

A Stacked Deck: Addressing Issues of Equity with Preservice Teachers

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JEFFREY A. FRYKHOLM

We live in a society in which once impermeable borders of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and culture seem to be dissolving at every turn. Perhaps nowhere is the impact of this convergence felt more acutely than in our public schools. Given the historic responsibility of public schools to educate every child in this country, teachers and administrators find themselves at a critical crossroads regarding the formation of curricula and school models that meet the needs of a diverse student body. Although this need for culturally relevant pedagogy continues to grow (Ladson-Billings, 1994), the task of preparing teachers effectively to implement teaching strategies that are appropriate for a diverse school population remains an unmet challenge. This is particularly true for preservice teachers who are generally in the beginning stages of developing a knowledge base about teaching and have relatively few experiences in the classroom to help prepare them for the magnitude of the challenge that awaits them in the schools.

This article explores preservice teachers' beliefs about issues of diversity and equity pertaining to school settings. Examined are the experiences of six cohorts of preservice teachers as they participated in a simulation activity designed to raise their awareness of not only their own biases, but, equally important, the inequities present in our schools today. The model here, along with other educational experiences, may be useful in helping to broaden preservice teachers' conceptions of equity issues in the schoolplace.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

One of the primary debates in preservice teacher education revolves around the need for teachers to develop the skills, attitudes, knowledge, and sensitivity to work effectively with diverse student populations (Banks, 1991; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Gomez, 1996; Zeichner, 1996). Several trends in the United States have made "revision of the preservice teacher education curriculum not just necessary, but urgent" (Cochran-Smith, 1995, p. 541).

First, the school-age population continues to reflect an increasing proportion of racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. In many urban areas, the majority of students are from minority groups (Banks, 1991). These changing demographics in school populations provide a stark contrast to the modest increase of teachers of color (Zeichner, 1996). Even under the most optimistic scenario, Banks (1991) suggests that the percentage of teachers of color in the year 2000 will be, at most, 15%. Teachers will continue to be white, mostly monolingual, and will have backgrounds and life experiences that vary considerably from many, if not most, of their students (Zeichner, 1996).

Moreover, there continues to be mounting evidence "that teachers are most able to understand, set appropriate expectations, and provide strategic support for students who are like themselves in culture, race, and ethnicity" (Cochran-Smith, 1995, p. 542). Gomez extends this notion to suggest that, not only are teachers apt to better support students who are similar in cultural background, they often view students who are unlike themselves "as children who are not only different, but deficient learners who are undesirable to teach" (1996, p. 109). These misunderstandings that surround the teaching of "other people's children" (Delpit, 1988) make all the more troubling the disparity between the make-up of the teaching force and the school population.

Faced with these growing concerns, many teacher educators have begun to address issues of diversity—race, culture, class, language, etcetera—in the preservice preparation curriculum. The wide range of strategies used to help prepare preservice teachers to deal effectively with issues of diversity include: exposing students to examples of successful teaching of diverse learners (Ladson-Billings, 1990; 1994); examining the ways in which schools structure inequalities (McNeil, 1986); creating cultural autobiographies (Gomez & Tabachnick, 1991; King & Ladson-Billings, 1990); reading accounts of life and educational experiences of minorities (Gomez, 1991); providing the histories of different ethnic groups (Ladson-Billings, 1990); and providing information about

learning styles and preferences of different ethnic groups (McDiarmid & Price, 1990).

As laudable as these strategies are in providing a context for beginning teachers to examine issues of diversity, they cannot overcome a fundamental dilemma—they still situate the beginning teacher as an outsider looking through a lens in order to identify with the experiences of students from different cultural, ethnic, and economic backgrounds. As suggested previously, most beginning teachers are from the dominant culture in our society. Many of these beginning teachers have never experienced, and therefore will never fully understand, the particular challenges in our schools and society that must be faced by students from nondominant cultures.

Although it is impossible to provide a real-life understanding for most teachers, one way to move toward such an understanding is through simulation or metaphorical experiences in which the emotions, feelings, and frustrations of diverse learners are experienced by preservice teachers (Clark, Dewolf & Clark, 1992). This article describes one such simulation experience I have used with students in my methodology courses. The responses of these preservice teachers as they were forced to examine their own biases and assumptions about schooling in American society are presented. Before discussing this study in detail, I would first like to address the potential role and benefit of simulation games in educational settings.

