Transformative Multiculturalism and the Supervision of Social Studies Student Teachers: A Critical Look at One University Supervisor’s Approach

James M. M. Hartwick
Edric C. Johnson
University of Wisconsin-Whitewater

This collaborative study, conducted by two social studies teacher educators, examines how one university supervisor translates his theoretical commitment to transformative multiculturalism into his practice with student teachers. The value of this study is that it (1) illustrates the subtle nuances and applications of the transformative multicultural approach to social studies; (2) provides concrete examples of how a university supervisor, cooperating teacher, or mentor can coach a novice teacher to incorporate dimensions of transformative multiculturalism into his or her practice; and (3) explores some potential barriers to implementing a transformative multicultural perspective with pre-service and novice teachers through an honest reflection of where the university supervisor has fallen short of his professed commitment to transformative multiculturalism.

Introduction

Of all the disciplines taught in our nation’s schools, we believe that the social sciences are most naturally associated with addressing issues of social justice and equity as well as developing a sense of activism. It is imperative that the social sciences cultivate these ideals in students to empower them to act on behalf of society. Transformative multiculturalism attempts to address these concerns according to Cornbleth and Waugh (1995), “Transformative multiculturalism serves to enhance understanding of one’s own and others’ experiences, of how present circumstances have come to be, and to inform social action toward equity and social justice goals” (p. 193). The transformative multicultural approach is critical in nature; multiple perspectives are included, and structural inequality, hegemony, and unjust power structures are challenged (Banks, 1995a). There is a belief, which is translated into practice, that all students are capable. Teachers attempt to cultivate connections with all of their students; therefore, they hold high expectations of their students while providing scaffolding and support, enabling students to connect actively with the material. Frequently, learning is connected to the local community — students are encouraged to work collaboratively to address local problems and use the community as a resource. In addition, students and communities are believed to possess valid knowledge. Finally, knowledge is not considered static; rather it is constructed by and/or “mined” from the students (Ladson-Billings, 1994).

This is all well and good, but how should the laudable goals inherent to transformative multiculturalism be accomplished? And in particular, how can a university supervisor — or perhaps cooperating teacher or mentor — cultivate transformative multicultural sensibilities and practices in his or her student teacher or less experienced colleagues? These are the primary questions that we, two social studies teacher educators and supervisors, set out to examine in this study. Moreover, by reflecting on where a university supervisor fell short of his professed commitment to transformative multiculturalism, we examine some potential barriers to implementing a transformative
multicultural perspective with pre-service and novice teachers.

As university supervisors, we observe and provide guidance to secondary social studies student teachers as they work in classroom settings. We help them to develop, connect, and apply both their content knowledge and educational theory to their emerging teaching practice. In our experience, student teachers in their debut teaching experiences frequently appear overwhelmed and occasionally panic-stricken. The last thing they need from us is a philosophical treatise on transformative multiculturalism. Much of our work with student teachers includes developing classroom management strategies, exploring various methods for teaching, and enhancing our student teachers’ abilities to be reflective about their practices. However, through this study, we found that transformative multiculturalism permeates one of the author’s (Dr. James Hartwick) observation reports and is readily apparent in the feedback that he provides to student teachers.

**Value of the Study**

Our special interest in the transformative multicultural approach stems from the fact that relative to other approaches to social studies, such as the social scientist or public issue approaches (Barr, Barth, & Shermis, 1978), the transformative multicultural approach has more recently gained prominence in the academic literature (Banks, 1995b). Moreover, the focus here is how a university supervisor translates his theoretical framework of transformative multiculturalism into his practice with student teachers.

This study is valuable in and of itself as it illustrates the subtle nuances and applications of the transformative multicultural approach to social studies. We provide concrete examples of how to coach a new teacher to incorporate dimensions of transformative multiculturalism into his or her practice.

In addition to illustrating how one university supervisor cultivated this pedagogical practices and theoretical dispositions in his less experienced pre-service teachers, this article provides honest reflection of where the university supervisor has fallen short of his professed commitment to transformative multiculturalism, providing some possible explanations for that failure. These explanations include some potential structural barriers to implementing a transformative multicultural perspective with pre-service teachers.

