

Chapter 1

BUILDING A CREOLE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY AS THE GOAL OF MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION FOR PRESERVICE TEACHERS

Eugene Matusov¹, John St. Julien,² and Renée Hayes^{3}*

University of Delaware

ABSTRACT

We, as multicultural educators, try to help our students learn how to provide sensitive guidance to children culturally different from themselves. But we often find ourselves treating our students (preservice teachers) as deficient, which shapes our students' experiences in ways that block their learning how to work with culturally diverse children in their classrooms. This article responds to this problem by posing an alternative pedagogical regime which promotes building a creole educational community primarily consisting of instructors, undergraduate teacher education students, local community

¹ Eugene Matusov is an Associate Professor of Education at the University of Delaware. His research interests are in innovative education, communities of learners, informal learning, and a sociocultural approach to learning and development.

Correspondence to Eugene Matusov, School of Education, University of Delaware, Newark, DE 19716, USA, email: ematusov@udel.edu

² John St. Julien is an educational consultant living and working out of Lafayette, Louisiana. His work involves understanding connectionist models of learning in a Creole cultural context, and in designing computer and school programs that foster engagement using the principles discoverable in children's social play.

Correspondence to John St. Julien, St. Julien Consulting, 401 St. Charles St., Lafayette, LA, 70501, USA, email: john@johnstjulien.com

³ Renee Hayes is a lecturer at the University of Delaware. Her research interests are in bilingualism, multiculturalism, discourse analysis, and sociocultural approach to education.

Correspondence to Renee Hayes, School of Education, University of Delaware, Newark, DE 19716, USA, email: rhayes@udel.edu.

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leaders, and children. A striking example of this process in a Latin American community center inspires and illustrates this analysis.

Key words: community, creole, multicultural education, culture, deficit model, preservice teachers

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A hallmark of current multicultural education for preservice teachers is its rejection of “deficit” models, which flourished in earlier educational theories and still influence educational practice, in favor of models which focus on cultural difference – (see also Gardner & Rogoff, 1990 for further description and a discussion of the model), see Bereiter and Engelman (1970) as an example of the deficit model in-use, see Labov (1974) for a critique of the deficit model, and see Sautter (1994) for a specific critique of applying the deficit model to urban children. However, there seems to be a major and disturbing paradox in the practice of multicultural education: it commits sins in its own practice similar to those it condemns in the practice of others. That is, much multicultural education proceeds from the assumption and perpetuates the narrative that most preservice teachers are, as a consequence of their history or being, deficient—that *they* are culturally insensitive (and, thus, unlike *us*, the enlightened professors of multicultural education). We argue that fighting a deficit model as applied to children of color and children from poor families by applying a deficit model to middle-class female preservice teachers has the contradictory and disturbing practical effect of sustaining the deficit model. Modeling the use of deficit reasoning perpetuates the fragmentation of the society and as a consequence ultimately leads to insensitive education (both at the university and school levels). It further socializes middle-class preservice teachers in the use of a deficit model in education where it is most powerful: in their own experience.

In this paper, we argue that this contradiction is most clearly manifested by multicultural education’s uncritical adoption of a conventional individualistic “pedagogical regime” aimed at making conceptual changes in individual students according to the instructor’s preconceived goals. The complex of assumptions and practices associated with this pedagogical regime leads to a model of ‘deficit correction’: purging preservice teachers cultural misconceptions and biases. A result of this style of multicultural education is the development of a *surface* narrative about how to be educationally sensitive when working with culturally diverse children that is imposed on the students by the instructor and that can easily disappear as soon as the preservice teachers leave the multicultural classroom. A growing dissatisfaction with the deficit model we have used in our own teaching practices led us to experiment with our instruction and to seek alternative educational models.

The purpose of this paper is to present an alternative model of multicultural teacher education that emerged in our own pedagogical practice and is based on a sociocultural family of approaches which treats the differences of the participants in multicultural settings as resources in the construction of new, precisely multi-cultural, or *creole*, learning communities rather than on fixing individuals’ deficits. In this model, an appropriate pedagogical regime is conceived of as building a new, *creole educational community* that

draws on the cultures and histories of children, preservice teachers, instructors, and community leaders. We refer to the notion of “community” to emphasize mutual solidarity and affinity among the participants (Cole, 1996; Durkheim, 1966). We use the term “creole” to refer to a holistic community where boundaries between diverse and distinguished cultural groups are neither fully erased nor fully maintained. This creole community is united yet preserves the diversity of participants’ cultures, backgrounds, immediate and long-term goals, values, and so on. Our creole community, which we wish to discuss and analyze here, consists of children, undergraduate teacher education students, and course instructors.

We want to emphasize the “educational” aspects of the community where the children learn how to participate in practices of their interests (e.g., computer and non-computer games, building computers, doing projects) and to help other children to do so; the undergraduate teacher education students learn how to fully engage with the children in their activities and guide them; and the course instructors (the professor and teaching assistant) learn how to promote a safe learning environment for their students working with culturally differing children and to guide the participants (primary the students) through dramatic critical events while we, the instructors, learn how to guide them in this process.

A “creole” label is intended to reference the mixed and dynamic nature of the emergent communities of practice to which we direct our attention⁴. Like creole languages and cultures, the communities of practice we are interested in helping create are neither stable nor internally uniform; rather they function by articulating the differences between the practices of the pre-existing communities from which they are composed and responding to the needs of *both* groups as well as of the new creole community itself. The notion of creole is an alternative to the idea of complete unification of people coming from diverse communities that seems to be an unintended byproduct of the conventional “pedagogical regime” which aims to install (identical) individual conceptual changes in students. Our hope is that this creole way of regarding learning communities that integrate difference can provide a useful theoretical and practical alternative to the usually mainstream, but almost always monologic (cf. Bakhtin & Emerson, 1999) ways of understanding community which function to exclude members from outside the “native” culture.

The participants of diverse local communities are engaged with each other while working on common projects. This engagement provokes the emergence and reoccurrence of unresolved issues and unsettles relations among the involved communities. These unresolved communal and social issues often manifest themselves in interpersonal conflicts among the participants. Public reflections on the nature of these emerging relational issues and attempts to resolve them through new, joint (specifically creole) practices become the core processes in building a creole educational community. The result of these shared practices is a creole multicultural education in which students have a shared history of creating and participating in a creole educational community that prepares them to become change agents in more

⁴ We are aware that the term “Creole” has historical and political baggage involving complex and ambivalent processes and relations. We use it as a metaphor emphasizing a practical, working unity that admits its ambivalent relations and, indeed, incorporates its differences and conflicts as foundational to the emergent community. This process has had and continues to have painful and unjust consequences—as well as invigorating and valuable ones—in real historical situations. We believe that almost all community development must negotiate difference. Thus the practical issue that remains is whether or not one recognizes, honors and utilizes that difference to the benefit of all participants. It is this part of the ambivalent historical tradition we hope to extend.

conventional educational institutions. Of course, it would be naïve to assume that any form of multicultural teacher education alone can solve problems of schooling (Ogbu, 1994) since many problems with institutional practices of schooling like discrimination, racism, sexism, classism are structural, historical, and societal — their full solution is simply beyond the scope of multicultural teacher education. But an effective multicultural education can contribute to their solution by revealing these “macro” problems to the preservice teachers and by teaching them how to fight these problems at the “micro” level of interpersonal relations with their future students, parents, colleagues, and administrators and by giving them experience in developing instructional practices in small learning communities that resist the stultifying effect of macro level problems and injustices.

We start our paper with a critique of conventional multicultural college education for preservice teachers and its pedagogical regime. Then, we describe an educational practice, based on (and a source of) this alternative model, involving the program called *La Red Mágica* (“Magic Web” in Spanish) aimed at preparing preservice teachers for working with (largely Spanish-speaking) children of color. Any educational model involves a description and justification of its pedagogical regime – the most important organizational principles of the institutionalized educational process. We will illustrate (i.e., demonstrate the life of) and provide the analysis of this practice by recounting a dramatic event (see the definition below) that occurred when one of our university students was “disrespected” by a child with whom she worked in a community center.

Our research methodology was rooted in “action research” (Atweh, Kemmis, & Weeks, 1998; Carson & Sumara, 1997), “reflexive methodology” (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000), and “qualitative methodology” (Rowe, 1983; Silverman, 1985). Data collection and analysis involved the systematic collection of fieldnotes by the instructors about class meetings and observations and interactions with the students outside of the class; biweekly reflective sessions with colleagues who did not directly participate in the class but who helped to develop a new direction of actions; analysis of the data constituted by the fieldnotes, interviews, and class web exchanges; abstraction of the practice events; and generating and analysis of cases. In our research, we were guided by a Marxist epistemology according to which understanding the reality involves its transformation (i.e., social activism) (Ilenkov, 1977).

THE TRAP OF A DEFICIT APPROACH IN MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION: FROM “DEFICIENT AND IRRATIONAL INDIVIDUAL” TO INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRAINTS

As we continue to teach multicultural education for preservice teachers, we have become increasingly aware of the persistence of a deficit model in our own teaching. Embarrassingly, the more we as educators learned to notice the deficit model in others the more aware we became of how we were trapped by it. When we started working in the area of multicultural undergraduate education, we noticed that we recreated many of aspects of conventional education that we criticized in our own multicultural classes. The more critical we became of the conventional education regime that too often treats children as deficient as a direct or indirect consequence of their color or class background, the less possible it was to ignore that

we treated as deficient our own education major students as a consequence of their coming from mainstream white middle class communities. Somehow, educational success in our own teaching had come to be defined by how much our students learned to sound like us (or could successfully mimic us) at the end of the semester. We became increasingly uncomfortable with the way we taught and related to our students, a discomfort which forced us to reflect critically on our own practice and search for alternatives. We struggled to find new ways of teaching multicultural education that would allow us to discard the deficit model without discarding our hopes for helping students develop into teachers who could sensitively guide diverse students.

We understand conventional education as organized to deliver to individual students an instructor-defined set of skills, attitudes, and body of knowledge. In relation to these standards, students are often viewed as inept, deficient, and biased. In the case of multicultural teacher education, students' culturally-based deficiencies and "misconceptions" often include: negative stereotyping of minority children, racial prejudices, insensitive guidance and ways of talking about culturally different children, ignorance of diverse cultural communicative styles, and acceptance of discriminatory practices. Multicultural courses are designed to deliver remedies for such student deficiencies.

We argue that the main issue with a deficit model, or even the deficit paradigm, in education is that it misguides. Yes, it is possible to describe others – children, students, preservice teachers – as full of limitations and misconceptions but such a description is not useful in promoting learning, which we understand as transformation of one's subjectivity. It is analogous to dealing with insomnia: it is true that a person who cannot sleep has lack of sleep (a deficit description) but focusing on that fact while lying awake in bed prevents sleep from occurring. As with the case of insomnia, education finds that it is less useful to describe "what is not there" than to promote the desired processes. The deficit model objectifies the student and distracts the teacher from accessing the student's subjectivity: how the student sees the world, what the student's interests, strengths, concerns, problems, and so on are.

