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A Self-Study of Culturally Responsive Pedagogy and Reflective Practice

Ingrid Spatt
Molloy College

Andrea Honigsfeld Ed.D.
Molloy College, ahonigsfeld@molloy.edu

Audrey Cohan Ed.D
Molloy College, acohan@molloy.edu

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ABSTRACT: This article describes a collaborative self-study implemented to improve and refine three teacher educators' instructional practices to better assist their teacher candidates in developing culturally responsive pedagogy and becoming reflective practitioners. The self-study is situated in three theoretical frameworks: Banks's (2005) framework for multicultural education, Gay's (2000, 2002, 2010) framework for culturally responsive practice, and the four pillars of the Dominican tradition at Molloy College (Donovan, 2004). This work contributes to the expanding research base of reflection and diversity in teacher education and refines articulation of the methodology of self-study. Findings reveal a need to hone and deepen personal reflective approaches, examine empowerment through the process of self-study, and focus perspectives within the contexts of cultural understanding.

If professional collaboration and reflective practice are to have a true impact on teacher preparation programs, then the work of self-study teams must be showcased, analyzed, and discussed. Considered a relatively new avenue of research, self-study "allows researchers to document not only what they learn about teaching and teacher education from the study of them, but also the tacit and personal practical knowledge they possess that contributes to our knowledge and understanding of teaching" (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 3). Self-study has also been referred to as *autoethnography* because of the prominent position of the researcher within the study. The self-study genre has encouraged many teachers—classroom teachers and teacher researchers—to closely examine and better understand individual teaching practices. What was once considered a rhetorical question—*How might I become a better teacher?*—is now seen as an evaluative question with a multitude of answers.

The self-study of teacher education practices is presented by Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) in their groundbreaking book *Self-Study of Practice as a Genre of Qualitative Research*. They describe self-study as "systematic research methodology that attempts to examine and improve professional practice settings" (p. 103).

This practice offers an exciting collaborative inquiry perspective, which is described by LaBoskey as "self initiated and focused; improvement-aimed;

interactive; uses multiple, mainly qualitative methods, and; has a validation process based in trustworthiness" (as cited in Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, pp. 103–104). Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) further clarified that this research is self-initiated and, in many cases, the connection between self-study and reflective practice is highly integrated (Hamilton, Smith, & Worthington, 2008; Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009).

Background

The researchers' institution, Molloy College in Rockville Centre, New York, is supported by a strong mission statement and the four pillars of the Dominican tradition (Donovan, 2004) that undergird teacher preparation. The idea of community and interacting as critical friends was an outgrowth of the already collaborative environment being fostered at the college.

The professor, who became the lead researcher in the self-study, was grounded by the four pillars of the Dominican tradition and, at the same time, empowered by the process of self-study. The practice of self-study "positions the researcher as a particular kind of inquirer and declares the relationship of that inquirer both to the practice and to others who are engaged with the inquirer in constructing the practice" (Pinnegar & Hamilton, 2009, p. 12). When professors are involved in a self-study project, they are studying their own practice with the acknowledgment that it involves others. The focus then becomes multidimensional, as the researchers explore the instructor's practice within one specific course and the outcomes for the teacher candidates.

This work was prompted by benchmark performances of teacher candidates in the previous year, since these performances lacked a depth of understanding in issues of cultural diversity and cultural responsiveness. The students' undistinguished performance led to self-evaluation and, ultimately, a commitment to the collaborative self-study approach and to improved teacher education practices.

The Four Pillars of the Dominican Tradition

The four pillars of the Dominican tradition serve the Division of Education's conceptual framework (National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE], n.d.). Since teachers are prepared for public and nonpublic school teaching, the faculty in the Division of Education interpreted the four Dominican pillars as (1) spirituality and reflection, (2) research and teaching, (3) service, and (4) community. The original four pillars are considered part of the heritage of the Dominican Order that founded Molloy College in 1955.

In the Dominican tradition, spirituality and reflection include an understanding that through the erudition of members of the Dominican Order, the liberal arts and sciences and metaphysics are media for creating understanding, constructing meaning, and planning action. To this end, spirituality and reflection embrace developing, maintaining, and updating a personally meaningful philosophy of education; understanding that spirituality and reflection can be secular, philosophical, and transformational, as well as theological; engaging in reflective and scholarly practices to improve teaching effectiveness, theory, and practice; encouraging lifelong learning through ongoing personal and professional development; and integrating ethical considerations, spirituality, and values into the curriculum (NCATE, n.d.).

