examine principles of multicultural curriculum design, students are expected to understand them conceptually and then create some examples of how these can be translated to actual practice in classroom instruction. Embedded in class projects are some aspects that every student should be able to accomplish with relative ease. Therefore, even novices should never complete a task without getting some portion of it correct. Conversely, there are other parts of the assignments that all students should find intellectually challenging—but not the same ones for everybody.

I believe very strongly in the power of cooperative learning, learning by doing, and prospective teachers learning in ways similar to how they should teach their own students (i.e., modeling). Consequently, these are distinguishing features of my classroom dynamics. My students and I share teaching tasks and trade student–teacher roles. As small groups take on the responsibility to “teach” different topics to the class, I become an ex officio student/teacher member of each one to assist in getting the tasks done. We learn about cooperative learning by engaging in it as we learn. Using this format also increases the chances for students to be more actively involved in classroom dynamics, at different levels and in different ways. Thus, diversity and modeling are both pedagogical anchors and learning outcomes of my teaching. My goal is to practice what I preach, or demonstrate my instructional messages as much as possible. If I tell prospective teachers they should use cooperative learning with ethnically diverse students in preK–12 schools, then I feel morally and pedagogically obligated to do so in my teacher education classes in ways similar to those I recommend for elementary and secondary classrooms.

Another way that I try to guarantee success for all students is to have them design a self-growth project that represents their commitment to the causes we are pursuing and in which they make a contract with them-
selves and me to do something for their own individual development. For example, in one case, when we were studying “prejudice reduction,” a student made a personal contract with herself to stop being a tacit supporter (through silence and nonresistance) of her father’s habitual use of racial slurs when referring to Latino, Japanese, Chinese, and African Americans. All the students have to do in order to receive maximum credit for the self-growth contracts is fulfill the terms they themselves have specified, document the fulfillment of the terms, provide a reflection on how the experience affected them, and explain how this activity or some facsimile can be used in teaching K–12 students.

CHOICE AND AUTHENTICITY ARE ESSENTIAL TO LEARNING

When I give tasks to students that require mastery of key concepts we have explored in class, there are always opportunities for them to choose from a variety of options. One of these options is to propose a task of their own. The only stipulation is that whatever they propose to do be similar in magnitude, focus, and intent to the options I have provided. Thus, variety of tasks and personal participation in the decision-making process about how to demonstrate mastery are hallmark features of the “partnership in learning” principle that informs my teaching.

In one class that was studying multicultural curriculum and instruction, the students were given an assignment to apply the principles we had examined by developing a micro-multicultural curriculum on a selected issue. The list of issues included ones that they were likely to encounter in actual school and societal situations. Among them were “the changing images of ethnic diversity in mass media,” “cultural conflicts in social interactions,” “mainstream consumption of cultural diversity,” “quality of public transportation for different ethnic groups and communities,” and “ethnically diverse patterns of consumerism.” To complete these projects, the students were to simulate the steps that commonly are involved in curriculum development. They began by forming small design committees and collecting data about these issues prior to designing their curricula. For example, the students working on the transportation topic collected information on bus routes and schedules; took bus rides through different communities; made observations about the advertisements, decorations, and cleanliness of the buses; noted the demeanor of the bus drivers; and talked with some of the regular passengers. The group working on mass media decided to focus on billboards. They scanned billboards in several different communities before beginning to create their curriculum. The decision to go on these “scouting” expeditions was the students’. I only

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advised them that their curricula needed to be “realistic.” The results of these preliminary analyses informed the curriculum decisions and made their final projects more authentic with respect to what was designed for hypothetical K–12 students.

In creating the microcurricula, my students had to complete several different tasks. These involved:

- Choosing a targeted student audience and school context (such as seventh graders in an urban multiracial school or tenth graders in a rural monoracial European American school), and providing an explanation for these choices that addressed multicultural education needs. These choices created some baselines to help me determine the quality of the subsequent tasks.
- Selecting a goal for the focus of the curriculum from a list common to multicultural education, such as acquiring knowledge about ethnic and cultural diversity, reducing prejudices, engaging in social action to promote social justice, and developing critical political and cultural consciousness.
- Including several different content samples and learning activities (specified by number and type), such as geographic, reading, and mathematical skills, as well as cognitive, affective, and action experiences.
- Developing some creative techniques for marketing the completed micro-curricula to selected audiences. These could be commercials, slogans, logos, jingles, or public announcements.
- Anything else the students decided to use to make their micro-curricula uniquely and persuasively illustrative of the mission of multicultural education.

