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A Case Study of Interactions With Multicultural Literature in a College Freshman English Classroom

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A CASE STUDY OF INTERACTIONS WITH MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE IN A COLLEGE FRESHMAN ENGLISH CLASSROOM

by

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This dissertation, submitted by Joan Whitchurch Kopperud in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

(Chairperson)

This dissertation meets the standards for appearance, conforms to the style and format requirements of the Graduate School of the University of North Dakota, and is hereby approved.

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Signature Joan Kopperud

Date July 20, 1994

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ABSTRACT

This paper considers the perceptions and interactions of a teacher and students in a college freshman English course. The researcher examined how multicultural literature was incorporated into that course and how students responded to the selections and classroom activities.

The study followed an inductive methodology; that is, abstractions were based upon observations and experiences from the participants rather than deduced from prior theories. Classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and course written documents provided data for analysis.

Based on this study's data collection and analysis, three themes emerged: First, the teacher's authenticity as a person and teacher contributed to a meaningful learning experience for the participants; second, active, student-centered learning experiences provided students opportunities to explore their own questions and ideas; and, third, the strong sense of connectedness in the class setting facilitated positive engagement for the participants within the learning community. Data suggested that text, teaching style, instructional method, class activities, and interactions among teacher, students, and outside voices all contributed to the development of students' understanding of other cultures.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

> People who know nothing of their past are culturally impoverished. People who cannot see beyond their own lives are ill-equipped to face the future. (Boyer, 1983, p. 6)

In 1938, Thornton Wilder's Our Town depicted the lives of countless Americans from small towns across the nation. Most Americans could relate their own lives and the lives of their neighbors to the characters and themes of the play. Children were born into a circle of common language, shared values, and similar experiences and influences. The people usually lived and worked within that circle throughout their lives and did not need to know a great deal about the circles of others who may be different from themselves. In the 1990s, however, "our towns" have changed. Current demographics indicate that American towns and cities no longer reflect a homogeneous circle of people whose neighbors share beliefs, customs, and traditions. Demographic projections recently released by the U.S. Bureau of Census indicate a rapidly shifting distribution of the population according to ethnic origin. For example, between 1990 and the year 2050, the Bureau projects the number of persons of Hispanic origin in the United States will more than double, while by the same year, the "white," or, Euro-American,

population will decrease by more than 20% (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993). Goodenough (1976) argued that multicultural awareness is an integral part of the human experience.

> All human beings, then, live in what for them is a multicultural world, in which they are aware of different sets of others to whom different cultural attributions must be made, and of different contexts in which the different cultures of which they are aware are expected to be operative. (p. 5)

The children born in America today are not likely to stay within their own circles as they grow to adulthood. People from different circles are not likely to "melt" into the circle of the dominant culture, as long suggested by the melting pot theory. The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts that minorities and women will compose the majority of the labor force by 2005 (Exter, 1992, p. 63). The Bureau's data illustrate increasing diversity in the American workforce. In order to better understand and accept the differences reflected in a pluralistic, interdependent society, this nation's children need access to the circles of others who may be different from themselves.

Changing demographic patterns impact every institution of society, including education. The United States of America has long sought to provide an education for its citizens. A century ago, Americans passed laws which ensured the educational needs of the next generation would be met; towns and villages were guaranteed by law to have schools and teachers to educate their children.

But the communities and schools American forebearers envisioned did not look like the cities and schools of the 1990s. It is imperative that American schools meet today's challenge of helping students understand themselves and reach beyond themselves in order to better understand and appreciate the complexity and diversity of people in the world.

> The world has become a more crowded, more interconnected, more volatile and unstable place. If education cannot help students see beyond themselves and better understand the interdependent nature of the world, each new generation will remain ignorant and its capacity to live confidently and responsibly will be dangerously diminished. (Boyer, 1983, p. 4)

A study which focuses on understanding and appreciating diversity is timely because there is evidence that racial conflict remains at high levels. In 1992, Klanwatch, a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, documented more than 270 hate crimes; more than half of these crimes were committed by teenagers (O'Neil, 1993, p. 61). Although schools alone cannot eliminate such discord, they can assume a role which provides policies, practices, and curricula which support and value diversity.

At all levels, educators have entered into serious debates about multiculturalism. A number of difficult issues and questions have been raised, including which terminology is the most appropriate. Support for, objections to, or just plain confusion often surround terms such as *multicultural, multiethnic,*

cross-cultural and even *race.* Therefore, in order to facilitate the discussion of this study and its findings, *multicultural literature* refers to "works that arise in the context of other cultures or people geographically separate from the fifty states of the United States of America" (Stotsky, 1994, p. 28).

Multicultural discussions often center on curricular decisions and instructional practices in classrooms, since it is here students develop the base of knowledge upon which future learning experiences rest. The broad issues associated with a more ethnically diverse America are prompting educators to consider changes in student learning activities and materials. Many educators seek to provide educational experiences which enable <u>all</u> students to recognize themselves in the school curricula and activities, and to understand differences and distinctions in others. Minnesota is one of many states that has mandated school-wide curricular changes in order to meet the changing needs of individuals and society with regard to understanding different cultures. In 1989, the Minnesota State Board of Education passed the Multicultural and Gender Fair Curriculum Rule. Part of this ruling requires that school boards in each district adopt a written plan to develop and to put into place a more inclusive educational program:

> One that employs a curriculum that is developed and delivered so that students and staff gain an understanding and appreciation of . . . the cultural diversity of the United States. . . . The program must reflect the wide range of contributions by and roles open to

> Americans of all races and cultures. (Department of Education, 1990, pp. 2-3)

Primary and secondary educators are not the only ones grappling with difficult multicultural discussions and decisions. Educators in higher learning also have entered debates about what students need to know regarding cultural diversity and understanding similarities and differences if they are to become truly educated members of society. There is an increasing call for higher education to examine such issues. Siggelkow (1991) asserted:

> Incoming undergraduates too often enter college without real understanding of social and psychological elements that spawn racism, and lack insight into our unique form of American apartheid. If we can alter stereotyped views . . . through curricular change we might find out that education really works. We can hardly continue to expect the elementary and secondary schools to shoulder all the guilt and blame consistently showered on them by spokespersons in higher education. (p. 103)

Campuses nationwide are responding to multicultural issues in various ways. Numerous institutions have created special courses in multiculturalism and some have required such courses. For many colleges or universities, the agenda guiding the institution's aims, goals, and objectives emphasizes the importance of diversity. For example, one college's curriculum plan expresses the following:

> Students should develop a breadth of knowledge and not be confined in their study to a single time, to a single way of examining the world, to a single culture. That is, students should . . . develop an awareness of and an appreciation for diversity, not only within their own culture but among other cultures as well. (Concordia College, 1984, p. 11)

Whether by choice or mandate, many of today's educators find themselves seeking innovative strategies and materials which better represent all members of society to help students understand diversity. One strategy for increasing students' cultural understanding and appreciation of diversity is the inclusion of multicultural literature in the curriculum. Rosenblatt (1983) proposed that "literature can be an important medium for enhancing a pride in ethnic roots while at the same time fostering a sense of community with other Americans of different ethnic heritages--an orchestration of diversities in our pluralistic society" (p. xi). If literature voices the human experience, then the multiplicity of voices present in the world today speak through the literature by and about various cultures. The literature of other cultures may provide a means by which students are encouraged to enter the circles of others. Culturally diverse writing encourages readers to hear the authentic voices of others whose experiences are different from their own. Such literature provides a lens to examine the lives of others, that is, to see another culture's common language, shared values, and experiences. Multicultural literature in a college-level curriculum may provide a

bridge between students' present and future understanding of others. However, simply adding multicultural literature to the curriculum may not guarantee students will increase their understanding and appreciation of others.

As teachers discuss and adapt to the multicultural curricular changes, it is imperative that educators reach beyond text selection issues. Not only must teachers seek multicultural selections which will accomplish their course goals effectively, but they must also develop strategies for teaching the selections so students do indeed begin to understand and appreciate diversity. In a recent review of Braided Lives, one of the countless multicultural anthologies now appearing, Hertzel (1992) suggested that despite its insightful section prefaces, strong literary selections, and excellent bibliographies, the text offers:

> No real clue about how literature might function successfully in the classroom as a force for multicultural harmony. . . . Good as this anthology is, it will not achieve much in the way of effecting better understanding among cultures if we just put it in the hands of well meaning English teachers and say, "Go forth and teach. Hope for the best." (p. 5).

Hertzel raised a crucial point: How does multicultural literature actually function in the classroom? In addition to what the multicultural text selection should be, it seems paramount that educators consider how the multicultural literature might be taught and how the students respond to the literature and activities.

In many ways, institutions of higher learning are microcosms of society. On college campuses, students of varied ethnic backgrounds, socioeconomic levels, intellectual capacities, and attitudes come to live, learn, and prepare for future roles. Because of the variation and breadth of students' past experiences brought to the college classroom, the setting provides a strong opportunity to explore the inclusion of multicultural literature from a wide range of perspectives. Therefore, this study was conducted in a college in which individual and community concerns for the future are directly encountered.

This study examined the inclusion of multicultural literature in a college-level English course; one of the course's goals was to enhance student understanding and appreciation of diversity. The researcher examined how one teacher incorporated such literature into her entry-level English course and how students responded to the multicultural selections and classroom activities. Although specific, pre-determined research questions or hypotheses were not posed for this study, general questions provided a background focus for the research. Does culturally diverse literature encourage students to consider perspectives of people from cultures different from their own? How does reading multicultural literature influence students' understanding of others and understanding of their own lives? What role does the teacher play in the students' classroom experience with multicultural literature? The intent of this study was not to answer specific questions; rather, it was to observe first-hand

then interpret the teaching and learning experiences with multicultural literature in a college English classroom.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the rationale and procedures used to study the multicultural literature experiences of one teacher and her students in a small liberal arts college; the study focuses on one entry-level English class setting for the length of one semester. The first section of this chapter describes the rationale for the study's qualitative design; the second section of the chapter details the specific procedure followed in conducting this study.

Rationale for Choice of Methodology

America has long held a fascination with numbers, striving to measure, assess, evaluate, and quantify most facets of society. This penchant for measurement is what Kaplan called "The Law of the Hammer": "Give a small boy a hammer, and he will find everything he encounters needs pounding" (Guba, 1968). The "pounding" Kaplan described has long been practiced in the field of education. There is no doubt that numerical measurement often has provided educators with valuable information for decades. Attaching numbers to people and programs in educational research often facilitates the handling of large quantities of data, but methodology dominated by measurement and experimental design does not always provide the only meaningful insights to educational

practice. There are times when the traditional, positivistic examination of an educational setting may not be adequate because the scene may deal largely with human beings, interactions, or social issues, all of which are difficult to measure with numerical values. On the other hand, qualitative research recognizes the context-bound nature of the educational setting and seeks inductive rather than deductive understanding of what is happening. The qualitative researcher employs multiple means of data collection in order to investigate the inside perspective. The researcher becomes the primary data collection instrument, preferred for the qualities of flexibility, responsiveness, and ability to provide insights.

Experimentalism or other forms of quantitative research are appropriate methodologies for certain kinds of questions; however, in settings such as classrooms, measured responses by teachers and students to predetermined questions may not provide the larger picture of what is happening. Since a class setting is rich with ideas, responses, actions, and interactions, the study conducted by a well-trained qualitative observer and interviewer offers a more comprehensive knowledge and perspective about the substance, the process, and the meaning of student and teacher understanding in such a milieu. Since multicultural literature is likely to raise issues which stimulate emotional as well as intellectual responses, it is crucial that important data not be overlooked due to limitations of the research design.

The qualitative methodology seemed appropriate for my research since the study of literature is a human enterprise. Rosenblatt (1978) theorized that during the literature-reading experience, a unique and powerful transaction occurs between the reader and the text. Other findings concur that there is indeed a special relationship between the text and the reader (Fish, 1980; Probst, 1988; Purves & Beach, 1972). In an educational setting in which literature is a part of the curriculum, the teacher also becomes a part of this interaction. For the study of the interaction among multicultural literature, students, and teacher, a qualitative methodology is appropriate since this methodology draws from the participants' perspectives and emphasizes human actions, which are strongly influenced by the natural settings in which they occur. An examination of the interactions among the literature, students, and teacher in an actual classroom setting is needed rather than an analysis of their experiences by paper and pencil measurement. If educators are to understand more clearly the teaching and learning of multicultural literature, it seems necessary to observe and listen to those who are in an authentic setting, to those who are actively participating in the interaction with the texts.

As a researcher, it was important for me to develop a background understanding of various research methodologies; by doing so, my rationale for choosing a qualitative research design rather than a qualitative one was well-grounded. The qualitative methodology employed for this study stemmed from my interest in and questions about the multicultural literature experience for

teacher and students. The qualitative methodology also allowed me to investigate the setting as a learner rather than as an expert or authority. This choice of methodology has provided me the opportunity to present the multicultural literature experience in a detailed manner, one with sufficient depth that a wider audience could read the study and connect to and learn from that educational experience so that their understanding of related issues is deepened. In reporting my research, I presented the words and stories of the participants' experience so that a wider audience might be able to:

> Appreciate more the intricate ways in which individual lives interact with social and structural forces and, perhaps, be more understanding and even humble in the face of those intricacies. Understanding and humility are not bad stances from which to try to effect improvement in education. (Seidman, 1991, p. 42)

Qualitative research is not the only way to contribute to the knowledge of the multicultural literature experience, but as a researcher with a genuine interest in the inner voices of teachers and students, the qualitative design of this study served my investigation well.

Background and Procedures for This Study

Collection of the Data

For this qualitative study, I became the primary instrument for data collection. The central modes of inquiry attributed to the qualitative methodology prompted me to function in four primary roles during the study: observer;

interviewer; collector of documents written by participants; and, eventually, interpreter of the data. The methodology which I used as an observer, interviewer, and a collector of documents is discussed in this section of the chapter; the chapter concludes with a description of my role as interpreter and describes the data analysis procedure for this study. Throughout the data collection process, I kept a working file, adapted from the Analytic Files suggested by Glesne and Peshkin (1992). In my working file, I recorded miscellaneous notes to myself, such as notations about setting and participants, miscellaneous thoughts, questions, or possible points to explore. Because I viewed myself as a learner in the research setting, the working file helped me store and later organize valuable thoughts and connections, which contributed to the accuracy of retelling my data gathering and analyzation process.

Qualitative research recognizes the importance of context; therefore, one primary role in which I functioned throughout the semester was that of observer. As Erickson (1986) suggested, a central question for qualitative research which focuses on classroom teaching and learning is, "What is happening here, specifically?" (p. 124). In order to see what was happening in my research site, I spent a semester carefully observing the events, actions, interactions, and gestures which occurred throughout a first-year literature/composition English course instructed by Mrs. Karen Holt. Throughout the rest of this study, the participant-teacher is referred to by this pseudonym.

In order to negotiate entry for these observations, the participant-teacher and I met three times during the spring of 1993. The purpose of these preliminary meetings with Mrs. Holt was to negotiate and clarify my presence in the class setting in order to increase the teacher's familiarity with the project and with me. For example, among our many discussion points, we talked about issues such as who I was, what I would be doing in the class, where I would sit, what questions, if any, she might have about my presence and work, my promise of confidentiality, what I would do with the results, and the assurance that my role was not to judge or evaluate. The early, informal meetings prior to the actual observation as part of the research data gathering allowed us to create a beginning for a relationship, that is, a foundation of trust on which we could build as the research semester progressed.

On the first day of the semester, Mrs. Holt explained my presence to the students. She described me as a researcher who was interested in the inclusion of multicultural literature in the first-year college English classroom, and explained that I would be collecting data through observation, interviews, and written documents. When Mrs. Holt invited me to make additional comments, I assured students that I was not present to judge or evaluate them, the course, or the instructor; all the data would remain confidential and anonymous in any writing which resulted from the study, unless students were referred to by pseudonym or in aggregate. I provided opportunity for questions, although no one posed any at this time.

I conducted classroom observations from various vantage points. The classroom contained 25 desks arranged in different configurations in order to facilitate various activities. When the desks were in rows facing the front of the room, I sat approximately midway back in the first row, which provided me the best vantage point for seeing the total class interaction with the least disruption. When the desk formation was a large circle, I became a part of that circle, although I continued my non-participation behavior. When the students arranged their desks for small group activities, I quietly moved throughout the room, sometimes sitting in a position where I could see and hear the discussions of more than one small group. After the first week of class, the students did not look in my direction or seem bothered by my presence regardless of where I sat.

Throughout the semester of observations, I kept consistent fieldnotes. I tried to observe as much as possible about what was happening in the room, which included the day-to-day events as well as special happenings. For example, in my observation notes I included daily tasks such as the teacher taking attendance as well as student-teacher actions and interactions with each other and with the subject matter. In my fieldnotes I also recorded special events, such as guest speakers or group presentations. In order to review the special events, with permission I also videotaped the speakers and group presentations. During the classroom observations, I used all my senses in order to try to capture accurately what was happening in that particular context. I recorded my observations in a field notebook, which became filled with descriptions of people, events, activities,

and conversations. Before attending the next class session, I transcribed on the computer the previous class session's fieldnotes, where I added descriptive details still fresh in mind. I dated and stored both the raw and transcribed fieldnotes in a large, three-ring notebook for on-going data analysis. Although it was impossible to see and record everything which happened in that setting, by the conclusion of the semester in the field, I had collected detailed notes which provided me with data for future analysis about student learning in that particular class setting.

The observations of the classroom setting provided me with important clues as to what was happening in the multicultural literature experience for teacher and students. Observations alone, however, did not provide insights and understanding for the participants' actual experience. In order to dig deeper, to go beyond what I observed, I assumed the role of interviewer. Erickson (1986) encouraged the educational researcher to question, "What do these happenings mean to those engaged in them?" (p. 124). Through in-depth interviews, I sought to understand the learning experience from the participants' perspectives and to understand more clearly the meaning they made of that experience.

Since my study focused on the multicultural literature experience for both teacher and students, my interviews included these participants. All participant interviews followed a similar method. For each interview session, I used open-ended questions written in an interview notebook. Most of these questions were developed from observations recorded in the field notes. For example, I

observed students to seem pleased with a particular activity, but in order to confirm that observation, I asked the participants during interviews to tell me about their experiences with the learning activity. By reviewing the observation notes and then developing questions for the in-depth interviews, I hoped to gain a sense of how the participants perceived the same events. Before the interviews, I noted background information and later added my thoughts about each of the interviews for possible use during the on-going data analysis. Throughout the 30- to 45-minute interviews, I often added questions built upon the participants' responses in order to explore their perspectives further. I tape recorded all participant interviews and also kept inconspicuous, brief notes during the interview sessions. The tape-recorded interviews were professionally transcribed, dated, and filed for on-going data analysis.

The teacher-participant was interviewed in depth seven times during the data-gathering stage of my research. Two in-depth preliminary interviews occurred during the month of August, three weeks prior to the semester field experience. The purpose of these preliminary interviews was to hear about her preparation process for the inclusion of multicultural literature in her curriculum. I focused the semi-structured questions on Mrs. Holt's decision-making process concerning multicultural literature selections, learning activities, and outside resources. During these interviews, I also explored the questions and concerns which she experienced during this time of preparation. The preliminary interviews also provided an important opportunity for us to gain familiarity with

each other and with our interview and response styles before the semester started. Once the semester began, I interviewed Mrs. Holt formally five more times, approximately every two to three weeks. At the close of the semester, I left the opportunity open for me to contact her as necessary. I contacted Mrs. Holt three times after the semester ended in order to clarify points which emerged during the data-analysis process.

For the student interviews, I adapted the three-interview series suggested by Seidman (1991). The first interview focused on life history. I encouraged the student-participants to reconstruct early experiences in family, in school, and with friends. Included in this interview was the opportunity for the student-participant to discuss previous multicultural experiences. The second interview focused on the details of present experiences in the college freshman English class setting. As Seidman suggested, I avoided questions which focused directly on opinion during this second interview; rather, I developed questions which prompted participants to reconstruct the stories of their experiences. In the third interview, I asked participants to reflect on the meaning of their classroom experiences. My interview questions explored the participants' connections, thoughts, ideas, opinions, questions, and feelings so that I might understand more clearly the meaning beyond their words and actions. The questions for all three interviews in the series followed an open-ended, in-depth structure. Just as Seidman discovered, I felt that each interview seemed to provide a foundation of detail which helped illuminate the next interview (1991, p. 13). For each of the four

student-participants selected for the study, I conducted the three interviews near the beginning, middle, and end of the semester. Similar to Seidman's experience, I appreciated the three-interview structure because it seemed to provide the participants' stories with a beginning, middle, and an ending, set within the context of my observations.

In addition to the roles of observer and interviewer, I became a collector of written documents which resulted from class activities. Since it was the nature of this first-year English class to emphasize writing as well as reading, students generated a number of written documents throughout the semester. It was not the purpose of this study to evaluate students' writing development, however. Instead, the written documents provided an opportunity for the researcher to corroborate observations and interviews, which in turn may make the findings more reliable (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Written documents also provide potential for new insights to the scene, for new questions which prompt further exploration during interviews, or for new direction of further data analysis. Such documents held the possibility of providing the researcher with insights to the perceptions of the participants' multicultural literature experience. The participant-teacher granted me access to all student writing which resulted from course assignments, commonly in the form of journals and essays. All students had the option of not allowing their written documents to be reviewed, although no one requested this. Selected written documents, such as the ones written by

four student-participants who were selected for in-depth interviews, were photocopied, dated, and filed for on-going data analysis.

