

Scaffolding Conscientization through Inquiry in Teacher Education

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It is common knowledge that the great majority of preservice teachers are white while the student population is becoming increasingly diverse. Surveys consistently find that although a large proportion of white preservice students anticipate working with children of another cultural background, as a whole they bring very little cross-cultural background, knowledge and experience, and little awareness or understanding of discrimination, especially racism (Avery & Walker, 1993; Barry & Lechner, 1995; King, 1991; Larke, 1990; Schultz, Neyhart & Reck, 1996; Su, 1996). Preservice students of color tend to bring greater commitment to multicultural teaching, social justice, and providing children of color with an academically challenging curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 1991; Rios & Montecinos, 1999; Su, 1996).

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As teacher educators, we have wrestled with using multicultural critical pedagogy to prepare such preservice students both to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students well, and to use multicultural critical pedagogy as teachers. We have

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found Paulo Freire's problem-posing pedagogy to be especially helpful. Our teaching processes provide students with opportunities and assistance for examining their social realities critically. This is a complex process of awakening, reflecting, learning from each other, and learning how to learn for oneself about issues of oppression. The topics we have had them inquire into — various dimensions of individual and institutionalized racism, sexism, and poverty, as well as cultural strengths of marginalized communities — are particularly sensitive and, at times, students manifest denial and frustration. But we have found scaffolded inquiry to be a helpful pedagogical tool for moving students through their frustration. Our aim has been to facilitate students' questioning of their own assumptions, and to engage them in issues that many would rather avoid. The purpose of this paper is to share our practice of Freire's problem-posing pedagogy in teacher education.

Freire's Problem-Posing Pedagogy

Conscientization or conscientização (in Portuguese) was one of the first ideas by which Paulo Freire started to be known beyond his immediate circle in the 60s and 70s. Freire stated everywhere that "education is political." As educators, we know that education may perpetuate inequalities and injustice. But Freire proposed that education should help students to achieve a critical understanding of their own reality and to engage in transformative actions.

By critical understanding, Freire (1973, 1992, 2000) referred to a deep examination, through dialogue with others, of the legitimacy of the social order in terms of access to socioeconomic resources and opportunities. This examination should start in the immediacy of one's own reality, and from there identify the structures and ideology of oppression at the local, institutional and societal levels, taking into account the vital needs and interests of the various social groups. Critical understanding entails unveiling myths created by the oppressors to maintain the status quo:

the myth that the oppressive order is a 'free society'; the myth that all men [and women] are free to work at whatever they wish...the myth that this order respects human rights...the myth that anyone who is industrious can become an entrepreneur...the myth of the industriousness of the oppressor, and the laziness and dishonesty of the oppressed...the myth of the universal right to education. (Freire, 1992, pp. 135-136)

A critical understanding of these myths may start when people engage in dialogue and begin to decode their reality in a systematic way. "Decoding" reality refers to the "description of the situation" in terms of its particular conditions that people obviously perceive, as well as the social structures that shape those conditions (Freire, 1992). In the process of decoding, people should be able to question why they are facing oppressing conditions and how to stop and transform those conditions toward their liberation.

Generally pre-service students of color recognize oppression based on race and ethnicity, although they may not have a very elaborated understanding of it or of other forms of oppression. But what about those who believe they have no reason to engage in any transformative action because the way things are works for them? They too can re-examine their reality. Their feeling comfortable and "happy" with the way society works for them alienates them from fellow citizens who are excluded from society's resources. Also, in this highly stratified capitalistic society, the great majority of people experience some form of exclusion, whether it is on the basis of social class, religion, disability, gender, and so forth. Forms of exclusion those with privileges face may lead them to empathizing with exclusion others experience, and may work as a springboard for examining their privileges. Recognition of privilege is not enough, but recognition of complicity in maintaining injustice if one does nothing is essential. In addition, everyone is "sold" prevalent myths such as those indicated above by Freire. By examining these, students start to feel the discomfort of being victims of deception and big lies (Macedo, 1994). Recognizing prevalent myths as propaganda is an avenue to question power asymmetry, privilege and colonization of the mind.

