Illuminating Beliefs About Diversity

Helen L. Harrington, *Universty of Michigan*

Russel S. Hathaway, *University of Michigan*

Discussions about multiculturalism and multicultural education often focus on definitions of multiculturalism and the varieties of implementation in schools. Scholars and researchers outline philosophical or theoretical bases (Crichlow, Goodwin, Shakes, & Swartz, 1990; McCarthy, 1994; Sleeter, 1991; Watkins, 1994); draw distinctions among multiculturalism, antiracism, racial identity, and multicultural education (Carter & Goodwin, 1994; Kailin, 1994); categorize and debate what should be included in multicultural education (Banks & McGee-Banks, 1989; Grant & Sleeter, 1989; King, 1994; Martin, 1991; McCarthy, 1994); and offer strategies for implementation (Banks, 1991; Kailin, 1994; Sleeter, 1993). The primary responsibility for implementing multicultural education falls on teachers. How to better prepare them to work and teach in multicultural environments should be a concern of all educators (Gollnick, 1992; Kailin, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1991).

The limited research on preparing teachers for multicultural environments provides insight into prospective teachers' multicultural awareness (Giles & Sherman, 1982; Ladson-Billings, 1991; Law & Lane, 1987) and how their beliefs and awareness influence the type of multicultural education implemented (Hamilton, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1991). Beliefs play a major role in how prospective teachers respond to the diversity they will encounter in their classrooms. Prospective teachers have had over 12 years of school experience to create the belief structures that inform their understanding of teaching, the schooling process, and diversity. These belief structures give form to incoming information and direct information processing (Walsh & Charalambides, 1990). Beliefs significantly influence how prospective teachers may teach (Kagan, 1992; Nespor, 1987) and how they

understand multiculturalism (Chavez, O'Donnell, & Gallegos, 1994; Sleeter, 1992). They are resistive to change (Buchmann & Schwille, 1983; Pajares, 1992; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1989).

Current arguments for preparing teachers to work with an increasingly diverse student population address accessing beliefs so they can be subject to critical analysis (Burbules & Rice, 1991; Giroux, 1988; Roman, 1993; Welch, 1991). Beliefs made public are open to critique. Prospective teachers can reflect on and question assumptions about their reality, others' reality, cultural differences, race, racism, and an entire spectrum of related issues when the issues are illuminated. Public discussions concerning such issues are often replete with dynamics that may silence many dialogue participants (Cherryholmes, 1988; Ellsworth, 1989; Grant & Sleeter, 1986; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Tappan & Brown, 1993). Even those skilled and aware of the power of group dynamics to silence dialogue struggle with how to make discussions fully participative (Ahlquist, 1991; Ellsworth, 1989). Finding ways to access beliefs and open them to critique in a nonthreatening way is necessary to the transformation required for teachers to implement appropriate education and enact a curriculum relevant to all students.

In this article, we discuss the findings of a study to determine if computer conferencing activities can be used to access and transform students' beliefs about their role and responsibilities as teachers in a multicultural society. Two questions guided our study: *Are students' beliefs about multicultural education apparent in conferencing activities? Are students' beliefs about multicultural education open to change in the course of discussion?* These questions focused our attention on if and how conferencing activities help individual students became aware of and modify, when

appropriate, beliefs relevant to multicultural education.

Conceptual Frame

The literature on critical and emancipatory pedagogy and teacher beliefs and multicultural education informs our work. Current arguments for preparing teachers to work in increasingly diverse environments suggest a process approach wherein prospective teachers engage in experiences allowing them to access, address, and transform beliefs about multiculturalism and multicultural education. Most scholars advocating a critical or emancipatory pedagogy argue that the most effective way to *empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices* (McLaren as quoted by Gore, 1993, p. 99) is through dialogic interaction. Dialogue opens students' beliefs, worldviews, and assumptions to critical analysis. All participants, treated as intellectuals continuously interpreting the world around them, are equal. Multiple worldviews are validated; in the process, students become aware that different interpretations exist and are based largely on each interpreter's position in society. In this way, all participants come to know the partial nature of their worldviews and the inclusive possibilities in shared views.