**Methodology**

The general research strategy involved conducting a self-study of one of the author’s, Dr. James Hartwick’s, supervision practices with student teachers as an approach to inquiry and critical reflection (Loughran, Hamilton, LaBoskey, & Russell, 2004). In this study, the two authors examined how James enacted his theoretical framework of transformative multiculturalism in his practice as a secondary social studies supervisor.

**Data Collection**

Hartwick used the Clinical Supervision approach (Goldhammer, Anderson, & Krajewski, 1980) in his work as a university supervisor; he engaged in a pre-observation conference, observed teaching, conducted a post-observation conference, and finally recorded an evaluation of each observation. These written evaluations served as the data source for this study of Hartwick’s supervision practices. Embedded in the observation reports were his conceptions of social studies as well as his understanding of appropriate methods for teaching it.

**Participants**

We intentionally selected a sample of the observation reports of three student teachers. These student teachers were chosen based on
Social Studies Research and Practice
http://www.socstrp.org

Volume 3 Number 3
28
November 2008

four primary considerations including (a) representation of both the high school and middle school levels, (b) similarity in subject matter (history), (c) representation of both genders, and (d) a wide variance of initial teaching skills. One “limitation” of this study was that each of these students was White and middle class. All of the students to whom Hartwick was assigned to work with during this semester were from similar ethnic and class backgrounds. Unfortunately, teachers of color make up a small percentage (less than 10%) of all new teachers (NCES, 2002). The lack of diversity in the sample does not appear to be unusual, but rather a problem that is endemic to the profession.

Three student teachers participated in this study and have been given pseudonyms to protect their anonymity. Adam taught eighth-grade United States History and was initially extremely challenged by his teaching duties. Megan struggled moderately in her teaching eleventh-grade United States history class. Luke, who taught tenth-grade World History, had extensive experience teaching music and, from the onset, was a highly skilled educator. All three student teachers were academically strong and possessed solid content knowledge. Each student teacher was observed four times; therefore, the source of the data for the study consists of twelve observation reports written over the course of one semester.

Settings. All three student teachers accepted assignments in a mid-size, Midwestern, metropolitan school district. According the school’s website (2008), the middle school where Adam taught had a student population comprised of 55% ethnic minority students; 29% were English Language Learners (ELL), and 53% of the students qualify for free and reduced-price lunch. The high school where Luke student taught had a student population comprised of 33% ethnic minority and 9% ELL, and 32% qualify for free and reduced-price lunch (2008, school website). And Megan’s high school lists the student population as 43% ethnic minority with 13% ELL, and 42% qualify for free and reduced-price lunch (2008, school website).

Analysis

We used grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to analyze the observation reports. Following categorization of the observation reports, we independently coded the reports and identified emergent themes (Patton, 2002) and subsequently negotiated the language to couch the themes. In analyzing the data, we used Banks’ (1995b) framework for transformative multiculturalism. We analyzed Hartwick’s observation reports of the three student teachers to identify evidence of his efforts to strengthen the student teachers’ conceptual understanding of transformative multicultural approach to social studies instruction.

Findings from the Observation Reports

In order to provide a sense of the pervasiveness of Hartwick’s attention to transformative multiculturalism, we examined the relative frequency of multicultural references in the observation reports. Admittedly, it is difficult and perhaps problematic to quantify this type of qualitative data; however, every report we examined included at least one reference associated with the transformative multicultural approach. Seventy-five percent of the reports had three or more examples of evidence associated with transformative multiculturalism, while one report had as many as seven such examples. The authors’ analysis of the data yielded the following themes of the transformative multiculturalism in the observation reports:

- Pedagogical implications
  - Educating all children
  - Gender equity
  - Teacher as warm demander
  - Building a supportive learning community
Curricular and theoretical implications
- Content-specific multicultural topics
- Multiculturalism
- Critical thinking and the critical perspective
- Language proficiency and addressing double consciousness
- Community learning opportunities and social activism

Although curricular and theoretical concerns are apparent, the pedagogical implications tend to predominate. Regardless, the evidence is clear that to a great extent Hartwick’s commitment to the theory and pedagogy of transformative multicultural social studies influenced his work with student teachers.