Reaching critical understanding is a social process mediated by dialogue. "Dialogue belongs to the nature of human beings, as beings of communication. Dialogue seals the act of knowing, which is never individual, even though it has its individual dimension" (Freire, in Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 3). Liberation through dialogue and transformative communal action can involve both those who recognize their own oppression, as well as those in privileged statuses. Working out anger, pain and guilt through transformative communal actions to change structural inequalities may be a way to "restore hope," as Beverly Tatum (1994) phrases it. Conscientization rarely is a one-time awakening, but rather it is a process with multiple avenues of insightful moments as well as difficult times of denial and pain. This process might be characterized by gradual as well as revolutionary changes at multiple levels ranging from alienation to liberation. Conscientization about one's actual reality takes place by submersion and intervention in it; hence, the necessity of doing inquiry mediated by reflective dialogue.

As educators, we feel obligated to create opportunities and learning situations for students to question why some people suffer, lack opportunities, and lose hope despite their hard work and resilience, while others have anything they want and more in a relatively easy way. We also feel the urgency to engage students and teachers in this type of inquiry for conscientization, and to strengthen alliances for working toward a more just and democratic society. Our sense of urgency is heightened by corporate-driven top-down reforms that are being thrust on schools and teacher education institutions across the U.S.

Problem-posing pedagogy engages students in questioning the world around them. Those who are in privileged positions often object to social justice education and consider it as a type of indoctrination. They question the educators' right to

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change the consciousness of students. Raising questions about what students take for granted, however, is different from indoctrination. The liberating educator facilitates students' engagement in the deep examination of their own reality through inquiry and dialogue. Problem-posing pedagogy implies for the educator a directive responsibility. It is neither authoritarian, nor laissez-faire. The liberating educator cannot manipulate students, yet he/she cannot leave students by themselves:

The opposite of these two possibilities is being radically democratic. That means accepting the directive nature of education... We must say to the students how we think and why. My role is not to be silent. I have to convince students of my dreams but not conquer them for my own plans. Even if students have the right to bad dreams, I have the right to say their dreams are bad. (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 157)

The educator takes responsibility for creating the inductive moment, but then guides students in undertaking the process as soon as possible: "We can't sit back and wait for students to put all the knowing together. We have to take the initiative and set an example for doing it" (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.158). The liberating educator prepares materials, frameworks, and the environment to facilitate critical dialogue among students, to decode their reality and unveil the myths about such reality. Ira Shor (1982) wrote about "the withering away of the teacher," which means that while the teacher is indispensable as a change agent, he/she should engage students in meaningful learning, with scaffolding, and gradually pull back, turning the necessary power over students to construct knowledge.

Transformative Inquiry in Sociocultural Foundations of Schooling

Each of us has taught courses that address sociocultural foundations of schooling. We have done so at different institutions, teaching courses with different names. Yet, we have developed and used similar teaching processes to help students use inquiry to deepen their own understanding of sociocultural foundations, and particularly the various forms of institutional discrimination. We each share our experiences below; then extract pedagogical processes that provide scaffolding for students as they develop their own critical inquiries.

Myriam's Experience

In teaching sociocultural foundations of schooling ("Schooling in a Multicultural Society" and "Cultural Diversity"), I had students inquire into issues of schooling which allowed them to see how discrimination and privilege work in daily sociocultural practices against the principles of a democratic society. The ultimate goal was to provide them with opportunities for developing a critical consciousness of their own reality as persons of a specific race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status, with specific abilities, and stories. Students enrolled in these courses

were undergraduate seniors planning to go into elementary education. Forty to fifty percent of them were from minority backgrounds, mostly Latino first-generation college students.

In each course, inquiry was used as a pedagogical tool, in addition to readings, discussions, students' own testimonies, and videos. Through their inquiry, students had the opportunity to find out for themselves the ways in which media and textbooks portray various minority groups and other people susceptible to influence by the propaganda system. To uncover the often covert nature of discrimination, I required students to find first-hand hard data about representation of minority groups in media and textbooks, so there was less chance to deny that such things would ever happen in this society.

In the "Cultural Diversity" course, students inquired into the mass media to find how the cultural diversity of the society to which they belong is portrayed in those media, and specifically the quantity and quality of representation of minority groups. In the course "Schooling in a Multicultural Society," students inquired into the ways school textbooks include or exclude knowledge, values, and histories of people because of their race, class, gender and disability. In both courses the inquiry project represented only 25% of the course work and was performed toward the end of the semester.

