PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' NEGOTIATION OF IDENTITY AND FIGURED WORLDS THROUGH THE READING OF MULTICULTURAL LITERATURE

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Abstract

This paper explores the effect of a multicultural literature course on pre-service teachers' abilities to examine themselves and their figured worlds through a practice known as perspective-taking. Using critical discourse analysis as a tool to analyze three pre-service teachers' work completed in the course, this study offers a series of complications and tensions embedded in classrooms like this, where white students read multicultural literature for the purposes of change and social justice in an educational context: the tension between the student-as-student and the student as-future-teacher, the contradiction between oral and written discourse connected to identity and positioning, and the role or "power" of the multicultural text. With implications for teacher educators and pre-service teachers in a multicultural society, this study theorizes the role figured worlds play in maintaining and re/creating students' identities.

Keywords: identity, figured worlds, perspective-taking, diversity, multicultural literature, young adult literature, critical discourse analysis, teacher education

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Perspective-taking, grounded in cognitive psychology and traditionally associated with the moral development of children (Kurdek, 1978), suggests that the process of mind-reading, of trying to understand someone different from ourselves, "describe[s] our ability to explain people's behavior in terms of their thoughts, feelings, beliefs, and desires" (Zunshine, 2006, p. 6). This practice encourages individuals to see how their beliefs and values are formed and why others may think differently than they do. In the process, it disrupts their figured world in order to imagine another's.

Figured worlds represent realms of interpretation and identities that might be considered normal or typical (i.e., the status quo) from one's perspective (Gee, 2011a), and as such they offer insight into why certain particularities, outcomes, or values may have more significance than others for any individual (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain, 2003). Because of "the taken-for-granted nature of the figured world, [which] often stands in the way of change" (Gee, 2011b, p. 43), figured worlds could lead people to marginalize those people and things that are not considered "normal" or "typical" for their own figured world. These worlds, however, are not static; they "act upon and are acted upon by individuals who come into contact with them" (Coffey & Street, 2008, p. 454). Because they are grounded in, constructed through, and varied by individuals' contexts and sociocultural affiliations, a practice like perspective-taking can challenge or potentially change individuals' figured worlds or worldviews.

Thein et al. (2007) suggest that fiction literature can serve as models of figured worlds, which in coming to understand a character's perspective, values, decisions, or figured world, individuals might then be able to better understand their peers' and their own. It is important, therefore, that texts foster different and competing cultural perspectives so that perspective-taking can illuminate, and subsequently challenge or even change, students' figured worlds, resulting in new, multicultural or intercultural (Camilleri, 1992) identities and figured worlds. In learning about characters' behaviors and states of mind, readers also learn about themselves, their interactions, and their own worldviews.

Toward this end, Banks (2001) argues for multicultural texts to help "students critically analyze their cultural, social, and political worlds and understand pluralistic perspectives of different cultures in the minority groups" (as cited in Yoon, Simpson, & Haag, 2010, p. 110). Similarly, Haddix and Price-Dennis (2013) argue, "critical encounters with urban and multicultural children's and adolescent literature can shape [pre-service teachers'] learning to teach processes" (p. 248). Whether using these texts with children and adolescents (Thein et al., 2007; Rasinski and Padak, 1990) or pre-service teachers (Haddix and Price-Dennis, 2013; Ambe, 2006; Louie, 2005, 2006), scholars concerned with individuals' authentic engagement with multicultural texts see value in in perspective-taking as a pedagogical approach because it "suggest[s] that learning and change happen when students are taught to embrace conflict between their status quo knowledge and new ideas" (Thein & Sloan, 2012, p. 314). Thein, Beach, & Parks (2007), for example, argue that

multicultural literature instruction "must be about changing students' cultural perspectives and helping students better understand their lives and the lives of those around them" (p. 54). With perspective-taking, activities like role-play, writing prompts, and whole-class discussions can further promote exploration of students' and characters' figured worlds. As a result, students may not necessarily change *what* they believe, but they might "increase their understandings of *how* their beliefs and values are formed and *why* other people think differently. They, therefore, acquire the *capability* itself to engage in and value perspective-taking through their literary experiences" (Thein et al., 2007, p. 55).