Another technique I use for prospective teachers to practice authentic choice making about cultural diversity in their own learning is to have them multiculturalize some aspects of regular classroom dynamics. First, they choose as a target of change something that typically is done in classrooms by many teachers, such as displaying symbols of subjects (e.g., maps in a social studies class, pictures of prominent authors in a literature class, alphabet streamers in a kindergarten classroom, etc.), cueing signals to refocus students’ attention on tasks and reduce noise levels, and sending correspondence to parents. Then, my students reconstruct their selections to make them multicultural and multiethnic. They make their own choices about the specific content to include, but it must be consistent with the content areas selected and fundamental principles of multicultural education. One group did a phenomenal job of multiculti-
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Turalizing the alphabet for primary teachers. They created a multimedia multicultural alphabet book that included a noteworthy individual from a different ethnic group for each letter of the alphabet, along with a visual image and a brief statement about the individual's achievements that was age appropriate for kindergarten and first-grade students. Another group chose to demonstrate how to multiculturalize correspondence with bilingual working-class parents, many of whom were recent immigrants. My students began by translating school information from professional jargon into a language they felt was more friendly and accessible for their targeted audiences. Then they "wrote" their correspondences in different formats, including typical letters in Standard English, Spanish, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Tagalog; made an audiotape of the message for parents who might have difficulty with reading any language; and created a videotape with a teacher speaking personally to parents or guardians of specific children, on the assumption that this would be a more warm and welcoming approach to communicating with parents unfamiliar with the U.S. education system. Authenticity is apparent in these examples because my students' suggested reforms focused on things that happen in actual classrooms and were compatible with principles of multicultural education and their selected areas of schooling. An important embedded message in these learning activities is for prospective teachers to understand culturally responsive teaching as an integral part of all teaching, not something reserved for special occasions.

TEACHING TO ENABLE AND EMPOWER

Periodic "process checking" is also a regular part of my classroom discourse. I review with students the requirements of assigned tasks prior to completion to determine how well their group dynamics are going. The purposes of these "reality checks" are to see whether what is expected is clear to them; to find out whether the students are experiencing any major substantive problems with the tasks; to see how their "community building" is coming along; to bolster their confidence; and to reaffirm, through public declaration, my faith in their ability to complete the tasks successfully. To me, being very public and genuine about conveying confidence in students' ability to accomplish high-quality performance is fundamental to effective teaching and learning. This is true whether the students are in kindergarten or doctoral programs.

I do not believe I should use the power of my position as professor to threaten or intimidate students, or to keep the knowledge I am supposed to know shrouded in mystery. My task should be to make knowledge ac-

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cussible to students and to diffuse the threat and anxiety that are often part of the learning process. I try to do this by teaching my students how to "read between the lines" of professional writings by learning how to locate the authors' central streams of thought; discerning assumptions and beliefs embedded in their ideas and explanations; locating cues that reveal authors' disciplinary frames of reference and preferred metaphors (these are very revealing indicators of value emphases); and, whenever possible, sharing something personal about the authors. I constantly explain the motivations behind my own actions as a scholar, theorist, researcher, and pedagogue.

What does this have to do with culturally responsive teaching? Everything. Scholars, like classroom teachers, are ethnic and cultural beings. Their attitudes and values are nested in their writings, research, and teachings. These need to be revealed and then analyzed to better understand their particular positions and points of view. Learning to discern how the "positionality" of authors affects their analyses of educational issues during their preparation programs may become a habit that teachers take into the classroom and pass on to their students. Furthermore, it is an excellent way to dispel the notion that scholars are infallible or the only ones with legitimate claims to expertise. In the process of revealing the constraints of one's positionality, the power of another's perspectives is unfolded. The intellectual give-and-take that results is a compelling illustration of the social construction of knowledge in action. This is something that I particularly want my students to understand and include in their teaching.