I gave students very specific guidelines for setting up the inquiry of the mass medium of their choice (such as TV, radio, newspapers, popular magazines, movies), and the minority group of their choice (such as women, women on welfare, elderly, youth, Gays and/or Lesbians, the physically impaired, or any of the ethnic minority groups). Students examined a series of broadcasts, or issues of the selected medium in terms of the number of times some groups are included relative to the majority group, the roles played by members of the different target groups, the language used to describe members of this group and/or their actions, and the context within which they were represented. Students also wrote a report illustrated with images, which they shared with their classmates, first in small groups and then with the whole group. When students found out that there are patterns of misrepresentation, regardless of the medium and the group chosen, whenever the medium is mainstream and the group is minority, it had a major impact on the class.

Concerning the inquiry into textbooks, students examined race, gender, social class, disability, sexual orientation, etc., in textbooks used in schools where they were doing their service learning. The students' inquiry focused on how accurately and fairly the linguistic and cultural diversity of students is represented in the textbooks. Students had a guiding article by Christine Sleeter and Carl Grant (1991), which is a comprehensive analysis of gender, race, class and disability in a wide sample of textbooks. In the textbook chosen, each student analyzed a random sample of stories, the respective illustrations, race and gender of the main character and the secondary characters, who causes the problems, who solves the problems, how sanitized are the stories, etc.

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The results of the students' inquiries were of two types. On the one hand, students collected some first-hand hard evidence about concrete cases of exclusion, misrepresentation (such as invisibility, stereotyping, consistent association with crime and negative or deviant behavior) and sanitization of histories, values and talents in both mainstream media and textbooks. When the individual results were put together with those of the rest of the group, they appeared as a systematic replication with different minority groups and cultural contexts. On the other hand, each student needed to make sense of such evidence within the context of his/her specific group studied, as well as in comparison with a small group and the whole group of classmates. By and large, the overall results had a differential impact on students depending to a great extent on their cultural and ideological background and their specific individual experiences.

Roughly, there were three types of student reaction. One group of students, mostly but not exclusively students of color, found their inquiry a validation of their own experiences of exclusion and misrepresentation. They engaged enthusiastically and took advantage of the opportunity to articulate and document their experiences in a systematic way. For a second group of students, mostly but not exclusively liberal European Americans, the experience was considered an "eye opener," or an awakening to realities of people that would have passed unseen otherwise. The third and last group, a few (8%) very conservative European Americans, and a mixed-race student, resisted throughout the course an examination of their own beliefs, tried to dismiss their own observations and those of their classmates, and ended up blaming the teacher and some "radical" students for not having learned anything in the course.

Sharing the experiences and insights they gained in their inquiries with the class in small groups, and then as a whole, facilitated most students to see the convergent trend of their findings: the systematic pattern of exclusion and misrepresentation, either in the mass media or the textbooks, of some groups because of their race, gender, class, disability, etc. As students compared and contrasted their findings and shared their insights, a collective text started to emerge. They showed interest in reading each other's reports and felt proud of their own inquiry. I helped students to edit their papers and, after some revisions, we assembled them into one textbook. Each author received a copy. Student-authors felt empowered, above all, when their projects were used as sources of information and support for demands for equality and social justice.

Engaging students in inquiring into social and schooling practices is not devoid of problems. First of all, one semester is hardly enough for many students to carry out an inquiry project, process the results at cognitive and emotional levels (anger, guilt, etc.) and then try to become proactive advocates for more democratic social practices and schooling. Second, many students were skeptical of their capabilities to conduct a short inquiry into these types of issues. This is not the typical notion of research they were familiar with, and consequently they expressed doubts about

the validity of their findings. Third, at times it became difficult to facilitate a meaningful dialogue among students with different cultural backgrounds and experiences concerning issues of exclusion, misrepresentation, racism, classism, sexism, etc., without having some of them feel disempowered. The resistance of conservative students prevented a cohesive and fluid dialogue at times. They felt uncomfortable talking about these 'hot issues' and reclaimed the more conservative view of educational issues. When conservative views were discussed, these students considered them as the 'real truth' or as a 'refreshing reading', while the same readings were meaningless for the other students. In brief, it is difficult to provide the opportunity in one semester for some students' empowerment without disempowering others.

