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Pause to Reflect: Exploring Teachers' Notions of Social Responsibility

The struggle, or interrelationship, between [authoritative and internally persuasive] discourses, determine the history of an individual's "ideological consciousness." (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 348)

The "ideological consciousness" of 11 elementary schoolteachers in a linguistically and culturally heterogeneous school about meanings of social responsibility is central in this inquiry. In analyzing what social responsibility might imply for educators' practices, we draw on the works of pedagogical theorists (Casey, 1993; Dei, 1996; Delpit, 1995; Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Sleeter, 1993; Toh & Floresca-Cawagas, 2000) concerned with equity in education. Discourses of social and educational philosophers (Greene, 2000; Ignatieff, 2000; Noddings, 1992; Naht Han, 1992; Saul, 1995; Vanier, 1998) and sociocultural theorists (Bakhtin, 1981; Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, & Cain, 1998) also inform this research. This inquiry was stimulated by our respective perspectives as a classroom teacher struggling with the British Columbia Ministry of Education *authoritative discourse* (Bakhtin, 1981) on social responsibility in her own teaching and a teacher educator working with teachers on practices and perspectives that might support the inclusion of students of diverse ancestries and capabilities.

The BC Ministry of Education (2000a) discourse is specified in a single document: *BC Ministry Performance Standards for Social Responsibility*. This document outlines a common set of expectations for student development: "contributing to the class and school community, solving problems in peaceful ways, valuing diversity and defending human rights, and exercising democratic rights and responsibilities" (p. 9). It also provides a rating scale (accompanied with one sample of a possible activity for each expectation), but gives

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little attention to curriculum design. Students are to be rated as “not yet within expectations, meet[ing] expectations (minimal level) fully meet[ing] expectations or exceed[ing] expectations” (Jeroski, Chapman, Dockendorf, & Walt, 2001, p. 11). When we asked the teachers in this study what they knew about the ministry document, no teacher could report having viewed it; nor did this seem troubling to them.

As a classroom teacher pursuing graduate work in human/child's rights, anti-racism, multicultural, and environmental education, I (Philpott) was both aware of and initially excited that the BC Ministry of Education had issued a document on social responsibility. With my customary enthusiasm and curiosity I eagerly embraced the idea of addressing the expectations outlined above and began adapting these to the particularities of my classroom. Then I paused. Were educators and current programs not already addressing social responsibility? The media portray increased violence, as well as student and public apathy about engagement in social issues. So it seems that apparently we as a society are slipping in this area. But are teachers really not teaching about caring and being more socially conscious even in small ways? On further reflection, and of most concern, I questioned the Ministry of Education's intent in introducing new discourses aimed at evaluating students on behaviors so closely linked to identities and cultural values. Was this simply a symbolic effort to address systemic issues about race, class, language, and gender, which if defined in other ways might point out where societal structures (rather than teachers' practices) were eroding? Like Noddings (1992), Saul (1995), and Toh and Floresca-Cawagas (2000), whose work we discuss below, teachers questioned both the value and feasibility of trying to measure students' socially responsible behaviors.

From a teacher educator perspective I (Beynon) am concerned that educators in various stages of their preparation are neither required nor encouraged to take courses in which they explore and articulate the sources of their ideas on social responsibility and the variety of issues of inclusion and exclusion it encompasses: for example, race, language, physical abilities, and sexual orientation. Similarly, why are preservice and inservice teachers not routinely introduced to formal authoritative discourses such as the United Nations (1991) Convention of the Rights of the Child and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), nor asked to explore the Canadian Multiculturalism Act: Bill C-93 (1988) or the Charter of Rights and Freedoms (1982)? Comparing the official discourses articulated in these foundational documents with their own personal discourses could stimulate important dialogues. If teachers were provided opportunities to analyze official discourses, as well as those they bring from their own families and communities, perhaps they could begin early in their careers to craft and improvise (Holland et al., 1998) thoughtful perspectives and practices about these issues.