Examination and Analysis of the Data

Data gathered through careful observation, in-depth interviews, and written documents had to be condensed in a meaningful way so results could be shared with a wider audience. At this point in the research process, I focused on my role as interpreter. Although the data-analysis procedure reported here appears to be quite linear, more accurately, the process was a recursive one. Much like a kaleidoscope picture changes with each turn, my view of the participants' multicultural literature teaching and learning experience continually changed through the data analysis process. I frequently returned to previous stages of analysis to gain a clearer sense of what was actually happening.

Data analysis is an on-going process rather than a discrete stage separated from data collection (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Seidman, 1991). As I collected data, I continually read and reread the gathered material and marked passages which seemed interesting with a bracket. This preliminary marking was not intended as a critical analysis, although it was a subjective act just by the nature of the process; I simply marked passages which caught my attention for further exploration and analysis.

After the preliminary marking, I later returned to the bracketed passages for a closer examination. I labeled the passages with code words developed by asking questions such as, what is the subject of this passage? Or, is there a word

or a phrase which seems to describe the passage? (Seidman, 1991). In this manner, the codes emerged from the data rather than having codes imposed upon the material. Marking the codes in pencil allowed them to be tentative, open to change as necessary. I also coded some of the passages as "extraneous" for possible analysis at a later time.

After coding the collected data in this manner, I compiled a list of the individual codes and searched for a relationship among them. I grouped the codes into broader categories, which seemed to offer promise for recurring patterns. I returned to the data and marked the category to which the passage belonged; in some cases, double or even triple categories were marked in order to keep the on-going analysis process flexible. As Seidman (1991) suggested, I also labeled each passage by a system which designated its original place in the transcript, for example, "K.H., I., 2." indicated the passage derived from Karen Holt's first interview, page two. If necessary, I could check the accuracy of the text in its full context. For all the collected data, I kept a file of original, unmarked copies.

The marked copies were cut apart according to their categories in order to visually group the categories scattered throughout the data. By doing this, I was able to relate, arrange, and rearrange the data to look for emerging patterns. I studied the newly pieced data and searched for the most compelling evidence to support or disconfirm what I thought I was seeing. I marked such passages with a highlighter for possible future use as evidence or illustrations. I also noted when

passages seemed to contradict other passages; then, as follow-up, I examined such disconfirming evidence to see if it was an isolated incident or, in fact, part of a disconfirming pattern. Whenever possible, I followed up on what appeared to be disconfirming evidence. For example, in one case I called the teacher-participant and asked for a clarification of the point in question. At this stage of the data-analysis process, I sought to understand the recurrences and patterns which seemed to be emerging. From the patterns, I looked for broad themes which could be supported by evidence, such as quotations, actions, or vignettes drawn from the participant interviews or from my observations.

At each phase of the data analysis, I assessed the trustworthiness of the data. I examined the codes, categories, patterns, and themes for consistency. I cross-checked the validity of the emerging patterns by comparing data found in observations, interviews, and collected written documents. This triangulation process increases the trustworthiness of the study findings.

The review of literature would further inform what I was beginning to recognize as themes and subthemes from the collected data. Specific themes and subthemes provided me with the direction for reviewing related literature. I hoped to gain a clearer sense of the existing research and its relationship to my study. Therefore, I returned to the preliminary review of literature, which was conducted as background literature for the research proposal. I evaluated the appropriateness of the previous literature review and gleaned ideas which seemed to have a specific relationship to my own research findings. In addition to

analysis of the preliminary review of literature, new themes and subthemes which required further literature review emerged from the data. I strived for appropriate connections between outside literature and my own research. The process of seeking and carefully reviewing the related literature assisted the interpretation and understanding of this study.

After analysis, interpretation, and review of related literature, it was necessary to report to others what I did not know previously about my topic. Most reporting of qualitative research provides the audience with a sense of being immersed in the setting. I intended to provide the reader often with illustrative narratives in the words of the participants, since it was their stories which were at the heart of this research design. As the researcher, I provided interpretive commentary to the richly narrative description in order to clarify and provide evidence for themes. Concluding the write-up of my research, I provided reflections as a researcher, that is, my thoughts, the surprises, and the nuances of my experiences as observer, interviewer, collector of documents, and interpreter. At the conclusion, I also provided suggestions for further research and discussed educational implications.

CHAPTER III

CONTEXT: THE SETTING, PARTICIPANTS, AND CURRICULUM

The research for this study occurred within a context of people, place, and curriculum. The stories of the participants' experiences, the meaning to them, and the interpretation of data are contextually bound. Educational settings are complex structures due to the complicated systems which are constantly intertwining. Therefore, in order to more clearly understand this study, it is first necessary to examine the place, people, and curriculum which are integral parts of the educational setting. Chapter III first delineates the process of context selection for this study and then describes the actual setting with regard to the college, the classroom, the broader class-community, and the teacher- and student-participants. The chapter concludes with a brief description of the intended curriculum as part of the research context as well.

Site and Participant Selection

My reading in and around the topic of multicultural literature and its implementation within a curriculum provided me with background knowledge as I developed a strategy for the process of site and participant selection. Quantitative methodologies often emphasize careful thought before the research about the variables as they relate to the problem.

> The open nature of qualitative inquiry, however, precludes the ability to know either all of the important selection criteria or the number of observation or interview sessions necessary to gather adequate data. The selection strategy evolves as the researcher collects data. (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992, p. 25)

For this study, I followed a thoughtful, careful selection process for site and participant selection. In order to accurately report the context decision-making process to a wider audience, I reserved a section of my working file to record my site-selection process; I recorded notes about my thoughts, false starts, leaps forward, and insights to selecting the specific context for this study.

The research site was selected because it met four criteria established after careful thought and consideration. Because this study focused on higher education, I first considered colleges and universities within proximity to me. Second, I narrowed those institutions to the ones which were accessible. Third, I narrowed further the research context by seeking an entry-level English program where multicultural literature was incorporated in the curriculum throughout the course rather than sporadically. Finally, I considered the attitude of the teacher-participant toward multicultural literature to be an important criterion. I hoped to learn more about the multicultural teaching and learning experience from a teacher and the students who were actively engaged in the reflective practice of including multicultural literature in the curriculum as a means of understanding and appreciating diversity. Karen Holt, the teacher-participant who eventually

emerged as a likely possibility for my study, was recognized by others as not only an outgoing and personable woman but was also reputed to be knowledgeable and sincerely interested in multicultural literature and related issues.

Description of the Setting

In order to understand more fully the experiences of and the interpretations made by the participants, the backdrop for their experiences is described. Bethany College, a pseudonym for a four-year liberal arts college with a religious heritage, was selected as the site for this study. This college is located within a community of 32,000 in the Upper Midwest. Centrally located within the city, Bethany College offers campus grounds landscaped with towering pine and hardwood trees as well as architecture which blends the older, stately buildings with more recent building projects. The college strives to maintain an optimum enrollment of approximately 2,700 students, thereby facilitating its 15:1 faculty-to-student ratio. Bethany College meets full accreditation standards at state and national levels and has been recognized nationally for offering a quality educational experience. Recruitment efforts for the college focus on the top 5-10% of high school graduating classes. Eighty percent of the students live on the Bethany College campus, which is still a requirement for all first-year students. The college's mission statement reflects a commitment to students by offering a wide range of opportunities to grow intellectually, personally, and spiritually.

The specific program which provides the context for this study is a first-year English class. Freshman English is a two-semester requirement for most

first-year students at Bethany; a small percentage of students with exceptional ability are able to complete tests which exempt them from this requirement. The goals of the first-year English program reflect a belief in the integral relationship of composition, literature, research, and speech. Most students usually complete research and speech-focused courses during the second semester. This study, however, examined the first semester experience, where the teacher-participant in this study fully incorporated multicultural literature within her writing and reading curriculum. Faculty members who teach these first-year English courses at Bethany College independently select course materials, although they are expected to adhere to the department-established Statement of Goals and Guidelines. Diversity and gender issues are to be reflected in the course content and materials, according to department and college guidelines. The setting for this study was one section of 23 students enrolled in Freshman English at Bethany College; at the conclusion of this study, the same students remained enrolled in the course. The study represented a cross section of incoming students enrolled in first-year English courses at Bethany College, since most students randomly select the course according to scheduling availability. For this study, I conducted observations of every class meeting for the duration of one semester in a class which met Monday, Wednesday, Friday for 70 minutes each period.

The first-year English class for this study convened in Skoglund Hall, Room 110. The tan, industrial-grade carpet coordinated with the lighter tan concrete block walls. A large white-board spanned the front of the classroom,

and to its right was the only window. A projection screen hung directly above the white-board, and a television was mounted at an angle in the corner to facilitate viewing. Tucked inconspicuously near the television were a mounted camera and microphone, used frequently by speech classes which met in this room. A large, Formica-topped table and portable wooden podium completed the front of the classroom. Twenty desks arranged in four straight rows faced the front of the room; five additional desks hugged the side wall of the room, turned to face the interior rather than the front. At the back of the Room 110 near the door, a small projection/viewing room with a window was available, although unoccupied throughout the semester. Three banks of fluorescent lights brightly illuminated the room, and a large white clock with black numbers at the back of the room quietly measured the time spent in Room 110, Skoglund Hall.

The Participants

Educational philosopher Maxine Greene (1978) described how people's responses, understanding, and meaning should be anchored in their lived experiences. "It is my view that persons are more likely to ask their own questions and seek their own transcendence when they feel themselves to be grounded in the personal histories, their lived lives. This is what I mean by 'landscapes'" (p. 2). Such learning landscapes were important in my educational research setting because it was from the participants' landscapes that the behavior, responses, and meaning of the multicultural literature experience emerged. This section of Chapter III provides clues to the general landscapes of the

teacher-participant, the broader classroom community, and, finally, the five student-participants selected for in-depth interviews.

The Teacher-Participant

Karen Holt described teaching as an important part of her personal landscape. In an early interview, she expressed that it seemed she had been "teaching something to someone all my life." Mrs. Holt smiled warmly as she reminisced about past teaching experiences: Teaching baton to neighborhood children as a fourth grader in a small southern Wisconsin town where she grew up; teaching French and English in an eastern Montana town of 168 people; and teaching English in the inner city of a large metropolitan area. At the time of this study, Mrs. Holt was beginning her fifth year of teaching at Bethany College.

The apparent diversity of Mrs. Holt's teaching experience seemed to be matched by her own diverse learning opportunities. As an undergraduate student, for example, she "wanted to go somewhere different, a place where my friends weren't going"; consequently, in the late 1960s, Karen Holt headed to the American University in Washington, D.C., an eye-opening experience, as she recollected. Several years later, she returned to the student role once again to complete graduate work at a midwestern university. At an initial interview, Mrs. Holt described herself as too busy and happy with her current pursuits of raising a family, teaching, volunteering, free-lance writing, and traveling to work toward a doctoral degree at this point. If she were to enroll in a doctoral program in the

future, she speculated it would be one which encompassed her cross-cultural, English-related, and educational interests.

In addition to diverse educational and teaching opportunities, Mrs. Holt believed that her travel experiences contributed to her personal landscape. She lived in Mexico for a year and has returned four or five times since then. Mrs. Holt recognized the influence that travel has on her, and she often shares her many travel experiences with others. For example, gleaned from the stories she heard and recorded from her work with women in Mexican squatters' villages, she has given a presentation numerous times to various groups on the role of Mexican women.

During my first in-depth interview for this research, Mrs. Holt reconstructed earlier experiences from her education, teaching, childhood, family, and travels. The depth and diversity recounted in Mrs. Holt's stories seemed reflected in her campus office, the location for the majority of my interviews with her. The small office, which Mrs. Holt jokingly referred to as a "converted broom closet," became remarkably reflective of the teacher and person I came to know during my semester at Bethany College. The professional books and stacks of papers revealed Karen Holt's involvement with academic responsibilities. The walls and desk displayed her love of family, travel, and work: Childhood artwork and poems; a framed magazine cover from a lead article which she authored in an area magazine; a world hunger appeal poster of a child; a wall-hanging of Hmong handwork, in which tiny animals were sewn in deep, rich colors; and a royal blue

and white satin hanging proclaimed, "Alegrense en El Señor Siempre," or "Praise the Lord Always."

In this small but vibrant office, the first of several interviews occurred on a cool, drizzly August morning. Karen Holt breezed in wearing a bright yellow slicker and carried a plastic travel mug of coffee. Right away, she seemed warm, genuine, and comfortable with herself. As I asked questions during the interview, for example, she sometimes leaned forward in interest as she answered. Mrs. Holt often gestured with her hands as she spoke and maintained strong eye contact as she comfortably talked and shared her thoughts. At the close of our first interview as I packed my tape recorder and notebook, she asked me if I wanted to read a book she had recently finished, Eight Women Who Made a Difference: With Minds of Their Own, which recounted the lives of women who made a difference in the lives of others. As I added the book to my belongings, I wondered if Karen Holt was just such a woman, one who made a difference in the lives of her students. I was eager to continue my research journey to find out more about the teacher and student multicultural literature experience.

The Classroom Community of Participants

In addition to the landscape of the teacher-participant, the broader classroom community provided another important part of the context for this study. This section of the chapter provides an overview of the broader classroom community from which the four student-participants eventually were selected. Two introductory classroom activities provided focused personal histories of the

classroom community. First, as is common practice for her in first-year English classes, she asked students to complete a Student Information Questionnaire. She explained to me that the questionnaire enabled her to know her students as individuals rather than as names on an attendance roster. The second introductory activity required students to interview each other in self-selected pairs and write their discoveries. After completion of the interview and writing assignment, students "introduced" their partners to the rest of the class. During these introductions, I recorded notes about each student in my field notebook in order to assist my student-participant selection process.

After reviewing the information provided by students during the two introductory activities, I wondered how this classroom community compared with other first-year English sections at Bethany. I asked Mrs. Holt how similar to other first-year English classes at Bethany this class seemed to her. She offered that the class seemed representative of her past sections. Mrs. Holt stated that based on her experience at Bethany, students are largely represented by Euro-American ethnicity and frequently come from small towns or cities in the Midwest; few, if any, of the students are older than the average 18-year-old, first-year student at Bethany College. Students' responses to the questions on the personal data handout added to the general profile of the classroom community. For example, the question, "What do you see yourself doing five years from now?" provided me with a sense of this group's career goals. Most students in this class envisioned themselves in careers such as accountants, business professionals,

teachers, or as graduate students enrolled in medically-related fields, law, or programs for advanced degrees. Mrs. Holt confirmed that from her perspective, these are common career goals for students at Bethany. From this broader classroom community, I selected four student-participants for this study.

Student-Participants Selection Process

Consistent with most qualitative research designs, I did not have in mind a pre-determined number of student-participants, although my research proposal expressed four or five students seemed to be a reasonable number to gain an inside perspective of what was happening. Based on my initial classroom observations as well as the introductory activities completed by the students, I focused on seven or eight students as possible study participants. I hoped to obtain a variety of inside perspectives; therefore, I considered the students' home town location and size as partial input for my selection. I also listened as students described cross-cultural experiences of one sort or another and noted students who self-reported to have had no previous cross-cultural experiences and students who seemed to have had more cross-cultural experiences. During the first five or six class sessions, I also observed student behavior to assess the students' possible comfort level with the in-depth interviews planned for this research project. The nature of qualitative methodology prompts researchers to select participants with whom they can establish rapport, build relationships, and develop partnerships in order to provide a wider audience with the rich, descriptive, emic perspective of what is happening in the study context (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992; Seidman, 1991).

Therefore, I considered students with whom I thought I might work well during my research. After approximately two weeks of this evolving selection process, I narrowed the broader classroom community to four students as possible study participants, three young women and one young man. Throughout the study I continued to observe and draw from the broader classroom community, but four students were asked to participate in the in-depth interviews. I approached each of the four students and briefly described the research project. All four students agreed to participate and signed informal contracts which granted me permission to observe, interview, and read their work for this class. Because of the emergent nature of qualitative research, when an additional student provided interesting insights to the multicultural literature experience, I requested an in-depth interview with that person. A brief profile follows for each of the four student-participants as well as for the additional student; the perspectives of the student-participants are more clearly reflected in Chapter IV, where in-depth analysis and findings are provided. Pseudonyms are used to maintain anonymity for the student-participants.

The Student-Participants

Julia came from what she referred to as a "close, hard-working dairy farm family" in rural Minnesota. "I lived about two miles away from Charlotte, which is a very small town that has a park, a fire station, and two bars." Julia was the youngest of five children, all of whom have grown and left home. Julia's hazel eyes became distant as she periodically reminisced about the farm and animals

she missed while away at college. Although Julia lived only four hours from a major metropolitan area which reflected more diversity than Charlotte, she stated that she had visited there only twice. Julia added that any personal cross-cultural experiences came during her high school senior trip to Chicago and from a visit to her sister's home in Milwaukee. Although I observed Julia to be very quiet in the classroom setting, she often talked at length in a quiet, slow, somewhat deliberate manner during our interview sessions.

The second student-participant, Aaron, hoped to enter the seminary after graduating from Bethany. Presently, however, his love of music has led him to a tentative music major at Bethany College and to a part-time job as a disc jockey at a local radio station. Aaron described his family as "the typical American family. You know, I have the mom and the dad, and I have an older brother and a younger brother. My dad is a county engineer with a basic 8:00 to 5:00 job, and my mother is an office manager at a radio station." Aaron told me that his family was central to his life; he fondly recalled large family gatherings which often included extended family and met several times a year. Although Aaron lived in a neighboring state during his early childhood, his family has lived in their home on a quiet lake near a city of 7,000 in Minnesota for the past several years. Throughout the interviews, Aaron seemed to regard seriously each question and only revealed his warm, broad smile on limited occasions. His radio experience was apparent by his clear, articulate, thoughtful responses to my questions.

Amber, the third student-participant, first caught my attention in the classroom community when she told that her family had moved frequently during her upbringing. After several moves around the state of North Dakota while growing up, the last half of Amber's senior year was spent in a small town in Wyoming. Amber's parents divorced when she was two, but she readily acknowledged how close she was to her step-father, saying, "I consider him my real dad." Amber's education spanned a wide range of experiences: Early years in a Head Start program, several different elementary and secondary schools, and now enrollment at Bethany College. Her goals included graduate school to become a criminal psychologist. When asked about past cross-cultural experiences, Amber offered she knew two foreign-exchange students in high school and once lived near an Indian reservation. Amber appreciated her experiences thus far at Bethany College: "I've always been from a small town, and everyone is just like family here. I like that." During the interviews, Amber's answers were frequently short and to the point; she often responded with a simple, "Yup." As an interviewer, I often invited her to expand on a response. When she did so, Amber usually maintained a determined, matter-of-fact tone to her voice. The appearance of the young woman with brassy blond hair and a heavily made-up face which I saw across the table from me at the first interview seemed to soften during the course of the semester. At the conclusion of the research project, Amber sent me a brief note which expressed her appreciation for her part in the study: "I still can't believe that I was chosen," she wrote.

Lauren, the fourth student-participant, came from a suburb of a large metropolitan area. She had travelled abroad with her parents and younger brother, and she also had stayed with a family in Switzerland the summer prior to her enrollment at Bethany College. Lauren probably described herself best: "I'm really outgoing. . . . I'm more of a city girl. All my family is from the city, and I just like to be out in the action. I'm not a secluded type of person." College life at Bethany was somewhat of an adjustment for Lauren, who found it difficult to be away from her family and friends this first year.

> I thought I would have more time to get to know people at college. In fact, when I talked about college before, I didn't talk about any of the school work. I talked about going out, meeting people, and having a good time at football games. I mean, I knew school work was there, but I just didn't think it was going to become my agenda for the entire day.

Lauren seemed to smile easily, which was also reflected in her bright eyes and enthusiastic demeanor. She always sported long, dangling earrings, sometimes partially hidden by her shoulder length, very curly, sun-tinted brown hair.

Jeanne became the fifth student-participant to provide an in-depth interview near the conclusion of the data-gathering stage of the research, although five participants were not originally selected. Jeanne's written responses in class journals and essays revealed interesting reflections about the class, Mrs. Holt, and the literature experience; therefore, I interviewed Jeanne to gain additional

understanding of the setting and experience for the participants. During the interview when asked about her personal history, Jeanne talked about the changes presently occurring in her hometown. "The town has changed over the years. We have a lot of people from different cultures, especially Hispanics, who have moved in for a number of different reasons, and the changes for the community haven't always been easy." Jeanne shared that her own cross-cultural experiences increased as her town changed. She added, "My neighborhood was kind of a mix of cultures. . . . It was kind of nice to have a mix and that's why I think that when I got to school I could understand other people better than a lot of people who grew up in the more ritzier [sic] environments and can't understand why this person or that person goes to our school." For more than an hour, Jeanne continued to explain her feelings and perspectives about the multicultural literature and her classroom experiences; her thoughts contributed richly to the findings and discussion in Chapter IV.