Christine's Experience

I have used the strategies that follow in different courses at two different institutions. As a part of my courses, students experienced community-based field placements through the semester, most often in a cultural context different from the context in which they grew up. Most placements were in after-school tutoring or recreation programs in community agencies, in settings where the population being served and running the agency represent a low-income historically disenfranchised group, volunteers have specific service work to do under the direction and supervision of a staff person, and their work will allow them to talk informally with some of the clients (usually children and youth). Here, students usually find themselves actually seeing many conditions related to oppression that they might not have believed exist on a significant scale. For example, students assigned to help with one agency's food bank and energy assistance program were shocked to realize the economic deprivation many people endure, the shortage of resources available, and the work ethic of many recipients of assistance. Students also develop personal relationships with people in the field. These relationships often gradually develop a trust level in which the university student can begin to ask questions some would not have dreamed of verbalizing earlier.

In this context, students took on a substantive investigation project. Early in the semester students were helped to identify questions or issues of concern to them, that relate to their community placement. For their larger investigation project, some semesters they analyzed an institution for discrimination and proposed a solution. Other semesters they compared the culture of their community site with themselves as cultural beings. One of the best investigation projects has been the "Why?" project. For this project, students are each to pose an authentic question related to race, language, social class, gender, or disability, and over the semester search for an understanding of that question that reflects the point of view of a group other than their own, to whom the question might pertain. For example, if some students have asked why a disproportionate number of African-American males get in trouble; they are to search for answers that represent African-American males'

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viewpoints. Questions are usually best when they emerge from the student's community field placement experience.

Over the semester, I provided various kinds of scaffolds to help students learn and understand. First, I taught them rudimentary skills in ethnographic interviewing and observing, and provide them with guides for conducting a wide array of mini-ethnographic investigations, such as suggested interview questions, or guidance for observing language use. Students were to select three of these (or design their own), and collect data. For example, students might interview community residents about their vision of what the community is trying to become and their assessment of the community's main needs and strengths. Students might observe the interaction styles of children and youth in a community center. Students might make a map of businesses and services that are located in the community, and also map transportation routes available to residents.

Second, I helped them examine where one might go for information, and why. We considered differences in perspective and validity of information of in-group and out-group members. We also considered different levels of sophistication one might bring to bear on a question: a child's perspective, the perspective of an adult community member, and the perspective of a scholar who has studied an area of investigation. (This is important because many pre-service students will easily interview children from a group other than their own, but are much more reluctant to talk with an adult.) Then, in small groups, prior to their "Why?" paper investigations, students helped each other generate a list of reasonable sources of information. They are to use at least six sources, including both interviews and library resources.

Third, through the semester, I instructed students explicitly about institutional discrimination, and culture. They learn what an institution is, and questions one might ask when analyzing an institution for discriminatory patterns. They also learned to analyze media, and to consider the interaction between ideas and beliefs encoded in various media, and the workings of institutions. A simulation that helps illustrate this framework is *Star Power (Shirts, 1969)*.

To practice conducting very short institutional analyses, the class was divided into groups responsible for mini-investigations on racism, poverty and social class, and sexism. The class as a whole generated as many questions as they could about possible examples of racism today at institutional and cultural levels, and ideas as to how questions might be investigated. The same process was repeated for classism and for sexism. Students volunteered to take a question, and they were helped to figure out a simple but reasonable way to gather data, such as pairing up similar to what is done to test for housing discrimination. Students had about two weeks to conduct their investigations. They presented their findings to the class; those investigating racism presented one after another and then we discussed patterns in their findings; the same process was repeated on different days with social class and gender. About ten students at a time shared what they found out, and usually

considerable discussion followed. For example, to investigate poverty, one student acquired published information about available child care for low-income people, then pretended to be a single mother looking for childcare, and actually made the telephone calls specified. She found out that print descriptions can differ widely from the treatment low-income single women may actually receive. Her findings connected with patterns of discriminatory treatment others had uncovered.

All of these various exercises and forms of instruction, plus guidance in identifying sources and in using interviews and observations, served as scaffolds to help students take on, and intelligently investigate, questions that treaded into sensitive territory. As a culminating activity, students wrote a paper based on community investigations, and the papers were compiled into a book. Some semesters all students wrote the "why" paper, other semesters the book was made up of investigations into institutional discrimination and solutions for it, or cross-cultural comparisons. I always gave them feedback on the papers that go into the book, and encouraged students to make any needed revisions. The book was then distributed to class members, and it often served as the textbook for the final weeks of class.