Our inquiry into these issues led to this key question: What do discourses from family, school, and community contribute to teachers' understandings and practices of social responsibility? In open-ended interviews we asked the 11 teachers to describe: (a) their understandings of social responsibility; (b) what they thought had contributed to these understandings; (c) whether they thought there were differences in how they understood and practiced social

responsibility in their classroom and the understandings and practices in their families, schools, and communities, and to what they attributed these differences; (d) some of the ways their educational practices about social responsibility were connected to their conceptions of social responsibility; (e) what opportunities they had to discuss these differences with colleagues; (f) their visions for social responsibility in their school and its communities, and what they considered the key steps in moving toward these visions. It is important to note that we were not testing the teachers on their knowledge of Ministry documents. Rather, our inquiries grew out of a sociocultural theoretical framework that suggests that we could learn about teachers' perceptions of these issues by asking them to articulate the variety of discourses developed in family, school, community, and profession over the course of their biographies. Although it was not our intent as researchers to embark on a change process, the theoretical frameworks outlined below suggest that developing pedagogical approaches that are equitable and inclusive requires analysis and understanding of the discourses teachers bring to their practice.

Pedagogical, Philosophical, and Theoretical Frames of Reference

Several authors (Casey, 1993; Dei, 1996; Delpit, 1995; Freire, 1970; Greene, 2000; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Noddings, 1992; Sleeter, 1993; Toh & Floresca-Cawagas, 2000) consider how teachers might address issues of social equity by recognizing students' diverse ancestries and biographies. Possible implications of the ideas of social responsibility and inclusion for educators' practices are also illuminated both by contemporary perspectives from social philosophy (Ignatieff, 2000; Naht Han, 1992; Saul, 1995; Vanier, 1998) and sociocultural/poststructural frames of reference (Bakhtin, 1981; Holland et al., 1998).

Pedagogical Reflections

From a pedagogical perspective Dei (1996) suggests, "As a society we can address questions of social justice, equity and power-sharing by first understanding ourselves and how we see our social obligations and responsibilities" (p. 132). For Sleeter (1993), Delpit (1995), and hooks (1994) these selves are understood as classed, raced, gendered, and abled subjects. In their perspectives teachers need to understand the sources and trajectories of their own discourses and identities and how these contribute to their teaching practices. For example, Sleeter sees that at the heart of teacher development is the notion that each individual constructs perspectives about what race means based on his or her own life experiences and vested interests and privileges. Therefore, teachers' abilities to understand what they felt as raced, gendered, classed, abled subjects in their schools and communities assist them in developing a greater sense of what it means to create inclusive, anti-racist, and supportive school communities. In this way teachers may set a frame of reference for similarly considering and honoring their students' antecedents and identity sources. In support of such self-examination Greene (2000) says, "Reflection on, thinking about lived and perceived actualities is what gives rise to understandings and to meanings. And all of these are contingent on the need to communicate with others—to conversation and dialogue" (p. 299). And yet "none of us receives much encouragement to examine our assumptions, values, preferences and habits of action" (Toh & Floresca-Cawagas, 2000, p. 397).

Philosophical and Ethical Orientations

Saul (1995), Vanier (1998), Ignatieff (2000), and Noddings (1992) offer the additional insights that social responsibility is based on living "consciously" for the "common good" of communities and societies. They speak with passion about the need to care deeply not only for our families and our communities, but for all of humankind. We must not live only in a struggle to survive or to achieve more in a competitive society (Saul, 1995). When we begin to believe that there is greater joy in working with and for others, then our society will truly become a place of celebration (Vanier, 1998). Although these authors wish to see individuals and societies move beyond the self to become more caring about others in local as well as global communities, they judge that the opposite is happening.

A Sociocultural Approach

Sociocultural theory specifies how discourse and struggles among different discourses are implicated in human "ideological coming to consciousness" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 348). Bakhtin focuses on the interactions of authoritative and internally persuasive discourses in analyzing this process. Authoritative discourses articulated in the words of "the father, the adult, and of teachers" (p. 342) are powerfully implicated how we interact in families, schools, and places of worship. "Authoritative discourse is privileged language that approaches us from without; it is distanced, taboo, and permits no play with its framing context. We recite it. It has power over us" (p. 424). These discourses might be articulated and enshrined in official documents (e.g., issued by ministries of education), but commonly they are more informally voiced in daily social interactions. Over time as we expand our interactions and dialogues with others, we struggle with new ideas, or reshape previously held beliefs, based on these new experiences and dialogues. According to Bakhtin, all utterance is defined by these dialogues, and no utterance stands alone, but is intertwined with past and present interactions. New understandings are what Bakhtin refers to as "internally persuasive discourse ... which is more akin to retelling ... in one's own words, with one's own accents, gestures, and modifications" (p. 424). The struggle between authoritative and internally persuasive discourses is a process of "freeing of one's own discourse from the authoritative word, or from earlier persuasive words that have ceased the mean" (p. 345). Applying Bakhtin's theory to teachers' narratives suggests looking at the variety of discourses relating to notions of social responsibility with which they have struggled over the course of their biographies; whether these were articulated by authorities such as their parents, teachers, or university professors. Teachers in this study cannot be said to have struggled with ministry authoritative discourses, because for the most part they knew little of what was articulated in official documents on social responsibility.