Conventional multicultural education promotes what can be called a "sandwich deficit model" because it assumes that white middle-class female pre- and in-service teachers have cultural deficits (e.g., prejudices, misconceptions, bad attitudes, ignorance), while students (especially minority students) and professors of multicultural education do not have these deficits. Pre- and in- service teachers are located in the "middle" of the "power sandwich" with university professors being on the top and (disadvantaged) school students being at the bottom. Reflecting on our own and our colleagues' teaching, we came to a conclusion that there is a profound contradiction between what conventional multicultural education for preservice teachers *preaches* and what it actually *does*. For example, in her early teaching of an educational course on cultural diversity the third author required that her students take quizzes to check how well they learned the instructor's preplanned curriculum. In her teaching, she *preached* celebration of diversity in the preservice teachers' future classroom and urged the teachers to focus on students' strengths and interests as the way of promoting quality education of all students including students of color and from poor families. Recognizing that some of the students might disagree with the views she promoted in her teaching, she stated in the class syllabus, "You may disagree with the points I teach but you must know them... It is my hope that you will carry the information and ideas you explore in this class with you when you design your units and lessons in your teaching methods classes." The instructor's implicit assumption was that the students could learn (and be graded on)

value-free research-based information about multiculturalism and then make their own informed decisions based on this learning in their future classrooms. The preservice teachers' own ways of defining and approaching multicultural issues, different from the instructor, were either suppressed or punished by low grades.

A conventional multicultural college education often *does* treat its own undergraduate students – often white middle-class females in their early 20s – as deficient, ignorant about other cultures, morally culpable and even racist. We found evidence for that not only in our own attitudes and communication – how we discussed our students among each other (e.g., a few years ago the first author said about his students to his colleague, “These two white middle-class students are against bilingual education because they are not sympathetic to Latino immigrants”) – but also in the literature. For example, Jordan argues that when asked to work with children of color and from poor families, many preservice teachers may develop “stereotypical, prejudicial and racist attitudes” toward those children (Jordan, 1995, p. 369). Cabello and Burstein (1995) similarly argue that teachers often possess preconceived ideas about teaching culturally and economically diverse children based on their own backgrounds and experiences. Aaronsohn, Carter, and Howell (1995) found that preservice teachers consistently stereotyped their students based on race and social class, and that they routinely demonstrated biased behaviors and attitudes in their field placements. Lasley (1980) argues that preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs about culturally and economically diverse children do not change unless they are intentionally or explicitly challenged in teacher education programs. The preservice teachers have to be “fixed” either by adding knowledge about some specific cultural aspects of minority children that they are not aware of or by going through some sort of “multicultural psychotherapy” (Abdi, 2002; Spindler & Spindler, 1994) to get rid of their own racist attitudes and ethnocentric biases (see Banks, 1997 as an example). The desired outcome of a conventional class is for a student to demonstrate that he or she has the same knowledge and attitude presented by the instructor (Palmer, 1998). There are many ways that the instructor of a multicultural class tries to “discipline” the minds (Foucault, 1984) of individual students; however, the instructor's “successes” are often limited to the classroom space.

Although conventional multicultural courses may have diverse instructional formats like lectures, discussions, debates, presentations, field trips, practicum, and so forth, these forms are implicitly treated by the students as “content” for exams where students have to demonstrate that they learn knowledge as defined by the instructor—and the progressive teaching methods employed become the means to gaining that testable knowledge. This often leads to “mastery without appropriation” (Wertsch, 1998) where the students can demonstrate skill in using the discourse approved by the instructor in the class and exams without either believing in it or being able to use it in their future teaching practice. Just as the traditional deficit model of education tries to impose “sophisticated” mainstream practices on non-mainstream children, conventional multicultural teacher education tries to impose sophisticated approaches to cultural sensitivity on preservice teachers. Although the content of these impositions is very different, if not opposite, we argue that the very goal and certainly the practice of imposing the teachers' views and practices on students repeats the deficit approach against which multicultural education struggles.

Disconcertingly, our critique of a deficit model in conventional multicultural education for preservice teachers perpetuates a deficit model at a new level of now treating instructors of multicultural education (i.e., ourselves and our colleagues) as deficient. In our critique of

conventional multicultural education, we moved the deficit model to a new, third “meta-level” by blaming instructors of multicultural education for treating their own students as deficient. The first level of the deficit model is when children (often children of color, children from poor families, and children with disabilities) are seen as academically, intellectually, and culturally deficient. For example, Bereiter & Engelman (1970) – the first author is a linguist and the second author is a teacher – argued that many African American children from poor families not only have poor, underdeveloped language but also underdeveloped cognition in comparison with their white middle class counterparts, “...a [Mexican-American or Negro] child who grows up in a social group that for generations has known only poverty and unskilled employment, where formal education is little known, and where the teaching that is done is done by outsiders, does not learn these language rules, even if the language he learns is fundamentally the same as the language of those who will teach him.... he has not learned the language rules that are necessary for defining concepts, for drawing inferences, for asking questions, and for giving explanations” (p. 5).

The second level of the deficit model is to see white middle-class female preservice teachers as deficient with regard to their cultural and racial sensitivity. Thus, studying behavior of primarily white female preservice teachers in their racially and SES diverse field placements, Aaronsohn, Carter, and Howell (1995) concluded that many preservice teachers were racially and class biased and “tended to assume their own intellectual, social, family, and moral life to be the norm and that their task as teachers would be to socialize the next generation of children to that norm” (p. 5). However, we find a lack of literature and research on the use of the deficit model in multicultural teacher education. We suspect that in our own past teaching, we were pretty typical in wanting to “fix” our middle class preservice teachers and cleanse them of cultural, racial, class, gender, and other misconceptions and biases (see some of the examples of our past attitude above).

The third level of the deficit model is to regard instructors of multicultural education as pedagogically deficient. There is a growing criticism of multicultural educators for taking an “expert”, monological stand and treating their (white) students as deficient exemplified by the following quote by college instructors of multicultural education,

A few years ago, we attended a three-day conference on “multicultural education” that left us feeling frustrated. Connection was lacking between what we were “told” by the experts presenting at the conference and the perceived realities of our lives. We also felt that socially constructed “expert” and “nonexpert” positions separated rather than encouraged the building of connections in trying to make sense of the meanings of multiculturalism. The tone of the conference conveyed that there are correct ways to think, feel, and act. This tone, in spite of its good intentions, we believe structured silence and inhibited democratic conversation. How can we build bridges and connections without being able to talk across differences? How can we achieve better relations when overgeneralizations are not challenged? How can we affirm diversity when selected views are allowed to be voiced, while others are silenced? Is it easier to tell others how to feel and what to do rather than join in a democratic conversation, so that we can work together to construct our notions of multiculturalism? (Fu & Stremmel, 1999).

At the fourth level, reviewers of academic journal articles reporting about research on multicultural education point out that the researchers use a deficit model while describing instructors of multicultural education and thus, do not live according their own claims. For

example, this is what an unidentified reviewer (from another journal) wrote justly of an earlier draft of this paper, “the paper comes across as curiously pedantic and positivistic... The author professes to have the ‘answer’ to the ‘traditional deficit model of education,’ even while he chastises teacher educators for trying to ‘fix’ students’ deficits.”

Of course, taking into consideration the long history of racism, discrimination, and slavery in the US, social and power consequences of the deficit models at the different levels are very different – for example, treating minority children as intellectually deficient in the broad historical context of social and political discrimination is not the same as treating white middle-class preservice teachers belonging to a mainstream social and political group as racist (Pleasants, personal communication, February, 25, 2002). However, in both cases the deficit models play the essential role for defining social relations in the classroom community. We urgently sought a way out of this escalation and perpetuation of the deficit model trapping educators. After all, we ended by blaming ourselves, surely an unstable situation!

We found Latour’s call for shifting the focus from “irrational individual” to institutional constraints (Latour, 1987) and Hargreaves’ analysis of the prevalence of transmission of knowledge educational philosophy among many schoolteachers (Hargreaves, 1988) especially useful for addressing this problem. Discussing why so many teachers in school practice an educational philosophy based on the transmission of knowledge – a position which often leads to a deficit model in their teaching, Hargreaves warns against attributing the cause of this phenomenon to a (irrational) choice of educational philosophy that the teacher made (Hargreaves, 1989). He argues against “psychologizing” the problem. Instead, Hargreaves suggests that we consider teachers to be active and rational agents coping in institutional conditions that have the effect of co-opting them into a transmission of knowledge educational philosophy because it becomes very difficult (if not impossible) to do anything else. It is like a coin running down the funnel in the Discovery Museum: it does not matter in what place and direction you start the coin rolling – the coin will finish deep down in the funnel. Using the terminology of chaos theory (Prigogine & Stengers, 1984), a transmission of knowledge educational philosophy is a major *attractor* as a consequence of the school’s institutional dynamics. In other words, it is not the case that many teachers rationally choose a transmission of knowledge educational philosophy from the “free market” of pedagogical ideas, models, and philosophies but that this educational philosophy acquires them (see McDermott, 1993, for this metaphor of acquisition) through the ways in which the institution of school is organized. In his investigation of why the transmission of knowledge philosophy is so widespread in schools, Hargreaves extracts 6 institutional factors that make the transmission philosophy so captivating for the teachers it acquires (Hargreaves, 1989, pp. 88-89). Based on his list and our observations, we want to propose the following institutional factors that co-opt instructors of multicultural education for preservice teachers into a deficit model:

1. Required grading for multicultural courses sorts students into those who succeed and those who fail the course.
2. The deficit model serves to provide control in “managing large cohorts of” students “in restricted physical surroundings” (Hargreaves, 1989, p. 88).
3. “The minimal effort demands it makes upon” (Hargreaves, 1989, p. 89) instructors who have to lower their investment in teaching due to academic career requirements (e.g., doing research, publishing peer-reviewed articles, sitting on committees).

4. Having a syllabus with a predetermined set of topics the instructor covers.
5. The low status of multicultural education results in the instructors' efforts to defend the field by essentializing the multicultural curriculum as "important things to cover" (Pleasants, personal communication, February, 25, 2002).
6. Absence of teaching practicum and teaching experiences that deal with culturally diverse children upon which students can reflect.
7. Text-based, "information transmission," styles of instruction lead students to see the value of their actions in terms of the instructor's approval or disapproval, rather than in terms of its consequences for students.
8. Students are forced to take multicultural classes while at a moment when they are not convinced of their usefulness.
9. "Its [the transmission philosophy] suitability for, and protection by, the conditions of teacher isolation, where external criteria of professional competence are ostensibly met and inducements to change are absent" (Hargreaves, 1989, p. 89, inclusion ours).