The Curriculum

Within the context for this research, the participants interacted with a curriculum planned by Mrs. Holt. The intended curriculum is "that body of material that is planned in advance of classroom use and that is designed to help students learn some content, acquire some skills, develop some beliefs, or have some valued type of experience" (Eisner, 1985, p. 48) and is described in this final section of Chapter III. The materials and goals which Karen Holt used for planning the first-year English course provided part of the context from which the

findings emerged. In addition to the intended curriculum, Eisner (1985) acknowledged an operational curriculum which functions in all courses; he defined the operational curriculum as: "The unique set of events that transpire within a classroom" (p. 47). Chapter IV reaches beyond the intended curriculum to examine the students' unique experiences and interactions with the multicultural literature and activities, with Mrs. Holt, and with other students. Examination of the operational curriculum "requires one to be in a position to observe what classroom activities actually unfold," advised Eisner (1985, p. 47) and to be able to talk to the participants about that experience. The intended curriculum concludes this chapter about context of the study, while discussion of the operational curriculum becomes a part of the rich description provided in Chapter IV. The researcher examined both the intended and operational dimensions of Mrs. Holt's curriculum; "Approaches to the former can be made by inspecting the materials and plans that have been formulated. Approaches to the latter can be made only by directly observing the classroom" (Eisner, 1985, p. 49).

Curriculum Materials

The department guidelines for Freshman English at Bethany College emphasize an integrated approach to reading, writing, researching, and speaking; therefore, in addition to the multicultural literature, Mrs. Holt adopted a composition text, supplemented by various rhetoric handouts. However, since the students' composition experiences were not the primary focus for this research project, those materials are not included in this curriculum description; rather, the

emphasis remains on the student-teacher-multicultural literature interaction. Karen Holt adopted two multicultural texts for the observed course, Ourselves Among Others: Cross Cultural Readings for Writers (Verburg, 1991) and I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala (Menchú, 1984). When asked if she felt pressured by the college or other factors to select multicultural literature rather than more traditional, Euro-American based choices for the course reading, Mrs. Holt responded, "No, the choices came from somewhere else, because this was before 'politically correct' was even a term. I don't exactly know when I made this decision. I just thought I'm really interested in this--I bet they [the students] will be too." Later Mrs. Holt stated she believes teachers must be excited about what they are teaching; therefore, she suggested teachers must make curricular decisions partially based on what they enjoy themselves.

According to a survey of multicultural readers for freshman composition courses, 45 different ethnic groups are represented in Ourselves Among Others; only 4% of the selections include Western authors writing about non-Western cultures. The text provides geographical, historical, political, or biographical information about the authors in chapter headnotes; a world map at the back offers further reader assistance (Shapiro, 1992). Seven themes organize the text, including themes such as "The Family: Cornerstone of Culture," "Coming of Age: Landmarks and Turning Points," and "Ideology and Politics: The Cost of Our Convictions." Throughout the course, Mrs. Holt assigned readings from various themes.

Mrs. Holt has taught from Ourselves Among Others as a required course text four other times; she has continued to use this text for several reasons. For example, the students generally provide positive feedback about the reading: "I've had students say, 'I took this book home over break and shared it with my parents,' or 'I'm going to keep this book.'" In a course evaluation Mrs. Holt administered at the conclusion of the semester, a majority of the students rated the course reading very positively, although the evaluation form did not separate whether responses referred to the multicultural reader, to I, Rigoberta Menchú, or to both. Mrs. Holt also liked Ourselves Among Others because of the thematic arrangement of readings: "It offers kind of the realm of the students' experiences. Maybe they haven't had to make some big political choices, but everybody's had a relationship, male/female, whatever, or had experience with a family." Building on this idea of students' ability to relate to the themes in the text, Holt added, "While all cultures have differences, I like the sameness that crosses over, of experiences they can see and relate to" in the Verburg reading. The text's flexibility is another of its strengths, according to Mrs. Holt: "I don't think I've ever incorporated the literature the same way twice." How Ourselves Among Others was incorporated within Mrs. Holt's freshman English course is part of the findings discussion in Chapter IV.

The second required reading, I, Rigoberta Menchú (1984), is the first-hand account of the social and political struggles of Rigoberta Menchú, a Guatemalan Indian peasant woman who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1992. According to

co-author Elisabeth Burgos-Debray, "The voice of Rigoberta Menchú allows the defeated to speak. She is a privileged witness: she has survived the genocide that destroyed her family and community and is stubbornly determined to break the silence" (Menchú & Burgos-Debray, 1984, p. xi). Mrs. Holt had not previously incorporated I, Rigoberta Menchú within her curriculum. When asked why she added the text, Mrs. Holt explained that she felt moved by Menchú's powerful first-hand account and was curious to see if students would share that feeling. Mrs. Holt explained, "The autobiography takes the general and brings it to the specific, to a culture and a person." I, Rigoberta Menchú was assigned during the second half of the semester and provided the basis for the journal writing, research, and group presentations described in Chapter IV.

On the first day of the course, Mrs. Holt passed out the syllabus, which included among the other course goals: "To learn about selves in a cross-cultural context." When I asked Mrs. Holt to tell me more about this particular goal, she offered, "I think the mission of the class or the goals of the class match my personal ones." She hoped her course would offer students the opportunity "to learn more about themselves among other people. To say, 'I didn't know that before about me.' To have an awareness of themselves that will come through their writing and reading and the stuff that we do." Holt saw this goal for her course as helping

> To make people who want to make a difference maybe, you know, in the world in terms of working with people of difference. And to

> expose them to lots of different people through the literature, through interviews that they might do, or through guests in class, or movies, or whatever it might be. So to just get them to really think, to put faces on ideas.

Mrs. Holt hoped to move her students to think about themselves among other cultures, "to break open where they haven't thought about other cultures before."

Concluding Comments for Chapter III

It was not possible for me to know everything about the setting and its participants. However, my hope is that the description, profiles, and curriculum overview included in this chapter provide background for the study interpretation which follows for a wider audience of readers. The landscapes of the teacher- and student-participants were introduced in this chapter to provide a point of entry to understanding the participants and their experiences with the multicultural literature teaching and learning. This chapter also provided the beginning of my own story as I researched the participants' experiences in a multicultural literature teaching and learning context.

CHAPTER IV

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES AND REFLECTIONS; CONNECTIONS TO RELATED LITERATURE

Qualitative research does not follow a deductive theory-driven model; more accurately, as Seidman (1991) advocated, "Theory cannot and should not be imposed on the words but must emanate from them. . . . They [theories] are the explanations people develop to help them make connections among events" (Seidman, 1991, p. 29). Similarly, Glaser and Straus (1967) discouraged the forced application of one theory to another context. However, this study was not completely theory-free. In this study, the theories resulted inductively from the plethora of data collected and analyzed. The outside literature assisted the researcher's understanding of what was discovered through the participants' experiences and stories. The outside literature and theories helped the researcher interpret and communicate the connections between the study and a broader community of scholarship. The integral relationship between findings and related literature explains why the findings and review of literature are integrated.

In Chapter III, three central themes which emerged from the collected observation, interview, and written-response data are described. In addition, numerous sub-themes are discussed for each major theme. Related literature

accompanies the discussion of the themes and subthemes. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the relationship between the central themes. The general focus for this research centered on the participants' multicultural literature experience. The researcher's interest focused on how multicultural literature was taught, how the learners experienced multicultural literature and related activities, and what was meaningful about their experiences to the participants. The collected and analyzed data suggested factors beyond text selection need to be part of the multicultural literature teaching and learning environment. The patterns which emerged from the participants' thoughts and meanings, feelings, beliefs, and actions in the study context provided the three important themes for this study: Central to the multicultural literature experience were (a) the authenticity of the teacher; (b) the active, student-centered learning environment; and (c) the strong connectedness within the experiences.

Teacher Authenticity

Mrs. Holt's authenticity as a person and a teacher redefined her in the classroom. Boyer (1993) asserted that good teachers are not only knowledgeable and able to relate content to the readiness of students, but good teachers are authentic human beings and are able to create active rather than passive learning climates in their classrooms. The importance of authenticity in teachers is reflected in Boyer's summary of an in-depth study of 29 colleges and universities.

> The central qualities that make for successful teaching can be simply stated: command of the material to be taught, a contagious

> enthusiasm for the play of ideas, optimism about human potential, the involvement with one's students, and--not least--sensitivity, integrity, and warmth as a human being. When this combination is present in the classroom, the impact of a teacher can be powerful and enduring. (Boyer, 1987, p. 154)

Such characteristics suggest the meaning of authenticity in an effective teacher. The authentic teacher is one who is genuine, worthy of trust and belief.

The importance of authenticity in teachers is recognized by others. For example, among Glasser's (1992) six conditions of quality in classrooms, he described the first necessary condition as "creating a warm and supportive climate in the classroom" (p. 15). He challenged teachers to teach in ways which allowed students to learn who the teacher was as a person and what he or she believed or stood for. Bleich (1991) also described effective teaching practice in higher education, more specifically, an introductory college literature course. He contended that it is "essential for teachers to find ways of 'introducing' themselves while they introduce their subjects, to show how the subject 'lives' in them, thus identifying more explicitly what they as teachers are bringing to the classroom" (p. 22). When teachers introduce themselves as well as the curriculum, they are likely to seem more authentic as human beings to the students.

Karen Holt demonstrated the qualities of an authentic teacher in the observed classroom setting in which she incorporated multicultural literature throughout the curriculum. At the first class session, she introduced herself as

"Karen Holt," then added students could refer to her by whatever title they were most comfortable: "Karen is fine, or Mrs. or Ms. Holt, whatever makes you the most comfortable." She also called attention to her home and office phone numbers listed on the syllabus and reminded students they could contact her at home. By making herself accessible to the students, Mrs. Holt quickly minimized the distance between teacher and students.

During various class activities, Karen Holt became more authentic to the students by sometimes sharing who she was beyond her instructor role. On the first day of class, for example, students worked in pairs to complete an introductory activity. After a short discussion of the importance of nonverbal communication and first impressions, Mrs. Holt asked student-selected pairs to stare at each other in silence for one minute; students then recorded on paper what they guessed to be their partner's favorite sport, food, vacation spot, and beverage. After completing these directions, the students introduced themselves to their partners and shared the real answers. Throughout the activity, the students made eye contact with each other, smiled, and often laughed at their partner's guesses. When the students finished, at random Mrs. Holt asked the partners to introduce each other to the class by using the information they discovered and to share what they had originally guessed. The students smiled and sometimes laughed as the class revealed their discoveries and commented on some of the stereotypes which emerged. For example, one student guessed lutefisk as her partner's favorite food since he "looked Norwegian," she explained.

Class participants appeared curious about the introductions; they often turned in their seats to see one student introduce another. After the last pair of students introduced each other, the class turned to the front of the room and seemed to wait for a transition to another activity. Instead, Karen Holt added, "Okay, now do the same for me." Looking somewhat surprised, the students watched the instructor in silence for one minute then jotted down their guesses. "The right answers are baton twirling--I knew that one would surprise you! Mexican is my favorite food; Mexico or Spain for travel; and coffee or mineral water for beverage," Karen Holt offered with a warm smile. The instructor participated in the class activity at the same level as the students, and, in just a few minutes, the class was introduced to Karen Holt as a person rather than just as an instructor.

This informal interview activity provided the teacher opportunity to become authentic for the students, and it also helped create a conducive climate for future class interactions. The warm, genuine relationship with the students established by Mrs. Holt on the first day reflected a guideline suggested by Billson and Tiberius (1991) for creating an effective teaching-learning climate in college classrooms: "Reduce the status differential between teacher and student" (p. 104). They based this guideline on the work of Boyer and Bolton (1971), who discovered that college students' class participation was inhibited "when the professor is perceived by students as having 'psychological bigness'" (Billson & Tiberius, 1991, p. 104). Characteristics of superiority rather than leadership by the college instructor can inhibit the establishment of a positive learning climate.

The opening activity in Mrs. Holt's classroom also established an important foundation for improved group interaction during future classes. "Students will participate more readily when they have been given an opportunity to get to know each other and interact in subgroups before they interact in the group as a whole," suggested Billson and Tiberius (1991, p. 95) as another guideline for an effective college classroom learning climate.

When asked about Mrs. Holt's participation in class activities such as that introductory interview, Aaron stated, "I thought it was great. I think it makes the class so much closer when the instructor will tell us about herself rather than just listening to us all of the time." Similarly, Julia recalled what she thought of Mrs. Holt on that first day: "I liked her way of teaching. She was nice and friendly. She always smiled." The warmth and authenticity of Karen Holt on the first day helped establish a comfortable environment in which multicultural literature was explored during other class sessions.

Throughout the semester, Mrs. Holt continued to reveal herself; as Bleich (1991) suggested, she "introduced" herself as part of introducing the students to the multicultural literature. During day-to-day classroom interactions with students and multicultural literature, Mrs. Holt continually shared her beliefs, travel experiences, personal life, feelings, possessions, and some of her own risks and failures.

Glasser (1992) stated that teachers need to reveal what it is they stand for or believe. Karen Holt periodically revealed how she personally confronted

multicultural issues, such as the ones raised in much of the reading, but she often expressed her beliefs and values in a non-threatening, personal manner. Greene (1978) recognized "the futility of teaching rules or preaching pieties or presenting concepts of the good. We can no longer set ourselves up as founts of wisdom, exemplars of righteousness, and expect to have positive effects" (p. 47). One example of how Karen Holt communicated personal values occurred during a discussion of the community theme in I, Rigoberta Menchú. Mrs. Holt told of her experience listening to stories from women who lived in a squatter's settlement in Mexico: "An old woman there once told me, 'I don't want to be like you, with your cars and tvs. You have things, but you have no community.'" Mrs. Holt added, "That experience had a lot of impact on me. I agree--community is important, I think." The personal experience Mrs. Holt offered, accompanied by her added comment, gave students a closer look at what she valued.

Karen Holt's beliefs were also apparent during another class discussion. She remarked that she was dealing with multicultural issues in her own life. "My oldest daughter had some friends over, some kids I didn't really know. When they left, some of them had been writing with my younger daughter's chalk. . . . Underneath the basketball hoop, it said, "Nigger." Well, sorry, I sort of hit the wall. I mean, I lost it." Mrs. Holt's beliefs about the situation were evident by her comment and facial expression, but she did not force her views upon her students by lecturing about her beliefs. She later explained to this researcher, "Sometimes I have to bite my tongue and not get too political. Their filters may

be a little bit more open, you know, to let a lot soak in. I want them to make up their own minds. I don't want them to go out of here thinking everything I think." Throughout the course, many of Mrs. Holt's beliefs were apparent, often made clear by the way she treated certain topics or issues, by her behavior and responses, by the examples she added to discussions, or by the experiences she offered. Despite opportunities to impose her views, however, she encouraged students to pursue their own ideas, decisions, and beliefs.

In addition to revealing her beliefs and values, Karen Holt periodically incorporated personal experiences from living and traveling in Mexico into class discussions, which further introduced her as an authentic person to the students. During the first half of the semester, for example, the students read "The Stolen Party" (Verburg, 1991), an Argentine short story about a cleaning woman's daughter, whose innocence was altered when the child discovered she was invited to a friend's birthday party as hired help rather than as a playmate. During class discussion of the story, Mrs. Holt stated that although many of the South American countries do not have formal caste systems, there are distinct levels of people, similar to the characters' lives in the story. Mrs. Holt added that when she and her family spent a year living in Mexico, they received a house, gardener, and maid as part of the living arrangements. She described how uncomfortable she felt asking the maid to do things around the house, so Mrs. Holt sometimes completed her own housework, much to the dismay of Luz Marie, the maid. Mrs. Holt continued to tell the students about the maid. One time after a party at the

Holts, she saw Luz Marie going through the garbage, only to pick out a watermelon shell which had been carved into the shape of a handled bowl. The last Mrs. Holt saw of the maid that evening was "Luz Marie walking down the street with a watermelon bowl slung over her arm like a purse." The students sat very quietly as Mrs. Holt described her personal experience with the maid. They seemed to watch Mrs. Holt with a great deal of interest and smiled at the description of the swinging watermelon bowl.

When I asked Mrs. Holt about the significance of revealing personal stories to the class, she explained, "It's partially for credibility, I guess, to give them a sense of my knowing and understanding a little bit. I want to give them a sense of reality to our reading and discussion of other cultures. I think the personal examples bring it home to them. They listen." Julia offered her perspective of Mrs. Holt's shared personal experiences: "One thing I liked was that she related the reading to something she's experienced. Like when she talked about that maid and gardener, you know, that really does happen. . . . She's been right there and she's telling you. She's saying this does happen, and you believe it." Karen Holt's personal stories not only revealed a part of who she was as a person, but they often provided important threads which connected the readers to the multicultural literature in a personal way.

Karen Holt's beliefs and travel experiences helped reveal her as a person to the students, but she revealed herself in other ways as well. To know Mrs. Holt in class meant the students would also know her in a family context outside

of her teaching. Throughout the course, she indirectly acquainted the students with her husband, two daughters, and son. For example, students learned more about one daughter when Mrs. Holt asked a young woman as she called roll, "Sarah, did I see your name in the paper as soccer goalie for the college? Great! My daughter will be goalie next year at Central." The students were introduced to Karen Holt's son through a story about how humorous it was for her to watch her 13-year-old son try not to watch the nude sun bathers on their trip to France. And students learned about Mrs. Holt's husband through her comments about his commitment to Habitat for Humanity and about his love of woodworking. Karen Holt sometimes took the students back to her own family upbringing in a small town. For example, during a discussion of students' perceptions about strangers, she added, "For me, well, I grew up with Beaver Cleaver, you know, where no one locked their doors. Strangers to me meant someone who you could help; they meant opportunities for hospitality." Mrs. Holt did not just appear as the instructor for the class then disappear at the end of 70 minutes. Instead, she revealed herself in ways grounded in a real upbringing, living in a real community, and raising a real family outside of the classroom. These all became a natural part of Karen Holt's teaching and a natural part of the students' experiences in this setting.

Authentic teachers find ways to reveal their interests and sometimes their feelings. Karen Holt often told students of her outside interests or feelings. She often incorporated her interests of reading and writing within class discussions.

Once when a student described the childhood experience of having the tips of her hair catch on fire from the candles on her fourth birthday cake, Mrs. Holt added, "I'm reading a book right now about childhood memories--Wow, that'd certainly be an interesting one to write about!" Another time when a student described the mother as "mean" during a class discussion of "The Stolen Party," Mrs. Holt added her own feelings as she posed a question for further discussion: "Sometimes I really want to protect my three teenagers, too. But that isn't always possible. What do some of the rest of you think? Was Rosaura's mother being protective or mean, as Terri suggested?" Karen Holt frequently found ways to intersect the multicultural literature with her own interests and feelings, which further revealed Mrs. Holt as an authentic teacher.

Karen Holt also appeared genuine to the students by the way she often shared personal possessions. During the group presentations, for example, she loaned helpful materials to the students, such as books, a Guatemalan poster, and a musical recording. When students read I, Rigoberta Menchú, Mrs. Holt brought to class an artifact from a cooperative in Mexico. She passed around a delicate wooden box approximately 12 inches long. The box contained separate compartments, each housing a miniature hand-carved musical instrument such as a harp, guitar, or lyre, all made with intricate carving, detailed inlay work, and thread-like strings. "This is an example of a craft that the co-ops make. They might sell this, then the money goes into a fund. As people need money for something, maybe like medicine, they can borrow from that fund. There's no

middle person and they can better themselves with their crafts and wares. There is an element of hope for the people in the co-ops by doing this," she explained. As students passed around the box, they gently cradled the instruments in their hands and admiring the native Mexican handwork. By the end of the course, students came to know well the teacher who shared herself and her belongings within the classroom context.

Karen Holt seemed authentic to the students when she revealed her warmth, enthusiasm, and sincerity for the students and for the subject matter. Mrs. Holt's willingness to take risks, to be vulnerable also suggested her authenticity. For example, when the students were planning their presentations, she prompted them to take some risks: "Don't worry if something you plan bombs. That's okay. I appreciate people who take risks. I welcome that. Having something not go the way you planned--that has certainly happened to me," she explained. Karen Holt also was able to laugh at herself along with the students. When one group's presentation was ready after days of preparation, Mrs. Holt asked a student to start the videotape. After several attempts to solve the problem as to why the tape was not running, Mrs. Holt discovered the problem and added with a laugh, "I forgot to put in the tape! Aren't you lucky that I wasn't in your group?!" The students joined in with her ability to laugh at herself. Mrs. Holt's warm sense of humor often became a natural part of the learning context. Civikly (1986) asserted that humor can be an important tool for effective teaching: "Classrooms do have unequal social structures. Role distinctions are

expected and accepted as part of the classroom culture. Humor can respect these differences *and* serve to promote the cohesive and positive dimensions of the class group" (p. 69).