Similarly, Holland et al. (1998) suggest that,

One's history-in-person is the sediment from past experiences upon which one improvises, using the cultural resources available, in response to the subject positions afforded one in the present (p. 18).

Thus persons and, to a lesser extent, groups are caught in the tensions between past histories that have settled in them and the present discourses (p. 4).

Holland et al. also discuss the dynamic of “figured worlds” that are

socially and culturally constructed realm(s) of interpretation in which particular characters and actors are recognized ... significance is assigned to certain acts, and particular outcomes are valued over others ... [consequently] figured worlds provide the contexts of meaning and action in which social positions and social relationships are named and conducted. (pp. 53, 60).

In this study we invited participants to reflect on the variety of figured worlds (e.g., home, community, school, and profession) in which they had participated. We asked them to tell us in their own words about the variety of discourses, both authoritative and internally persuasive, relating to notions of social responsibility that they and others had articulated in these settings.

Qualitative Inquiry

This study took place in one of the largest and fastest growing school districts in British Columbia. Social responsibility is among the district’s newest program initiatives. The importance attached to this area is reflected and authorized in a special district-level department identified as Project Development, Social Responsibility and Student Leadership. The school selected for this study identifies on its Web site “improving students’ social behavior by providing them with the skills to make better decisions” as a focal goal formulated in response to the BC Ministry of Education (2002b) *Performance Standards for Social Responsibility*. In addition to its stated concern with social responsibility this school was selected because it is multiethnic, has bilingual (French, English) teachers and represents well the multiethnic demographics of the district. In concert with pedagogical theories on diversity and social equity in contemporary North American schools, we considered this linguistic and cultural diversity an important dimension and were interested in how teachers would account for it in their perspectives on social responsibility.

Open-ended interviews of approximately 90 minutes were conducted with 11 of a total of 22 practicing teachers of Anglo-European ancestry. In this group of 11 volunteers, five taught in French immersion and three in English programs. We found no particular differences in the respective perspectives of teachers in the French immersion and English-track programs.

In addition, one counselor, one teacher-librarian, and one special education teacher also volunteered to participate. These interviews usefully set out the discourses that these practitioners bring to potential pedagogical practices for social responsibility.

Teachers’ Perspectives

Teachers’ perspectives on social responsibility are analyzed in relation to the figured (sociocultural) worlds (Holland et al., 1998) of their own families and communities, profession and the futures they imagine. This analysis identifies these worlds respectively as: where I have come from (family, community, and school); where I am now (present school community: parents, children, and colleagues); and where I imagine I might go (visions of socially responsible communities). Bakhtin’s (1981) sense of authoritative and internally persuasive discourses informs the analysis of teachers’ narratives about these varied figured worlds.

Our analysis of teachers' narratives suggests two (sometimes intersecting) discourses about social responsibility. The first is a discourse of respect and adherence to rules; the second is a discourse of exploration that seeks to expand beyond what was internalized in youth to a more community-minded, or in some instances a more global perspective.

Where I have come from

"It was a big issue in our family—being able to act responsibly and respectfully" (Marie).

Family

Interviewees noted that they felt their own parents had the strongest influence in shaping their notions of what it means to be socially responsible. For many of the teachers, like Marie, the idea of respect was a key parental message. Emily reinforced this idea when she said, "Well, we were taught ... about talking to adults, speaking with adults or even identifying yourself. Your respect is actually one of the biggest [things]. Respect for people and things and yourself." The notion of *do unto others*, because for every action there will be a consequence, was also prevalent in many of the internally persuasive discourses articulated. As Anna said, lessons taught by her mother played out in many aspects of her life, "I guess from my mom. She has just always taught us to do unto others as you would have them do unto you and I guess that just partakes in how you treat other people and how that contributes to you and a group setting."