As part of a class I teach on "Teaching African American Students," we examine cultural characteristics that affect teaching and learning. Because many of my students have no personal interactions with African Americans, they find these descriptions to be abstractions that are difficult to visualize or to consider as anything but stereotypes. To help them break through these barriers to understanding, I try to exemplify some of the cultural features we are reading and talking about. I may intersperse bits of Ebonics (such as topic-chaining talk, storytelling, sermonizing, dramatic word play) into my regular teaching discourse without any warning of what is about to happen. After a while, I shift back to more typical academic language. I may then stop the conversation and do a reflective analysis with the students on what they have just experienced. I ask whether they were aware of any differences in language usage, whether they understood the information being transmitted, and how they felt about what happened. Now that they have a "living example" of a cultural behavior, we can compare the theory with the practice—and possibly achieve a better understanding of both. I use similar processes in
analyzing other people's narratives and dialogues, observations, film, and other types of media. We begin with conceptualization, followed sequentially by an illustrative behavioral experience, new information, debriefing, and reconceptualization. This habit of teaching is based on my belief that explicit connections need to be made between ideas and corresponding actions; many aspects of cultural and ethnic diversity need to be visualized for teachers, especially those who have had little or no practical experiences with it in their personal lives; and guided practice improves learning quality.

At first most of my students do not know what is going on, or they are captivated by my "performances," or they are too polite to challenge or differ with the professor. But with time, practice, and knowledge they become very adept in their observations and analyses, as well as their willingness to probe me about the implications of my culturally expressive behaviors for their own teaching. They seek clarifications about whether these "performances" are authentic, whether they are generalizable across person and place, and how to translate insights derived from them into better classroom instruction. These teaching techniques are very effective in demonstrating the importance and principles of culturally responsive teaching. Teacher education students who do not understand me when I speak Ebonics to them now have a personal experience with what it feels like to be intelligent but still not know what your teacher is talking about. This experience may enable them to better empathize with ethnically diverse students in their own classrooms who are in similar situations. They also have some experience with the concepts and related skills of "cultural style-shifting," "cultural hybridity," and "cultural border crossing." These are important in teaching students from different ethnic backgrounds to function more effectively in school situations without having to forsake their cultural heritages. They are skills that are especially important for students of color whose cultural socialization may be very different from that which prevails in mainstream schools.

**KNOWLEDGE PLUS PRACTICE IS IMPERATIVE**

I often give assignments that require students to take an advocacy position on some issue directed toward a specific audience. One of these asks students in teacher education courses to select a "constituent audience" and explain the benefits of multicultural education to it. The choices might include a member of the Moral Majority; a potential advocate who is willing to promote cultural diversity but lacks sufficient knowledge; a Latina grandmother who just wants her grandchildren to learn to be...
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I want you to know that you’re not the first to declare that you shouldn’t have to learn about different ethnic groups, and you probably won’t be the last. But, let me explain why this is important.

First of all, let me say that you already are learning about ethnic groups whether you realize it or not. Do you watch TV? If you see people you think might be different from you on TV, you’re already forming opinions of them. Do you read newspapers and magazines? If you do, you’re gathering information and developing beliefs about other ethnic and cultural groups and individuals. How do you know that the information is correct or that the opinions and beliefs you’re forming are fair? You’ll never know if you don’t learn about other ethnic groups...

The question then becomes whether or not what and how you are learning is a positive or negative experience for yourself and others. Is it accurate? Is it going to help or hinder you and others? Let me give you an example that might demonstrate how not having information could hinder or prevent you from knowing what you need to know.

You are learning to play a new game. There are ten rules to follow, but at home you decide to play by only five. You learn these five rules very well and you win a lot. Later on you go to a friend’s house to play the same game. He has learned all of the rules. You lose and lose but can’t figure out why. Not having all of the information prevented you from playing the game as well
as you might have once you were outside of your home. It might even have caused you to argue with or distrust your friend. Once you learn the other rules of the game, you find that you win some of the time and have much more fun playing the game.