Much of the research on teacher beliefs focuses on the content, skills, and methods teachers use in their professional lives; less is known about the scaffolding of the deeply held belief structures providing the foundation for their development as teachers. The research sensitizes us to the relevance of beliefs and the difficulty in changing them. How students understand and approach the implementation of a multicultural education will reflect, among other things, their beliefs and understanding of multiculturalism, the role of teachers, and the connections between them. Prospective teachers may assume they should communicate a specific worldview to all students regardless of their ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, or gender. In contrast, they may believe they have a responsibility to recognize the diversity in classrooms and propose curricula to represent the various perspectives students bring to the teaching and learning situation. Or, they may see multicultural education as an issue embedded in and contributing to the ambiguity of teaching. For these students, a teacher's role is to critically reflect on worldviews; become aware of and modify assumptions that limit worldviews; make inclusive professional decisions reflecting and acknowledging the transformative nature of teaching and learning, the moral dimension of education, and the ethical obligations of educators (Harrington, 1994).

Method

Computer conferencing is a unique and minimally studied way to gain insight into students' beliefs. Computer conferencing activities allow students opportunities to discuss educational issues with their peers in a nondominated and nonthreatening way (Harrington & Hathaway, 1994), develop norms of collegiality and joint problem solving (Harasim, 1987), use their own discourse style (Cooper & Self, 1990), and have time for reflection (Dickson, Franklin, & Hill, 1987; Harasim, 1987). Conferencing also provides opportunities for dialogue, a key to transformative learning, to change beliefs. Computer conferencing activities can support dialogue minimally influenced by the traditional dynamics that silence, hide, and bury beliefs. Students may be more likely to draw from deeply held beliefs in their discussions. We critically examined the text to gain understanding of students' thinking and their understanding and conceptions of their roles and responsibilities as teachers. We did so with the intent of documenting how effectively educators can use computer conferencing activities to expand students' beliefs related to multicultural education.

The transcript of the Dialogical Community Exercise (DCE)—a structured computer conferencing activity—provided the text for analysis. For this study, we analyzed 178 responses, resulting in 165 pages of dialogue. Students generated the text in an introductory teacher education course that is part of a block of courses including an educational psychology course, a reading methods course, and a 9-hour practicum in an elementary school classroom. Because the instructor does not participate in the conference, the 27 students enrolled in the

course produced the text. Students participated anonymously to avoid the modification of articulated beliefs, Walsh and Charalambides (1990) note. The students in the elementary program are predominantly White, middle-class females; the 27 participants in this study included three African-American women and four men.

We completed a critical interpretive analysis (Berger, 1991; Lincoln & Guba, 1985) by analyzing all responses to a month of discussion focusing on teachers' roles and responsibilities in relation to multicultural education. We focused on the language students used; the definitions provided for multicultural education; the beliefs that supported positions presented; and the power relationships, social roles as educators, and consequences reflected in the discussions. We first examined what students said about multicultural education, including their beliefs about multicultural education itself and their responsibility for its implementation. We identified relevant themes, paying particular attention to reappearing words, emotional resonance, contradictions, inconsistencies in style, and revisions and absences (Brown & Gilligan, 1991, p. 46). We read the transcript a second time to examine, independently, the course of the conversations about multicultural education. In this analysis, we attempted to determine if and when individual participants became aware of and modified their own beliefs as the discussion proceeded. For example, if one student challenged another student's beliefs or definition of multicultural education, we wondered what prompted that challenge and how the challenged student responded. Did students change, adjust, or further articulate their beliefs after other conference participants questioned them?

Findings

Illuminating Students' Beliefs

In answering our first question—Are students' beliefs about multicultural education apparent in conferencing activities?—we examined three items addressing issues relevant to the implementation of multicultural education. The dominant patterns reflect the varied ways students define multiculturalism, perceive the role of the teacher in implementing multicultural education, and recognize the inherent difficulties.