**Pedagogical Implications**

**Educating All Children and Gender Equity**

In the cycle of observation reports for each student teacher, Hartwick made numerous references to the importance of educating all children, especially those who have been historically marginalized; being sensitive to their cultural and individual needs is of central importance to the tenets of transformative multiculturalism. Social justice demands that all teachers, especially those who teach social studies, believe in and strive to educate all of their students.

Luke is a good example of how Hartwick highlights the importance of educating all children. In his first observation, Luke appeared to overlook non-engaged students. Consequently, Hartwick noted that Luke had “a tendency to rely on the same students to respond to questions.” Later in the same report Hartwick indicated that in future conferences, they should discuss, “addressing the needs of unmotivated students and encouraging them to become more involved.” In the second observation, Hartwick noted that “a student who was almost totally unengaged two weeks earlier was much more involved in this lesson. Luke stated that he had talked with this student about being more involved.” In Luke’s third report, Hartwick commented on strategies for encouraging “greater involvement by all students,” and he praised Luke for his successful involvement with two students who both struggled with learning disabilities. Hartwick described Luke’s efforts to secure additional support for struggling students and concluded this paragraph stating, “This shows Luke’s awareness and commitment to address the needs of all of his students.” In a rather lengthy section, James cautioned Luke on making assumptions about students’ families and reminded Luke to remain vigilant in not giving up on his students:

Luke noted that he had six failures in this class in the first semester...and none of the parents called about their child. I noted that we, as teachers, need to be careful about making assumptions based upon such data. Luke stated that it takes a whole community, including parents, to educate a child. I am in full agreement with Luke on this point, but still advise caution in making assumptions. I suggested that he call the parents and talk to them about their child’s performance. Once again, I believe that Luke is sensitive to the needs of his students and does not give up on them. Furthermore, I believe that in action he does not abdicate his responsibilities as an educator by blaming parents or the kids.

We view this excerpt as a tactful caution, perhaps too “tactful” to avoid the all-too-common trap of “blaming the victim.” Hartwick urges Luke to reach out to these struggling students and their families in order to replace unfair assumptions with positive connections. Thus, in Luke’s observation reports Hartwick frequently revisited the issue of educating all children, either in the form of noting a concern, praising him or her for...
improvement, issuing general positive comments, or cautioning him or her about making assumptions. Regardless of the specifics, Hartwick’s message is clear: Luke should closely attend to the educational needs of all of his students.

**Gender equity.** A subset of educating all children is the notion of gender equity. In their research, Myra and David Sadker (1986) found that male students are given more time to talk and receive more attention from teachers than female students and that educators are often unaware of their gender bias. In the observation reports, James made several references to gender equity, especially in the form of giving equal attention to the females since the males appeared to dominate the student teacher’s attention. For instance, in Megan’s second observation report, Hartwick noted how she struggled in this regard:

In the class that I observed, the male students, especially the high energy, aggressive ones, were called on much more frequently than the female students. Overall, the boys were much more willing to blurt out their responses, while the girls more frequently raised their hands. Thus, inadvertently, the boys were being rewarded for their more aggressive style, while many of the girls were being slightly disadvantaged for their more appropriate behavior…I do not believe that any of Megan’s behavior was intentionally sexist; I believe that Megan was trying to engage the boys in a positive way. We discussed how the inordinate attention given to the boys is unfair and potentially reinforces their negative behavior. Megan stated that she was committed to calling on the girls more and that she would distribute her attention more equitably.

Ironically, this lesson focused on Women’s Rights, and the irony dramatically illustrates the notion that the method is the lesson, or at least it is indistinguishable from it. In Megan’s third observation report, Hartwick commented on her improvement in her “equitable treatment of both genders” and specifically her use of “both male and female volunteers throughout the class.”