Cultural perspective-taking, then, has the potential to disrupt students' figured worlds connected to difference and diversity, thereby influencing their own social and cultural identities. Poststructural and sociocultural understandings of identity (Norton, 2013) conceive of identities as being fluid, dynamic, and multiple – no individual is ever the same person in any situation – and one's language and discourse constructs and reproduces social identities (Fuller, 2013). These traditions also recognize that identities are situated in certain contexts, are relational, and are mutually constituted, positioned, and repositioned. Thus, identity rests at the intersection of language, culture, and society as a "sociocultural phenomenon that emerges and circulates in local discourse contexts of interaction" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005, p. 585). In addition to being contextually based, identity references how a person understands his or her relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how a person understands possibilities for the future (Norton, 2013).

The emergent principle of identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) defines identity "as the emergent product rather than the pre-existing source of linguistic and other semiotic practices and therefore as fundamentally a social and cultural phenomenon" (p. 588). In this way, one's identity is "housed" in the mind and articulated through interactions or oral or written discourse. When it comes to specific identity categories (like race or gender), membership is a linguistic construction, and "the study of language and identity is the study of linguistic means through which membership assignations are made and how language is used to create, embrace, resist, or alter group boundaries" (Fuller, 2013, p. 10).

Along these lines, Gee (2011a, 2011b) argues that because all language is political, words have actions associated with their meaning that contribute to the building or destroying of one's identity, reality, or figured world. One's use of language "in tandem with actions, interactions… and distinctive ways of thinking, valuing, feeling, and believing" (p. 30) helps to constitute, build, and rebuild these worlds. Specifically, Gee (2011b) argues, "whenever we speak or write, we always and simultaneously build one of seven things or seven areas of 'reality'… the 'seven building tasks' of language" (2011b, p. 30). These seven "tasks" include significance, activities, identities, relationships, social goods, connections, and signs and systems. According to the identity task specifically, "we use language to get recognized as taking on a certain identity or role: that is, to build an identity here and now" (p.

31). Quite simply, individuals create identities through language, and these different identities may be created or enacted at one and the same time or across different times.

Because identity is discursively produced, because it is not the source but the outcome of linguistic practice (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), and because it constitutes a person's relationship across time, identity serves as the conceptual piece that connects figured worlds to perspective-taking; it acts as the go-between in discursively and temporally negotiating both. Just as the practice of perspective-taking presumes an understanding of identity that is fluid in nature, open to change, and possibly even contradictory at times, so too do the poststructural and sociocultural theories of language and identity that guide this paper.

1. PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

As the instructor of a semester-long, elective multicultural literature class, *Issues of Difference and Diversity in Young Adult and Multicultural Literature*, housed in a College of Education, I used young adult literature as a vehicle to build an awareness and understanding of issues connected to difference and identity. With the course participants consisting of twenty-five mostly White, mostly female pre-service teachers, my goal was to prepare them "to be more culturally responsive teachers… to move [them] away from cultural deficit perspectives" (Haddix & Price-Dennis, 2013, p. 251) of diverse students. Thus, through a rigorous study of young adult, multicultural texts, I hoped that an identity of my students as more "multiculturally aware" of themselves and others may *emerge* by the end of the semester.

Class discussions were focused on understanding the Discourses (Gee, 2007) around difference and diversity and Tatum's (2000) seven identity categories (race and ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, and physical and mental ability). In order to challenge these pre-service teachers to better understand their own worlds and identities and those of others, the practice of perspective-taking (Thein et al., 2007) was a regular activity.

For this paper, I focus on three of my students/pre-service teachers' expressions of their identities through language in the context of this course. With the assumed use of perspective-taking and students' negotiable figured worlds, I ask: What socially recognizable identity or identities does the student try to enact or make known? How does the student's language treat other people's identities as well as her own? How does the student position others? What sorts of identities does the student recognize for others in relationship to her own? (Gee, 2011a). I argue that those students who willingly tried on alternative perspectives were made more aware of their own emergent identities (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) connected to difference and diversity by the end of the semester than those who either did not, did so in cursory ways, or misappropriated their understanding of perspective-taking. Students who regularly tried to take on different perspectives im-

plicated or challenged their own figured worlds (Holland, Lachicotte, Skinner, and Cain, 2003) as evidenced in a series of routine class assignments called "Summary Statements".