We argue that these (and probably other) institutional factors and constraints constitute a pedagogical regime of traditional schooling and limit the developmental trajectories of instructors of multicultural education in ways that lead to perpetuating a deficit model in multicultural education for preservice teachers. We think that the deficit model is a matter of participation in certain institutions and institutional practices. The current institutional structures make it much easier to be guided by the deficit model because the deficit model is built into these institutions. It provides a vicious cycle of interaction between educational practices, institutional constraints, cultural values, and individual beliefs. It is relatively easy to argue against a deficit model but it is much harder to escape the institutional constraints that promote it. The constraints of schooling's institutional practices make it difficult to resist the practices of the deficit model. The deficit model becomes a major *attractor* in the dynamic institutional system of schooling.

Now we will turn to a description of an alternative educational model of multicultural education. Our goal was not only to undermine the existing institutional organization that promotes a deficit model but to develop an alternative *institutional attractor* (what we call "pedagogical regime") that promotes building a creole learning community. We will describe and analyze an attempt to develop an alternative to the traditional conceptualization and practical approaches to multicultural teacher education within a project called La Red Mágica.

A SOCIOCULTURAL APPROACH TO LEARNING AS A COMMUNAL PROCESS

From the point of view of a sociocultural approach to learning and development, the main goal of multicultural teacher education is to help teachers join, develop, and initiate diverse learning communities. Learning, in the sense of a transformation of participation, is an aspect of any activity, practice, or community (Lave, 1992). From such a perspective, the problem diversity raises for education is rooted in the difficulties that teachers and students have in

supporting each other's guidance and learning in order to form integrated, but still diverse, learning communities – what we call a creole community. So, a sociocultural approach to multicultural teacher education is vitally concerned with learning how to build diverse learning communities by engaging culturally diverse participants in learning about each other and the world and to overcome the disengagement, disintegration, and de-communization⁵ which are often the consequence of conventional pedagogical practices rooted both in how conventional schools are structured and in broader unresolved problems in the society. This cannot and should not be a task of any individual preservice teacher – a task of changing his or her individual conceptualization, – but rather a task within a diverse community of how to promote engagement that facilitates learning in all the members of a community. We understand communal practices and relations mediated by pedagogical regimes to be the appropriate objects of pedagogical actions, rather than the autonomous individual mindsets of preservice teachers (as remains true for conventional, individually-focused multicultural teacher education). Within this alternative framework, change and development in educational communities comes from adopting new practices and devising new relationships which, taken as a whole, constitute different pedagogical regimes. How can such changes occur? In the account we develop here, one way the changes occur is by attending to the collision of voices we call “dramatic events.” The resulting reorganization of social relationships (the institution of an altered pedagogical regime) effects changes in the participant's perceptions and their consequent dispositions to act in ways that serve to further the goals of helping teachers learn to join, develop, and initiate diverse/creole learning communities.

The traditional notion of learning focuses on a desired change in an individual student as defined and guided by the instructor. An alternative sociocultural approach to learning focuses on students' changing participation in a community of practice. Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that learning is a communal process, situated in a community of practice. Learning is always a question of membership in the community and participation in the community's practice. A novice is not simply an individual who lacks some entities, called 'skills,' but rather a newcomer who needs to negotiate her or his participation in the community practice and identity in the community (Wenger, 1998). Learning, a process of negotiation and renegotiation of participation in the community of practice, is seldom the focus of community business; it occurs at the periphery of community activity. The central process of the community is its practice – the recursive activity that shapes the community. Because the community is aware of newcomers, the peripheral processes of negotiation and renegotiation, of what Lave and Wenger (1991) refer to as 'peripheral participation,' have a legitimate character. Newcomers' needs and skills are anticipated and their induction organized by the community. "Legitimate peripheral participation" in the on-going business of the community becomes the main medium of learning and development. However, such learning, essential though it is, is often implicit rather than explicit.

According to this sociocultural approach, what makes a person a scientist, for example, is not a unique way of thinking (as a traditional approach implies) but a person's participation in a scientific community (recognized as such by other members of the community and by people outside of the community) (Latour, 1987). Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) argue

⁵ We consider racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, and ethnic prejudices as extreme forms of such disengagement, disintegration, and de-communization.

that in the case of learning in school, the most relevant community for the students is that of school itself. The learning curriculum for the students – what students learn (Lave & Wenger, 1991) – is school practice itself. Lave (1992) insists that learning is inherent to any activity. Learning occurs regardless of the expectations and wills of more experienced members of the community – it is not a matter of *whether* students learn in school but a matter of *what* they learn from their complex experiences in school. What is actually learned is defined by what the students do in and for the class, what concerns them inside and outside the classroom, how they relate to each other and the instructor, and the nature of their class-related communication. By building a classroom community that focuses on deepening the integration of learning communities, a multicultural teaching curriculum is particularly central in this understanding of students' learning curriculum.

But the integration of teacher and student communities does not emerge simply from their being in the same room. New practices, which enact new relationships, must emerge to partially meld the formerly different communities. How this development can be encouraged is a crucial issue in the development of an alternate, socially focused, regime of multicultural education. One way, we believe, is to focus our pedagogy on "critical events," a notion influenced by Bakhtin. Bakhtin (1986) argued that the life of a community is captured in dramatic events of 'heteroglossia' when different and often incompatible voices collide. This notion of dramatic dialogue is especially relevant for a multicultural education aimed at building learning communities with culturally diverse participants. From this point of view, the curriculum of multicultural education can emerge from focusing participants on dramatic dialogues and attempting to resolve the conflicts they reveal.

Would such an approach deny the agency of our students – and ourselves -- by vesting all efficacy in communal changes? Definitely not! Would changes persist beyond the pedagogical situations in which our students participated? We believe so. Both students themselves and instructors expect and want changes and learning in each student. We see the individual learning that students carry away from their participation as a shift in what they are able to perceive and a change in the way they are disposed to act in reaction to what they perceive in new situations (Dewey, 1938/1982). However, we do not set this as the direct goal of our pedagogical actions because we, like Lave and Wenger (1991) see learning as a peripheral process – often occurring incidentally and sometimes unconsciously – in the course of getting things done and collectively solving real-life problems. To mistake the teacher's fuller goal in encouraging particular transformations of participation (learning how to function well in multicultural communities) for the process by which it is achieved is a fundamental error that we attempt to avoid in designing our approach to multicultural education for prospective teachers.

A view of learning as a communal process embedded in communal practices has inspired many educational practitioners and researchers to explore and define new forms of guidance that can be used in schools. These include instructional conversations (Tharp & Gallimore, 1988), reciprocal teaching (A. L. Brown & Palincsar, 1987), cognitive apprenticeship (Rogoff, 1990), community of learners (A. L. Brown & Campione, 1994; Rogoff, Matusov, & White, 1996) , problem-based learning (Gijselaers & Wilkerson, 1996), and dialogic inquiry (Wells, 1999). To sum up, this family of instructional and conceptual approaches largely shares the following important principles:

- learning is a communal process;

- learning is embedded in the activities and practices in which it occurs;
- learning involves the development and negotiation of new communal identities;
- students' guided initiation into the discourse and methods of defining problems and goals is crucial for becoming an active member of a community of practice;
- ownership for guidance and learning should be shared among students and between the students and the teacher; and
- a community is based on practice, social relationships, and discourse.

These conceptual approaches guide us in organizing multicultural education as building and supporting a culturally diverse community of learners and to describe our practice of doing that. Our goal here is to extract guiding principles of how to design a pedagogical regime that promotes and supports building such a community. We see learning occurring in individual students – socially desirable transformation of their participation in practice of teaching – as a by-product of our students' participation in the communal processes and practices.

We work to extend this sociocultural and community-based approach by noting that our preservice teachers and the children they work with come from differing, established communities, and that to be effective as a learning community for both parties a new “creole” community needs be developed which coordinates, however partially, locally, and temporarily, the pre-existing communities.

We recognize that in putting forth this formulation we tread on difficult and contradictory ground; ground that those advocating sociocultural approaches seem to have avoided in the past. Certainly a clear implication of a sociocultural approach to learning is that what actually happens in classroom settings is that students are inducted into *the* classroom culture – and this unitary classroom is implicitly mainstream. The difficulties for an explicitly *multicultural* education are obvious when stated in this way. But this basic difficulty is not evaded by ignoring it—which would allow the default, conventional mainstream assumptions of the standard classroom to go unchallenged.

We believe the events recounted below put meat on the bare-bones meaning of these largely conceptual sociocultural ideas and indicates the types of concerns to which we respond. Our efforts to extract a new pedagogical regime based on using dramatic critical events to build a creole learning community was based on the instructor's and TA's fieldnotes; an interview with students a few months after the class was over; students', instructor's, and TA's postings on the class web regarding the events; and students' weekly mini-projects that focused on these issues.

LA RED MAGICA: BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF EDUCATORS

La Red Mágica is a University-Community partnership that started in September 1998. The partnership is designed to build an after-school program based on voluntary, collaborative, and informal learning linking inner-city minority elementary school children at the Latin-American Community Center (LACC) in Wilmington and teacher education students at the University of Delaware in Newark. The LACC children are mainly from low income Puerto Ricans and African American families and recent immigrants from Mexico,

Dominican Republic, and Guatemala. The class involved 13 white middle-class females, one white middle-class male, and one middle-class African American female, all in their late teens from North-Eastern states. The class was conducted by a Russian-Jewish male immigrant in his late 30s (instructor, and first author of this paper) and by a female graduate student from Panama in her late 20s (teaching assistant). It is important to mention that both the instructor and TA belonged to a bigger community interested in community-based teacher education in their university and through the so-called "5th Dimension" network uniting similar efforts across the country and abroad and existing for almost 20 years (Cole, 1996). As the class progressed many other important aspects of participants' backgrounds surfaced in our public discourse involving the UD students, the instructors, the LACC children and officers (e.g., we had sorority and non-sorority students in our class conflicting with each other at times, some LACC children were considered to be "American" and some not).

A caveat: in our view, describing the participants' backgrounds as we have done above is valuable chiefly as background which aids the reader in following and interpreting the narrative we are preparing to launch: it is not "data" in the sense that we believe that these unique backgrounds shaped the outcome. The narrative is not one of "heroes" as our culture's storytelling habits might lead us as readers to conclude. Rather, the main characters in this narrative are the unfolding events and interactions that lead to the development of a creole pedagogical community.

