

## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### A Transformational Journey: Exploring our multicultural identities through self-study

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This article reports a self-study of multicultural identities in a public high school ethnic studies class and a university multicultural education course in Hawai‘i, a unique multicultural setting in which no ethnic group is in the majority. Participants are the two authors and 117 of their high school and university students. Three important findings emerged from constant comparison analysis of students’ and authors’ personal multicultural narratives, reflections, and coursework. First, a personal-constructivist-collaborative approach to self-study in an intellectually safe classroom environment provides both students and teachers with a context for challenging their socially constructed assumptions about race, culture, and ethnicity and supports the unpacking of previously held stereotypes and biases. Second, the students’ narratives are transformational teaching texts. The formal and informal sharing of personal stories helps students and teachers to be more thoughtful about the complexity of identities, develop new understandings of their own and others’ multicultural identities, and gain a critical consciousness about the connection between self-understanding and prejudice reduction. Third, self-study is a multicultural pedagogy that promotes social perspective taking, tolerance, and understanding of diversity through personal transformation. The article concludes by encouraging multicultural educators to transform traditional classroom pedagogies so that the journey to understand other people begins with the self.

**Keywords:** self-study pedagogy; multicultural identity; multicultural education; self-knowledge; personal transformation; prejudice reduction

Colleges of Education across the country have recognized the need for teachers and students in the USA to be multiculturally educated. Research indicates that many preservice teacher education programs are still struggling to find ways to meet this need effectively (Cockrell, Placier, Cockrell, & Middleton, 1999). This study contributes to this growing body of research by describing an approach to teaching multicultural education with diverse students in Hawai‘i. In this article we, a professor at a large university and a teacher at a public high school, discuss how we incorporated aspects of self-study as a frame for teaching multicultural education and ethnic studies in our respective teaching contexts. In addition, we discuss how, together with our students, we were able to challenge our assumptions and beliefs and uncover our subtle and not-so-subtle biases. Our study had two interrelated goals. By studying our teaching and our students’ learning, we hoped to improve our teaching and, at the same time, gain a deeper understanding of how to help our students and ourselves explore our multicultural identities.

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### Context

The teaching and research in this study took place in Hawai‘i. Those of us who live in Hawai‘i recognize that our island home is often defined by the diversity of its people (Okamura, 2008). In a state where no one ethnic group is in the majority (Grant & Ogawa, 1993), people have learned to “get along” (Okamura, 2008, p. 11) by adapting to a multitude of behavioral nuances. And, although they are not perfect, our ethnic relationships are typically “distinguished by their tolerance, equality, and harmony” (Okamura, 2008, p. 7). This makes teaching multicultural education different from other contexts. Our unique context and rich diversity provide opportunities for everyone to be exposed to and participate in informal cultural experiences in our homes, communities, and schools on a daily basis. Amber reflects on her early experiences:

As a Caucasian born and raised in Hawai‘i, my first multicultural experiences were informal. In the small neighborhood that I grew up in I learned that when we gave freshly baked cookies to Mrs. Adachi she would be obligated to give us a return gift and we should accept it. I came to expect that Chinese New Year’s was the loudest day of the year because Mr. Ho was warding off evil spirits with his firecrackers. I also learned to keep quiet when my father’s business associates from the “mainland” walk around our house with their shoes on even though I had been scolded to never enter the house without first taking my own shoes off. (Amber’s personal reflection, 2006)

While on the one hand this unique multicultural context provides opportunities for informal cultural experiences and gives us insight into a variety of cultures and traditions, on the other hand this familiarity can mislead us to think that we have a deeper understanding of multiculturalism. It leads many of us to assume that we are multicultural as a result of our interactions and experiences. It also makes the institutional forms of racism that exist in our state (Okamura, 2008) very difficult to see, and therefore address. Students in Anne’s university class often question why they have to take a multicultural education course. Many of them assert that they already know about different cultures from growing up in Hawai‘i. But as we can see from Amber’s later reflection below, knowing about other cultures is not what multicultural education truly involves and does not challenge our thinking:

Since I grew up in Hawai‘i I decided it would be best to attend college away from home, and for this reason I chose a university in California. It was at this time in my life that I had one of my biggest lessons about my multicultural identity. I was conducting interviews with students in a middle school Language Arts class that I was observing, when a thirteen-year old Latino boy blurted out, “Ms. Amber, I wish I could be White like you.” At the time I could hardly believe it. I grew up “Haole” in Hawai‘i, and for my entire life I wanted to be anything but White so that I could have avoided the “outsider” treatment that I got in some of my favorite local hangouts. So there I was, miles away from home, and my assumptions about my own cultural identity were thrown into question. Why would someone want to be white? What did it mean to be white? In Hawai‘i? In California? (Personal reflection, 2006)

Amber’s reflection raises the question as to how we could engage our students in reflecting on their personal experiences at a deeper level as Amber did. How could we help our students challenge their assumptions, critically inquire into their beliefs and biases, and explore their unique cultural identities? Perhaps an important question could be posed to our students: What does it mean to be Japanese, Korean, Filipino, Hawaiian, or “local” in Hawai‘i? And what does it mean to get along? We wanted to scratch beneath the surface and critically confront the seemingly harmonious nature of our diverse society and examine the myth of the “multiracial paradise” (Okamura, 1998, p. 265) that we live in. We wanted to draw upon the rich diversity of cultures, ethnicities, social class, and religions in our classrooms, and to move away from the notion that studying multiculturalism is about studying *the other* (McIntyre, 1997).

Our goal was to implement a pedagogy that was appropriate to our multicultural context because we found that texts from the Continental United States were not particularly relevant to the unique characteristics of our students' diversity. Therefore, in our classes we wanted to uncover, along with our students, the layers and layers of assumptions, views, and biases that needed to be peeled back. We wanted to implement a pedagogy that allowed our students and ourselves to wrestle with and unpack tensions and stereotypes, and to arrive at new understandings of our multicultural identities; a pedagogy that challenged us, and our students, to take risks and not gloss over the sensitive issues.

### Theoretical Frameworks

Dewey (1916) argued against seeing teaching as the transmission of ready-made ideas to students, saying:

No thought, no idea, can possibly be conveyed as an idea from one person to another . . . Only by wrestling with the conditions of the problem at first hand, seeking and finding [his or her] own way out, does [a person] think. (p. 188)

But how do you help a student find her own way? More specifically, in our case, how could we problematize multicultural education in such a way that our students would be open to discussing and examining their ideas about the sensitive topics that fit under the complex phrase multicultural education? How could we provide our students with opportunities to transform their understanding of race, class, and culture and explore the complexities of our racial paradise?

Banks (1997) writes extensively about the role of a multicultural curriculum in promoting tolerance and equity through *personal transformation* and *social action* (pp. 23–24). Given the task of designing curriculum to achieve these goals, educators typically construct a multicultural pedagogy based upon the theoretical foundation of social perspective taking (Markstrom-Adams & Spencer, 1994). This is a “process by which individuals develop the ability to see the world imaginatively from the perspective of someone other than themselves” (Markstrom-Adams & Spencer, 1994, p. 85). Students are often encouraged to do this by discussing, “concepts, issues, themes, and problems from several ethnic perspectives and points of view” (Banks, 1997, p. 24). Implicit in this process is the assumption that students *and* teachers have a highly developed ability to see themselves and to make “comparisons of similarities and differences between the self and others” (Markstrom-Adams & Spencer, 1994, p. 95).

We asked one another: Can we make this assumption of our students? Of ourselves? And if not, how do we facilitate the development of our students' and our self-knowledge, including our personal, social, cultural, and ethnic identity (Erikson, 1968; Jensen, 2003)? We attempted to answer these questions by drawing upon aspects of self-study and incorporating them in our multicultural pedagogy/curriculum. Our involvement in this approach was profoundly personal. We realized that we needed to confront our own assumptions and beliefs and redefine our perceptions about race, class, and culture if we were to become effective culturally responsive educators (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). And since risk taking, openness, and vulnerability are critical aspects of self-study, we recognized that we needed to model these qualities and share our stories and our biases and assumptions.