Karen Holt also shared her own risk-taking with the class. During a discussion of accepting and building on criticism of one's writing, she told about submitting to a major publication what she believed to be a fine piece of writing, only to receive a rejection letter. Mrs. Holt explained how she grew from the criticism; she encouraged the students to accept similar challenges as they critiqued each other's written compositions. During one interview, the researcher asked Mrs. Holt to reflect on what she had learned, if anything, about herself during the course. Part of her response was, "I think being there [in the classroom] is risky. You know, I do things and I never know how it's going to turn out. It could be a total bomb, and that's risky." She continued, "But it's worth the risk. I like being there with those kids. Sometimes it becomes a job until I get there, and then it's all worth it." As an authentic teacher, Karen Holt took risks, and, by modeling and supporting, she encouraged the students to grow by taking risks and not to fear failure from their experiences of discovery and learning.

The Active, Student-Centered Learning Environment

Although much has been described about the authenticity of the teacher, Karen Holt's classroom was not teacher-centered. Instead, the second theme suggested by the data strongly supported an active, student-centered learning

environment. Analysis of the collected data indicated student-centeredness in Mrs. Holt's educational philosophy, in the roles assumed by teacher and students, and in many of the curricular decisions.

A Student-Centered Educational Philosophy

An educational philosophy is based on theory, beliefs, attitudes, and experiences; it provides part of the foundation from which educators make decisions and judgments. Knoblauch and Brannon (1984) emphasized the importance of a teacher's philosophical stance:

> Teachers must become philosophers if they are to differentiate ideas or methods that lack support in experience from those they support. They must become philosophers in order to carry out the work of improving instruction by first improving the theoretical underpinnings of instruction. (p. 18)

However, not all philosophies are explicit. Although Mrs. Holt did not communicate the formal educational philosophy to which she subscribed, observations of and interviews with Mrs. Holt suggested her implicit theory, that is, the system of beliefs and attitudes on which she based her practice. "Implicit theories are our individual submerged rationales about events in the world and about our own behavior in the world" (Rando & Menges, 1991, p. 7). Implicit theories often provide a teacher with the broad orientations for practice.

Karen Holt's implicit theory was student-centered. One tenet of her philosophy which reflected student-centeredness was her desire to build on who the students were and what they brought to the classroom.

> I begin by building on who they are . . . maybe writing about their families and where they have come from to get an understanding of why they are the way they are, then learning why that standard is how they measure everything else. The idea that it's natural to think that the way we do things how we've been taught is the correct way. That's natural and it's an okay thing but then to talk about why we may, you know, distort that sometimes. I start with them--the students, because . . . to know other cultures, you have to know where you are coming from.

As Mrs. Holt incorporated the multicultural literature into the curriculum, she sought to understand the students' points of entry. Early in the semester, for example, students were asked to write their understanding of *culture, values,* and *beliefs.* One student responded that *culture* was something that grew in a Petri dish in science, while another student stated that culture had something to do with art. Mrs. Holt explained to the researcher this was the first time a science-related understanding of culture had been offered by a student. She explained her plan to let the students find their own answers for the appropriate definitions. Mrs. Holt opened the next class session with small group discussions, in which students exchanged definitions and discussed them in relation to the multicultural reading

assignment. The small group discussion was followed by large group consensus about which definitions were appropriate to this context. Karen Holt acknowledged, "The students all have different ideas about what culture, values, and beliefs are. . . . I think they find out they need to know more about what culture is and this gives them their own beginning points." Karen Holt accepted the level of experience and understanding which students brought to class and used those perspectives as a beginning point for many of the multicultural literature discussions or activities.

Three additional student-centered activities early in the semester encouraged students' own points of entry to the multicultural literature and related issues. First, in "Autobiography of My Culture," students described in writing then discussed how they viewed aspects of their own culture, such as family, school, church, and friends. Second, in the "Cultural Values Worksheet," students indicated what they valued most and least from a list of options, which provided discussion about cultural and personal values. A third activity which prompted students' personal entry to the multicultural literature and discussions was "Learning from Childhood," in which students informally wrote what they were taught about strangers and people who were different from themselves. Mrs. Holt hoped these activities would do the following:

> Change the idea of looking at the world as "We" and "They"; instead, seeing ourselves among, intertwined with the other person rather than "we're here, they're there," and isn't that too bad.

> Instead, where do we come in? I think to look back at where you come from will help determine how you respond to the multicultural literature. There isn't a right or a wrong answer. It's a heavy question, I know; it's sometimes hard to deal with.

Mrs. Holt's distinction between the "We" versus "They" approach instead of "ourselves among others" is important. Schmitz (1992) described the risks of a strictly comparative model to study other cultures, such as "West" and "non-West":

> Such a rigid distinction would allow students to continue to think in terms of "us" and "them," "we" being "natural" and "they" being "exotic and strange." This result would defeat one of the principal aims of curricular reform--to foster in students greater sensitivity to cultural pluralism. (pp. 64-65)

Some of the student-participants reflected on the student-centered activities. For example, Aaron stated, "I guess I was surprised to see that a lot of people had the same values as I did. . . . I hadn't thought about values as part of culture really." On the other hand, Jeanne expressed her surprise at how different some students' values were from her own. She told the researcher the "Learning from Childhood" activity was difficult for her to complete.

> I hadn't ever thought about it before, I mean, what I got from the church or family or friends. It was very hard for me. I mean, I was sitting next to Deanna and we were, like, what are we supposed to

put for our culture? We've never had this set in front of us before. It was, like, something totally new.

Further support emerged during student-participant interviews that the students were unaccustomed to reflecting on their own culture. When asked to describe their own culture, all four student-participants expressed in one way or another that they did not see themselves as having a culture; two participants asked the researcher to clarify what she meant by *culture*. The participants' inability to articulate a description of their culture should not be surprising. Kennedy (1991) acknowledged students come to the classroom "with full acculturation. They already have the values of our culture; we do not need to teach them. . . . They know the values of their culture, even if they cannot articulate them" (p. 38). However, Kennedy argued that educators do need to help students become aware of their cultural beliefs and values so they might be able to more clearly understand themselves as they consider others. Mrs. Holt's student-centered philosophy for instruction prompted her to develop opportunities for the students to examine their own lives in relation to others and to explore the culture, values, and beliefs *they* brought to the multicultural reading. Activities such as "Learning from Childhood" prompted students to find their own points of entry to the multicultural literature and discussion.

In order to help students know themselves as they encountered the multicultural literature, a second tenet of Mrs. Holt's educational philosophy became apparent: the importance of forming and asking questions, which further

reflected the student-centeredness of the learning environment. Mrs. Holt told the students one day, "We need to know what questions to ask. For example, when somebody tells me, 'Hey, Lady, you need a new muffler,' there are certain questions I need to ask." During one interview, Karen Holt referred to this process of investigation as "discovery." Mrs. Holt reported she thought it was very important for everybody, not just students, to learn to ask questions, "to formulate questions in order to get to the bottom of things." She noted not everyone asks the same questions; during one in-depth interview, she expressed her hope that students would ask their own questions about the literature and about themselves. Mrs. Holt's belief in the importance of the learner discovery process is reflective of influential educational philosophers such as Whitehead, who argued that from the very beginning of a child's education, "The child should experience the joy of discovery" (Whitehead, 1974, p. 5).

Mrs. Holt's emphasis on the importance of questioning and discovery was reflected in most reading assignments and class discussions. Mrs. Holt often prompted students to "dig deeper." For example, as Mrs. Holt previewed one reading assignment for the next class meeting, she added, "As you read this for class next time, try to think of some of the causes for the things that happen. Go beyond the obvious and dig a little deeper to see some of the root causes for reactions and to see what is really happening." When asked if the practice of asking questions and digging deeper related specifically to the inclusion of

multicultural literature in her entry-level English course, Mrs. Holt emphasized the importance of questions:

> Pretty soon you start to question your ethnocentrism. You start to say, maybe this isn't the way. You start to see gray areas and places that didn't exist before, and, you know, maybe even question, what can I do to do something about this? Or you start asking the big questions and maybe even a life-forming question, like what occupation will I have where I am affected by inclusiveness?

Mrs. Holt identified the ethnocentric tendency many students brought to her classroom. As the students read about various practices from other cultures, responses often included the descriptors "shocking," "weird," and "surprising." Mrs. Holt hoped by encouraging students to ask questions and dig deeper, they would disengage from an ethnocentric perspective as they read about the circles of others.

I asked Mrs. Holt to talk about the role of answers to questions. "Yes, I think we look for answers, but probably don't find them a lot. There's a lot of suggestions of answers in the reading that we do, maybe, and we'll do a lot of interesting things that might help them find their own answers." Duckworth (1987) emphasized the importance of encouraging the students to dig deeper and to share their questions and discoveries. By attempting to clarify their thoughts for others, students "achieve greater clarity for themselves" (p. 130). Also, Duckworth asserted when learners pose their own questions, "The students

themselves determine what it is they want to understand" (p. 130). She also acknowledged that "people come to depend on themselves: They are the judges of what they know and believe" (pp. 130-131). When learners depend on themselves, "Students recognize the powerful experience of having their ideas taken seriously, rather than simply screened for correspondence to what the teacher wanted" (p. 131). The process of digging deeper also leads students to see that they can "learn an enormous amount from each other," and, finally, "Learners come to recognize knowledge as a human construction, since they have constructed their own knowledge and they know that they have" (p. 131). Mrs. Holt's beliefs in discovery, questioning, and digging deeper offered students the opportunity to accomplish these principles.

Student-Centered Roles for Teacher and Students

An attitude of student-centeredness was revealed not only through Mrs. Holt's implicit educational philosophy, but through the roles of teacher and students. Freire (1970) described the traditional role of teaching through the metaphor of banking: "In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing" (p. 58); learning is deposited by the teacher. In this kind of classroom, teacher talk dominates and students assume the more passive role of listening. Shor (1992) summarized Freire's assertion as "a vertical relationship between unequals, with authority on top and the students below, authority speaking and the students being filled with official content" (p. 86).

Similarly, Astin's (1993) findings from a recent study of higher education supported this assertion. He concluded, "Traditional lower-division classes involve a good deal of lecturing, possibly some class discussion, some individual out-of-class work, course exams, and letter grades" (p. 427). However, the teacher-as-authority role was not the role assumed by Karen Holt as her class explored multicultural literature. More accurately, Mrs. Holt created a dialogical relationship with her students. The learner remained at the center of her classroom, and the teacher acted as a knowledgeable facilitator of learning rather than as the authority who delivered the multicultural literature content and meaning. In the instructor role Karen Holt defined for herself, she facilitated student learning in two ways: First, by assisting the learners; second, by providing related information, often through a dialogical approach to inquiry.

Karen Holt assisted the students' pursuit of their own questions and ideas. When asked about Mrs. Holt's role in the class, Jeanne reported, "I think she stimulated thought. She did that by the questions--she asked really good questions that would make you think. You know, she kind of asked both sides of a question but didn't give an answer." When asked if she felt Mrs. Holt had specific answers in mind to her questions, Jeanne replied, "No, she just wanted us to think. She didn't just give us the information." During another student-participant interview, Aaron shared he felt Mrs. Holt "almost pushed us to have our own connections" to the reading and writing assignments. As an example, he offered his experience with the assigned cross-cultural interview. Instead of conducting an interview with

someone from a distinctly different culture, Aaron asked Mrs. Holt if he could interview a family which included adopted and foster children, very different from what he saw as part of his culture, "the more traditional nuclear family," as he described it. He reflected about the interview experience.

> I didn't know if that would be enougn of a difference in culture. But she [Mrs. Holt] told me to go for it. I liked that she would allow me to do what I wanted to do, but still making sure that it would tie in with the assignment. I think she knew I would learn something out of the experience, and I did.

Other participants reported a similar sense of control over their decision-making and learning processes. Students developed their own questions, and Mrs. Holt facilitated opportunities for students to discover their own answers.

Karen Holt assisted the learners in other ways. For example, she sometimes assisted students' understanding of the multicultural literature itself. For example, after reading "You Are a Man" by Richard Rodriquez (Verburg, 1991), students indicated confusion about the essay: "It was confusing"; "It seemed fragmented to me"; "I didn't even get it," reported another. When these comments emerged during class discussion, Karen Holt suggested students review the introductory information provided about the essay. After doing so, the student who suggested the essay was confusing contributed that the writing was originally used in Harper's to introduce a collection of photographs. When Mrs. Holt asked what difference that might make, the student responded that the

photographs probably connected to the writing about people crossing the border illegally into the United States; but without the photographs, the student added, the writing only *seemed* fragmented to the reader. This exchange prompted additional class discussion about what and who the *coyote* was in the writing and why people illegally crossed the border. Mrs. Holt assisted the students' learning by showing them where to look for clues to clarify their own understanding of the literature.

Sometimes Karen Holt assisted the students' learning by providing resources. Throughout the semester, she offered materials such as the supplemental resource guide produced by the Resource Center of the Americas to assist their study and presentations of I, Rigoberta Menchú. Other times, Mrs. Holt assisted the students with materials, music, overhead transparencies, ideas, or video recording equipment for group presentations. She also provided assistance through direct instruction. For example, during a collaborative project based on their reading of I, Rigoberta Menchú, the students reported difficulties finding appropriate information at the library. The next class period, Mrs. Holt assisted their learning process by inviting a reference librarian to class to review specific reference materials and strategies for researching the topics related to their questions.

In addition to her role of assisting the learners, Mrs. Holt provided information relating to issues and topics in order to help students clarify their understanding. However, the information presented by Mrs. Holt rarely appeared

in the traditional, prepared lecture format, which frequently dominates the undergraduate educational experience. Terenzini and Pascarella (1994) report that in Pollio's study (1984), teachers in the typical classroom lectured to students more than 80% of the time. In Mrs. Holt's class setting, the provided information responded to points from the students' writing, questions, discussions, or from Karen Holt's personal thoughts or connections to the reading. She communicated information and offered ideas through a more natural dialogue framework rather than through traditional lecture. For example, after reading the Lindholms' "Life Behind the Veil," Lauren responded, "The essay shocked me. I knew that the Moslem women wore veils, but I didn't realize why or realize that it was so extreme." Mrs. Holt acknowledged to the class that many people in other cultures do not fully understand the practice of veiling, and she added the essay did not even reflect the full extent of what some fundamentalists practice. Mrs. Holt explained that for some females, a type of female circumcision is performed, and she told about an international movement, particularly strong in Europe, which seeks to end this practice of mutilation, as some people call it. After another Verburg reading assignment, "The Chase," an Italian short story about an unfaithful wife, a student asked about the meaning of the title and the bird metaphor. Mrs. Holt did not tell the student what the "correct" interpretation should be. Instead, in response, she briefly explained existentialism, the philosophy to which the writer subscribed, according to the reading introduction, and then Mrs. Holt asked how the existentialist philosophy might relate to the

title or metaphor. The students shared speculations about their own interpretations. During the discussion of "The Stolen Party," Mrs. Holt provided background information as possible explanation for why Rosaura, the main character, might not have had a father.

> Have some of you heard of "machismo"? In many South American or Latin American countries, this is a dominant philosophy. It is not uncommon for men to have mistresses, frequently lower class women; men might father children but are not legally responsible for them. There are probably millions of children who don't know who their fathers are. Also, there is no social security system in many of these countries. Many will have quite a few children so they can be cared for in their old age--kids become a kind of financial protection in some cultures. Others of you asked about birth control in your journals. Remember, this is a predominantly Catholic country. . . . Again, we have to look at the systems that are operating in a culture. Look at the root causes for some of the things that we read about.

Through the students' natural curiosities welcomed in a classroom climate of dialogue, Mrs. Holt informally provided information which helped students clarify their own understanding of the multicultural reading. At the same time, she guided the students to ground their responses in the text itself.

The students' reading, writing, and presentations based on I, Rigoberta Menchú also provided many opportunities for Mrs. Holt to provide information intended to assist their understanding. For example, after the first section of reading, some students described the reading as "choppy" or "fragmented." Karen Holt suggested they reconsider the book's introduction as possible explanation for the book's writing style. After reviewing the book introduction, students discovered a possible reason. Menchú had communicated her autobiography/ testimony in Spanish through an interpreter. To assist understanding further, Mrs. Holt called attention to the time of this writing. Menchú had spoken Spanish for only five or six years at its writing; Menchú had only recently learned Spanish to communicate her story since few people spoke her native Indian language. Mrs. Holt also provided more information about Menchú's writing style: "Not all cultures have the same thinking structures. For example, in most European-based cultures, we are more linear thinkers." She continued, "Think about the outlines you may have completed for a speech class. You were to make a point, then a sub-point, and so on. But in other cultures, for example, the Native American culture, they might think and speak differently. A professor from the University of Oklahoma who studied Native Americans for quite some time once shared with me that tribal thought is more like a wheel." Mrs. Holt walked to the board and drew a large circle and added spokes like a wheel and a large dot in the center.

> When many Native Americans speak, for example, they have a point, but approach it from a lot of different directions, much like

> the spokes on a wheel. They might get at their point through stories, often more than one story maybe. I remember when I taught speech to Native American students once, they seemed to be all over the place in their organization; but in talking with them, that is the way to approach thinking in their culture. So if Menchú's book seems fragmented, it might be that her thinking and approach to her points is different.

Based on the students' responses, Karen Holt had provided follow-up information about thinking patterns to enrich the students' reading experience.

Sometimes the information Mrs. Holt provided during the class dialogue was based on the students' written responses. For example, students expressed shock at this part of Menchú's description of life on the *altiplano:* "As for sex, that's something we Indians know about because most of the family sees everything that goes on. Couples sleep together but don't have a separate place for themselves" (Menchú, 1984, p. 47). In their dialogue journals, students wrote: "As I came across this passage in the reading, I was shocked because I would have never had guessed that Indians did this when they seemed so secret in other ways"; or, "It seems weird that people have sex right in front of the entire family. Sex, especially between parents, is something that's not really talked about in our families. And they would certainly never do it in front of the children"; yet another stated, "I guess this blew my mind, but I think that's mostly because of the way I was raised . . . I don't know how they could do that! Didn't they feel kinda

strange?" At the next class meeting, Mrs. Holt explained that sexual practices are an expression of culture as well. She stated that in Menchú's Guatemalan Indian culture, sex was a natural part of their lives; families often shared extremely close living quarters, which meant relationships of all kinds were more visible. Mrs. Holt reminded the students that sexual needs are one of the basic human needs, and different cultures view sexual practices differently. Mrs. Holt provided information about many topics which emerged from the multicultural reading and students' responses, for example: a description of "The Disappeared" (a column published in the Guatemalan newspapers of people who have disappeared); a review of Maslow's basic needs triangle; an explanation of Liberation Theology (a practice which uses the Bible to counter social injustices); the ancient traditions of human sacrifices in some cultures; the decision-making process for selecting recipients of the Nobel Peace Prize; the formation of cooperatives as a means of empowerment; the ethos, pathos, and logos sides of any issue; the caste system of India; as well as other related topics and issues. The information provided by Mrs. Holt stemmed from the students' written responses or class discussions, which further supported the recurring pattern of student-centeredness in the learning environment.

The roles which teacher and students assumed in this class setting were dialogical in nature. As Gollnick and Chin (1990) suggested, the type of dialogical relationship Mrs. Holt maintained with her students requires certain skills:

> That teachers know the subject being taught very well. Rather than depending on a textbook and lecture format, the teacher listens to students and directs them in the learning of a discipline through dialogue. . . . It requires discarding the traditional authoritarian classroom to establish a democratic one in which both teacher and students are active participants. (p. 282)

In her role as teacher, Mrs. Holt did not act as the one who delivered information; rather, the information resulted from the students' questions or responses and became a part of the class dialogue. In her role as teacher, Karen Holt viewed herself as a learner, not as the teacher-expert. "I think watching them discover is really a neat thing about being a teacher. I'm learning right along with them because I'm not the expert either. I may have studied some of this stuff and can help them find their answers, but the discovery part is up to them." When asked about her selection of the small group strategy for discussing I, Rigoberta Menchú, she offered, "This approach is good for me too because the students help teach it. I learn right along with them. I mean, I might set up the procedural stuff, but they take it from there." During a student-participant interview, Jeanne offered her perspective on the role of students in this class:

> I don't think the teacher's voice dominated at all. I think it was the voices of the literature and the students' voices that were most important. Because Mrs. Holt has already read this and thought

> It's like, I think she's trying to make everyone learn from each other too.

Similarly, Jeanne viewed the class:

> [As] a very easy going environment. I didn't think it was a stressful class like some of my other ones. . . . She related to us. She didn't stand up there and act like a big professor that's been educated and wise. She made you feel really welcome, just by the way she smiled, by the things she talked about, the way she cared. Not a lot of teachers in college are like that. I like her so much. I go visit her sometimes just because she made me feel welcome. She always looked at you like an individual, not as just a student she has to teach.

The roles of teacher and students in this class setting were best clarified for this researcher by the students' own stories.