Students' beliefs about how to define multicultural education and what it entails reflect many of the categories discussed in the multicultural literature including presenting diverse perspectives, valuing and appreciating diversity, validating minority experience, and multiculturalism as an aspect of critical thinking. The majority of conference participants believe the presentation of multiple viewpoints is an important component of multicultural education. In this view, to make a classroom multicultural, or to teach multiculturally, teachers must offer or generate multiple perspectives on any given situation or historical event. They often discuss this by noting what is missing from curricula and suggest what should be included. One student wrote, *One particular historical example that comes to mind is the concept of 'manifest destiny', the view that it was the God-given destiny of our White American nation to extend its domain from the Atlantic to the Pacific. But that view leaves out the perspectives of the Indians, the Mexicans and others from whom we took the land.* Another commented, *I believe that educating students on multiple perspectives means offering stories on the bookshelves in your classroom that are written by both women and men, both Americans and Indians, and Christian, Buddhist, Jewish, and Muslim. I believe that teaching these perspectives means talking about the different ways that people feel about Thanksgiving, Columbus Day, or Christmas and Hanukkah.*

Other students stated that they would not be able to teach about different perspectives because they either do not have the time to learn about them or they could not represent them accurately because of their own experience. *I know that in my heart that all points of view should be given. I would rather take more time and teach the many perspectives than to quickly teach one point of view. My problem lies in how I know more than just the common views or the different views that may affect me personally*

Students also believe that multiculturalism and multicultural education facilitate the valuing and appreciating of diversity. Respect often appears in comments of conference participants as they describe the management of multiculturalism. *Perhaps, as L26 pointed out, a commit-*

tee of parents and teachers could be formed in order to convey to parents the idea that multicultural education does not equate with placing value judgments on various cultures, but is rather, an instrument for allowing students to learn about and respect the diversity of other cultures.

Some students suggest multiculturalism is a way to validate minority experiences. They believe this is accomplished when these experiences are represented in the curriculum and classroom and prompt their peers to consider this. *Being a minority, I feel that it is important to see a representation of my heritage in books. Not seeing adequate representations contributes to a sense of inferiority and I know that lot of minorities have had the same feelings. By saying that we shouldn't teach it because it is too complicated, [does that mean] that we should continue the legacy of teaching in a one sided manner? Children need to have an awareness of their culture as well as others.*

Other students' comments reflect the belief that multicultural education is a more complex issue than the presentation of multiple perspectives or the valuing of diversity. They extend the discussion by considering the relationship between thinking and the implementation of a multicultural education.

- *I feel that multiculturalism should be seen as the basis on which the class is run, inherent in the way that a teacher teaches. It does not mean that one simply chooses a few cultures to study in more depth. It is a way of thinking, a way of interacting with others, an appreciation and an interest in other ways of life.*
- *It is impossible for us, as teachers to know everything and feel prepared to teach on the multitude of issues concerning multiculturalism. In an effort to avoid token inclusion of ethnic perspective, I believe that children should be taught critical thinking skills. To learn to question. Not necessarily to see 'the white man' as bad but to understand that there are various perspectives on history that are all connected. As educators we need to model this behavior by questioning both our assumptions as well as those of our students while encouraging them to research different perspectives.*
- *I think this is an important message that our instructors are trying to give us, that it's not what you teach your student to think, but how you*

teach your students to think. If you can help them to become open-minded, reflective individuals then hopefully they will explore other dimensions of multidimensional topics themselves.

Our analysis suggests that through extended discussions students encounter a variety of perspectives on multicultural education. From suggestions of didactic presentations of multiple perspectives to consideration of real individuals whose perspectives are to be included to multiculturalism as a way of thinking and knowing, students are provided with extensions of their beliefs. By engaging in dialogue with individuals with different views, they find their views and the beliefs that support them challenged. In the process, students think more complexly and inclusively about multicultural education.

Other relevant beliefs were challenged as well. Beliefs about the role of the teacher in the implementation of multicultural education became increasingly important as the discussion evolved, with the issue of teacher neutrality a dominant theme. It ran throughout the discussion with some students seeing teacher neutrality as a goal, others recognizing the impossibility of teacher neutrality, and still others seeing the importance of recognizing the nonneutrality of teaching and how one's own perspective can help or hinder one's goals.