The Potential Impact of Simulation Games in Teacher Education

Although simulation games have long been used as a tool in crosscultural training to prepare exchange students, volunteers, professionals, technicians, and diplomats for overseas service (Fowler, 1994), there is little in the research literature to suggest that they have been applied to the teacher preparation process. Nevertheless, simulation games have recently been viewed as one mechanism for breaching gaps between theory and practice such as those that often characterize teacher education (Goodman, 1995; Bennis-Suter, 1993).

There have been relatively few empirical studies validating the long-term effectiveness of simulation games on the belief structures of participants (Bennis-Suter, 1993). Yet researchers have found promising evidence that simulations and other experientially related activities do impact attitude changes (Byrnes & Kiger, 1990). While a number of these studies have been conducted within the realm of educational and counselling psychology, there are nevertheless sufficient parallels to

suggest that they might also be successful in preservice teacher education.

Clark, Dewolf & Clark (1992), for example, have articulated a compelling argument for the inclusion of simulation experiences in teacher preparation programs. In addressing sensitive subjects like race, gender, and culture, the authors described their *former* program as one which, "like most standard training programs, used a cognitive approach with lectures and readings. We systematically informed student teachers that we must educate all children about different cultures" (p. 5). They found, however, that these methods led preservice teachers to create culturally *assaultive*, as opposed to culturally *sensitive*, classrooms. "Unwittingly, we were teaching teachers to magnify differences, not to teach understanding and respect for diversity" (p. 5). The authors went on to describe their efforts to create new program experiences for preservice teachers, primarily through simulations, built on the notion that, "People don't learn social lessons cognitively; they learn them affectively, by emotionally processing and anchoring lessons learned from intense experiences. . . . We need preservice courses that let dominant culture people feel what it's like to be in a culturally assaultive environment" (p. 6). A similar premise guided and shaped the research described in this article.

METHODS

Barnga: A Simulation Game

With the intention of merging theory and practical experience, I adapted a crosscultural simulation game for my preservice preparation courses. At its simplest level, Barnga (Steinwachs, 1990)* is a card game much like "Hearts" or "Spades"—as cards are played around the table, the person who lays down the highest card wins the trick. Three groups of players (table one, table two, and table three) were established for the game. On another level, the goal of Barnga is to dominate one's own table in order to advance to, or remain at, the highest level table. Ultimately, the winners of the game are those that are seated at table three after numerous rounds have been played during the allotted time for the game.

For example, those participants who start out at table one try to end up at table three when the game is over. They must win a round at their home table, then advance to table two. After winning at table two, they advance to table three. Once at table three, participants attempt to maintain their position at this highest level until time expires. Just as the dominant player at each table advances, the least successful player from each table is demoted one level at the end of each round. All

* Special thanks to Bernadette Baker for introducing me to this simulation game.

other players remain at the same table. At the beginning of the game, participants had five minutes to read the rules, which was then followed by several minutes of practice at their home tables.

Complicating this movement among tables are two confounding restrictions. First, unknown to the participants, the rules of play are slightly different at each table. For example, the trump suit (the most powerful suit) may be diamonds at table one, but hearts at table two. Or, an ace might be considered high at one table, and low at another. As the rounds progress and players switch tables, participants find themselves in the middle of controversies over the rules of play. Reconciling these differences is made difficult by a second restriction that is strictly enforced: no verbal or written communication is allowed at any point during the game. Given these two factors, participants come face-to-face with challenges beyond their control and conditions that are unfairly biased against them. Players also experience the difficulties that come with an inability to communicate freely. As they navigate their way to the top table, the competitive nature of human beings and the confounding rules of the game create numerous situations that provide fertile ground for later discussion about issues of prejudice, equity, culture, and fairness that are all germane to schools today.

Data Collection and Analysis

Participants and their involvement. The experiences of six cohorts of preservice teachers ($n = 72$) were examined as they engaged in this simulation experience. These students were seeking secondary teaching certification in a wide range of academic disciplines including English, history, mathematics, foreign language, science, and music. In each case, the students had engaged previously in discussions and readings about issues of race, ethnicity, and culture in school settings. The simulation games were conducted over a two year period within several different preservice preparation courses.