Peggy's Experience

In graduate teacher education courses I teach, I find that institutionalized discrimination and cultural hegemony are a pervasive reality. From their daily schooling experiences, both past and present, students are often "educated" from a model of disempowerment, hence my work is to facilitate a transformation of beliefs about themselves as learners and their role as educators. In one graduate course, "Biliteracy for Spanish/English Learners", I explored the use of a Participatory Research model as a framework for investigating issues of literacy and biliteracy in schools and society, and to construct pedagogical models for personal and social action within these contexts.

As elaborated in the works of Alma Flor Ada and Constance Beutel (1993), Patricia Maguire (1987), and Peter Park et al. (1993), participatory research is founded upon critical theory, which embraces multiple forms of knowledge as legitimate for investigating the human experience. By connecting interactive knowledge (that which we learn from each other) with instrumental knowledge (that which can be measured quantitatively) and critical knowledge (the understanding we gain from reflecting upon moral issues and taking action), I attempt to incorporate a participatory and inclusive forum in my courses where students may examine their roles as teachers in the classroom and in society.

In the Biliteracy course, teachers are to learn effective strategies for teaching and assessing literacy and biliteracy with bilingual learners. I opted to guide them through a participatory case study, not only to learn about current methods, but also to examine the appropriateness of these methods within the context of their students' communities.

At the first class meeting I provided an overview of the participatory research

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model, and we brainstormed a list of questions or outcomes relating to biliteracy that they wanted to learn from the course. The goals that they listed documented our starting point, and formed a springboard for inquiry-based individual projects, or what we referred to as the participatory case study. Core readings for the course formed a common theoretical base to inform our inquiries (Ada & Beutel, 1993; Darder, 1993; Freire & Macedo, 1987; Moraes, 1995). As we progressed through the required readings combined with the data gathered from each participant's inquiries, the actual text for the course became a combination of what was read in books, and what was "read" in the community context.

The process for individual inquiries was linked to group dialogue and synthesis, so individual findings could also be analyzed as part of a larger class effort. Hence, our participatory case studies consisted of concurrent and reciprocal levels of inquiry, observation, dialogue, and reflection. At each class session, knowledge students brought from the field was shared, discussed, and connected to relevant instructional practices and assessments in bilingual settings. Class sessions were also used to model and practice steps in the case study, such as developing questions for dialogue, and practicing constructive listening and responding in a dialogic process. The group process subsequently influenced how teachers' thinking evolved about participatory research, and how they became more critically aware of their roles as reflective learners working with our participants, rather than conducting research upon subjects.

A schema of the process is seen below, providing a scaffold to guide students through both individual and group tasks:

Sequence of Case Study and Simultaneous Group Synthesis Tasks

Individual Case Study Assignments	Group Synthesis
1. Personal Bio on Bilingualism	
2. Individual Entry into Community	2. Group Synthesis on Entry into Community
3. Data Collection with Participant	3. Group Synthesis of Data Collection
4. Observations in the Community	4. Group Reflection
5. Questions for Dialogue/Record/ Transcribe	5. Group Synthesis of Questions
6. Individual Analysis of Dialogues	6. Group Synthesis of Dialogues
7. Recommendations for Action	7. Group Synthesis of Recommendations
8. Reflections of the Researcher	8. Group Synthesis of Reflections
9. Review of the Literature	9. Completion of Group Work
10. Compile Participatory Case Studies	

We began our participatory case studies by exploring our own perceptions, expectations and biases around what we knew and experienced as biliteracy. We realized through our own diverging points of view that "biliteracy" does not necessarily have a uniform definition. A critical understanding from this step was the need to acknowledge different ways of knowing "biliteracy". Personal definitions ranged from knowledge of formal language structures for listening, speaking,

reading and writing, to basic communicative competence, to identification with cultural and affective contexts of a second language. In this initial stage, different features of language were recognized, and different ways of knowing “biliteracy” came to be acknowledged, but not yet reconciled within a critical framework. This would evolve later in the course through students’ inquiries into the community.

We then moved through subsequent stages of the individual inquiries. Teachers identified participant(s) for their case study, and a range of communities were represented, including learners from primary to junior high school, adults in professional settings, students in higher education, and family members of students in the class. Cultural contexts included first and second generation Hmong families, a fifth generation Mexican-American family, Spanish speaking English Language Learners in elementary classrooms, and first generation Fiji and Portuguese women who are in the teaching profession.