One students suggests, *A fine line exists between teaching ideas and preaching opinions. Teachers must remain neutral in the classroom, yet should not deny the students any information or access to information. Perhaps if the parents and administrators could form ongoing committees, some compromises could be met in respect to these issues.* Another student noted, *In the beginning, a number of you were saying that teachers needed to remain neutral and present students with facts. From our current discussion of parents' influence on curriculum we should realize that presenting an unbiased view or unbiased set of facts is impossible. As teachers we must consider new and different viewpoints and reflect on them. Contrary to what L23 said, no matter what, the teacher will always communicate his/her opinions or at least basic beliefs through their presentation of the curriculum. Teachers must be prepared to compromise and/or stand firm on issues when they are challenged. We cannot as teachers*

assume an entirely neutral stance and still hope to be effective.

Students also begin to address subtle connections between means and end.

- *The way to handle multiculturalism in a classroom is to establish respect as the foundation in your classroom, and I will start by respect in the classroom among classmates. As a teacher, I will tell my students that as people we not only have to respect people, but we must also respect various aspects about people such as life-style, heritage, race, etc. I will also tell the students even if you do not agree with it, you still must respect other's decisions.*

- *In closing I believe wholeheartedly that the best way to teach a culture perspective or whatever else you could call it is by bringing it into the classroom for the students to witness first hand.*

- *In response to facilitator 1 and L17 I believe that multiculturalism is a philosophy not a content or lesson. If multiculturalism is to be in the classroom, one has to incorporate it in all aspects.*

Ongoing, in-depth discussions provide students with opportunities to become aware of the complexity and ambiguity in teaching multiculturally. They are opportunities for students to begin to recognize the interconnections among the students for whom they are responsible, the experience they bring with them, communities of which they are a part, communities their classrooms become, and their professional responsibilities as educators. Discussion of multiculturalism, beginning as a discussion of different perspectives, may expand to a consideration of the connections between a philosophy and a pedagogy.

Students also consider and discuss possible barriers to a multicultural education. The primary issues they discuss in relation to the difficulties in implementing a multicultural education include the difficulty in defining multiculturalism and the related issue of power. Some students gain little clarity about what a multicultural education entails and how they would be able to implement it in the classroom.

- *I am still confused on how to teach multiculturalism in a class that is all encompassing. Do people mean that the books will be diverse? And that different perspectives will be respected and [students] taught to see that there are many of these?*

Is this different and more helpful to the students than specific lessons of different ethnic backgrounds?

- *I think it's too complex of an idea to define. It covers everything and to be honest, I'm not sure it can or should be taught. Please don't misinterpret this everyone. I think the best safeguard against this is teaching students to have an open mind and the will to learn on their own.*

As students struggle with the implications of creating classrooms responsive to the diversity of students and the surrounding society, they begin to consider the issue of power and how it might influence what they would or could do in classrooms.

- *I wanted to pose the question earlier, that if we are to teach in a multicultural sense whose perspectives do we choose? Do we suppress the white male's because he has been over represented in our times? Also another thing, if we do want to bring different perspectives, who decides what? Could this lead to more power struggle?*

- *What public has the right to decide what should be taught? And does the minority have rights to alternative activities?*

- *I'm still thinking about what public will have the power to make the choice of what we teach in the classroom in terms of multiculturalism. Right now I believe that it is the elite power who decides now without any parents realizing differently.*

- *L21 said that s/he would incorporate multiculturalism by teaching the 'American' perspective first, and then bring in other views. Maybe L21, and L15, who agreed, could tell me what defines the American perspective. Is this just the view of the majority? And if so, why should this receive any more weight than other voices?*

Our analysis shows that computer conferencing activities seem particularly suited to the discussion of multiculturalism and multicultural education. The process illuminates many beliefs and helps students connect them through the discussions. Students weave and reweave their way of making meaning as they encounter various views, have time to reflect, modify their views, and receive support and challenge from their peers to think more deeply and critically. The traditional power imbalance found in most classrooms is mitigated, and students begin to assume responsibility for their own learning in a

relatively safe and trusting environment. Examining, in detail, the conference participation of one student provides further insight into the opportunities provided through these activities.