During the 10-week teaching practicum, undergraduate students help children who are engaged in educational activities (e.g., computer activities, telecommunication, readings, crafts, sport and board games). The program is open 4 days a week at LACC for 1.5 hours per day. Each undergraduate student is expected to come to the LACC twice a week. So far, the only course associated with the La Red Mágica project has been "Cultural Diversity in Teaching and Schooling" a core (mandatory) class in the teacher education program taken by freshman and sophomores. The class enrollment varies between 15 and 20 students, limited by number of seats in the university van that transports the students from the University of Delaware (UD) located in Newark to LACC located in Wilmington (about a 30 minute drive).

Besides practicum requirements and classroom meetings, students are expected to participate in the Internet-based discussions ("webtalks" involving postings to a web page), produce weekly mini-projects that target students' work with the LACC children (e.g., interviews and focused fieldnotes), and read assigned literature. The class discussed here had a teaching assistant, who helped the instructor in organizing class and web discussions, preparing material, and addressing class logistics, and a site coordinator that helped the students run the site and work with the LACC children.

FOUR PRINCIPLES OF CREATING THE PEDAGOGICAL REGIME OF A CREOLE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY IN THE MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM

Here, we present the principles of a pedagogical regime for promoting multicultural learning through creole community building that we arrived at in the course of our La Red Mágica project. The first author had been involved in building a similar practice at the University of California at Santa Cruz in partnership with the local Latino Community Center

named Barrios Unidos in 1996 before coming to Delaware. This project at Santa Cruz is part of the UC-links consortium and stemmed from the 5th Dimension afterschool project developed and conceptualized by Michael Cole and his colleagues (Cole, 1996; Nicolopoulou & Cole, 1993) aimed at developing alternative educational models based on informal learning. The principles of the creole educational model were developed in a dialogic appropriation of and a dialogic opposition to the 5th Dimension project. That project involved a stable structure imposed on the afterschool setting by the University (e.g., "maze", "wizard", and "task cards," see the references above).

From the beginning of the class, the instructor and TA and all the participants are concerned about and aimed toward: 1) creating a safe learning environment for all, 2) developing an open and democratic structure, 3) creating and maintaining a public space for bringing up and discussing emerging hot issues, promoting a professional discourse that considered the pros and cons of the educational practices in question, and, finally, 4) recursively trying new pedagogical practices to see their consequences. These four principles of the alternative model of multicultural education aimed at building a creole pedagogical community are in contrast to the conventional pedagogical regime which results in a deficit model (cf. the principle of critical pedagogy and democratic education practiced and discussed by Shor, 1996).

In conventional education the learning environment is often not safe: students' mistakes are counted against them in such institutionalized practices as grading and even in traditional teacher-controlled discourse (Lemke, 1990; Mehan, 1979). Pedagogical mistakes that preservice teachers make with children in their practicum often are not safe for the children (and thus for the preservice teachers) as the children are forced to be in the classroom and to do what the adults demand them to do. The participatory structure of a conventional classroom is often unilateral and closed (Rogoff et al., 1996). A public space for discussions is at best very limited and at worst fully teacher-controlled (Bonk, Daytner, Daytner, Dennen, & Malikowski, 1999). Finally, in our observation, even when students have a teaching field experience, they rarely have ownership for their own pedagogical action, can recursively experiment with their pedagogical actions, and publicly reflect on this experimentation in class.

Although the four organizational principles of a new pedagogical regime were abstracted from our pedagogical practice as we tried to communicate to our colleagues what we do and why, it is not difficult to see conceptual roots of these principles in a family of theories with long traditions such as: social constructivism (Kafai & Resnick, 1996), pragmatism (Dewey, 1966), democratic education (Gutmann, 1999), critical pedagogy (Freire, 1986; Shor, 1996; Shor & Freire, 1987), sociocultural and sociohistorical approaches (Bakhtin et al., 1986; Vygotsky, 1978; Wertsch, 1998), feminism (Hicks, 1996) and so forth. These four principles are hardly new in innovative educational practices (Rogers & Freiberg, 1994; Rogoff, Bartlett, & Goodman Turkianis, 2001; Shor, 1996). In our view, these four principles are not "silver bullets" – they do not guarantee the absence of a deficit model and the building of a creole community. Rather they are institutional constraints that can facilitate and guide some emergent processes (as we believe they did while we worked on building a creole community) and obstruct others (like a deficit-based community). The new pedagogical regime can be reproduced and "tried" when the broader institutional culture and regime are favorable for such experimentation: institutional constraints leading to a deficit model are relaxed (e.g., the University does not require having exams or grading on a "curve",

professors have a lot of leeway in designing their courses) and the institution is supportive in giving necessary resources to start a new program (the university administration is committed to the necessary infrastructure of the program). These favorable institutional conditions both preexisted and were further developed during the project.

We argue that these four pedagogical principles make difficult (although not impossible) a deficit model and facilitate building creole educational communities. In this regime, the students' difficulties are treated not as evidence of dysfunctional beliefs to be corrected, but as opportunities for collective inquiry into their engagement with children. Students' inquiries are brought into a public space of discussion where the participants reveal underlying assumptions and values involved in the issues and develop approaches to deal with the issues that they test in practice. Building a creole community between the instructors and students in this class entailed developing new practices and altering the meaning of some old practices – with both teachers and students needing to accept practices rooted in the world of the other. This process parallels and models the process of creole community building that the students enact in their field experience placement.

Principle 1. Developing a Safe Learning Environment with an Open Participatory Structure

In order to learn through building a creole community of educators, preservice teachers must have an opportunity to be involved in authentic professional activity. In the case of a class with the purpose of teaching preservice teachers how to provide sensitive guidance to culturally diverse classrooms, engagement with diverse children is crucial. This engagement has to be safe for the participants in the sense that preservice teachers' professional mistakes should not lead to irreversible deterioration of relations between the teachers and the children. The structure of the engagement should be open in order to facilitate shared ownership and creative input by the students. This means that the organizational structure offered by the project leaders (by the instructor, TA, LACC officers) and inherited from previous participants needs to be open for public critique, suggestions, and modifications.

In the La Red Mágica project, the LACC children always have the opportunity to get away from the university students when the students are insensitive to the children's needs by physically moving to another game or by ignoring the students. This is less possible in traditional classrooms where children are expected and when necessary forced to do whatever the adult (e.g., a preservice teacher) asks them. The example below shows how the instructor and the TA used this safety principle to guide undergraduate UD students to the understanding that it was preferable to move away from the controlling and potentially abusive conditions that traditional classrooms had lead them to expect. The open structure of participation of the learning environment at the LACC allows the UD preservice teachers (and the LACC children) to develop ownership of their pedagogical actions, and makes their consequences more visible. For example, LACC girls' complaints that LACC boys run into the computer room first and then monopolize the computers led UD students to experiment with the organizational structure at LACC in order to find a solution in collaboration with the LACC children. The university classroom organizational structure was also under constant revision and transformation that involved all the participants – as the class syllabus said, "Everything in the class is negotiable except its meaningfulness" (cf. Shor, 1996).

Since giving final grades were required by the university institution and this was not negotiable (a major institutional constraint), the course instructors transformed the grading system to minimize “punishment for students’ mistakes” as much as possible (Shor, 1996). The instructors did not grade the quality but rather the quantity of the students’ participation (i.e., a number of web weekly postings, a number of weekly mini-projects, attendance, and so on). By shifting the student’s focus from the instructor’s judgment of their work to their participation with children one constraint, which pushed students toward focusing on external factors rather instead of the quality of their interaction with students, was removed. A related strategy, “The Exchange Favors Policy,” helped the students who deviated from the quantitative expectations compensate for the gap by making extra efforts to help our classroom community (for example, by finding useful websites, bringing articles, posting their overview analysis of weekly mini-projects, and so on). By making the consequences of not meeting participation requirements community-building ones this strategy recast class participation as something owed by the community rather than something done for a grade. The students’ initial focus on grades and requirements was used to encourage them to engage in new practices that were intended to develop their intrinsic interest and participation. Here is how two former students Sonia and Karen⁶ reflected on this process two months after the class was over in a conversation with the instructor:

Sonia: Shortly after the beginning of the class, my focus shifted from thinking what you want from us – what I should do to pass the class and to get A – to what we want to do at LACC.

Karen: I stopped worrying about my grade in the class after you said that you would let us know if we wouldn’t meet your expectations. You never warned me... so I did not know if it was true (she is laughing). But I relaxed.

Eugene (laughing): It was true. I warned some of you who did not meet my expectations.

Sonia: Right. Instead of worrying about grades, I started worrying about LACC kids and us – if they learned anything at LACC, if we helped them in the right way, if the LACC environment was helpful for the kids. Our class discussions, videos, and readings helped me to think through these issues to choose how to help the kids better and... and how to learn from the kids to help them better.

The evaluation focus shifted from how an individual student was doing in meeting the instructor’s expectations and goals to how the classroom community was doing in building relations with LACC children, providing guidance to them and solving emerging problems.

Principle 2. Opening up Public Space for Discussing Hot Topics from Professional Practice

Another layer (dynamic) of safety in the emerging ecology of a creole community of educators is a public space for recognizing, discussing, and addressing hot issues emerging from the students’ participation in professional practice and for sharing the range of their

⁶ All children’s, students’, and LACC officers’ name used in the paper are pseudonyms.

experiences. By publicizing personal discomfort, concerns, dilemmas, and issues, such public spaces provide opportunities for the students' reflection on their actions and for critical thinking about their practice. The engaged discourse that occurs there helps to develop a professional language to talk about the practice. It creates possibilities for recursively considering and polishing learning activities and pedagogical strategies (e.g., why and how to react in pedagogically appropriate ways to children's foul language) – in sum, it helps create a teaching culture (Stigler & Hiebert, 1998).

It took the students a few weeks to grasp the design and purposes of the class and the La Red Mágica program and even more time to get used to the alternative mindset they implied and begin acting out of it. As many students later reported, they faced questions like, “Why should we do such additional, time-intensive work for the class, if students who are taking other sections of the same class do not have to do it?” “How do we fit the bi-weekly teaching practicum into an already busy class schedule and life’s other obligations?” “What do we have to do to get A in this class?” “What exactly do they want us to do with the LACC kids?” Transforming questions of this type into questions about the students’ education and well-being became the initial class curriculum and a basis for establishing students’ collective ownership for the project (and the class). For example, students’ statements like, “I can’t go to LACC at 5 pm on Tuesdays,” were transformed by the instructor to “What is the most convenient time for us to go to LACC that day?” Rather than considering the students’ concerns about class requirements early in the course as annoying and distracting issues that the instructor had to deal with in a quick and private fashion by making necessary unilateral decisions and adjustments, the instructor and TA worked with the students to create a *public forum for the students’ concerns* as a basis for a professional community that owned its problems and solutions (Shor, 1996).