**Teacher as Warm Demander**

An important facet of transformative multiculturalism involves the teacher’s ability to cultivate relationships with all of his or her students while at the same time maintaining high expectations. Such teachers provide the necessary scaffolding and support that enables their students to succeed. Judith Kleinfeld (1975) coined the term “warm demanders” in her study of effective teachers of Eskimo and Native students along with non-minority students. Kleinfeld found that these successful teachers actively cultivated positive interpersonal relationships with their students, demanded a high level of intellectual participation, and provided ample intellectual and emotional support. Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) found similar results in her work with successful teachers of African-American students.

Each student received at least one, and frequently more than one, clear explicit statement regarding connecting personally with his or her students and/or maintaining high expectations. For instance, in Luke’s third report, Hartwick noted:

Luke and I discussed … the responsibility of the teacher to provide students with support and high expectations. We discussed how, in the end, although a teacher cannot take responsibility for a student’s learning (no one can be forced to learn against their [sic] will), a teacher can provide support and impel students into learning experiences.

This quote clearly illustrates Hartwick’s belief that a teacher has an obligation to hold high
expectations and provide the necessary support for students to achieve these expectations. However, being a true “warm demander” requires more than just support; it implies actively using a personal connection to help students succeed. For instance, in the second observation report, Hartwick commented on how Luke used his rapport with his students to help them learn:

During the presentations of representative people, Luke demonstrated a personal knowledge of several of the students’ interests when helping them to generate sound responses. Clearly, Luke is developing rapport with his students and is using it to engage the students in learning.

Furthermore, we believe that “warm demandingness” applies to classroom management. According to Hartwick, early on, Adam struggled noticeably with classroom management and behavioral issues, and one student, Rachel, was especially difficult. Consequently, Adam and Hartwick developed a plan to address this situation. The description of the plan and subsequent comments illustrate how Hartwick conceives that “warm demandingness” applies to classroom management:

We created a plan that Adam intends to use with some of his more disruptive students to help them become more focused. Adam decided he would talk with these students outside of class and try to discern if they are having some problem which is affecting their behavior (for instance, Adam is aware that Rachel has some family problems) and at the same time, set clear expectations for classroom behavior. Adam and I agreed that if he can connect with these students and they tell him their problems, he may be able to support them and it will be much more difficult for them to misbehave in his class. At the same time, we discussed the notion of having clear expectations and following through with disciplinary measures.

**Building a Supportive Learning Community**

Transformative multiculturalism calls for the creation of a supportive classroom community where students help and learn from one another. The observation reports provided clear evidence that Hartwick conveys the importance of building classroom community. For instance, in Megan’s fourth observation report, he praised her for cultivating a “supportive and welcoming classroom community,” and he explained that “Students did not complain about working with certain individual students as they had done in the past. This is a testament to Megan’s ability to create a supportive and welcoming classroom community.”

Furthermore, in at least one of each of the student teacher’s observation reports, Hartwick suggested strategies for cultivating community. For example, in Luke’s first observation report, Hartwick recommended using cooperative learning and “…having students become ‘experts’ on a particular term and present [it] in class.” Likewise, in Megan’s second observation, Hartwick praised her for involving students in classroom responsibilities and noted its positive effect on the learning environment: “Megan used students well in reading to the class, writing on the board, and passing out papers. This involvement gives students a sense of ownership and responsibility for the learning environment.” Probably the best example of Hartwick’s advocacy of an approach designed to encourage students to support and teach one another so as to maximize the learning of all students occurs in Adam’s third observation report; he recommended:

… Adam could give a quiz the next day reviewing material covered in this class. After the students finish the quiz, he
could give them time to help each other with the answers, telling them that if the entire class gets above an 80% he will reward them. This encourages students to work together and gives all students a chance to be successful which some of the students in this class desperately need.

Admittedly, a better suggestion would be for students to help each other prior to the quiz to ensure everyone’s success on it. Regardless, if implemented in whatever form, this approach encourages students to teach one another and instills in them a sense of responsibility, not only for their own learning, but also for the learning of their fellow classmates.