In Liz's experience, "All responsibilities were shared equally. There was no female/male thing in our house.... Parents' political views also stimulated teachers to think beyond 'self' to embrace the 'greater good of the community.'" Jane spoke of her father's political involvement and her mother's church involvement contributing to her understandings of what it meant to be socially responsible.

Community

In addition to community involvements of their parents, which they remembered from their own childhoods, teachers recounted that other adults in their communities played key parts in shaping their understandings. All the teachers were raised in predominantly white, English-speaking communities, nine in suburban Vancouver and two in rural British Columbia. They described their understandings of social responsibility in relation to the communities in which they were raised. For many teachers, living in a community that held values similar to their own reinforced understandings. As a child Liz found this consistency a source of comfort and security.

From a young age I attended the local church and I was in Young People and choir and I joined absolutely everything; Guides and Brownies. The values from church and from working and from guiding were all similar to what we got at home.

Emily commented,

I think that the community sets pretty good examples when they have different programs ... open for different age groups, different lifestyles maybe ... you

kind of get to know each other and by knowing each other you can learn about their customs ... and kind of gain a tolerance and a respect that way.

Marie noted,

Playing sports added to that as well because there are things that you need to do and things that are not okay and any sort of community thing I guess impacts your understanding of it [social responsibility] in some way, shape or form.

Ben, on the other hand, reflecting on the racial (white), linguistic (English), and occupational and economic homogeneity of his (small-town) community found that this security, although not negative, was nevertheless limiting.

From the eyes of a child I would have seen that ... [values of home and community] were very similar because you were basically only [relating] to the people that your parents know with similar values. I was in a very protective environment ... It was all positive. So my understanding of what the community was ... that everybody was the same. Yes it [the community] was [very homogeneous] ... mostly Caucasian people; and the industries were pretty much the same too.

In spite of this apparent homogeneity Ben also recognized that cultural understanding was not always the norm.

Yeah [racism was an undercurrent in my community] and that's an interesting thing. I am not that way at all. Even when my parents or my brother-in-law come [to the city] it's sort of like "no that's not okay to say." My dad comes down here and says "There's a lot of Chinese people down here" ... it is racism but it's more just naïveté. In a way it's a bit of both. I chose not to be that.

For Rita "coming to consciousness" (Bakhtin, 1981) and deciding to live out her life differently from her parents led to a continual struggle with authoritative discourses from her past,

Well you don't want my family upbringing because I was in a dysfunctional family. I think it was like in high school when I started to do track and field and other people ... acted like parents and treated me with respect and guided me to the right way of living so I wasn't working on the street.

School experiences

"Nothing stands out when I went to school" (Marie); "I don't know of anything specific" (Linda); "I can't think of anything grand ... I'm sure we must have done something, but nothing jumps out at me" (Kate). Although many educators assume they are continually addressing social responsibility, a considerable number of the teachers interviewed in this research revealed a completely different perspective based on their own school experiences. Virtually none perceived that their own school experiences contributed to shaping their understandings of social responsibility. Moreover, this gap was not filled by their teacher education experiences, either preservice or inservice.

The only opportunities [in preservice teacher education] as far as I'm concerned ... were just in planning my year and my units and whatever I got out of the IRP's (Integrated Resource Packages) and how I interpreted them. But we didn't have any seminars or sessions on social responsibility. (Anna)

Ben, referring to his father's naïveté about racial diversity, credited travel and moving to another community to attend university (but not preservice teacher education) for widening his perspective: "When I went off to college, I went to Alberta for a year and then down here and I just chose not to see things that [naïve] way." He then went on to note that he actively seeks out new experiences that expand his understandings of social responsibility in relation to people from cultures other than his own.

Marie agreed that travel opened new possibilities for understanding, "We've done quite a bit of travelling ... So we've seen other places where people just seem to have this cohesive sense of community." Kate, like Ben, also found university was pivotal: "[I] ... then moved into University and it was the whole world all of a sudden and for me I became real idealistic." Liz noted that a life-altering illness led her to reevaluate her understandings: "Oh, big time [notions have changed] big time ... I'm just more relaxed about things I can't change."