To push the boundaries, and look outside our comfort zone of practice, we incorporated a “personal-constructivist-collaborative” self-study approach (Beck, Freese, & Kosnik, 2004, p. 1256). We started with ourselves (the personal aspect) and reflected on

our own multicultural identities. Then, to ensure that both our students and ourselves were supported during the self-study process in our classrooms, we incorporated elements of Philosophy for Children Hawai‘i (Jackson, 2001) into our teaching practices. This helped to build a philosophical community of learners and establish a safe environment in which our students and ourselves could feel comfortable discussing deeply personal, controversial, and provocative issues in an open forum.

Next, we asked our students to critically reflect and write personal multicultural identity narratives that addressed how the characteristics of ethnicity, social class, gender, language, and religion impacted their sense of identity. These multicultural identity narratives addressed the personal aspect of self-study and provided us and our students with the opportunity to critically reflect and inquire into our assumptions, biases, and beliefs (Knowles & Cole, 1998). The “constructivist” aspect of self-study was introduced and included elements of unending inquiry that challenged prejudice and convention, and that respected the value of one’s experience and one’s personal construction of knowledge. The approach was also “collaborative” in that it stressed “community, the social construction of knowledge, inclusiveness and equity” (Beck et al., 2004, p. 1263). We wanted to co-inquire, hear our students’ voices, and learn ways we could improve our teaching practices.

Drawing upon the work of Clandinin (2000), we used the students’ narratives as a way of helping them “raise their own questions about identity through stories of their own” (p. 20). At first, the personal narratives allowed us and the students to go inward and reflect on our multicultural identities. Then, over time, the construction of knowledge moved from an individual activity to a social one, through discussions and the sharing of the students’ stories. We found that our constant conversations, questioning, and note taking, as well as the group discussions in our class community circles, created a culture of reflection and inquiry that resulted in framing and reframing one’s thinking and acknowledging multiple perspectives. In our classrooms, the topics were collectively negotiated (Davey & Ham, 2009) and the students arrived at deeper understandings of their multicultural selves through listening to and reading one another’s stories and experiences. In each of our classes, the narratives were collected together into an anthology.

### **Objectives**

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of self-study in our classrooms as we positioned ourselves as co-learners with our students. We wanted to explore what happened when we enacted an innovative pedagogy that valued student and teacher perspectives, challenged the norms, and addressed highly personal and deeply provocative and controversial issues. The study explored the following questions: What happens when we implement a self-study-like approach in our multicultural classrooms? What is its impact on ourselves? And in what ways can using self-study strategies help our students critically engage in exploring their multicultural identities and transform their views about multiculturalism? We viewed our students as informants into our teaching and co-inquirers on a journey to arrive at new understandings about being multicultural.

### **Methods**

The participants in our study included the two authors and 89 students in a high school ethnic studies course and 28 students in a university multicultural education course. Data

came from our personal reflections, discussions, and the students' work. Using the method of constant comparison (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), we analyzed our students' work and our reflections in three distinct phases. In phase one we analyzed the data separately. Away from each other, we reorganized the data and developed initial open codes. In phase two, to decrease researcher bias, we came together and served as critical friends (Miles & Huberman, 1994). We reviewed each other's data and student writings and looked over each other's initial open codes. Then, we worked together to develop theoretical codes and analytic themes. In phase three we wrote up our findings. In this final stage of the analytic process we collaborated further to revise our thinking and refine the themes we had developed.

### Findings

The discussion of our findings includes an overview of the themes that emerged from analyzing our students' narratives. Our collaborative analysis resulted in the following themes: challenging one's assumptions, personal stories as transformational teaching texts, and self-study: a multicultural pedagogy.