2. METHOD

Recognizing literacy and language as a social practice mediated by culture, context, and power, I rely on Gee's conceptions of identity, figured worlds, and critical discourse analysis (Gee, 2011b) as my tools of inquiry and analysis. In the context of my multicultural literature class, the notion of perspective-taking (Thein et al., 2007) acted as the catalyst for the merger of these conceptual frames.

2.1 Data Sources

My students consisted of twenty-five, mostly white females aged 19-21; there were three Native Americans, one African American, and three Asian American females in the class. This paper focuses on three white students in the class, Becky, Kristy, and Sarah[1]. I chose white students because my goal in this paper is to see if there is some sense of an emergent identity connected to self-understanding around diversity and difference as students negotiate figured worlds, and Tatum (2000) argues that white students have a more difficult task of seeing beyond their own identities than students who represent non-dominant identities. Additionally, I chose them because they all looked "the same" in person, they came from similar backgrounds, they were passionate about teaching, they were active class participants, and they were open and willing to read and talk about the various cultures and perspectives different from their own through the books we studied in this class. But, they had different attitudes towards and varied processes of perspective-taking, as reflected a series of in-class assignments called "Summary Statements," which asked all of my students to reflect on the book, themes, or issues of each unit. The assignment always used the same prompt: "Did this text provide you with an opportunity to "take-on" a perspective other than your own? Did it allow you to understand or explain a character's behaviors, choices, or actions? Explain." Students noted in writing how, if at all, they were able to participate in perspective-taking. I focused my study on these assignments because the students were the most candid and uninhibited in these assignments since they were meant to be a sincere, ungraded reflection. Further, these written assignments reflect a better indicator of students' identity work than class discussions, in particular, which could be influenced by performance and social desirability.

In order to ascertain some sense of my students' emergent identities, I chose to analyze three of these Summary Statement assignments completed during the latter half of the semester, in weeks 9, 10, and 13 (of a 15-week semester). My ra-

[1] *Pseydonyms.*

tionale was that if students had been trying on different perspectives since early in the semester, then these responses should be more generative than ones completed earlier in the semester (see the Appendix for a description of all of the books studied during the semester, but see Table 1 for those relevant to this paper).

Table 1: Description of Books used for Summary Statement Analysis

Week	Book and Author	Description
9	*Rules* by Cynthia Lord *Mockingbird* by Kathryn Erskine	*** During this week, students were given several options of books with character(s) of some type of disability. Becky chose to read* Rules *while Kristy and Sarah chose to read* Mockingbird. *Rules* is told from the perspective of Catherine, a 13 year-old girl, whose brother has Autism. *Mockingbird* is told from the perspective of Caitlin, an 11 year-old girl with Asperger's Syndrome, as she deals with her brother's death.
10	*Sold* by Patricia McCormick	*Sold* is told from the perspective of Lakshmi, a 13 year-old girl living in Nepal, who is eventually and unknowingly sold into sexual slavery to pay off her family's debts.
13	*American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang	This book interweaves three seemingly unrelated stories about Jin Wang, a young, Chinese American student, as he navigates his life in a new neighborhood and school as the only Chinese student.

2.2 Data Analysis

An initial round of open coding (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) helped me to theorize perspective-taking around identity and figured worlds. The codes were:

1) response suggests a change in beliefs about others or self
2) response suggests a potential change in how others think or in how values are formed
3) response suggests a change in habits of mind or recognition of "taking on" other perspectives
4) response suggests little to do with perspective-taking or identity work

Once I decided upon these codes, I recoded the Summary Statements both vertically and horizontally. In terms of vertical coding, I read and coded each summary statement assignment as its own independent piece of data for a specific book or topic. In terms of horizontal coding, I read across all of the summary statement assignments to get a sense of the bigger picture and over time of students' perspective-taking and identity work.

For another round of analysis, I analyzed my data using Gee's identity building task of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Gee, 2011b). Simply put, "CDA is designed to look at power structures as they are manifested through language use… [and] is particularly intended to unveil the connections between language and social struc-

ture which are not easily visible" (Fuller, 2013, p. 8). In this way, CDA helps me to explore the way language shapes and is shaped by social practices because "Gee reminds us that anytime we are communicating, we are building social relationships, identities, and figured worlds" (Rogers, 2011, p. 11). Further, Gee's identity building task is a useful tool for determining what identity work is being done with language.