Where I am now

In looking at their present professional lives, teachers focused on comparisons of their own discourses and those of parents (of the students they teach) and on how their classroom practices reflected the former. They also talked about interactions (or lack thereof) with colleagues.

Comparison with parents

Many of the teachers felt that parental values (of the students in their classes) were different from their own internally persuasive discourses about key issues.

I've definitely run across parents with different values than I have or with different opinions of how things should be handled ... In most cases children are without strong home support ... lack of role models ... [and] ... lack of any guidelines or discipline. (Rick)

[For these kids] if someone hits you, hit back [rather than talking it out] ... A lot of parents aren't willing to take the time. Some of the parents are very young and I think life experiences have not happened for them yet (Liz).

Teachers identified a variety of factors that account for the differences they perceived between their own and the parents' discourses. These included:

Socioeconomic factors:

Kids don't have ... the stable resources at home or they are different now than they were, say, when I was a child with one parent working and one parent at home ... I guess it is hard enough to have food on the table and kids dressed let alone being able to spend their time doing these other types of teaching. (Emily)

Education levels. "I think a lot of it [the differences] is how they are educated. I think the more educated you are the more you have to offer. The less educated they don't have as much resources to offer" (Rita).

Cultural differences. "There are some cultures where there is not a lot of respect for women and sometimes female teachers have a hard time dealing with difficult children; [especially boys]" (Jane).

Media. "I think maybe a lot of what people see in the media ... violence for example [influences them]."

Finally, when dialogue with parents was seen as a waste of time, Rick asserted the authority of his own discourse.

I state what my belief is and why I am doing something and leave it at that. They may not like it, but as long as I explain it to them and the reasons why, I am usually OK with it ... they disagree ... but they don't have a choice in the matter.

Jane switched her focus to the classroom.

there is the occasional parent who will make ... excuse[es for a child's behavior] when a parent is totally in denial ... the mom insists that none of this behavior shows up at home and so it's obviously something between me and the child ... when it gets to that point I feel like OK ... this is getting to be a waste of my time with this parent and I may as well focus my energies on this child and getting things going together with this child.

Classroom practices

In the context of their professional lives, the teachers' discourses reveal the repetition of strong personal family understandings about the notions of "instilling respect" (Linda) and compliance to rules; and "ingraining" ideas in children at an early age when "they are like parrots" (Jane). Notions of non-recognition of racial and linguistic diversity were also apparent. For example, even in acknowledging the presence of anti-racism in school, Rita denied the existence of differences.

Well, I think a lot of the schools now we try to do the anti-racism and treating each other with respect and those kinds of things. So I think by teaching it to the kids at a younger level we are cultivating that everyone is the same, we all come from the same community, no one is different than each other.

However, teachers did build beyond notions of respect and homogeneity in recognizing opportunities for children to see, as Liz put it, "beyond themselves."

I run the student council and we've worked for the last two years to try and get the kids to see beyond themselves. This year we are sponsoring a child in India and we are running a recycling of pop and juice cans to supply the money for that and we are going to "green" part of our school.

Ben saw that discourses of social responsibility needed to permeate a variety of interactions in the school.

I think my whole job is devoted to that [educational practice regarding social responsibility]. Even though I may not have a very good verbal sense or definition of what social responsibility is, I think that that's sort of what I have chosen to do in my job.... to help people to help themselves a little more.

Dialogues with colleagues

Teachers reported that recently, that is, because social responsibility was chosen as a school focus, there had been staff discussions on this topic. After participating in the interview, a number of teachers also began to engage during lunch and coffee breaks in informal conversations with colleagues about social responsibility. As the interviews progressed, the researcher noticed that the teachers' conversations about social responsibility increased in frequency and interest.

We've been talking about it a lot lately ... when we have [staff] meetings ... how can we approach it to make it a better community and what are the consequences for certain behaviors and how can we improve, how can we teach the kids about social responsibility within the classroom with individuals within the family, within the community? (Rita)

However, they also reported they were most likely to seek out for these conversations colleagues who held similar views. Zoe's comment illustrates this. "I always find there is opportunity to talk ... in the staff room ... I could probably talk to anybody, but more likely I would talk to the two teachers who are also good friends of mine." Kate believed that teachers were satisfied with their minimal interactions with parents and students: "They have their ways that they feel are right and working and they are happy with it so they don't feel they need to discuss [differences] with others."

