THE MICROPOLITICS OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY: THE INTERSECTION OF

POLICY, PRACTICE, AND ONTOLOGY OF WHITE ENGLISH-SPEAKING

ELEMENTARY TEACHERS IN MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOMS

DISSERTATION

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Karon Henderson

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family. I could not have finished this work

without their support, love, and unrelenting faith in my abilities to complete the pages of

this dissertation

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the inspirational guidance and support I received from Miguel Guajardo. As my dissertation chair, he provided me with a litany of questions to ponder in my quest to make sense of educational policy and the politics in schools. At times, his questioning left me perplexed and caused me innumerable nights of insomnia as I worked to sort out the effects of educational policy and the sociocultural impact on the students I taught. Miguel's encouragement to write an authentic dissertation gave me the creative license I needed to write the story of the micropolitics of policy. I know that this dissertation is only the beginning…this is unfinished work. Miguel has been a mentor and friend to me for the past three years and without his continued support and counsel, I could not have completed this process.

The members of my committee, Clarena Larrotta, Letti Grimaldo, and Jennifer Jacobs have generously given their time and expertise to assist me in completing this dissertation. What an amazing experience I have had by surrounding myself with such a diverse group of women. I have learned so much from each of them and look forward to collaborating on various projects in the future.

I am so grateful for my dissertation writing group without whom I may still be staring at a blank computer screen trying to craft research questions for my dissertation. Enrique, I thank you for sharing your work on the art and science of conversation; Keith, I thank you for sharing your work on equity in education; Xinto, I thank you for sharing

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December 2012

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This study examines the micropolitics of current educational policy

implementation regarding the education of English Language Learners (ELLs) in

multicultural classrooms which are taught by White monolingual-English speaking

teachers. By examining and interrogating current educational policy which directly or

indirectly affects the achievement of ELLs, teachers may begin to pave the way for

policy reforms which are informed by what occurs at the classroom or micro level. This

study sought to examine how White female educators whose only language is English,

negotiate the political space of the policy mandates in elementary classrooms.

The context for this study is conceptually framed through a critical lens as the

effects of policy mandates, policy as practice, and the impact of policy on self was co-

constructed with a group of monolingual English-speaking elementary teachers who work

in multicultural environments. An examination of assumptions and beliefs about teaching in a multicultural settings and understandings of situations and conditions of policy, practice, and the political nature of the work at the micro level was explored. An interrogation of policy at the micro level was executed through the implementation of an archeology of policy as a framework for analysis.

The findings of this qualitative research study were represented utilizing creative nonfiction to tell the story of the micropolitics of educational policy. Two major themes emerged from this investigation: (a) policy as practice at the micro level is informed by an understanding of self, cultural competency, and critical pedagogy, and (b) critical conversation is the impetus for instructional change as teachers work to deliver culturally relevant practice of policy. Recommendations presented in this study include creating and sustaining sacred time towards developing an understanding of self, developing targeted and focused critical conversation sessions, and finding and creating opportunities for future political action.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: SETTING THE MICRO-POLITICAL CONTEXT

The journey toward creating spaces of successful teaching and learning requires more than an understanding of content knowledge and meticulously scripted lesson plans complete with behavioral objectives designed to measure a desirable outcome. Teachers must connect with the students that they teach to create learning experiences and opportunities that are memorable and long-lasting. Connecting to students in meaningful ways is critical in classrooms where students who speak a language other than English are taught by monolingual-English speaking teachers (Cummins, 2000; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004; Gay, 2000; Gonzales, Moll, & Amanti, 2004). Shifting towards a pedagogy of human connectedness calls for teacher behavior that is intentional, reciprocal, and grounded in knowledge of self (Freire, 1974). The search for a teacher identity which seeks to understand the cultural, historical and political self has promise in facilitating open and honest classroom environments where learning is a process of co-construction.

During the spring semester of 2001, Mrs. Tyson, the principal of my school announced to the faculty that all classroom teachers would need to make the necessary arrangements to become certified as English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers or make plans to transfer to another school. At the time, one teacher at each grade level was certified to teach English language learners

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(ELLs), but that was all to change due to the shifting demographics of the neighborhood and influx of children whose home language was not English. In order to add the ESL endorsement to our Texas teaching certificates, we were required to attend three days of training and then take an ESL certification test. If we passed the test, the state of Texas would consider us "highly qualified" teachers of ELLs.

I signed up for the crash course in ESL along with five other teachers from my school whose only language, like mine, was English. The three days of training were filled with second language acquisition theory as well as suggestions and strategies to promote academic English acquisition in the classrooms where we taught. I took copious notes those three days as I learned the difference between acquiring a language and learning a language (Krashen, 1988). Renewed and invigorated, I took a vow to be the best ESL teacher the world had ever encountered. The only problem was that I have acquired in my lifetime only one language and have little to no experience in the process by which a second language learner must navigate her world in order to speak and learn in a new language. How could I really and truly be considered "highly qualified" after a mere three days of training? (Karon, Journal entry, September, 2008).

The impetus for this study came about as I examined the development of a budding awareness of my cultural, historical, and political identity in my negotiations in teaching and learning in a multicultural context[1]. As a graduate student in the Ph.D. in

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[1] Throughout this text, the term *multicultural* is used to describe contexts with students of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004).

School Improvement program at Texas State University-San Marcos, I maintained a journal from 2008 to 2012 documenting my reflections on issues surrounding school improvement initiatives. Using these autobiographical accounts of my experiences in schools as a springboard, I began to weave a narrative account of my experiences negotiating the micropolitics of educational policy. This, matched with theory and research, served to build upon my concept of cultural self-awareness and development of my own identity as a teacher (Gay, 2000; Kincheloe, 2003; Lasky, 2005; Spindler, & Spindler, 1987, 1992). The awareness, identification, and recognition of the students we teach as "the other" (Said, 1978) served as the starting point for the negotiation of identities and our role in carrying out educational policy.

The space where this study resides is in the polity of the micro level. Iannaccone (1975) described the micropolitics of education as the politics that take place in and around schools with a focus on "the interaction and political ideologies of social systems of teachers, administrators, and pupils within school buildings" (p. 43). McLaughlin (1991, p. 155) suggests that the challenge of effective implementation of educational policy "lies in understanding how policy can enable it." The practice of policy at the micro level gives rise to an examination of the sociocultural effects of educational policy on culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students.

Together, four White, female, English speaking teachers, I include myself as participant and observer (Patton, 2002), worked as research partners and explored how our enduring selves and situated selves (Spindler & Spindler, 1992, 1994) have informed our practices in negotiating the changing demographics of the traditional classroom. Additionally, we examined how the development of our political selves had evolved as

we have implemented current policy initiatives and directives regarding the instruction of English language learners (ELLs).

The context for this study is conceptually framed through a critical lens, the effects of policy mandates, policy as practice, and the impact of policy on self was co-constructed with a group of monolingual English-speaking elementary teachers who work in multicultural environments. Critical theorists seek to examine power structures that shape individuals' beliefs and actions (Schwandt, 2001) and work towards "human emancipation" (Horkeimer, 1982, p. 244) in conditions of domination and oppression. Additionally, critical theorists work to explain what is wrong with current social reality, identify actors who might change it, and provide goals for such social transformation. McLaren (2007) explains the role educational critical theorist play:

> Fundamentally concerned with the centrality of politics and power in our understanding of how schools work, critical theorist have produced work centering on a critique of the political economy of schooling, the state and education, the representation of texts, and the construction of student subjectivity (p. 185).

In keeping with the tenets of Critical Theory, this study aims to examine the historical, socio-cultural, and institutional forms of domination.

Research Problem

This study examined the micropolitics of current educational policy implementation regarding the education of ELLs in multicultural classrooms which were taught by White monolingual-English speaking teachers. Research suggests positive outcomes for CLD students when they are matched with a teacher who shares the same

language and culture (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005). According to a 2010 report from the National Center of Education Statistics (NCES), during the 2006-2007 school year approximately 21% of public school students were Hispanic but less than 5% of teachers identified themselves as Hispanic. The teacher corps teaching students who speak a language other than English was comprised primarily of White, middle class, female, English speaking teachers who were a product of education in white neighborhoods and "whitestream" universities (Urrieta, 2009). Additionally, many monolingual English teachers have had no experience living and learning in another country and may be unaware of the sociocultural and sociopolitical pressures of acculturation which ELLs face in an English speaking classroom. The recognition of the nature of dominant-culture ideologies and its relationship to educational language policies in classrooms is a challenge as teachers develop skills to critically analyze educational policy (Bartolomé, 2008).

In schools where the student and teacher population is homogenous, teachers impart the rules and values of a shared culture in the context of their teaching content. Assumptions made by teachers about the knowledge and experiences their pupils bring to school are generally on target because they share a similar culture. According to George Spindler (1997), schooling is seen as an agent of cultural transmission where teaching and learning of social and cultural values are accomplished through the explicit and implicit enactment of curriculum in schools. In schools where students speak languages other than English, cultural transmission is more complex as teachers must not only consider language differences but the historical, social, and political constraints on learning through a prescribed curriculum. The following journal reflection illustrates

how I attempted to teach an ELL in my classroom but may have underserved her because my instructional practices did not take cultural differences into account:

> Lily was a Latina student in my fourth grade class. She had attended the school where I taught since she was in pre-kindergarten. Lily's third grade teacher warned me that Lily struggled with reading and math and rarely did well in school. Additionally, Lily's mother spoke Spanish only making it difficult for her to help her daughter with schoolwork. The day that Lily arrived in my classroom, I already knew much about her as a student. I placed her close to the front of the room and made a commitment to accommodate instruction and provide Lily with as many supports in the classroom as possible to help her be successful. Knowing that Lily's first language was Spanish, I sat her next to Claudia, a Spanish speaking student, in hopes that she might benefit from the clarification of concepts in her native language. I was also hopeful that Lily and Claudia might develop a lasting friendship as Lily was painfully shy and a bit of a loner. Lily and Claudia did become great friends however, Lily continued to struggle with the content she was learning and did poorly on the state mandated high stakes testing in reading, writing, and math that year. While I had the best intentions about how to teach Lily, I failed to make a difference in her educational experience. (Karon, Journal entry, November, 2008).

Many ELLs such as Lily, come from a low socio-economic status (SES) and are in classrooms where dominant ideologies may associate bilingualism with inferior intelligence making the work educators do political in nature and much more than just a pedagogical undertaking (Bartolomé, 2008; Cadiero-Kaplan, & Rodriguez, 2008; Friere,

1985; Guajardo & Guajardo, 2009). Understanding the inculcation of American culture, American schooling practices, educational policy as it is enacted in our classrooms, and the effect on the students we serve is of the utmost importance. Additionally, educators should take in consideration how dominant interests are played out in schools and how a reproduction of rules supporting dominant ideologies exists. Lipman (1997) suggests:

> Without this critique and willingness to challenge existing power relations, there is little cause for optimism that teacher participation in reform will significantly alter the marginalization of low-income students of color in schools…educational change involves risk, conflict, and ultimate restructuring of relation of power in schools and communities (p. 33).

By examining and interrogating current educational policy which directly or indirectly affects the achievement of ELLs, teachers may begin to pave the way for policy reforms which are informed by what occurs at the classroom or micro level. This study sought to examine how we, as White female educators whose only language is English, negotiated the political space of the policy mandates in our classrooms.

The process of educational policy as described by Fowler (2009) is a six stage model including issue definition, agenda setting, policy formation, policy adoption, policy implementation, and policy evaluation. Not all educational issues become policy but once an issue has been defined as worthy of becoming policy, it may be acted on by governmental officials and is placed on the policy agenda. Policy formation refers to the development of a bill, or statute of a proposed policy which then needs to be adopted officially by the appropriate governmental body such as a majority vote in Congress. Once the policy is adopted, it is implemented by school districts, administrators, and

teachers. In an effort to determine if policies which have been adopted are doing what they were intended to do, outside consulting firms, universities, or think tanks may engage in research activities designed to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of policies.

This inquiry focuses on the political space between policy adoption and policy implementation. This interrogation includes a discursive triangle between the translation of policy as it is mandated, policy as practice, and the impact of policy on self. Mandated policy refers to the actual directive for teachers to carry out policy initiatives. Once the policy is implemented in classrooms, the policy becomes practice. The impact on self of carrying out policy and responding to policy mandates is also considered as teaching and learning occurs. Figure 1 illustrates the space representing the enactment of policy at the classroom or micro level. By critically reflecting on our histories and examining our role in carrying out policy in our classrooms, I invited Amy, Scarlett, and Mackenzie[2] to join me as research partners in co-constructing knowledge about current pedagogical practices in multicultural environments.
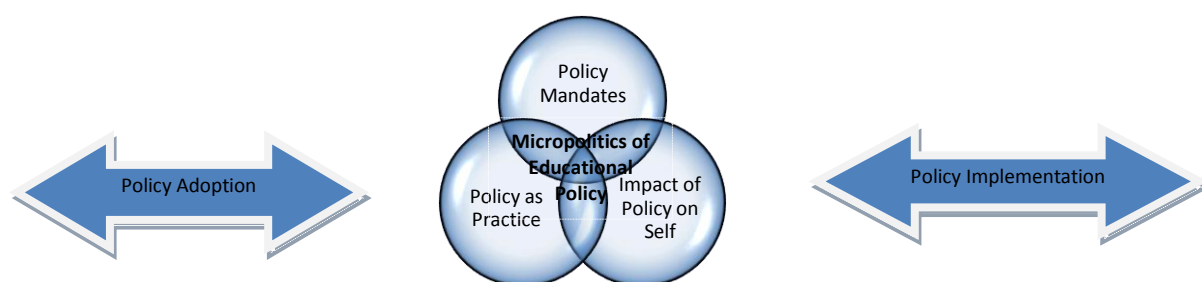
Figure 1 Policy as Practice at the Micropolitical Level.

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[2] The names of the research partners have been changed to protect their privacy and identity.

Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to co-examine, along with my research partners, the effects of our history, or her-story as is the focus of this inquiry, and our culture on effective teaching and learning in diverse classrooms. Additionally, my research partners and I discovered how educational policy as practice has impacted processes and systems informing and guiding classroom practice at the micro level, namely the multicultural classrooms where we teach. Through this inquiry, we were able to explore and examine our assumptions and beliefs about teaching in a multicultural setting as well as examine our understanding of situations and conditions of policy, practice, and the political nature of the work we do at the micro level. The following research questions guided the study.

1. What does ethnography of educational policy tell us about the practice of four White elementary teachers in multilingual settings?

2. What is the ontology of four White elementary teachers who teach English Language Learners?

3. Why is the study of educational policy as practice in four White elementary teachers' classrooms important?

This study will contribute to the body of research examining the micropolitics of effective teaching practice in multicultural settings and how this practice may inform policy. The analysis of ontology through history, epistemology through culture, and power through policy may be beneficial in curriculum development and leadership as educators work to negotiate the contextual influences of organization and policy challenging their knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions about teaching and learning in culturally and linguistically different classrooms.

Overview of the Dissertation

I chose to implement a qualitative design which was informed by narrative inquiry to carry out this research. Connely & Clandin (1990) explain the use of narrative inquiry in educational research as a method that encourages "the construction and deconstruction of personal and social stories; teachers and learners are storytellers and characters in their own and others' stories" (p. 2). The remaining chapters of this dissertation represent the findings of my study through the literary genre of creative nonfiction (Gutkind, 1997). Creative nonfiction is a mixture of literature and nonfiction where the author tells a story using factual information to expand the readers' understanding of the subject by presenting facts based on extensive research (Lounsberry, 1996). I have taken the stories and experiences that Amy, Scarlett, Mackenzie, and I shared during our time together as research partners and represented those narrative accounts in literary form by telling the story of one teacher's struggle negotiating the micropolitics of a new school.

In his book *The Authentic Dissertation,* Jacobs (2008) provides examples of dissertation stories from graduate students who seek to represent findings in a more authentic and less traditional format by focusing more on the important questions, diverse perspectives, and authentic experiences and less on the research methodologies. In an attempt to produce an alternative dissertation to represent my findings, I have employed a backward design (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) framework starting with the end in mind. I begin with the creative fiction story of one teacher's struggle negotiating policy in her CLD classroom, move to a connection to the literature and analysis of data from the study, and append the methodology to end of the dissertation. In keeping with the

backward design for this dissertation, I have intentionally appended the methodology to the end of this document so as not to sway the readers' interpretation and understanding of the micropolitics of educational policy. Employing policy archeology (Scheurich, 1994) as a framework to analyze the narrative data collected through interviews, critical conversations, reflective journals, artifacts, and documents my findings give a picture of the micropolitics of educational policy as a discursive triangle and interplay between an understanding of self, cultural competency, and critical pedagogy as we carry out policy in our classrooms.

In Chapter II, the story opens with Charlotte Robinson's[3] first day in a new school. She has moved from a high achieving and affluent neighborhood school to a Title I school with many CLD students. This chapter focuses on policy initiatives to locate and place highly qualified teachers (National Archives and Records Administration, 2009) on campuses where a large portion of the student body is considered economically disadvantaged. In the story, Charlotte holds a certificate to teach ESL thus she meets one of the requirements of a highly qualified teacher based on the policy guidelines of NCLB. Chapter II concludes with an examination of how the understanding of self and awareness of one's core values inform how we negotiate educational policy as it relates to the ELLs that we teach.

Chapter III finds Charlotte's participation in the annual Neighborhood Walk to be the start of her journey towards cultural competence. Her assumptions about the parents and families of the students she will be teaching are put to the test as she makes her rounds to visit with the families of her students. The enactment of policy initiatives by

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[3] Charlotte Robinson and the other characters appearing in the story are fictional characters. Any similarities between them and real persons are purely coincidental.

teachers who work to value and understand cultural diversity is examined in this chapter.

A discussion of how and when our own awareness of cultural differences and the effect

this had at the micro or classroom level is presented in Chapter III.

Chapter IV begins with Charlotte's realization that she is in the middle of

negotiating policy initiatives and navigating a system which does not work for all of her

the students. Her quest to find instructional practices and strategies which are aligned to

the state standards she is expected to teach her students suddenly takes a turn when she

discovers that the secret to paving the way towards developing students who are critical

thinkers lies in the cultural assets her students bring into her class each day. A

discussion focused on critical reflection of instructional practice along with a rethinking

of pedagogical approaches implemented in classrooms with CLD students is examined in

this chapter.

In Chapter V, Charlotte learns about the systems in place at Katherine Grace

Elementary School to address academic interventions for the students she teaches. When

the stress of keeping up with a rigid curriculum timeline cause her to lash out a student,

she realizes that her practice of policy may not be meeting the needs of the students she

teaches. This chapter addresses policy as practice and ways in which educators navigate

policy in an era of accountability.

Chapter VI begins with the conclusion of the story of Charlotte and takes us to the

last day of school and the dissemination of state testing results at Grace Elementary

school. Charlotte finds herself in a quandary as to how to distribute the news to her

students on the last day of school and begins to question why things are done the way

they are in schools. In this final chapter, findings from the study are disclosed and

challenges are discussed. Implications for future research and action are also addressed in this chapter.

I have intentionally sequenced the pages of this dissertation starting with the creative nonfiction story followed by a discussion of the literature and data analysis. By doing this, the reader is at liberty to develop her/his own interpretation of what the story is saying (or not saying) before reading my interpretation of the micropolitics of educational policy based on the data I collected for this study. Figure 2 represents the roadmap of this dissertation portraying the micro and macro forces at play in the institution of schools. I use the analogy of a single tree in a forest to illustrate the micropolitics of educational policy, on the following page.
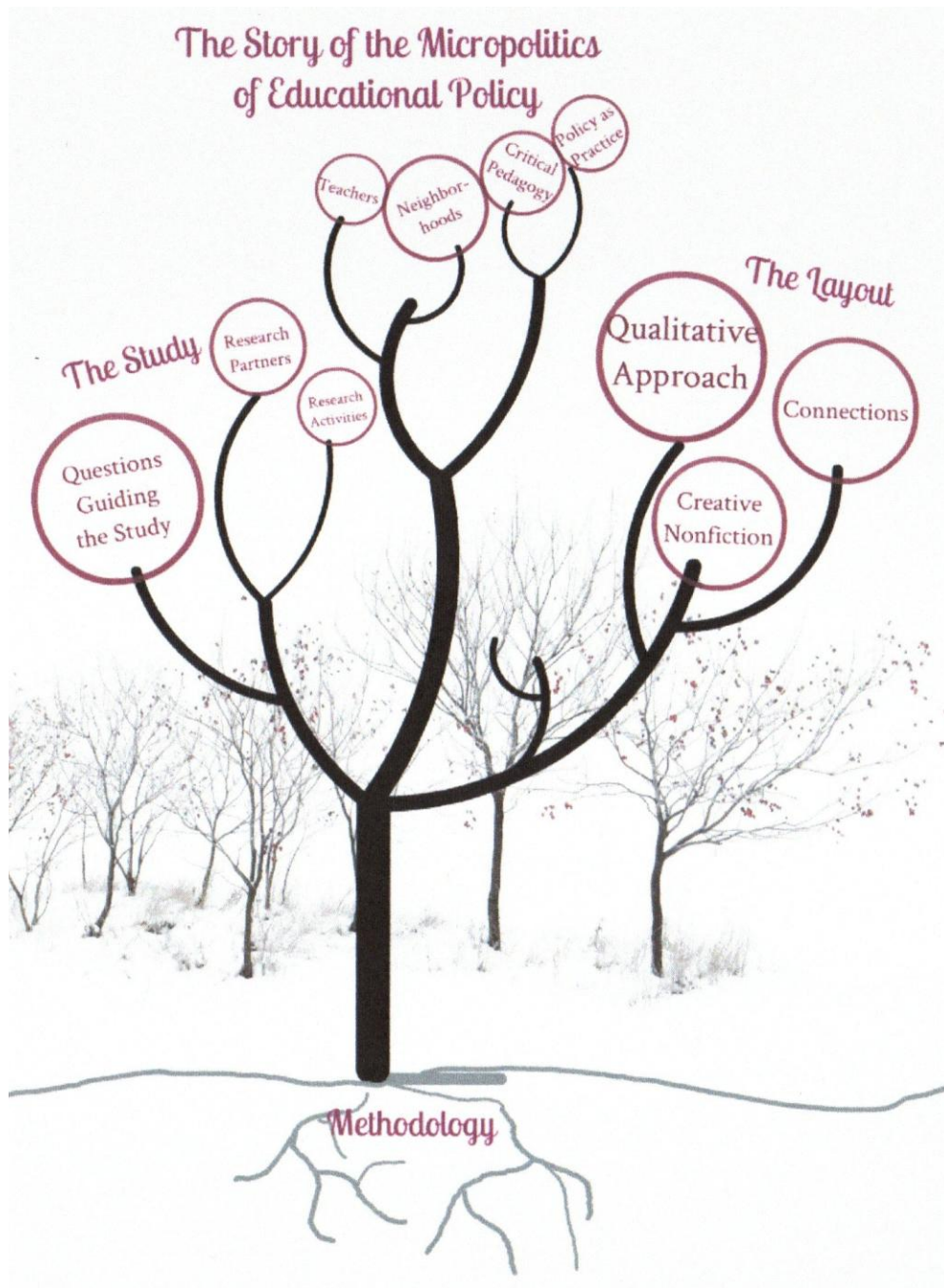
Figure 2 Roadmap of Dissertation.

Just as the roots of a tree provide sustenance and support for the life of the tree, so too does the methodology give life and support the pages of this dissertation. In keeping with a backwards design framework, I have included the methodology as an appendix. I

do this to focus the reader's attention on the story of the micropolitics of educational

policy.

CHAPTER II

A NEW START: NEGOTIATING THE SOCIAL SYSTEMS OF TEACHERS

Charlotte Robinson had much to look forward to. She had just earned a Masters degree in educational administration, gotten engaged to her college sweetheart, and landed a new teaching job in the town where her fiancé lived. Today she was heading to her new school to meet the fourth grade team she would be working with. With only two weeks until the first day of school, Charlotte was eager to meet her new teammates, tour the school, and begin setting up her new classroom.

Charlotte's first five years of teaching had been at Salmon Elementary School in an upper income suburban neighborhood where she had also done her student teaching. Salmon Elementary was a beautiful school with everything and anything a teacher could dream of. The students in Charlotte's first grade classroom were well behaved and eager to learn. The parents of her students were very involved and volunteered to help with class projects, field trips, and just about anything Charlotte needed help with. Even though she enjoyed teaching at Salmon and considered this a dream job, Charlotte wanted to be closer to her fiancé Frank and made the decision to leave Salmon after getting a job offer minutes away from Frank's apartment. With her new certification as an educational administrator, she knew she needed experience teaching in a grade level required to take the state mandated standardized test. Additionally, she had always wanted to teach

children of poverty because she wanted to make a real difference in children's lives. Charlotte jumped at the chance to work as a fourth grade teacher at a Title I school.