In the Dominican tradition, research and teaching include understanding that "human knowledge is a constructed form of experience and therefore a reflection of mind as well as nature: Knowledge is made, not simply discovered" (Eisner, 1991, p. 7). It also means constructing a theoretical and pragmatic framework—through critical evaluation—that nurtures and directs action, enhancing the instructional delivery system to be student-centered to ensure access to knowledge for all, and incorporating research and modeling about the teaching/learning process (NCATE, n.d.).

In the Dominican tradition, service means providing service learning opportunities to teacher candidates in preparation for becoming socially responsible members of the community. The future teachers are being prepared for undertaking transformational activities within and outside school settings and assuming leadership in religious, civic, and professional education organizations and institutions (NCATE, n.d.).

Finally, community relates to engaging in the acceptance of all people and rejecting all forms of discrimination while building a community of learners in the school and practicing personal accountability and responsibility in the educational and extended communities (NCATE, n.d.).

The education faculty at Molloy College often consider their practice through the lens of the four pillars of the Dominican tradition, as it is an established framework for study and scholarship. Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) stated, "In designing a self-study, the researcher will first want to understand the theories and research already available that purport to provide insight or guidance into the practice being interrogated and uncovered" (p. 57). In this case, the four pillars of the Dominican tradition and the Division of Education's conceptual framework (NCATE, n.d.) offer a strong foundation for the purpose of the study and the exploration and reflection that were subsequently conducted.

Theoretical Framework

The self-study was situated in three theoretical frameworks: Banks's (2005, 2009) framework for multicultural education, Gay's (2000, 2002, 2010) frame-

work for culturally responsive practice, and the four pillars of the Dominican tradition (Donovan, 2004). Banks (2005) defined *multicultural education* as "a reform movement designed to change the total educational environment so that students from diverse racial and ethnic groups . . . will experience equal educational opportunities in schools" (pp. 29–30). He identified four approaches to integrate multicultural education into the curriculum and make it more inclusive and action oriented to make sure greater understanding and more positive attitudes are developed toward different groups.

> Level 1: The Contributions Approach, which focuses on heroes and heroines, holidays, and discrete cultural elements as a first attempt to integrate ethnic and multicultural content into the curriculum;
>
> Level 2: The Additive Approach, in which content, concepts, themes and perspectives are added to the curriculum without changing its structure;
>
> Level 3: The Transformation Approach, wherein the structure of the curriculum is changed to enable students to view concepts, issues, events, and themes from the perspectives of diverse ethnic and cultural groups, and;
>
> Level 4: The Social Action Approach, wherein students make decisions on important social issues and take actions to help solve them. (Banks, 2009, p. 238)

Ladson-Billings (1994) explored the challenges of implementing culturally responsive teaching practices and the positive impacts thereof. Ladson-Billings (2000) defined culturally relevant teaching as

> the kind of teaching that is designed not merely to fit the school culture to the students' culture but also to use student culture as the basis for helping students understand themselves and others, structure social interactions, and conceptualize knowledge. (p. 142)

Similarly, Gay's (2000) extensive research on culturally responsive education defined it as employing the

> cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming. (p. 29)

Furthermore, it suggested that such education would help all students become more connected with schools and more successful in their academic and social development. Gay urged teacher educators to help develop a type of cross-cultural understanding and cultural competence that considers the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of linguistically and culturally diverse students as catalysts for reaching them more successfully. In sum, Gay's (2000, 2002, 2010) contribution to the concept of culturally responsive pedagogical practices complemented Banks's model in multiple ways. Gay identified four critical components of culturally responsive teaching, such as caring, communication, curriculum, and instruction. She also called for deliberately creating cultural continuity (Gay, 2010) for ethnically

and racially diverse students so that their school socialization and prior experiences could be promptly acknowledged an embraced.

Multicultural Frameworks From Coursework

Banks's (2005, 2009) four stages of multicultural education, Gay's (2000, 2002) concept of culturally responsive education, and the four pillars of the Dominican tradition collectively offered a structure to examine the lead researcher's instructional practice with relation to undergraduate and graduate education courses that prepare candidates to work with diverse student populations. By conducting a self-study of individual interpretation and application of these frameworks, the critical friends examined how the lead researcher might foster heightened culturally responsive pedagogy and model reflective practice, thus experiencing congruence of reflection with the activity of teacher education.