Several teachers spoke about avoiding controversy. Ben said, "I think the reason [discussions might not happen] is people are afraid to express their feelings. We don't want to be rejected."

Linda did not talk about social responsibility with her colleagues because she "[didn't] want other people to think I am criticizing them in how they are teaching their students. [Teachers] might be just a bit guarded ... a bit concerned that they might say the wrong thing."

Where I am going

At the end of the interviews teachers were invited to express their visions for developing social responsibility in their schools and community. Many had similar aspirations of how these visions might unfold. The idea of teacher, parent, student, and community collaborative involvement was a strong theme. Creating a "link between all those groups [through] communication (Anna)" is key. Marie agreed that, "parents just should be involved in every step of the way ... it's a home, community, [responsibility] everywhere." Other themes expressed by teachers included the following.

Consistency and commitment. "Just having more flow through the school ... cohesion ... because if teachers don't have the same vision then it's really hard to get that cohesion from students (Kate).

Teaching concern for others (moving beyond the self). "I visualize students out there ... when someone is in need, someone who needs support, students recognize this and help that person" (Rick).

Improving integrated services. "My vision would be ... a wrap-around service [and] more of a community agency involvement closer to the school so they are not separate entities" (Ben).

Interpretation: Certainty and Struggle

Teachers articulated two prominent discourses about social responsibility that were not always consistent. One related to a rule-based sense of respect developed in their families. The other related to the notion of reaching out beyond their familiar figured worlds. They had hopeful visions of what a socially responsible school community might look like, but they had few experiences with how to negotiate or dialogue with dissonant discourses of colleagues and/or parents in order to move toward a collectively accepted vision.

The Problematics of Respect

"Being responsible in the sense of, like following the law ... the proper rules ... being kind to others, manners and those kinds of things" (Kate). For all the teachers the idea of respect was a strong message conveyed by their own parents. Many, like Kate, defined socially responsible behavior as being respectful, especially in the context of obeying rules. In contrast, Noddings (1992) suggests that it is care that is at the heart of living consciously for the common good. Respect, it seems to us, implies regard for others' rights and some level of deference to authority, whereas care implies a more personal emotional commitment to and engagement with others. We see that the notion of respect can be much like the notion of tolerance. It is possible to respect or tolerate others without ever having really to know or understand them. It seems that if listening to others (as we would have them listen to us) is implicated in this rule of doing unto others, we would need to consider how best to engage in dialogues, especially when diverse discourses of colleagues and parents sound dissonant and precipitate struggle.

Possibilities for Encompassing Diverse Perspectives

"It's family first [that influences your understandings of social responsibility] ... then people outside ... probably everybody ... [begins to influence and reshape understandings]" (Ben). Freire (1970), hooks (1994), Sleeter (1993), and Toh and Floresca-Cawagas (2000) suggest that reflecting on self and personal world views is essential in preparing teachers to create, and work in, inclusive, anti-racist, socially active, and socially responsible classrooms. Discussion with colleagues might be a place to begin reflection and dialogue, but teachers seemed cautious lest this lead to dissonance (in conflict with their own visions of a whole school community). Experiences with parents where dialogue led to dissonance were also cited as reasons for keeping their work on social responsibility confined to the figured worlds of their own respective classrooms. So although teachers had hopeful visions of what an expanded community might be like, getting there was seen as problematic. Anna put it this way: "All the domains of the community and the different families and individuals within those families are brought together in a school community, a somewhat artificial community." The problematic artificiality that Anna indicates is suggestive of Holland et al.'s (1998) idea of "as if," or "socially constructed" worlds. Children, parents, and teachers all participate in the socially constructed world of school, but it is clear that not all have been equally involved in shaping the frameworks in which they are required to participate.

Whose Definitions?

Teachers all expressed the desire to see their students leave school with a greater understanding of what it means to be socially responsible. The questions, then, are whose understanding and how do we achieve this? Teachers recognized that children attending their school were being introduced to new discourses that Zoe said sent "mixed messages" and could, according to Marie, "create confusion and conflict." In this conflict or cultural clash (Delpit, 1995; Evans & Hundey, 2000), teachers see themselves "sometimes fighting against what has been ingrained in a child" (Jane). They spoke of growing frustration when working with students who did not seem to them to espouse or adopt the

ideals to which teachers had been socialized, "I don't know what we are supposed to do to change it" (Zoe).