In this class, we want to look at a lot of different information around us. We want to think about the stories we read and hear. We want to look at pictures of many different experiences and peoples, and talk about them. We want to speculate about how others feel and why. We want to try different things in different ways. We want to learn in ways that will better prepare us for the “game of life.” Since ethnic and cultural diversity is an important part of life now and in the future, you need to know about it to be able to play the game better. As we prepare for the “game of life,” we will be learning about our own as well as others’ cultural differences. And, we’re going to discover that learning about differences is exciting. So give it a try before you decide it is unnecessary.

I also use role playing and simulations frequently to provide students with opportunities to translate theory into practice in relation to understanding information and being more pedagogically responsive to cultural diversity in classrooms. These instructional techniques are especially useful for students who have not had any actual teaching experiences. Two examples illustrate how the learning activities operate and the range of opportunities they provide. In the first case, I told my students that representatives from the state department of education had asked me to consult with them about improving the school performance of at-risk students, a high percentage of whom were African, Latino, and Native Americans. To respond to this request I had volunteered this group of students, who, at the time, were enrolled in a class on “Multicultural Curriculum and Instruction.” Their task was to develop a prototype curriculum on “Essential Multicultural Citizenship Skills for ‘At-Risk’ Students in the State of Washington.” The underlying assumptions of the simulation were (1) elementary and secondary students throughout the state are “at-risk” multiculturally because they are not taught adequately about ethnic and cultural diversity, and (2) any students can be “at-risk” under some circumstances. I wanted my students to be cautious about accepting simplistic explanations for complex issues involved in teaching ethnically diverse students and to understand the importance of “contextuality” in educational decision making. Thus, being “at-risk” should not be understood as an identifier for particular groups of students, but a condition that is contextually specific. My students had to begin the task by rethinking what it meant to be “at-risk” if all students in Washington were affected, determining what was the best focus and tone for a curriculum for a state department of education, and deciding what constituted a “curriculum prototype. The seeming success was a small group effort to devise a model. New approaches were artfully created and the works were artfully adorned. The final product was a colorful and culturally significant artefact. At the end of the process, the students presented their work to the state department of education and received positive feedback. This experience taught me the importance of involving students in real-world projects and the value of collaborative learning.
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... prototype." They needed to make these preliminary decisions in order to make their curriculum prototype more audience appropriate.

The second example of using role playing and simulation to bring an aura of practical reality to my teaching about cultural diversity involved the students in translating knowledge from one form to another. This process was a powerful testament to the quality and depth of understanding that students had acquired. The students were asked to assume the role of producers and consumers of art and mass media while we were studying philosophical beliefs about what multicultural education means and why it is important to include it in school curricula and instruction. The motif adopted for the discussion was the opening day of an art exhibition. In small groups, the students became "artists" by creating visual images of the messages they had derived from reading samples of different authors' ideas about the what and why of multicultural education. We then converted the classroom into an art museum, and the students hung their artworks throughout. When the exhibition opened, half the students were artists who were there to talk with the audience about their artistic renditions. After some time, the roles were reversed. Those students who had been artists became audience, and the audience became artists to explain their works.

At the close of the exhibition (which coincided with the end of the class period), the students switched to another role. They became "journalists" to report on what they had seen and experienced at the "Multicultural Philosophical Art Exhibition." Each small group chose a section common to newspapers and wrote about their experiences in its "voice"; for instance, a headline story, editorial, obituary, human interest page, advertisement, classified ad, comic, horoscope, and entertainment review. After all the selected parts of the newspaper were composed, representatives from the small groups arranged themselves in the proper order and then "read themselves aloud" to the rest of the class.