The way Mrs. Holt structured and used class time also reflected the important role of students. Early in the semester, she established a tone of student-centeredness. At the first class session, when clarifying her attendance policy, Mrs. Holt added with a smile, "I'm kind of stickler on attendance because *you* make it happen in here, I don't. When all of you are here, that's when things really happen!" During another class early in the semester when a student asked Mrs. Holt what she wanted for a particular assignment, Karen Holt responded quickly but warmly, "Let's get it straight right now. This is your audience for the

writing," as she swept her arm gesturing to the class, "not me." In her classroom, Mrs. Holt successfully established a tone which acknowledged all opinions as important. This attitude was reflected in the way Jeanne viewed the class:

> It was like this big, huge, almost like a melting pot of ideas. Everyone was throwing in their own ideas, their own questions, their own thoughts, and everyone was stirring it around in their own heads. A neat little package never seemed to come out, but it stimulated a lot of thought processes in many areas.

Karen Holt described during an interview the kind of class she found exciting: "I might set up the structure, but then I like to pull way out . . . just back off and let them go. They stay on track themselves; you'd be amazed." In this class setting, pre-knowledge about a culture was not necessary for the exploration of the multicultural literature. Dasenbrock (1992) asserted that knowledge need not be a prerequisite to experiencing the writing of other cultures. This belief also disengages the teacher from being the expert. Dasenbrock suggested what is needed is "a model of reading, of interpretation, which redescribes the scene of reading not as a scene of possession, of the demonstration of knowledge already in place, or as a failure of possession, but as a scene of learning" (1992, p. 39). Observations as well as in-depth interviews with student-participants confirmed the classroom as a scene of learning for the participants, which was established by the personal and interactive classroom structure and activities facilitated by Mrs. Holt.

> about it, but for the students, it was their first time. They had to make their own interpretations of the material.

One instance in particular revealed the importance of student voice in Mrs. Holt's classroom. Mrs. Holt asked the students to discuss their cross-cultural interviews in small groups. Around the room, the students huddled in groups of three or four, alive with questions, comments, and conversation; everyone seemed to have something to say. As Mrs. Holt walked from group to group, she often pulled up a desk to listen to the discussion. As she passed where I sat to observe and record fieldnotes, she whispered, "Listen," then paused to listen to the students talking. "I love that sound, don't you?" She smiled and moved to another group. Student voice was truly an integral part of this student-centered teaching and learning environment.

Not only did Karen Holt redefine her own role from a more traditional authoritarian teacher to teacher-facilitator, but the students perceived the importance of their role in her classroom as well. Lauren shared her perception of Mrs. Holt and students:

> I think she includes all of us instead of trying to make herself the dominant one. And that's one thing I like about her. She makes everything equal. . . . She makes me feel, how do I say it, like I'm involved with the teaching along with her instead of she's the professor and I'm the student and I'm supposed to learn from her.

Although most students indicated positive responses to this kind of learning environment, one student did not appear as readily accepting of the multicultural reading or of the open, discovery-oriented class atmosphere. When Mrs. Holt began class one day by asking students their general thoughts about the reading, Alex, slumped in his desk in the third row offered, "It sucked." Mrs. Holt calmly responded, "I can't accept that, Alex. You will have to tell us why you think that. Give us reasons or examples. You might feel that way about the reading, but dig deeper for why that might be." Alex offered little response, however. A few weeks later when a distinguished guest speaker came to class to talk about his experience at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony, Alex walked to the front of the room and read a brief statement about the speaker and introduced him to the class. On his way out after class, Alex stopped and asked Mrs. Holt, "How did I do? Was that enough and all that?" She responded with a smile, "Oh, yes, Alex. It was very nicely done. Thanks a lot again for doing that." Later, Karen Holt explained that she was aware of Alex's negative attitude toward some aspects of the class because of some of his written and spoken comments or actions. "I think some of it was insecurity and maybe a little immaturity. I wanted to give him an important job to help him feel more a part of things. So I asked him after class one day if he would meet with the speaker ahead of time and get a little background information for an introduction. I think it may have worked." After Alex's introduction of the speaker, the negative comments disappeared; he appeared to be more comfortable in the class because he added constructive

points to class discussions and participated in the group work in a less domineering manner. Mrs. Holt offered, "I feel that students have a right to learn, and I don't like other students taking the show away or taking away others' right to learn." The manner in which Karen Holt approached the situation with Alex demonstrated her emphasis on students.

The roles of teacher and students in this entry-level English class were redefined from traditional teacher and student roles in the college classroom. Svinicki (1991) described the kind of redefined roles for teacher and students which appeared in this class setting. For students, "It is the change from lower cognitive levels (memorization and simple translation of authoritative sources) to higher levels (analysis, evaluation, and acceptance of personal responsibilities for one's choices)" (p. 28). The instructor's role assumes "careful attention to how the content is structured, how it is sequenced, what examples and activities we use, how we respond to initial learning attempts, and an array of other instructional strategies" (pp. 28-29). In these redefined roles for teacher and students, learning becomes a shared responsibility.

Do these redefined roles of teacher and student have something specific to offer the classroom where multicultural content is included in the curriculum? It appears that student-centeredness as practiced by Mrs. Holt may be essential in classrooms where multicultural content and issues are explored. In his study of more than 300 colleges and universities, Gaff (1992) found multiculturalism increasingly reflected in the courses now offered on the nation's campuses. He

suggested multicultural general-education courses call for "more personal, experiential, interactive, and collaborative kinds of instruction" than the traditional, lecture-as-usual approach. Wilkerson (1992) also concluded that a more "open-ended pedagogy" offered students in higher education the best opportunities for exploring and learning from a multicultural curriculum. Schmitz (1992) recognized that higher education faculty members currently are redefining traditional curricula as well as pedagogy; she cited ethnic studies as a "critical source of energy and enthusiasm for new pedagogical approaches because of their history of student-centered teaching and learning" (p. 67). The redefined roles assumed by Mrs. Holt and the students helped create an active learning environment in which the participants constructed meaning.

Student-Centered Curricular Decisions

A student-centered learning climate was also established through curricular decision-making. The focus on students was apparent in Mrs. Holt's multicultural literature selection process and in the activities intended to engage students in thinking and learning. As Mrs. Holt became familiar with her students and their questions, she tried to accommodate their needs and points of interest in her literature selection process, she explained. She added that she has never taught the multicultural text the same way twice, often in order to accommodate what was happening with the students' lives. For example, Mrs. Holt was aware that this class of incoming students would be studying the theme of Freedom and Authority in a required humanities course on campus; therefore, she selected

readings such as "You Are a Man" by Richard Rodriquez and "Life Behind the Veil" by Cherry and Charles Lindholm (Verburg, 1991), in which students would have additional opportunities to confront related themes. Amber acknowledged part of her high interest in the class was due to the literature selections. "She did a good job picking out the material we read. It was really interesting." Mrs. Holt's selection of much of the literature incorporated in this course was based on the students' needs and interests.

Mrs. Holt also focused on students as she considered the amount and type of literature assigned. She reported part of her belief about teaching was to break the whole into smaller parts, or, as she described, "building blocks." She explained, "It's kind of like teaching tennis or teaching any skill, you give them success at small increments . . . show them where they are successful, maybe where there's room for improvement, then continue to build up from there to a whole." This belief explains why she started with the shorter, high interest readings from the multicultural literature text and then assigned the longer reading of the multicultural autobiography during the second half of the course. "The autobiography," she believes, "takes the general and brings it to the specific for the students, to a culture and to a person." The students' needs and interests were an integral part of the curriculum decision-making process on which Mrs. Holt built the participants' multicultural literature experiences. As Svinicki (1991) asserted, teachers must carefully consider how content is structured and sequenced and what activities accompany content.

The activities which Karen Holt incorporated as part of the course curriculum reflected an active, student-centered perspective. The activities which accompanied the multicultural reading emphasized the students' interactions with the multicultural literature rather than provided them with teacher-generated question-answer worksheets. For example, one activity called Phillips 66 was adapted from a suggestion found in Communication in the College Classroom (1989). For this activity, students developed their own questions based on the reading assignment then discussed their responses in groups of six for six minutes as they sat in the midst of a larger audience-circle. Mrs. Holt had not used the activity before, but selected it because she "wanted to see what the students could come up with for their questions. It gave the students some direct involvement, some freedom in the discussion, and I think that's important." She explained she also chose the activity because the teacher was "totally out of the picture. The way it was structured forced them to deal with each other." Although Mrs. Holt expressed she was pleased with the way the activity was conducted and with the students' discussion, three of the four student-participants reported that they did not like Phillips 66. In addition, other students provided less than enthusiastic responses about this activity on their final course evaluations. When participants were asked to describe their experiences with this activity, they included comments such as, "I felt self-conscious sitting in the center circle"; or, "I didn't really know what we were supposed to do." However, student-participants stated that they liked the discussion of student-generated questions rather than teacher-

or book-generated questions; it appeared that it was the discussion format of Phillips 66 which they did not like.

Another curricular activity which exemplified the emphasis on the learners in Mrs. Holt's class was the in-depth investigation paper. Students investigated one aspect of another culture of their choice. In preparation, Mrs. Holt described examples such as the role of fathers in a particular culture, eye contact in the Native American culture, or spatial proximity as it played out in another culture. Mrs. Holt encouraged students to "mesh your interests with the topic. For example, if you're interested in music, find a paper topic with that in mind. We're digging deeper here." She explained the purpose of the paper was not to present a geography report or to provide opinions, but, instead, the purpose was to inform the audience as much as possible about a narrow aspect which they found compelling in another culture. The student-participants reported that this assignment was interesting, even "eye-opening," as Aaron called his investigation of the Christian church in the former Soviet Union today. Aaron, who hoped to become a church pastor someday, experienced the freedom to integrate his interests with the cross-cultural assignment.

Perhaps the strongest example of curricular planning which focused on the students' own construction of meaning was their opportunity to directly interact with the multicultural literature and with Mrs. Holt in their Dialogue Journals. In Mrs. Holt's class, after completion of the assigned reading, the students divided their journal response into thirds: First, students selected a passage from the

reading, recorded it on paper, and noted the page number; second, they wrote a response to the passage, such as a comment, question, related experience, or any other form of response. Third, Mrs. Holt wrote responses to their thoughts, questions, or ideas. In many traditional approaches to literature, teacher-generated or textbook questions are posed, then students search for "correct" answers. However, in Mrs. Holt's class, the students and teacher were mutually involved with the text and meaning in the Dialogue Journal. The journal writing often became the springboard for class discussions. Through such informal writing opportunities, "Students are actively involved in the reading/writing process as they engage in an exchange of ideas about their reading. The classroom becomes a community in which students learn from each other as well as from the teacher" (Friedman, 1992, p. 188). Zamel (1988) concurred that journals "allow for dialogues with a text so that students come to discover that the meaning of texts is not fixed 'out there' but is made while readers react to them" (p. 187).

The feedback opportunity which was part of the Dialogue Journal provided Mrs. Holt opportunity to move students to explore more deeply, to reconsider certain points, to answer or pose questions, to become more personal with students, or to challenge students to examine a new perspective. For example, in response to a passage about maturity at an early age from I, Rigoberta Menchú, one student wrote: "When I was 13, I had to become more mature about life too. My brother Ryan died at age 16. This led me to fill his place in the family . . .

this changed my life forever." Mrs. Holt continued the journal dialogue and wrote in return: "This happened to me also. When I was 13, my dad died and I grew up fast. I can relate to you and your response to the reading when you said that event changed your life forever. It did for me too." Another student wrote a journal response based on a section of I, Rigoberta Menchú, in which he commented that it seemed to him "every little problem is blamed on white people." Part of the feedback from the instructor was a question about Guatemala posed for the student's consideration: "How do conquerors alter history for a people?" The dialogue journal format provided students with a rich opportunity for direct, active involvement not only with the literature, but with the teacher and with each other during follow-up class discussions. Friedman (1992) cited Fulwiler's (1982) emphasis on journal writing in response to reading. By journal writing, "'They have committed themselves, through their own language, to at least a tentative exploration of an idea'" (Friedman, 1992, p. 184). When the literature is multicultural in nature, opportunities for students to explore their ideas in a non-threatening, open-ended manner such as journal writing are important. "Reader-response approaches are particularly well-suited to teaching . . . ethnic literature. Teachers, who themselves may be 'outsiders,' need not place themselves in a position of authority, expressing the 'correct' interpretation" (Karolides, 1992, p. 185). Through much of her curricular decision-making, Karen Holt facilitated opportunities for the students to explore the multicultural literature. Many of the activities which accompanied the reading experience

connected the course content to what the students knew, cared about, and brought to the classroom setting.

The first recurring theme, which emerged from the observed, interview, and written data, strongly supported Karen Holt as an authentic teacher. The second theme revealed an active, student-centered learning environment. The students' individual points of entry to the multicultural literature and the students' questions about themselves, the literature, and others created the foundation on which Mrs. Holt built a wide range of multicultural literature experiences. The third theme provides another layer of understanding of the study setting and participants.

Connectedness in the Multicultural Literature Teaching and Learning Experience

Key relationships among the repeated ideas generated the third theme for this study: Within this multicultural literature teaching and learning environment, a strong sense of connectedness developed among various facets of the course; students became more closely connected to voices outside the classroom, connected to their own lives, connected to each other and to the teacher, and, lastly, connected to a broad range of academic skills.

The importance of connectedness is reflected in Boyer's (1987) study of colleges and universities: "To improve the undergraduate experience--and strengthen the community of learning--the challenge is to build connections" (p. 172). Boyer also argued that faculty and students must see themselves as having

important business to do together; without a sense of connectedness, "what could be a time of exciting exploration is reduced to a series of uninspired routines" (p. 141).

Connections to Outside Voices

Karen Holt's personal beliefs about connection to community were reflected in her practice of incorporating multicultural literature within her course curriculum. In her personal philosophy, Mrs. Holt believed people are part of a larger community and always impact one another. Referring to her constant interactions with others through actual experience or through literature, Mrs. Holt acknowledged, "Every time I read or write about other people, they become part of who I am. That probably sounds a little New Age or something, but I've always felt that way. You know, like I'm me not because of me, but because of all the stuff I've put into me--maybe a little like eating." This strong sense of relationship with others influenced Mrs. Holt's curriculum decision-making. She explained that she hoped to create opportunities for the students to interact with a broader community through the multicultural literature and through others. Mrs. Holt intended that students would get to know each other in the class, but she also wanted them "to move beyond the walls of the classroom. I think it's important to bring the campus and the local community into the classroom. . . . I think it's exciting to connect with the outside world." Amber expressed appreciation for the relationship between class and a broader community: "I like that what we're reading is happening now. It's important to me to keep up on

current events, you know, the problems of the world and society. I feel like the reading has made me a part of what's going on, and maybe I could become part of a solution . . . or maybe I'm part of the problem. It's really opened up my eyes." Early in the semester, Karen Holt quoted a statement to the class which she said was like "a thesis for our whole class, what we're trying to do in here." She read:

> Author/anthropologist Charles Lindholm stated that the authors' purpose for writing "Life Behind the Veil" was *"to look beneath the things that seem to us to be exotic, strange, alienating, and try to understand the milieu that makes those things sensible"* [italics added]. (Verburg, 1991, p. 359)

Mrs. Holt reminded the students that they shared a similar purpose in their multicultural reading, that is, to try to understand a little better, not necessarily to embrace. To help students build this understanding of themselves among others, students were connected to the voices of others through multicultural literature and through community resource people.

One opportunity for students to connect to cross-cultural voices in Mrs. Holt's entry-level English class came from the assigned multicultural text, Ourselves Among Others: Cross-Cultural Readings for Writers. The readings provided students with voices depicting a wide range of cross-cultural experiences such as individual voices from Hong Kong, India, the former Soviet Union, and Iran. Aaron shared his attitude toward the Verburg text: "When I first bought it

[the text], I thought it was just another textbook. After reading it so far, I really enjoy it. All the reading has kept me interested . . . and I want to keep reading more. It expands my knowledge." Another student-participant, Jeanne, shared her perspective of the text: "I thought it was fairly easy to read. It was pretty much there in front of you, except for you had so many questions as you read the text. Why this, why that, why would they do this, why would they do that? And that's what going to this class was all about, so you can discuss those things."

Students were connected to another cross-cultural voice through the second text for the course, I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala. Early responses from several of the students to Menchú's writing included: "It was boring," or, "It's okay." Mrs. Holt explained the book would pull readers in more gradually as they continued to read. She offered, "You'll get to some parts in the reading that I doubt you'll forget. This reading might be a little harder, let's say than the Verburg readings, but hang in there." She reminded the students not to focus on "each picky detail"; instead, "See if you can dig deeper and see the concepts and ideas that Menchú is trying to convey." By the conclusion of the reading, participants expressed that they were deeply affected by the voice of Rigoberta Menchú. Julia, who grew up in a rural setting, shared her strong identification with the writer: "I'll always remember Rigoberta because . . . it was true, but also because there were a lot of things that you just don't forget, like the persecutions and the tortures. But for me, it was her relationship with the land and the animals." When student-participants were asked at the final interview

what, if anything, stood out as particularly memorable from the past semester, all five students mentioned the voice of Rigoberta Menchú among their responses. Jeanne stated, "I just couldn't put the book down because it was opening my eyes to things that not a lot of high school teachers would dare open your eyes to." Students' written responses in their Dialogue Journals also indicated their high involvement with the reading. Responses to the reading in their Dialogue Journals revealed a range of emotions, from anger, sorrow, and even surprise to a strong sense of identification. When asked about reading autobiographical voices from another culture, Aaron offered his perspective: "When we read first-hand what has happened, it's just, it's just amazing. I mean, the author just says this is what it's like. They aren't trying to prove anything out of their writing--they're just informing us this is the way it is, and that's effective." Amber expressed her experience with reading Menchú's autobiography: "It was so powerful because she told the truth. She didn't leave anything out. . . . It's from her experience. That means, it's coming directly to you." Through I, Rigoberta Menchú, the students heard an authentic voice tell about the political and social situation in Guatemala. The autobiographical multicultural literature provided a powerful connection for the students to experiences of others.

The student-participants indicated during the in-depth interviews the importance of Menchú's autobiographical voice. Porter (1990) recognized the power of autobiography; he acknowledged that autobiography touches readers in a special way because of the representation of direct experience. Porter argued that

autobiography not only joins the students to the writer but also suggests a similar opportunity for the teacher:

> Autobiography nudges us to dialogue with the writer because his or her voice taps something in us, and the teacher of autobiography can listen for the point of contact, can encourage the reader to make explicit what may only be dimly perceived. (Porter, 1990, p. 3)

Others have supported the powerful influence of the autobiographical reading experience (Beckham, 1990; Carey-Webb, 1990). Beverley (1990), distinguishing *testimonio* from the participant-narrative of autobiography, recognized its unique relationship to readers. In *testimonio*, such as Rigoberta Menchú's book, part of the intent of the narrator is the urgency to communicate, often problems of social or political oppression or poverty. Beverley (1989) asserted:

> This presence of the voice, which we are meant to experience as the voice of a real rather than a fictional person, is the mark of a desire not to be silenced or defeated, to impose oneself on an institution of power like literature from the position of the excluded or the marginal. (pp. 16-17)

The reading experience of I, Rigoberta Menchú left the students with a strong sense of connectedness to Menchú and to her situation of oppression.

Students were connected to the cross-cultural voice of Rigoberta Menchú through her writing, but Mrs. Holt also provided an opportunity for students to connect directly with Menchú. In mid-November, after students completed the

reading and related presentations, Mrs. Holt came to class with a stack of department stationery. "When you come to class next time, on this paper I'd like you to have written a letter to Rigoberta Menchú. She'll be at the Peace Prize Forum in Northbranch in February, and I'll get your letters to her." At this announcement, I heard responses such as: "No way!", incredulous at the thought of having Menchú actually receive their letters. Another student, equally surprised, smiled and simply responded, "Wooow." Mrs. Holt continued, "You are free to write anything to her. You might want to respond to her book, to her life or the movement." Many of the students carefully placed the stationery in their notebooks. The next class meeting, students returned with letters written to Rigoberta Menchú. Excerpts from their letters best capture the essence of their experiences: "I found out by reading your book and doing research how brutal the poor of Central America are treated by the leaders who are rich and powerful. I think that you are a very heroic person to put your life forward for a cause"; "Your story opened my eyes to the less fortunate people of the world. Maybe 'unfortunate' should be labeled 'fortunate'; your people have close relationships within the community and family. For me, my relationships with family and friends are only skin deep"; "I admire your strength . . . I applaud you. Your story touched my life because of the meaning behind it. I learned what honor was all about"; "You are one of the most courageous women in the world"; "I, Rigoberta Menchú brought reality to me"; "I was very sad to hear about the deaths of many of your family members. Losing one member of my family was

difficult for me"; and, "You have educated a great many people and, for that, you are very much appreciated." The students wrote letters of praise, admiration, and appreciation; many wrote about their identification with something about which Menchú had written.

The opportunity to make a direct connection with Menchú through the letter-writing experience was appreciated by the interviewed participants, although some expressed a degree of hesitation. "It was very, very hard for me because I didn't know what to say. I didn't feel right about just saying, 'Hey, congratulations.' So I basically talked about what she had done, and what she has done for me through her book, that it kind of opened my eyes. It took me at least 45 minutes to even figure out what I want to write. This was a very neat assignment," Julia offered. Lauren described her response to the letter-writing opportunity: "It was, like, kind of weird to be really writing to Rigoberta. I told her what I thought of the book, and I just praised her. Really, I think she deserves so much praise. It was neat knowing she was going to get my letter." After reading the students' letters, Mrs. Holt provided the researcher with her perspective on what the students had written:

> I liked that they didn't talk about pity, and I liked that they didn't say, 'We're so fortunate to live in this country and I'm glad I don't live anywhere else.' I appreciated it when they said they learned so many things they didn't know before, that they were sorry about her family, that they admired her strength, and that they were glad she

> won the Peace Prize. I felt like in their letters, they were riding on an equal level, not just as First World to Third World, but writing with more of an understanding and knowledge. The letters were very insightful for me to read.