Rationale for the Self-Study

The objective of this collaborative self-study was to improve and refine three teacher educators' instructional practices in an effort to better assist teacher candidates in developing culturally responsive pedagogy and becoming reflective practitioners. The professor—who became the lead researcher in the self-study—did an analysis of and reflection on student benchmark performance data with relation to the intent of instruction in a course entitled "An Examination of Critical Issues in Education." The data were collected as part of the ongoing assessment system for the NCATE. The course, offered in the first semester of the education program at the college, is designed to provide elementary, secondary, and special education teacher candidates with a framework for critical examination of current issues affecting the contemporary classroom and with an overview of K–12 education as an evolving system, an area of study, and a field for professional growth. Among the objectives of the course, teacher candidates are to demonstrate the ability to adapt curriculum for students from diverse backgrounds.

The benchmark assignment for this course required teacher candidates to examine a peer-reviewed journal article addressing the uniqueness of students from a specific culture, ethnic, or religious background and to do a class presentation that focused on these unique characteristics and addressed the ways to incorporate and respect the diversity of these students in the classroom. The rubric of the assignment called for the candidates to

1. describe positive and negative images, biases, prejudices, injustices, and stereotypes encountered by the cultural group;
2. provide specific strategies for meeting the needs of students from the cultural group within the inclusive classroom; and

3. discuss detailed impacts upon classroom practice and implications for instruction.

Rubrics were rated and entered into the college's e-portfolio Chalk and Wire technology, which provided a permanent record of the teacher candidates' performance.

Systematic review and analysis of the rubrics of a population of 67 students in three sections of the course indicated that (1) 87% did not fully describe positive and negative issues encountered by the cultural group but, instead, simply described characteristics as presented in peer-reviewed journal articles and Culture Grams; (2) 67% provided only general, rather than specific, strategies for meeting the needs of the cultural group; and (3) only 36% discussed detailed impacts upon classroom practice and implications for instruction. These data sparked the lead researcher's interest in conducting a self-study. Along with two critical friends, the lead researcher recognized that the basis for this self-study would be what Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) suggested as "noticing something in our practice or context that intrigues us" and "being compelled by professional curiosity to explore [our practice] more deeply" (p. 61).

Method

The methodology selected, which best served the researchers' purpose, was the self-study of teacher education practices as explored and presented by Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009), which is a "systematic research methodology that attempts to examine and improve [one's own] professional practice settings" (p. 103). What sets self-study apart from other types of qualitative research is the way in which the researcher is positioned as a particular kind of inquirer who investigates his or her professional practice and relationships. The study was initiated by the lead researcher and remained focused on a particular aspect of interest in improving personal practice of teaching an undergraduate course on diversity. Collaboration with others was achieved when this lead researcher invited two colleagues (critical friends and coauthors) to participate in the study. The collaborative team decided on the research design, which utilized multiple qualitative data sources as sources of evidence. The intent was to demonstrate trustworthiness by making the data visible through numerous quotes and by making extensive transparent linkages among the raw data, the findings, and the interpretations.

The unique research design selected involved identifying one researcher as the focus of the self-study process (lead researcher) while the other two served in the role of critical friends. The critical friends' professional development model is "practitioner driven and highly collaborative, asking participants to draw on one another's skills and ideas, as well as on knowledge bases outside the school, to design a program and expand repertoires in ways specifically tailored to their own environment" (Dunne, Nave, & Lewis, 2000, ¶ 2). Since the researchers called on reflection in personal

practice and for that of respective teacher candidates, the component of critical friends provided a strong framework for the inquiry. As Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009) also noted, "When we want to understand our own practice more deeply, we use the voice of the others in our practice to support our interpretations" (p. 15); thus, this self-study project combined internal and abstract self-collaboration as well as external collaborative approaches. Using critical friends throughout the self-study project also allowed the lead researcher to engage in dialogue with colleagues "as an essential element of the coming-to-know process" (p. 77).