One small group that chose to write about their experiences in the form of a birth announcement wrote:

The world's most awaited child finally arrived here in Seattle with the birth of "multicultural education." Father, True Democracy, and mother, Necessity, are the proudest of parents. After nearly 300 years of racism and inequality, Multicultural Education was conceived in the 1960s. After a long and tenuous labor, Multicultural Education was finally born on June 28, 1999 (the date of the class assignment), and made her first public appearance at the grand opening of the art museum named in her honor. Famous artists awaiting her prepared a fabulous multimedia presentation for the public to herald her arrival. The thought-provoking exhibitions and presentations captured the colorful, complex, creative, and challenging personality of Multicultural Edu-
cation in all of her expressive dimensions. The artists' works also alluded to the hopes, expectations, and potentials of Multicultural Education for a millennium of cooperation and collaboration among ethnically diverse groups in schools and society. Multicultural Education's older siblings, Justice and Social Activism, also were on hand for the festivities.

Another group of students selected weather forecasting as the motif for writing about their perceptions of the multicultural education philosophical art exhibition. Their creative rendition stated:

Upon entering the Museum of Multicultural Education this past Monday, June 28th, one could not help but notice the dramatic change in the weather. The cloudy skies outside were apparently no match for the warm front of high hopes and expectations in the gallery. Participants in the exhibition found success in clarifying the foggy misconceptions that have long nourished the storms of controversy surrounding multicultural education. Their presentations included a downpour of information unearthing sunny prognoses for the future of education grounded in culturally relevant approaches to teaching and learning. These cleansing deluges were followed by brilliant sunshine of insights and a dazzling rainbow of pedagogical possibilities.

In order to correct the climate characterized by a barrage of misunderstandings and misapprehensions, the artists for multicultural education produced a flood of positive anecdotal and research-based data that are sure to precipitate great changes in the minds of the public. With the cold front of misinformation in check, it looks like nothing but clear skies ahead.

The ten-year forecast includes a period of continued scattered clouds of controversy early on that will eventually develop into greater visibility and a hopeful air index of multicultural education policy formation and implementation. Finally, our satellite weather shows the end of the decade immersed in the sun belt of cultural diversity infusion. A few thunderstorms of doubt and back-peddling might pop up occasionally on the national radar screens as we work out the glitches. But, overall it looks like calm seas, warm temperatures, and only moderate rainfall ahead. No natural catastrophes, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, droughts, or tornadoes are expected. So make your plans now to celebrate the increasing success of multicultural education.

These are beautiful examples of the creativity and high-quality performance of prospective teachers. They attest to the incredible capability of students for imagination and mastery if teachers create opportunities, convey high expectations, and provide facilitative assistance. Although these performances were produced by adult learners in college, elementary and high school students also have the ability to be highly creative in learning activities if they are provided ample opportunities. In addition to tapping creativity and providing practical experiences for preservice

A Personal Case of teacher education
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A Personal Case of Culturally Responsive Teaching Praxis

teacher education students, simulated learning opportunities offered several other benefits that are consistent with theoretical ideas of culturally responsive teaching. Among them are:

- Getting students personally involved in their own learning
- Using varied formats, multiple perspectives, and novelty in teaching
- Responding to multiple learning styles
- Modeling in teaching and learning
- Using cooperation and collaboration among students to achieve common learning outcomes
- Learning by doing
- Incorporating different types of skill development (e.g., intellectual, social, emotional, moral) in teaching and learning experiences
- Transferring knowledge from one form or context to another
- Combining knowledge, concepts, and theory with practice (i.e., engaging in praxis)
- Having students reflect critically on their knowledge, beliefs, thoughts, and actions
- Building capacity, confidence, and efficacy in students as agents of pedagogical, intellectual, moral, and social justice changes related to cultural diversity

CULTIVATING CRITICAL ORIENTATIONS IS IMPORTANT

The intellectual processes that students go through in my classes are designed so that they can engage and enhance their own knowing potential. I want them to be independent, critical, reflective, and quality thinkers and decision makers who are deliberate and intentional in constructing their personal pedagogical positions, and in monitoring and assessing the quality of their culturally diverse beliefs and behaviors. Consequently, my students are challenged to reconfigure and integrate knowledge segments from several sources to serve new purposes; to be analytical about sources of knowledge; to push the boundaries of their present knowledge frames by looking for deeper meanings and principles in descriptive texts; and to create new ways to organize and categorize information and insights. I constantly prompt them to “think about,” to wonder “what if,” to explain why. When I do this myself, I frequently stop the dialogue to explain how I arrived at my new categories and why I think the information should be
sorted accordingly. This "explanation of processing" is intended to be an instructive model for my students to emulate in their intellectual operations with their own students.