Communication with and about LACC children constantly moved from private or semi-public spaces to the formal, public space of web and class discussions. The students’ ownership of the issues that they dealt with defined the classroom and personal learning curriculum as illustrated in the interview with the two former students of the class:

Karen: In other classes, what I’ve been learning is very distant – it’s about other people that have nothing to do with me. It’s about “them,” not me. Even in the class on history of the women’s movement that I’m very interested, I study other people, their history. – not me. In contrast, in our class, learning was constantly about application to what I was doing, thinking, and struggling...

Sonia: Yeah, I remember we saw a video about a Japanese classroom [“Preschool in Three Cultures” (Tobin, Davidson, & Wu, 1989) – the authors] and I was thinking, “Wow, that’s interesting!” At that time, I wanted to have more structure at LACC. I came from a Catholic school background that had a very strict structure. There wasn’t anything similar at LACC. I couldn’t recognize any learning at LACC. I thought it was chaos because I could not see a familiar structure that I associated with learning. Just before watching the video, I was thinking that LACC was an after school environment and not school so it might be OK for the kids not to have much learning there. But then I saw the Japanese classroom that looked very much chaotic for me like LACC, but it was very clear that the Japanese kids learned there. So, I started thinking that maybe I couldn’t see learning at LACC, maybe LACC kids learn not like I learned in my Catholic school. Instead of pushing for more structure or giving up, I began watching more careful what

was going on at LACC and listening more careful to other people in the class when we were discussing kids' learning.

Karen: In other classes. I don't care if other students don't come in... for a lecture, ph!... but in our class. I cared because we helped each other to think through what we were going to do at LACC. We were together. It was very personal.

There was a constant explicit or tacit negotiation in the class about the boundaries between public and private topics or even what are officially public versus what were informally public topics. In the La Red Mágica project, the formal public space was constituted by the class meetings and the class discussion web. Before each class meeting, the instructor and TA developed a *shared class agenda* – a list of issues that the students want to discuss during the class meeting – which was written on the chalk board (cf. Shor, 1996). They encouraged the students to add their own issues to the list. Soon not only did students begin adding their own topics to the class agenda (e.g., to share their problems or exciting experience at LACC, to raise organizational issues, or to announce somebody's birthday) but they also began to bring to class newspaper articles and articles from other classes that were relevant for the current class discussions and foci. Although the students were welcome to speak and did speak without raising their hands during the class meetings, the instructor and TA clearly had more control over the class discourse and its topics by taking the floor as they wished and by managing the discussions. Control of the class web discussion was shared more equally by the whole class – the participants could support each other's postings by replying and prompting for reply or inhibit by not replying and, thus, ending the discussion thread. The instructor and TA did not have special privileges on the class discussion web but they had some special roles and made use of those roles and made tactical decisions as to whose postings they wanted to support or what issues they wanted to offer to the students to discuss. (However the students might not and often did not follow these issues). Regulation of what was appropriate or inappropriate on the public official space of the web discussion was often done through the practices of common etiquette. For example, one student posted a joke about another student who missed several class meetings without any announcement. She apologized when she learned also via the class web that the student was seriously sick (and thus could not share information about his circumstances).

The informal public space was constituted by participants' chatting on the van, at the LACC, and at the University. Often, a large group of students from the class were seen together immediately after the class chatting about class and out-of-class issues that might or might not later enter the official space. Many stories and topics related to the class were spread throughout the class via informal channels. Some of the stories were moved to the formal public space like, for example, one web posting that explained: "On our way home Wednesday night [in the van], we were talking a lot about the idea of teasing as part of Latin American culture. Eugene brought up a very good point." Other stories were kept informal but still public (like stories about students' private lives, their boyfriends and girlfriends) – these stories became important markers of the community because students saw each other as sources of help and comfort. Sometimes the instructor and the TA brought touchy issues that they informally noticed in the students' interaction. One example concerned adversarial relations among sorority and non-sorority students in the class. Two sorority students were ostracized from the rest of the class and were referred to as "those girls" rather than by first

name, as was customary with other students. To address this issue in an official public space and invite the students to consider it publicly, the TA (who was better aware of the problem than the male instructor) prepared a presentation on oppositional solidarity (i.e., group solidarity that is based on opposition to another group or individuals) with an initial safe focus on how LACC children build their oppositional solidarities. It was a surprise for us that the students immediately brought an example of adversarial relations among sororities and non-sororities on the campus as an example of oppositional solidarities in which they were involved. The ensuing public discussion led to disruption of adversarial relations among the students after the class meeting.

Moreover, some topics that were in the formal public space for a while could move to informal public space. For example, a discussion on homosexuality in the class and on the web later moved to a discussion on the van of a gay and lesbian international film festival and then moved back to the class web where a student who attended the festival provided reviews of the movies and their relevancy to our previous discussion of educational issues of homosexuality. There were plenty of indicators that the students were discussing issues from the class formal public space with each other, their friends and family outside of the class. Consider for example the following student's reply to an article about gender differences between boys' and girls' choices of computer games posted by the TA on the class web:

Dear Leda [TA], I loved this article. I thought it was great! I forwarded it to my boyfriend (we discuss women's issues a lot) and he forwarded it to his entire women's studies class. I think that many video games for girls, like Barbie games and the others described in the article, are sickeningly stereotypical. However, aren't all those shooting, fighting, and sports games that boys play also stereotypical? ...

Oscillation and cross-fertilization between the private, informal public, and formal public spaces of communication helped constitute a multifaceted community with a central focus on how to provide culturally sensitive guidance for all children.

It is important to note that at any given moment during the class, there were many hot issues in the foreground and background of the class' focus that were at different levels of intensity and phases of development. Each hot issue often initiates its own, often recursive, chain of processes. Often attempts to solve one hot issue generate other ones. For example, the students' attempts to democratize choice in LACC children's decisions about what game to play in the gym by introducing voting led to racist slurs from the children because the favorite games were not the same for different racial groups (see the more detailed description of the episode below). Addressing this hot issue was "interrupted" and "de-intensified" by a cursing event in which a LACC child disrespected one university student (below). Nevertheless, the hot issue of democratic decision-making in the gym did not disappear but was alive on the periphery of the cursing incident and reappeared later with a new intensity after gaining momentum from the successful resolution of the cursing incident. Thus, there were many "circles of hot topics" simultaneously "rotating" with different "speeds" and in different phases.

Principle 3. Developing Open and Inclusive Discourse in a Creole Community of Educators

The major focus of the discourse in a productive learning community of educators is on evaluating the consequences of educational actions enacted or considered by the participants. Participants in the discourse try either to add their support or to provide counter-arguments to other participants' statements about a specific educational action. Latour (1987) describes a similar process in scientific discourse as a "change of modalities" in scholars' statements that either elevate a prior statement to the status of scientific fact or lower it to the status of an incorrect hypothesis (i.e., "artifact"). As a result of this type of discursive activity, an educational action can be either elevated to an educationally sound practice or lowered to an educational mistake. For example, teasing as a pedagogical reaction to LACC children's misbehavior was elevated in this community to a pedagogically valid practice despite the concerns that some students and the instructor expressed (in other words, they tried to lower the modality of this strategy to one of a potential pedagogical mistake). However, trying to be "nice" with the children at the expense of the students' own well-being did not survive the scrutiny of the communal discourse. Through these discursive practices, the participants often could begin to see the underlying priorities and goals of the pedagogical actions considered that were initially hidden from them and to allow members of the community to contest them. For example, a web discussion on whether it is best to offer only one or a few art projects to the LACC children in the art room revealed some students' focus on control of the children and their prioritizing that control over the children's having choices and deciding for themselves what art project they want to do. Once uncovered, this motivation became a site for community members to contend over the pedagogical value of control.

This "uncovering" of discursive interaction was not limited to just the immediate participants in the class and in the La Red Mágica project but also involved a broader network of people who were not physically present in the class: the authors of the instructor-assigned and student-suggested readings, videos, and movies; the academic community mediated by the instructor, friends and relatives, the LACC children and their parents, and so on as participants used their ideas, experiences, and reasoning to build their arguments. The more diverse and inclusive this extended network and immediate participants in terms of interests, life trajectories, perspectives, and so forth are, the more critical the discourse. For example, watching an interview with a working class young Italian man from Boston in the video "American Tongues" (Alvarez, Kolker, & Media, 1987) helped the students realize that foul language could be an asset for working class boys that creates solidarity in some important social situations and settings (see Gee, 1996 for more discussion of foul language in working class communities).

Through such discursive practices, the learning community of educators builds communal knowledge and embodies communal values and aspirations.

Principle 4. Acting, Experiencing, and Reflecting on Pedagogical Consequences of their Actions

The discursive practices in a creole educational community are not just about rhetoric – how to convince other participants to accept a pedagogical action to which one is committed, -- but also about experiencing and considering the pedagogical consequences of this action. The value of recognizing the practical consequences of pedagogical actions is the development of criteria for judging their pedagogical soundness. Communal discourse helps to define, reflect, analyze, and critique pedagogical actions as well as to develop the criteria for their judgment. However, their final test, as well as final application, belongs to practice. For example, as we will see below, different participants raised their voices for and against the use of teasing as a pedagogically useful practice at LACC. However, it was a practical problem involving the students' discomfort about LACC boys using sexual language that demanded a solution and guided the class discourse, not the students' detached curiosity about the pedagogical appropriateness of teasing.

An example of such a cycle was the students' struggle with how to decide which game to play in the LACC gym. That dispute among the LACC children often led to a long impasse because of arguments and even fights among the children. After several class discussions, students decided to introduce the democratic decision-making procedure of taking a vote on which game to play first. The trial of the new strategy led to an even bigger conflict among the children, involving racial slurs like "Dirty Mexicans" applied to all children who wanted to play soccer. Through democratic voting, it became more visible that generally, Latino children (Puerto-Ricans, Mexicans, Dominicans, and Guatemalans) preferred playing soccer while African American children preferred basketball – although there were exceptions on both sides. Because there were more Latino children than African American children at the LACC (about 2:1), there was no way that basketball would win over soccer. This new problem of emerging racism as the consequence of the failure of the students' strategy forced the class to develop and test new approaches such as flipping a coin to select a game, introducing culturally neutral games, designing new games in collaboration with all children in the gym, and talking about racism with LACC children. The "failure" was a rich source of pedagogical exploration and collective learning. The students were pressed to develop new practices and new meanings for old practices that would better serve to unite and define the emerging creole community of game-players at LACC. The new practices did not attempt to erase the differences between the communities of soccer and basketball players; rather they reconstituted the meaning of these games at LACC and offered alternatives that both groups could embrace.

Each of the pedagogical actions generated a new set of issues. There were many hot issues at different phases of their development that generated their own cycles that overlapped in time with each other and which moved back and forth from the background of the communal focus to its center.

Bringing a cohesive, purposive, community of students into the LACC is a crucial step in the process we advocate. Without an established community of educators the process of "creolization" would be missing one of its communities. Below we consider and illustrate the consequences of developing a community of professional educators of this type for their activity as educators in our after school setting.