Change in Beliefs

Students' beliefs are apparent throughout the discussions. But our intent is to go beyond illuminating beliefs to finding ways to help students become aware of them, to understand how powerfully they interact with their understanding of teaching, and to move beyond them to more inclusive ways of knowing and being. By examining the discussion of one student, we are better able to illustrate the way in which extended, ongoing dialog can influence a student's understanding of her own understanding.

Anne (pseudonym) begins the discussion with a complex view of multiculturalism, continuously describing multiculturalism as a way of thinking rather than simply perspective taking. In her first entry, she reflects on her experience with biased curricula, telling the other participants how *the Indians are portrayed as savages during Custer's last stand* and that *Thomas Jefferson was an abolitionist, however, it is never discussed how he owned slaves*. Upon reflection, Anne indicates that *this made me think of all the lies I was learning*. In her very next entry, she stresses that *I am angry that I was taught lies. I feel betrayed in a way* and begins to lay out her conception of multicultural education. *I think it is possible to give multiple viewpoints on events. If it is not provided in the text, it would be beneficial to have the class try and generate possible opinions by practicing empathy and role playing. The students will learn not only what they are learning but to question what they are learning.*

Anne appears to see perspectives as a tool to facilitate a questioning attitude in students. She also believes that teachers and prospective teachers must first become familiar with many perspectives. In a series of remarks, she indicates the complexities.

• *How will we as teachers work with a multi-perspective curriculum? Before you are able to teach something first you must learn and master it yourself. Teachers must learn all perspectives. This can be done by workshops. Awareness is the first step to eliminate ignorance. But we must be careful—Multiculturalism is not just tasting food, watching dances, and presenting the 'other side.' It is being aware of the world globally. It is always and naturally making students aware of the multiple world viewpoints. It should be a daily practice and habit rather than a special event of the month.*

• *You make an interesting point that multiculturalism is not a one day lesson. It is an awareness. A philosophy of teaching. If the parents disagree then their child should not be in your class.*

• *Just to build on L13's great point. I don't think we have come to a consensus of whether or not Multiculturalism is a topic of content or a philosophy of education. For me, multiculturalism is an awareness and respect for other people and where, and the customs of where, they are from. I don't think I could ever say I will teach about A this day and B this day. I think what we are struggling with is different philosophies of teaching.*

In this sequence of entries, Anne argues that one must learn all perspectives but indicates that being aware of perspectives is not multiculturalism. She is attempting to articulate a philosophy of teaching in which multiculturalism is embedded. In her next entry, she begins to address the pedagogical issues of multicultural education and frames her argument by agreeing with another conference participant's entry. *L27, I really like your point about what we are struggling with is the best way to teach multicultural viewpoints. I think the combination of sources and being prepared to learn along with your students would be very effective. I would also like to add that as Banks said (I was looking ahead) 'We should teach students that knowledge is a social construction that it reflects the perspectives, experiences, and values of the people and the cultures that reflect it.' In this way we would not be making one viewpoint more valid than another. We will teach points of view and not 'facts' and 'truths' which I believe will help ease some tension.*

Anne is advocating a pedagogical approach that acknowledges the idea of the social construction of knowledge in which the teacher learns along with the students, and no perspective is necessarily more valid than another because everyone participates in constructing knowledge. She also understands how complex an

issue it is. I *agree that teachers should be supported, however, we must be careful about setting up guidelines of how something should and should not be taught. In doing this, certain 'truths' might have to be established which will undermine the entire concept of multiculturalism as multi-awareness. Informing parents is very important. It must be made clear to parents that the schools are making people aware of other perspectives and not forcing them to choose what they believe. Schools teach viewpoints and not morals.*

Here she argues that setting up guidelines for multiculturalism is inconsistent with how she constructs an understanding of it. In other words, having a recommended way to teach multiculturalism undermines the multiple perspective philosophy supporting it. When another student challenges her point that the schools should not teach morals, she clarifies, *Schools do model certain behavior. And I believe that they should. However, they should never say, 'Believe this! This is the correct way to believe!' I think the main problem is this is PUBLIC education. What PUBLIC has the right to decide what should be taught? And does the minority have rights to alternative activities?*