I encourage and assist students to deconstruct conventional assumptions about and paradigms for teaching marginalized students of color and to search for more viable alternatives. In one of my classes, "Multiethnic Curriculum and Instruction," a routine activity undertaken to accomplish this task is to expose the cultural underpinnings of explanations for low academic achievement, such as lack of motivation, devaluing education, at-riskness, limited intellectuality, and parental nonparticipation. We consider alternative paradigms that promise possibilities for different solutions. Among them are cultural incongruity, stress and anxiety, existential distance between students and teachers, situational competence, and transitional trauma caused by having to shift from home to school cultural systems. Each of these is examined to determine different explanations for why students are not achieving well in school and new implications for classroom instruction. In another class, on "Teaching African American Students," we consider the principles of Kwanzaa (Riley, 1995) as a pedagogical paradigm. In exploring this possibility, my students engage in activities such as translating Kwanzaa principles to the arena of teaching and learning: explaining how Kwanzaa principles exemplify African American cultural values and characteristics; and delineating how these can function as educational ideologies and classroom practices. They also develop teaching strategies and learning activities that illustrate the Kwanzaa principles in a variety of subjects, skills, grades, and school settings. These kinds of instructional activities are based on the premises that (1) positive beliefs about ethnic and cultural diversity produce positive teaching and learning behaviors, and (2) educational interventions for ethnically diverse students based on prior success (not failure) generate subsequent learning successes.

THE PERSONAL IS POWERFUL

I think interpersonal relations have a tremendous impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Students perform much better in environments where they feel comfortable and valued. Therefore, I work hard at creating a classroom climate and ambiance of warmth, support, caring, dignity, informality, and enjoyment. Yet these psychoemotional factors do not distract from the fact that my classes are very demanding intellectually. Students are expected to work hard and at high levels of quality. I, too, am at my best in these kinds of settings. So I try to bond with my students as teachers and one another, integrating personal experiences, sharing ideas, theories, and roles.

It is not always easy for students to share personal stories about racial discrimination, uncertainty about their role in family, or reluctance to discuss European American history. I think this is because students are initially uncertain about their role in class and I try to help them work through these feelings by building on our dual authenticity.

To help students understand the many scenarios and identity issues that arise in teaching and learning, we examine the model of teaching and learning based on the personal is powerful principle and prepare the students in telling and understanding and developing the cultural and ethnic identities of our students. As students share their stories, sharing is done. Initially, I simply e
ended to be an elitist operation. "Stereotypical assumptions of color and class, racism, and classism for devaluing educational participation. I believe, are a root cause of anxiety, existential competence, and fear of school and new schools."

Teaching Afrikan (Riley, my students and me) to the arena of experiences exemplified by the "delineating room practices" that illustrate the premises and failures to produce positive interventions.

I work hard at support, caring, and emotional factors. Introducing intellectual levels of quality and bond with my students as teacher, friend, and advocate, and to get them to accept me and one another in a similar manner. One way I do this is by legitimizing personal experiences as significant sources of knowledge. As a result, "telling our personal stories" plays a prominent part in our conversations as we struggle to capture the essence of culturally responsive educational ideas, theories, principles, and practices.

It is not always easy to get students (even those in graduate studies programs) to self-declare and share their personal stories. They are often reluctant to discuss their experiences, impressions, and thoughts about racial discrimination, ethnic inequities, and cultural hegemony. Some are uncertain about their own ethnic and cultural identity as well as about their role in advocating for cultural diversity in teaching and learning. Their reluctance is fueled further by the fact that they are predominantly European Americans and I am African American. Many of my students are initially anxious about how their comments will be received by me. I think this hesitancy is driven by a combination of intimidation by my ethnicity, fear of showing ignorance and insult, and respect for my position of dual authority (personal and professional).