Charlotte's new school, Katherine Grace Elementary School was going to be a radical change for her. Grace was one of 35 elementary schools in the Southwest Independent School District and was located in a lower middle class neighborhood surrounded by 12 apartment complexes of which 4 were considered low income housing units. Seventy percent of the students attending Grace were considered economically disadvantaged and participated in the free lunch program. Additionally, Grace was also a site for Dual Language, the Spanish bilingual program and approximately 45% of the student body spoke a language other than English at home.

Charlotte pulled into the parking lot at Grace the same time Mrs. Martin, the principal was pulling in. She noticed that Mrs. Martin parked at the back of the parking lot and not in the space provided in the front of the school with the word PRINCIPAL painted in bright yellow block letters. She thought that was interesting and made a mental note to ask her new team why Mrs. Martin parked so far away when she had her own spot reserved for her right in front of the school.

"Good morning Mrs. Martin. I am so glad we got here at the same time since I have no way to get into the building," Charlotte said as she slid out of her car.

"Not a problem Charlotte and please, call me Dee. I will get Mrs. Briggs, our secretary to hook you up with what you need to get access into the building. I guess you are excited to meet your team. How is the move going? Are you all settled in yet?"

"Well, I am still in boxes but all my stuff is finally in one town." Charlotte gave the thumbs up and followed Mrs. Martin up the walkway to the entrance of the school.

"It looks like your team is not here yet. How would you like a tour of the school?"

"That would be awesome!"

The first place Mrs. Martin took Charlotte was to the cafeteria where she noticed there were several flags hanging from the ceiling. Mrs. Martin explained, "When a student enrolls from another country, we buy the flag representing that country and hang it from the ceiling as a way to honor the student's home country."

"How many flags do you have hanging right now?"

"We have 35 flags hanging today representing 35 countries with 24 different languages spoken at our school."

"Wow! That is a lot of languages. I just got my English as a Second Language (ESL) certification this year and have never had more than one English language learner (ELL) in my classroom at a time.   How do you teach with so many different languages in one classroom?"

"Don't worry, you will be fine. You are on a great team that works wonders with our ELLs. As the matter of fact, all of the teachers at Grace are ESL certified. That way, we can place our English learners in any classroom and feel confident that they are being taught by a highly qualified teacher."

As Mrs. Martin continued the tour, Charlotte began to worry that her one day training to pass the ESL certification test may not have been enough to teach ELLs. Mrs. Martin had referred to her new team as a "great team that works well together and does wonders with the ELLs they teach." Charlotte was hopeful that her new team would support her as she learned to work with linguistically and culturally diverse students.

Besides, she had one ELL from her previous school and she did a good job with that student. It couldn't be all that different.

Mrs. Martin turned a corner and headed out a set of doors leading to a set of portable buildings. With Charlotte following close behind, Mrs. Martin explained that the fourth grade classrooms were located outside in portable buildings along with the gifted classroom and two special education classrooms. Charlotte could see that a door to one of the fourth grade classrooms was open and she began to get nervous about meeting her new team. What if they didn't like her? What if she wasn't good enough to be on this team that does, according to Mrs. Martin, "wonders with ELLs?" She would just go in there, do the best job she could, and give her new fourth grade team 100% every day.

As Mrs. Martin led Charlotte in the classroom, she noticed that the classroom had already been set up. There was an elaborate calendar on one wall, a colorful "Welcome Back to School" bulletin board adorned another entire wall, and numerous teaching posters were already hung, ready and waiting for a classroom of children to come bounding through the doors. This made Charlotte nervous because she was already feeling a bit behind and overwhelmed.

"Good morning ladies. This is Charlotte Robinson, your new teammate. I am going to leave her with you Stacy and let you do the introductions. I have a 9:30 meeting that I am already late for. Charlotte, come by the front office when you are finished here and pick up your keys to your classroom. I am leaving you in good hands here." With that, Mrs. Martin shook Charlotte's hand and darted out the door.

"Hi Charlotte and welcome to our team." Stacy got up, shook Charlotte's hand and motioned for her to sit in an empty chair at a round table where she was working on

developing math games for her future students. "I am Stacy May and this is Melinda

Brown. Sally Sanford couldn't make it today because her daughter is having a baby. She

will be here next week for staff development so I will introduce you to her then. She is

retiring soon and doesn't really like to meet during the summer anyway." Melinda stood

up, gave Charlotte a big smile, hugged her, and welcomed her to the team. Charlotte sat

down and began to tell her new teammates about her previous teaching experiences and

about her recent move to be closer to her fiancé. The conversation was lively and

Charlotte learned that she had much in common with Stacy and Melinda. She was

curious about Sally but felt confident that things would work out. Besides, she was

already beginning to click with the two teammates she had just met.

Stacy took Charlotte to the front office to retrieve the keys to her new classroom.

On the way to her classroom, Stacy informed Charlotte that she would be teaching

partners with Sally this school year. Charlotte's classroom was connected to Sally's

classroom in a portable building similar to Stacy's and Melinda's. Charlotte was hoping

to be closer to Stacy and Melinda and began to feel a bit of apprehension about being

paired with a teacher who was so close to retirement.

"So when are we going to get together to talk about our class lists and make plans

for what we are going to be doing the first week of school?" Charlotte blurted out unable

to conceal her first days of school jitters.

Stacy smiled warmly and told Charlotte that there would be plenty of time for

team planning. She explained, "Our district has a curriculum we have to follow so we

generally get together to go over the plans and decide how we want to teach the lessons.

You will learn all about it later. It is called the Southwest Connected Curriculum

Instructional Plan, better known as the SCCIP (skip). Some of the lessons are pretty

good and some, well, some we just have to do what we know is best for the kids we

teach. The curriculum is actually connected to the state standards so it takes the

guesswork out of what we need to teach our students based on what they will be tested on

in the spring."

"Well Stacy, I am new to this whole world of testing. I was a first grade teacher

for the last five years," Charlotte confessed, feeling inadequate once again for this new

challenge she was embarking on.

"You know Charlotte, let's take one day at a time. Today you met your new

school, new teammates, and your new classroom. Next week, you will get your class list

and will meet your students. Every year we do a neighborhood walk where we find our

students and visit them in their homes to introduce ourselves and to meet their parents. It

is a great way to start the year and to begin to build relationships with the families of the

students we will be spending the next nine months with."

Charlotte thought about going door to door to introduce herself to her students

and said, "Wow. That is kind of cool. My previous school never did anything like that.

We had Meet the Teacher Night and all the parents and kids came to the classroom a

couple of days before school started but we never walked the neighborhood."

"Yeah, we have been doing it for a few years now and the students and families

look forward to the visit each summer. It is a personal touch that means a lot to the kids

we teach. If I were you, I would familiarize myself with the neighborhood because it is

easy to get lost around here. So, I will leave you to work on your room and will touch

base with you soon to give you your textbooks and basic start-of-school supplies. "

"Thanks Stacy, for making me feel a part of the team on my first day here. Oh, I have one last question. Why does the principal park in the back parking lot and not right in the front of the school?"

Stacy chuckled, "Oh that Dee Martin! You are going to absolutely love working with her. She refuses to park in the front of the school because she feels as if she is taking a spot a parent may need. Our principal is all about the families in this community and will do absolutely anything for the students here. Working at this school can be tough at times but at the end of the day, you know you are working to make a difference in kids' lives. Isn't that why we got into this line of work in the first place?"

After Stacy left, Charlotte rearranged the desks in her new classroom and began taking an inventory of the supplies that were left in the classroom by the previous year's teacher. She worked for another two hours before packing up her things and calling it a day. Charlotte left Katherine Grace Elementary School that day eager to get home to tell Frank what she learned about her new school and new friends. Katherine Grace Elementary was going to be a great place to work.

Discussion

Charlotte has resigned from a high performing school in an affluent neighborhood to teach fourth grade at a school where more than half of the students live below the poverty line. She is apprehensive about her abilities to perform in a classroom with CLD students and has some anxiety about preparing her students for the state mandated standardized tests. Furthermore, switching from a school whose demographics and culture matched her own as a White English speaking teacher to a school with an abundance of cultural and linguistic diversity may prove to be quite a challenge.

In schools, everything is political (Marshall & Scribner, 1991). Decisions about who gets what, when, and how are the driving force behind what we do in schools. According to Morgan (1986):

> By recognizing that an organization is intrinsically political, in the sense that ways must be found to create order and direction among people with potentially diverse and conflicting interests, much can be learned about the problems and legitimacy of management as a process of government, and about the relation of the organization to society. (p. 142)

The conversations we engage in, relationships we build, how we deal with conflict, and how we lead and learn in schools are all political acts. The micropolitics of schools are akin to one single tree in the forest. A forest ecosystem is comprised of soil, water, trees, animals, insects, bacteria, and fungi. The tree thrives in the forest when interacting and being a part of the ecosystem. Just as the tree is a subset of the forest ecosystem, teachers, students, parents, and administrators are actors in the ecosystem of the school.

As a player in the political landscape of her new school, Charlotte has already begun to develop a social and cultural connection with the teachers on her team. The micropolitics of schools is not only about conflict and how people compete with one another to get what they want, it is also "about cooperation and how people build support among themselves to achieve their ends" (Blase, 1991, pp. 1-2). Charlotte is learning the lay of the land at Grace Elementary and in the short amount of time she has been on campus, she has figured out the dynamics of the team and principal she will soon be working with.

Highly Qualified Teachers

Katherine Grace Elementary School is not unlike many schools in Texas where the majority of the students speak a language other than English. The number of ELLs enrolled in Texas schools more than doubled from1991 to 2008. According to the Texas Education Agency, the total enrollment of ELLs during the 2010-2011 school year was about 831,904 which accounted for 17% of all students attending schools in the state. While there are approximately 120 different languages spoken in Texas schools, 91% of ELLs speak Spanish as their home language. Additionally, Hispanic[4] families' income levels lag significantly behind their Anglo counterparts. Former Texas demographer Steve Murdock warns that if the current trend line for Hispanic student dropout rate continues, 30% of the labor force in the state of Texas will not even have a high school diploma (Scharrer, 2010).

Educators must decide how to effectively engage ELLs in the academic and social life of the school, while also ensuring that these students improve and become proficient in reading, science, and mathematics. In the state of Texas, this equates to preparing immigrant students for the Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS)[5], the state mandated high stakes test within three years of enrollment in the public school system. Requiring students who are new to English and new to the testing mill (which is the backdrop of accountability in schools) does little more than further marginalize students who are not native English speakers.

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[4] The term "Hispanic" is the word of choice used by the U.S. Government to identify people of Spanish origin (Sattin-Bajaj, 2009).
[5] The State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) replaced TAKS in the 2011-2012 school year.   A key component of the STAAR is new exams which are more course specific and more rigorous than the TAKS (Texas Education Agency, 2011a).

With 45% of the student body at Katherine Grace Elementary School speaking a language other than English, teachers at that campus must hone their skills to adequately teach their ELL population. One way schools have worked to ensure that teachers have the skills necessary to meet the unique needs of the ELLs they teach is by requiring additional licensure to be added to their teaching certificate. One of the goals of No Child Left Behind (NCLB) is to ensure that schools are staffed with highly qualified teachers. A teacher with a certificate to teach ESL is considered highly qualified to teach ELLs based on guidelines set forth by the Department of Education.

The reauthorization of NCLB more recently, has lead to the U.S. Department of Education's Race to the Top fund to reward states with plans for working towards increasing an equitable allotment of effective teachers and for increasing the number of highly qualified teachers in schools where a majority of the student population is considered economically disadvantaged, (National Archives and Records Administration, 2009). This equitable distribution means that teachers who have students in their classrooms who speak a language other than English must obtain appropriate licensure in order to be considered highly qualified. Mrs. Martin, the principal of Katherine Grace Elementary School requires all of her staff to become ESL certified. Had Charlotte not taken the necessary steps to include an ESL endorsement on her Texas teaching certificate, she may not have been considered for the position.

Policy initiatives to distribute highly qualified teachers in schools, especially in schools with a high number of students who are considered economically disadvantaged is an admirable goal; however, research indicates that schools with the most disadvantaged students have lower teacher salaries and tend to have more teachers with

emergency credentials and sometimes, without regular certification (Bartolome, 1994; Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004; Haycock & Hanushek, 2010). The framework of NCLB presents a generic approach to the education of ELLs, citing that a highly qualified teacher of ELLs would possess content knowledge but may not possess the unique knowledge to teach students with English language needs (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004; Gonzales, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). Moreover, as the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness (STAAR) replaces the TAKS and the academic rigor increases on these measures of academic proficiency, teachers must possess the content and pedagogical knowledge to develop students' English language proficiencies concurrently while providing content specific knowledge. Successful teaching and learning in culturally and linguistically enhanced classrooms requires ongoing examination of practice in the classroom in light of the implementation of state and federal policies.

Teacher Development Towards ESL Certification

The experience of including students who speak a language other than English in traditional English-only classroom settings has prompted change in many teachers' instructional practice. Educators feel unprepared to teach students because of a lack of professional development and training, thus creating difficult situations for teachers and the students they teach (Grant & Gillette, 2006; Hollins & Guzmán, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Tellez & Waxman, 2006). Charlotte had taken a one day training designed to help her pass an ESL certification test and was clearly having some doubts about her skills in teaching ELLs. Classroom teachers must work to teach content and language in a classroom with ELLs thus increasing attention to language in the content

area (Cadiero-Kaplan & Rodriguez, 2008; Cummins, 2000; Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2004). This is not an easy task as many times teachers have no formal preparation and minimal professional development training to earn the title of ESL teacher. Additionally, many ELLs are provided teachers who admit they are not prepared for effective instruction of these students (Cadiero-Kaplan, 2008; Cohen, 1989; Garcia, Arias, Murri, & Serna, 2010; Quiroz, 2001). While Charlotte felt ill-prepared to teach ELLs at Grace Elementary School, she was in fact ESL certified which made her a bit more marketable. Had she told the principal during her interview that she was unsure about her competence in teaching ELLs, she might not have gotten the job.

Many well intentioned teachers assume that implementing practices which are considered good teaching methods will yield positive results for ELLs. Holding assumptions such as this could be dangerous in that teachers may develop negative stereotypes of the English learners they teach and ultimately fail to meet their students' social and academic needs (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004; Tellez & Waxman, 2006; Tse, 2001; Valdez, 2001). A move from passive instruction where the teacher is the keeper of the knowledge, to collectively co-constructing knowledge with students through the identification and acceptance of individual ontology may yield positive results. Gay (2000) explains the concept of cultural caring and culturally responsive teaching by "placing teachers in ethical, emotional, and academic partnership with ethnically diverse students, a partnership that is anchored in respect, honor, integrity, resource sharing, and a deep belief in the possibility of transcendence" (p. 52). At Southwest Independent School District teachers are expected to follow the Connected Curriculum Instructional Plan developed by curriculum writers in their school district.

Following a prescribed curriculum which may have been developed by monolingual English speakers may make culturally responsive teaching difficult to do.

Reeves (2009), posits that to be an effective teacher, a renegotiation of teacher identity must occur. By having a clear concept of our teacher identity and situational adaptations, we may be able to understand the struggle of the ELLs that we teach (Lipman, 1997; McIntosh, 1990; Reeves, 2009; Spindler & Spindler, 1994, p. 19). The multilingual classroom is prime space for teachers and students to negotiate identities because of the shift of a more diverse student population within a classroom which all parties previously shared a common language (Valdez, 2001). Practicing teachers benefit significantly from opportunities to learn more about themselves personally, professionally, and pedagogically in a sociocultural context (Kincheloe, 2003). The teachers at Grace Elementary will learn much about their students by visiting them in their homes prior to the first day of school. This is also a great way to begin to build a relationship with the family and learn about their culture. By critically reflecting on practice, and engaging in professional conversations, Charlotte and her team may grow both professionally and personally. The relationship and collaboration between the teachers on Charlotte's new team will be key as they work to bridge cultural differences and meet the needs of the CLD students that they teach.

Teacher Identity

Charlotte's new school is very different from where she has been teaching the last five years. She will most likely be confronted with situations that don't align with her beliefs and values. In order for teachers to identify their place in the politics of education as informed political agents, they must collectively engage in self-reflective talk about

the "self". George and Louise Spindler (1994) treat the concept of self along three dimensions; the enduring self, the situated self, and the endangered self. The enduring self refers to the values and beliefs one has acquired through one's own past and is the set of values that have been developed through one's culture, family and religious beliefs. The situated self, on the other hand, is the aspects of persons' character as s/he copes with the everyday life occurrences. The Spindlers (1994) explain:

> The enduring self provides a sense of personal continuity with the past while the situated self is oriented to the present and the contexts (situations) one finds oneself in. This may imply that the enduring self is entirely conscious, and indeed much of it is – particularly the idealized features of identity, obscured by time and selected out of memory (pp. 13-14).

At times, the enduring self and the situated self may be at odds. If the enduring self is violated too often and over a period of time, the result may be a damaged enduring self concept or the emergence of an endangered self. As educators, our sense of self can be interrupted by life/histories and these interruptions influence our beliefs and/or perceptions about our agency in education. It is likely that Charlotte may experience a disruption as she negotiates her political agency in this new Title I school.

Connection to Study

Just like Charlotte who made a conscious decision to teach at culturally diverse school, my research partners and I chose to work at schools where a large percentage of students speak English as a second language. We each had different reasons for choosing teaching as a career; however, our decision to work with CLD students was an intentional

choice. During the course of this study, we learned about how our core values and beliefs at times were shaken as we interacted and learned from the students we encountered.

Mackenzie tells the story of how her beliefs about working with CLD students have shifted since she first started teaching:

My life now is very different from when I was raised. I grew up in a small town where something like 98 to 99% of the community was White. Everybody spoke English and there was not a lot of cultural diversity. And so now, in my classroom, I think, today I counted 3 White students and 17 of other races and cultures. So it's a 180 and I think it impacted the work I do because I hadn't seen it before. I hadn't realized the value in it my whole life. The idea of it was always good, but I hadn't seen it. But then I had my classroom…and so this is what it is like. When I think about going to teach at another school that may not be as diverse, I would really miss having all of this. It would be like when I was back home and it wouldn't be the same. I would not like it (Mackenzie, Initial Interview, March 1, 2012).

This narrative illustrates how Mackenzie's experiences working with students from other cultures have changed her perception about teaching in multicultural environments. She goes further to explain how her perceptions have changed about being an ESL teacher and how she now understands the importance of honoring and valuing students' home language.

I used to have a very different philosophy about teaching ESL…just put 'em in an English classroom, they'll figure out everything. And part of me still believes that ELLs have to be immersed in English in the classroom to figure it out. But

you can't forget about their first language and their culture. Because when you merge the two and you can relate one to the other, they are going to learn so much better and you are still supporting and not forgetting about their own culture and language (Mackenzie, Initial interview, March 1, 2012).

Mackenzie's upbringing and socialization in a small town with little diversity did not prepare her for the challenges she now faces as a teacher of CLD students. Mackenzie's professional identity is being developed because of her interaction with students who are culturally and linguistically different from her.

Mackenzie, Scarlett, and Amy all come from similar backgrounds and are all about the same age. When creating a historical timeline, their experiences were very different from mine. I grew up during the civil rights movement so much of what I believe about what we do in schools stems from my social and historical background as I lived through segregation and then integration in Galveston, Texas. My research partners were born of another generation being twenty-plus years younger than me. The timeline in Table 1 demonstrates the gap in our historical and social experiences.

Educational Policy Timeline

Effect on Education

- Teachers' literacy knowledge is tested and standardized testing begins in Texas.
- Focus on accountability begins
- Looking more at student acheivement
- Raised teacher and school accountability
- ELPS were added as part of the TEKS
- RtI, more interventions for struggling learners

Events in History

- Desegregation of schools in the United States
- TECAT, TABS, TEAMS
- Gulf War
- Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS)
- NoChlid Left Behind
- Economy crashes
- Space Shuttle Columbia explodes
- First African American President elected

1960s | 1980 | 1990 | 2000 | 911 | 2005 | 2010

- Civil Rights Movement
- MTV,Madonna, pop culture
- Space Shuttle Challenger explodes on take off.
- O.J. Simpson Trial
- Increase in technology
- Hurricane Katrina
- Dempgraphics changing. More ELLs.

Figure 3 Historical Timeline.

When I explained that during my first two years of teaching the state of Texas had no standardized testing and no TEKS or state standards to follow, my research partners could not believe it. Scarlett even mentioned that hearing that she felt "like a bird with a bad wing when you say, "We didn't have TEKS." What did you do?" (Scarlett, Critical Conversation #2, April 1, 2012). I explained that we taught our students. Mackenzie responded with:

> I think about that. I would have been about 3 at that time so I would have been
> one of your students. I think that my generation may be turning out a little bit
> better than some of the generations I am teaching right now with all of this other
> stuff that is going on right now. Like we have to teach what we are told, but we

are not really teaching them how to be human beings (Mackenzie, Critical

Conversation #2, April 1, 2012).

My research partners have known only a standardized system and standardized testing

since the day they began elementary school.

Having the opportunity to engage in critical conversation about policy mandates

that directly affect the CLD students we teach provided a forum for us to engage in

critical reflection and an exploration of our ever changing self concept. Amy explains the

power of conversation and how engaging in critical conversation has altered her

perspective and has caused her to reflect inward.

I don't think you really ever arrive because we are who we are and it takes a lot to

overcome deficit thinking. I think just listening to other people you can learn a lot

about yourself. And when you are forced to tell your story and you hear other

perspectives, it makes you take a step back and look at yourself and peel back the

layers to uncover your own deficit beliefs that you may have. I think that with

each year, with each student, you grow a little bit after having worked with that

child and slowly those layers begin to come off. Those beliefs begin to unravel

because you know more about yourself as an individual (Amy, Final Interview,

May 2, 2012).

Amy has been working with CLD students for the last ten years and has worked

to connect with the families and students she teaches. Being raised in a "very diverse

community… literally separated by tracks. Railroad tracks. Whites on one side of the

tracks, blacks and Hispanics on the other side" (Amy, Initial interview, March 2, 2012).

Amy's core values were challenged as she engaged in critical self reflection and recognized her own deficit thoughts about the CLD students she teaches.

As a member of a Ph.D. in Education cohort at Texas State University, I have been fortunate to have many opportunities to engage in critical self reflection. The following is a reflection of the how I began to question an institution I had never questioned before:

Most of my life, I have been a rule follower. I obeyed my parents, I obeyed my teachers, I obeyed my husband, and I obeyed the administrators who led the schools where I taught. I actually aligned my beliefs to match a patriarch…no questions asked. After experiencing divorce and single motherhood in the mid-1990s, I began to question things. I realized I was hanging on to what others in my life believed in and was trying to fit in by either agreeing with those around me or by having no opinion at all. I avoided conflict at all costs as I considered this a "bad" thing. The roots were deep and I was raised to be subservient to those in power. Living life as an independent woman and single mother shook me right out of a life lived in compliance and down a path of self renewal and continuous reflection on what I now believed to be important.

Once I was out from under the influence of my parents and my husband, I was able to see the world through my own eyes. The multilingual and multicultural classroom where I taught was excellent fodder for my metamorphosis. I began to advocate for the rights of those whose voice may not be heard. I started peeling back the layers of the establishment in general and the institution of schooling in particular. Because my entire adult life has been in

schools, my focus has been mainly on students and ways they may be underserved by our current educational system.

My experiences in graduate school afforded me the opportunity to develop a critical conscience (Freire, 1970). With other students in my PhD cohort, we began asking questions such as: What is important for our students to know and learn? What do students believe is important to know and learn? Who decides what is important for our students to know and learn? Years of accepting the status quo and operating in a classroom through a techno-rational and mechanistic paradigm had come to a screeching halt. My original desire to make a difference in the world by teaching may now be realized as I strive to align myself with others whose goal it is to open opportunities for those who may be oppressed by our current educational system (Karon, Journal entry, January, 2011).

The opportunity to participate as a cohort member of the Ph.D. in School Improvement program had a profound effect on developing my agency as an educator. Because I was in constant conversation with many diverse thinkers, I was in a safe place to develop a critical conscience.

Understanding ourselves and actively participating in deep reflection with others works to inform our practice and shape our political identities. Sharing our stories and learning the stories of the students and families we serve gives impetus for real change that may positively affect the educational opportunities for students who may be underserved under the current educational system.