Through this clarification, we see her begin to critically reflect on the power issue of who gets to decide what is taught in the public schools. Many students do not address power issues unless prompted, but Anne's awareness of power dynamics is also apparent when she asks who decides what is taught. *I think we all are saying we must educate parents and explain our rationale for educating. We must inform the parents that we as teachers are only presenting views. We are not preaching. But what can we do as teachers if the parents do not want to have their children learn? As teachers how can we prevent ignorance if we are not even given the chance to educate? The children who will be pulled out might be the students who most benefit from the discussion because they will not be exposed to multiple viewpoints at home. In this way, the schools will not be breaking cycles, they will be reinforcing them. Again, I propose the question in public education, which public has the right to decide what and how children should learn?*

In asking her peers who decides what is taught, Anne suggests that multiculturalism may help break a cycle of ignorance. Although she does not directly state that schools are a center of the reproduction of societal inequalities as argued in much of the critical pedagogy literature, she appears to see schools as a way to break a similar cycle of ignorance. She previously stated parents should have the option to pull children out of class if they disagreed with the teacher; she now suggests that schools may serve a larger purpose. If Anne were introduced to critical theory at this time, she might more explicitly construe education as a way to overcome the societal reproduction of inequality—a foundation for some of the more complex approaches to multiculturalism (e.g., Banks, 1991). Her participation illustrates how the use of activities such as this might individualize opportunities for students to further expand their way of making meaning.

Anne has not resolved all issues. Although advocating a more *thinking* approach to multicultural education, she struggles with how to present a lesson on the Holocaust. Her struggle is reflected in the following entries:

- *The Holocaust did happen. It is a fact, not a matter of opinion. Ethically and morally I would find it very difficult to teach as a point of view [the opinion that it never happened]. However, I think what I would do in this situation is take these students aside (so I don't confuse the rest of the class) and present them with all the evidence for the existence of the Holocaust.*
- *I will not tell them to change their opinions about the Holocaust. I will only have them consider and learn about other opinions so that they can make a more informed choice on what to believe.*

Anne is struggling with the tensions between method and manner, how to support multicultural education as she defines it when her definition may be in conflict with responsible teaching. Believing that presenting multiple perspectives challenges students to think about the different ways of looking at issues, she recognizes the inherent conflicts when perspectives one cannot support enter the discussion. Helping students develop the ability to recognize they have choices to make is a first step to helping them develop the ability to do so in reasoned, thoughtful, and ethical ways. Students are at various points in that journey. Computer conferencing activities may enable teacher educators to better support their journey by providing insight into their beliefs and under-

standings and opportunities to encourage more complex understandings of multiculturalism and multicultural education.

Implications and Discussion

In this article, we present the findings of a study to determine if computer conferencing activities can be used to access and transform students' beliefs about their roles and responsibilities as teachers in a multicultural society. Our findings suggest that conferencing activities are a powerful lens to examine students' beliefs and provide an environment supportive of the extension of beliefs. The process challenges students to consider the basis for their beliefs by presenting beliefs different from their own; directing challenges prompting reexamination of their own beliefs; and exposing them to more complex, inclusive, and critical ways of thinking. Students begin to think more deeply about the foundations of their beliefs and their role as teachers in a multicultural society. Our findings also suggest issues necessary to address as we strive to better prepare teachers to work in increasingly diverse environments.

Not all students can draw connections among the multiple issues influencing the implementation of a multicultural education. For some students, their conception of the role of the teacher exists independent of their understanding of multicultural education. If they address power issues at all, they do so in direct relation to curriculum choices; many do not acknowledge or understand the interrelationship among power, curriculum, multicultural education, and teachers' choices. They may express a belief in teacher neutrality but fail to consider if a teacher can be neutral while enacting a nonneutral curriculum. We must find ways to help all students make the connections necessary to understanding multicultural teaching and schooling in their ambiguity and complexity. We may need to take a more direct role with some students. Close attention to their participation in activities such as the one discussed here provides a rich source of information to begin with.