#### *Challenging One's Assumptions*

The analysis of the data revealed how self-study strategies helped our students and ourselves challenge our assumptions. The self-study research process, including course reflections, class discussions, and other assignments, helped the students and ourselves critically reflect and engage in exploring our multicultural identities. The data also revealed that the creation of an intellectually safe classroom (Jackson, 2001) environment was a necessary condition for this type of transformational thinking. The process of telling and sharing one's story in an intellectually safe community of inquiry created spaces for rethinking and digging more deeply to uncover our personal beliefs, stereotypes, biases, and contradictions. Under these conditions, the students and ourselves challenged our socially constructed assumptions about race, class, and gender and ultimately opened up to new ways of seeing ourselves and each other:

"Intellectual safety," . . . is highly stressed. This encourages students to be free thinkers and it allows the students to voice their opinions based on their various upbringings and cultural background. "The class actually gets me to think about the world . . ." "This class is cool because we are able to discuss any topic concerning culture or race. It is safe to discuss things here and voice your opinion, it is a freedom that we don't really have in other classes . . ." "I've had hard classes before, but this one takes a lot of thinking . . . if they [the students] get it then they will leave with an appreciation for other cultures. That's something that you can't take away from someone." (High school students' reflections, 2007)

These quotes illustrate the importance of an intellectually safe classroom environment during the self-study process. Throughout the semester, in both the university and the high school classroom, the students and teachers worked together to make sure that their learning environment was one of mutual respect. As the quotes demonstrate, intellectual safety not only made students feel better but also helped them think better. When students and teachers are assured that they can ask any question and state any point of view as long as respect for all persons in the classroom is honored, only then can meaningful inquiry flourish (Jackson, 2001). This was evident in our multicultural classrooms, where intellectual safety provided the necessary conditions for unpacking our previously held stereotypes and biases.



*Unpacking our Previously Held Stereotypes and Biases*

Throughout the self-study process, students like Brandy, a preservice teacher, recognized the value of exploring one's assumptions and biases. She stated, "It is a process of self-reflection and personal thought that we must go through to change our ideas or biases that we hold" (preservice teacher reflection, 2006). The self-study project required students to ask questions, gather information, and think critically about their findings both on their own, and with their peers and teachers. This provided them with the time and space for peeling back the layers of their previously held beliefs about others and themselves. Many of the students' narratives reflected this process.

For example, Lani, a high school student, wrote:

I realized that throughout my life I have been prejudiced towards certain ethnicities. By researching and interviewing some of my friends I found out the things that trigger me to be judgmental. Some are foreign languages and the way people look and act . . . I don't really have any Filipinos in my family. When I hear the Filipino language I notice I get really irritated because I'm not used to it. But hearing pidgin or Hawaiian or Portuguese doesn't bug me because I was raised around it. (Student narrative, 2007)

This honest examination into previously held stereotypes and biases led Lani to ask more questions. Among them, do I want to include these prejudices as a part of my identity? This type of questioning, found throughout the multicultural narratives, ultimately opened many of the students up to new ideas they identified in terms of race, class, and gender.

Jason, a preservice teacher, one of the students who became open to new ideas, questioned his prior assumptions, and through his questioning began viewing the process of racial and ethnic identification in a new way:

When I first stepped into this class back in January, I had a general idea about what the term "multicultural" meant – I thought to myself, I'm Asian – I'm a minority, I know what multicultural means. Boy was I wrong. The anger and the irritation that I felt, as shown in one of my earlier papers was directed at the wrong audience. I thought my perspective was always right when it came to racial issues and discrimination because I am Japanese-American and I experienced prejudice for myself. But what I had failed to do – I failed to see through another person's eyes. (Preservice teacher narrative, 2005)

While Jason became more open to seeing the world through another's eyes, Chad was able to find some peace about the way in which he had been discriminated against based on his ethnicity in the past. He wrote:

This reflection essay's purpose is to discover what really shapes who you are . . . I don't let those things that bother me influence me because I know they are just stereotypes and are coming from people who don't know what the hell they are talking about. I keep my mind open and try to bypass all of the racial ideologies and lies that people come up with; to what, describe differences between us. Like many of the things I have learned in this class, this has shown me a new perspective of life and made me a better more informed person. (Student narrative, 2007)

Chad was not alone; many of the students' narratives described how they, too, had transformed throughout the self-study, and through sharing their stories of personal discovery, the students became teachers to us, and one another.