CHAPTER III

NEGOTIATING THE SOCIAL SYSTEMS OF NEIGHBORHOODS AND

CULTURAL AWARENESS

"Frank, I think I am going to love this new school. I can't wait for you to meet my new friends Stacy and Melinda. We hit it off immediately and I think you will really like them. I just have so much to do to get ready for my students. Did you know Stacy already has her room set up for kids? Do you think you could take me to the teacher supply store so I can buy some stuff for my classroom?" Charlotte had been talking a mile a minute about her day at Grace Elementary School hardly giving Frank time to get a word in edgewise.

"Why don't you wait and see what the school has to offer in the way of teacher supplies. I am sure they will give you what you need. There is no sense in our going out and buying things for a classroom of kids you don't even know yet." Frank was trying to be the voice of reason. "Besides, you don't really even know what you need."

"I guess you are right," Charlotte said with a sigh. "I am going to go in first thing in the morning and get busy getting my classroom ready. I want my students to walk into that room and know it is a place for learning."

"Hmmmm…if I were you, I would be enjoying the last two weeks of my summer vacation before you have to be at that school every day."

"But this is what I want to do with the last two weeks of my summer. Oh yeah, I totally forgot to tell you that Grace does a Neighborhood Walk a couple of days beforeschool starts. We go out into the neighborhood and meet our students and their families. We go house to house and introduce ourselves and get to know the kids a little bit before we start the school year with them. Isn't that cool?"

At this piece of news, Frank furrowed his brow and crinkled his nose giving a look of puzzlement. "You go to their homes? Why would you do that? Why can't they just come to the school and meet you there?"

Feeling totally deflated Charlotte said, "The kids and families really look forward to it Frank. It is something this campus has been doing for a couple of years and I think it is a fabulous way to let the families and students know we care about them before they even walk through the doors of the school."

"Aw, come on Char. You know I love you, but I don't get why you feel the need to kill yourself over these kids you don't even know yet. I just don't want you to burn yourself out before the school year even starts. You know, Katherine Grace Elementary won the lottery by hiring such a great and caring teacher like you." Charlotte smiled at Frank but was beginning to sense that he didn't quite understand the depth of her passion for teaching.

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On the day of the Neighborhood Walk, Charlotte and Frank decided to meet up for lunch. Charlotte was feeling a bit guilty because she had been spending so little time with Frank lately. The news that the Neighborhood Walk was going to take place from 5:30 to 8:00 in the evening had not gone over well with Frank. He couldn't understand

why Charlotte spent every waking minute the last few weeks at her new school. Charlotte believed that if they were going to make their relationship work, Frank was going to have to understand that beginning of the school year activities for a teacher can be all-consuming. This year in particular was going to be tough a one because Charlotte was changing schools and grade levels. He would just have to be understanding and know that the life of an educator does not stop at the end of the day.

Charlotte, Stacy, Melinda, and Sally were scheduled to meet in Stacy's classroom to plan the first day of school activities while they waited for the much anticipated distributing of the class lists. Mrs. Martin and the assistant principal, Ms. Webber had stayed until midnight the day before developing class lists for their kindergarten through fifth grade staff which consisted of forty teachers. The announcement that the lists would not be complete until after lunch brought groans from most of the staff but Stacy had warned that class lists never come out in a timely fashion and it would be in best interest of all parties to be flexible with the situation.

During the team meeting, Charlotte noticed that Sally contributed very little to the planning of the first week's activities. Sally was cordial to the other teachers on the team but seemed to have nothing to contribute. When the team meeting was over, Charlotte stayed behind to talk to Stacy about her teaching partner's lack of collaboration with the team.

"Hey Stacy, can you fill me in on what is going on with Sally? I mean, I walk into her classroom and the chairs are still stacked, there is nothing on the walls, and she is seldom even in her classroom. And then today at our first team planning meeting of the

year, she just sat there and contributed nothing to the group. I mean, if I am going to be partnered up with her all year, I need to know what the story is here."

Stacy let out a long sigh. "Well, my friend, you are paired up this year with a teacher who is on her way out. This is probably going to be her last year in the classroom so she is going to cruise on through this year. I heard that she used to be a pretty phenomenal teacher but as the demographics of this school began to change and more students of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds started enrolling here, she just stopped trying with her kids. It is almost like she had her first year of teaching and then for the next 27 years, she repeated that first year." Stacy chuckled at the prospect of that. "You will see. She comes to school every morning right before the students arrive, she leaves when they leave, and she never participates in the things we do that go above and beyond what our contract says we must do. As the matter of fact, I will be real surprised if she attends the Neighborhood Walk this evening," Stacy said shrugging her shoulders.

"I thought everyone in this school was expected to do the Neighborhood Walk. I was also under the impression that the teachers here cared about the students they teach," retorted Charlotte feeling slightly disillusioned about the climate at Katherine Grace Elementary School.

Stacy put her arm around Charlotte and said, "Listen, Sally is really a pretty nice lady and she does care about the kids she teaches. She is just pretty much set in her ways about how she should teach her kids and it sometimes doesn't match with what Melinda and I want to do with the students in our classrooms. We just let her do what she wants as long as her kids do well on the state tests, and that is really all that really matters. You can plan with Melinda and me. We meet once a week. The only time Sally comes is

when Dee tells her she has to come. We never push the issue and we seem to get along

O.K. Don't worry, you will be fine."

And at that moment as Charlotte was wondering what it might be like working

with a teaching partner that wanted to fly solo, the long awaited announcement was

made. "Teachers. I am pleased to announce that the class lists have been finalized.

Team leaders please meet me at the front office to pick up the class lists for your grade

level team. We are attaching student addresses as well as a map of the neighborhood.

Enjoy your time with your new students this evening!"

The first thing Charlotte did when she got her list was to see the different

languages her students would be speaking this year. She counted 5 Spanish speakers, 1

Portuguese speaker, 2 Korean speakers, 1 Vietnamese speaker, 1 Urdu speaker, and 10

English speakers. Her classroom consisted of nine girls and eleven boys. She secretly

prayed that her class size would stay at 20 but had a sneaking suspicion that her numbers

would increase as the school year got underway. Charlotte then began to map out a plan

for her home visits by highlighting the areas where her students lived on the map

provided by Mrs. Martin.

There was a knock at the door and because teachers in the portable buildings were

instructed to keep their doors locked at all times, Charlotte had to get up to open the door.

"Hey, how are you Charlotte? Charlotte Robinson, right?" Charlotte nodded and found

herself staring at the tallest, fittest woman she had ever seen.   "I'm Coach Wagner.

Kelly Wagner. I'm the P.E. coach here at Grace. You can call me Kel. I am going to be

driving you to your students' homes this evening. Those of us at Grace without a

homeroom class act as drivers for the classroom teachers. Orders from The Big House

you know."

"The Big House?" asked Charlotte.

"Yeah, you know, Mrs. Martin and Ms. Webber…the front office. And it's your

lucky day because you get me to drive you around. I already know most of these kids

and I can fill you in on each one as we drive to their houses. That's the good and the bad

thing about being the coach here; I know every kid in the school," Kel said giving a wink

and nod. "I am not going to take up too much of your time but if you can meet me in the

back parking lot around 5:15 we can get this show on the road. I drive a blue, 2005

Pontiac Vibe with a bicycle rack on the back. You can't miss it. I am the only car here

with a rack in the back."

"You bet Kel. Thanks for stopping by and I am so happy the Big House chose

you to drive my chariot." Charlotte found Coach Wagner friendly and full of energy.

The Neighborhood Walk would certainly be interesting with Coach Wagner at the wheel.

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During lunch Charlotte could not stop thinking about her students and what she

would say when she got to each house. What if the parents spoke no English? How

would they communicate with one another? She spoke some Spanish but not enough to

carry on an intelligible conversation with the 5 families that spoke Spanish. And what if

they didn't want her to come into their home? What if they didn't like her? Charlotte's

thoughts were racing as she conjured up possible scenarios of the impending evening in

her mind.

"Charlotte?" Frank's tone was brisk. "Have you even been listening to a word I said? What is going on with you today?"

Charlotte realized she had been so wrapped up in her anxiety and nervous anticipation of the Neighborhood Walk that she had complete tuned Frank out. "Oh my goodness Frank! I am so sorry, I was just thinking about what might happen this evening as I visit my families. Please tell me again about the new website you are creating."

"Eh…forget it. You have a one track mind right now. Maybe after this evening you will have more time for me," Frank said feeling a bit dejected and hurt.

The remainder of their lunch was spent in near silence as both Frank and Charlotte contemplated what had just happened. Charlotte would have to keep this issue on an emotional back burner for now. She had students to welcome and families to meet. Charlotte needed to prepare herself for Katherine Grace Elementary School's annual Neighborhood Walk.

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At 5:15, Charlotte meandered to the back parking lot where she found Coach Wagner waiting for her. Once Coach Wagner spotted Charlotte she beeped her horn three times, rolled down her window and yelled, "C'mon girl! We got some kids you need to meet!" Charlotte jumped in the car and they took off.

As they drove along, Coach Wagner filled Charlotte with news about the students and families that she would be working with. Charlotte really liked Coach Wagner and was very appreciative of the information about her students as well as the camaraderie she was experiencing as they drove from house to house. After the disaster of a lunch she

had experienced earlier, it was nice to be in the company of someone who shared her same enthusiasm about the students at Grace Elementary.

Charlotte had 7 students who lived in the Clear Water Apartments. Coach Wagner scanned the list and said, "Celia and Martín live next door to each other here. They have been going to Grace since they were in Pre-K. All I know is they are really well behaved kids but they don't do so well in school. Their parents never come to any school functions and only speak Spanish, so you may have a little trouble communicating with them but the kids know English really well and will translate to the parents what you are saying. If you want me to come with you I will."

"No, I think I will be O.K. I know a little bit of Spanish and I feel like I need to do this on my own, you know? Just wait right here and I will be back in a bit."

Charlotte decided to visit Celia and Martín last and made the rounds for the other 5 students of which 2 were not at home. Those three visits warmed her up and gave her confidence to visit the last two homes where she might have some difficulty communicating with the parents. She managed to muster up her courage and knock on Celia's front door…

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"Wow, that didn't take you so long. Did you get to meet all of your kids?" Coach Wagner asked as Charlotte got back in the car.

"Well, two of my families weren't there but it was great! Celia and Martín are wonderful, Kel. What sweet kids. I was so worried about not being able to communicate with their parents but it was O.K. It was like they knew I was coming and they invited me in their homes. They even had food for me. Kel, I am going to be the best, best

fourth grade teacher this year. I promise I will do everything in my power to help these kids."

"Simmer down now, you have only met one-third of the kids you'll be teaching. We have a few more to go you know."

"I know but I feel responsible for them already, you know?" Charlotte explained. "Where are we going now?"

"We are heading to the Garden Spot Apartments over on the other side of the highway. A little history about these apartments…they were actually built right after Hurricane Katrina and the government bought them up and used them mainly for Katrina refugees. They are pretty nice for Section 8 housing, if you ask me," Coach Wagner motioned to a group of buildings behind a gated fence.

"What is Section 8 housing?"

"Oh yeah, I forgot you are coming from Cesar Palace Elementary School," scoffed Coach Wagner. "That is low income housing. Government housing. The rent is configured by using a sliding scale based on your income. We have lots of families that live here. As the matter of fact, you have 4 students here so you better get cracking girl."

Charlotte scanned her list and noticed one of the four students on the list was Paulo. Paulo's native language was Portuguese. She hoped that his visit would be as good as her visit with Celia and Martín. Charlotte decided this time to go to Paulo's door first since it was located near the entrance. Charlotte found Paulo's apartment and rang the doorbell. A woman in her mid thirties answered the door.

"Hello, my name is Charlotte Robinson and I am going to be your son's fourth grade teacher this year," Charlotte announced while extending her hand.

The woman chuckled, "Paulo is not my son. I am Rubi, the translator," she motioned to a man and a woman sitting on a couch behind her, "These are Paulo's parents and Paulo is outside playing." With that she led Charlotte into a small living room where both Paulo's parents shook her hand. The translator mediated the conversation and Charlotte was able to explain to Paulo's parents what to expect for the school year. Shortly afterward, Paulo came bursting through the front door. His mother said something in Portuguese and Paulo's expression changed as his eyes met Charlotte's. Charlotte stood up and shook Paulo's hand and told him she was looking forward to a great year. Paulo smiled and said, "Me too."

On the way back to Grace, Coach Wagner explained that Paulo's parents left Brazil to find a better life for themselves and their children in the United States. She explained to Charlotte that Paulo's father was a television celebrity and his mother taught high school math in their home town in Brazil. Here, Paulo's father worked as a grounds keeper at a cemetery and his mother cleaned houses for a living. Charlotte thought long and hard about Paulo's family. She could sense that Paulo's parents were interested in his education and she couldn't believe his mother was an educator in Brazil. Charlotte and Paulo's mom shared the same profession. Charlotte began think about the preconceived notions she held about her students and parents prior to the Neighborhood Walk. Her perspective was beginning to shift.

Discussion

The interactions with the families and within the communities where we teach are a part of the micropolitics of education. Hoyle (1986) distinguished between the managerial and people side of the micropolitics of schools referring to governance as

figure and interactions with the school community as ground. Marshall and Scribner (1991) further describe this notion of the ground of micropolitcs in schools:

> The ground, on the other hand, constitutes the dynamic interplay on the people side of the equation. This is a useful way of conceptualizing the school as a polity and distinguishing between power, conflict, and policy processes and the content of what is political within a school building (pp. 349-350).

Grace Elementary School's Neighborhood Walk was an attempt for the school to connect with the families of the students who would soon walk through the doors of the school. This activity also had potential to create a power dynamic between the school and the parents.

Schools and teachers encounter many challenges as they work to support students of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Often, the values and beliefs instilled within the home of the students we teach is in stark contrast to our own values and beliefs. Charlotte's participation in the Neighborhood Walk did much to raise her awareness of the ethnic, cultural, and linguistic differences her students would bring into her classroom. Through critical self-reflection, Charlotte is beginning to indentify her own assumptions, biases, and misconceptions about the students and families from cultures that are different from her own. By developing cultural awareness and working towards her own cultural competence, Charlotte will begin to hone the skills she needs to build relationships and make connections with the students she teaches.

Becoming Culturally Aware

Like the vast majority of teachers at her school, Charlotte is white, middle class, and monolingual English speaking. Her life and her experiences are profoundly different

from the students she will be teaching. White teachers have little or no experience of themselves as having a racial position and many times the topic of cultural diversity is uncomfortable or not addressed at all (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2001; McIntosh, 1990). While the Neighborhood Walk would have been a great platform for the teachers of Grace to explore their own cultures and begin to learn about the cultures of the students they would be teaching, it was practiced more as an isolated act, a beginning of the year activity that could be checked off of a list of things to get done.

One of the greatest challenges in becoming culturally proficient is overcoming the discomfort that is often experienced when talking about differences. Conversations about race, ethnicity, how we perceive ourselves, how we perceive others, and how others perceive us must take place if teachers are to develop into educators who are culturally proficient and responsive to the linguistic and cultural demands of the students they teach (Gay, 2000; Hall, 1976; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Marx, 2006; Tatem, 1997). This is especially true in schools like Katherine Grace Elementary School where a majority of the teacher population represents the dominant culture.

Charlotte's teaching partner, Sally was not open to changing what she did in her classroom. She was unwilling to participate in the Neighborhood Walk and chose to teach what she wanted and in the style she had always taught children. When we teach and treat all students the same, we are most likely viewing children through a dominant culture perspective rather than celebrating the rich diversity and assets of the children we encounter (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Marx, 2006; Tatum, 1997). Teacher conceptions of self and others influence how and what is taught to students and through

reflective self-analysis in diverse settings and with one another, educators negotiate important beliefs about what is important in education.

Cultural Competence

Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs (1989) explored the concept of cultural competence in the system of care and identified it as a set of attitudes, actions, and policies that intersect through professionals or within a system which enables the system or professionals to work successfully in cross-cultural conditions. Charlotte is prepared for the challenge of creating culturally responsive spaces for learning; however, she must engage in opportunities to learn more about herself personally, professionally and within the same sociocultural context (Kincheloe, 2003). By being socioculturally conscious, Charlotte can look beyond her own personal experiences to societal inequities and the role that schools play in perpetuating and confronting those inequities. Sociocultural consciousness is an awareness that an individual's worldview is not universal but is influenced by a variety of factors including race, ethnicity, gender, and social class (Nieto, 1996).

Teachers who work to understand and value the role of diversity in today's society can transfer that knowledge and develop cultural competency in the schools where they work (Prater, & Devereaux, 2009). Ladson-Billings (2001) defines culturally competent teachers as those who take responsibility for learning about the culture and community of the students they teach and "promoting a flexible use of students' local and global culture" (p. 98). Not only was participation in the Neighborhood Walk a great way for Charlotte to meet the students she would teach, it was also the first step in learning firsthand about her students' culture, community, and home.

Connection to Study

As educators in multicultural environments, our goal is to improve the educational success of ethnically diverse students through culturally responsive teaching. By examining our own culture and those of the students we teach, we can begin to build relationships based on mutual respect. The following excerpt details my experience with a professional development aimed at raising awareness of cultural differences.

During the summer of 2001 our school participated in diversity training led by professors from a nearby university. The training was to last two days and after those two days; we were to become culturally proficient teachers prepared for the cultural and linguistic challenges that awaited us in our classrooms. The training was very interesting and we participated in simulations which were designed to spark awareness of difference. One such activity was a card game known as "Barnga" which was played in small groups. Each group had different rules and as we moved from table to table, the rules changed and conflicts would occur due to the difference in understanding of the basic rules of participation. In discovering that the rules were different, we basically underwent a mini culture shock similar to actual experiences of entering a different culture. The simulation was magnified due to the fact we were not allowed to speak during the simulation. I remember not caring if I participated at all at one point and sat in a corner spot hoping I did not have to participate any more. Upon reflection on the activity, we realized that this feeling of confusion, frustration, and disconnection may be experienced by the students we serve. We were determined to change the spaces

in our schools to accommodate for the English learners who would enrich our classrooms and our lives.

The diversity training opened up conversation amongst teachers about differences in themselves and the students they teach. The two days were quite intense as we listened to many stories of discrimination and prejudice. Mr. Castro, the music teacher, spoke of a time he was walking down the street in his neighborhood and was stopped by a police officer who asked what he was doing walking the streets of this middle class (and mostly white) neighborhood and asked for his identification. Mr. Castro led the officer to his home, six doors down, to prove he belonged in the neighborhood. There were audible gasps in the air as we listened and reacted as Mr. Castro explained his feelings of fear and eventual anger at having to prove his identity to the police officer. After that day, we began to identify, talk about, and value the cultural differences amongst our colleagues. Was this two day intense training enough to help us negotiate differences in our own classrooms every day? How would we keep the momentum going so that we could "walk the talk" of cultural responsiveness? (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Zumwalt & Craig, 2005. Cited from Karon's journal entry, June, 2009).

Like many summer professional development trainings such as the one described above, once the school year began, our experiences from the diversity training were never revisited and eventually became a faint memory. It is unfortunate that conversations about our collective understandings about the diverse students we taught did not occur as this may have had an impact on the culture of teaching and learning on our campus.

During our time together as research partners, Amy, Mackenzie, Scarlett and I examined our own awareness of culture and how this impacts how we address policy mandates in our classroom.

Mackenzie works to expose her students to the rich diversity within her classroom. Students are often invited to share elements of their culture and in her classroom, speaking another language is treated as an asset. Mackenzie has a Korean speaking student who was expected to take the STAAR test and would receive very little accommodations other than a Korean/English dictionary. Mackenzie shares a story about his reaction to receiving the Korean/English dictionary:

So, one of the accommodations one of my students has is to have a Korean/English dictionary. Yesterday, I went and got it from the library and I gave it to him and the moment I gave it to him, he just lit up. He was so happy to just be reading in Korean. He is very high in English proficiencies but he was just so happy that I got the book for him so he was sharing it with everybody. He was telling them words in Korean. Just, the fact that he got to share some words in Korean was great because right now, he has only learned English from his friends and now he is getting to put a piece of himself in this classroom. So, he just lit up (Mackenzie, Initial Interview, March 1, 2012).

While Mackenzie was issuing the Korean/English dictionary because of a policy mandate, her student gratefully accepted the book because he could now contribute a piece of his Korean culture to the classroom.

Working towards cultural competence can be difficult especially when you are a member of the dominant culture. Developing cultural proficiency means more than just

an awareness of cultural differences, it means taking time to critically reflect on our practices in classrooms and our interactions with students who are culturally and linguistically different. When we take the time to reflect and identify misguided perceptions of the students we teach, our practice has the promise of becoming culturally relevant (Delpit, 1995; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Marx, 2006). Amy discusses a blind spot she uncovered as she conducted a conference with a parent whose daughter was at risk for failing the TAKS test.

> I was having this conversation outside on this bench with this parent and I gave my little schpeel about how her daughter needed to work harder if she wanted to pass the TAKS test. And I am waiting for the mom to…I don't know what. But she turns to her daughter and she says, "You know, I got my high school diploma…" And in that moment, in that split second, I am thinking, "Oh please don't say it! Want more for your child. Want your child to go to college…" You know? Because I am thinking the way she said it…so that was what I was thinking. She says, "And you see how I am struggling? You have got to do better than me." And I thought, "Oh my gosh." But it was kind of a self check for me. Why was I thinking that? Why was I automatically thinking that about that parent at that moment? Why did I think she would not want the very best for her child? Because that is where my thoughts initially went (Amy, Initial Interview, March 2, 2012).

Following this parent interaction, Amy questioned herself about her beliefs about parents of CLD students. Through critical self-reflection, Amy began the process of challenging long held assumptions about the students and families she taught.

Understanding our beliefs and biases is paramount in the quest to move towards cultural competence. When we work to understand who we are and why we believe what we believe, we may be primed to move forward in developing cultural proficiencies.

CHAPTER IV

MICROPOLITICS AND CRITICAL PEDAGOGY: A LESSON FROM CLAUDIA

"O.K. Next week the SCCIP says we need to be teaching the Carbon Cycle in science," Stacy announced at the weekly team planning meeting. "Be sure to read up on the non-negotiable lesson we have to teach because it looks like we may be getting a visit next week from the assistant superintendent and we really want to show her that we are on top of our game." Non-negotiable lessons were lessons in the Southwest Curriculum Connection Instructional Plan (SCCIP) which were required lessons to be taught in each classroom. These lessons were developed by curriculum specialist who studied the state standards to align instruction with the curriculum set forth by the state.

Charlotte winced at the thought of following the prescribed lesson. "Have you all read the lesson? It is not very engaging. I'm worried my kids won't like it. And if they don't like it, they will make my life miserable."

Melinda shrugged and said, "We have to do the non-negotiable lessons. That is just the way it is. When you work at a Title I school, you don't get to choose what you want to teach or even how to teach it sometimes. We just have to follow the SCCIP."

"But it is just a short film, some articles for the kids to read and then T-charts, Venn Diagrams, and a couple of vocabulary games. I mean there is nothing solid or experiential in the non-negotiable lesson that I can see." Charlotte began to thumb

through the pages of the unit on the Carbon Cycle trying to find something that would spark some interest from her students.

"I tell you what," Stacy piped in, "why don't we read through it and meet tomorrow after school to talk about ways we can beef it up. Maybe if we put our heads together we can do some things with the lesson that may prove to be a bit more engaging for our kids and still follow the non-negotiable lesson."

That evening Charlotte studied the non-negotiable science lesson in the SCCIP. She was happy that Frank had recently accepted a consulting position in Wisconsin because it was exhausting explaining to him why she had to work in the evenings. This school year was proving to be almost more than she could handle and to have Frank constantly complaining to her about her hours spent doing school related activities only added to her stress. She was beginning to think she had made a huge mistake in leaving Salmon Elementary School to come to Grace.

First of all, most of Charlotte's students were struggling learners. With 50% of her students ELLs, she felt as if she was doing a lot of re-teaching just to help them catch up. And the connection she felt with the parents of her students during the Neighborhood Walk was just a faint memory now as Charlotte had not seen nor spoken to any of her parents since that first day of school nearly six weeks ago. She just wasn't reaching her students and she couldn't figure out what it was she needed to do. The strategies and activities she used at Salmon Elementary were not working with the students she now taught at Grace.

Another problem Charlotte faced was the expectation that she follow the SCCIP. The lessons were scripted and she felt she was losing her professional authority and

creative license by following a curriculum and lessons she did not help to develop.