Teachers were asked to gather data on school achievement with their participants, to observe in the environment of their participant, and to conduct a dialogic interview. The entire process was extremely challenging for all of us, as traditional views on research and the role of the researcher had to be dismantled in order to construct alternative paradigms that would allow students the freedom to participate as subjects in their participatory case studies, and to allow the interactive and critical knowledge they constructed through their work to be counted. For example, data on school achievement could not always be gathered from traditional sources, so other sources of data were tapped and became valuable when comparing the school views on bilingual students with family and other sources. Protocols around “observation” were also redefined away from previous notions of observation as a process where the “researcher” was not to contaminate the context.

A particular challenge for students was the dialogic interview. As students developed their own questions for dialogue, they struggled with their own roles in the process, attempting to remain objective. In a participatory framework, objectivity is not the purpose, and they were encouraged to interact with their participants in the dialogue: to listen, respond, and connect to their own experiences as in a reciprocal process. Participatory research acknowledges subjectivity, and some students were not prepared for the impact this would have upon them as researchers, teachers and scholars. Consequently, their final reflections revealed a deeper level of understanding they had gained from this experience, than if they had remained objective and non-participatory in the dialogues. As stated by one student in her final reflections:

When you truly listen to someone, when you hear not only their words, but feel their experiences, see the world through their eyes, one is changed . . . I could also see our parallel experiences and see that while each experience was unique, the commonalities we had shared make for a deeper connection and can begin to be generalized into theories about the class themes of language and power. (student paper, 1999)

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Each teacher incorporated into their final project a recommendation for action, which was to be applied to their own professional and personal context for growth. For example, a reading resource teacher for struggling bilingual students identified from her dialogues with two boys the theme of feeling safe and valued in the classroom, because one of her students was experiencing anxiety and low self confidence around reading. She recommended that more attention was needed to “examine our students’ attitudes about reading so that they can reflect on the reading process, and we as teachers can reflect upon the students’ reflections.” She also acknowledge that “the types of books they enjoy reading are not necessarily the same books we teachers use for instruction” (student paper, 1999), and concluded that she would be incorporating more literacy activities that connected to students’ backgrounds, interests and learning styles.

As the participatory process was designed to be open-ended, the end results were varied but they often marked the beginning of future inquiries participants would embark upon in their growth as teacher researchers. Each final project was documented and shared. In their final reflections, students expressed that they learned tremendously more than about strategies and models for biliteracy in schools, and that the transformative outcome of the participatory case study would have applications for their work in the future.

Scaffolding Conscientization through Inquiry

As our examples illustrate, we engage our students by sharing power. Students are engaged in meaningful learning with scaffolding from teachers and peers; students share their learning experiences with other classmates in small groups and the whole group while validating and challenging their perspectives and interpretations; students inquire into sociocultural issues that shape their own reality to gain critical understanding of them; and students commit themselves and start engaging in transformative actions. Hence, the professor/teacher’s role is that of an agent of change with ability, preparation, and commitment to create spaces and scaffolds for such conscientization for his/her students. The teacher also provides conceptual frameworks, which will be the basis for students to develop their own. We have found that if we do not do so, it is unlikely that many students will come up with any critical framework at all. For instance, teachers of historically marginalized students need to teach them the culture of power; they cannot just let the students construct whatever they want without guiding them toward understanding both the culture of power and their own cultural experiences.

Scaffolding is a shared teaching strategy as well as a useful conceptual tool for describing and organizing such experiences. Drawing from Lev Vygotsky (1978), scaffolding implies an interaction between members of a group with differential levels of abilities as they engage in a specific task. It also implies guidance, change

from external control to self-control, appropriation of strategies, and collaboration. Below we describe some specific scaffolding strategies.

Learning to Question

Schools teach young people not to pursue their own questions, but rather to pursue questions defined by the teacher and the textbook. Further, the dominant ideology teaches young people to accept and take for granted certain perspectives, and to view questions about issues such as racism and poverty to be impolite. We wanted to disrupt these patterns. We wanted students to move outside of their comfort zones and learn to ask questions on their own. In Christine's class, for example, the "why" question project took students' questions as a central part of the course and built learning around their questions. Christine began by asking students to select any question related to race, gender, social class, or disability they did not understand, and frame it as a "why" question. Many students had difficulty doing this. At first, many couldn't think of a question. Then, as they thought about what they wondered about, students very often viewed their questions as impolite and would begin by whispering a question in Christine's ear. When Christine took their questions seriously and helped students think through how to investigate answers that went beyond simplistic assumptions, students began to feel empowered to learn for themselves.