*Personal Stories as Transformational Teaching Texts*

The second major theme to come out of the data analysis describes how our students' stories became transformational teaching texts. At both the university and the high school, the students' honest and articulate multicultural narratives provided dynamic course

material that captured the complexities of many multicultural issues. As our students engaged in the process of self-study alongside one another, they had many opportunities to share their multicultural narratives and personal stories. Sometimes this sharing was formal, as they read final drafts of their personal narratives out loud, but often it was informal, as they discussed questions in class and talked through drafts of their writing. The data showed that through the formal and informal sharing of their personal stories, the students were more thoughtful about the complexity of identities, they developed new understandings of their own and others' multicultural identities, and they gained a critical consciousness about the connection between self-understanding and prejudice reduction.

Self-study helped raise our own, and our students', awareness about the complexity of multicultural identification and the value of multiple perspectives. Through reflection, inquiry, and discussions, the students and ourselves began to see ethnic, cultural, and racial identification as multifaceted and difficult to pin down. Christian was one of those students:

We were going around the circle talking about ethnicity and one of my classmates said to me, "I thought you were Asian." This bothered me because he assumed that I was just Asian when in my own mind I was thinking of myself as Hawaiian. Right at that moment I realized it hurts to be discriminated against by other people. I understand his mistake because other people might think I'm just Asian by the way I look, but what they don't know is that I have other ethnic backgrounds. My self-concept is more diverse than others might think. (Student narrative, 2008)

Christian commented on how his self-search awakened in him the misgivings that his peers had about his identity. He asked, "Who defines who we are? Ourselves? Others?"

The researching, writing, and sharing of the multicultural narratives helped the students to think through questions like Christian's and to arrive at new understandings of themselves. Chad, a self-proclaimed "Spanglish" student, wrote, "In a way, where you are determines who you are, at least what people think you are." He noted that "Here in Hawai'i, I 'look' like your 'ordinary Haole,' but in South America people can tell I am Hispanic, and also people on the mainland notice that I am Hispanic" (student narrative, 2008). With increased self-knowledge, like Chad's, the students and ourselves began to engage more deeply in the process of social perspective taking (Markstrom-Adams & Spencer, 1994).

#### *A Connection between Self-knowledge and Prejudice Reduction*

The data showed that the multicultural narratives helped both the students and ourselves uncover our prejudices and ultimately dismantle them. There were two distinct ways that this occurred. First, we confronted our own prejudices as we learned about ourselves during the writing process and second, we gained new insights by listening to others share their stories.

In many of the students' narratives, there was evidence that learning about themselves helped them to reduce the prejudices they had toward others. One student wrote:

Through this investigation I found out that I contradict myself. By self-reflecting I noticed that I say people shouldn't judge people, but here I am judging people . . . I say that I am diverse but then that I am also prejudice towards other ethnicities . . . Maybe If I hung out with those certain ethnicities and got to know them better, then I wouldn't be judgmental towards them. I think that I have grown a lot through this investigation. (Student narrative, 2007)

Another student used her critical reflections to tackle her racist beliefs:

Growing up in freedom conferences made a big impact on me, making me more and more confused each time . . . They explained to me and said the White people (Haoles) stole from us

and won't give it back. At this age I didn't know what to do so I assumed that White people were bad, so I hated all white people . . . Being racist creates racism in my life. Racism lives off of the racist remarks we make towards others . . . I have much ahead of me to learn and experience. I blossomed into something more, my growth increases every day. (Student narrative, 2006)

In addition to using new self-knowledge to overcome prejudices, the students learned a lot by listening to others share what they had learned about themselves. A university student commented on how another student's story provided a different perspective from his own:

Reading about some of the struggles and pain that he had been through really shattered some of the generalizations I had held about "local boys." His honesty and vulnerability made it such a powerful story. (Preservice teacher narrative, 2005)

The students were not the only ones transformed by the sharing of narratives; we, the teachers, were impacted as well.