In order to answer my research questions, I looked specifically at the students' use of pronouns and self-positioning – how did she focus her response? How and who was the intended subject of her thoughts and attitudes about the book? How did she respond to the view of the world the texts reflect? Thus, I analyzed my data for the different "versions" (Gee 2011a) or enacted identities of students through their Summary Statement assignments. This analytic lens, in addition to my coding, allowed me to see not just how they enact identities for themselves, but how they also created and positioned identities for others, including, importantly, their future students or even their future selves as teachers. Importantly, I want to emphasize again that my students were all declared pre-service teachers; therefore, they faced a challenge in balancing the developmental tasks of academic socialization (as students) and of thinking in terms of a future teacher-on the-job (as a pre-service teacher) – an important point I will discuss later in this paper.

3. FINDINGS

The findings offered below represent embedded case studies (Yin, 2009) of my three students. I will use these embedded case studies to make larger claims about the course, perspective-taking, and students' figured worlds and identities in the subsequent Discussion section of the paper.

3.1 Individual Student Cases

3.1.1 Becky

Table 2: Becky's Responses

Rules *(*Disability book)* (Week 9)	1. Rules allowed me to take on the perspective of Catherine, a 12 year 2. old girl whose brother has autism. As a reader, I saw how a sibling 3. might feel when living with a sibling who has a disability. I saw 4. her embarrassment and worry when she saw how others viewed 5. David in public. Although this perspective is present in the story, I 6. do not believe it is an accurate depiction of how those with 7. disabilities should be viewed.
Sold (Week 10)	8. By reading a book from a thirteen year old girl's perspective, 9. students will be able to relate to issues that a character very close 10. in age to them faces. They will be able to relate to the characters 11. in the book because of their similar ages and how different their 12. life style is in the sense that Lakshmi faces horrendous situations 13. everyday. This will hopefully allow my students to see how 14. much of their daily lives that they take for granted. They will 15. realize that there are people the same age as them starving or 16. forced to do horrendous things in order to survive.
American Born Chinese (Week 13)	17. I think that this book shows a single story, but it also is a great 18. chance to challenge this single story in the classroom by 19. discussing the stereotypes. I don't believe reading this book 20. changed my perspective because it just highlighted stereotypes I 21. was already aware of.

Becky notes that *Rules* allowed her to take on the perspective of a sibling of someone who has autism because the book is written from the point of view of a sibling, Catherine (lines 1-2). Becky writes that she "saw" (lines 2 and 3), as opposed to experienced or felt, some of Catherine's feelings like "embarrassment" and "worry" (line 4). While this helps her to empathize with the character, this is the extent to which she connects with the book; she does not offer any understanding of why Catherine or her brother's experiences could be different from her own. She ends with a formal disagreement of the characterization of the autistic brother, writing that she does "not believe it is an accurate depiction of how those with disabilities should be viewed" (lines 6-7). This comment suggests Becky's more visceral reaction to the character and with her own figured world (which clearly reflects something other than that portrayed in the book) of an autistic person still in tact after her reading.

Her response to *Sold* shows more openness to the characters and the world of the book and suggests a deeper connection with the text. This is evidenced by her repeated use of the word "relate" (lines 9 and 10), but she frames her response

with her future students in mind (line 9), noting that they will be the ones who are able to "relate" to the characters. They will be of similar age with the protagonist (lines 9-11) even though they will have had vastly different experiences and different cultural contexts. Thus, her openness to this book comes from her identity as a pre-service teacher, for the book's pedagogical purposes, not as a student trying to understand cultural diversity and difference. The idea that this book might help her future students realize what they have "taken for granted" (line 14) could result from Becky's own willingness to take on Lakshmi's perspective. This interpretation is supported by her final claim that her students might realize, through reading this book, how others are "starving or forced to do horrendous things in order to survive" (lines 15-16).

Becky's comments on *American Born Chinese* reflect a tension for its possible uses: its benefit comes from showcasing and "challenging" (line 18) a single, stereotyped depiction of Asian Americans (lines 17-19), but it did not help her to change her perspective because she already knew about the stereotypes it presents (lines 19-21). Her response is again guided by her identity as a pre-service teacher and the book's pedagogical purposes, but unlike her response to *Sold*, this one is framed by herself-as-teacher, as evidenced by her use of "I" (lines 17, 19, and 20), instead of from the perspective of "students." As such, she neglects to consider that the stereotypes addressed in the book may be new to her students or that her students could benefit from learning about these stereotypes. So while she claims that the book would be good when "discussing stereotypes" (line 19) in the classroom, she presumably believes that it is only good for illustrating what the stereotypes are (as connected to Asian Americans) instead of the processes by which they are created and used.