A COMMUNITY OF EDUCATORS IN ACTION: THE EMERGENCE OF A CREOLE EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITY FROM A DRAMATIC CRITICAL EVENT

To illustrate how the class functioned as a creole community of learners and educators, we have selected a dramatic episode in the life of the Fall Semester 1999 class. In this episode one of the students was disrespected and humiliated by one of the LACC preadolescent boys through the use of sexually exploitive language in Spanish. We selected this case for the following four reasons.

First, the incident of humiliation was related to a key issue in this class. Each semester, there are always a few main issues that constitute the class' major foci and organize the emerging learning curricula. In the fall 1999 semester, one of the major issues we had was the rough and sexually loaded language that the 9-13 year old LACC boys used. This usage was so well integrated into the boys' local LACC community that despite the LACC policy prohibiting cursing, they sometimes cursed openly, especially in situations when something did not work in their activities. Our UD students were very upset by young children using foul language. Their initial reaction was shock, and it resulted in a tendency to demonize the boys as simply bad. They did not know how to react or how to stop the children (or even why to do that).

Second, it exemplifies a broader multicultural issue. Minority children tend to be either demonized or romanticized in educational books and movies (e.g., the popular movie "Dangerous Minds"). The example we have selected shows the difficult complexity of learning how to work with minority children without using the heroes-villains mythology as well as the university students' hard work to achieve this. This is just the kind of clash of meanings/practices that too often lead our students to avoid teaching students of color and to avoid empathizing with the students of color they encounter. Until such issues can be seen as a clash of community conventions — rather than the individual problem of a few unnaturally, unchild-like and cruel children — little progress can be made in integrating the two communities into a productive and mutually respectful "creole" community of learners.

Third, the past and current practice of discrimination against and oppression of people of color in the US involves the demonization of people of color and people with low SES, viewing them often as "(un)naturally" violent, aggressive, disrespectful, and prone to criminality. (Racial profiling of black motorists on the New Jersey Turnpike "uncovered" in the late 1990s is one of many sad examples of such an attitude). This politically and socially unresolved business of our society puts an additional burden on many white middle-class teachers working with children of color. White liberally-minded middle-class teachers, aware of the issue, sometimes respond to the historically-grounded problem of unjust criminalization of people of color by becoming "extra nice" to children of color and children from poor families (Taylor, Gilligan, & Sullivan, 1995). In our observations (see below), they work hard to ignore the negative behavior of those children and to suppress the negative emotions that quite "normal" misbehavior among children of color would otherwise elicit. The consequence of this approach is often two-fold. First, children of color are not provided with guidance that white middle-class children in a similar situation would receive. Second, they are also ostracized from the classroom community because the teacher's hesitations to guide them lead to their being uninvolved with the problems that arise in the classroom

community. In sad fact, the effect of ignoring unwelcome behavior of children of color is to ignore the children themselves. Our example presented here involves an alternative way of dealing with this situation.

Fourth, the case is messy and demonstrates our conviction that our work as teachers is always in progress and open for critique. We believe that community life can be more usefully depicted for the purposes of teaching teachers in its aspect of “becoming” a community rather than in an illusory depiction of a stably functioning one, however ideally that state is depicted. We recognize that a community grows through critical events. Bakhtin (1986), Altman and Rogoff (1987), and Pepper (1967) argue that each event is a social and holistic process. Bakhtin (1986) reminds us that the Russian word “sobytie” (event) literally means “collective being.” He insists that an event is a *dramatic* dialogic intersection between voices and, sometimes, even a *collision* of somewhat incompatible voices, ideologies, and actors. We want to add to Bakhtin’s formulation the notion that the dramatic event in which we are interested also involves a *critical breakdown of their relations* when the participants cannot talk, act, participate, relate, or be in the way that they are used to (Matusov, 1999). We are informed here by Dewey’s notion of a “problematic” as an event that is triggered by the an interruption of the ongoing flow of events (Dewey, 1982). A dramatic critical event involves a discontinuity of participants’ identities. The old, familiar ways of talking, acting, participating, relating, knowing, thinking, and being (e.g., being “nice” to the LACC kids, suppressing negative emotions, and smiling falsely (Taylor et al., 1995)) become impossible to sustain during a collision, Bakhtin asserted. In a dramatic critical event involving a conflict with and a collision between participants’ goals, values, and voices, personal and communal identities necessarily change (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These dramatic critical events shake up the entire community, and old ways of practicing and relating become impossible – it is a moment of potential growth (or deterioration) and a time for testing and redefining communal values (Matusov, 1999, 2001).

The example below shows how a private issue that a student initially struggled with on her own became a public issue and the focus of the class discussion. It demonstrates how other students contributed to the communal process of meaning making, how the instructor mediated this process, what professional tools and alternative practices he offered to the community for attacking the problem, how a resolution of the public discussion led to students’ experimentation in their practice, and how the reflection on students’ experimentation was a recursive process. Rather than describe all details of this dramatic critical event, we have mainly focused on one illustrative class discussion based on in-class notes made by the TA and reflective notes made by the instructor that exemplify this process.

Instructor’s Account of the Dramatic Critical Event

I was ready to go to my Friday class, when I decided to check the class web on the Internet to see students’ recent discussion. One discussion thread captured my attention as a consequence of its unusual subject line:

Subject: "Kiss my balls"

From: Nancy

Date: Wednesday, 03 November 1999, 8:34PM [posted shortly after the student returned from her practicum at the LACC]

Today I was greatly disrespected at the LACC. One boy in the art room, about 11 years old said to me in Spanish that he wanted his balls in my mouth. Too shocked to respond, I gave him a dirty look and he smiled and walked away. He obviously knew what he was saying. Kelly, Cathy [classmates] and I had a long discussion about this and I felt very uncomfortable in this situation. I go to the LACC, like everyone else, to help those kids. But the experience that I had today made the time I spend there horrible. I wanted to leave early just to get out of the situation. Cursing and sexual jokes should not be allowed in the LACC. I think we should make rules about this. I don't want to deal with the same thing again and I don't think anyone else should either. Please tell me what you guys think should be done!!!

From: Cathy (reply to Nancy)

Date: Wednesday, 03 November 1999, 9:01PM

I was with Nancy in the art room and I heard what the kids were saying and I felt very uncomfortable in that situation, just as uncomfortable as I had felt when the comments were directed at me in the past. I really felt bad for Nancy, b/c she was so surprised and shocked by what they said. We did not know what to do. We did not want to shut down the art room b/c there were children in there that were working nicely. So we told the boys that they needed to stop that way of talking or they would have to leave. The younger boy said back "It's just a joke," to which we replied that it was not funny, and we would have to ask them to stop it or leave. I don't know what was exactly the correct thing to do in this situation. What do you all think?

I was shocked to read these messages because of the level of pain, helplessness, and despair they conveyed. It was clear to me that the event had traumatized these two students to a degree that they might not feel comfortable coming back to LACC. However, similar events would be experienced by many teachers in multicultural settings and, thus, focusing on this event can help the students in their future professional career. I knew we, as a class, had to focus on this event. I felt that the way we would deal with it would probably decide if the class was successful in preparing our students to work in diverse settings or not: the undergraduate students would either revert to talking about "those kids" or they would transform their experiences in a way that would aid them in becoming better teachers of children different from themselves. I did not have any strategy at hand beyond focusing the class on the event.

I was very surprised to read these postings for two reasons. First, I did not know about this disturbing event even though I was with my students at LACC that evening. I probably was in the computer room with other students when the incident happened. The students did not mention the incident on our way back, even though we discussed our experiences as usual. I wondered if it might have taken some time before Nancy could publicly discuss what happened with her. Second, I was surprised that Nancy, being a rather quiet and withdrawn person, felt comfortable to bring this painful topic to the entire class. Just before that class started, I talked with Nancy and Cathy; asking their permission to discuss the issue and use their web postings in class. Nancy indicated that her purpose in posting the message was to bring it for a class discussion. It was clear the Nancy considered the incident a public hot topic for our class.

For that class meeting, I had planned to discuss the Japanese educational system and culture, which was one of our class hot topics. The topic had emerged from our previous class discussions (especially about classroom management and use of teasing to that end by Japanese teachers), from difficulties that some students experienced with managing LACC children (see interview with the two former students mentioning this hot topic above), and the class readings scheduled for this day related to this topic. However, I felt that I could not ignore the incident at LACC and entirely focus on Japan. It seemed to me that it was a critical moment for Nancy, if not for the entire class. Either we could together find an approach for addressing the situation or they might develop insecurities about working with some minority children.

I came to the class very ambivalent as to how much time I should give for the discussion of the incident and how much we should spend on discussing Japan (since it was also a hot topic for the class).

Class Meeting (from Notes Made by the Teaching Assistant)

After 15 minutes of discussion about Japanese culture, the instructor announced his interest in addressing the issue of foul language brought up that week on the class discussion web. The instructor distributed a copy of Nancy's web posting. The students talked about the chaos in the art room that day. The instructor mentioned that that day there had been a visit from the state governor and that all the personnel were stressed out. However, despite this, the computer room was calm, very cooperative, and engaged. In the art room, there was a lot of complexity, and a deterioration of the communal ecology.

Many students expressed their opinions about the event and reasons for it. The discussion was very rich with ideas and topics. However, the core issue was how to deal with the problematic situation. They went back and forth about whether the boys should be understood and accepted or expelled from the art room. Here is an example of the students' discussion of the issue while the instructor reflected the students' points on the blackboard (see chart below).

Student: I want all kids in but I want disrespectful behavior out.

Student: I want to have all kids including those who are misbehaving and even disrespectful in, in LACC, rather than being outside, on streets. Especially the ones, who are violent, need to be there. That is (what) LACC and we are for.

Then there was some brief whole-class discussion about Native American traditions of rites of passage: piercing and tearing the skin, in response to a suggestion that the boy's behavior was some kind of rite of passage. Then the instructor turned the students' attention to the table on the blackboard that he made during the students' discussion of Nancy's case:

| <i>Issue: Do we want all the kids to stay in and not kick anybody out?</i> | |
|---|---|
| PROs | CONs |
| We care about all the kids Everybody should be able to come in The program is open Volunteer participation for the kids Kids' choice of activities and place to be at LACC Sensitivity to troubled kids Sensitivity to kids' native and peer cultures Talking dirty is normal for preadolescent boys They might not understand what they said We should serve especially those kids, who demonstrate troubled behavior | We're not helping kids who disrespect us by letting them stay in We feel like prisoners in the art room We are not used to it |
| <i>Teaching Dilemma: How can we access and help all the kids without collapsing ourselves?</i> | |

In the follow-up discussion recorded by the teaching assistant, the instructor praised the students for not trying to demonize the LACC children. However, he noticed that they developed “a big list of PROs and a short list of CONs.” He suggested that the students were in a “pendulum swing” of trying to be nice with the children at the expense of their own well-being.