Amber vividly remembers Kaio, one of the only African-American students in her class, reading his narrative out loud:

Some people ask me why I don't act black, but how do black people act? Being black doesn't mean having a grill, nice jewelry, or a pimped out car . . . Like when people call me nigger, it doesn't offend me, but I don't really like it . . . I have gone through some shit in Hawaii from being egged walking on the street to being arrested for asking a kid for a dollar. People that don't know me tell me "nigger, get off our island." But the funny thing is that I've lived here longer than most of the people that tell me that . . . I've learned being black is difficult no matter where and there's always someone who is not going to like you. Just like everything you have to fight through it: maybe not physically, but mentally too. I have learned to accept being black and I am very PROUD of who I am. Pride is something that can never be taken away . . . I'm glad I paid attention in this class because it made me think of who I am. (Student narrative, 2007)

As he spoke the words in his narrative, Amber and the students in her class deeply connected with Kaio's struggles and came to new understandings about his experience as an African-American male in Hawai'i. Listening to his story caused Amber to reflect and make changes in her curriculum and personal relationships in her life. A product of the self-study journey, multicultural narratives like these helped all of us scratch beneath the surface of our cultural context and put an end to over-generalizing about individuals based on appearances.

### *Self-study: A multicultural pedagogy*

It became apparent during the analysis of the data that self-study is a powerful tool for multicultural educators as they work to transform traditional classroom pedagogies so that the journey to understand other people begins with the self. Implementing a personal-constructivist-collaborative approach (Beck et al., 2004, p. 1256) helped us see different perspectives and move beyond one's own unique experiences and interpretations.

The students in the university classroom wrote about how they had a deeper understanding about the diversity of students they will have in their future classrooms. Evan stated:

I learned that one's own story is an integral part of how and what one comes to believe and teach . . . Reading the personal narratives of others made me realize that I need to be aware of the degrees of difference within any classroom and to be mindful and respectful of them. Also I realized that I need to be aware of my own biases towards the differences around me . . . and recognize the diversity surrounding me and acknowledge that diversity as I teach my students. (Preservice teacher narrative, 2005)

Malia wrote:

I realize that multicultural education is in fact a central element of my journey as an educator. It is much more than teaching ethnic tolerance to students; rather, multicultural education is something that can transform student, teacher, and perhaps by extension, society itself. This



class has led me to adjust the way I thought of multiculturalism and to reevaluate not only what multicultural education means, but my entire identity as a potential teacher as well. (Preservice teacher narrative, 2006)

Their writings capture the complex process of helping students question their assumptions, examine their multicultural identity, and increase tolerance and understanding of those different from themselves.

As a result of the self-study journey, we all gained insight into the value of students and teachers sharing their authentic stories with one another. The collection of personal histories exposed all of us to the variety of challenges and racial tensions the students have encountered. We looked at stereotypes and discrimination, and saw the subtle and not-so-subtle ways in which individuals marginalize one another. Their personal narratives, so honest and soul searching, opened all of us up to confronting our preconceived biases and prejudices. Through self-examination and the sharing of our stories, we reframed our assumptions about *others*. Collectively we realized that the *others* were right there in our classrooms: they were people whom we had come to know and care about deeply.

### What Did We Learn?

Our collaboration pushed us to step out of our own solitary perspectives and to engage ourselves in conversation about our multicultural views. Our own stories helped us see the relevance of this approach in our classrooms. We shared our beliefs, personal experiences, and biases. We did not always agree, but we had one another to use as a mirror to challenge our assumptions about Hawai'i as a racial paradise. We leaned on one another, and we worked together to reconstruct our ideas about others and ourselves.