Having examined student outcome data from previous semesters, the lead researcher turned to two colleagues to serve as critical friends, with the intent of establishing a collaborative effort to explore and refine teaching practices and thus nurture the students in the course to embrace diversity, enhancing individual perspectives of cultural identity and classroom impact. Upon examining the results of the students' rubrics, the lead researcher expressed concerns and identified a need to examine her own practice related to diversity education:

> I thought that I could do a relatively simple analysis and arrive at viable conclusions regarding better ways to enhance my students' awareness of diversity. However, as I quickly discovered, this was no simple, and certainly not a simplistic, task. Orators and writers as diverse as Maya Angelou, Mark Twain, Jimmy Carter, Margaret Mead and John F. Kennedy have often been quoted with ringing and eloquent reflections of diversity. These range from thoughts as intricate as exploring the ramifications of color to whimsical musings on a horse race. Powerful words calling for mutual respect and understanding, freshness and vitality, tolerance and possibilities resonate throughout these marvelous works. Yet, even as I was inspired by this rhetoric, I was also left with more questions than answers as to how to weave the tapestry of my college course experience, and the linkages which bind us internally and with the larger community, into an editorial which completes the story.

The desire to examine the teaching methodology of one professor while considering the specific dimension of cultural diversity as course content offered the opportunity for self-study and critique. The element of reflection was multifaceted in that the researchers enhanced unique individual reflective practice while evaluating the reflection of teacher candidates in previous courses as an impetus for the self-study. Three initial concentrated meetings served to establish the study and develop the research design. There was immediate satisfaction as a result of collaborating with peers who were passionate about the same topic of cultural diversity. Subsequently, the lead researcher and the two critical friends initiated the self-study.

Data Sources, Collection, and Analysis

Two major data sources were utilized in this self-study project: First, the lead researcher regularly produced reflective writings (journal entries) that she

collaboratively reviewed and discussed with the two critical friends. Second, the lead researcher and critical friends digitally recorded and had a research assistant transcribe discussions during 5 weeks of meetings. These weekly discussions and shared reflections on teaching diversity issues with critical friends were reviewed in a collaborative fashion.

During a period of 5 weeks that took place at the beginning of the semester, the lead researcher met individually with each of the two critical friends and twice with both for a total of five weekly tape-recorded sessions to further reflect on the enlarging perspective of diversity, which increasingly became a part of these conversations. In addition, the lead researcher kept reflective notes to document a personal thought process related to the study before, during, and after the scheduled meetings.

Data were subjected to systematic pattern analysis through analytic coding procedures, treating each written document and each transcribed critical friend discussion as text. The researchers decided on using thematic analytic coding, after appropriate parts of the research data were labeled for information related to diversity. In the initial data analysis phase, descriptive coding was used to identify recurring themes and to sort them into major categories. At the same time, the researchers also applied analytical coding practices to the emerging findings to explore and note possible explanations for the lead researcher's statements and actions. As Marshall and Rossman (1995) claimed, "cross-classifications generate new insights and typologies for further exploration in the study" (p. 115). Thus, all three participating researchers collaboratively evaluated the emerging themes for their plausibility and evaluated them for their informational credibility and usefulness. To enhance the trustworthiness of the results, two investigators (the lead researcher and one critical friend) were involved in the coding process (Glesne, 2006).

Results

Based on the analytic coding that the research team performed, four major themes emerged from the data sources: (1) defining and redefining diversity, (2) applying the reflective process, (3) focusing on instructional domains, and (4) making linkages among the undergraduate courses in the apprentice phase of the education program.

Defining and Redefining Diversity

During the conversation with critical friends in the first session, the lead researcher expressed an insight into expanding the definition of diversity in light of an initial unit in the focus course of this study. This unit involved an extensive discussion of generational and situational poverty. The lead researcher commented,

> When we first started our conversations we were highlighting the multicultural aspect of diversity. However, as I have worked with my students investigating the

facets of poverty, I realized that I was beginning to incorporate a larger issue of diversity; a concept which still incorporated different groups of people but with different issues. (Session 1)

This quote reflected the lead researcher's realization that the term *diversity* needed a broader interpretation and definition than what had previously been used in the course; furthermore, such an interpretation should in fact redefine and more fully encompass a multiplicity of characteristics and issues faced by divergent people. In response to this observation, one critical friend commented that, additionally, issues of immigration do indeed involve connections with poverty and the socioeconomic challenges of English-language learners and their families. Interestingly, this perspective brought the conversation back to the linkages that bind people internally and with the larger community, which is a component of the four pillars of the Dominican tradition, which served as the instructional context for this study.