Instructor: For how long can we be “nice” to all kids before quitting, before becoming mean, before becoming burnt out? Is being always “nice” helpful for the kids? Can slaves of kids teach the kids how to be free people?!

Instructor: Teaching is very relational. We teach relations. If we are uncomfortable going to the art room, we won't be able to create a safe learning environment that promotes freedom, respect, and creativity in the kids. If we're collapsing and emotionally overwhelmed, we can't do quality teaching, and we will become useless for the kids – the only thing we will teach is how to be victims. Remember flight attendant's safety instruction, “In case of emergency, help yourself first and then the dependent other.” We should help ourselves first. Sometimes we should prioritize our well-being.

Instructor: Possible steps to address the situation:

- Send the kid out or get him/her to apologize. (Nancy: The kid obeyed my request to leave the art room but I felt so bad...)
- Talk with the kids about how upset you are. Share your emotions. Cry if it helps you and you feel comfortable. Share your pain. The kids will understand. They're very compassionate. They like us.
- If that's not enough for restoring yourself, close the art room. Ask Molly [the LACC youth director] or Mike [the site coordinator] and other students to help you.
- Move to the computer room and recoup by having a good teaching experience with kids. Restore yourself emotionally. Regain your willingness to come back to LACC. Have fun with kids.

Student: But the kids would be out. We come to be with the kids.

Instructor: They were out [i.e., without the students] before you come and after you leave. What is important is what we do with the kids and how we relate to them rather than our physical presence in the art room. If we feel like we are in prison, we probably should interrupt this experience.

Student: What about the kids who were cooperative in the art room? Would they be penalized for a few who behaved disrespectfully?

Instructor: Good point... it's not about penalizing anybody... but I think that it's more educational for them to move out of the place that enslaves other people and to go to places where all people feel themselves free. You can explain it to them. What do you think?

Students kept discussing the issues that the instructor defined as sexism at LACC. The instructor suggested inviting the LACC youth director who, like the students, was a young white middle-class female and a graduate of the University of Delaware, to the class to talk about how she deals with sexism at LACC. He also suggested asking Leda, the TA, who is a female from Panama and has had experience working at LACC. Leda suggested talking with LACC staff and asking for their insights. The instructor acknowledged that as a white male, he had limits to how much insights and guidance he could provide on this important issue. He promised to check academic and educational literature on this topic for next class meeting.

Even when the class was over, several students kept discussing with the instructor the issues. One student expressed her viewpoint on the matter, a viewpoint apparently shared by many other students at that time, "I should admit that your advice to close the art room was unexpected to me. I expected you to tell us how to accommodate that boy. Now I see a new goal at LACC – to learn how to be myself with the kids. I enjoy working with the kids but I was not myself. I'm uncomfortable telling kids what I don't like. I'm a pretty direct person. I don't want to be rude or yell at kids or something..." Several other students including Nancy who were present there immediately agreed with the new goal. They expressed their excitement with the new goal of becoming comfortable being with the children at LACC. The instructor replied, "It takes time to find ways to be comfortable with [the] kids [at LACC]. It is good idea to experiment. You're right — not everything should go that is comfortable for us. Sometimes we must do what is uncomfortable for us, teachers. Our comfort is important but not always a priority. I think it's a dilemma how to negotiate and develop a mutual comfort. Expect from yourself to do mistakes -- it is OK. Kids understand our mistakes, they know that we mean well. They learn from us by observing what we do when we make mistakes. Please, let us [the class] know about your efforts to become more yourself with kids. Write on the web [about your experiments and new experiences], please."

AN EDUCATIONAL CREOLE COMMUNITY AT LACC: INSTRUCTOR'S ACCOUNT OF THE EVENT (CONTINUED)

After the class, Nancy told me that she again felt excited about going to LACC because she wanted to try some new ideas on how to be more assertive. We continued looking for practical solutions to this problem. In another class meeting, we had a dramatic play simulating a situation where two children, played by our students, cursed while playing a

computer game. The students split into small groups and had to come up with a strategy for stopping “children’s” cursing because cursing was unpleasant for the students. The students playing “children” were from other groups and did not know the strategy that the “teacher” used. The groups tried different approaches, from trying to be “nice” to the “children” to trying to be adversarial. The class saw where the emerging dynamics of “teacher-children” interaction would lead each approach. After each demonstration and its discussion by the whole class, the next group tried to take into account the consequences of the previous groups’ strategies. The most successful group was the last one that tried to be “honest” with “children” in communicating their discomfort with children’s cursing and to provide the children alternative language to express their frustration with the game.

The students continued trying new ideas to deal with the issue of how to facilitate building a culturally diverse community in which members from both communities could be comfortable. For example, one of the students suggested on the class discussion web that we use teasing, common in Japanese culture, to stop cursing at LACC and to communicate UD students’ discomfort with certain behaviors of the LACC children. This idea of teasing stemmed from discussion of a few videos of Japanese classrooms and the instructor sharing his experiences visiting Japan and Japanese schools.

Subject: Laughing to Discipline

After class today, we discussed the video and the different approaches used by the different cultures. I thought the example of a Japanese child stealing a toy and then being laughed at by the teacher was really strange but when you think about it, it actually kind of makes sense. Nobody likes to be laughed at in a mean way, which is what the Japanese teachers were referring to. I know if I were teased badly enough I would stop whatever it was that caused the teasing.

Knowing this now, do you guys think we should tease the students at the LACC when they curse at us or when they do something we don’t want them to do? I wonder what would happen if we tried that one day. I know it’s an extreme idea but I wonder what their reactions would be. It probably wouldn’t work though because it’s not like they had been brought up that way from the beginning like the Japanese kids had been. Just a thought.

During our web-based discussions, we often tried to provide alternative views, foresee desired and undesired consequences, and make an evaluation of a suggested pedagogical action. Below is one of such evaluations as a response to the posting, also appearing on the discussion web:

I personally do not like teasing especially to put people down. I would much rather ignore the behavior because I feel the kids are looking for a reaction and by ignoring the misbehavior it will stop. However, I realize in different countries teasing is looked at in a different way. Just as Leda [the TA] mentioned the other day. [Leda had remarked that in her experience, teasing practice was common among Hispanic and Black peoples.] So...I would be willing to try teasing to see if it has any affect on the kids. What do you think?

Eugene (the instructor) warned the students to be careful with their experimenting with teasing, worrying that some children and students might be hurt. He wrote on the web,

This is a very interesting idea. However, I want to caution that laughing at kids may be rather harmful and even dangerous. Japanese way of laughing is based on idea creating dependency of the child from the parents and the teachers. Laughing in these circumstances is a way of shaming the child who jeopardize the community or family that gives him/her emotional and other supports and comfort. It is shame of not fulfilling high expectations that family and community place on each member. Please, do not forget that both Japanese teachers and parents indulge kids a lot (by American standards).

In my view, we should be very careful to borrow cultural strategies because they may be supported by other elements of cultural practices.

What do you think?

The emerging disagreement between the instructor who was not comfortable with the students experimenting with teasing at LACC and the students who wanted to try teasing brought about another dramatic event, another collision that could potentially result in the growth or deterioration of the classroom community. Informed by the instructor's warning, many students focused their attention on how teasing was done at LACC by the children and by the LACC adult staff. Classroom and web discussion of teasing and its cultural variations continued. Students actively searched for and interviewed representatives of Latin and Afro-American cultures both inside and outside of LACC to learn about culturally appropriate and expected forms of teasing as a culturally sanctioned way of indirectly dealing with uncomfortable issues. Finally, despite the instructor's warning, some students tried the strategy that they found to be rooted in the LACC and used by LACC officers and reported about the results to the class via the discussion web:

On our way home Wednesday night [in a university van], we were talking a lot about the idea of teasing as part of Latin American culture. Eugene [the instructor] brought up a very good point. He pointed out that Kris, the LACC worker that is usually near the front desk, has a really strong and positive relationship with the kids. He is constantly teasing them, often about things that our culture would usually find over the limit such as weight or calling someone ugly, but at the same time, he can silence the entire group of kids in two seconds when he needs to. Because they love and respect him, he is their friend and their disciplinarian. Inspired by this, I decided to see if I could successfully make myself part of that group of rowdier boys (Jose, Pablo, etc). When we were waiting in the TV room on Thursday night before everything got started, I walked over to where they were sitting. As I approached them, Jose said to me, "You can't sit near me!" I quickly responded, by walking around him to a seat on the other side of the group and saying, "Why would I want to sit next to you?! You Smell!" All the boys thought this was hysterical. They even brought one of the older teenage boys in to tell him how I "dissed" Jose. Jose was a little put out at first, but he bounced right back. I know that these kids get teased a lot worse than that all of the time. He was a really good sport about it. The boys were *even more surprised* [italics ours] when I understood some of their conversations and joking in Spanish right after. So, I was successful. "Una gringa" made it into their group! (even if it was only for a second!)

Following Bakhtin, we claim that the teasing introduced by the university student has essentially a carnival nature aiming at the rebirth of a community (Bakhtin, 1984). Like a carnival profanity, it involves ambivalence and lowering language and contexts. The reference to a body function (i.e., unpleasant odor, smell) should not be viewed as "offensive physiologism" but rather as breaking sociocultural boundaries and fences with which individuals have surrounded themselves: gender (male vs. female), age (preadolescent vs.

young adult), ethnicity (Latino vs. Anglo-Caucasian), socio-economic class (working class vs. middle class), situation (“I don’t want to sit with you!”). Through a reference to a lower body-function, this carnival teasing – “friendly abuse” (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 422) – shifts the focus of communication from an individual to the universe: “you smell”, “people smell”, “I smell”, “the universe smells.” Bad smell, bodily lower stratum (Bakhtin, 1984, p. 78), is a common denominator of the entire universe – it makes things in the universe, and especially humans with their material bodies, familiar to each other, it breaks impenetrable social boundaries among people. Friendly teasing is a dialogic provocation (an invitation to a dialogue) through shared laughter where the Latino boy Jose was treated as both the object and a co-participant for the laughter.