Curricular and Theoretical Dimensions

Content-Specific Multicultural Topics

In one sense, all, or nearly all, of the topics discussed in social studies can be considered multicultural because they are imbued with power relations, raise issues of social justice and equity, and can be critically assessed. However, a few topics stand out in the observation reports as having particular relevance to multiculturalism. In particular, the treatment of these multicultural topics highlighted the importance of integrating multicultural content (Banks, 1996) into the study of history. While the theme of content-specific multicultural topics occurs relatively infrequently in the observation reports, one good example occurs in Adam’s second observation report in which Hartwick made the following comments:

During the pre-observation conference, Adam and I discussed the relationship of these pre-colonial African kingdoms to the history of the United States. Adam stated that it is important for all of his students (who represent a broad spectrum of racial and ethnic groups) to recognize Africa as having advanced civilizations prior to European involvement. We discussed how Africa is often associated with stereotypical misconceptions of being uncivilized and that these misconceptions may lead to subtle, and not so subtle, prejudices.

The inclusion and specification of the topic, pre-colonial African kingdoms, the allusion to the diverse racial and ethnic make-up of Adam’s students, along with the reference to stereotypes, misconceptions, and prejudices, all serve to underscore the importance of addressing multicultural topics. Beyond the mere mentioning of these issues is the assumption that teaching students a more accurate interpretation of pre-colonial Africa combats stereotypes, misconceptions, and ultimately, prejudice. These ends are naturally associated with transformative multiculturalism since this approach attempts to combat racism and promote social justice and equity.

Multiculturalism

Hartwick explicitly addressed the concept of multiculturalism in some of the observation reports. For example, in Luke’s fourth report, Hartwick briefly referred to a discussion of multiculturalism in the following manner:

In addition, we discussed Multiculturalism; Luke was reflective and insightful in this discussion. He expressed a desire to learn more about this issue; specifically, he was interested in case studies of successful culturally relevant teachers. I referred him to Gloria Ladson-Billings’ book, *The Dreamkeepers*.

The reference to Ladson-Billings’ (1994) landmark book about successful culturally relevant teachers is indicative of how Hartwick tends to emphasize culturally relevant pedagogy, perhaps even more earnestly than multicultural content integration, when addressing multiculturalism. In any case, given that
Hartwick does not record every word or topic discussed, it appears he intentionally highlights this conversation to remind Luke to attend to multiculturalism.

**Critical Thinking and the Critical Perspective**

Because of its critical nature, transformative multiculturalism seeks to offer multiple perspectives and interpretations as well as to interrogate the subject matter in order to reveal hidden, often conflicting assumptions and embedded power relations. From a transformative multicultural perspective, “critical thinking” implies more than its common generic use, which makes it virtually synonymous with “thinking deeply.” Indeed, the critical spirit of the concept is frequently lost when it becomes conflated with higher order thinking.

The evidence from the observation reports suggests that at times Hartwick uses the term critical thinking in an imprecise, generic manner, roughly equivalent to thinking deeply about a topic. While the term critical thinking appears to be problematic in Hartwick’s reports, each student received at least one comment that may be interpreted as highlighting a critical perspective. In Adam’s first observation report, Hartwick made the following comment regarding the use of students’ questions related to tobacco sales and the exploitation of miners in Peru, “While it was appropriate to foretell a discussion of these issues, each could have provided an opportunity to critically consider economic practices, such as exploitation, which were closely related to the topic at hand.” Here, Hartwick not only encourages Adam to consider using student-generated questions as an impetus for learning, but he also invites Adam to adopt a critical approach in addressing these questions.

Luke received a more hidden admonition to incorporate a critical approach in his third observation report. First, Hartwick noted that one of Luke’s objectives was to “…use primary documents to foster critical understanding.” Later, as Hartwick positively assessed the lesson, he noted, “…students faithfully grappled with issues such as the clash of cultures, economic exploitation, destruction of cultures, Christianization, among others.” The original reference to “critical understanding” followed by positive commentary acknowledging students’ engagement with multicultural issues combines to underscore the importance of this critical approach.

**Language proficiency and addressing double consciousness.** In Adam’s first observation report, Hartwick made the following comment that is highly relevant to transformative multiculturalism, but it does not neatly fit into any previously established category:

At one point, Adam was unsure how to pronounce a Spanish word in the text and he asked the students if they knew how to pronounce it. One of the ESL students volunteered, pronouncing it correctly for the class. This seemed to help this student to regain focus and may have boosted his confidence and pride in his culture.