Most teachers believed that parents and children should become more involved in supporting the values of the school: "you can instill certain practices in them [students], but if they are not continued at home it makes it a challenge" (Anna).

The notion of caring, although important in the discourse on teaching practice, was paradoxically interwoven with contradictory negative judgments of lifestyles and value choices of the students' families. These views implied that it is the responsibility of the parents to change or adapt their understandings and world views to be more in line with the ideals espoused by the school system, as opposed to the school system changing to invite diverse understandings of the parents and community.

Many of the teachers interviewed had little in-depth experience with multicultural, anti-racist education or other curricular approaches to social inclusion. Some discussed their efforts to include multiculturalism as an integral part of their practice (especially relating to teaching social responsibility): "We try to do the anti-racism and treating each other with respect and those kinds of things" (Rita). However, notions that "we are cultivating that everyone is the same, we all come from the same community, no one is different than each other" (Rita, Zoe, and Anna) are contrary to anti-racist and multicultural pedagogies that emphasize that equity requires the acknowledgment and valuing of difference (Dei, 1996; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994).

Who is responsible for change?

"Whose responsibility is it to teach social responsibility?" (Zoe). Casey (1993), Elliot (2000), Freire (1970), hooks (1994), Ladson-Billings (1994), and Paley (1989) suggest that teachers can act as agents of change by engaging the community in the co-creation of curriculum and educational settings conducive to meeting the diverse needs of the students. Teachers in this study believed that they shouldered weighty societal expectations about learners' experiences with social responsibility. They viewed themselves as vital links to the community, but noted that they still had a deep chasm to cross in creating connections between school and community. Comments such as "Parents just should be involved in every step of the way ... they need to have their opinions heard because it's not just a school thing ... it's home, community, everywhere" (Marie) suggest teachers' desires to have parents work with them. "Some teachers address the need to enhance 'communication between parents and teachers ... [and to make it] ... a little less formal" (Zoe). Zoe's point echoes Bakhtin (1981) and Holland et al.'s (1998) views that dialogue is essential to the creation of new discourses. Freire (1970) defines collaboration as "co-intentional," aimed at improvising to create new socially constructed worlds. Such collaboration must also include children as active participants (UN *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 2001, Article 29[1]) in shaping their own lives and education. This was also acknowledged by some teachers as critical in bringing about new educational practice, "Kids are involved ... because this is their school" (Zoe). However, expecting parents' and children's compliance contradicts notions of the authentic inclusion that can open doors to social change.

Studies of teachers acting as effective agents of social change (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Casey, 1993; Paley, 1989; Elliot, 2000, cited in Medwick, 2000) show that they do not feel compelled to espouse beliefs or expectations identical to those of colleagues, parents, or students, or vice versa. Instead, they draw on the diversity of teacher and community discourses in improvising new and inclusive approaches.

Some teachers in this study spoke of wishing to build educational settings that are caring and collaborative "to see the head knowledge move to be heart knowledge" (Jane). However, they also indicated that they required opportunities, encouragement, conditions, and support to move toward this goal. Learning effective ways to link communities, initiate dialogue (between parents, children, colleagues, and community), and engage in collaborative educational practices remain real challenges for these teachers.

Recommendations

Pedagogical theorists identify dialogues in which differing discourses are articulated as central to the processes of creating collective visions for educational change. Engaging productively in these dialogues requires reflection in order to develop awareness of, and be able to articulate, the sources of personal and professional beliefs. Often the dialogues in which we experience dissonance are powerful in helping us to specify our internally persuasive discourses.