Moreover, if she did not keep up with the pacing of the SCCIP, or if she taught skills and

concepts that were not a part of her grade level SCCIP, she could be at risk for getting

written up by her administrator. With three infractions on file at Human Resources, a

teacher could be terminated at the end of the school year. And because of recent cuts in

the budget, every teacher was on a one year contract making it all the more critical to

adhere to the district policy of following the SCCIP. Charlotte did not want to lose her

position at Grace so she followed the rules and did what was expected of her.

Next was her teaching partner, Sally. Sally's kids appeared to be pretty bright and

half of her kids were in the gifted program. As the matter of fact, Sally had all the gifted

kids and Charlotte, Stacy, and Melinda had none. Sally never came to the planning

meetings and she was not interested in collaborating with Charlotte at all. Besides, how

could she help any way? Their students had vastly different needs. Charlotte was

working tirelessly to meet the needs of her students and when she walked into Sally's

class, Sally was almost always at her computer while her students were working quietly

at their desks. To make matters worse, Charlotte had been told that Sally's students

always performed well on the state mandated standardized test. Charlotte worried that

she would not be able to get her students where they needed to be this year to pass the

state assessments in reading, writing, and math. It was just too much! Charlotte needed

help.

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The following day, Charlotte made an appointment to talk to Dee about the

struggles she was having in her classroom and her thoughts of inadequacy at teaching

fourth grade, not to mention her overall sense of low self-efficacy. Dee reassured

Charlotte that all she had to do in her classroom was to follow the SCCIP and use "best

practice" and she should have no problem meeting the needs of all the children in her

classroom. Besides, Dee had observed in her classroom numerous times and had the

utmost confidence in her abilities to meet the unique needs of all the students she taught.

Charlotte insisted that there had to be more to teaching her students other than just

implementing cooperative learning strategies or having students discuss concepts with

one another as she facilitated dynamic learning experiences for all the students she

taught. Dee could clearly see the mounting frustration Charlotte was experiencing. She

ended the meeting by contacting the district office and setting up a meeting with an

instructional coach who would provide some training and coach Charlotte through

strategies proven to work with struggling students and ELLs. Charlotte felt somewhat

relieved knowing that help was on the way.

A few days after the meeting with Dee Martin, the district instructional coach,

Ms. Cook scheduled a visit to Charlotte's classroom. Ms. Cook, a 40-something

Caucasian woman with a thick Southern accent met with Charlotte one morning shortly

before her students arrived. Charlotte explained some of the frustrations she was feeling

in teaching students who were struggling as well as those whose home language was not

English. Ms. Cook gave Charlotte some tips about slowing her speech, using visuals,

reconfiguring the set up of the classroom, and talked at length about differentiation in

Charlotte's classroom. Charlotte asked Ms. Cook if she could assist her in learning more

about differentiation for her ELLs and she recommended a book Charlotte might want to

read on the subject.   Ms. Cook then modeled a vocabulary lesson with a group of

students and Charlotte took careful notes. Charlotte decided to focus her efforts this year
on vocabulary development with her students and made a note to add more pictures and
visuals as she taught her lessons. Ms. Cook promised to return in a few weeks but
Charlotte could sense that she would ever make the trip back to her fourth grade
classroom.

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On the morning of the assistant superintendant's visit to Grace Elementary
School, Charlotte was deep in thought about her lesson on the Carbon Cycle. The night
before, Frank had surprised Charlotte by coming home early from Wisconsin and since
they had been apart for a week, she wanted to spend time with Frank and not with the
SCCIP. While her students began to file into her classroom, Charlotte was at her
computer making last minute plans for the execution and delivery of her lesson on the
Carbon Cycle. She could sense that someone was standing behind her.

"Ms. Robinson. Do you notice something different about me today?" Claudia, a
Spanish speaking student was standing behind Charlotte with a flag of Mexico pinned to
her blouse.

Charlotte turned from the computer, studied the fashion statement Claudia was
sporting and replied, "Isn't that the Mexican flag? Why are you wearing that today?"

"Ms. Robinson! Don't you know that on this day, September 16th in 1810,
México declared its independence from Spain?" Claudia was beaming with a smile from
ear to ear as she explained, "Diez y Seis de Septiembre is the biggest national holiday in
México and México is where I was born. It is my country."

At that moment, the lesson on the Carbon Cycle became not so important. Charlotte could detect the sense of pride and passion Claudia felt for her country. She gathered all the students together on the floor and asked Claudia to share what she knew about her country's national holiday. Claudia sat in a director's chair in front of her classmates and told the story of Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla, a priest who rang the church bells in the small town of Dolores Hidalgo at 6:00 in the morning on September 16th, gathering the villagers together encouraging them to revolt against Spain.

As Claudia was relating the story of Mexico's independence, Charlotte began to realize how connected Claudia was with this history of her country. She spoke with such pride, such enthusiasm. Charlotte thought she might be able to turn this situation into a learning opportunity. She asked Claudia if she might like to spend the morning in the library researching the history behind this holiday. Claudia accepted only if her two friends, who were also born in México, could join her in researching their heritage. Charlotte was a little worried that she might get into trouble for sending students to the library for research on a subject that was not listed on the SCCIP as a unit of study for fourth grade. She also fretted a bit over the fact that this was the day her school was to get a visit from the assistant superintendent. What was she thinking? Why did this happen? Why was she drawn to this story Claudia was telling her about her country? Against her better judgment, Charlotte decided that sending students to the library to conduct authentic and real-time research was worth the risk. That afternoon, her class was treated to a slide presentation detailing the events leading up to Mexico's declaration of independence from Spain and the inevitable revolution against Spanish colonial

government. The three students presented the information speaking in both Spanish and English. And the assistant superintendent never showed up.

After that day, Charlotte made a commitment to encourage Claudia to use her home language, Spanish, to find her voice in writing. She would encourage Claudia to write about her life in México, her family, her struggles living in the United States, and anything Claudia wished to write about. Charlotte visited the local library and located trade books with English and Spanish in the text to provide a model for Claudia to help hone her craft and write as a bilingual author. Additionally, Claudia's mother was able to help her at home with the Spanish portion of her writing and began reading with Claudia the Spanish literature she grew up with in México. And for the first time since school had started, Charlotte felt a connection, a bond with a student that transcended culture. All she had done was taken time to listen and learn from Claudia…everyone in Charlotte's class benefitted on the day that Claudia and her friends shared their knowledge of México's independence from Spain. And the Carbon Cycle was taught per SCCIP recommendations the following day.

Discussion

Iannaccone (1975) explains that micropolitics in schools are centered on the political ideologies, values, and beliefs of the teachers, administrators, and students and their interaction between subsystems at the building level. Charlotte was feeling conflicted about the directive to follow the lessons from the district's ready-made curriculum and made a professional decision to allow Claudia to work on a research paper instead of joining the rest of class for a science lesson. By asserting her

professional authority, Charlotte was exercising her political will and by doing such, gave power to Claudia to choose what and how she would engage in learning for the day.

The intention of culturally relevant pedagogy is to produce students who are successful academically, demonstrate cultural competence, and are socio-politically critical (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Educators need time to rethink current teaching practice in their classrooms in an effort to move towards a pedagogical approach which aims to examine how the world affects the educational experiences of their students. By following the SCCIP, Charlotte was stifled in her teaching and focused mostly on technical skills delivered through scripted lessons based on a scope and sequence. Charlotte's pedagogical approach is beginning to shift as she grapples with the cultural and linguistic diversity in her classroom while at the same time, adhering to a curriculum which is devoid of relevance for the diverse group of students she teaches. Instructional practice has the promise of reaching all students when teachers evaluate their own assumptions, beliefs, and values in a conscious effort toward understanding the values and practices of families and cultures different from their own (Bartolomé, 2008; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Hollins & Guzmán, 2005; Marx, 2006; McIntosh, 1990). By considering our agency in carrying out educational policy and engaging in critical reflection about our classroom practice, we can begin to develop an understanding of schooling as critical pedagogues.

Teacher Agency

Charlotte is beleaguered by her yearning to reach the diverse students she teaches and her desire to follow local policy teaching the prescribed lessons as described by the SCCIP. Teacher agency in the classroom is shaped by the belief that human beings have

the ability to influence their lives and environment while they are also shaped by social and individual factors (Bourdieu, 1977). What educators believe, think, and act is shaped by cultural, historical, and social structures reflected in district and school initiatives, guidelines, and policy standards which continue to evolve as people use them (Vygotsky, 1962).

Accountability and reform efforts have affected teacher agency in previous years and teachers have enacted this policy either passively or actively. It is clear that Sally has exercised her political will by her absence during team planning and her blatant refusal to follow the guidelines of the SCCIP. Charlotte, on the other hand is trying to negotiate her approach to teaching while staying in compliance with the district's expectation that she teach the lessons in the SCCIP. Lasky (2005) argues that new policies that focus on improving schools and raising student achievement within a restricted measurable range threaten the identity of teachers. Additionally, the way and the tone that many policies are implemented in classrooms affect teacher identity negatively and have a profound impact on teacher agency.

Dewey (1916/1944) posited that a good aim in education "surveys the present state of experience of pupils, and forming a tentative plan of treatment, keeps the plan constantly in view and yet modifies it as conditions develop" (p. 105). The teacher as the facilitator of learning is continuously working to create experiences to ensure continued academic growth and should be included in curricular decisions concerning the ELLs which they teach. Charlotte was given the grade level curriculum but was not given the autonomy to decide how to teach the lesson. She was even advised by her teammate to teach the lesson they way it was written because that was "just the way it is."

Rugg and Schumaker (as cited in Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995, p. 119) advocated for teachers to be part of the curriculum process in schools and found that teachers who were involved in this type of democratic model of curriculum development were more likely to include students in the making of curriculum. Teachers act as policy brokers taking the practical work of teaching in the socially constructed world of schools, giving context to the meaning of policy thus shaping teachers' actions.

Critical Reflection

Since Charlotte's first day at Katherine Grace Elementary School, she has been engaged in self reflection which has caused her on occasion to question long-held assumptions and beliefs. Critical reflection is a conscious and explicit reassessment of the way we make sense of the world. It is best described by Mezirow (1995) as:

> A process by which we attempt to justify our beliefs, either by rationally examining assumptions, often in response to intuitively becoming aware that something is wrong with the result of our thought, or challenging its validity through discourse with others of differing viewpoints and arriving at the best informed judgment (p. 46).

Claudia's enthusiasm for learning the history of Mexico's independence of Spanish rule caused Charlotte to critically reflect on a staid curriculum with a lesson that might have little meaning to Claudia at that particular time. She chose instead to fuel the fire and encouraged Claudia to continue her quest to learn more about this national holiday.

Critically reflecting on the ways in which we have sanctioned cultural and linguistic responsiveness in our classrooms is a personal journey which goes beyond knowledge and skills calling for qualities such as "courage, willpower, and tenacity"

(Buehler, Gere, Dallavis, & Haviland, 2009, p. 409). Undoubtedly, Charlotte had grown accustomed to teaching via a curriculum which championed skills through technical and rational methods. Through her conversation with Claudia, Charlotte was able to shift her practice to meet the social, cultural, and educational needs of her student. Freire (1985) explains the dynamics of how the movement of theory and practice work to create and recreate themselves:

> I must be constantly open to criticism and sustain my curiosity, always ready for revision based on the results of my future experience and that of others. And in turn, those who put my experience into practice must strive to recreate it and also rethink my thinking…no educational practice takes place in a vacuum, only in a real context – historical, economic, political, and not necessarily identical to any other context (pp. 11-12).

By listening to her students and working towards a climate of mutual respect and trust, Charlotte is on a journey of recognizing, valuing, and utilizing student diversity to enact educational policies in her classroom aimed at meeting the needs of the students and families she serves.

Critical Pedagogy

Accountability schemes and policy initiatives aimed at producing and promoting teachers whose day-to-day practice consists of lessons, activities, and drills does little to develop students who are critical thinkers and have a vision of the world as a place where they can make a difference. Critical pedagogy works to challenge the role that schools play in producing students who are critical and active agents in society. Pedagogy should be distinguished from teaching as Simon (1987) explains:

"Pedagogy" refers to the integration in practice of a particular curriculum content and design, classroom strategies and techniques, and evaluation, purpose, and methods. All of these aspects of educational practice come together in the realities of what happens in classrooms. Together they organize a view of how teacher's work within an institutional context specifies a particular version of what knowledge is of most worth, what it means to know something, and how we might construct representations of ourselves, others, and our physical and social environment. In other words, talk about pedagogy is simultaneously talk about the details of what students and others might do together and the cultural politics such practices support. In this perspective, we cannot talk about teaching practices without talking about politics (p.370).

Charlotte is beginning to realize that the curriculum that she and her teammates are required to follow does not match the experiences and ontological knowledge of the diverse group of students she teaches.

Policy initiatives aimed at improving instruction for teachers of ELLs may be "operationalized in ways that are often disconnected to the constituents whose educational opportunities they are designed to enhance" (Quiroz, 2001, p.167). A move from the technical and rational teaching style Charlotte utilized at Salmon Elementary School has not been effective with the students she now teachers at Katherine Grace Elementary School. Charlotte must approach teaching with a critical lens and consider other forms of literacy that match the culture and language of the students she teaches.

An increasing number of schools are opting to purchase teacher-proof curricula that align with state standards with the promise of helping students pass state mandated

standardized tests. These accountability designs do little more than narrow the curriculum and deskill teachers (Giroux, 2003; McLaren, 2007). Additionally, these educational products work to reproduce the status quo of the dominant culture in schools. The SCCIP is a prime example of how curriculum has been packaged based on the increasing pressure for schools to pass state required testing. One of the premises of critical pedagogy is the idea that schooling for social empowerment occurs prior to the mastery of technical skills. Teachers who are committed to social transformation recognize the hidden curriculum and attempt to change classroom practice so that it empowers students to "learn to question and selectively appropriate those aspects of the dominant culture that will provide them with the basis for defining and transforming, rather than merely serving, the wider social order" (McLaren, 2007).

Connection to Study

Mackenzie, Amy, and Scarlett teach in a district with a established and prescribed curriculum. The TEKS have been organized into a timeline and teachers are required to teach the lessons from the approved curriculum. They must adhere to a strict timeline and each teacher on a grade level team must be teaching the same thing at the same time. Many of our conversations during the study centered on this enforced policy of utilizing a set curriculum that did not always match the learning styles, interest, and cultural background of the students they taught. Amy explains the lack of flexibility in following the curriculum:

> Which brings me to what I would do in schools to help better support ELL
> students…One thing I feel we need is more flexibility in the pacing of our
> curriculum. The classroom curriculum timeline is very rigid as far as when we

have to teach something and how long we have to teach it. Which translates to all students having to know and understand (and there is a difference) the exact same thing at the exact same time. The only way to do this in my mind is to change the curriculum. I feel we teach a whole lot of concepts at a very shallow level. I would like to see us dig deeper in a fewer amount of the concepts that really matter. Unfortunately what happens today is we get overwhelmed, deflated, and fed up teaching to the majority or middle of the road, so to speak. In the end, it does most students a disservice (Amy, Reflective Journal, April, 2012).

Amy is concerned here that succumbing to a set curriculum written for students who may be considered average students of the dominant culture does not always lend itself to authentic and rich learning experiences for all students. Mackenzie is also concerned about teaching to the middle and not having the professional authority to decide what her students should learn. The following excerpt was taken from a conversation between Mackenzie and me and illustrates her frustration with the district policy of following the curriculum and adhering to a timeline:

Karon: So the question is: Who decides what is important to learn?

Mackenzie: Not me. I'm told. I am told what I have to teach every nine weeks from the State and from the district curriculum. And, you know, we decide the best way to teach it but sometimes, we don't even get that choice. We are told what lesson to do with it. Do I think it is the best lesson to teach in my classroom with all the diversity we have? No. But that is what I have to do. Then I have to fit in the way I would like to do it. Which, we don't always have time for or it feels rushed so sometimes my own personal teaching philosophies have to be

pushed aside because I have to do what I am told to do. (Mackenzie, Initial Interview, March 1, 2012).

Mackenzie's feeling of loss of control over what she does in her classroom is a sentiment that is also shared by Scarlett. Scarlett explains how the use of the district's policy to follow a prescribed curriculum has stifled her creativity and left her feeling powerless over what she does in the classroom:

> At one time, I felt like I was able to actually make decisions about the curriculum in my room. However, now that I work at a different school, in a different school district that is Title I, those freedoms have been taken away. The message sent is that I, and other teachers, are not competent enough to look at a general scope and sequence and make decisions on how best to teach their students. We may be labeled "highly qualified" teachers by the state, but in the district's eyes, we're not even qualified enough to determine how to teach the TEKS (Scarlett, Reflective Journal, April, 2012).

While Mackenzie, Amy, and Scarlett were concerned over the issue of following the district's curriculum, they also engaged in conversation about why they should be invited to develop curriculum and lessons for the students they teach. They also work to justify why their district has enforced a policy such as this:

> Amy: And really, it is just like our students. When they are learning a new concept and they are getting in there and doing a lot of hands-on stuff…they are questioning, they are trying different stuff. We teachers, when you take that away from us, we also don't learn as much and as well. The best lessons I teach are the ones I create because I put so much thought into them.

Scarlett: And you have ownership and you want to make them work and you want to see the kids succeed.

Mackenzie: And I also think that a lot of the lessons on the district's curriculum that we get, like I said they are not for every kid at every school, so when we are teaching our kids, they are not getting out of it what they should because it is either too high or too low. So they are like, "What are we supposed to be learning?" or "This is too easy. I knew how to do this in the first grade." They are not engaging at all. They are not meant for children. They are just not engaging. I think that what happens is that somebody in the curriculum department thinks that it is this grand idea, but I don't know if they ever tried it out in a classroom.

Amy: And it is a great idea that they know will work for every school. That is the reason those lessons are in there. They know that every school has these tools, these resources. It is a lot of copies we have to make. It is a lot of copies, you know because every school can run those and use them as their manipulatives (Amy, Scarlett, and Mackenzie, Critical Conversation #1, April 1, 2012).

As we engaged in conversation, we began to question things such as: Who develops these policies which affect what we do in the classrooms where we teach? Who decides what is important to learn? Who benefits from the state and district's curriculum? We began to examine our practices in the classroom to think about how we have interacted with policy and how this interaction has affected what we do with our students.

In my own classroom, I often struggled with what and how to deliver instruction that was relevant to the students I taught. Many times I taught without taking into consideration the various cultural and linguistic differences in my classroom. I was teaching as if all students in my classroom were members of the dominant culture. The following critical reflection portrays the disequilibrium I experienced when finally coming to grips with the fact that I was interpreting policy based on my history and what I knew as a monolingual English speaking educator:

> As Sophia began to evolve as a writer using both Spanish and English to express what she wanted to say, I began to reflect on what it means to be an ESL teacher. I thought about how I might have had a hand in marginalizing ELLs in the past by pushing an "English-only" agenda on them. My intentions were good but were based on what I knew about teaching and learning as a White English speaking female. In the past when I reached out for help in teaching my ELLs, I was directed to other monolingual English speaking professionals and the help I received was more along the lines of procuring resources and less about looking at the rich cultural and historical influences our students bring to our classes each day. If only I had those students back…it would be very different, we would learn together (Karon, Journal entry, March 2010).

Becoming ESL certified does not necessarily translate into producing teachers who have the pedagogical knowledge to teach and reach students who may be culturally and linguistically different from them. In order to provide access to education for our students who are at risk for

marginalization because of a hegemonic educational system, teachers need to work to develop relationships with students and their families to learn more about their lives and their experiences.

During a conversation with Mackenzie she explained that in her five years of teaching, she has grown and learned important things from each student she has taught. Sharing her personal life map with Scarlett, Amy and me, Mackenzie explained:

> I put a few kids' names for each year because there a few kids each year that have taught me something about teaching. I have like Saif[6] one year because he had special needs and he taught me about patience and how to be flexible with things I am going to do because it doesn't always work. And next I have Dante, Grayson, and Alex and they all had very different needs. They were all in the same class and I had to learn to deal with them each individually. I think that picking up things with each of those kids has taught me because now, I will have all those incidences in my classroom again (Mackenzie, Critical Conversation #3, April 1, 2012).

Mackenzie learned early on that she would need to learn much from the CLD students she teaches especially since she was raised in a mostly White, monolingual English environment. Figure 2 illustrates the students she learned from each year since her first year of teaching in 2008. Student names have been blocked out to protect their identity.

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[6] Student names have been changed to protect their identity and privacy.
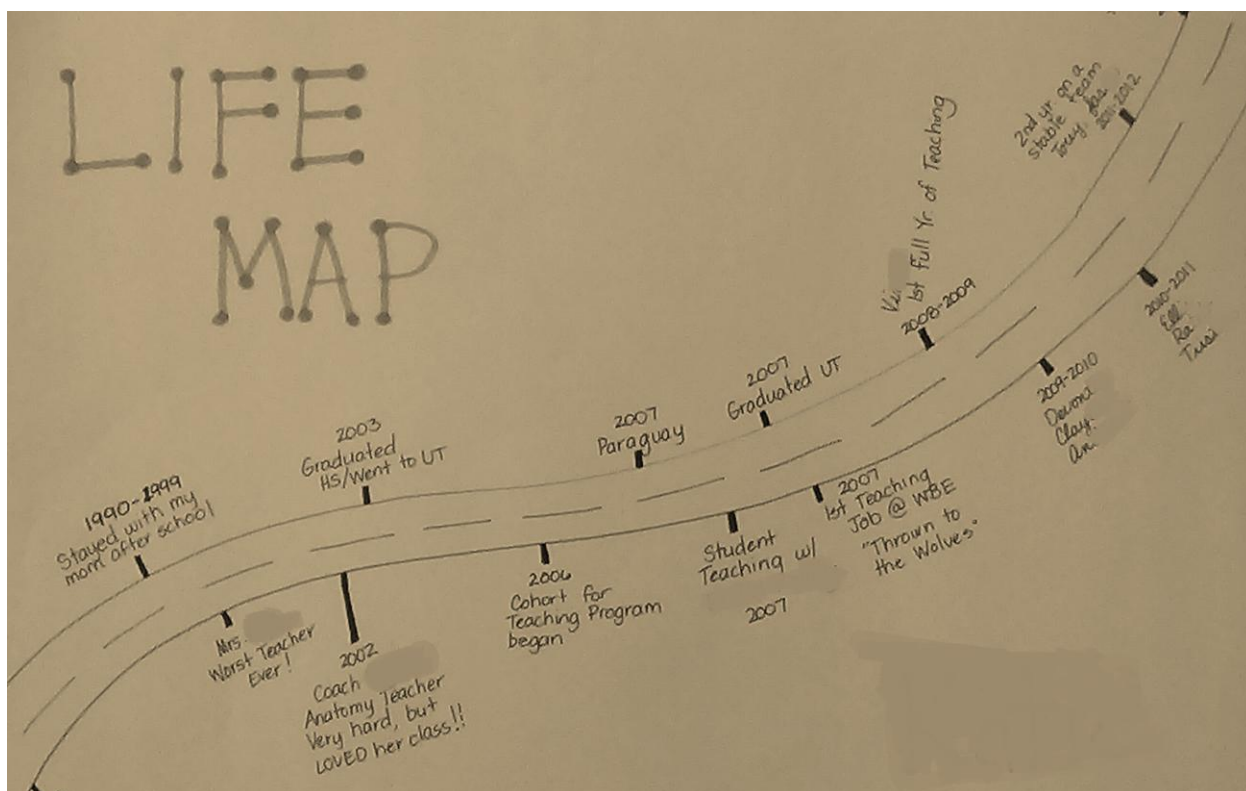
Figure 4 Mackenzie's Life Map.

Amy also understands the importance of building relationships and connecting with the students she works with day-to-day. She explains:

I think that over time I feel that you really do have to look at each child individually. And it is really hard to do but you have to get to know them personally, you have to get to know their family, and I have found that through my experiences that relationship building is a key. And I think that it is so important, not just because you have that bond, because when you have a relationship with somebody, you know about that person. You know them, you understand about that person. So through this, I gain insight into their life. I know their struggles, I know their families, and so I, as their teacher can better meet their needs in the classroom. I can use their experiences and when

something comes up in instruction, I can relate that to something I know that child already knows or that they are aware of (Amy, Initial Interview, March 2, 2012).