There are several interesting issues noted in this comment. Often, language is a barrier to the success of ESL students in school, but in this case, Adam recognizes the student’s language facility as an asset, making it a key to his sense of his personal worth in the classroom. Language is intimately connected to cultural identity; it is frequently perceived as a sign of cultural belonging, and unfortunately, it often serves as a site of cultural conflict (Gee, 1996). Thankfully, Adam’s approach is a far cry from others who use schooling as a means to undermine and replace a student’s language and culture. This is a positive example of a teacher supporting a student’s cultural identity. However, historically, the Americanization of immigrants’ function of schools attests to the power of schools to undermine students’ cultural identities and at the same time reify racial and ethnic hierarchies (Castaneda, 1974;
The comment about helping this student regain focus alludes to a tenet of transformative multiculturalism — that it is part of the teacher’s job to recognize and celebrate students’ cultures so as to help them succeed.

The last issue relating to the potential for this event to increase the student’s focus, confidence, and pride in his culture reveals Hartwick’s conception that these three domains are intimately connected. When students’ cultures are denigrated and are pitted against them, they are at risk of developing a type of “double-consciousness,” which undermines their confidence, zaps their strength, and more than likely, results in depressed academic performance. In reference to African Americans, W. E. B. DuBois (1903) eloquently describes double-consciousness:

“This sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. One ever feels his twoness — an American, a Negro; two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. (p. 5)

In contrast, by positively recognizing this student’s culture in the form of asking for assistance with pronunciation of a Spanish word, Adam’s approach can be interpreted as potentially reducing the student’s sense of double-consciousness. Specifically implied in the comment is Hartwick’s speculation that positive cultural recognition may enhance confidence, increase focus, and ultimately lead to higher academic achievement. Generally, this comment reveals Hartwick’s belief that through the treatment of language and cultural issues, teachers and schools can play an influential role in supporting the formation of a coherent and healthy sense of identity, or they can serve as powerful wedges that divide the souls of the students, creating a civil war within. Since affirming students’ cultures (Grant, 1978) in order to promote personal wholeness and academic success is closely associated with transformative multiculturalism, this quotation from Adam’s observation report provides convincing evidence of Hartwick’s philosophical affinity with transformative multiculturalism.

Community Learning Opportunities and Social Activism

There is a logical, and perhaps practical, relationship between a teacher seeking out community learning opportunities and his or her commitment to social activism. Utilizing the community for learning opportunities prepares students to understand and experience the issues and problems that call for social activism. Moreover, the local community often serves as a site to initiate community activism.

The creation of community-based learning opportunities and utilization of the community as an academic resource was nearly absent from the twelve observation reports. Hartwick made one general remark in Luke’s third report about agreeing with him that it takes a whole community to educate a child. With Megan, Hartwick merely noted a comment made by her cooperating teacher about Megan organizing “a speaker to come to school to discuss being a refugee in Europe during and following World War II.” Hartwick made no references to creating learning experiences by utilizing the local community in any of Adam’s observation reports.

Transformative multiculturalism not only seeks to utilize the community as a source of learning opportunities, but it also attempts to address and redress issues of structural inequality and other violations of social justice. Ultimately, the full flourishing of transformative multiculturalism is social activism directed toward the goals of equity and social justice (Banks, 1995b; Cornbleth & Waugh, 1995).

The evidence from the observation reports
is abundantly clear on this issue. There are no references, direct or indirect, to social activism. The concept is not raised in any of the observation reports examined.

**Discussion**

The transformative multicultural approach promotes equity and social justice, teaches students to assess issues critically, and encourages activism for the common good. A preponderance of evidence exists that suggests Hartwick’s conception of transformative multiculturalism is pervasive in his work with secondary social studies student teachers. More specifically, in his observation reports, Hartwick consistently highlighted the importance of educating all children; encourages student teachers to adopt a warm, yet demanding approach, and advocates for building a supportive learning community. In addition, there is some evidence that Hartwick discussed content-specific multicultural topics and multiculturalism with his student teachers and underscores the importance of critical approaches to history. In one report, Hartwick explored building cultural pride, which may be associated with minimizing double consciousness. On the other hand, Hartwick lacked vigor in his advocacy of utilizing community learning opportunities and ignores altogether allusions to teaching for social activism. The evidence suggests that Hartwick’s work with student teachers is greatly influenced by his commitment to the transformative multicultural approach to social studies. Moreover, while curricular and theoretical dimensions of transformative multiculturalism are apparent, the pedagogical implications tend to predominate.