Subsequent sessions revealed that the lead researcher and the two critical friends continued to unify the larger issue of diversity within the intent of the self-study. Initially feeling that the group had gotten away from the theoretical framework of the study, the lead researcher became increasingly at ease with the expanded definition, realizing that this more comprehensive characterization did indeed blend Banks's (2005, 2009) stages of multicultural education and Gay's (2000, 2002, 2010) concept of culturally responsive education. As the semester proceeded, the lead researcher also found that the students in the course were using the term *diversity* but appeared to have expanded their vision of the definition; in fact, students incorporated learning styles in their descriptions of diverse classrooms.
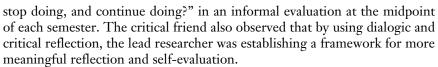
Applying the Reflective Process

Another major theme that emerged involved the lead researcher's perceptions of an emerging personal perspective of reflection during the process of the self-study. She observed that, initially, descriptive reflection was the predominant means used to consider instructional pedagogy. However, this type of reflection simply served to describe events or activities and did not satisfy the lead researcher's need to view teacher preparation for culturally responsive pedagogy with "a second set of eyes" (Giouroukakis, Cohan, Nenchin, & Honigsfeld, 2011, p. 60). The work of Hatton and Smith (1995) provided insight on deeper ways to reflect and revealed that dialogic and critical reflection better suited the purposes of the self-study. With dialogic reflection, the lead researcher was able to "step back" and in fact have more of a self-dialogue and analyze her pedagogy more analytically. In addition, critical reflection enabled even deeper reflection and the realization that cultural understanding could be seen in different contexts through multiple perspectives.

One critical friend found this perspective extremely interesting because she used a similar pattern of what she called "What should I start doing,

stop doing, and continue doing?" in an informal evaluation at the midpoint of each semester. The critical friend also observed that by using dialogic and critical reflection, the lead researcher was establishing a framework for more meaningful reflection and self-evaluation.

Becoming familiar with self-study as a research genre. A subtheme of reflection that emerged as a result of the lead researcher's conversations with the two critical friends was that of becoming familiar and comfortable with self-study as a genre. It became clear as the sessions proceeded that all three participants found great satisfaction with the self-study model, which helped expand a collegial understanding and attach importance to the collaborative thinking experienced during the conversations. The lead researcher commented on her growth during the final session with the critical friends:

> I believe I have grown to a great extent and that this genre of self-study has given me a different perspective. It is a rich perspective which has allowed me to consciously and deliberately consider the issue of culturally responsive teaching. I do not believe that I would have done this without the benefit of self-study. (Session 5)

The critical friends pursued this thought by probing about specific areas of growth that the lead researcher had experienced. In response, the lead researcher expressed a unique growth in thinking through the issues of diversity and a broadening of an individual scope of application of instructional techniques.

Developing shared language as a component of self-study. The shared language that developed during the self-study was yet another subtheme that emerged regarding the research method. As such, it was acknowledged to become an essential aspect of the project by the critical friends. The shared language in turn affected the teacher candidates in classes other than the lead researcher's as a universal conversation developed between colleagues and among classes. One critical friend commented,

> I never noticed before that my use of language was different than that of my colleagues. I often use terms like diversity consciousness, cultural responsiveness, cultural sensitivity or diversity. But I realized that I rarely used the term multiculturalism and yet my colleagues did. This new understanding led me to clarify my lectures by offering students a broader base of terminology to consider. Other examples of this were terms such as acculturation, assimilation, and pluralism, which have different meanings at different historical times. Since I teach Foundations of Education, the terms might be different than the ones introduced in the critical issues course. (Session 4)

This shared language also created deeper and more meaningful professional bonds. When a lecture was being developed or a new topic added to the course syllabi, consideration was given to the other course, the other professor, and the alignment of standards. The professional bonds were evidenced by increased collaboration and collegial discussion.

Focusing on Instructional Domains

During the second session, the lead researcher and the two critical friends continued to discuss the importance of reflection. Interestingly, this led to a focus that became a third theme, that of expanded reflection to focus on instructional domains. The lead researcher observed,

> Within my work, I use Bloom's taxonomy as a framework. And yet, when I considered the expanded definition of diversity which we have become comfortable with, I realized that, while the cognitive domain could be used to structure instruction, the affective domain was a much better approach to use because it has a component of valuing. Specifically, as the domain was reconfigured by Bloom, Krathwohl, and Masia (1973), within the category of valuing, we are talking about the worth or value a person attaches to particular concepts or core issues. As an extension of this I can see how valuing would include being sensitive to cultural differences, thus valuing diversity. (Session 2)