Data sources. To examine the experiences of these students as they participated in the simulation, data were gathered in a variety of ways. Sources included audiotaped recordings of the simulation game as it was being played (primarily to record the comments of the facilitator), audiotaped recordings of the post-game discussion, free-write response papers written immediately after the game concluded, 3 to 5 page reaction papers completed several days after the simulation, and interviews with a subset of the participants. In addition to these sources, another set of data was gathered for two of the six cohorts in particular. These two cohorts had more members than the game could facilitate. Hence, the extra students in these two cohorts were asked to observe closely the reactions of their peers as they interacted in

the simulation. To guide their reflections, they were given a page with several questions encouraging them, for example, to focus exclusively on a particular table for a round, to examine the changes in demeanor that took place as the game progressed, to hypothesize why so many participants were getting frustrated, to describe the confrontations they observed, etcetera. Students recorded these observations and impressions.

Data analysis. Erickson (1986) suggests that to analyze data from qualitative studies is to generate empirical assertions, largely through induction, and to establish an evidentiary warrant for these assertions through a systematic search for confirming (or disconfirming) data. Of interest in this study were not only the reactions of the participants as they played the game, but their reflections about the ways in which the experience had affected their beliefs, values, and thinking about equity issues. As such, an iterative process of coding the data (Strauss, 1987) was applied to identify potential themes emerging from the data. Further stages of analysis followed in which taxonomic relationships within codes, as well as thematic relationships between codes, were explored (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973; Spradley, 1979).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this investigation are organized around two themes. The first involves the spontaneous reactions and behaviors of the participants as they played the game. The second theme explores the reflections of the participants about the experience, particularly as it caused them to examine both their existing biases as well as the parallels between the simulation and school settings.

Theme One: Playing the Game

The reactions of the students as they played the game are organized around several sub-themes. First, I describe the rather casual approach the students initially adopted—how the novelty of playing cards in class led them to be playful and light-hearted during the opening minutes of the game. Next, I explore the ways in which this initial tone in the classroom changed drastically as the game progressed. As students confronted one another over misunderstandings, a wide range of reactions were observed—from total apathy to aggression. Finally, I describe how the reactions of students led each of the three tables to develop a unique identity, and how students fell into fairly predictable patterns of behavior.

“Why are we playing cards?”

The simulation game evoked active participation and enthusiasm by almost all participants. Contributing to

the intrigue of playing cards in class, students were told very little before they started playing the game. Their curiosity and interest, as a result, appeared to be relatively high. Students did not know of the frustrations, anger, and confusion they were going to experience in the following minutes. "At first," reported one student, "I had no idea why we were playing cards. I thought, 'What is he [the instructor] doing?' I didn't even think twice about the fact that this was anything more than us just playing a game" (discussion, 2/11/97). Reflective of this casual approach to the experience, the students initially appeared fairly comfortable and relaxed as evidenced by many smiles and muffled laughter. As noted by several students who were observing the participants during the first practice round, "Everyone is participating. They all seem to understand and they seem to be enjoying themselves" (student response, 2/11/97). As will be explored below, however, the playful interactions that characterized the beginning rounds changed quickly as the game progressed.

"What a jerk! . . . He just took the trick right away from me."

At the conclusion of the first round, the top player from each table advanced, while the least successful player was demoted one level. The top player at table three remained at table three, while the least successful player at table one remained at table one. The second round, therefore, marked the first time in which two or more sets of rules were at play at a table. Immediately, the climate of the room changed. "The people who moved seemed clueless. They were arguing with members of the table over tricks" (student response, 2/11/97). Instead of smiles, angry and confused looks were exchanged, fists slammed on tables and tempers rose as players contested tricks. Several students noted the immediate change in emotions they felt when challenged by another player.

It was weird. Everything was fine, and then all of the sudden nobody seemed to know what was going on. . . . I could feel my face get red in about a second. I knew that I had won that trick, but Kevin wouldn't let go. I was so mad! I was like, "What a jerk!" I could not believe he just took the trick right away from me. (discussion, 2/21/96)

The participants responded differently to these confrontations, which eventually led to significantly different dynamics at each of the tables.

"I knew I'd never get out of table one. It was easier just to quit trying."