**Personal and Collegial Reflections on Falling Short of Ideals**

The paltry evidence regarding community learning opportunities and social activism is noteworthy and begs for possible explanations. In fact, it raises the question, does Hartwick value utilizing community learning opportunities and engaging students in social activism when preparing educators to teach social studies? Hartwick contends that he does value these dimensions of transformative multiculturalism and readily admits that he probably should have commented more extensively and visibly on them.

While it was personally valuable for Hartwick to see the lack of attention he gave to these important facets of transformative multiculturalism, it became even more fruitful to explore these discrepancies collaboratively in the context of this research project. We found it valuable to work collegially: two social studies teacher educators working together to interpret the data. Conducting research together fostered a sense of mutual trust, collegiality, and respect. By making the process collaborative, or public, it not only fostered the social construction of knowledge but also emboldened us to see more readily the structural limitations of the systems in which we work.

**Structural Barriers to Fully Implementing Transformational Multicultural Supervision**

As indicated above, we found that some aspects of transformative multiculturalism were more prevalent than others. This pattern of feast or famine in the observation reports forced us to analyze the inconsistencies. By considering the context and plausible reasons for Hartwick failing to fully implement his multicultural sensibilities, we have identified some potential barriers to fully implementing a transformative multicultural perspective with pre-service teachers. A summary of these personal and collegial reflections are provided for the reader to consider so as to elucidate potential barriers that may limit the ability of supervisors and other teacher educators to prepare their pre-service (and perhaps in-service) teachers to engage in transformative multicultural approaches to teaching social studies.
Beyond simply dismissing the lack of significant evidence for some dimensions of transformative multiculturalism as merely a personal failing that Hartwick should correct, we discussed the context in which the observations occur. First, we believe that coherently utilizing community learning opportunities and engaging students in transformative multiculturalism approaches such as social activism may require a substantial degree of sophistication that most student teachers are unlikely to possess. Beginning student teachers may lack the professional skill to successfully implement these approaches. Embedded in this explanation is a belief that engaging students in community learning opportunities as well as social activism requires greater professional expertise than more traditional approaches. Here, we are extending Lee Shulman’s (1986, 1987) notions of the three types of teacher knowledge — content knowledge, pedagogical knowledge, and pedagogical-content knowledge — by envisioning developmental levels associated with pedagogical-content knowledge. Further research into developmental levels of pedagogical-content knowledge and appropriate scaffolding of pedagogical-content knowledge is needed to validate the accuracy of these beliefs. Perhaps these pre-service teachers will be more capable of embracing these approaches later in their careers; however, as we shall see, other factors loom large in this equation. Still, discussion of one-day utilizing community learning opportunities and social activism seems wise, so as to prepare future teachers to adopt these approaches when they are developmentally ready.

Second, student teachers may lack the power to make significant changes in the educational approach of their cooperating teacher’s classroom. Generally speaking, student teachers are bound to the disciplinary approach utilized by their cooperating teacher. After all, student teachers are guests in their cooperating teacher’s classroom. We believe that it would be grossly unfair for Hartwick to strongly advocate for an approach to teaching social studies that the student teacher has little agency in implementing. Furthermore, given the relatively loose connection between the university and the schools, it would be difficult for Hartwick to press the cooperating teacher on this or any other significant issue. Naturally, a stronger connection and greater communication between the university and the K-12 schools could begin to alleviate this problem. In 1990, the Holmes Group recommended the implementation of professional development schools to address these issues (Young et al., 1990). In our opinion, it is imperative that structures be created to bridge the divide that seems to exist between the ivory tower and the educational complex.