This teasing was very different from the sexual innuendo of the previous incident where the UD student Nancy was treated solely as the object of the “joke” rather than a dialogic partner, where the boy’s solidarity with other LACC boys was achieved at the expense of humiliation of the UD student. The sexual innuendo exploited and reinforced the preexisting boundaries between the working class Latino boys and white middle class young adult females from the University. These preexisting boundaries were based on the history and, probably, the participants’ first-hand experience of and dealing with racism, sexism, classism, agism, groupism (i.e., oppositional solidarity, see Sherif, 1988), and so on. Nothing new occurred there: the social world reinforced its boundaries and existence. The world is old and stable. In contrast, Lisa’s teasing of Jose was an invitation for friendship based on a carnival-like flip-flop inversion: “I don’t want to sit with you because you smell” is read to mean “I’d love to sit with you because I like you.” This carnival inversion communicates affection without sentimentality and objectification (objectification like, for example, in the exclamation “oh, you’re so cute!” that adults often say about a child whose looks they find pleasing). As in a Bakhtinian carnival, the teasing had a cultural frame guiding the participants in how to “read” the ambivalent messages as the LACC kids recognized that Lisa “dissed” Jose and Lisa recognized that she was teased back by Jose (unfortunately we do not have the exact account of that teasing response). Everyone was (actually or potentially) an object of and participant in carnival laughter. The participation in the shared teasing and laughter not only broke the pre-existing rigid boundaries and fences between the UD student and the LACC boys but also built new relations and a new community among them.

Of course, the UD student took a risk of not only engaging in a novel practice that was culturally alien for them (as they stressed, in their home cultures “you have to be nice with people”) but in a practice in which failure could be really costly for their future relations with the LACC children. However, the alternative to taking this risk was growing alienation from many LACC children. Old ways of relating became increasingly impossible to continue as tension between some UD students and LACC children grew. Another student assessed the success and wanted to apply it to broader circumstances,

That’s so funny Lisa [she referred to the author of the previous posting cited above]...maybe we should all try it. I know I’ll be giving it a shot. Maybe that might even curb some of the sexual comments towards some of us too. Maybe if we tease them right back and they accept us as their friends, they will just treat us as they treat their other friends at the LACC. I would MUCH rather them tease me jokingly about little things like what Lisa was talking about than be the object of sexual jokes from 7 year olds. Maybe Lisa is on to something!

Some students did try to tease LACC children about their unwelcome sexual jokes and it indeed curbed this undesired practice of the LACC with such power that future university students never dealt with this issue again.

In our view, the effectiveness of the students' stopping unwelcome sexual innuendo was due to an emergent creole practice. LACC boys recognized the student's attempt to engage in a practice of teasing that was meaningful for them and culturally alien for the UD white middle-class female students, "gringas." Lisa's action of teasing was counterintuitive (i.e., "surprising" – see Lisa's quote above) because it contradicted the past stable and recursive relations between her and the LACC boys that were excluding her (and the other UD students) from the boys Spanish-speaking culture. She acted *as if* she had been a part of their community (acting or talking *as if* is referred to in the literature as building "new prolepsis" (Rommetveit, 1979, 1985) and arguably is the essence of any new communal "sharedness"). In their response, the LACC boys accepted Lisa's offer of new prolepsis for a new community that included Lisa. Lisa's attempt at teasing could have gone either way: the boys could have become aggressive toward Lisa, or they could have singled out Jose as a scapegoat who could not respond to this UD *gringa* girl in an "appropriate" way, or they could have recognized Lisa's reply as the sort of teasing common in their local culture – a teasing which identified the teaser as an inappropriate target. They chose the latter. Their reply defined Lisa's action as successful teasing (according to Mead (1974) meaning is constructed in a reply from others to the actor's action). Her understanding of their jokes in Spanish and Jose's generous reaction to the teasing clarified (if not gave) the meaning of the dramatic critical event as building a new "we." The attempts at teasing and the risk behind it (a risk on both parts) created another dramatic critical event (Bakhtin's "collective being") constituting a shared experience of the new community. The possibilities of this emergent process were overlooked by the instructor in his initial concerns that teasing could be dangerous for the UD students to engage in.

The formerly well-defined communal boundaries segregating the LACC boy community and the UD white middle-class female community of undergraduate students blurred (although never fully disappeared), creating a new creole community. The dynamic processes started by Lisa and the LACC boys stabilized in a few subsequent weeks, as joking in Spanish and English and mutual teasing between UD students and LACC boys became a common experience while sexually unwelcome comments disappeared. When in future semesters, new boys joined the LACC and tried to make sexual comments about UD students (who were also new), they were not supported by the LACC oldtimers and were often put down. New cultural norms had been established.

Nancy's comments in her final mini-project about what she learned in the class is interesting; she reflected on the whole process of learning in a community of educators:

"In this class, we were given a once in a lifetime opportunity to make mistakes and learn from them in a situation like a classroom where, in the future, we may not be able to make mistakes. Even from the "I want my balls in your mouth" experience, I learned that children just want to get a rise out of you. In class discussions, I have heard other people's opinions and views that I never thought of..."

It was apparent that not only had students regained their excitement for working with the LACC children after the dramatic event involving Nancy, but they also had moved forward in

building a new, culturally diverse community of learners that included themselves and the LACC children. This development was encouraged by the classroom focus on dealing with tough issues and on promoting honest but supportive communication with the LACC children, by honoring their own culture's commitment to not cursing, by using the Hispanic culture's practice of teasing and by simply keeping folks productively engaged and undefeated by the collision of cultures. Crucial moments in this development of a new, more productive *creole* community of learners were the instructor's indication that the students needed to acknowledge and respect their own culturally-based discomfort with cursing and sexual innuendo in young children, and the students' work to integrate the cultural practices of "other" cultures (teasing) into their own practice. Children cursed less and university students teased more—the new mix of practices, drawn from both cultures, signals a new, if temporary and partial, community of practice. However, before the two communities could interact, the university students had to exist as the sort of vital community that could, in practice, resist the instructor's doubts about the ultimately successful teasing strategy.

CONCLUSION

This approach and the pedagogical design of the class was based on building a creole educational community that allowed us to avoid the trap traditional classrooms set for multicultural education where instruction is based on an implicit individualistic deficit model and the transmission or construction of the predetermined "correct" (often liberal or middle class) values defined by the instructor, while the explicit class curriculum focuses on criticizing deficit and transmission of knowledge models that teachers use in traditional schools. By focusing on the emerging issues and concerns of the students working with LACC children as the primary source of the classroom curriculum, this design promotes unity between the content and the method of the class and between classroom curriculum and practices to be studied. At the minimum, the legacy of this multicultural education lies in the students' positive experiences and *nostalgia* about a culturally diverse learning community in which they experienced success, which prepares them to be change agents in their future educational institutions. Students learn how to manage their relations with culturally diverse children, to perceive such children differently, and to have habits of engagement that they can use as tools to promote sensitive guidance rather than having accumulated a set of "silver bullets" (objectively proved through scientific research) to use as teacher tricks. The worlds of school and targeted practice are aligned.

The model of multicultural education for preservice teachers presented here is based on building an educational creole community of learners and educators through a chain of dramatic critical events that treats both the instructor and the students as learners and educators (practitioners) in different but related ways. The class instructor is a practitioner-learner because his primary responsibility is to educate preservice teachers and his secondary responsibility is to learn how to do this job better. The students are learner-practitioners because their primary responsibility is to learn how to teach and their secondary responsibility is to educate the LACC children. Thus, the class functions as a community of both learners and educators.

This model of becoming a new practitioner by participating in the development of an innovative creole community of educators is different from two classical models of becoming teachers: 1) traditional schooling, where dramatic critical events of the type we have discussed as "hot topics" are subordinated to teaching skills (Haan, 1999), and 2) apprenticeship, where the apprentice is placed on the periphery of the practice (Coy, 1989; Lave & Wenger, 1991). In the model of building an innovative creole community of educators, events are embedded in the main practice (as is true of the apprenticeship model); however, students are in the center of defining and carrying on the main practice rather than placed on its periphery by old-timers. Production of a new practice, rather than reproduction of an old established practice, is emphasized and prioritized in the model.

The illustrations in this article have shown how we may avoid some of the pitfalls associated with the 'deficit/remediation' model of teacher education. In focusing on education students' emerging issues and concerns in a responsive, collaborative and genuinely inquisitive way, students are allowed to explore their current reactions, and to question the beliefs that underlie them. Multicultural education for preservice teachers shifts to being about building a professional community capable of developing a creole learning community composed of culturally diverse participants through dealing with dramatic critical events when often incompatible voices, identities, attitudes, backgrounds, ideologies, and practices collide. The dramatic critical events often force the participants to examine their views about others and themselves and to take risky, and sometimes counterintuitive, actions to disrupt old and familiar ways of doing things in order to build new and better relations with others who were not yet a part of their "we". This process of 'creolization' produces new cultural practices, values, and locally meaningful ways of talking, doing, and being. This process is facilitated and guided by a distinctive pedagogical regime that is aimed at creating a safe learning environment, engaging participants in the production of a new practice, promoting a public space for critical dialoguing, and by encouraging the participants to try new approaches and actions.

A traditional view of culture is often a static, ready-made concept of something that has developed in the past - language, traditions, practices, ways of doing things (cf. Latour's notion of "ready-made science" (Latour, 1987)) and becomes what Latour calls "a black box." We argue that this view of culture, although useful in certain cases, can essentialize the notion of culture as "a context" for individual actions (influencing the actions) and/or enforce the view that people are simply carriers and containers of a culture. Following Latour, we argue that ready-made culture has to be replaced with the notion of "culture-in-action". Again we see the dialogic framework useful for building the culture-in-action approach. Specifically, we think that Bakhtin's (1986) ideas about voice are applicable to the notion of culture-in-action. Like Bakhtin argued that any voice is essentially heteroglossic (multivoiced), we suggest that any culture is essentially multicultural and creole (cf. with Latour's conceptual move of "opening a black box"). Further, like Bakhtin who argued that new voices are developed on the boundary of diverse voices and through a collision of incompatible voices, we also suggest that a new culture develops on the boundaries of cultures through a dramatic critical event (or a series of such events) where the cultures, communities, and participants - their voices, identities, practices, values, and so on - can no longer coexist in the old ways and collide.

What are the limitations of the model? Does the creole model work for all? What if Hitler enrolled in the class? Honestly, we do not know. We do not have enough experience with

running the model (only 6 years for the first author and 1.5 years for the third author) to accumulate negative experiences. So far, our most visible failure was with the instructor's violation of the 2nd principle (to some degree) in his pushing for creating new projects at LACC that led to diminishing students' ownership for the program. But even this problem, corrected in the second part of the semester, did not affect the building of creole communities in the long-run. In our view, this problem was evidence of the strength of the model rather its limitation – violation of one of the principles constituting its pedagogical regime disrupted the desired pedagogical processes. Currently, we are expanding the program to include more sections and more faculty members teaching the La Red Mágica classes. We hope to accumulate and to reflect on new experiences to address the issue of the model limitations.

However, speaking conceptually, we think/speculate that our creole pedagogical model, like any pedagogical model, has its limitations. In our view, these limitations are not defined by participants' (incompatible) "backgrounds" but rather by tensions/fragmentations in the society that cannot be approached pedagogically (that is, locally and interactionally) and may require political, economic, technological, legal, or other actions from a broader community/society.

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