Students observing their peers play the game noted unmistakable differences in the level of engagement at each table. While participants at all tables demonstrated enthusiasm in the initial rounds, that was not the case as

time progressed. Each table developed a culture unto itself, and newcomers were forced to deal with not only different *rules* of play, but also different *norms* for interpersonal interactions as well. As described below, the participants at table three became quite competitive, participants at table two became somewhat indifferent, and the players at table one became noticeably apathetic. I begin by describing table three.

As several students observed, there appeared to be an air of superiority at table three.

Those players [at table three] feel superior to the rest of the players because they have a position that others desire to have. . . . They realize a very important element to staying at the table: all they have to do is NOT lose! They do not have to win to stay, but simply force others to lose. (student observation, 2/26/96)

As a result, the play at table three often turned rather competitive. As one student noted, "They [players at table three] are able to psychologically gang up on the newcomers to the table, making them uncomfortable and not as determined to win." Another student echoed these sentiments as he reflected about his state of mind as he tried to remain at table three.

Mark and I, in the top group, were very pleased with our superiority. . . . As well as feeling deserving of our high status because of our card-playing prowess, we were fairly aggressive in fending off newcomers. They had no right to achieve our status because they obviously didn't know how to play the game properly. (free-write, 2/16/96)

Another student responded similarly after starting, and finishing, the game at table three:

After the game was introduced, I felt that I had to win. . . . I didn't want to move to a lower table. As we played more games, I got more motivated and confident every time I won. I felt like no one could beat me. I didn't care who came in, because I was confident that I was going to win, no matter who I played against. I didn't feel bad for the losers at all, and even taunted them by raising both my hands up in victory, congratulating myself. (free-write, 2/16/96)

In contrast to the competitive nature of table three, table two showed signs of indifference. As students both observed and noted from personal experience, it was easy to feel somewhat lost at table two. Perhaps this is because there were always individuals moving both down a level and up a level through table two. This meant that, with the exception of the first round, participants at table two were always forced to reconcile three sets of rules. This confusion led many students to coast through the rest of the activity. As one student observed,

Table two seems to be the most observant of all the groups at first. [They] see what is going on at the tables around them: disputes over tricks, bad attitudes and people ganging up on others. Knowing that they have the rules down for their table, they hope to simply not win, not lose, and just stay where they feel the most comfortable: at table two. They are not receiving much feedback from the facilitator to push them to want to move up either. (student observation, 10/15/95)

The observations noted in the previous quote were confirmed by a student who began, and finished, the game at table two. As he observed what was happening both at his table and those tables around him, he astutely recognized that the rules were different at each table. Comfortable where he was, he did not try to win and advance.

My personal reaction to the game was somewhat subdued since I suspected the rules were different at other tables. And, since I wasn't having very good luck at winning at my own table, I wasn't too intent on moving to another table where I would have to discern the rules they were playing with. (free-write response, 2/21/96)

Finally, there was almost uniform agreement among both observers and participants that the players at table one became apathetic, and eventually uninterested, in trying to advance to a higher table. As one observer recorded,

From the start of the game, they [table one] are ridiculed and put-down by the facilitator, never feeling like they are successful at the game. As this atmosphere continues, many players become very passive, deciding that it is useless to try to get away from this table, as even if they do not lose, they are stuck there. They welcome the newcomers to a point by possibly explaining the rules to them, but really do not care if the newcomers beat them. Playing the game becomes a chore, and simply throwing cards on the table without thinking becomes their style of play. (reaction paper, 2/25/96)

Other observers noted behaviors at table one that were not present elsewhere. For example, some participants used gestures to ridicule the facilitator behind his back—a measure which seemed to bring great satisfaction to the rest of the players at table one. Others completely disengaged, an extreme case being one student who began to read a book even though his peers continued to deal him cards. Still other students tried to break rules without being caught by the facilitator by, for example, getting up and walking around the table and whispering to each other. As one student suggested, "We ended up just playing around at our table. . . . I felt like egging you on, pushing your buttons with your little rules" (free-write response, 2/11/97). One player who

spent the entire game at table one described his playing experience by writing,

Initially I was frustrated because I had to start at table one. On one of the games I tied with someone else, but didn't get to advance because my name was after his alphabetically like the rules said. Both of these decisions seemed very unfair to me, probably much the same way that tracking seems to many students. As the game progressed and I remained at table one, I became more frustrated, and as I saw my chances of getting to table three decrease, I became less competitive, and less interested in the game. Finally when I was still at table one and the final round was announced, I didn't care anymore about what happened. (response paper, 2/26/95)

These descriptions of the experiences of the participants point to a number of issues that emerged later in classroom discussions and students' written response papers. I would like to turn now to a discussion of the reflections of the participants about the experience, particularly the ways in which it encouraged them to examine the parallels between the simulation game and the realities of school settings.