One of Mrs. Holt's colleagues who attended the Peace Prize Forum in February personally delivered the students' letters to Rigoberta Menchú, which provided students a personal connection to the Nobel Peace Prize recipient. Glasser (1992) emphasized the necessity of quality learning opportunities rather than assignments which simply intimidated the students into some kind of performance without meaning. The letters to Menchú provided this kind of quality learning opportunity for Mrs. Holt's students. In the activity, the students communicated with a genuine audience in mind; later, they expressed to the researcher that they felt a sense of purpose when they wrote the letters to Menchú.

The multicultural literature of this introductory English course connected the students to cross-cultural voices through the literature, but learners also were connected to community resource voices as part of their interaction with the reading. Boyer (1987) recommended colleges and universities enlarge their sense of community by reaching beyond the immediate campus, to "extend settings, to enlarge their perspective on the world" (pp. 232-233). One way for this kind of interaction is to provide opportunities for community resource people to come into the classrooms, such as Mrs. Holt did in this entry-level English course. The first opportunity to hear a voice from a broader community came early in the

course. After a discussion of culture, Mrs. Holt assigned students to interview someone from a different culture. Mrs. Holt explained that the interview was to be interesting to their audience, the rest of the class; the interview was not to reflect the detached voice of a researcher. She encouraged the students to think about what they actually wanted to know, then pose questions beyond the obvious surface ones. "I want you to go on a journey of curiosity. We'll kind of be anthropologists for this semester," she added. A few days later, following their interviews, students circled their desks in small groups and shared excerpts from their written accounts. When asked what this experience was like for participants, several expressed that they found the assignment to be "very interesting"; "I learned new things"; and, "I found out I had some misconceptions about that culture." This last participant was not the only one who credited the cross-cultural interview for changing previous misconceptions. Aaron acknowledged that the interview format contributed to part of the success of his investigation: "The interview format had a very big effect on what I found out. I could ask them questions and get answers to things I really wanted to know about. And then as they talked, I often thought of more questions. It was just so personal this way . . . . She [Mrs. Holt] should definitely keep this assignment in the course." Students from the broader classroom community also shared positive comments about the cross-cultural interview format. The cross-cultural interview connected learners to actual voices and complemented the multicultural literature voices from their reading experiences.

Resource people from the community surrounding Bethany College provided additional perspectives to the students' multicultural literature experiences. For example, the president of the college came to class and described his experience of meeting Rigoberta Menchú at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony in Oslo, Norway, where she received the honor. Later, when asked about hearing the president, one student-participant reflected, "I think it was really informative, and it brought the book and the Nobel Prize even closer to us." Another added, "He was a good speaker. I think it was interesting to hear what he thought of Rigoberta Menchú because I think we can relate to his experience there. People relate more to people of their own type. You know, he is part of the college and we can relate and understand him." The multicultural reading of I, Rigoberta Menchú was connected to the students' learning experience in a personal way through the voices of others.

A panel on immigration provided another opportunity for the students in Mrs. Holt's class to interact with multicultural perspectives. Students were in the process of preparing persuasive papers on self-selected narrow aspects of immigration. In order to provide background information for this assignment, Mrs. Holt invited to the class four speakers who were involved with immigration in the local community. After panel members described their roles and provided personal perspectives, students and panel interacted with questions and answers. When asked about the panel presentation, students responded positively to hearing the speakers provide outside connections to the course content: "It adds

so much more to the class because then we're not just hearing what a book has to say or what the professor says. This is a real outside source, and I feel the more information I get from those sources, the more I'll know." Jeanne responded favorably to the community speakers because, "It's not a book or an object where you have to get the information. You have real people talking *to me* about the situation. I like that. It's kind of like they say in business, if you go there in person, they'll respect you more." Several of the students incorporated the panelists' information in their immigration papers; in some cases, students contacted one or more of the panelists after that initial class presentation in order to obtain more information for their papers.

When the instructor was asked why she invited outside speakers to the classroom, Mrs. Holt responded, "Oh, in part, it gives them a new face in the classroom. But, also, I think it localizes what they are reading to know it relates to this community and to them." For at least one student, a speaker did localize the cross-cultural experience in a personal way. Jeanne's immigration paper proposal opposed all Mexican immigration, based in part, she acknowledged, on previous negative experiences with Hispanics in a nearby community.

> After I did the research and heard the one panelist, I went and interviewed her. My opinion completely changed. I am still shocked. I thought I knew all this stuff, I mean, lots of people I went to school with hated them. They called them names and said

they'd take away our jobs. But I found out most of what I thought was wrong. I learned so much through this.

At the final interview with this participant, she reiterated that this added insight provided one of the most meaningful experiences from the course for her. First-hand experiences shared by guest speakers became an important part of the students' interaction with the multicultural literature learning experiences in Mrs. Holt's classroom. The students listened to cross-cultural voices through the multicultural literature as well as through first-person voices from their community; participants credited both opportunities as positively impacting their classroom experiences.

Connections to the Learners' Lives

The strong sense of connectedness described in the third theme of this study also became apparent as the students connected the classroom learning experiences to their own lives. The reading, discussion, and written opportunities throughout the course connected the students in a personal way to past, present, and future experiences. For example, many of the assigned activities invited the students to connect to the multicultural literature in a personal way. Activities such as the Dialogue Journal encouraged personal application. In their journals, students often wrote about points in which they identified closely with something from the literature. In-class discussion opportunities which followed the multicultural reading also provided additional opportunities for students to interact on a personal level. Lauren appreciated such discussions as a means of

exploring her thoughts: "I felt like I wasn't really out there in the boonies with what I'm thinking or wondering about. There are other people who think the same as me. I mean, I didn't know a lot about other cultures, and I guess others in here didn't either." Amber added her perspective:

> Discussions were kind of a way to get to know your classmates even more and to get to know the teacher. When you're in a class and you don't know who sits next to you or when your teacher just lectures, you don't feel welcome. You feel unimportant. You don't feel like a person, and you don't feel like your thoughts are important. . . . So when you get to class and you can share, you feel like your ideas and thoughts and what you've been thinking is just as important as someone else's.

Although most students spoke positively about the class discussions, Aaron felt that some of the students "might be holding back." He commented, "I don't know if we are completely open to each other. You know, some people may be a little afraid of telling exactly how they feel, so that hinders things a little bit." As follow-up, the researcher invited him to expand on this thought. Aaron added it was early in the course, and he felt students might be more open as the class progressed. He said that, personally, he felt the atmosphere established by Mrs. Holt was conducive to an open exchange of ideas, but sometimes "the students might not be used to this--they hold back, I think." As students read the assigned

multicultural literature, Mrs. Holt provided opportunities for the students to connect the reading to their own lives through writing and discussion.

Three specific assignments provide examples of opportunities for students' personal connections to the course content. First, in a cultural autobiography, the students wrote about and discussed the beliefs and values represented by family, church, school, and friends from their upbringing. A second in-class assignment on cultural values also encouraged personal connections to the course content. After reading a handout in which values such as "Get ahead," "Be honest," "Be clean," "Win" and "Help your fellow person" were listed, students ranked three values most like their own and three values least like their own. In a large circle, students offered their responses while Mrs. Holt tabulated the results. The results indicated the three values closest to the students in this particular class: pursue happiness, work hard, and honor your word/oath/promise/commitment. Students also indicated three values least like their own: adjust to the prevailing social norm, look out for yourself, and know the right people. During the discussion which ensued, a variety of perspectives and topics related to values emerged, such as which values the students perceived as positive or negative values and why, how a culture passed on its values, how values in a culture can change, and what value differences exist among cultures evidenced by some of their reading and listening experiences. Through this cultural values activity, Mrs. Holt provided students with a springboard for a lively discussion about cultural values. She did not come to class with a prepared lecture about cultural values; instead, the learning

evolved inductively. Much like concentric circles, the discussion started with the students' own values, then moved beyond to the values of others in the class, and, finally, moved outward again to a discussion of cultural values in the global community. Mrs. Holt closed the class session by adding, "Research about cross-cultural experiences will tell you that you have to know a lot about who you are and your own values before you can begin to understand another culture." Dasenbrock (1992) indicated that effective cross-cultural teachers provide opportunities to know and respect "where the students are coming from" (p. 38). Similarly, Bleich (1992) suggested teachers can use what students bring to the classroom as a springboard for reading and writing about other cultures. The cultural values activity in Mrs. Holt's classroom connected students to their own values and facilitated the opportunity to learn about the values of others.

A third opportunity for the students' personal connections within the course came through the Social Distance Scale (Mrs. Holt's handout citation stated: "Adapted from Gary E. McCuen's *The Racist Reader,* Anoka, MN: Greenhaven Press, 1974. Found in *The Prejudice Book* by David Shiman"). For this activity, students indicated their levels of acceptance of various groups, such as Irish, Catholic, Chinese, Black, Mexican, among others. They indicated their acceptance levels by using the listed categories, which ranged from: (1) "I would not let them in my country," to (7) "I would be willing for my sister or brother to marry or date them." Students completed this assignment but did not share their ratings aloud. Mrs. Holt explained to the students that the assignment was

intended to provide the students with background thinking for their papers on immigration. Mrs. Holt encouraged students to be honest with their responses, and she reminded them that their answers were private and non-graded. When asked about the Social Distance Scale experience, participants often viewed the activity in a personal way. Lauren stated, "I thought it was really interesting because since I've been here at college, I've started thinking about these things. My closest friend up here is dating a Jewish guy right now." Amber's response also supported the personal application of this activity: "I think it was a good assignment because it made me realize things about myself. A lot of my answers surprised me. I think I sounded racist, but I don't want to be." Aaron shared his perspective:

> One thing I learned from it was that I don't know a lot about other cultures or people from different countries. Sometimes I really didn't know anything about the group so I thought, why not let them in. Other times, I know I was prejudiced, like against Mexicans and Indians, from my past experiences with them. . . . I was really surprised I answered the way I did sometimes.

Mrs. Holt provided opportunities for students to examine their past and present thoughts, feelings, and attitudes about topics connected to the multicultural reading and related issues. It is important to note that with some of the opportunities for personal application, responses were not graded and often not shared with others. Schmitz (1992) suggested that higher education faculty

members are beginning to change their ideas about "content acquisition and are seeing the inefficacy of blaming students for what they do not know or value. They are beginning to see their role as helping students connect the course content with what students do know and care about, including themselves" (p. 68). Such pedagogical practices have a positive correlation to students' intellectual development and maturation as they continue in their undergraduate education (Astin, 1992). Students connecting their own lives to the course content need at least some kinds of response opportunities free from traditional grade evaluation.

Throughout the course, students connected the course content to past and present experiences, but they often connected the content to their futures as well. At the final interview, for example, Jeanne provided her perspective about the course:

> I think that I feel better about myself and my opinions through knowledge that I developed from the class and readings. . . . Knowledge gives me confidence. I look at myself and know that I gained knowledge out of the class that can help me in the future.

Amber also supported this sense of future application of the course content:

> I can see it [the readings] connected to my life because probably no matter where I go now, I'm going to be around cross cultural people, and this class will always make me think that they have a way of life that's not wrong even if it's different from mine, and I

> shouldn't pass judgment on them. I'll just think of people differently now.

Julia also recognized a connection to her future: "I think that the students' responsibility was to read the readings and think about it and apply it to their own lives and to their own past and maybe to their future." Lauren provided a different perspective of the literature's possible connection to her life:

> I don't know how it relates to my life really. I can't see it totally relating, but I do think it will have an impact on my life for me to be grateful. I don't think it directly relates to my life right now, but I wouldn't just consider the reading something only for freshman English either. I guess I'll have to wait and see.

This participant was the only student-participant interviewed who expressed a possible lack of connection to her life; in addition, no responses on the final course evaluation completed by the classroom community indicated a lack of application either. The multicultural literature, discussions, and related activities offered students opportunities to reach beyond the classroom walls in a personal way.

Mrs. Holt expressed her views about the course's personal application to the students' lives. At one of the final interviews, the researcher asked Mrs. Holt what she would like students to feel or think about based on their learning experiences in this course. Karen Holt responded that she hoped the course would be a beginning, "A launching post, of sorts. You know, boink--to take off

from here. Maybe to say, 'I'm going to the Peace Prize Forum, or I might take a religion class now on liberation theology.'" She hoped students would understand other cultures better and would be willing to continue their investigations. However, Karen Holt was realistic in her expectations for student change or action. She acknowledged, "Change is a process, not a product." Mrs. Holt continued, "If the course moved students towards a better understanding of themselves and others just a little bit, I'd be pleased." Some of the student-participants also stated during the interviews their perspectives on change. When asked how his life intersected with the multicultural reading, Aaron stated, "I think I fit right in the center of things. I really think so many cultures affect me, but I was closed off to it before. I really never realized it until this course." He added that much of this realization came about because the assignments prompted students to examine themselves, not just others: "All the things we've had to write somehow had to do with ourselves. That made me realize that all this takes place around me, and that I'm a part of it whether I want to be or not. I now feel like I'm a part of everything." Lauren reflected:

> I'm definitely different than I was at the beginning of the course. I am more aware of, more interested in other cultures. Like through the Social Distance Scale, I'm thinking about things I've never thought about before, trying to figure out what type of person I really am when faced with that kind of situation.

For many of the student-participants, this course seemed like an opportunity for them to connect to multiculturally-related issues in a personal way.

Connections to Each Other and to the Teacher-Facilitator

The study findings thus far described students' connectedness to outside voices and students' connectedness to their own lives. Another opportunity for connectedness in Mrs. Holt's classroom was for students to connect to each other and to the teacher. As already described throughout this chapter, there were numerous learning situations in which students interacted with each other through a variety of multicultural literature activities. In addition, the physical arrangement of the classroom often helped students to connect to each other as well. When asked about her frequent use of a large circle arrangement of the desks, Mrs. Holt shared, "I like to have them have some eye contact with each other . . . people paying attention to each other rather than the back of their heads when they are in rows. I like the circle for eye contact and so they can banter back and forth about things." When asked if she felt the circle arrangement was helpful for the study of multicultural literature and related issues, Karen Holt responded, "Yes, but just for any classroom in general when you want people to respond." Mrs. Holt added that she believed students were perhaps more involved in a circle type of arrangement: "If we pull them into a circle, it means everybody is involved--me plus everybody else." Student interaction was prevalent throughout the semester. Mrs. Holt hoped the learners *would come to class not because of the attendance policy, but "because there's*

something here that they really want to hear about and learn. I tend to structure class periods pretty full of things that they couldn't get just by reading the text. They have to be there for interacting with the other students, with me, with the reading. They have to know it won't happen unless they're there." During every observed class session, students actively connected with each other and with the instructor in one way or another.

One collaborative activity in particular offered a strong opportunity for connectedness among learners. Students worked cooperatively in small groups for projects to accompany the reading of the multicultural autobiography, I, Rigoberta Menchú. Mrs. Holt divided the class into five groups. The instructor selected the groups in order to create what she described as "balanced groups, ones where different participants can contribute a variety of skills." Each group was responsible for a class presentation on one section of the book and one accompanying theme relating to the book content. For example, the group responsible for the first portion of the book detailing Menchú's cultural background also incorporated the theme of Guatemalan Indian family life within their presentation. The groups divided the presentation content among group members and designed the method of presentation which best served their content and interests. Mrs. Holt offered students resources and assistance as needed during the planning stage. To set a tone of collaboration, she reminded students that the purpose of the assignment was not to compete; rather, everyone was to review the reading and come to class prepared to discuss and participate fully.

When asked about her selection of the group strategy for I, Rigoberta Menchú, Mrs. Holt stated, "I wanted them to have creative power over what they were doing. You know, with guidelines but yet free. It might get confusing at times, but I think it's do-able."

For the next several class sessions, students worked in their groups for all or part of the class time. Karen Holt explained that it was her belief that students often were scheduled too tightly outside of class to be able to find a common meeting time for group work. Therefore, if she expected group collaboration, she felt she needed to provide the time necessary to accomplish those goals. When groups were given class time to meet, Mrs. Holt always assigned something due at the end of the allotted time. For example, students were asked to list the group's goals, their preliminary plans for how they would accomplish those goals, and the possible resources they planned to use. "I know they're tentative plans maybe, but they give me a pulse on what you're doing," the instructor added. Another time, she asked students to write informally what they wanted the class to learn from their presentations. Mrs. Holt continued to monitor the groups by her frequent contact with each group during the class time provided. In addition, she provided written feedback for the informal assignments collected after the time spent in groups. During the two weeks of preparation, students actively pursued plans for their final presentations. Often overheard were comments such as, "I know someone at our library from home and she could help us find. . . ," or, "My Spanish teacher has a book on. . . ," or, "Maybe we could make a videotape of . . ."

The students spent the days of preparation in various ways, such as researching at the library, making visual aids, interviewing resource people, or writing the manuscripts.

The day arrived for the first presentation. The classroom was alive with last-minute planning and the rearranging of desks. The group members, dressed a bit less casually than previous class meetings, waited for Mrs. Holt's opening instructions. She passed out evaluation forms for members of the audience and explained that feedback gives the group members an opportunity to hear what others thought. To the presenters, she added, "It's a communications thing--you need to get a lot of feedback when you do something like this. It provides you with different perspectives from others." Another form of evaluation came from the group members themselves. Each presentation was videotaped; then, as a group, if possible, they watched the tape and individually completed an evaluation of their own performance as well as an evaluation of the group's overall performance. Mrs. Holt's evaluation provided a third form of assessment, which she completed during and immediately following the presentations.

For the next five class meetings, the groups presented their assigned sections of I, Rigoberta Menchú and the accompanying interest area. The groups' methods of presentation were diverse. For example, one group role-played *compañeros* working in the fields, while another group involved the class with a mock quiz at the beginning of the presentation and provided answers throughout their presentation. One group asked students to work in pairs what tell what they

thought their *nahuals* might be (according to Quiche Indian belief, a *nahual* was someone's alter-ego, frequently an animal). At the conclusion of yet another presentation, the audience divided into teams for a game of Jeopardy and based answers on the presentation. From the researcher's perspective, perhaps the most moving presentation for the classroom community began with a videotape which one group had produced. With the assistance of the campus television studio, black and white photographs of the Tzul family, Guatemalan peasants, appeared on the screen with accompanying background music. For each of the seven images, the group chairperson read a short, first-person account of what life was like in Guatemala for that person, for example:

> I am Juanita Tzul. I am twelve years old. I have two brothers and a sister. I had two more sisters, but they died when they were babies. I used to go to school . . . . Many afternoons, the girls in my community get together in the shade of a huge tree and do our weaving. We talk and weave, and our grandmothers sometimes join us to tell us stories. (Resource Center of The Americas, n.d., p. 12)

The audience sat very quietly in the darkened room, focused on the television screen mounted in the corner of the room. The students seemed to watch the screen as if the black and white photographs were speaking. After the last narrative was read and the images faded, for a few moments, no one said a word, as if to absorb the videotape images, words, and music one more time.

To better understand the participants' experiences with the group presentations, the researcher asked the student-participants and Mrs. Holt to tell their thoughts about the activity. When asked what it was like to watch the presentations, Mrs. Holt said, "I loved them, and I was surprised with what they came up with. Some presentations, well, they haven't really gotten it yet. But others went even beyond." She also described the risk involved with assigning the collaborative work: "You never know how they're going to take this assignment--where they're going to run with it. I'm so pleased I didn't have to monitor the groups more closely. I think they had fun with it. . . . They exceeded how I thought the groups would work, and that's exciting." The student-participants also provided important insights to the collaborative experience. Lauren shared that the group work was a more positive experience than anticipated: "When she first brought it up, I'm like, oh, I hate group stuff. But after seeing today's presentation, I think this is really a good idea. I can't wait to do ours." Aaron offered a glimpse into his experience: "Overall, I enjoyed it. I thought it was really interesting, and it was a way for us to learn more. We didn't have to learn it from the professor. We could learn from our classmates and on our own--I liked that. Sometimes it was frustrating to decide what direction we wanted to go, but Mrs. Holt was always willing to help us talk it through." Amber offered a similar insight about learning from each other: "I think it's easier learning from people our own age sometimes, and I think we came up with neat stuff on our own." From the broader classroom community,

final course evaluations indicated equally positive feedback for the collaborative work and presentation format. This strategy offered learners an opportunity to connect with each other in both personal and academic ways. From the planning stage of the presentations to the group and self-evaluations, students interacted, negotiated, compromised, and shared their unique discoveries. Mrs. Holt developed an activity in which the students cooperatively articulated their own questions about Menchú's book and the assigned interest area, then discovered their own ways of synthesizing and sharing those questions and their discoveries.