To help students break out of this reluctance, during the early part of the course I talk about, critique, and even make fun of myself a lot. I share many scenarios about mistakes I have made in the past and the tentativeness and incompleteness of my early efforts to engage with the issues we are examining in class. I share successes, too, as well as experiences I am ambivalent about. My purposes in these self-disclosures are threefold: to model sharing one's own experiences and how these illustrate the pedagogical principles under study; to lead the way for my students to follow and prepare the classroom climate to make it easier for them to function in telling and analyzing their own stories; and to demonstrate that competence is not something that happens instantaneously, but rather develops over time and shifts according to contexts. In other words, I use my own stories to show how I came to be, and how I am still in the process of becoming, with respect to competence in teaching for, about, and to cultural and ethnic diversity.

As the students become more comfortable and confident about sharing their stories, I share fewer of mine and increasingly vary how this sharing is done. I may wait for the students to share their stories first before declaring my own. Or I may use the students' stories as a catalyst to prompt a memory of my own, and tie it to their stories, as an obvious secondary narrative. On other occasions I defer the telling of stories totally to students, and I restrict my participation to extrapolating pedagogical principles from them. I also change how I react with the students' stories. Initially, I simply encourage the class members to "receive" the stories and...
compliment the “authors” of them for sharing. Next, I begin to invite the storyteller and other students to analyze the stories, looking for pedagogical messages within them or ways in which they illustrate specific principles of teaching. Finally, I, along with the students, “evaluate” the stories as they are told. By this I mean we make judgments about whether the stories offered are appropriate to the ongoing discourse and as illustrations of the bigger issues or ideas being developed in class. Sometimes this approach to dealing with the stories of students as pedagogical content evolves over many weeks. At other times it occurs within the duration of a single class, and may even unfold within a scenario provided by one student.

I also use a variety of techniques to dialogue with students, to capture their attention, and to engage their deep feelings and thoughts, both in and outside of the classroom. For example, when I give feedback on their papers, I share whatever thoughts or feelings their ideas prompt at the moment I read them. Sometimes it is a new insight, a question, a memory, a smile, a new thought, a gladness that they have mastered a task, or a criticism that they are performing at a level below their potential. In other words, my feedback on written assignments becomes an “interactive conversation” with my students through their papers, and a means for me to continue the instructional process on a level that is more personal than the classroom sometimes allows.

CONCLUSION

The themes that run through all of my teaching and other interactions with students are “we are partners in the quest for learning” and “the better we can combine our resources, the better all of us will be. I will teach better and you will learn better.”

I approach teaching as if it is an unfolding drama, a story in the making that is never finished. Each class session is a new episode in this drama. It has its own unique texture and function yet is a critical contribution to the construction of the larger story. I am responsible for creating the sets, props, and the rough draft of the scripts for the learning encounters that take place. But how these actually unfold is beyond my unilateral control because the students play crucial roles in my teaching. I neither dictate nor control exactly what these roles will be. I simply cast the parts, and the students construct the characters. Together, we create teaching and learning dynamics that work best for us and what we are trying to accomplish.
Consequently, completing learning tasks is simultaneously a cause for celebration and an invitation for us to return to the stage once again and add yet another segment to the continuing drama of teaching and learning. We compile our efforts, resources, experiences, and intellects to making learning ventures the best possible for everyone involved. Thus, my students and I work closely together to develop learning experiences that are simultaneously personally validating, academically enriching, socially empowering, morally uplifting, and pedagogically transforming. Sometimes the unfolding script and drama work well for my students and me, but not always. Although I wish otherwise, when my teaching is less than desirable I am not incapacitated by imperfection. I know well that there is no end to learning, that I do not know all there is to be known about ethnic and cultural diversity, that good teachers are always learning, and that there are no guarantees or infallible formulas for perpetual success in teaching. I welcome the uncertainty and imperfections as invitations to be imaginative and innovative, to reaffirm that culturally responsive teaching is a continuous process of development, and to embrace the reality stated so eloquently by William Ayers (2004) that “teaching is never twice the same” (p. 43).