Theme Two: Reactions to the Simulation Experience

With each of the six cohorts, an immediate outburst of conversation erupted as soon as the ban on talking was lifted. While some students laughed and joked, others were unable to let go so quickly of the frustrations they were feeling. During the ensuing discussions, as well as the response papers and free-writes, a number of topics were raised—more than could be addressed adequately in this article. Issues included tracking, language, competition, power, negotiation, cultural norms, equity, equality, fairness, and other tangentially related topics. While it is not possible to discuss each of these issues, I would like to organize this section around several key themes that emerged repeatedly in the data. In describing the reflections of the students, I have drawn parallels, where appropriate, to the behaviors described in the previous section.

"It's a self-fulfilling prophecy."

Many students expressed surprise at how quickly each table developed its own culture and personality. Before any instructions were given for the game, students chose a seat at one of the tables without any idea that table one would be severely disadvantaged. Therefore, the students were dispersed somewhat randomly across the room. Yet, within only a few minutes, noticeable differences in behavior emerged. Players at table three became extremely competitive, while those at table one became uninterested and passive. Several students

recognized the parallels between this game and the tracking system that is prevalent in schools. One noted,

I thought the exercise was a good representation of the difficulties of crossing social and academic boundaries. I think it applies to cultural boundaries in society and school as well as school tracking. (reaction paper, 2/21/96)

Curious to many students was how quickly this tracking system caused members at each table to behave in certain ways. As one student remarked in a class discussion, "You can see what happens in tracking. It's a self-fulfilling prophecy. Once you know you are at table one and have no chance of winning, you start acting that way" (discussion, 2/11/97). Another student made a similar statement noting the powerful forces at work even in this simulation experience, and how much greater those forces must be in real classrooms and schools.

Even though I consider myself to be "equal" to other students in this class (specifically those at the higher tables), and I knew that it was just an activity we were involved in, I actually started wondering at one point if we (the players of the lowest table) really were inferior card players. I knew that it was just a game we were playing. I may have been frustrated; but I knew it wasn't real. It is scary to think how much worse a student might feel in my shoes if the situation were real. This is something that is a reality for some students. Do they break the "silence" code and shout out at the teacher? Are they punished for it by not being allowed to even play? (reaction paper, 3/7/96)

This statement, like others, suggested that students understood that the very structure of the game, like the structure of schools and classrooms, was inequitable. As one student remarked, the system was biased against those participants unlucky enough to begin at the bottom table. The assignment of students to tables, though arbitrary, had implications.

You told us at the beginning that everyone had an equal chance of winning, even though that wasn't true at all. The people at table one had to keep winning and winning to get to the top. All the people at table three needed to do was not lose. (class discussion, 2/11/97)

Another student responded to this statement by saying,

Yeah, just like tracking. At my school we had three tracks. If you started in the low track, there was almost no way you would ever get out no matter how smart you were. All my classes in high school were basically the same people. Nobody came in, and nobody left. (class discussion, 2/11/97)

The impact of the inherent disparities in the game was felt by a number of students. Much like tracking in schools, students recognized that the structure of this game often leads to frustration and failure. Representative of comments made by a number of his peers, one student suggested, "For me, the confusion and lack of success in the card game led to frustration, depression, a sense of urgency/panic, anger and eventually disinterest."

"We started out being completely ignorant of the fact that others played by different rules."

The fact that the rules were different at each table led students to think about ways in which school children must learn different cultural and academic norms in order to succeed in the system. While some participants recognized along the way that the rules were different at each table, others did not find out until the game was over. One notable aspect of the comments they made about the differences in rules was the way in which they perceived others who were operating under a different set of guidelines. It was almost without question that they perceived the other person in conflict to have either made a mistake or to have not understood the rules.