Much of the research about cooperative learning has been conducted in kindergarten through 12th grade settings. However, research about cooperative learning in the post-secondary setting supports similar conclusions about the benefits of cooperative learning. According to Millis (1990), such opportunities in a higher education setting provide an effective instructional strategy, are more enjoyable for teacher and students, and lead to increased student involvement. Similar support for cooperative learning strategies in higher education is offered by others (Astin, 1993; Boyer, 1987; Cooper & Mueck, 1989; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1994). Feedback from the teacher and students in Mrs. Holt's class setting further support these findings about cooperative learning opportunities in higher education.

Students interacted closely with each other throughout the course in a variety of ways, but there was also an opportunity for connectedness to the instructor. Throughout the day-to-day complex transactions which occurred in the

teaching-learning environment, Karen Holt interacted in a very personal way with her students. For example, on the first day, she asked students for pronunciation help with their names or for name preferences, such as, "Do you prefer Jenny or Jennifer?" She explained to the researcher that names and what students want to be called is important to her. Karen Holt learned the students' names quickly and called them by name frequently as she facilitated class sessions. Another example of personal connectedness between teacher and students was apparent when students shared excerpts from their writing with the class. Mrs. Holt frequently added a personal comment, such as, "Oh, Becky, when I read your paper, I liked the comparison you used. Would you mind sharing that part?" Mrs. Holt's added comments often suggested she remembered something in a personal way about the students and their work. During in-depth interviews, participants sometimes mentioned they felt important to Mrs. Holt. When asked if there was a reading, event, person, or activity which stood out as particularly memorable from the course, the participants quickly acknowledged Karen Holt. "I think she was great. I mean, she's the one who got us into all the reading, and she was the one who brought it all together," Lauren reflected. Aaron also indicated his connection to Mrs. Holt: "I think it makes us so much closer when the instructor will tell us about themselves rather than just listening to us all the time." Throughout the semester, Karen Holt remained accessible to her students, creating many opportunities for personal interaction with her. Karen Holt's personal interactions with students, her teaching style, the learning activities, and

individual feedback provided some of the avenues for connection between teacher and students.

Mrs. Holt's teaching style also provided opportunities for connectedness between teacher and students. Aaron's response reflected what the student-participants and the broader classroom community commonly expressed about Mrs. Holt's style of teaching:

> She is open to the way we want to learn. She has a basis for everything, like the literature she's picked and stuff, but she kind of lets us teach ourselves. That's how we discover more rather than her saying, you know, "Here's the facts about this. There will be a test on it tomorrow," or something like that. We're having to find the facts, discover them, and, discover our opinions about the facts. It's great.

During her interview, Amber reflected how Mrs. Holt's teaching style helped the other cultures "come alive." When asked how this happened, Amber continued: "It's probably, mostly, the teaching style. Because, with what we've been doing, you had to do it by yourself. . . . You could talk to somebody else, but still you had to ask the questions." Amber acknowledged that she did much of her own digging for answers to her own questions throughout the course. Julia described Mrs. Holt's teaching style as, "Really neat. I think she really cares about what she's doing." When asked why she thought so, Julia added, "Just the way she acts in class. . . . It's almost exciting to go to class because you don't know what we'll

do in class. She doesn't give the same old lectures and have us take notes." Mrs. Holt's interactive teaching style provided connections to the students in a personal way within the teaching and learning environment.

The selected learning activities and individual feedback also offered opportunities for connections between the students and teacher. For example, the Dialogue Journals provided personal interaction with the instructor. Students appreciated Mrs. Holt's personal feedback to their literature responses. "As soon as they're handed back, I read her comments right away. I'm interested in knowing what she has to say," Aaron said. He also expressed that he was pleased that the Dialogue Journals were non-graded because there were times when he did not have as much to say, or times when he had a question about what was read. He explained that he felt free to ask a question in the journal instead of trying to show he had answers about the reading. On the other hand, Lauren said graded journal entries would not have mattered to her because she would have responded the same way whether graded or not. However, the majority of the participants expressed that they appreciated the non-graded response opportunities. On the final course evaluation, several students from the broader classroom also commented positively on the non-graded activities. From the teacher's perspective, Mrs. Holt liked the non-graded connection to the students: "I love reading and responding without the stress of having to grade it." She expressed a strong sense of connectedness to the students through their Dialogue Journals. By reading their literature responses, she felt she could "tap into where

they really are." When asked if she would use Dialogue Journals again with teaching multicultural literature, she did not hesitate to offer, "Oh, yes. I think for every single person, there was at least one time that they responded because something from the reading hit them powerfully. I like giving them the opportunity to share that feeling with me." The Dialogue Journals provided a rich opportunity for connectedness between teacher and students.

Class discussions of the reading also provided learner-teacher connectedness. For example, when one of the multicultural readings included the character's feelings about the importance of her name, Karen Holt personalized the discussion. "How do you feel about your name? What is it like for you when people mispronounce it?" she asked the class. To this question, a number of students shared personal examples of mispronunciations of their own names and Mrs. Holt shared similar experiences. After a few minutes, the discussion returned to the reading, but the students were now connected to the reading and the teacher in a personal way. Throughout the semester, before class discussions of the multicultural literature began, Mrs. Holt often connected the discussion topic to the students on a personal level first before she moved the learners toward direct interaction with the reading. For example, before the class discussion of readings from the thematic section of Verburg (1991) entitled "Work: We Are What We Do," in a large circle Mrs. Holt asked the students to recall their thoughts from childhood about what they had wanted to do when they grew up. The students smiled, agreed, and even laughed at hearing each other's

responses of dancer, baseball player, and "mountain man," and at hearing about Mrs. Holt's childhood letter to the FBI asking how she could become an FBI agent when she grew up. When the discussion of the reading, "Trail of the Green Blazer," (Verburg, 1991) followed, the students were already connected to the topic and the teacher. Throughout the planned learning activities and informal interactions, opportunities for personal connections between teacher and students were available.

Connections to Academic Skills

Thus far, the data offer strong support for the theme of connectedness to outside voices, to learners' own lives, to each other, and to the teacher. A sense of connectedness was also present with regard to academic skills which were integrated in this entry-level English course. The multicultural literature was not just a reading experience. In addition, there was a constant connectedness between reading and other skills, such as listening, writing, speaking, researching, and thinking. In a variety of contexts, students developed listening skills, such as through class discussions, guest speakers, and group presentations. Participant-learners also developed writing skills throughout the semester. In compliance with the department goals which specified students would develop composition skills, Mrs. Holt created a range of opportunities for various kinds of writing: informal journal responses, formal essays, the cross-cultural interview, an essay exam, the letter to Rigoberta Menchú, the argumentation paper on immigration, and the group presentation manuscript. Speaking opportunities were incorporated

through formal and informal opportunities, such as the cross-cultural interview, class discussions, individual conferences with Mrs. Holt, collaborative groups, and group presentations. Research skills were also connected to the course as the students explored questions and developed responses. Thinking skills were emphasized throughout the course. Mrs. Holt hoped the focus on asking questions course would "get them thinking on a little different level. Questioning is a part of critical thinking--getting them to ask questions of each other, of the authors, of their professors. You know, those questions might inspire them to another level of understanding." Mrs. Holt developed activities for this class in which "students were always having to think. There aren't easy answers when it comes to cross-cultural understanding and where we fit in." The academic skills involved in this course were not taught as separate areas of study; rather, the academic skills overlapped and weaved together to create a unified learning experience.

Karen Holt offered her perspective about the integration of other skills with the reading: "I don't even see a separation in my own mind. How could you teach one skill without the other?" Mrs. Holt also expressed that the multicultural literature worked well with the development of a range of academic skills; for example, compare/contrast writing could be incorporated by comparing one culture to another. From her perspective, the literature of other cultures can and should be infused within a curriculum, not added on like some kind of appendage. From the students' perspective, the incorporation of multicultural literature with

the academic skills often emphasized in a first-year college English course was beneficial. Aaron expressed:

> I think if the multicultural literature was a separate course, fewer people would take it. . . . I've heard kids say, "I don't want to learn this [multicultural literature and related issues]. I don't want to deal with this,: so I think if it's part of the English curriculum or any other class, I think it helps a lot and it's very interesting and it's a good way to learn. We learned a lot about how to write through studying different cultures, and it was interesting at the same time.

Jeanne echoed Aaron's perspective: "I felt that in this class, I not only learned about some of the how-to's in writing, but I also learned to think about people from other cultures and how they might look at me." The students appreciated the integration rather than the isolation of academic skills which were to be a part of their introductory college English experience.

Relationship Between the Three Themes

Although discussed separately in this chapter, the three themes and numerous sub-themes did not exist as separate, unrelated entities within the study context. Instead, the themes and sub-themes emerged simultaneously as part of the complex structure of the learning environment for this study. A reciprocal type of relationship existed among the three themes; that is, the themes were mutually supportive. This chapter concludes with a description of the reciprocal relationship between the themes.

Karen Holt's authenticity as a teacher and human being contributed to the redefinition of the roles of teacher and student in the classroom; an active, student-centered learning environment resulted. Within the kind of classroom established, a strong sense of connectedness emerged among many facets of the course, such as connectedness to outside voices, to the students' own lives, to each other and to the teacher, and to a broad range of academic skills appropriate for the entry-level English course context.

The multicultural literature was infused not only within the curriculum but within the total learning environment. The multicultural literature became a holistic experience for the students rather than simply assigned reading scattered throughout the curriculum. As facilitator, Karen Holt modeled a positive perspective toward diversity. One way which Mrs. Holt demonstrated her perspective was by her acceptance of students' various points of entry to the reading, writing, and discussion. She did not lecture the students about inclusiveness or diversity; instead, she provided a framework for students to explore their own thoughts and develop their own meaning and understanding. Karen Holt's instructional and personal philosophies reflected Duckworth's (1987) assertion:

> The way to move a person's thoughts and feelings is not by trying to excise them and replace them with other thoughts and feelings. Rather, it is to try to *understand* the person's thoughts and feelings, and to work from there. It means having the person articulate his

> or her own thoughts in different areas and in different ways and see where they run into conflict themselves. That means *acknowledging* complexity rather than replacing one simple way of looking at things with another simple way of looking at things--acknowledging the complexity and seeing where that leads. (p. 116)

Karen Holt was knowledgeable about other cultures; this knowledge enabled her to draw from a wealth of information, experiences, and outside resources. However, students had opportunities to articulate their own thoughts as they wrestled with the multicultural reading and related issues rather than accepting the teacher's. In her role as facilitator, Mrs. Holt removed possible barriers to the students' learning and helped students develop their own ways of thinking about themselves among other cultures. Rather than *covering* multicultural literature within the curriculum, the students participated in activities designed to *uncover* questions and discoveries based on the reading experiences.

Students' interactions with each other and with the teacher reflected the course goal that students would more clearly understand themselves among other cultures. Through this course, students came to understand themselves better, and they also came to learn about and understand each other through various opportunities. Students had public and private opportunities to express themselves and to hear what others in the class had to say. All participants were prompted to ask their own questions about the reading and to express their discoveries. Sometimes learning has been described as "messy," that is, a process

which is not always straight or easily described. In this classroom setting, the learning process was sometimes messy, but, as White and Gunstone (1992) offered, "In sum, understanding of a concept or of a discipline is a continuous function of the person's knowledge, is not a dichotomy and is not linear in extent" (p. 7). Despite the messiness of learning sometimes present in Mrs. Holt's classroom, the learning environment was consistently supportive, and a framework in which students could explore their understanding of themselves in relation to others was consistently provided. The connectedness which existed among all facets of the course contributed to the supportive, consistent kind of learning environment observed. Students felt safe reaching out to ask questions and to incorporate their own interests. The classroom culture itself reflected an egalitarian way of viewing the literature of other cultures, the guest speakers and broader community, the teacher and other learners, and the various ways of understanding.

CHAPTER V

EXPLORATION, REFLECTIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter further explores issues raised by this study of the multicultural literature teaching and learning experience within Mrs. Holt's level college English course. Following this discussion, personal reflections about the research experience are provided. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future study and educational practice.

Exploration of Related Issues

By conducting this study, the researcher intended to develop a clearer understanding of how participants experienced multicultural literature in the college classroom. Based on this study's data collection and analysis, three themes emerged: First, the teacher's authenticity as a person and teacher contributed to a meaningful learning experience for the participants; second, active, student-centered learning experiences provided students opportunities to explore their own questions and ideas; and, third, the strong sense of connectedness in the class setting facilitated positive engagement for the participants within the learning community. The researcher's data suggested that text, teaching style, instructional method, class activities, and interactions among

teacher, students, and outside voices all contributed to the development of students' understanding of other cultures.

In order to facilitate additional discussion of important themes and issues raised by this study, three theoretical frameworks provide structure for the researcher's insights. These three frameworks are by no means the only ones which illuminate this study. For example, Fuller and Ahler (1991) also describe developmental stages regarding multicultural awareness and learning. For this report, three frameworks which connect the study findings to a broader discussion have been selected by the researcher. These frameworks led the researcher to greater understanding of the multicultural teaching and learning experiences in this study. The theoretical frameworks were not included to categorize or affix labels to the study participants or to their experiences. Rather, by using the theoretical frameworks, the researcher hoped to emphasize important ideas about multicultural literature teaching and learning without losing the uniqueness of the natural setting or its participants.

The nature of qualitative research prompts researchers to allow findings to emerge in an inductive manner. Although the general topic of the research was how multicultural literature functioned in one college freshman English class setting, the observations and student-participants interviews consistently focused on the teacher as central to the multicultural literature experience in the study context. Therefore, the three theoretical frameworks described in this chapter

emphasize the teacher in one way or another, although the students and literature remain important to the total study.

A Curricular Framework for Multicultural Literature

McIntosh (1990) developed a framework which described the "Interactive Phases of Curricular and Personal Re-vision with Regard to Race." (Note: The term race is controversial for many because *race* is not synonymous with culture; however, *race* is used in the following discussion because it is the term used by McIntosh throughout her theory description). According to McIntosh, her theory of Interactive Phases has broad applicability. Therefore, although McIntosh focused on race, the phases she described also enlighten the findings of this study which focused on multiculturalism.

By considering McIntosh's phases of development, some readers may become more aware of their own understandings, while other readers may believe the phase-theory opens new insights for a discipline, a department, an idea, or even an institution. For others, McIntosh's theory also may be useful for describing, inspiring, or justifying changes in instructional methods (McIntosh, 1990, p. 3). Although McIntosh described each of the re-vision phases separately, she reminded readers that "no one person or course exists completely fixed in a given phase and the phases do not always occur in the chronological order given" (p. 4).

According to McIntosh, many traditionally trained faculty members begin their teaching within Phase One monoculturalism, often unaware of the racial

elements in which they are immersed. McIntosh described Phase One as vertical in nature; the perspective is a top-down way of seeing. This phase involves predominant identification with Western thought and research, most often from the male perspective. Educational materials which reflect this perspective are in abundance, and students frequently are not encouraged to challenge assumptions. According to McIntosh, when race is addressed in most undergraduate courses, unfortunately, it is from the Phase One perspective.

It is not uncommon for teachers to move from Phase One to Phase Two at some point in their teaching, McIntosh contended. In Phase Two, the teacher begins to see overlooked individuals or groups in society and starts to consider ways to accommodate their inclusion. Syllabi often change during this stage in order to reflect these new realizations. For example, in a college introductory English course, a Phase One approach might reflect Western-based literature, predominantly written by male authors. However, the same course reflective of Phase Two might add an "Exceptional Minorities in Literature"-type of approach. Phase Two teaches about non-European cultures but usually does so from the "famous few" perspective (McIntosh, 1990, p. 9). Again, Phase Two is on a vertical axis, which implies there is a top, middle, and bottom.

Phase Three extends the teacher and content to racial "issues"; for example, it focuses on minority issues, problems, absences, or victim-status. McIntosh cautioned that teaching only in Phase Three can be inadvertently racist because it may imply that for any non-European group, its main identity is one of

deficit (1990, p. 7). However, Phase Three encourages students to consider systems of power as well as positions of advantage and disadvantage and increases awareness, but this phase also commonly presents a vertical perspective.

An important conceptual shift occurs in Phase Four. To this phase of the interactive theory, McIntosh (1990) attributed the characteristics of "relational alertness and the plural consciousness" (p. 5). Teachers in this phase honor multiple cultures "on their own terms, trying to see them through the testimony or actions of their people" (p. 5). For example, teaching literature in this mode prompts teachers to regard the wholeness, uniqueness, and complexities reflected in another group's experiences.

> Phase Four comes out of and recognizes the lateral, connected, and diverse functions of psyche and society; it is about creativity, integrity, wholeness, ordinariness, and multiple forms of power and talent unrecognized in vertical systems of appraisal. It honors both/and [sic] thinking about who exists and what counts.
>
> (McIntosh, 1990, p. 7)

The question, "How was it for them?" opens a forum where all voices count. McIntosh asserted that in this phase, pedagogy shifts so the professor's way of knowing is not necessarily acknowledged as superior to the students' knowing. The Phase One kind of events and knowledge are not eliminated in this phase, but they are viewed in a new way within a larger picture. As McIntosh described Phase Four, exploration stays very close to the human daily experience; students

are encouraged to ask many questions of people about their lives. Learners listen for many human voices and examine the cultural and political influences on the information. All experience is seen as a source of knowledge (p. 7). Within Phase Four teaching, students might read and respond to multiple short works, including the work by students. The Phase Four classroom is one of energy and interest. Students feel jointly responsible for learning in this phase of teaching and learning about others.

Finally, in Phase Five, concepts are redefined and reconstructed to include all people. Phase Five requires "a vocabulary for perceiving, feeling, and analyzing which is both plural and coherent, and will put us in a new relation to ourselves and the world" (McIntosh, 1990, p. 5). Phase Five helps students think critically about organizational structures and resources in a complex world. This phase reconsiders "competitive hierarchical propensities, our contingent and relational propensities" (p. 12). McIntosh recognized that Phase Five is visionary in nature.

Although McIntosh's framework focused on race, her interactive phases provide an appropriate framework for added understanding of the multicultural issues which emerged from this research setting and participants. For example, Karen Holt's philosophy and classroom practices were reflective of Phases Four and Five from the McIntosh typology. Mrs. Holt's multicultural literature selections, discussion examples, pedagogical decisions, and learning activities reflected the relational alertness and plural consciousness McIntosh described in

Phase Four. For example, the Guatemalan Quiche Indians were honored on their own terms as students read Menchú's testimony. Similarly, through the multiple short readings from the Verburg multicultural literature text, the uniqueness and complexity of each culture's experience was emphasized. Many of the multicultural literature readings reflected multiple worlds, often revealing what another culture's daily experiences were like. Discussions and assignments in this course prompted students to examine their own cultural values and beliefs and to consider the political systems impacting the reading from various perspectives. The reading and learning experiences contributed to a whole picture of understanding others rather than offered isolated bits of information about other cultures.

The cognitive processes at work in this study site were also reflective of Phases Four and Five: reading, talking, listening, thinking, observing, analyzing, interacting, making connections, and reflecting in order to reach a new level of understanding and respect. In addition, Karen Holt modeled a more lateral than vertical view of the world. Instructional methods in this class setting did not emphasize the teacher's way of knowing as superior to the students' understanding. The class roles were redefined as roles of co-ownership for teacher and students; there was a consistent learning climate of energy, interest, and warmth. For Karen Holt and the other participants in this class, an appropriate metaphor was one of journey. She modeled ways and supported students to become travelers rather than tourists of other cultures. Tourists

dabble on a surface level then move on. On the other hand, travelers dig deeper, often taking the less traveled roads of their own curiosities, in order to understand.

The interactive phases of McIntosh's framework suggest active, changing stages of teacher and curricular development. Although McIntosh emphasized personal re-visioning regarding race, a similar type of re-visioning is necessary with multiculturalism. Teachers must not only re-vision themselves, but they must re-vision their changing classrooms, curriculum, and pedagogy as education moves into the twenty-first century.

Literary Theory

A second theoretical framework provided deeper understanding for this researcher of this study's events and participants. This framework focuses discussion on one of the numerous schools of literary criticism. The tenets of a particular approach to literary criticism suggest certain kinds of pedagogical decisions as English teachers plan and teach their courses. Is one literary theory particularly relevant when multicultural literature is infused within the curriculum?

Data from the observations, participant interviews, and collected documents suggest the need for an appropriate critical framework as teacher and students explore multicultural literature. A critical theory appropriate in this particular study setting would have to incorporate a variety of attributes about the literature in addition to the teaching and learning strategies Mrs. Holt

implemented. For example, in Karen Holt's class, the multicultural literature selections often recounted events, practices, and interactions from an unfamiliar cultural context, which sometimes included vocabulary equally unfamiliar, such as *nahual* or *gulli*. Also, the teacher's role in this setting was not one of expert or authority, possessing the "correct" meaning or interpretation of the reading. Students developed their own questions and often interacted with the teacher in a more dialectic form of inquiry rather than with study guides or text-generated questions. In the learning environment Mrs. Holt developed, the multicultural reading experience included non-graded opportunities for discussion as well as for written responses. In addition, the learners were socialized to grow as thinkers rather than to act as passive receivers of information in this class setting. In this class, readers brought their own experiences to the multicultural reading, yet, at the same time, the author and cultural background were not separated completely from the reading or its meaning, as suggested by some literary critical theories. Although Karen Holt did not profess to this researcher that she had adopted a particular literary theory for the inclusion of multicultural literature in her curriculum, many of her instructional practices reflected a reader-response, or transactional, approach to the literature.