Additionally, Amy takes time to build relationships with the families of the students she teaches. She believes that it is her responsibility to educate parents on what to expect with the educational system in the United States. Amy articulates her perspective on this issue:

When kids come home with different ways of thinking and different strategies, parents are at a loss because what their child is trying to explain to them about how certain things are done is different from what their parents learned. So I think that how I deal with kids today…the one thing I really push for is equality in education. And me as a teacher, I have to look at that and I don't have children but I often stop to think, "If this was my nephew, or if this was my daughter or son, what would I want for them? What is in that student's best interest?" So I think that is currently where I am at. And I also think that really, you have to explain to the parents what is going on and what it is that they need…what is in the best interest of their child. Today, and as a teacher I look ahead to the future. I say, "O.K. This is where they are now, this is the program they are in, this is the test they are taking, in three years they will be here. In five years they will be here." Because I think a lot of parents, especially students who have come from a different country, their parents are not up on the American public education system. And so I understand how the tracking system works. I understand what they will be doing in middle school, or high school. I think that getting them and

teaching them, educating the parents on what all this is going to look like for that

child in the future is very important (Amy, Initial Interview, March 2, 2012).

Amy has been teaching for ten years. In recent years she has worked to

understand how her values and beliefs have been challenged as she works with CLD

students and families. In particular, she has indentified times when her thoughts about

the students she taught may have been considered deficit thinking. In Figure 3 we see

how Amy maps out her eventual entry into an Educational Administration program at a

central Texas university and her realization and rehabilitation of her own deficit thoughts

about the students she teaches.
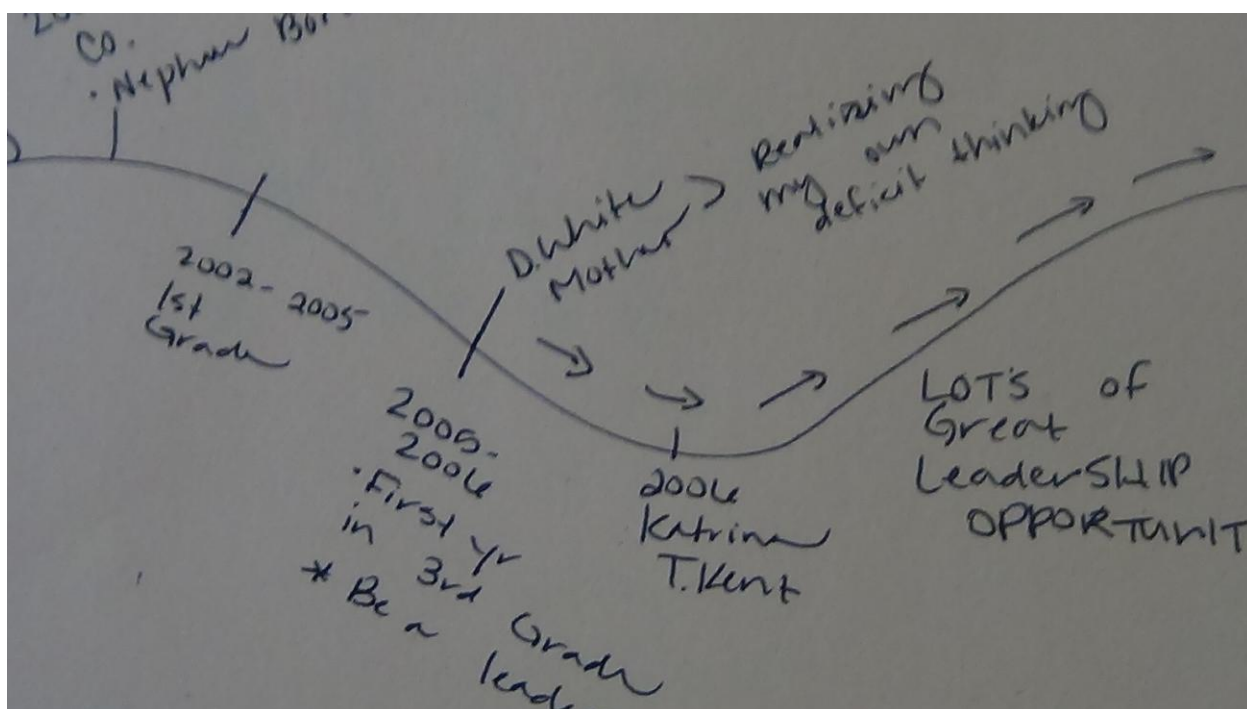
Figure 5 Amy's Life Map.

Practicing critical pedagogy in classrooms with CLD students is paramount as we

work to educate students to become critical thinkers in this mobile society. In order to

achieve a critical approach to teaching, an understanding of self and a move towards

cultural competence must occur. Making connections with students and parents is key in understanding their unique needs and providing access to the educational system. An understanding of self, a move towards cultural proficiency, and critical pedagogy work in concert as teachers enact policy as practice in classrooms.

CHAPTER V

POLICY AS PRACTICE: INTERVENTIONS AS POLICING

The day was Thursday and Thursdays at Katherine Grace Elementary were

devoted to meetings with the Student Achievement Panel, better known as the SAP. The

SAP consisted of the principal, counselor, teacher, math and literacy interventionists, and

any other teacher who might work with a student who was not meeting grade level

expectations or who might be at risk for failing the state assessment. Based on classroom

performance and benchmark scores, teachers submitted the names of students they

believed needed additional help beyond what could be provided during general

instruction time. Teachers were required to document parent notification of the referral

to the SAP, have students' hearing and vision assessed, collect work samples, and collect

any other testing data that would assist the SAP in determining the best intervention for

the student.

After completing the required paperwork, classroom teachers were invited to

attend a SAP meeting to discuss the progress their students were making as well as to

determine whether or not a student might need additional help from one of the

interventionists on staff. These interventionists were teachers who specialized in literacy

and math instruction for struggling learners. They pulled small groups of students

together to intervene with the goal of accelerating learning and closing the achievement

gap for those students who were falling behind.   Once it was determined that a student

needed intense and targeted intervention, SAP meetings for that student were then conducted every other week to assess progress. Again, the ultimate goal was to get students caught up with their grade level peers.

As Charlotte sat on a bench outside Dee's office waiting for her turn to meet with the SAP, she pored over the data of her students' most recent benchmark scores. Today she was meeting to discuss the progress of Celia and Martín who had been receiving interventions since the beginning of the school year. Charlotte reflected back to the first time she met both students at their homes and how she swore she would do whatever she could to meet these kids' needs. Both Celia and Martín had done poorly on the district benchmark assessments in reading and math even though they were spending four days a week with an interventionist for both reading and math. With the state assessments right around the corner, Charlotte was worried that these two students might do poorly. Maybe the SAP had some ideas she could try.

Dee poked her head around the corner and summoned Charlotte into her office. Two interventionists and the school's counselor were seated at a large round table at the center of the room. Dee was situated at her desk behind her computer as she always was during these meetings. The district required documentation of all SAP meetings so Dee relegated herself to the task of recording the minutes of each meeting.

"O.K. Charlotte. How are Celia and Martín doing in your class?" Dee inquired, eyes fixed to the computer screen.

"Well…" Charlotte paused, "according to the benchmark scores, they aren't doing so well. If I work with them and give them time to process the things we are

learning, they seem to do a bit better. And if they get to work in small groups and I pare

down the learning into manageable chunks…..”

"I just need the benchmark scores," interrupted Dee. "Look, Charlotte, we have

32 more students we need to take through the SAP today. Let's just stick with the data

and if you want to talk about instructional practices or things you have done with your

kids, make an appointment with me next week and I will be more than happy to chat with

you about what is going on in your classroom." Dee gave an audible sigh and continued,

"I'm sorry Charlotte. I know you are doing all you can for your students. We just need

to look at scores right now and determine if we need to change their intervention. The

interventionists will help Celia and Martín learn the skills they need to pass the state tests

next month."

"Oh, sorry," Charlotte lamented, "I was under the impression we would be talking

about instruction and the SAP would discuss things I can do to help my students."

"Scores don't lie Charlotte. We are in the business of preparing our students for

success through a rigorous and aligned curriculum. Stick to the SCCIP and those scores

will improve." And with that, Dee returned to her computer and Charlotte reported

benchmark scores and other data pertinent to accounting for the progress of her students.

The final verdict; Celia and Martín would continue to receive interventions for math and

reading.

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At dinner that evening, Charlotte shared with Frank her experience of meeting

with the SAP. She explained how she envisioned the SAP as a way to collaborate on

teaching methods and of how Dee had stopped her in mid-sentence as she was talking

about what she was doing in her classroom. Frank seemed interested for the first time in months.

"Can you believe that?" Charlotte said. "She said the scores don't lie. I mean, why is it always about the test?"

"Well, as I recall, you were the one who wanted the experience of teaching a grade level that would have to take a state test," Frank reminded. "You are just going to have to suck it up Char. Just realize it is about the test. You are going to be held accountable for how your kids do. If they don't do well, it will not bode well for you. You have got to get over this idealistic fantasy of yours that you can reach every kid in your class."

Charlotte had become desensitized to Frank's matter-of-fact attitude about the issues and struggles she was feeling at school. "Well Frank, I do believe that I can reach every kid in my classroom and the day I think I can't, will be the day I search for a new career."

Frank shrugged his shoulders as if to say, ""Whatever," and then changed the subject to baseball where his beloved Astros had signed a new pitcher to their team. Frank droned on and on about the upcoming baseball season as Charlotte's thoughts drifted to the SAP, the SCCIP, the upcoming state assessments, and her students. It was becoming all too clear to Charlotte that moving to this city for Frank was a huge mistake. She didn't even like baseball!

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Charlotte arrived at school the following day long before her students. Still reeling after the previous day's debacle over test scores, Charlotte decided to review the

SCCIP to prepare for the day's lessons. She noticed the light in Sally's classroom was on and decided to have a talk with her about her experience with the SAP. Sally and Charlotte had developed a bit of a friendship over the course of the year even though they never planned lessons together nor talked much about the students they were teaching. Earlier in the school year when Stacy told Charlotte about Sally's impending retirement at the end of the year, Charlotte assumed Sally would not be interested in working collaboratively with her. They had kept their relationship copasetic and engaged in cordialities and that seemed to work just fine for them.

"Hi Sally, are you counting the days?" Charlotte asked as she scanned the room and noticed a stack of boxes in one corner of her classroom.

Sally smiled, "You have no idea. I heard you went to the SAP yesterday. How'd it go?"

"Not so good. I think all anyone cares about is the test. I was hoping to get some good strategies and ideas to help Celia and Martín and the only thing Dee told me to do was to stick to the SCCIP and my scores would be fine."

"Well, unfortunately, that is how it is here. You are only as good as your last state assessment scores," Sally mused. "You see, I know what to do to get my kids to pass and they leave me alone."

Charlotte was puzzled. "But you don't follow the SCCIP."

Sally waved her hand as if shooing flies away. "I have been doing this for a long time my dear; I know how to play this standardized testing game. Like you, I used to fight it. I used to engage my students in learning that meant something to them. Have you ever heard of Whole Language?" Charlotte nodded. "Well, I was the Whole

Language Queen! My students learned everything through listening, speaking, reading, and writing. My kids wrote plays, researched things they were interested in, and one student even published a book at the ripe old age of 10 years old." Sally's eyes drifted to the ceiling as she reminisced about her glory days in the classroom before the era of standardized testing and teacher accountability.

Charlotte could not believe what she was hearing and asked, "Why don't you do those things with your students anymore?"

Sally shrugged, "I don't know. I guess I just gave in. It was just easier for me to teach students the skills they needed to pass the test." At that moment there was a knock at Sally's door. "That must be some of my charges. You better get back to your room…you don't want your kids to start stacking up outside your door." And with that, Sally opened the door to let her students into her classroom.

As Charlotte walked back to her classroom, she began to think about everything she learned about her friend Sally. She wished she had gotten to know Sally better this year. Did Melinda and Stacy know that Sally was considered the Queen of Whole Language back in the day? Did they take the time to get to know her and learn from her? Charlotte had enjoyed the camaraderie she felt when planning lessons with Stacy and Melinda but now felt there were things they could all learn from Sally and things Sally could learn from them.

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In the corner of Charlotte's classroom was a large red rug. She had purchased the rug at a garage sale along with a couple of bean bags and the famous director's chair that her students referred to as the Share Chair since this was where they sat to read their

writing, share their learning, or share stories about their lives and experiences. Many times when Charlotte was teaching a lesson, she would gather her students to the rug where they would sit in rows as Charlotte taught lessons in reading, writing, math, science, and social studies. It was an expectation in Charlotte's classroom that students sit quietly and pay attention as Charlotte facilitated learning on anything from literary devices to the Earth's shifting tectonic plates. Having the students within close range made it more manageable for Charlotte to monitor student behavior and check for understanding during the lesson.

During their last planning meeting, Stacy, Melinda, and Charlotte had gathered materials for the SCCIPs focus on test taking skills and the specific skills that would most likely appear on the test. Since 45% of the state test in reading consisted of questions on the elements of narrative text, the team was to focus on those skills for the week. With only two weeks left until the state assessment, Charlotte was feeling some anxiety about getting everything in.

The day's reading lesson was on identifying character traits in narrative text. Charlotte gathered her students on the rug and began the lesson by reading the book *Chicken Sunday* by Patricia Pallaco.   Charlotte enjoyed teaching skills from trade books and Patricia Pallaco was one of her favorite authors of children's literature. Charlotte was about half way through the book when Celia and Martín entered the classroom returning from their reading intervention with Ms. Speck, their intervention teacher. Both Celia and Martín were smiling and appeared excited when they came bounding into the room.

"Ms. Robinson, Ms. Robinson!" Martín, who was completely out of breath, ran to Charlotte with a paper bag in his outstretched hand. "Look what we got from Ms. Speck today. She said we did a good job and she knows we will pass the test because we have been trying so hard."

Charlotte inspected the contents of the paper bag. There were a couple mechanical pencils, a small notebook, some "Great Job" stickers, and a few other items in the bag. "That is great Martín, but I need you to put that in your desk for now and join us on the rug. We have started our reading lesson and you and Celia have missed part of the lesson."

Celia was already on the rug after putting her prize bag away but Martín was taking his time putting his bag of goodies away. Charlotte had stopped reading and was waiting for Martín to find a place on the rug so she could resume reading the story and carry on her lesson about character traits.

"Martín, I am waiting for you…." Charlotte said; her tone a bit stern. "We have a lot to do today so hurry up and put that bag away and get to the rug."

Martín found his way to the rug and Charlotte continued reading *Chicken Sunday* to her students. As she was reading, she detected a slight rustling sound, a rustling of paper. Charlotte stopped for moment, scanning the rug to locate where the sound was coming from. She gave her best "Whoever that is making that noise had better stop" face and then continued reading the book. Then, she heard it again. Charlotte spotted Martín with the prize bag he had gotten from Ms. Speck. He was digging through the bag, showing his friends the trinkets he had earned during his intervention time. Charlotte rose from the chair she was sitting on and reaching across two rows of students, she

snatched the bag out of Martín's hand. She crumpled it in her hands, walked briskly to the trash can and threw the contents in the receptacle.   Every student was silent as Charlotte threw Martín's prized possessions away.

"Martín! I asked you to put that away and you didn't do what I asked!" Charlotte bellowed.

Immediately, Martín's eyes filled with tears and he cried, "But Ms. Robinson, Ms. Speck gave that to me because I was doing a good job! I was doing a good job!" At this point, Martín was inconsolable.

 "Martín, I need you paying attention to the lesson I am teaching, not playing with your prizes from Ms. Speck. We only have one week until we take the state test." As Charlotte spoke the words, she had a sick and sinking feeling in her stomach. She had just ruined Martín's day by throwing his prize bag in the trash. How could she have done such a thing? What was wrong with her? Martín did not deserve this treatment.

Charlotte sent her students back to their seats and gave them a worksheet on character traits to complete. She knew she needed to make things right with Martín. Charlotte made her way to his desk, bent down, and rubbing his back gently told him how very sorry she was. Martín continued his sobbing. He was crushed and she knew it. She walked over to the trash can, reached in and retrieved the prize bag. She put the bag on Martín's desk and said, "Yes, Martín. You have been doing a good job."

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In reflecting on the events of the day, Charlotte realized that her anxiety about getting through the lessons she was required to teach was turning her into a monster. She felt miserable about how she had treated Martín and wondered if things might have

played out differently if she did not adhere to a timeline and if there was less pressure for having all students pass the state tests. Charlotte was turning into the kind of teacher she did not want to be. She was teaching to a test that may not ever benefit the CLD students in her class.

Charlotte thought about how Celia and Martín left her classroom to attend interventions every day for 45 minutes. If she was teaching from the SCCIP and it was aligned to what would be tested, what was happening during their intervention time? Were they just learning more of the same skills she was already teaching? If so, it wasn't working. And because it wasn't working, shouldn't we try something different? Charlotte was beginning to feel that the entire educational system was working against kids like Celia and Martín. She wanted to make a difference in schools but teaching a prescribed curriculum and focusing on skills that would promote passing a state test would do nothing but perpetuate the status quo. Charlotte was on a mission to become an agent of change.

Discussion

Conflict between administrators, teachers, students, and parents is bound to occur and plays an integral role in the micropolitics of schools. "Conflict serves as a change function, giving individuals and groups an opportunity to affect existing power relations. Thus, collaboration, cohesion, and maintenance of order occur only when one group successfully dominates" (Marshall & Scribner, 1991, p. 349). Martín and Charlotte had competing interests during the reading lesson and because of this conflict, Charlotte chose to exercise her power over Martín as the teacher by throwing his prize bag in the trash. Martín's reaction to this power play became the intervention Charlotte required to

raise her awareness of structures in schools which may not address the social, cultural, and emotional needs of the students she teaches and possibly work to marginalize and silence the voices of students who are CLD.
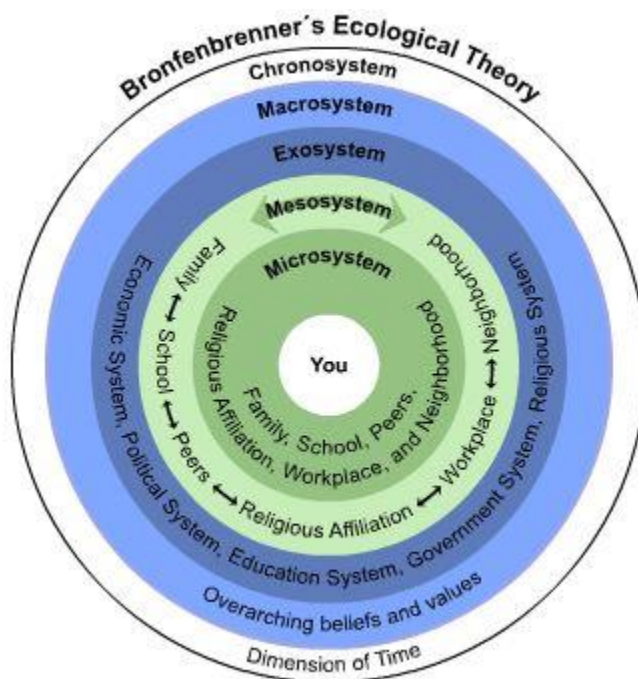
The pressure Charlotte is under to adhere to a curriculum timeline has prompted her to consider how policy informs her classroom practice. She has become all too aware that some of the policies initiated at her campus directly affect students of diverse cultural, linguistic, and social class groups. Charlotte has taken the initiative to explore her own assumptions, biases, and misconceptions about students who are fundamentally different from her. She has embarked upon a journey of self-reflection and acknowledgement her own notions of place and positionality with regard to policy targeting the CLD population. Charlotte vacillates between a technical and rational teaching approach where she follows the SCCIP, to an approach which is more along the lines of critical pedagogy as she is peels back the layers of the institution of schooling asking the question, "Who benefits from these policies?"

Because Charlotte has developed a deeper understanding of the constructs of diversity and culture, she is beginning to scrutinize these through the political landscape of Katherine Grace Elementary School. Considering an ecological systems approach, the manner in which educational policy as practice is enacted at the micro level is a direct result of ways that teachers manage conflict in their classrooms.

Ecological Systems Theory

Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1979) Ecological Systems Theory approach divides a system into the chrono-, macro-, exo-, meso-, and micro- levels or systems. When considering political forces and the push and pull of implementing educational policy, an

ecological systems approach provides a frame for possible causes and effects of policy as practice at the mico level. Figure 4 illustrates Brnfenbenner's Ecological Systems Theory.

Figure 6. Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory.

At the macro level, there is pressure to compete in the global economy. These pressures then trickle down to the national level or exo level. Policy initiatives such as the reauthorization of NCLB and the Race to the Top (National Archives and Records Administration, 2009) place emphasis on math, science, and technology encouraging schools to increase the rigor in these disciplines in an effort to compete in a world market. In a recent television ad, The ExxonMobil Corporation publicized the results of a study indicating that students in the United States were rated 25th in the world in the areas of math and 17th in science. With their "Let's Solve This" slogan, ExxonMobil has partnered up with the National Math and Science Initiative (NMSI) contributing 125 million dollars towards supporting teacher academies and summer camps aimed at

innovative science and math methods. The message of this ad campaign is that American

Schools must beef up what they do in classrooms so that students in the United States

will have a fighting chance at keeping up with the rest of the world.

This demand to excel in the areas of math, science, and technology has found its

way to the meso level where schools have purchased standardized curricula that is

"teacher proof" (Ingersoll, 2003, p. 103) to ensure that what is taught is in alignment to

what will be tested. The actual carrying out of the curriculum takes place at the micro

level, the classroom. Celia and Martín were not meeting grade level expectations based

on the standards of the SCCIP. Since they were at risk of failing the state mandated tests,

interventions were put in place for these students as well as regular meeting to discuss

their progress of achieving mastery of these standards. This is an example how the policy

mandates set forth at the macro level are interpreted and negotiated at the micro level.

Micro-macro integration (Ritzer, 1989, 1996) is the process by which parallels

and relationships develop at each level. Exploring and identifying our position within the

landscape of current educational policy is paramount as we ride the wave of the push and

pull of macro, exo, meso, and micro forces; interpreting and carrying out policy

initiatives and mandates in our classrooms. Guajardo & Guajardo, (2004) suggest

connecting the relationships between the macro and micro realities which exist in

schools, making sense of current educational policies through dialogic processes.

Conflict

As a member of a school community, conflict is always present. Teachers may have different views about their role in schools or may have differing opinions as to what methods to use to carry out the prescribed curriculum. On her first day as a teacher at Katherine Grace Elementary School, Charlotte was filled with internal conflict. She came from a high achieving school with very little experience about how to teach students of poverty or those who are CLD. Malen & Cochran (2008) analyzed the way in which teachers managed conflict in formal and informal settings. They suggest that teachers either suppress conflict maintaining established interest thus maintaining the status quo, or they embrace conflict discussing issues openly and at times challenging differences frankly and honestly. Up to this point, Charlotte has maintained the status quo with an occasional pedagogical epiphany when she is able to reach her CLD students.

Conflict may be viewed as an opportunity if filtered through an ontological and epistemological frame. Conversations about the interaction of political forces and how policy is enacted at the micropolitical level is important work. If Charlotte cannot find a group of professionals and a safe space to engage in critical conversation about negating policy mandates and reaching the diverse students she teaches, she may be at risk for ending up like Sally and giving in to the milieu of the testing mill. By engaging in critical conversation, teachers may discover ways in which their response to conflict and their actions might have caused patterns of change or a reproduction of previous classroom practice. By engaging with others in an exploration of praxis at the micro

level and how the interaction and interplay at all levels of political influence may be the impetus for change at Katherine Grace Elementary School.

Educational Policy in the Classroom

The keystone of current Federal educational policy has been focused on the increase of school accountability based on student performance on standardized tests. Additionally, students whose English proficiencies are limited must take an additional state assessment to measure the acceleration of English language progression and must demonstrate progress by improving one proficiency level[7] each school year. Schools who fail to meet Adequate Yearly Progress based on test performance may be labeled "low performing" (National Archives and Records Administration, 2009) and could be at risk for external interventions from the state or federal government. The impact of this culture of accountability and outcomes-based education has prompted a move towards greater centralization by school districts utilizing top-down systems which may lead to the disempowerment of teachers (Ingersoll, 2003). Accountability pressures are mounting as teachers at Grace Elementary are constantly under the gun to make sure their students pass the test. Sally has been successful in turning out students year after year who pass the test so her classroom practices have not been questioned.