Our findings also suggest that students' struggles with thinking multiculturally, implementing multicultural education, and seeing the implications for students and schools may reflect conflicts generated by the deeper, foundational beliefs that provide the scaffolding for how they think about specific issues. How students perceive the nature of knowledge and how they and their students know seem particularly relevant. When there is a *truth* to be found, students may approach multicultural education and its implementation very differently than when they see truth as an ambiguous claim with the teacher responsible for helping students choose among competing claims. If prospective teachers believe they can know with certainty, their response to the diverse perspectives students bring with them to the classroom may validate those diverse perspectives in very different ways. Power is a very different issue when there is a truth to be found rather than a better answer to be sought. Varied approaches to multicultural education may be a reflection of differences in these kinds of beliefs. These struggles are not as apparent when we access students' beliefs in traditional ways, for example, with surveys, because, in general, we have not yet developed a deep understanding of the various ways our students think about multiculturalism, the struggles they experience as they encounter it, and the beliefs that provide the foundation for their diverse ways of making meaning. Computer conferencing is a way to access or document varied beliefs and the resultant struggles. However, the method has its limitations. Nondominated dialogue may not challenge students' beliefs to the degree that dominated dialogue might. We do not know if the benefits outweigh the costs. This is a question for further study. Computer conferencing activities do provide powerful lenses for illuminating students' understanding. This illumination may help us structure dialogue that leads to transforming their meaning-making systems in ways that foster more multicultural, inclusive worldviews.

References

Ahlquist, R. (1991). Position and imposition: Power relations in a multicultural foundations class. *Journal of Negro Education*, 60(2), 158-169.
Banks, J. A. (1991). A curriculum for empowerment, action, and change. In C. E. Sleeter (Ed.), *Empowerment through multicultural*

education (pp. 125-141). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Banks, J. A., & McGee-Banks, C. A. (Eds.). (1989). *Multicultural education. Issues and perspectives*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Berger, A. A. (1991). *Media research techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Brown, L. M., & Gilligan, C. (1991). Listening for voice in narratives of relationship. *New Directions for Child Development, 54*, 43-61.

Buchmann, M., & Schwille, J. (1983). Education: The overcoming of experience. *American Journal of Education, 92*, 30-51.

Burbules, N. C., & Rice, S. (1991). Dialogue across differences: Continuing the conversation. *Harvard Educational Review, 61*(4), 393-416.

Carter, R., & Goodwin, A. L. (1994). Racial identity and education. In L. Darling-Hammond (Ed.), *Review of Research in Education* (pp. 291-336). Washington, DC: American Educational Research Association.

Chavez, R. C., O'Donnell, J., & Gallegos, R. L. (1994, April). *Preservice students' perspectives to 'dilemmas' in a multicultural education course*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Cherryholmes, C. H. (1988). *Power and criticism. Poststructural investigations in education*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Cooper, M. M., & Self, C. L. (1990). Computer conferences and learning: Authority, resistance, and internally persuasive discourse. *College English, 52*(8), 847-869.

Crichlow, W., Goodwin, S., Shakes, G., & Swartz, E. (1990). Multicultural ways of knowing: Implications for practice. *Journal of Education, 172*(2), 101-117.

Dickson, M., Franklin, J., & Hill, A. (1987). *Attitudinal changes through computer conferencing*. Paper presented at the Guelph Symposium on Computer Conferencing. Guelph, Ontario.

Ellsworth, E. (1989). Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review, 59*(3), 297-324.

Giles, M. B., & Sherman, T. M. (1982). Measurement of multicultural attitudes of teacher trainees. *Journal of Educational Research, 75*(4), 204-209.

Giroux, H. A. (1988). Literacy and the pedagogy of voice and political empowerment. *Educational Theory, 38*(1), 61-75.

Gollnick, D. M. (1992). Multicultural education: Policies and practices in teacher education. In C. A. Grant. (Ed.), *Research and multicultural education: From the margins to the mainstream*. (pp. 218-239). Washington DC: Falmer.