3.1.2 Kristy

Table 3: Kristy's Responses

Mockingbird *(*Disability book)* (Week 9)	1. This book allowed me to take on the perspective of a ten year old 2. girl who has Asperger's. The fact that the story is told from the 3. first person through Caitlin's point of view gave me an insider's 4. perspective to an individual with Asperger's as I felt that I was able 5. to experience first-hand the thoughts and feelings that Caitlin was 6. experiencing. The fact that Caitlin capitalizes words and phrases 7. that are characteristic of Asperger's allowed me to become more 8. aware of the symptoms of the disability. It also allowed me to get 9. inside her head; to see her lack of understanding emotion, 10. relationships with others, and excessive attachment. However, 11. before reading this book I was not very familiar with Asperger's 12. and I do not believe that the book's purpose was to educate about 13. the disability and these symptoms. Instead, I believe that the 14. purpose of the book was to give an insider's perspective of an 15. individual who has Asperger's and the thoughts and feelings that 16. she experiences as a result of both the loss of her brother Devon 17. and her diagnosis.
Sold (Week 10)	18. I found this book to be an interesting piece of literature that not 19. only raises awareness about important issues, but it does so in a 20. manner that students are able to identify with. Even though a 21. student may not have explicitly dealt with direct participation in 22. the slave trade, a young high schooler may be able to empathize 23. with Lakshmi and her current issues. This book was very eye 24. opening and educational. It really made me aware about that 25. prevalence of trafficking. Before this novel, I never understood 26. these problems in India. I think that it did not change my 27. perspective, but instead made me have one. This book made me 28. think of my own life as a 13-year-old and the petty problems I 29. worried about.
American Born Chinese (Week 13)	30. I think this book challenges Asian-American stereotypes as it 31. brings about many of the stereotypes that are present in our 32. society. After reading this book, my perspectives have changed in 33. the fact that stereotypes do need to be taught in the classroom. 34. This book introduces students to the world of stereotypes without 35. condemnation, while also allowing the teacher to have real-life 36. examples in which they can base their lesson off from. I 37. thoroughly enjoyed this book and would not hesitate to use this in 38. my classroom. Not only does it use graphic novels, but it also 39. opens the classroom up to opportunity for attaining another 40. person's perspective.

As a whole, Kristy is better able to capture the implications of trying on different perspectives than Becky. For example, in her response to *Mockingbird*, she mentions that the book allowed for an "insider perspective" (lines 1, 4, 9, 14) or "first-

hand experience" (lines 3, 5, 15-16) of someone with Asperger's. Having the book narrated from this perspective played a key role in Kristy's ability to understand the "symptoms" (line 8) and "thoughts and feelings" (line 15) of someone with Asperger's. Her continual use of the verb "allow" (lines 1, 7, 8) suggests that the book itself (as opposed to discussions about the book or some secondary material connected to the book) granted her this ability to see, feel, and understand what it is like to have Asperger's, reflecting on the main character's emotive state and relationships with others (lines 9-10). Though her response does not necessarily imply a change in the way she thinks, it does illustrate a new understanding of someone with a disability; her figured world has been adjusted to account for the "lack understanding emotion and… excessive attachment" (lines 9-10) of someone with Asperger's.

Whereas her reflection to *Mockingbird* was solidly personal (the use of "I" or the "insider perspective"), Kristy's *Sold* reflection shifts from the personal "I", to a third person "student" (lines 20-21) or "high schooler" (line 22), and then back to the personal "I". She mentions that students might be able to "identify" (line 20) or "emphasize" (line 22) with the main character of the book because of their similarity in age (line 28). She calls *Sold* "eye-opening and educational" (lines 23-24) because it "raises awareness about important issues" (line 19), perhaps because she was not aware of "these problems" (line 26) before reading this book. While she does lump the issues of sex trafficking to "problems" in India as a whole, and therefore misrepresents both the issue and country, she writes that *Sold* "made me have" (line 27) a perspective and helped her to realize her own "petty problems" when compared to Lakshimi's. Within these eleven lines, Kristy tries to articulate the complex and fluid nature of her identity and to capture her newfound figured world after reading this book.