Since I was at table one the entire time, I never realized that the tables had different rules. So near the end of the game, when two new players were at our table, I was again frustrated and questioned how they could not know what was going on yet. I thought to myself that they really must not understand cards at all. I also found myself wishing that the original group of players would be back together since we all knew how to play. I would imagine that in a tracking system, many students would also be less motivated to get into a higher track, since they are comfortable with the people in their track. (response paper, 3/1/96)

Despite his frustrations, this student went on to add that he tried to help these newcomers learn the rules of play anyway. At the other end of the spectrum, however, several students at table three (who also did not recognize there were different rules of play) had quite different responses, as evidenced by the remarks of two different students.

I was at table three the whole time. I had no idea there were any different rules. I just kept thinking how stupid these people were. By the time they figured out how to play, it was way too late for them. (class discussion, 2/21/96)

We didn't realize that the difficulty individuals had entering our group was a result of different group rules; we thought it was their inferior card skills. That fits well with the thinking, "I have worked hard and maintained my high status in our economy and society. Other folks

who can't pull themselves up by their bootstraps are either just lazy or stupid." (free-write response, 2/21/96)

Making the transition from one level to the next was difficult for most of the students, many of whom reported that they lost quickly at the higher table and returned to their home table right away. Several students that did manage to navigate from table one to table three spoke of the arduous process it demanded. One of these students rather eloquently linked the difficulty of his experiences to those of school children.

The goal for educators is (or should be) to have all students increase their knowledge and achieve success in the classroom. In the card game, this translates to moving up to the top table. However, this necessarily places unequal burden on the student at the low table. This student, in order to advance, must learn the rules at another table (another status group). Thus, by making achievement a goal in education, educators are necessarily making as a goal as well the isolation, confusion, and humiliation caused by entering into a higher group. Thus the reward to the low status student for moving up (getting an A or winning the card game) is a "slap in the face." This is in contrast to the experience of the high status students. This (high status) student only has to face the above difficulties when he/she has failed. (paper response, 2/27/96)

"I was just like, 'Screw you and get out of my face.'"

The participants reacted strongly to the facilitator of the game. Throughout the simulation, there were several noticeable patterns of interaction and behavior on the part of the facilitator in which he perpetuated the inequities inherent in the game. As students noted, his biased behavior began at the beginning of the experience.

He [the facilitator] began the game by telling us that table three is where we want to be and that table one is the lowest table on the floor. Right away, we were put into groups of good table and bad table. These names were certainly not fair, as choosing a starting table was completely random on our parts. (free-write response, 2/21/96)

The disparity between tables that the facilitator mentioned was supported immediately by his actions, a point that did not go unnoticed by students at table one in particular.

I started to get annoyed with you from the very beginning. You passed the cards—bad ones, they were pretty old—out to us last, so we did not get much time to practice. I think you were not fair, because you picked on table one a lot! (free-write, 2/17/97)

The disparate treatment continued, as another student was quick to point out.

Having preconceived notions of the tables led the facilitator to treat us very differently. The facilitator tended to be very comfortable around table three, and created a healthy relationship with them. Table one, on the other hand, was constantly criticized for the smallest things, and often things that they were not even guilty of. The facilitator stayed away from them physically, making his negative comments loud enough for everyone to hear. They were given no chance to feel good, as he associated them with the losers from the beginning. (response paper, 3/7/96)

Students reported a variety of emotions and reactions in response to the biased actions of the facilitator. Some simply found the facilitator to be humorous, not recognizing that his behavior was a metaphor for the ways that teachers sometimes treat school children differently based on their status. Others, however, took the comments and actions of the facilitator quite seriously. "I was so sick of you always saying something to our table. I was like, 'Screw you and get out of my face'" (free-write response, 2/17/97). Another participant reported that, although she knew this was a game, she nevertheless could not separate the facilitator's comments from her own self-esteem. "I did not think your behavior was fair or reasonable. I laughed outside, but inside I was really mad" (free-write response, 2/17/97).

"The most difficult part of the game—but at the same time the most real—was the code of silence."

Almost uniformly, the students reported that the communication restriction was the most aggravating part of the experience. While at first it seemed merely a nuisance, they later recognized how difficult it is for students to communicate across academic, cultural, economic, and racial boundaries. More importantly, they noted the potential problems that occur when communication is not easily facilitated in schools and communities.