As policy initiatives are mandated in schools, the interpretation, implementation or possibly resistance to policy initiatives is carried out by the teacher. When Charlotte reprimanded Martín in front of his classmates she began to realize that her role in carrying out policy was actually a detriment to the CLDs in her classroom. She was not changing her pedagogical approach to match the needs of her students. The effect of this

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[7] English Language Proficiency levels for English Language Learners include Beginning, Intermediate, Advanced, and Advanced High for the state of Texas (Texas Education Agency, 2011b)

policy mandate left Charlotte questioning the implementation of this policy. Hornberger (2002) suggests that when top-down policies close the ideological spaces shared by educators, the implementational spaces created from the bottom up can begin to open local ideological spaces. In essence, the effect of the policy mandate of requiring teachers to teach from a prescribed and scripted curriculum prompted Charlotte to shift her ideological perspective about teaching and learning in multicultural and multilingual environments.

Charlotte recognizes that she is a product of her socialization as a White, monolingual English speaking female. She is faced with the task of negotiating policy at the micro level through the juxtaposition of her agency within the power structure of educational politics. Policy as it is practiced at the micro level hinges on the teacher's understanding of self, cultural awareness, and critical pedagogy. When teachers have a solid understanding of who they are, they are more apt to work towards an understanding of others, and as they begin to develop a critical conscience, a shift towards critical pedagogy has a better chance of evolving.

Connection to Study

Navigating policy mandates through a culture of accountability is tricky business. Amy, Scarlett, and Mackenzie have only known a world of state testing and pressure to get students to pass whatever standardized test is currently in vogue. In a conversation, they discussed their experiences as teachers in today's culture of accountability:

> Amy: I am definitely a teacher of the No Child Left Behind era and I think that
> for me as a teacher, and I am in a grade level that does test…I always have. I
> definitely feel the pressure to get kids to pass the test and I think that for so long I

would do anything to get those kids to pass the test and sometimes I did kill and drill just to get the kids to pass the test. I did a lot of strategy teaching and not necessarily getting them to learn things in ways they could use them in the future. And I definitely think that impacted how I work with kids. And being sort of a naturally competitive person, I wanted my kids to do well. They needed to pass that test.

Scarlett: So, I am in the No Child Left Behind era as well. And I started teaching in 2006 and when I first started teaching, I taught first grade. And so my big concern was not that they were going to pass the test, it was how to document that I was doing Guided Reading and my small groups. That was my big concern. I moved to fourth grade to learn the testing side of schools and it is very much you have to get them to pass the test. And I am asking myself, "What is it that I have to do to get them to pass the test?" It's different when you teach a non-testing grade versus a testing grade…they are two completely different beasts. When I was teaching first grade, the TAKS test was not even on my radar.

Mackenzie: My earliest memory of state test is when I was in third grade and my teacher would give us worksheets all the time. She was at the overhead and we were doing our worksheets. It was Ms. Skoal. And I still remember her gray ponytail going all the way down to her butt. Every day, and I remember her very clearly. And I always said I was never going to become a teacher but because it was in my family, I said, "If I am ever a teacher, I am not teaching like that." Because all we did was worksheets…drill and kill kind of thing. But I have only worked in a school where getting our scores up has been very, very important.

It's the bottom line, we have to perform. And so there are times, like last year

when we found ourselves just doing that. Like whatever means necessary just to

get them to pass. Whether it was what I thought was best practices or not…it

didn't matter.

Scarlett: And that being said, I think our principal came in and said, "Alright, cut

out social studies or whatever you have to do to get these kids to pass you will do

it." And I remember talking about one particular student and she said, "And what

are you going to do to get them to pass?" (Amy, Scarlett, and Mackenzie, Critical

Conversation #3, April 1, 2012).

For these teachers, their instructional practice has been compromised because of

the demands to get all students to pass a state mandated standardized test. Mackenzie

even laments over the prospect of turning into the very teacher that she swore she would

never become. As macro political forces find their way to the micro level, there is often

conflict. In the following excerpt, Scarlett explains how she came to be ESL certified:

According to NCLB, highly qualified teachers must be ESL certified. The

problem is that school districts put emphasis on passing the test but not actually

preparing teachers how to teach ELLs. I took my test and passed because my

principal told me to – that didn't make me a better educator or equip me to teach

ELLs (Scarlett, Reflective Journal, May 3, 2012).

Policy aimed at requiring all teachers to become ESL certified has yielded an

increase in those who have credentials to teach ELLs but are in dire need of a

pedagogical approach in teaching CLD students. Ingersoll (2003) equates this to

"industrial and product-oriented organizations…to produce outputs from inputs. The

product usually is assumed to be student academic learning, as assessed by scores on mass-produced, standardized tests (pp. 226-227)."

During one of our conversations, Amy, Mackenzie, Scarlett, and I discussed our vision for the future and possibilities for change in schools. Mackenzie shared a sketch of her idea for change which included more autonomy for teachers. The illustration Mackenzie shared with her research partners of her vision for schools is depicted in the figure below.
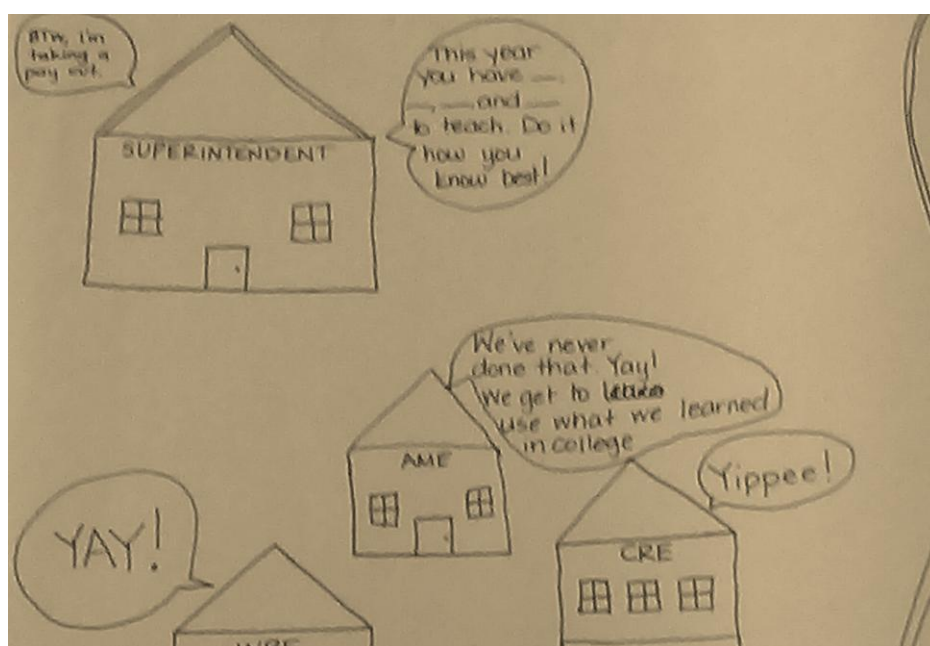
Figure 7 Mackenzie's Vision for Schools.

Mackenzie explained that the superintendent would decide what the students should learn however, teachers would decide how the curriculum is taught. The following conversation stream details the exchange of ideas which ensued following her explanation of her vision for future possibilities:

Mackenzie: We have the superintendents building over here. And he says, "This year, you have BLANK, BLANK, BLANK to teach. Do it how you know best."

So he is giving teachers the responsibility to do what they know is best. And these are all the little schools. And this is a school that one of my friends works at and it says, "We already do that."

Scarlett: (Pointing to picture and laughing) It's about time!

Mackenzie: And this is teachers saying, "Yay! We get to use what we learned in college!"

Karon: But he (superintendent) is still telling you what to teach?

Mackenzie: He's telling you that these are your expectations…you're right. He's telling us the expectations. Teach your kids…by the end of the year…they need to know these basic things. Because I fear that if you don't at least give some expectation, then nothing will get taught. You have to give some…I am talking about the district curriculum and the required lessons, and the timeline, and how everything is so rigid…and some things need to take longer. The kids don't get it by the end of the unit, but oh no, no, we have to move on. So, in all the required lessons, they are not good for every school. Our district is very diverse. What's good for one school is not necessarily good for us. And so when they put those lessons out there and they put that timeline out there, you can't do that. It is not one-size-fits-all. We have to differentiate for all the students in our class, why aren't they differentiating for all the schools in the district?

Karon: So, who decides what is taught then?

Mackenzie: Well, obviously the state does. But then again, the state is…I don't know…

Amy: I believe in giving teachers direction on what to teach. I believe we live in a society that is mobile and if kids change schools with no direction at all it would be crazy, crazy. So, I like the direction and sort of the foundation of what kids need to know. It is important so that we are all on the same page. Sometimes I think you know, why we don't do it on a bigger level. Like if we are all ultimately doing this to benefit our society, then why don't we have societal expectations, you know, we have all of our kids…

Mackenzie: What about in other countries? I feel like…

Scarlett: I feel like there needs to be some kind of scope and sequence…some kind. But there also has to be some kind of freedom for the teachers. Some kind because…they are taking out what we used to love about teaching…the whole creative part about sitting down and planning your lessons. How can I get them here? What can I do? And I used to love my job and I used to go in on weekends just to make the plans. And now it is like I look at the district's curriculum because it is so rigid, and I say, "O.K. I am teaching this and this is how I am doing it." It takes away the teacher autonomy and it takes away the creative process. (Mackenzie, Scarlett, and Karon, Critical Conversation #1, April 1, 2012).

Through critical conversation, we were able to challenge existing political structures and really think about why schools have implemented certain policies, reflecting on exactly which group benefits from such educational policies.

As policy drives and informs much of our practice in schools, academic interventions have become the mainstay for many of our struggling students. Many

schools hire interventionists and set up teams of professionals that meet regularly to

discuss student progress in the hopes of closing the achievement gap for struggling

learners.   While the goal is well intentioned, sometimes the outcome is too many

students getting pulled out of class to learn minimal skills to help them pass a

standardized test. Amy discusses her experience of meeting with the Response to

Intervention (RtI)[8] team to talk about the progress of a student in her class:

> And I always go back to the policy…we have these meetings. These RtI meetings
>
> and they are seven minutes long. You may kind of touch on maybe why a kid is
>
> not getting their homework done or what is happening in their home life, but you
>
> never really get in there and dig deep and try to find out what can I truly do to
>
> help this child. It is like, "What are we seeing, what are they doing, what other
>
> service we can give them…" And then that is it. It is in and out. I think all of
>
> our learners, including ELL students, need for us to really take time to have these
>
> conversations. And that being said, I don't think you give teachers more things to
>
> do without starting to unload that plate as well. If we value this, and as school
>
> leaders you value this, then you have to be willing to give something up (Amy,
>
> Final Interview, May 2, 2012).

In this example, Amy brings to light the possibility of an intervention with the

teacher, not necessarily the student. As educational policy becomes practice, educators

must remain critical players considering all angles of such policies and how to best serve

the CLD students at the micro level. By engaging in critical conversations, educators

have a vehicle for making sense of a critical pedagogy informed by what they know

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[8] Response to Intervention (RtI) is a framework used in schools to identify and monitor academic and behavioral interventions for students who are struggling learners.

about themselves, what they know about the students they teach, and what they know

about the policy mandates which have been laid out before them.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Last Day of School: Impact of Policy on Students and Teachers

On the last day of the school year, the Parent Teacher Association (P.T.A.) sponsored a breakfast for the teachers of Katherine Grace Elementary School. Charlotte arrived early so that she would have time to visit with the other teachers before beginning the final day of her first year as a fourth grade teacher at Grace Elementary. As she entered the building, she noticed many teachers gathered at the front office in what looked almost like a mob scene. Dee, the school principal, was frantically passing out folders to each of the teachers. Charlotte spotted her teammate, Stacy, flipping through the contents of her folder and decided to see what all the fuss was about. As she passed through the doors of the office, she was greeted by her other teammate Sally, with folder in hand, who informed Charlotte that the results of state testing had arrived. Charlotte felt a wave of anxiety rush over her as she took her place in line.

"Stacy, how did your kids do?" Charlotte inquired as she made her way closer to the front of the line.

"Well, they did better in reading this year but not so good in math," Stacy reported showing Charlotte the spreadsheet given to her by Dee. "I'm sure Dee will scare up some professional development opportunities in math for me to go to this summer,"

she quipped shrugging her shoulders and closing her folder. "Get your results and meetme in the cafeteria. I heard the P.T.A. has a big spread for us this morning and we wouldn't want to miss it."

Next, Dee handed Charlotte the folder containing state testing results for her class. She stepped away from the crowd of teachers because she wanted to be by herself as she perused the contents of the folder. Charlotte opened the folder and scanned the results. Just as she had suspected, Martín, an English language learner (ELL) in her class had not met grade level standards in both math and reading. She knew that students who did not pass the state test were required to go to summer school. Charlotte felt sick to her stomach as she knew that this was news she would have to break to him on the last day of school…a day that should be filled with joyful anticipation of the coming days of summer. Martín was not the only student who would spend a part of summer break in summer school; Charlotte had three other children who did not meet grade level standards in either math or reading.

"Four students," thought Charlotte. "That's not so bad." Then she realized that Claudia, another ELL in her class, was not one of the four. She opened the folder again and double checked the results. Yes! Claudia had passed both the math and reading state assessments! While she was thrilled that Claudia had done well, she wondered why Claudia had passed the state assessments and Martín had not. What was it about the educational experience that seemed to work for some students but not for others? Who decides what is necessary to learn? Why must we place so much emphasis on one standardized test? Who benefits from the current educational system and curriculum? Why do I do what I do in schools? Who am I here for? At that moment, Charlotte

decided to wait until the end of the day to distribute report cards along with the results of the state test. She reflected on the ways her school year had been dictated by this one standardized text. She thought about the curriculum, the benchmarks, and the interventions. All of these activities were driven by the test. Telling the four students in her class that they did not meet state standards for fourth grade did not match her philosophy of teaching and learning. She was in the business of caring for the students in her class by creating compassionate and inclusive environments but the reality was that she too was accountable for how her students did on state assessments. Yes, she decided, she would wait till the end of the day. Charlotte closed the folder and headed toward the cafeteria where her teammates were waiting for her.

Discussion

This study was an attempt to provide opportunities for my research partners and myself to engage in an examination of our lives, history, personal and professional experiences, and how these aspects of life have impacted how we interpret and enact educational policies in our multilingual classrooms. Our socialization shapes what we believe about difference and as we encounter new knowledge, our perspective can either be reinforced or disrupted. If disrupted, a shift in thinking toward developing newfound understanding can erupt (Mezirow, 1995; Taylor, 1998). By recognizing and situating ourselves as products of our socialization, my research partners and I were able to interpret the juxtaposition of our agency within the power structure of educational politics.

This study aimed to explore ways in which White monolingual English speaking elementary school teachers, myself included, negotiated educational policy and enacted

these policies in the culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) environments where we work. The research questions guiding this inquiry were:

1. What does ethnography of educational policy tell us about the practice of four White elementary teachers in multilingual settings?

2. What is the ontology of four White elementary teachers who teach English Language Learners?

3. Why is the study of educational policy as practice in four White elementary teachers' classrooms important?

As we identified educational policy and its affect on CLD students, we worked to construct and de-construct our understanding of our role as political agents amid a backdrop of accountability. By focusing analysis on the archeology of policy (Scheurich, 1994) and using it as a framework for analysis, I was able to address my research questions and interrogate the values, intentions, history, culture, pedagogical approaches, philosophy of education, and power of educational policy at the micro level. Two major themes emerged from this investigation:

(a) policy as practice at the micro level is informed by an understanding of self, cultural competency, and critical pedagogy, and

(b) critical conversation is the impetus for instructional change as teachers work to deliver culturally relevant practice of policy.

In this chapter, I discuss these themes in terms of the sociocultural impact of policy enactment at the micro level. In this final chapter I also discuss implications for future research as well as future action.

Policy as Practice

The findings in my study suggest that the practice of policy at the micro level is a recursive process. As teachers enact policy mandates, the understanding of self, degree of cultural competency, and critical pedagogy interact through a discursive triangle. Each informs the other and through iterative and interactive association, policy is enacted in the classroom. This dialogic process represented in Figure 6 illustrates how critical pedagogy, understanding of self, and cultural competency informs the practice of educational policy.
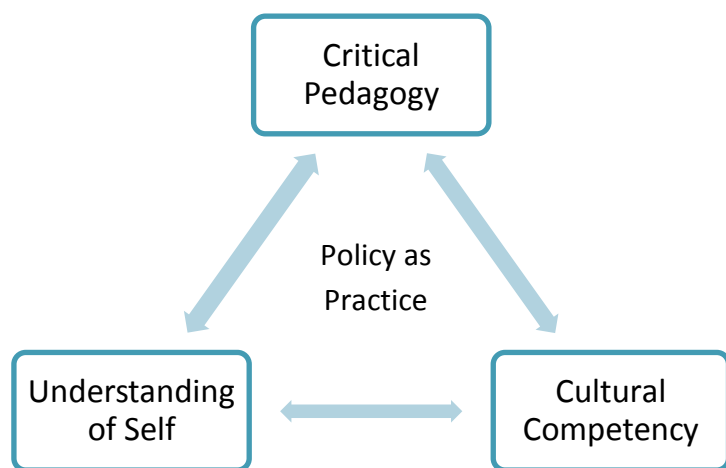
Figure 8 The Discursive Triangle of Policy as Practice at the Micro Level.

As teachers gain an understanding of who they are professionally and personally, they are more apt to work towards an understanding of students and families whose culture may be different from their own. This understanding of cultural difference and development of cultural proficiency influences the way we do things in our classrooms moving us towards a more critical approach to teaching.

As a case in point, Amy shared her concern with her belief that there was some sort of "disconnect" with what she was expected to do in her classroom and what her

CLD students needed. The following narrative is an example of how the discursive

triangle of policy practice is played out at the micro level:

> Because I know the right thing is to use these students and their families as assets
>
> in the classroom but to do that consistently, all the time, every day is impossible.
>
> It's a big challenge because I want to meet their needs and I want to know the best
>
> way to meet their needs, but with so much diversity, and it's awesome, but along
>
> with that diversity, they all bring in their differences. To mesh those together
>
> takes time, and unfortunately, our curriculum and the pace that is set for us does
>
> not allow for that time. So I think there is a disconnect with our curriculum and
>
> the expectations that are placed on teachers to get the students where they need to
>
> be. And the students, to achieve at a certain levels and rates that is
>
> impossible…and a lot of cases for our ELL students which are really not data
>
> driven or research based…I think we all know that is takes time to learn the
>
> language, and one of the hardest things for these kids is the academic language
>
> they have to learn and to catch up on. So I think that that is a huge challenge and
>
> it puts our ELL students at a big disadvantage…compared to their American peers
>
> who have been here (Initial Interview with Amy, March 2, 2012).

This is an example of the fluidity of the discursive triangle of the practice of

policy as Amy moves back and forth from her personal beliefs about her CLD students,

to development of cultural proficiencies, to questioning the curriculum, to moving

towards a critical approach to teaching. Amy speaks about the assets of the families and

students she teaches but is trying to negotiate the demands of the required curriculum as

well as deliver instruction that meets the linguistic and cultural needs of the CLD students in her classroom.

In a culture of standardization and accountability pressures, many times there is a great amount of emphasis on test scores. Working in a culture of test accountability is illuminated here as Mackenzie grapples with the approach she should use in her multicultural classroom to teach her students. Her philosophy of teaching and the goals of the campus are sometimes at odds. She explains her frustration with the current system:

> I strongly dislike the testing system we currently have and all the current systems we have for any kid. Never mind they are an ELL. I don't think it's fair. It doesn't…I don't think it allows every kid to show their true potential on that one test because it is made for one kind of person. If we think about it, and even think about the state of Texas, what the test is made for mostly White middle class kids, and if you know anything about the state of Texas, that is the minority now. So, who is the test really been written for? I do also notice in the test that to make it more multicultural, they just change names that are more multicultural. Which does not make the background knowledge required more multicultural (Mackenzie, Initial Interview, March 1, 2012).

In her journal, Mackenzie laments, "With our current systems, ELLs may only get the chance to feel defeated, be it with daily expectations or work they don't understand or state testing they aren't prepared for." By practicing policy mandates in her classroom, Mackenzie is starting to question the systems currently in place for the CLD students she teaches. Within the discursive triangle, Mackenzie has a heightened awareness of the

social and cultural needs of her students and it does not match her values and beliefs as she practices policy in her classroom. The dance between an awareness of self and cultural competency is informing future action in Mackenzie's practice as she develops a critical approach to teaching.

Many times as policy aimed at educating CLD students is mandated, teachers have little to no input into the policy development or manner in which it is to be implemented in classrooms. Considering this phenomenon, Amy proposed that policy makers live the life of an ELL who is expected to perform academically at the same level as his English-only counterparts within a time span of two years. The following vignette frames her idea of transplanting policy makers to another country. There, they would be required to achieve the same level of language proficiency as they have deemed acceptable in policy mandates for ELLs in Texas:

> I sometimes think it is really easy for policy-makers to sit up there and make these decisions on the behalf of everyone without ever having stepped into a classroom or not in a very, very long time…you know, what if we told them they had to learn and work in another language? "You need to know this language by this time, and we are going to give you the two years, even though you have taken that away from the students we have now, and on this day, you are going to read your contract in that language and you are going to sign it. And that is going to determine your future." You know, it doesn't make any sense (Amy, Critical Conversation #2, April 1, 2012).

Amy is working towards developing a political stance by interrogating the policy and questioning the rationale of policy makers. This example of Amy's conviction that this

language policy is inequitable for students exemplifies the discursive triangle and stems from an awareness and understanding of herself, the cultural and linguistic needs of the students she teaches, and a move towards critical pedagogy.

As schools become more and more controlled by education reformers, policy makers, and members of the public, teachers feel they are losing control over what they do in the classroom. The standardized curriculum Scarlett is required to follow is a prime example of ways schools control the work of teachers. Recently, Scarlett questioned the use of such a prescribed and scripted curriculum in her final interview:

> I would love to question policy more often. And ask, "Why do we have to do it this way?" Why do we….and actually in my last meeting in my summative evaluation I said (to the principal), "I do feel like the district curriculum is taking away some of my creativity. I do feel that I can come up with lessons that do target that skill better than the district curriculum can. I do feel like, you know, I am in the trenches and I know what I am doing. I can come up with lessons that are going to do better." I don't know if that was well received, but I did it! (Scarlett, Final Interview, May 2, 2012).

Scarlett's practice of policy has her wondering about some of the policy directives she is required to implement. It took great courage for her to question the district's policy of following a standardized curriculum during her end of year evaluation. The practice of policy within the discursive triangle of self awareness, cultural competence, and critical pedagogy has given rise to Scarlett's political will to question policy initiatives. Therefore, study findings are in agreement with existent literature. For

example, the political nature of the work teachers do in schools is clarified by Larry

Cuban (1988):

> To the degree that teachers, for example, use their legitimate authority to allocate
>
> scarce resources to children, govern minors through a series of techniques,
>
> negotiate order, and bargain with members of the class, teachers act politically.
>
> Determining who gets what, when, and under what circumstances to achieve
>
> desirable ends – a classic formulation of political behavior – occurs in classrooms,
>
> schools, and districts. (p.xix)

During our time together, my research partners and I engaged in many

conversations about the role we play in carrying out policy initiatives in our classrooms.

It was through these conversations that we experienced a collective momentum towards

answering the question: Who will benefit from this policy? As we understand ourselves

and take the time to develop an understanding of the students we teach, we can move

towards a more critical approach to teaching our students. In this micro space, we find

the practice of policy.

Critical Conversations as a Conduit

My research partners and I participated in critical conversations centered on tough

issues which were challenging, frustrating, and at times emotionally charged. Critical

conversation sessions were focused sessions where we shared our stories about our

history, our values and beliefs, and how we carry out policy as practice in our classroom.