Drawing upon the work of Davey and Ham (2009), we saw how we benefited from the assistive collaborative role of being critical friends. Through our collaboration, we identified tensions, different points of view, and dilemmas related to teaching. We became more comfortable addressing controversial topics and students' resistance. We did not ignore challenges to safety in the classroom, but became vigilant in maintaining a safe environment. We learned that if we made ourselves vulnerable as teachers, over time our students would feel safe to share their personal stories. Sharing our challenges and breakthroughs gave us confidence to keep trying. We listened more and learned to be patient. Together we created a dynamic, collaborative learning process involving teacher to teacher, teacher to students, and students to students.

This collaborative process helped us reframe multiculturalism as the practice of seeing with new eyes. We witnessed how the students were teachers and informants to us, as well as to each other. Rather than try to have students leave the class thinking the way the instructor thinks they should think, the students experienced one another's stories, put themselves in another's shoes, and began to see the complexities of ethnic identification, prejudice, and discrimination. We learned how to work together to tackle overt acts of racism and to uncover and dismantle hidden forms of institutionalized discrimination. And collectively we became more aware of the individual barriers that were keeping us from opening our minds and hearts to other points of view.

Through this study, we have developed a keener awareness of how our lived stories and those of our students are bounded, influenced, and shaped by our personal, institutional, and cultural stories (Clandinin, 2000). Our students' stories and the findings from our study have had a profound impact on us personally and professionally. The brutal honesty of our students in disclosing life experiences that we would not have imagined allowed us to gain powerful insights into the things you read about, but do not think

happen in the lives of those we teach. We read many of the stories with heavy hearts and experienced a different, more personal connection with our students. We learned how their lives, their struggles, although different from our own, provided an increased understanding of their needs and how to support them.

### Conclusions: Transformation

Using aspects of self-study in our multicultural classes helped the students frame and reframe their assumptions about *others* by realizing that issues of equity, prejudice, racial biases, ethnocentrism, and marginalization are not somewhere else, but are right in our own classrooms. Such insights broadened their and our thinking in terms of how we need to confront our biases and help our students better understand themselves and others. We learned how aspects of self-study can have a significant place in our teaching about multiculturalism, particularly because it creates a direct, personal connection to the students and ourselves.

Self-study in the context of multicultural education provided both students and teachers with an approach that creates the conditions for challenging their socially constructed assumptions about race, culture, and ethnicity. In addition, self-study helped us and our students develop the necessary texts for unpacking our previously held stereotypes and biases so that we all could arrive at new understandings about the complexity of our multicultural identities, and develop a critical consciousness about the connection between self-knowledge and prejudice reduction. For the preservice students, these authentic multicultural texts gave them an idea of the diversity they will likely encounter in their future classrooms. And in the high school setting, the students' narratives opened up dialogue and facilitated the transformation of their school's culture to a place characterized by empathy, tolerance, and peace.

Incorporating aspects of self-study in our classrooms challenged us to think about multicultural education differently. As we immersed ourselves in our ongoing study of our practice, we learned that "the wisdom of practice is much messier than the certainties we provide, much more provisional than the prescriptions we offer and filled with a degree of human and educational tension that cannot be ignored" (Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2009, p. 110). We learned that each class has a unique culture and that teaching and learning require "wrestling with the conditions of the problem" (Dewey, 1916, p. 188) and not avoiding emotional and controversial issues because they make the teachers and students uncomfortable. Clearly, reflection and self-study in the context of multicultural education cannot be reduced to a prescriptive approach, but need to include fostering and developing our students' and our own analytical ability so that collectively we are better equipped to navigate the complexities of our diverse world. In this light, self-study is not simply an additive to our multicultural pedagogy, but rather it is an integral part of our being, what we believe, how we know ourselves, and how we build connections between each other.

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