Yet another closely related insight derives from reflecting upon the structural position of cooperating teachers when working with student teachers and how this is indicative of the extreme resistance of schools to change. After recognizing that student teachers are beholden to their cooperating teachers’ approach to social studies, we reflected further and realized that the cooperating teachers are subject to the expectations of the schools and ultimately those of the community about the proper approach for teaching social studies. Community members often believe that the more traditional ways that they were taught social studies are the most appropriate. For instance, in History on Trial, Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn (1997) note how some resisted the movement toward a greater emphasis on social history. For a variety of reasons, new teachers adopt the practices and approaches of their predecessors. In the end, the system may be self-perpetuating and insulated against change. Finally, with regard to social activism, an additional reason may be that by its very nature, social activism is often controversial, and as such, it may have negative consequences for pre-service teachers who attempt to incorporate social activism into their classrooms (Kumashiro, 2002). Controversy is the last thing that a student teacher needs if he or she hopes to get a positive recommendation.
and secure a job. Practically speaking, few principals want to hire someone who stirs up controversy. Controversy avoidance is also true of beginning teachers who need to keep a low profile for their first few years prior to earning tenure. Not having tenure, or having probationary status, means that a teacher can be non-renewed without cause. The last thing that a responsible university supervisor may want to do is encourage a student teacher to adopt practices that limit his or her chances of being hired and/or being granted tenure. Given that these student teachers are probably not ready to undertake social activism with their students, more than likely, they do not have the authority to radically alter the educational approach offered, and the controversial nature of social activism may make them un-hirable and potentially at risk of being non-renewed in their first few years of teaching; it is no wonder that Hartwick did not more strongly advocate for greater social activism. However, Johnson (2007) reminds us that pre-service teachers have the potential to gain critical awareness of political obstacles and develop the ability to push for structural changes in common teaching practices and school curriculum mandates. In doing so, pre-service teachers can operate in the critical pedagogical act.

Despite the above barriers, we do not believe that this should prevent Hartwick, or other likeminded university supervisors, from advocating for the use of community learning opportunities and social activism. At the very least, these approaches merit a frank discussion along with the structural limitations and dangers of unwisely employing them. Despite limitations and structural barriers, university supervisors and pre-service teachers, and for that matter, in-service teachers, have agency to promote even the controversial aspects of the transformative multicultural approach.

Conclusions

This study has been conducted in order for one supervisor to gain greater insight into his practice and consequently to promote his growth as a teacher educator. By investigating Hartwick’s observation reports, we have learned a great deal about how transformative multiculturalism is present in his practice. This knowledge, in and of itself, should enable Hartwick to be clearer when addressing multicultural issues with future teacher candidates. Moreover, the authors hope that the descriptive examples and analysis will help others to better prepare and mentor new teachers to incorporate dimensions of transformative multiculturalism into their practices.

Finally, in addition to describing how one university supervisor cultivated transformative multicultural pedagogical practices and theoretical dispositions in his less experienced pre-service teachers, this article provides honest reflection of where the university supervisor has fallen short of his professed commitment to transformative multiculturalism, providing some possible explanations as to why. These explanations include some potential inherent barriers to implementing a transformative multicultural perspective with pre-service teachers. While these barriers are significant, we believe that the university supervisor and others associated with preparing teachers, especially social studies teachers, have a duty to promote even the controversial aspects of the transformative multicultural approach.

References


About the Authors

James M. M. Hartwick is an Assistant Professor in the College of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. He earned his Ph.D. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and won the 2006 Outstanding Dissertation Award from the Religion and Education SIG of AERA. He has worked as a high school social studies teacher and as an Outward Bound instructor. His research interests include social studies and teacher education, multiculturalism, service-learning, and spiritual and religious issues in education.

Edric C. Johnson is an Assistant Professor in the College of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Whitewater. He earned his Ph.D. from Ohio State University-Columbus and his M.S. from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has worked as an elementary and middle school teacher. His research interests include social studies and teacher education, multiculturalism, qualitative inquiry, and drama in education.

Primary contact information

Mailing Address: University of Wisconsin-Whitewater, 800 W. Main Street, 3051 WH, Whitewater, WI 53190
Phone: (262) 472-5815
Email: hartwicj@uw.edu