The two critical friends enthusiastically responded to this expanded framework, commenting that through a new variety of constructs, the lead researcher had truly grown within the context of the self-study. The critical friends also observed that in the past, the lead researcher might very well not have sought out deeper resources for exploration of the issue of diversity, since participating in self-studies and using critical friends to improve one's instruction have not been commonly established practices in the college's Division of Education.
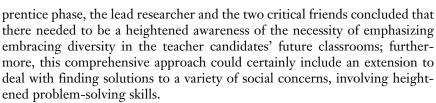
Making Linkages Among the Undergraduate Course in the Apprentice Phase of the Education Program

As a result of the discussion of reflection and instructional domains, one critical friend observed that differences and cultures were addressed in a class entitled "Foundations of Education." Furthermore, as a result of the conversations during this self-study, this critical friend had come to realize that there were common themes among the five courses offered during the first semester of the undergraduate teacher education program, which is entitled the *apprentice phase*. These themes included the presentation of what were emerging as overlaps of information. For example, on that particular day, this critical friend was planning to present a cultural identity circle to see how the students might self-identify themselves.

The second critical friend expanded on this theme, perceiving that there might be a need to coordinate objectives for lessons in individual courses to reduce overlap and, more important, make sure that there was indeed a reinforcement of themes of diversity. Furthermore, this critical friend noted that it would be important to include affective domain verbs in lesson plans to heighten the importance of valuing. Since the students were beginning to develop their individual philosophies of education and pedagogy in the ap-

prentice phase, the lead researcher and the two critical friends concluded that there needed to be a heightened awareness of the necessity of emphasizing embracing diversity in the teacher candidates' future classrooms; furthermore, this comprehensive approach could certainly include an extension to deal with finding solutions to a variety of social concerns, involving heightened problem-solving skills.

Expanding on the issue of social concerns, the first critical friend explained that during a lesson in the foundations course that dealt with socioeconomic status and the possible impact on student performance, one student shared that in the lead researcher's course, the class had looked intensely at the issues involved in poverty and could link that exploration to what was being discussed in the critical friend's class. Both critical friends and the lead researcher agreed that this was a turning point in that the student was making connections and, as one critical friend described, "going to the next level in her analysis" (Session 4).

Similarly, the researchers discussed a key benchmark in the program. Each student needed to write a professional philosophy of teaching and learning in the beginning of the semester. Although most students included some mention of diversity in their philosophies, the goal became that all students would incorporate some key element of diversity. Prior to the self-study project and analysis, one professor was responsible for the philosophy benchmark. Although this remained true in terms of grading, the vision of students as future teachers became more dynamic as they considered different perspectives introduced in the multiple courses. The interwoven relationship among education courses, professional philosophies, and the vision of teacher candidates became more significant in the first semester of the program. New dialogues—which included topics that focused on immigration (legal and illegal), socioeconomic challenges of English-language learners, and homelessness—developed over the semester as opportunities for reflection emerged.

The lead researcher and the two critical friends agreed that it would be important to expand this discussion with all faculty involved in teaching during the apprentice phase, to more precisely map what was taught in all of the courses so that the impact on student learning could be maximized. The three agreed that this was an exciting new conversation and reflected that the self-study made it possible for this discussion to emerge.

New topics for discussion in classes included refugee children, undocumented families, the Dream Act (see http://dreamact.info/), migrant families, and second-language acquisition. Although it became clear that all these issues could not be covered in an in-depth manner, the critical friends agreed that the need for discussion about barriers to academic achievement needed to be broadened. Another unanticipated outcome of the self-study was the expansion of teaching and learning expectations in the first semester of teacher candidate work.

From these discussions emerged yet another unanticipated outcome, which was the development of a learning community. Traditionally, faculty wrote their own course outlines and objectives. Through this self-study process, discussions led to more collaboration and a focus on overlapping content. The idea of working in isolation was replaced by the concepts of cooperation, discussion, and reflection.

Discussion

The ultimate goal of the self-study was for the lead researcher to become a more culturally responsive teacher educator. In addition, through collaboration with critical friends, this researcher recognized the need to refine and deepen a personal reflective approach to develop new insights to better respond to the undergraduate students' needs to become culturally responsive educators themselves.