Developing Awareness Through Dialogical Practices

Dialogue is required here, and dialogue ends in questions or in great sadness as it does in solutions. Even in genuine dialogue, the end is often uncertainty and the sort of tension that will lead to fresh and more vigorous exploration. (Noddings, 1992, p. 120)

"Through dialogue, questions may be raised that make us feel uncomfortable [and] shifting paradigms can cause discomfort" (hooks, 1994, p. 43). Sleeter (1993), Delpit (1995), Dei (1996), and hooks suggest that before dialoguing about issues of race, class, and gender with their students, educators must first become aware of their own particular understandings, their own ideological consciousness about these issues

Teachers in this study indicated that although they had opportunities to engage in dialogues with colleagues or parents, they often chose to avoid such encounters for fear of offending those with conflicting views or creating friction. Furthermore, teachers related that they had had few opportunities (preservice and inservice) to develop strategies for engaging in such discussions. Those who found their understandings of social responsibility most profoundly altered over the years had challenged the authoritative discourses of their youth. They noted that university arts and sciences, as well as travel and illness, had helped them to reflect on their own perspectives and become open to considering new perspectives. Paradoxically, however, teachers did not count either their own childhood schooling or their teacher education as providing opportunities for dialogues that helped them to be more self-reflective and articulate new discourses. Moreover, they found little in teacher education that could guide their efforts to facilitate dialogues with parents and colleagues.

The opportunity or desire to challenge authoritative discourses to which they were answerable in their youth and further develop their own internally persuasive discourses is what led these individuals to expand their thinking about what it means to be socially responsible and perhaps more adept at engaging in potentially uncomfortable dialogues with others. The challenge, then, is in how to create spaces for those educators (both practicing and preservice) who may not have had such experiences, spaces where teachers are provided opportunities to dialogue with others:

1. to develop awareness of personal beliefs, ideas, values, and understandings;
2. to determine whether their previously held (authoritative discourses) world views continue to fit with new information and ideas (internally persuasive discourse);
3. to challenge previously held ideas and shape new discourses;
4. to shape new ways to engage in dialogue with others who may have differing world views, values, and beliefs; and
5. to create new visions that are inclusive and honor a variety of voices and understandings.

Doing this requires giving ample opportunities for preservice and inservice teachers to reflect on and critically examine the variety of discourses (their own, parents, children, curriculum, pedagogical, theoretical, philosophical, and social policy) implicated in their lives. Examples from pedagogical literature illustrate how this might be done through dialogue (hooks, 1994); reflective writing about critical incidents (Wyatt-Beynon, 1985), reading and discussion of autobiography (Florio-Ruane, 2001), and literature (Greene, 1990).

Creating Collective Visions: When Visions and Values Collide

Teachers talk about wishing to educate children to move beyond the self, to embrace the common good, to be compassionate and caring. However, the notion of difference is commonly quietly swept into the corner in favor of more polite and socially acceptable understandings that tidily collect people together in we-are-all-the-same groupings. Sleeter (1993), hooks (1994), Delpit (1995), and Dei (1996) all address this authoritative, predominantly Caucasian middle-class perspective. They identify the challenge as lying in creating spaces where a variety of voices come together to create a common vision.

Creating this community or building a school culture does not imply assimilation or conforming to the understandings and ideals espoused by the school (or specific teachers or classrooms in the school). Rather, classroom communities, as hooks (1994) specifies, need to be places where diverse voices meet, collide, improvise, and co-create ever-evolving understandings. "Community creates a sense that there is shared commitment and a common good that binds us ... to build community in the classroom is to recognize the value of each individual voice" (p. 40). Although the teachers in this research acknowledge the many factors that contribute to conflict between parent, teacher, and community understandings, they seem uncertain as to how they might begin to bridge these gaps. Each parent, teacher and student is working in his or her own framework of understanding and identity based on, and limited by,

his or her own experiences and discourses. The challenge, then, is not to exclude voices, but rather to acknowledge and accept that alternative voices may indeed have something of value to offer. Ignatieff (2000) suggests where possibilities lie:

The precondition for order in a liberal society is an act of the imagination: *not* a moral consensus or shared values, but the capacity to understand a moral world different from our own. We may be different, but we can imagine what it would be like to be each other. (p. 138)

Imagining what it would be like to be each other can in turn stimulate self-knowledge. Greene (2000) puts it this way: "Through naming what stood in their way, through coming together in efforts to overcome—people are likely to find out the kinds of selves they are creating" (p. 301). Perhaps the next step for teachers in this imaginative process is to work and engage in dialogue together with each other, with parents, students, and diverse community members in exploring each other's varied understandings of social responsibility. Teachers at all levels of education (as well as government decision-makers) need to acknowledge that we occupy positions that give us power and privilege to initiate these dialogues. If they do not take this initiative, then potentially productive discussions of varied perspectives are not likely to occur.

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