The most difficult part of the game—but at the same time the most real—was the code of silence. This silence is what exaggerated the problem of moving from table to table, thus causing more inequity between the learning situation of the high- and low-status student. Without our speech we couldn't easily ask the rules of the game. We also couldn't provide feedback to you, the "commissioner." This allowed you to ignorantly carry out your discriminatory and negligent practices! (paper response, 3/7/96)

As a number of students noted, individuals' voices are critical not only to their development as learners, but to the climate of the school setting as well. Those with the voice tend to be from the dominant culture, thus limiting the potential success of newcomers as well as

contributing to their alienation as a member of a low-status group.

We were discouraged from simply explaining our different rules to others. Doing it in an alternative fashion, such as signing, was a difficult task, especially when time was not allotted to do so. Players were unable to stand up for themselves when playing tricks, so only the strongest willed and those familiar with the rules were able to succeed. Comfort came from sticking with those from your original table where nothing was foreign. This made cliques inevitable and interaction between them very difficult, leading to many of the hostile and frustrated feelings. (paper response, 3/7/96)

CONCLUSION

The card game was an enlightening experience. I think it is one of the clearest, hard-hitting methods for exposing students to the problems of equity in the classroom. It gives students direct, personal experience with the discriminatory, competitive, segregated classroom. (paper response, 3/7/96)

As mentioned in the excerpt above, this simulation experience is a hard-hitting method of addressing issues of equity, diversity, and culture with preservice teachers. In the theoretical framework of this proposal, I suggested a wide variety of strategies that have been used by teacher educators to raise the awareness of preservice teachers to these important issues in our schools today. The value of this simulation game is that participants have an opportunity to actually *feel* what it is like to be an outsider who does not fit within the mainstream or dominant culture. As one of my students stated,

We could say that we knew what it was like to be an "abnormal"—e.g., ethnic minority, physically or mentally handicapped, poor—student in a classroom where the "normal" majority student is favored. Although most preservice teachers learn about these issues in articles and books, many belong to the majority, in terms of race, economic status, or other criteria, and thus have never actually lived it. (paper response, 3/7/96)

Moreover, and most important, the experience appeared to motivate these participants to view their powerful role as the teacher in a different way. Ultimately, the game was intended to cause these preservice teachers to do more than simply feel what it is like to be an outsider—it was intended to cause them to consider teaching practices that do not perpetuate the status-quo. A number of the students appeared willing to engage in critical thinking about their teaching as a result, at least in part, of their participation in this experience. While many students responded with suggestions for particular classroom practices, others looked more holistically

at the broader societal and contextual issues that are at the root of the inequities in schools.

This [the simulation] leads us to the ultimate question: How do we as leaders in this community stop these events from happening? Although a difficult task, we must make a great effort to discourage these attitudes and feelings from surfacing. . . . We can create an environment that all students can feel accepted and successful in. (response paper, 3/7/97)

Critics are somewhat skeptical of the long-term benefits and impact of simulation games. While I understand their hesitations, the findings of this study nevertheless lead me to believe that this simulation activity, if accompanied by other educational opportunities, can be an important and powerful experience for preservice teachers. As one of my students suggested, "Participating in this card game allowed me to experience certain feelings that I either had never felt, or felt rarely, in my academic career" (response paper, 3/9/96). Although the experience certainly provides only a mere inkling of what some school children face, it is nevertheless enough to cause these future teachers to think about issues of equity and diversity in their teaching.

Although these preservice students probably end up more uncertain of their role as teachers after the simulation than they were before, I believe it is imperative that we challenge them to think about, and prepare for, the difficult issues they will soon face as classroom teachers. Although this simulation experience did not necessarily provide my students with many answers, it did cause them to ask some important questions about schools, teaching, and diverse student learners. As one of my students remarked, "None of us can claim to be ignorant about these issues anymore" (personal communication, 2/11/97). It is certainly painful for some students to closely examine the educational system which treated them so well at the expense of others. Encouraging these beginning teachers to adopt a critical consciousness, however, is absolutely necessary if they are to become educators who are willing and able to address the growing inequities in our schools and wider society.

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Jeffrey A. Frykholm is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Teaching and Learning at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University, Blacksburg, Virginia.