As noted by Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009), the recursive nature of data collection, analysis, and interpretation also defined the research process for this work. A dynamic component of this self-study was the opportunity to concurrently collect the data and make sense of it during each session (Clarke, 2005). During the recorded conversations, the lead researcher and critical friends broadened ideas by revisiting the theoretical frameworks and were excited to discover that this occurred spontaneously. As the lead researcher reflected,

> clearly, a logical frame for focus involves our Dominican tradition. When I consider the pillars of spirituality and reflection, as well as research and teaching, the fact that these include creating understanding, constructing meaning and planning action, as well as the understanding that knowledge is a constructed form of experience, I find that these perspectives seamlessly blend with the expectations that we, in the Division of Education, hold for our teacher candidates.

Furthermore, in reflective notes, the lead researcher observed,

> The pillars of service and community which reflect preparation for becoming socially responsible members of the community as well as engaging in the acceptance of all people and rejecting discrimination, ideally complement the basic assumptions of the multitude of eloquent writings on diversity.

The emergence of these conclusions involved the outcomes of dialogic reflections and collaborative conversations, and as suggested by Pinnegar and Hamilton (2009), this self-study truly used "dialogue as our process for knowing" (p. 154). The lead researcher and the two critical friends felt empowered through the process of self-study, which resulted in a universally meaningful realization about the essence of diversity education. The lead researcher concluded,

> This, then, involves building—one block at a time, linking meaning with action. Perhaps that encompasses the true essence of diversity; making linkages so all

the puzzle pieces come together and the whole is, indeed, made stronger by the sum of the parts.

Impact on the Critical Issues Course

As presented in the previous section, the lead researcher experienced substantial rethinking and redefining of teaching practices. As a natural outgrowth, there were positive impacts on the character of the focus course, "An Examination of Critical Issues in Education." While the course retained its essential design, modifications were made that

1. provided teacher candidates opportunities to explore the concept of diversity with more breadth, understanding that "diversity" was multi-dimensional and did not merely reflect single distinctive characteristics of a group of people;
2. required teacher candidates to more deeply and critically reflect on their own aptitudes for in-depth exploration of the issues affecting students whom they might have in their classes when they became teachers, as well as their readiness and skill for ensuring balanced class environments;
3. provided greater in-class opportunities for collegial interaction and subsequent deepening of individual teacher candidates' perspectives; and
4. provided greater emphasis on building an affective domain into lessons that the teacher candidates would develop to address issues of diversity.

Conclusion

The self-study conducted in this project contributed to the expanding research base on reflection and diversity in teacher education and refined articulation of the methodology of self-study. The meaningful dialogue among the lead researcher and two critical friends enhanced the pedagogical perspectives of teachers and teacher candidates regarding the practices that include a balanced sensitivity between dominant and marginalized cultural groups.

One indicator of the success of the self-study approach was the renewed interest in cultural responsiveness and reflection as it was implemented within the coursework. Participation in the process of self-study allowed for enhanced critical reflection, which in turn enabled the lead researcher to go deeper and realize that cultural understanding could be seen in different contexts through multiple perspectives.

In sum, although the lead researcher and the two critical friends recognized the degree to which there was a provision of culturally responsive pedagogy in the classes during the apprentice seminar, there was also the recognition of a need to continue to explore additional instructional approaches to ensure sensitivity and awareness for all dimensions of diversity. In addition, the qualities of spirituality and reflection, research and teaching, service, and community—

the pillars of the Dominican tradition—need to be further explored with this cultural perspective, through further self-study. **TEP**

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Ingrid Spatt is an associate professor in the Division of Education at Molloy College, Rockville Centre, New York. She has also been a teacher of reading, special education, and music and has served as an associate at the New York State Education Department, as well as an assistant superintendent in four New York State public school districts. She has written and published on school organizational patterns, equity, and cultural diversity. Address correspondence to Ingrid Spatt, Molloy College K219, 1000 Hempstead Avenue, PO Box 5002, Rockville Centre, NY 11571-5002. E-mail: ispatt@molloy.edu.

Andrea Honigsfeld is a professor in the Division of Education at Molloy College, Rockville Centre, New York. She is a Fulbright scholar and has coauthored and coedited five books and numerous chapters and articles related to working with English-language learners, implementing innovative instructional practices, and providing individualized instruction based on learning-style preferences.

Audrey Cohan is a professor in the Division of Education at Molloy College, Rockville Centre, New York. She has published material on child sexual abuse and effective professional development practices. She has also coedited the Breaking the Mold series of innovative practices with Andrea Honigsfeld.