As students asked questions in all our courses, we found that they needed to re-examine their assumptions about objectivity. They had to grapple with developing a reciprocal relationship with people from whom they gathered information and with whom they participated in their studies. This was particularly difficult when they realized they had learned not to listen to people from historically marginalized groups, or to dismiss perspectives that challenged their own. To assist students in learning to listen and hear, we used various modeling strategies and support systems.

Modeling

We used modeling to scaffold both directly and indirectly. As educators, we directly modeled behaviors, procedures, and research skills. For example, Peggy modeled "constructive listening" to facilitate dialogue among her students when they needed to talk about issues such as discrimination, bilingual education, racism, and sexism. Indirect modeling consisted, among other things, of using other studies, role models or situations that facilitated teachers' dialogues and the development of their inquiries. For the textbook inquiry, Myriam gave her undergraduate students a study on textbooks carried out by Sleeter and Grant (1991) as a model of one way they could analyze and critically evaluate the textbook each student selected. In general, we modeled behaviors and attitudes (constructive listening), processes and interpretation (study of gender, race, class, and disability in textbooks), and conceptual models (such as the pyramid of power) to help teachers

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visualize behaviors and situations, organize ideas and experiences, and develop procedural and conceptual understanding of the reality into which they were inquiring.

Supporting Systems

The three of us tailored a variety of supporting systems aimed at bridging students' experiences with their inquiries and with the reading assignments; facilitating examination beyond the comfort zone of their own beliefs and attitudes; and assisting students in the collection, interpretation, and synthesis of information. We organized small-group activities to give students the opportunity to share their projects, observations and findings and to get feedback from other classmates. Other small-group activities helped students to integrate and synthesize their findings for presentation to the whole class. These sharing activities facilitated students' recognition of emerging patterns of discrimination, misrepresentation, inequity and inequality.

Other types of supporting systems we provided were conceptual frameworks and methodological strategies. We used conceptual frameworks such as symbolic control and media representation, institutional racism, and transformative pedagogy. These frameworks provided students with the language and the structure to interpret and conceptualize their experiences and the information gathered through their inquiries. Students were also given specific guidelines for conducting their inquiries, as well as some training for conducting interviews, observing and recording information, carrying out simple discourse analysis, navigating the library, and organizing, interpreting and making sense of the information collected through their inquiries. We consider that the dynamic notion of culture and the situated nature of understanding and learning require teachers to be inquirers of their classrooms and teaching.

Compilation of Students' Papers into a Class Book

We have found that a good culmination of a given inquiry project is to compile students' papers into a class book, which not only validates students' experiences but also empowers them as authors. Going through the whole process of research — collecting first-hand information, interpreting, reporting, as well as editing for publishing — is a highly educative process. To maximize this process the inquiry project should be set up early in the semester as the main course project in order to provide time for the necessary revisions and editing by students themselves before the instructor's final review and editing. In such a compilation, articles can be organized to maximize the comprehensiveness of the phenomenon being investigated. For example, the class text Myriam created on "Media Representation of Minority Groups" showed a wide range of media following the same pattern of misrepresentation. When completed early, these class texts can be used as readings

for the latter part of the semester. They also have been used with other classes as models of student inquiry and as a source of information. In addition to empowering students as authors, creating class books makes students' efforts and insights a permanent product rather than a disposable one. It also is an opportunity to influence others with their own awakenings, which may constitute a transforming action in itself.

Concluding Remark

Education is under seige, even more strongly than it was when Henry Giroux and Stanley Aronowitz (1985) published their book by that name. Children across the nation are being tested more than ever before, and curricula are being defined increasingly by state legislators working with the business community. Teacher education faculty are being told increasingly by the state what to teach and how to design their programs. Issues of multiculturalism and social justice are being marginalized and ignored in the current reforms. More than ever, teachers and students have a right to empowering pedagogy that helps them to question their world and act on it. In small but significant ways, the strategies that we shared in this article help to do that.

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