Gore, J. M. (1993). *The struggle for pedagogies: Critical and feminist discourses as regimes of truth*. New York: Routledge.

Grant, C. A., & Sleeter, C. E. (1986). Race, class, gender in education research: An argument for integrative analysis. *Review of Educational Research, 56*(2), 195-211.

Grant, C. A., & Sleeter, C. E. (1989). Race, class, gender, exceptionality, and educational reform. In J. A. Banks &. C. A. McGee-Banks (Eds.), *Multicultural education. Issues and perspectives*. (pp. 49-65.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Hamilton, M. L. (1994). *Tacit messages: Teachers' cultural models of the classroom*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Harasim, L. (1987). Teaching and learning online: Issues in computer-mediated graduate courses. *Canadian Journal of Education, 16*(2), 117-135.

Harrington, H. L. (1994). Teaching and knowing. *Journal of Teacher Education, 45*(3), 190-198.

Harrington, H. L., & Hathaway, R. (1994). Computer conferencing, critical reflection, and teacher development. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 10*(5), 543-554.

Kagan. D. (1992). Implications of research on teacher belief. *Educational Psychologist, 27*(1), 65-90.

Kailin, J. (1994). Anti-racist staff development for teachers: Consideration of race, class, and gender. *Teaching & Teacher Education, 10*(2), 169-184.

King, J. E. (1994, April). *Perceiving reality in a new way: Rethinking the black/white duality of our time*. Paper presented at the annual

meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1991). Beyond multicultural illiteracy. *Journal of Negro Education*, 60(2), 147-157.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1994, April). *Your blues ain't like mine: Keeping issues of race and racism on the multicultural agenda*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA.

Law, S. G., & Lane, D. S. (1987). Multicultural acceptance by teacher education students: A survey of attitudes toward 32 ethnic and national groups and a comparison with 60 years of data. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 14(1), 3-9.

Lincoln, E., & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Martin, R. J. (1991). The power to empower: Multicultural education for student-teachers. In C. E. Sleeter (Ed.), *Empowerment through multicultural education* (pp. 287-297). Albany: State University of New York Press.

McCarthy, C. (1994). Multicultural discourses and curriculum reform: A critical perspective. *Educational Theory*, 44(1), 81-99.

Nespor, J. (1987). The role of beliefs in the practice of teaching. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 19(4), 317-328.

Pajares, M. F. (1992). Teachers beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct. *Review of Educational Research*, 62(3), 307-332.

Roman, L. G. (1993). White is a color! White defensiveness, postmodernism, and anti-racist pedagogy. In C. McCarthy & W. Crichlow (Eds.), *Race identity and representation in education* (pp. 71-88). New York: Routledge.

Scardamalia, M., & Bereiter, C. (1989). Conceptions of teaching and approaches to core problems. In M. C. Reynolds (Ed.), *Knowledge base for the beginning teacher* (pp. 37-46). Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education.

Sleeter, C. E. (1991). Introduction: Multicultural education and empowerment. In C. E. Sleeter (Ed.), *Empowerment through multicultural education* (pp. 1-23). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Sleeter, C. E. (1992). Resisting racial awareness: How teachers understand the social order from their racial, gender, and social class locations. *Educational Foundations*, 6(2), 7-32.

Sleeter, C. E. (1993). Multicultural education: Five views. *The Education Digest*, 53-57.

Tappan, M. B., & Brown, L. M. (1993, April). *Discourse, dialogue, and difference: Moral and identity development in a postmodern world*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Atlanta, GA.

Walsh, J. P., & Charalambides, L. C. (1990). Individual and social origins of belief structure change. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 130(4), 517-532.

Watkins, W. H. (1994). Multicultural education: Toward a historical and political inquiry. *Educational Theory*, 44(1), 99-117.

Welch, S. (1991). An ethic of solidarity and difference. In H. A. Giroux (Ed.), *Postmodernism, feminism, and cultural politics. Redrawing educational boundaries* (pp. 83-99). Albany: State University of New York Press.