Findings from this study indicate that the act of engaging in critical conversation provides

a conduit for the understanding of a true critical pedagogy to develop as we learn more

about ourselves through the interaction with others. Figure 7 represents a graphic

depiction as to how critical conversation works to complete policy as practice at the
micro level.
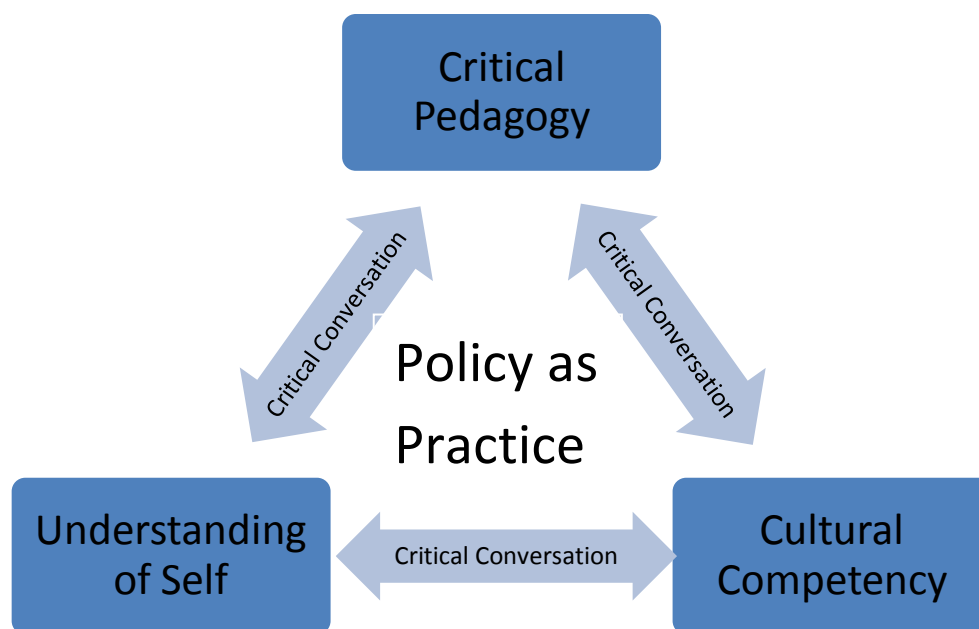
Figure 9. The Micropolitics of Policy as Practice.

It is necessary for teachers to stop, converse, reflect, and dialogue about the issues
that are important to them and to the students they teach. Through critical conversations,
educators can delve deeper into the social and cultural influences of the policy they are
practicing.

Sometimes policy initiatives aimed to guarantee teachers become ESL certified,
and therefore better suited to teach ELLs, may not be getting the results which were
intended. In the following conversation stream, my research partners and I discussed our
experiences in attaining the appropriate licensure to teach ELLs:

Scarlett: So I walked out of there completely certified but not necessarily

equipped to teach my particular student.

Mackenzie: It is funny you say that. We are all ESL certified but what does it

really mean? I mean when we are in the classroom…

Scarlett: Well, when I took my ESL test I was in a different district. And in my

one day training someone said, "When in doubt and you don't know the answer,

think of them as a special ed. student and put down what you would do for them."

And I vividly remember that and they said to make sure that it is tactile, make

sure there is kinesthetic stuff going on…and it is funny, we have had

conversations before, ESL does not mean that there is a cognitive issue.

Amy: And to bounce off that idea…what we have always been told when you go

in to take these tests is that you should think of an ideal situation…think of a

perfect world. The sad thing is that it is not the reality of the everyday classroom.

So, we know what is best for these kids and ideally we know what might meet

their academic needs the most, but that is not the reality we live in.

Mackenzie: It's a disconnect (Scarlett, Mackenzie, and Amy, Critical

Conversation #1, April1, 2012).

Conversations such as this spurred a collective examination of systems which

may further marginalize the CLD students we teach. By engaging in this type of

conversation, seeds are planted, they germinate through critical self reflection, and

through continued critical conversations, possibilities for change have a fighting chance

to flourish.

We were able to reflect on our own beliefs, values, and assumptions through the

process of critical conversation. As illustrated by the data in the study, a shift in thinking

about pedagogical approaches may occur when given the space and time to engage with

others about how our actions and reactions have affected the students we teach. As a matter of fact, during a critical conversation, Amy tells a story of how she reprimanded a student and later reflected on what actually might have been going on in this student's life which may have been more pressing an issue than the lesson she was teaching. This story resonated with Scarlett as illustrated by the following conversation stream:

Scarlett: Something that Amy said really, really hit me because… because there are times when we get so caught up in teaching and making sure that they know the material they are required to know and they know what is going to be on the test…we get so caught up in that and we forget about the kid. And I know that there have been times, because I wasn't always aware of all these other issues coming in with the children that I have probably totally messed it up. It makes me think of how many times have I crushed some little kid's spirit or how many times have I not been hearing what they have been saying? Because I think that for teachers, there is a little bit of a perfectionist in each of us…and so at home I do reflect and think that I am never good enough. And so this year and last year have just made me feel so inadequate because there is so much going on and there is so much that we are supposed to handle within an eight hour period, and it is not possible.

Amy: And just to remember that it is ultimately about the kids. And I mean it is hard because we get caught up in so many things…I mean I am a rule follower naturally and that is how I am wired. But ultimately it is about the kids and about doing right by them and when you know in your heart that something is not good

for them or something is not working for them, to step out of that comfort zone and really push for what you think is right personally.

Scarlett: Sometimes I wonder what we could actually accomplish if we did what was right by the child and not what we were told to do (Scarlett and Amy, Critical Conversation #3, April 1, 2012).

In the previous conversation, a shift is thinking is emerging. By engaging in critical conversation, Amy and Scarlett are beginning to dabble with the notion that policy as practice may have an adverse affect on some of their students. In a conversation a month later, Scarlett reported that she continued to reflect on the stories which were shared during the study and how she is more aware about how her actions can have a huge impact on the students she teaches:

I think there are days that I go home and I think, "Did I win the battle today?" I know I am going to win the war, but did I win the battle today? And when you go home and you reflect on your work, there are days when you realize…that you did not speak to a student all day…that you needed to speak to. Or that something is going on in a kid's life that is so much bigger than the STAAR test…and you did not handle it the right way because you are so focused on the scores and on making sure you hold them accountable because you're held accountable. Sometimes you are not treating the whole child even though you want to (Scarlett, Final Interview, May 2, 2012).

In her reflection, Scarlett is in conflict with a system that measures her students' performance in the classroom by a single test score. By sharing our stories and engaging in critical conversation, we are informing future policy practice in the classroom.

In summary, in reflecting on the time we spent together, the stories we shared seemed to have an impact on the direction our critical conversations lead us. Many times our conversations about policy implementation took us to places where we had to take a good hard look at our own deficit practices. Having a safe space to open up and let our guard down, we openly shared our experiences. This exercise was crucial to our personal and professional growth.

<div align="center">**Implications for Future Research and Action**</div>

Negotiating and implementing policy in CLD classrooms is important work. This study aimed to make sense of how White monolingual English speaking teachers enact policy at the micro level. The findings of this study indicate the need for schools to create safe spaces for teachers to engage in critical conversation aimed at developing a practice or critical pedagogy. Recommendations presented in this study include creating and sustaining sacred time towards developing an understanding of self, developing targeted and focused critical conversation sessions, and finding and creating opportunities for future political action. Finding time and space for critical conversations is a challenge in schools sparking a need for further research and future action.

Understanding of Self

The practice of working towards an understanding of the self is an ongoing process. In this study there was limited time for self reflection to explore and learn about ourselves in relation to our role as sociocultural players in schools. At the beginning of our time together, we spent a great deal of time on the technical aspect of teaching. Even as we shared our life maps and our vision for schools, we weren't engaging in deep and critical reflection of our values, beliefs, and assumptions. It wasn't until later on in the

study that more critical conversations emerged, causing us to shift our thinking about our individual agency and role in enacting policy at the micro level. At this point, we were comfortable with each other and the space we shared.

I suggest a move towards creating professional development opportunities in schools for teachers and leaders to develop a deeper understanding of themselves and each other. In negotiating the political climate of school, is imperative that school leaders create spaces for cultivating educators who are disposed to developing as critical pedagogues. I encourage school leaders to provide opportunities for teachers to examine their values and beliefs as these may be challenged over the course of their teaching career. By capturing pedagogical interactions and interrogating these acts, the study of self has promise of constructing and deconstructing the veiled pedagogical understandings of educators. Research focused on the understanding of self through self exploration inquiry may shed light on the interaction of pedagogical choice and the world views of teachers.

Critical Conversations

An obstacle my research partners and I faced in the study, and schools are facing now, is an extended opportunity to engage in meaningful and critical conversations. My research partners and I engaged in critical conversation on a Sunday afternoon. Just as we were beginning to unpack our understanding of the role we play in carrying out policy, our time was over. Amy explains her feelings about her participation in critical conversations:

> I really enjoyed the conversations and hearing everyone's stories. I thought that
> was very powerful. Had we not had this particular experience, I wouldn't have

heard everyone's stories and things that they do, and wouldn't have had the opportunity to learn that. There is not necessarily time built in to do that with each other at school. Unfortunately, a lot of the times when we do make that time, the conversation doesn't always, isn't always focused on a particular topic like it was in this case. I think Scarlett and Mackenzie are brilliant and we all have something to offer. Through our individual…you know, I can grow from their experiences, they can grow from mine. That's how we learn (Amy, Final Interview, May 2, 2012).

During our time together, our conversations were focused on our history, educational policy, and the students we teach. We were able to capture a glimpse of what we do in multicultural classrooms, just scratching the surface of the political nature of the work we do in schools. Had we had more time, our conversations had the potential of evolving into a deeper understanding of the sociocultural impact of policy as practice at the micro level.

Conversations about students many times center on measurable data focused on the academic achievement and the graduation trajectory of students. These conversations are topical and stimulate a level of conversation which seeks to find solutions to produce outputs determined by state or district policies. I suggest that school administrators redefine the work they do with students, families, and community and engage in critical conversations with an aim to question current instructional practices and educational policy. It is my opinion that schools that commit to devoting time for critical conversation have promise of moving teachers and leaders toward developing as critical pedagogues.

Providing space and time for teachers to regularly meet for critical conversations is half the battle. The space must be safe for those who are participating in critical conversation. Hughes (2008) offers a description of Gracious Space where trust, compassion, and curiosity are key ingredients:

> Gracious Space plays and essential tool on a journey to the common good. Without the graciousness in which to question and learn, we will likely conceive of a more narrow interpretation of the common good. Without a spirit of compassion and curiosity, we may lack the trust and the will to commit to the remainder of the journey. In Gracious Space we can join with others to search for shared solutions to society's problems. Gracious Space encourages us to do this work with integrity, courage, and hope (p. 49).

By creating spaces such as this, teachers have a forum for re-imagining their craft, moving away from the traditional knowledge-based curricula towards more authentic instructional contexts. Studies on ways and means to create contexts for critical conversations in schools may be beneficial as educators work to re-imagine the institution of schooling.

A Call to Action

At the beginning of my time with my research partners, we considered ourselves neutral in our roles as teachers within the micropolitics of schools. We even went as far to articulate that we have little to do with the politics in schools. As my research partners and I problemetized our roles in enacting policy we identified ways in which policy, as it was practiced in our classrooms, may have been detrimental for the CLD students that we teach. Our conversations shifted as we began to take ownership of our political agency as

a player in the micropolitics of educational policy. Regrettably, we never got to a place where we, collectively or individually, took a stand to become active participants in policy change. Mackenzie shared her thoughts on policy initiatives and alludes to a desire to advocate for change:

> I feel that the curriculum or the demands that are put on us are put on us by somebody who is unfamiliar with how a class of 22 students operates. With all their differing needs, different languages, different accommodations…everything, there does need to be changes. I guess we should be more of an advocate for changes in policy. I mean, we say we are really here to meet the needs of the students but sometimes, I don't think that is 100% true (Mackenzie, Final Interview, May 2, 2012).

Mackenzie is clearly at a point where she is ready to take the next steps towards becoming politically active in the educational community. She just doesn't know how to become politically involved and what that may look like. Amy, like Mackenzie expresses a need move forward as an agent for change and is daunted by the enormity of this task:

> It's talking about that change…we do have these policies. And it is like, what? What can I do as a fifth grade classroom teacher in a huge district, in a huge state…and we are ultimately run by a huge, powerful government that we know runs everything. What can we do? I don't know. (Amy, Final Interview, May 2, 2012).

Participation in a study examining our role in carrying out educational policy paved a path for conversation aimed at ways to act as political change agents. My

research partners and I did nothing more than admire the idea of taking action. Moving beyond the conversation of the practice of policy towards conversations of how we might become political agents of change proved to be a challenge in this study. Future studies examining ways teachers perceive themselves as political beings may prove helpful as educators work to find their voice as political agents in this era of accountability in schools.

Conclusion

As I work to finish the pages of this dissertation, I am all too aware of the incredible responsibility I have to continue the work my research partners and I started as we examined the micropolitics in the schools where we teach. My research partners are prime fodder for taking the next steps in becoming change agents for the schools where they work. Our time together during this research study was too short; however, we created relationships that will last long after this study has ended. By examining the micropolitics of schools, we can work to not only peel back the layers of sociocultural effects of this polity but also begin to re-imagine possibilities for fundamental changes in how we do things in schools.

We must engage in critical conversation in our communities of practice as we continue to strive for critical pedagogical approaches that meet the needs of the CLD students we teach. This research served as a catalyst in our quest to interrogate policy and ground our practices based on the needs of the students and families we serve. In reflecting on her participation in this study, Scarlett gives some caution and advice about getting caught up in the milieu of an era of standardization and accountability in schools:

You know, I guess I just want to thank you for letting me be a participant in this

study because sometimes you can't see the forest for the trees. And you have to

take a step back and look at things differently in order to be reminded about what

is important and what your job is and what you are doing. The guidelines coming

down to you are not always the be-all-end-all…your student is (Scarlett, Final

Interview, May 2, 2012).

A shift in educational ideology occurs as we confront our histories, assumptions

and beliefs, and question policy mandates. Future work in this area should take us to

possibilities and hope in schools by working towards developing teachers who are

politically active and are critical agents of change.

APPENDIX A

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research was to actively involve a group of White women in critically investigating our personal histories as they are related to enacting educational policy in multi-lingual and multicultural classrooms. Acting in the role as both participant and observer of the study (Adler & Adler, 1998), I chose to employ qualitative research methods to conduct a narrative inquiry and engage participants in a professional collaboration to examine and design an ethnography of educational policy seeking to address the following questions:

1. What does ethnography of educational policy tell us about the practice of four White elementary teachers in multilingual settings?

2. What is the ontology of four White elementary teachers who teach English Language Learners?

3. Why is the study of effective educational policy as practice in four White elementary teachers' classrooms important?

Through participation and narrative inquiry, my research partners and I collectively examined and analyzed our role in carrying out educational policy.

Context of the Study

I chose White Rapids Elementary School (pseudonym), an elementary school located in Central Texas to be the focus of the study. I selected this school based on the following criteria:

- The majority of students who attend this school are culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students and are considered economically disadvantaged.

- The majority of teachers who teach at this school are White and female.

- The school has a rating of "Recognized" or better based upon the current Academic Excellence Indicator System (A.E.I.S.) report (Texas Education Agency, 2012).

I have worked with teachers at White Rapids for the last three years providing professional development and training to support English language learner (ELL) instructional practices aimed at improving the language proficiencies and academic achievement of the ELL population at White Rapids Elementary School. Previous to my current position in the district as an instructional coach, I was employed at White Rapids as a reading interventionist working solely with third, fourth, and fifth grade students. Through my interactions in working as an interventionist and instructional coach, I developed a sound working relationship based on mutual respect and trust with several teachers at White Rapids Elementary School.

Participants

I began the study by selecting three teachers from White Rapids Elementary School. Amy taught fifth grade and Mackenzie and Scarlett both taught fourth grade at White Rapids. The sampling strategy I chose to employ in electing these three teachers

to participate in this inquiry was intensity sampling as this strategy "consists of information-rich cases that manifest the phenomenon of interest intensely" (Patton, 2002, p.234). I considered these teachers to be excellent candidates for the study because of their experiential knowledge in working with CLD students in multilingual classrooms. It was also important to me to carefully select teachers who would be willing to commit time to collaborative participation in the study. Each teacher selected for this research identified herself as White, monolingual English speaking, employed by White Rapids Elementary School for more than two years, and had greater than three years of experience in a multilingual classroom. Additionally, these teachers perceived themselves as having had success with the ELLs they taught and they were also willing to commit time to participate in the study.

After identifying the teachers who would become my research partners, I personally contacted them by phone or email presenting information and the direction of the inquiry I was pursuing. I met with each teacher in her classroom to review with them the consent form to participate in the study. I needed to inform them about the measures I was going to follow to conduct research and protect their identities in doing so. I also assured each research partner of her right to refuse participation at any time during the study. After reading through the consent forms and asking various questions, Amy, Scarlett, and Mackenzie agreed to become research partners in the study (see Appendix C).

Data Collection

Data sources to document this study include initial and final interviews, critical conversation sessions, reflective journals, artifacts, and documents. I wrote in narrative

form in this study to present the reader with insight into the philosophies and ontology of life and teaching as White monolingual English teachers and the story of our interaction with the practice of policy. The ethnography of the practice of educational policy shed light on our interpretation of how we enact educational policy as White female monolingual English speaking teachers. "Qualitative research tries to establish an empathetic understanding for the reader, through description, sometimes *thick description*, conveying to the reader what the experience itself would convey" (Stake, 1995, p. 39). The narrative text detailing the oral history and experiences of White monolingual female teachers teaching in diverse classrooms who are investigating the impact of micropolitical processes in multicultural contexts serve as evidence of the rigor and at the same time, flexible process of qualitative data collection and analysis.

In keeping with the qualitative research paradigm (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam, 2009; Stake, 1995), multiple data sources were collected following explicit permission from participants and in compliance with the guidelines of the Institution Review Board (IRB). During the course of my inquiry, I learned along with my research partners as a participant observer (Patton, 2002) engaging in interviews, critical conversation sessions, and maintaining reflective journals. Additionally, artifacts and documents were also collected to inform the inquiry.

Interviews. The use of interviews and observation are common methods utilized in qualitative study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Merriam; 2009; Patton, 1980). Semi-structured interviews were conducted and videotaped in an effort to engage and capture research partners in conversation thus building in flexibility and an opportunity to observe body language and other nuances during the interview sessions (Merriam, 2009).

The process of engaging in interview while conducting a qualitative study is best explained by Spindler & Spindler (1997):

> It requires being immersed in the field situation, and it requires constant interviewing in all degrees of formality and casualness. From this interviewing, backed by observation, one is able to collect and elicit the native view(s) of reality and the native ascription of meaning to events, intentions, and consequences (p. 53).

I conducted two semi-structured interviews with each research partner, one interview at the beginning of the study and another at the conclusion of our inquiry. For the initial interview, two of the three research partners chose to be interviewed in their classrooms and one met me at a coffee shop on a Saturday morning. For the final interview, all partners wished to meet in their classrooms one day after school. I created an interview guide to use for each semi-structured interview session including questions on issues and topics related to the research questions guiding my research (See Appendix D). The use of an interview guide assisted me in focusing each session as well as affording me and my research partners some flexibility to move back and forth between the questions. The interviews did not exceed an hour and I transcribed all of them with the purpose of getting immersed in the data (Patton, 2002).

The primary purpose of the initial interview session was to familiarize the research partners with the study, build rapport and trust, and learn about each partners' background and experiences in schools in general and multilingual/multicultural classrooms in particular. This initial interview was critical to the study as it was an opportunity to collect data for the oral histories (Leavy, 2011) as well as the gateway to

future critical conversation group discussions. I chose to record my interpretations of each session by writing reflective notes in a journal immediately following each session. I also documented session particularities in a research log directly following each interview in an effort to keep an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) of my activities during the study.

The final interview took place at the conclusion of the study and questions were generated based on an analysis of previous interviews and after the critical conversations took place. I developed an interview guide and used it during those semi-structured interview sessions. Reflections on the interviews were recorded in my reflective journal and documented in the research log following each session. Because the initial and final sessions were videotaped, I was able to observe body language which assisted me in the verification of shared meanings during the interview session (Fontana & Frey, 1994). Research partners received transcripts of each session to review and validate the content of our interview sessions; in other words, I conducted member checks with my research partners (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Critical Conversations. My research partners and I met on a Sunday afternoon at my home where I facilitated three separate sessions engaging my partners in intellectual activities and conversation examining specific topics related to our histories, experiences, and educational policies in multicultural contexts (See Appendix E). Guajardo and Guajardo (2008) refer to *pláticas* as the "act of sharing ideas, experiences, and stories" (p. 66). It was through this sharing that we began to make sense of our political agency in multicultural classrooms. Each critical conversation was videotaped for future transcription and analysis.

The initial session centered on our educational philosophies and pedagogy, during the second session we engaged in a discussion of educational policies directly impacting instruction in our classrooms, and the third session was devoted to creating a life map using symbols or pictures to tell the story of our life history. Each session lasted a little longer than one hour. According to Macnaghten and Myers (2004), "groups work best for topics people could talk about to each other in their everyday lives – but don't" (p. 65). My goal was to get my research partners engaged in conversation. Creating time and space to focus our conversation on issues related to the topic of the micropolitics of educational policy was key during each critical conversation session.

Similar to focus group interviews (Patton, 1990), the critical conversations assisted "participants to hear each other's responses and make additional comments beyond their own original responses as they hear what other people have to say" (Patton, 2002, p. 386). Together, we co-facilitated the group sessions as we co-created understandings about our position and agency amongst the backdrop of educational policy. I videotaped and transcribed all critical conversation sessions sending completed transcriptions to the three research partners for member checking. Immediately following each meeting, I spent time reflecting on the discussion group experience making reflective notes of the experience as well as developing additional questions and direction for further investigation. All group activities were documented in a research log.

Reflective Journals. Qualitative researchers are advised to engage in reflective practice during the course of a research study writing reflective notes that explain "their presuppositions, choices, experiences and actions during the research process" (Mruck & Bruer, 2003, p.3). During the course of this inquiry, I maintained a reflective journal

recording my reflections and interpretations during interviews and critical conversation sessions. Additionally, I provided my research partners with reflective journals because we were engaged in co-constructing meaning. I felt the use of reflective journals beneficial as my research partners and I worked to tease out and reflect critically on our assumptions, biases, values, and beliefs about the role we play in carrying out educational policy.

Each critical conversation session opened with the sharing of stories recorded in the reflective journal. We used the reflective journal to recall past events related to our teaching experiences in working with CLD students, reflected on educational policy related to the instruction of CLD students, and recorded events we felt were pertinent to effective teaching and learning in multicultural environments. Additionally, we devoted time for reflection and writing during critical conversation sessions and used our journals to record our reflections. Our reactions to critical conversations which were captured in the reflective journals were collected, transcribed, and sent to the research partners for member checking.

Artifacts. Physical material or objects found during the course of a study represent artifacts (Merriam, 2009). Collecting and analyzing artifacts may assist the researcher in interpreting and making sense of the meaning people bring in their natural setting (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). During the critical conversation sessions, my research partners and I created drawings, a timeline, and life maps which were collected for future analysis.

For our first critical conversation session, each of us drew a picture of our vision for schools. We each took turns explaining our vision for the improvement of schools by

sharing our sketches. In the next critical conversation, my research partners and I worked

to create a timeline which reflected historical events and the affect on educational policy.

The final critical conversation session was dedicated to the development of a life map

which consisted of a pictorial representation of pivotal moments in our lives (Hodge,

2005).

Documents. Merriam (1998) explains that collecting documents is a less

intrusive method of collecting data and may provide detail and evidence of substantiation

or disagreement as compared to the collection of other data. The term document will be

used as "the umbrella term to refer to a wide range of written, visual, digital, and physical

material relevant to the study at hand" (Merriam, 2009, p. 139). Documents collected

during the course of this study were reports from the Texas Education Agency, various

sections of the No Child Left Behind Act, and sections of the prescribed curriculum used

by my research partners.

Data Analysis

Policy archaeology as a framework for analysis seeks to investigate the

intersection of conditions which illuminate policy as a social problem (Scheurich, 1994).

The use of policy archaeology was applied to interrogate the values, intentions, history,

culture, pedagogical approaches, philosophy of education, and power of educational

policy as it is enacted in micro contexts. The analysis of the data remained in congruence

with critical theory as I implemented an organic process (developing naturally) for

discovering emerging themes (Patton, 2002). I took time to pause for reflection, making

comments in my research journal, engaging in an analysis of the data concurrently as data

was collected (Merriam, 1998). Keeping my research questions at the forefront, I worked

to focus my analysis on the archeology of policy informing the micropolitics of

educational policy. Table 2 illustrates the data analysis tool I employed as I collected and

analyzed data.

Table 1 Data Management

Research Questions	Data Collection Strategies	Analysis of Data
What does ethnography of educational policy tell us about the practice of four White elementary teachers in multilingual settings?	- Origin/ontology of policy - Policy analysis - Analysis of policy as mandate (strategies, professional development, cultural understanding) - Fit between policy and learning theory	Micropolitical Framework Archeology of Policy - original values - original intentions How this impacts… - values - history - culture - politics/power - pedagogical approaches - philosophy of education
What is the ontology of four White elementary teachers who teach English Language Learners?	- Teachers' life stories (historical and socio-cultural background) - Life map of critical events - Disposition (class, power) - Whiteness - Processes of personal development - Fit between personal and classroom context	Micropolitical Framework Archeology of Policy - original values - original intentions How this impacts… - values - history - culture - politics/power - pedagogical approaches - philosophy of education

Research Questions	Data Collection Strategies	Analysis of Data
Why is the study of effective educational policy as practice in four White elementary teachers' classrooms important?	-Teaching approaches - Perspective of effective classroom practice - Engagement of professional development - Individual case study of students taught - Fit between policy and practice	Micropolitical Framework Archeology of Policy - original values - original intentions How this impacts… - values - history - culture - politics/power - pedagogical approaches - philosophy of education

Note: This table matches data collection and data analysis strategies with specific research questions.