Many characteristics of reader-response theory (Rosenblatt, 1978, 1983) offer teachers a framework which may work effectively for the incorporation of multicultural literature within their curricula. In a transactional approach to literature, Rosenblatt asserted that the reading experience should not ignore the

reader, only to focus on the author, literary techniques, terms, or genres. The reader-literature relationship is not completely an objective one one where the author, genre, and literary devices comprise the total reading experience. Rosenblatt argued that meaning was not hidden in the text. Instead, the reader performs *with* the text. By reading and responding, the reader is able to actively participate in and acquire insights about another individual's world. This demanding role for the readers emphasizes their responsibility for creating knowledge, not just remembering the information presented to them by another. The meaning is an amalgam of what the readers bring to the text: their own histories, beliefs, biases, prejudices, experiences, and hopes.

Probst (1990) summarized seven salient principles which Rosenblatt described as important for this kind of literature-reader transaction. First, students must be free to deal with their own reactions to the text. Readers dialogue with the text and with the values and beliefs in the text. Second, a feeling of security in the relationship between teacher and student in the classroom should be present. In the reader-response classroom, correctness is not valued above exploration and questions. Third, time and opportunity in order to gain a personal sense about the reading should be provided for before the critical stances of others are offered. Reading logs, journals, response statements, or similar strategies offer such opportunities. Rosenblatt's fourth principle summarized by Probst (1990) argued that teachers must not place undue emphasis on the form of the students' reactions. For example, there exists a wide range of

possibilities for written responses; students should have the freedom to choose among them. Fifth, according to Probst, teachers are encouraged to find "points of contact" among the opinions of students. This principle is particularly important for class discussions. Teachers can help students find similarities and differences in their readings and encourage talk which explores experiences, assumptions, beliefs, and values. Sixth, teachers are not to substitute extrinsic matters for the real effects of the literary work. Probst cited Rosenblatt's belief that "'literature provides a *living-through*, not simple *knowledge about* . . .'" experience for students (Probst, 1990, p. 35). Finally, Rosenblatt's transactional theory asserted that although free response is necessary, it is not sufficient. Students must be led to reflection and analysis. Reader-response does not encourage uncritical acceptance of texts. The class setting is to be dialectic in the sense that discussion provides a means of modifying or guiding interpretations (Probst, 1990, pp. 31-35).

Critics of reader-response theory sometimes contend that too much emphasis may be placed on the reader, which leaves the role of writer and context sometimes in question. Dasenbrock (1992) acknowledged that readers are important to the interpretive process and that they do not have to become experts to interact with multicultural writing. However, he also emphasized that learning environments need to be places where readers can examine meanings behind the words. Because the writing is in English, readers cannot assume the writer from a different culture necessarily will share the same set of beliefs or meaning for

those wo. is (Dasenbrock, 1992). Therefore, an appropriate critical framework for interpreting multicultural literature needs to value both the reader and the writer so that the "learning can take place on many different levels, often simultaneously: the lexical, the syntactic, the formal or generic, the cultural, the religious" (Dasenbrock, 1992, p. 42). Both the reader and the writer were valued in Karen Holt's class setting. Class activities such as the Dialogue Journals and class discussions invited students to respond as readers to the values and beliefs of another culture. At the same time, exploration of the writer's world as an additional source of important information was incorporated in many of the activities to assist the students' understanding. The reading experience for the students in the study setting became one of *living-through* the lives presented in the literature rather than an experience of simply *knowledge about* a particular culture.

Teachers who are challenged to incorporate multicultural literature within their curricula sometimes express that they have not been trained as authorities in the literature of other cultures. Does this mean teachers should not include multicultural literature unless they can teach the works from an expert's position? Should English teachers only teach the literature where they are experts, most likely the literature of their own culture? Recent trends in English classrooms and textbooks suggest this attitude is not realistic since multicultural perspectives are permeating curricula at all levels. A literary theory is needed in which teachers and students can explore the literature of other cultures, not as experts

or authorities but still have a meaningful learning experience. A critical literary theory which acknowledges the partnership of the author, context, and reader may offer an appropriate structure for the interpretation of multicultural literature.

Teacher Excellence

Based on the data analysis, Karen Holt emerged as an integral part of the students' multicultural literature experience. Her authenticity, attitude, teaching style, instructional strategies, and knowledge were some of the characteristics students indicated as important to their interaction with the multicultural literature. Because the teacher emerged from the data as central to the participants' experiences in this study, a theoretical framework which emphasizes teacher excellence is described in this chapter. This framework is not the only one which focuses on effective teaching in higher education. However, the developmental framework for teacher excellence in post-secondary classrooms which is described by Sherman, Armistead, Fowler, Barksdale, and Reif (1987) contributed to greater understanding of this study's findings for the researcher.

Many colleges and universities have entered dialogues about the changing roles of the professoriate. Institutions of higher education are re-examining the role of teaching as part of what it means to be a scholar. Colleges and universities currently are exploring ways to balance the importance of teaching with the importance of research and service (Boice, 1990; Mann, 1990). This trend exhibits a revival for the role of pedagogy, defined by Edgerton (1990) as "respect for the science and art of teaching as an intellectual field" (p. 192.) How

can college and university scholars teach what is of deepest value to them, the content of their disciplines, to students in a meaningful way? As multicultural literature content is increasingly incorporated within curricula, effective teaching practices for its inclusion also must become an integral part of that higher education teaching and learning environment.

Sherman et al. (1987) asserted in their theoretical framework, "A Developmental Description of Teaching Excellence," that excellence in college teaching is recognizable and attainable. They described four stages, each with three components: conceptions of teaching, students' thinking and learning, and the relation between teaching actions and learning (p. 78). The four developmental stages of teaching excellence offered insights to this researcher about the teacher's role in the inclusion of multicultural literature. In the first stage, according to Sherman et al., teaching is an act of telling. At this stage, the teacher tells students what they should know. "Teaching" is presenting information"; "learning" is the ability to repeat what is heard or read. Stage Two views teaching as leading, then hoping students will learn. The teacher is responsible for bringing students into contact with a variety of materials, ideas, and opportunities, but the learning is usually self-directed in nature. Students learn on their own, and the expectation that more than memorizing may be present. Teaching at this stage is a matter of explanation of concepts, relationships, and ideas.

Stage Three of the developmental sequence of teaching quality recognizes the transmission of knowledge. Teachers believe they have influence on what and how students learn. This stage of teaching extends beyond content to include how and why that content is important to students. Teachers at this stage recognize that students cannot become "experts" in a single course; learning is a process. Consequently, at this stage, the course and instruction focus on organizing and developing with regard to "a logical beginning" (Sherman et al., 1987, p. 78). Knowledge becomes a matter of building: "Learning is manifested by individual students acquiring knowledge and using that knowledge to analyze and evaluate discipline-related issues" (p. 78). Finally, Stage Four of this framework for developing teacher excellence recognizes the complexity of the interactions of students, content, and teacher. Learning develops from a variety of cognitive processes involving intellectual, personal, analytic, and evaluative strategies, which assist learner understanding. Teachers at this stage understand how students acquire knowledge and use a variety of techniques to provide a learning climate which is active and interesting for the students. Learning at this stage may even raise more questions by the students than they actually answer. Knowledge is viewed as a transaction, not as an act of transmission. These developmental stages of quality teaching in the higher education setting have implications for teaching multicultural literature in an introductory English course.

Teachers who reflect the fourth stage of teacher development are necessary for the effective multicultural literature teaching and learning experience.

Knowledge is viewed as a transaction rather than as transmission; therefore, teachers need to develop strategies where their knowledge intersects with the students' questions and experiences. Teaching multicultural literature is more than an act of telling students about other cultures. Karen Holt demonstrated a breadth and depth of knowledge, gleaned from educational, community, personal, and travel experiences. Her knowledge contributed to the students' inquiry and learning processes.

Stage Four teaching also implies that teachers themselves must be learners. Students in this study responded positively to Mrs. Holt's role as co-inquirer rather than teacher-as-authority. Karen Holt expressed her belief in the importance of sharing the learning and teaching responsibility with students. She readily acknowledged her role as learner/participant in the classroom setting, and, at the same time, emphasized her role as facilitator. Stage Four of effective teaching also implies that excellent teachers recognize the important influence of their teaching; therefore, they consistently offer students active, interesting opportunities to integrate the learning within their own lives and other courses. Teachers at this stage shift to pedagogical practices which build bridges between the multicultural literature and the students' experiences and understanding. Teaching at the Stage Four level is most often characterized by "clarity of knowledge, enthusiasm, organization, and stimulation" (Sherman et al., 1987, p. 77). Instructional methods extend the reading, discussion, and assignments beyond the classroom walls, reflected in the way Mrs. Holt moved students

outside the classroom as well as invited others inside her classroom. In this study, students described Karen Holt as an important part of their total multicultural literature experience; therefore, it is important to recognize the attributes of teacher excellence and support faculty who strive for that level of development.

The three theoretical frameworks presented in this section of Chapter V provide insights for curricular decision-making, critical literary theory, and teacher excellence with regard to the inclusion of multicultural literature. The frameworks should be regarded as starting points rather than as prescriptive mandates. As teachers set goals to help students establish a clearer understanding and acceptance of others through multicultural literature, they need to reach beyond text selection to create a more holistic teaching and learning experience with diversity. With greater emphasis and support for the importance of pedagogy in higher education, professors can begin to share Aristotle's regard for teaching as "the highest form of understanding" (Edgerton, 1990, p. 195).

Researcher's Reflections

To each final interview with study-participants, I brought a small gift of appreciation for their study participation. I selected the gifts based on the uniqueness I felt each participant brought to the study setting. For Julia, I selected a small wooden box with a hand-painted cat on the lid. Throughout the semester of research, Julia had shared her love of animals in her written and interview responses. She often described how she missed the cats left on the farm while she was away at Bethany. For Aaron, I chose a painted clay ocarina, a

whistle-like musical instrument hand-made in Chile. The ocarina seemed appropriate because of his love of music and his gentle nature, much like the music of the instrument. Lauren's personality seemed reflected by the flashy earrings she always wore. I added to her collection the gift of silver and turquoise earrings with a Native American design. For Amber, because she once shared during an interview that she someday hoped to have a Native American dream catcher, I chose for her a hand-crafted dream catcher made from bent twigs and a thread-like web of leather. Selecting a gift for Karen Holt was difficult because she had shared so much of herself with me. At an interview with Karen Holt in December, she once digressed about the Santa-like figures she has collected from various places. To our final interview, I brought her a hand-painted, resin Asian figure to add to her collection. These were the gifts I gave to the participants, but the gifts they gave me were of greater value. The participants gave me an important part of themselves: their stories, their words, their thoughts, their beliefs, and their ideas. They also gave me the gift of trust, which allowed me to ask questions and explore deeper. They viewed me as a learner and gave me the gift of openness and patience as I observed, interviewed, collected, and analyzed.

As I reflect on this research experience, I recall advice about conducting research which I once heard: One must research with both the head *and* the heart. Similarly, Seidman (1991) encouraged researchers to form inquiry where they felt a sense of passion. I feel this study reflects both my head and my heart. My head tells me the topic and research for this study are important. The

cultural landscape of this country is changing with incredible speed. As educators, we need to prepare future generations to participate fully in a global, interdependent community. Multicultural literature accompanied by activities which help students see themselves among others can provide an important avenue to help achieve this goal.

My heart in this research tells me that attitudes of hatred and intolerance continue to permeate the world community, our country, our cities, and our own neighborhoods. My passion for a more inclusive perspective of ourselves among a myriad of cultures encourages me to explore my role as a teacher and human being who models and supports ways which diffuse intolerance. Seidman also suggested that research often has autobiographical roots. For my research, I looked *backward* to examine past experiences, curiosities, and interests in order to find my research topic. However, because of this research experience, I have moved *forward* toward a new orientation, new ideas, and new practices as a teacher.

Through this study, I have also come to view myself seriously as a researcher. When I embarked on this research journey, I had taken courses, read books, and practiced skills to become a thorough researcher. However, it was the actual research experience which provided me with depth and dimensions not previously understood from the textbooks or the experiences of others. I had a genuine desire to know what was happening in a multicultural literature experience for entry-level college students, which has become clearer as a result

of my research experience. Inductive researchers do not enter the field to test specific theories; rather, they remain open to the findings which emerge from the natural context of the study setting. Although my general topic focused on multicultural literature, the teacher of that literature became a dominant part of the research picture. The research data suggested three important themes, but beyond these themes, I learned about the importance of effective teaching in the multicultural literature classroom.

Through this research experience, I have come to know more clearly and appreciate more deeply the important role that research has in understanding teaching and learning. I have also come to understand the necessity of different kinds of research designs in order to learn about educational settings and participants. Although quantitative research methodology provides certain kinds of important information about a study setting, a qualitative design offers different insights beyond the contours of measurement or experimental controls. The inductive approach builds conclusions based on the particulars; findings emerge from the bottom up, or, reflect "grounded theory" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In grounded theory, abstractions are based upon observations and experiences from the participants' realities rather than deduced from prior theories. My research experience with this case study has contributed to my belief that in order to fully understand the learning life of participants, researchers must not disregard the surprise, creativity, individuality, curiosity, and meaning which are integral parts of any learning experience.

Recommendations

This chapter concludes with recommendations which stem from the data collection, analysis, and findings. First, recommendations for further study are presented; second, recommendations for educational practice are described.

Recommendations for Further Study

This study adhered to an inductive research design. Although the researcher had broad, general questions in mind prior to the investigation, inductive studies often raise questions as the research unfolds. Qualitative research questions are reformulated numerous times as necessary throughout the data collection and analysis stages of research. The researcher is challenged to converge the collected data to find patterns and themes. However, the researcher is also challenged to diverge from the data to pose more questions. The process of inductive research and the reporting of those findings to a wider audience stimulated additional questions, perhaps different kinds of questions, which suggest areas for future research.

One area for future research focuses on pedagogy. Mrs. Holt's teaching style could be characterized as interactive, exploratory and cooperative in nature; the participants reported that Mrs. Holt and her teaching style were an integral part of their learning experience. However, this finding should not suggest that one teaching style is the only effective one for a positive multicultural literature learning experience. Further exploration of varied teaching styles with regard to the inclusion of multicultural literature in the classroom is necessary.

Another area for future research focuses on curriculum. Karen Holt's curriculum reflected multicultural voices through I, Rigoberta Menchú and the multicultural reader Ourselves Among Others. However, she had dozens of other multicultural writings from which she had to make her curricular selection. How can teachers effectively decide on multicultural texts from the plethora of multicultural writings flooding the market?

Multicultural text selection involves more complex issues than will the students like the reading. From her study of numerous multicultural texts, Shapiro (1992) suggested that there are underlying theories of pedagogy behind most multicultural readers used in college classrooms today. First, most multicultural readers subscribe to a learning theory which emphasizes self-reflection. Students are asked to connect personal knowledge to content in order to establish their own sense of authority. Second, most multicultural readers reflect a pedagogy which is relativistic, prompting students to fit judgments into some kind of cross-cultural context. Third, the pedagogy reflected in most multicultural readers emphasizes the active reader; that is, students are challenged to interact with the text by questioning and commenting, which creates a kind of dialogue rather than a formal interpretation. Finally, Shapiro observed, multicultural readers often encourage collaborative learning through various class activities, projects, or exercises to help establish closer communities within a class setting (Shapiro, 1992, pp. 5-6). Questions emerge for further research based on the complexities of appropriate text selection. If these are the underlying theories

behind most multicultural texts, is there an effective way to help teachers differentiate among texts in order to select a text which is compatible with their own pedagogical stances? What should teachers look for during the text and supplementary materials selection process which will enhance their pedagogical styles, while, at the same time, provide students with appropriate content to meet the course goals to which that pedagogy is directed? Further research on text selection and pedagogical assumptions behind multicultural texts may provide clearer understanding of these and other questions.

Once the multicultural literature is selected, how can that literature be incorporated effectively into the existing curriculum and still meet course goals? For example, Shapiro (1992) provided a caveat for the inclusion of multicultural literature in an introductory composition course, much like the setting for this study. If the primary goal of a course is for students to learn to write, Shapiro argued, do multicultural readers provide the appropriate amount and kind of guidance for teaching students to write for different audiences, purposes, contexts, and disciplines? The students' written documents collected for this study were not analyzed for how the multicultural literature impacted composition skill development. There is a need for additional research on how multicultural literature impacts existing curricula and how multicultural literature can be incorporated within curricula without diminishing the other course goals.

Further study also could focus on an underpinning goal which often accompanies the inclusion of multicultural literature in the curriculum: to help

students understand and appreciate others who are culturally different from themselves. This study was not designed specifically to measure attitude or changes in attitude which resulted from the multicultural literature experience. If a course such as Karen Holt's introductory English course helps students to re-frame their thinking about themselves among other cultures, what precipitated the change? What kinds of change occurred? Do the students apply their re-visions to other courses or contexts outside the classroom? If so, in what ways? What are the long range effects of exposure to and positive experiences with multicultural literature and related issues?

This study's participants largely represented a homogeneous population with regard to cultural background and socioeconomic status. It would be useful to understand the multicultural literature teaching and learning experience from the perspectives of different participant populations as well. For example, further research could explore other homogeneous populations from different cultures, such as all Hispanic study participants. A study of multicultural participants would offer additional insights. Future research with different cultural representations in the participants seems necessary.

From this study of multicultural literature in an entry-level English class, issues such as cooperative learning, reader-response theory, and teacher effectiveness emerged. These areas have been studied in elementary or secondary settings, but what do these strategies have to offer learners in college or university settings? Research in these areas has been conducted with regard to higher

education, but more research is necessary if educators are to better serve the students in the undergraduate experience.

This study stimulated questions which suggest many areas for future research. The inclusion of multicultural literature suggests questions which can best be answered by both quantitative and qualitative kinds of research. However, if researchers are interested in the emic, or inside, perspective of the participants, then qualitative research continues to provide researchers with rich opportunity to understand the teaching and learning experience.

Educational Implications

Based on extensive research of many of this nation's colleges and universities, Boyer (1987) asserted that although students may learn competence in specialized fields, the vast majority of undergraduates are not equipped to deal with many of life's most vital issues--"the nature of society, the roots of social injustice, indeed the very prospects for human survival" (p. 283). The incorporation of multicultural literature appears to be one strategy which educators are implementing to respond to this deficit. The findings of this study suggest implications for educational practice.

The voices and perspectives heard through multicultural literature should be infused within curricula rather than treated as separate courses or curricular units. "While separate units or courses on cultural diversity are desirable to provide background and highlight the importance of these issues for students, reinforcement through infusion is necessary for the student to integrate concepts

of cultural diversity into a specific discipline," asserted Flannery and Vanterpool (1990, p. 163). These infused fictional and non-fictional multicultural voices should be written by authentic voices from a culture in order to provide a more clearly focused lens to see into the circle of another culture. Since most campuses require an entry-level English course of some kind, such required courses provide fertile ground for affirming diversity and honoring multiple perspectives. However, the emphasis on such perspectives should not be the responsibility of one course or one department. The affirmation of diversity and multiple perspectives should permeate the institution of higher learning.

Teachers who incorporate multicultural literature should be able to freely and with support be able to re-define traditional teacher-student roles to accommodate a shared responsibility for exploring such literature and related issues. As these teachers participate in a re-visioning process of themselves, their curriculum, and pedagogy, they need continued support from all decision-makers at the institution. Just as the multicultural literature should be infused within the curriculum, pedagogy, and classroom climate, so too should institutions of higher education provide a campus-wide climate which seeks clearer understanding and acceptance of diversity. Multiculturalism should prompt institutions of higher learning to re-examine the infrastructure of teaching and learning on college and university campuses. Jane Tompkins (1994) challenged colleges to offer curricula of self-discovery *and* world discovery; she emphasized the interrelatedness of those goals. As students actively discover and learn within specialized disciplines,

they also should be provided opportunities for world discovery beyond the classroom. Multicultural literature provides an opportunity for one kind of global interaction.

Colleges and universities are readily acknowledged as richly diverse places of learning. Courses where multicultural literature is infused in the curriculum take place in a physical and cultural context. Therefore, entire institutions rather than isolated course instructors should build on strengths already in place on that campus. Support for growth in multiculturally-related areas can appear through staff development, exchange programs, teaching, and research opportunities. Support for diversity must extend beyond teachers, courses, or departments becoming culturally inclusive only on paper. Colleges and universities need to offer challenges to teachers, departments, and institutions to re-vision themselves among others. The challenge ahead for educational practice is great:

> The goal is not to indoctrinate students, but to set them free in a world of ideas and provide a climate in which ethical and moral choices can be thoughtfully examined and convictions formed. . . . The undergraduate college can make a difference in the intellectual and personal lives of its graduates, in the social and civic responsibilities they are willing to assume, and ultimately in their world perspective. (Boyer, 1987, pp. 284-285)

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