Additionally, I interacted with the data I collected by asking questions of myself, reflecting on the findings, and dialoguing with others about the findings. The questions I continued to ask myself as I read and re-read the data were:

1. What are the data telling me?

2. What questions are the data answering?

3. What connections can I make between what the data are telling me and what I want to know?

Srivastava (2009) explains that the role of iteration in qualitative analysis is to engage in a process of continuous meaning-making during the analysis process. By reading the data multiple times, I was able to make connections and interpret findings related to the original questions of the inquiry.

I also spent much time engaged in narrative analysis utilizing a holistic method to code the data. Saldaña (2009) explains that coding is a cyclical process and that researchers engage in what he calls "First Cycle and Second Cycle" (p. 45) coding methods. The First Cycle is the initial coding process and the Second Cycle is a process of analysis of reviewing initial codes creating categories, classifying, synthesizing the data, and ultimately developing concepts and theories. As I coded the data, I numbered the codes and wrote them down in a code book for categorization and analysis. This process went through much iteration as it was important to me that categories remain fluid.

During the First Cycle of coding I read through the transcripts of the interviews, critical conversations, and reflective journals to get a sense of the whole study. As I reread the narrative data, I highlighted key phrases and what I called narrative chunks, looking for descriptive wording that would assist me in telling the story of the effect of educational policy at the classroom level. I engaged in a similar process as I analyzed the artifacts and documents, working to make sense of the data by describing what I had collected. Then, I reread the key phrases and descriptive wording to begin building categories for the data I collected. The four categories that emerged from the data during the Second Cycle of coding were; 1) Core Values, 2) Cultural Awareness, 3) Critical Pedagogy, and 4) Policy as Practice. The topics were then grouped by categories and coded to for further analysis (Tesch, 1990). I developed a spreadsheet to assist me in organizing the data and was able to filter and sort by participant, category, or research question. I also kept a notebook which included transcripts of interviews and critical conversations, reflective journal entries, photographs of artifacts, and documents used

during the research. Using the spreadsheet and the notebook, I was able to quickly find

the data that matched my query. Table 3 is an example of the spreadsheet I used to

organize my analysis.

Table 2 Spreadsheet for Data Analysis

P	PIC	Category	Description	Research question	Coding Key
**Micropolitics of Educational Policy Codebook**				
M	CC/2/5-14	PAP	Standardized testing	1,3	
S	CC/2/22-26	PAP	PD for ESL strategies	3	P - Participant
S	CC/2/31-32	PAP	Policy mandates	1	PIC - Participant Identification Code
A	CC/2/34-43	PAP	restricted curriculum	1,3	A - Amy / M - Mackenzie
CS	CC/2/49-55	PAP/CP	Standardized testing	1,3	S - Scarlett / Karon - K
CS	CC/2/63-77	PAP	Policy makers	1	Conversation Stream - CS
CS	CC/2/84-89	PAP	Policy makers	1	II - Initial Interview
S	CC/2/118-120	CV	unchanging schools	1	FI - Final Interview
CS	CC/2/125-130	CA	11-Sep	2	AR - Artifact / J - Journal
CS	CC/2/141-147	CV	Pop culture	2	HT - Historical Timeline
CS	CC/2/153-166	CA	OJ Simpson trial	2	PT - Personal Timeline
CS	CC/2/173-194	CA	Katrina	3	D - Drawing of Ideal School
CS	CC/2/240-261	CV	Pop culture, media	2	CC - Critical Conversation
A	CC/2/272-277	CV	mobil phones	2	LP - Language Policy
K	CC/2/287-292	PAP	texting	3	CV - Core Values
CS	CC/2/307-329	PAP	subpopulation needs	3	CA - Cultural Awareness
CS	CC/2/340-344	PAP	NCLB accountability	3	CP - Critical Pedagogy
K	CC/2/354-357	PAP	teacher as scapegoat	1,3	PAP - Policy as Practice
M	CC/2/364-370	PAP	Benchmark testing	1,3	
CS	CC/2/380-392	PAP	teacher burnout	2	

Note: this table depicts the coding structure that governed data analysis.

Once I decided on the categories, I engaged in constant comparison analysis as I moved in and out of the data in an effort to reduce the data to generate a set of common themes (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The two themes that emerged from the data were:

(a) policy as practice at the micro level is informed by an understanding of self, cultural competency, and critical pedagogy, and

(b) critical conversation is the impetus for instructional change as teachers work to deliver culturally relevant practice of policy.

Through my personal journey with the data I was able to make sense of the data as it related to the micropolitics of educational policy in multilingual contexts.

Trustworthiness

Guba (1981) proposes four criteria that he believes should be considered by qualitative researchers in their quest to produce a trustworthy study. These criteria are:

a) Creditability in terms of internal validity;

b) Transferability in terms of external validity;

c) Dependability in terms of reliability;

d) Confirmability in terms of objectivity.

In attending to the criteria of credibility, qualitative researchers endeavor to demonstrate that a true representation of the phenomenon under examination is being presented. Transferability of the study requires the qualitative researcher to present ample detail of the context of the study for a reader to make a judgment whether the contents of the study can justifiably be applied to another similar setting. The meeting of the dependability construct refers to the prospect of future researchers repeating the study and discovering similar findings. To accomplish confirmability, qualitative researchers

should work to demonstrate that findings from the study emerge from the data and not the researcher's personal biases or predisposition of the phenomenon under scrutiny. While Guba's constructs have been accepted my many, a contemporary trend in qualitative research is to consider trustworthiness based on the notion of representation or authenticity, the way in which the findings divulge the reality of the individuals being studied (Hatch, 2002). For the purposes of my study, I address trustworthiness in two ways: (a) representation of my research partners' stories and (b) reflexivity of my own biases and predispositions that I bring to the study.

The nature of narrative inquiry is to research the way people make meaning of their lives as narratives. During our time together, my research partners and I shared numerous stories of the students we taught and our experiences negotiating policy initiatives in our classrooms. I transcribed our conversations and interviews, sending copies of the transcriptions to each research partner to ensure the accuracy of the transcribed material. This research activity of member checking was an integral part of the triangulation of reflections, analysis, and interpretation of data and added to the trustworthiness of the study (Merriam, 2009). Additionally, I shared categories and themes I was developing throughout the study as it was important that I represent my research partners with fidelity. I was able to represent my research partners in a natural and authentic way because my research partners were co-constructing meaning of the data by reflecting on meaning making throughout the entire study.

In an effort to identify my own presuppositions and biases, I maintained a reflective journal throughout the study. This journal was utilized for reflection and to record ways my perspective may influence the data collection, analysis, and findings in

the study. To begin with, my role as researcher with a critical sociocultural perspective shaped the way in which I questioned my research partners and it also informed the topics of critical conversation we engaged in. Once I established myself as a co-researcher with my research partners, our conversations and data collection reflected a diverse collection of ideas and contributions.

Ethical Considerations

"Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their code of ethics strict" (Stake, 2005, p. 459). During our time together, I had to weigh the benefits and risks of my research partners' participation in the study. As a research partner in the study, we worked collaboratively to make meaning of our position in the micropolitics of educational policy. At times our conversations would get heated as we opened old wounds in reflecting on students whom we may have underserved or marginalized unintentionally. It was during sessions such as this one that I had to step out of my co-participant role and into the role of ethical researcher. The emotional well being of my participants was of the utmost importance and my charge was to maintain a caring and safe environment for my research partners.

Another ethical dilemma I faced was how I might represent my findings in a way that would protect the identity and integrity of my research partners. Because many of the stories we shared could be traced to the person who experienced the event, I had to find a way to present the findings. I chose to use the genre of creative nonfiction (Gutkind, 1997) to represent my findings. Creative nonfiction uses actual narrative accounts and represents the information in literary form. By writing a story about one teacher's struggle negotiating the micropolitics of a new school, I was able to protect my

research partners and tell the story of the micropolitics of educational policy based on our collective analysis of the narratives shared.

Challenges to the Study

One of the methodological challenges of this study was the reality that the research partners in this study all teach at the same elementary campus thus; the data collected was representative of one elementary campus located in Central Texas. It was imperative to provide *thick description* (Geertz, 1977) to guide readers in the construction of their own understanding of the findings, enabling them to make generalizations and transfer information to similar situations elsewhere. According to Erickson (1986), since the general lies in the particular, what we learn in a particular case can be transferred to similar situations. It is my hope that through narrative description, readers can learn indirectly from an encounter with this narrative inquiry.

Another challenge in conducting this study was in managing my personal biases and assumptions during the research process. "Interpretive research begins and ends with the biography and self of the researcher" (Denzin, 1989, p.12). My experiences and history inform how I perceive the world and did have an influence on how I approached this research. Because of the collaborative nature of this study, it was difficult to separate myself from the research. I spent time naming and writing about my assumptions in regards to the study in an effort to face my biases and assumptions. It was of the utmost importance to control my biases so as not to sway my research partner's responses and produce an authentic research study which has potential for reaching beyond the themes, concepts, and categories of the data collected.

Significance of the Study

This study aims to examine the need for teachers' to act as critical and political agents to address the question: What pedagogical approach is important when teaching CLD students? The analysis of history, culture, and policy may be beneficial in curriculum development as educators work to negotiate the contextual influences of organization and policy challenging their knowledge, beliefs, and assumptions about teaching and learning in culturally and linguistically diverse classrooms. This study will contribute to the body of research examining the enactment of educational policy and effective teaching practice in multicultural classrooms.

APPENDIX B

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Alternative dissertation: Dissertation which represents findings in a nontraditional and creative way focusing more on the important questions than on the research methodologies (Jacobs, 2008).

Backwards design: An educational learning theory that begins with desired end results and builds on those skills and understandings to ensure mastery of concepts (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005).

Creative nonfiction: The use of literary craft to present nonfiction text in a compelling and vivid manner (Gutkind, 1997).

Critical Theory: An examination of power structures that shape individuals' beliefs and actions (Schwandt, 2001) working towards "human emancipation" (Horkeimer, 1982, p.244) in conditions of domination and oppression.

Cultural competence: Teachers who take responsibility for learning about the culture and community of the students they teach by "promoting a flexible use of students' local and global culture" (Ladson-Billings, 2001, p. 98).

Culturally relevant pedagogy: Classroom practice which includes a deliberate and conscious effort toward understanding the values and practices of families and cultures different from the dominant group (Bartolomé , 2008; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Hollins & Guzmán, 2005; Marx, 2006; McIntosh, 1990).

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Culturally responsive teaching: Positioning teachers in partnership with ethnically diverse students where a community steeped in honor, caring, and respect is the primary goal (Gay, 2000).

Cultural transmission: Teaching and learning of social and cultural values are accomplished through the explicit and implicit enactment of curriculum in schools (Spindler, 1997).

Ecological Systems Theory: An approach which divides a system into the macro-, exo-, meso-, and micro- levels (Bronfenbrenner, 1979).

Educational policy: The process whereby schools and school systems handle educational problems which eventually govern the rules and laws schools must abide by (Fowler, 2009).

ELLs: The acronym for and English language learner, or a person whose home language is not English (Texas Education Agency, 2011a).

Enduring and situated self: The enduring self refers to the values and beliefs one has acquired through one's own past and is the set of values that have been developed through one's culture, family and religious beliefs. The situated self, on the other hand, is the aspects of persons' character as s/he copes with the everyday life occurrences (Spindler & Spindler, 1994).

ESL: This acronym stands for English as a second language and refers to a curriculum or class where students who are learning English are taught by a specially trained teacher (Texas Education Agency, 2011a).

Ethnography of educational policy: Theoretical and methodological approach for using ethnography to study and influence educational policy (Levinson, Cade, Padawer, & Elvir, 2002).

Highly qualified teacher: A teacher who has taken the necessary steps to include certain endorsements such as ESL on their teaching certificate. The No Child Left Behind Act requires teachers of ELLs to obtain licensure to teach ESL (National Archives and Records Administration, 2009).

Hispanic: The word of choice used by the U.S. Government to identify people of Spanish origin (Sattin-Bajaj, 2009).

Life Map: A pictorial representation of pivotal moments in one's life. Graphic symbols may be used to identify moments, people, and places (Hodge, 2005).

Linguistic: Having to do with language (Gay, 2000).

Micropolitics: The strategic use of power by individuals and groups in organizations to achieve preferred outcomes (Ball, 1993).

Multicultural: A term used to describe contexts with students of diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004).

NCLB: The acronym for No Child Left Behind which is a United States Act of Congress concerning the education of children in public schools (National Archives and Records Administration, 2009).

Ontology: Basic assumptions about the nature of reality or how one comes to understand the world (Cresswell, 2007).

Policy Archeology: A methodological framework that seeks to investigate the intersection of conditions which illuminate policy as a social problem (Scheurich, 1994).

Research Partners: Term given to the participants and researcher in this study based on the participative nature of the inquiry.

STAAR: Acronym for the State of Texas Assessment of Academic Readiness which will replace TAKS, the former high stakes standardized test used by Texas schools (Texas Education Agency, 2011a).

TAKS: Acronym for Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills which has been the standardized test used to test publics school students in Texas schools since 2002 (Texas Education Agency, 2011).

Teacher agency: The cultural, historical, and social structures reflected in district and school initiatives, guidelines, and policy standards which shape what educators believe and think (Vygotsky, 1962).

APPENDIX C

REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION AND CONSENT FORM

Dear _____:

      You are invited to participate in a study conducted by Karon Henderson, doctoral candidate at Texas State University. The purpose of this study is to examine the effect of our history and experience in elementary multicultural classroom settings and how we, as White English-speaking elementary school teachers, have negotiated educational policy in our classrooms. In particular, this qualitative investigation will explore how our understanding of language policy and the theoretical frameworks of culturally responsive pedagogy have impacted the enactment of policy initiatives at the classroom level. You were selected as a possible participant for this study because of the work you have done with English language learners at the elementary campus where you teach.

      Participation in this study is entirely voluntary, confidential and separate from normal work duties.

      If you are interested in participating in this study and would like additional information, please contact Karon Henderson via email at karonstudy@gmail.com or by phone: 512-751-6470. Thank you,

Karon Henderson
Texas State University – San Marcos
Doctoral Candidate

Consent Form
Please Keep This Form for Your Records

You are being asked to participate in a research study. This form provides you with information about the qualitative study. The researcher conducting this research study will also describe the study to you and answer all of your questions. Please read the information below and ask any questions you might have before deciding whether or not to participate. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You can stop your participation at any time and your refusal will not impact current or future relationships with Texas State University or Round Rock ISD. To end your participation, simply notify the researcher that you wish to stop participation. The researcher will provide you with a copy of this consent form for your records.

Title of the Study: The Micropolitics of Educational Policy:
The Intersection of Policy, Practice, and Ontology of White English-Speaking Elementary Teachers in Multilingual Classrooms

Principle Investigator/Researcher: Karon Henderson, doctoral candidate, Texas State University – San Marcos, karonstudy@gmail.com, 512.751.6470

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Miguel Guajardo, Ph.D., Associate Professor for Educational Administration, mg50@txstate.edu, 512.245.6579

What is the purpose of this study?
The purpose of this qualitative investigation is to explore our histories and experiences in educational settings and examine how our understandings of educational policy and the theoretical frameworks of culturally responsive pedagogy impact the enactment of policy initiatives at the elementary classroom level.

If you agree to this study, I will ask you to do the following:
- Participate in two video or audio recorded interviews about your experiences as a teacher in multicultural settings. Each session will last no longer than 45 minutes.
- Participate in three video or audio recorded, interactive group sessions exploring:
  - Our values and beliefs about working in multicultural contexts.
  - Our own histories and the intersection of educational policies past and present.
  - Pivotal events in our lives which have lead us to the work we do.
  Each session will last approximately 45 minutes
- Keep a journal of reflections of past experiences in teaching ELLs as well as your reflections and reactions during the interactive group sessions. During the group sessions, time will be dedicated to reflection; however, you are free to reflect and journal about your experiences at any time for the duration of the research study.

Risks and benefits of participating in this study:
- Participation in the study poses no physical risk; however, there may be some risk of emotional stress when reflecting upon past instructional practices.

- Participation in this study is expected to benefit participants by engaging them in a reflective conversation about effective instruction and meeting the needs of increasingly diverse student populations amid a backdrop of educational policy initiatives.

Compensation:
- There is no compensation for participating in this study.

Confidentiality and Privacy Protections:

- The data resulting from your participation will be used for educational purposes and possible publication. The data will contain no identifying information that could associate you with it, or with your participation in this study.
- Data will be stored to ensure that it is secure and remains confidential. The participants' responses to interview questions will be videotaped, though participants may choose whether or not to be videotaped. Pending participant approval, the video recorded sessions will be saved to a camera equipped with converting files to Audio Video Interleave (AVI) which can be stored on a flash drive. Once the video files have been transferred from the camera to the flash drive, they shall be in a secure place (locked in a filing cabinet located at the researcher's home), limiting access to the taped recordings and research data. Video files will be destroyed immediately following transcription. Pseudonyms will be assigned after interviews and actual names will be removed from all recordings and data. The researcher will maintain a master key, which maintains the participant's real name and the assigned pseudonym. This key will be securely stored in a separate locked desk drawer located in the researcher's home.
- The records of this study will be stored securely and kept confidential. Authorized persons from Texas State University and members of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) have the legal right to review research records and will protect the confidentiality of those records to the extent permitted by law. Names and locations will be changed to All publications will include pseudonyms for people and places so as to make it difficult to identify you as a subject.
- Throughout this study, the researcher will notify you of new information that may become available and that might affect your decision to remain in the study.

Contacts and Questions:
- If you have any questions about the study, please ask now. If you have questions later, want additional information, or wish to withdraw your participation, contact the researcher conducting this study. My name, phone number, and email address are listed above as is the contact information for the Texas State University sponsor, Dr. Miguel Guajardo.
- If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, complaints, concerns, or question about the research, you may contact Dr. Jon Lasser, Chair, Texas State University Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at 512-245-3413 or the Office of Institutional Support at 512-245-2348, or email ospirb@txstate.edu.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

As the researcher conducting this study, I have explained the purpose, procedure, risks, and benefits involved in participation in this study.

Signature of researcher_____ Date_____

Statement of Consent:
- I have read the information above and have sufficient information to make a decision about participating in this study.
- I consent to participate in this study.

Your signature_____ Date_____

Please print your name_____

- I grant permission for the researcher to use the data collected as a result of my participation in this study for future publication and other educational purposes.

Your signature_____ Date_____

Signature of researcher_____ Date_____

Printed name of researcher_____ Date_____

INITIAL AND FINAL INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW PROTOCOLS

Initial Individual Interview Guide

Introductory Comments:
Thank you for agreeing to this interview. I am asking you to tell the story of your experiences in schools. The purpose for doing this is to collect our stories in order to begin a process of examining how we make sense of our work in multicultural classrooms. We will collect and analyze our stories looking for significant commonalities and differences in the stories we tell.

In telling the story about your life in schools, you need not tell every event, you should try to concentrate on those events you believe to be important in some fundamental way. Think of events and experiences you have had that have made you the teacher you are today. This interview is for research purposes only for the singular purpose of collecting data on our life stories.

1. Tell me about your family.

2. Tell me about your decision to go into the field of education.

3. When and why did you become certified to teach English Language Learners?

4. Tell me about the work you do with ELLs on this campus. What events led to your decision to work with students whose language and culture differ from your own?

5. Describe any event(s) in your life that stands out to you as having been significant or important. In what ways have these events impacted your life and the work you do with ELLs?

6. Think back to challenges you have faced. How did you deal with these challenges and how has this influenced what you do with the students you teach?

7. What do you believe is the most important value in human living? How does this match what we do in schools to teach and reach ELLs?

8. In what ways have your values and beliefs about teaching in multicultural and multilingual environments changed over time?

9. When are you at your best and most effective at teaching?

10. What else can you tell me that would help me understand your beliefs and values about life, the world, or your philosophy of teaching in multicultural environments?

11. Is there anything else you would like to tell me that I have not asked?

Thank you so much for participating and sharing your life stories. I will transcribe our session and send you a copy of the transcriptions for your review. Additionally, I am giving you a journal to reflect on your experiences in working with ELLs. For our first meeting, please bring a story about a specific experience you have had with an ELL that you have taught. These case studies will be the starting point of our critical conversations.

Final Individual Interview Guide
Introductory Comments:
Thank you for actively participating in this study. For this final interview, I would like for you to reflect on our experiences learning together during the course of the inquiry.

1. During the course of our study, which activity or experience had the most impact on the way you think about students, parents, curriculum, educational policy, the people you work with, etc? Explain.

2. What have you learned about your role in implementing language policy in your classroom?

3. What have you learned about yourself as a result of participation in this study?

4. What have you learned about others as a result of participation in this study?

5. What might you do differently as a result of being a part of this study?

6. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your experience as a participant in this study?

Thanks again for taking time to meet with me today. I will transcribe our session and will send you the transcriptions for your review. It was a pleasure getting to know you and I look forward to continued opportunities to grow and learn with you.

PROTOCOL FOR CRITICAL CONVERSATION SESSIONS

First Critical Conversation Session

This session will be devoted to learning about our values and beliefs about working in diverse environments. Participants will bring in reflective journals and will be prepared to the story of and ELL student they have previously taught. The session activities are outlined below.

- Participants share a case study of an ELL student they have taught.

- Participants will journal for 15-20 minutes, writing to address the following prompts:
    - What is your vision of education for the ELLs you teach?
    - If you could shape and develop what we do in schools, what would you do and what might that look like?

- Using chart paper, teachers will draw a picture of their reflections. Each participant will share visual representation explaining their philosophy of education.

- At the conclusion of the session, participants will share one thing they gleaned from participation in this session.

- In preparation for the following session, participants will be asked to think about language policy and ways language policy mandates have informed what they do with the students they teach. Using the reflective journal, participants write about a specific incident related to language policy in their work with ELLs. Participants will be encouraged to tell the story of an ELL they have worked with.

Second Critical Conversation Session

During this session, we will begin to look at educational policy. For this exercise, participants will, as a group, begin to fill a timeline with historical events which may have had an impact on educational policy and may have had a hand in defining what we do with the students we teach. Below is an outline of activities we will engage in during this session.

- Participants will share their case study from reflective journals detailing how language policy has impacted the work they do with ELLs.

- Chart paper will be divided into two sections: Historical Events and Educational Policy.

- Participants will brainstorm historical events which may include events such as Brown vs. the Board or Education, 911, Lau vs. Nichols, etc. These events will be added to the chart.

- Participants will reflect on educational policy created addressing historical events and will write these on the chart.

- Through our discussions and based on what is written on the timeline, participants will address the following questions:
    o How did these events inform what you did with the students you teach?
    o At what point on this timeline did you, as an educator (or future educator), begin to change what you did in your classroom or prompt you to consider alternatives for the ELLs you teach?

At the conclusion of this session, participants will be asked to use the reflective journal to write about how their own history intersected with history and educational policies discussed during the session. Participants will share these reflections during the next critical conversation session.

Third Critical Conversation Session

For this session, participants will develop a life map detailing important life events which have had an impact on them and possibly have directed them into their current work in schools. The following details the activities the participants will engage in during this session.

- Participants will share stories about the intersection of their lives and educational policies from their reflective journals.

- Each participant will be given paper and makers to design a diagram of pivotal instances that have impacted their lives and have aimed them in the direction of the work they do with ELLs.

- Participants will be given ample time to create their maps and will be given the following guidelines and questions to assist them with this endeavor.

  o Keep events narrowed down to 8 – 10 events.

  o Use symbols to depict events – be creative.

  o Consider events that have informed the work you do with the ELLs you teach.

  o What are the pivotal moments in your life?

  o What are challenges you have faced?

  o What events defined the person/educator you have become?

- Participants will share their maps with the group.

- Participants will take turns revealing something they learned about group members.

Participants will be asked to continue utilizing the reflective journal to write their thoughts about language policy and how they have enacted policy in the classroom. Reflective journals will be collected during the final interview session.

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VITA

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