Finally, her response to *American Born Chinese* acts as a written rationale for the teaching of this book from her identity as a pre-service teacher, with references to her hypothetical "students" (line 34) and "classroom" (line 33, 38, 39) as well as a third person "teacher" (line 35) and her "lesson" (line 36). While she does mention that her perspective has changed (line 32), it has changed in the sense of her pedagogical approach to teaching: stereotypes need to be taught (line 33) and this book could be a useful tool in challenging Asian-American stereotypes "present in our society" (lines 31-32) and grounded in "real life" (line 35). Kristy, then, recognizes the book's value in using stereotypes for the purpose of critiquing them. Thus, she "enjoyed" (line 37) it while seeing and understanding its larger purpose (she "would not hesitate to use this in my classroom" (lines 37-38)). Finally, Kristy recognizes and values another aspect of the book with it being a "graphic novel" (line 38), as opposed to a traditional novel. This statement implies a figured world that values a non-traditional or non-dominant perspective, as evidenced in her responses overall.

3.1.3 Sarah

Table 4: Sarah's Responses

Mockingbird *(*Disability book)* (Week 9)	1. Mockingbird did allow me to take on a new perspective. The 2. author stated that her goal was to help readers understand 3. Asperger's syndrome and what a child with this syndrome may go 4. through on a daily basis and I didn't feel like I necessarily gained 5. that perspective. Yet, the story was told from the point of view of 6. the main character Caitlin. You not only read about the different 7. events in her life but you experience them with her through her 8. inner thoughts and feelings. The book addressed the ability to put 9. yourself in the shoes of others, and I think that the author made it 10. really easy for readers to do so with Caitlin and her unique situation
Sold (Week 10)	11. I think this book holds so much power when it comes to raising 12. awareness about an issue that isn't receiving enough attention. It 13. not only presents an authentic and emotional story but also has 14. the ability to open up discussion about the topic of sex trafficking 15. and other social issues that occur not only in other countries but 16. here in the US. I was on the fence about teaching this in a middle 17. school classroom, and possibly just making it an option to 18. students would be a better idea. Yet I do think 13 is a completely 19. appropriate age for students to be reading this, especially due to 20. the age of the girls being trafficked. It would open their eyes and 21. challenge them to put themselves in someone else's shoes. I think 22. too often we limit student exposure because we are under the 23. impression that they cannot handle "adult" topics, when in reality 24. I think that children have the ability to comprehend much more 25. than we give them credit for. A book like this could open their 26. eyes, start discussion, make them more careful, and spread 27. awareness on an issue that obviously needs to be discussed more often.
American Born Chinese (Week 13)	28. I think that by showcasing so many stereotypes Yang is actually 29. challenging them. He uses the common stereotypes, and they are 30. basically in your face for the entire novel and so he is satirizing 31. those who produce and maintain stereotypes rather than the 32. subject of those stereotypes. This caused me to obviously notice 33. these stereotypes, but to also question the possible stereotypes I 34. may have held subconsciously and where they came from. It does 35. all of this while making you laugh and at times not even realize 36. you are questioning these stereotypes.

Sarah has high expectations for the books we read in helping her to understand and see difference through perspective-taking. She begins her response to *Mockingbird* by writing that the book did help her to "take on a new perspective" (line1), but not necessarily in the way the author wanted or expected (lines 4-5). Instead, like Kristy, she suggests that the book was effective in the way the reader can "experience" (line 7) the main character's "inner thoughts and feelings" (line 8), not just read "about" the "events" in her life. In this way, the book offers the oppor-

tunity for the reader to an active participant of Caitlin's life. Sarah claims the importance of this book having been told "from the point of view of the main character" (lines 5-6), noting that it gives readers the opportunity to put themselves in Caitlin's "unique" (lines 9-10) situation. Though she is less specific than Kristy in describing what exactly this perspective-taking stance means (other than to mention "experience… inner thoughts and feelings" in likes 7-8), she is confident in her ability to "experience" what Caitlin has. Most of her response is told from her own perspective (as evidenced by the "me" and "I" scattered throughout the response), but she does shift to the third person "reader" and even the second person "you" when describing the effect of the book on the reader. She ends with a declarative "I think" (line 9) when providing her final comments on the author's effectiveness in capturing Caitlin's point of view and, thus, in altering her own figured world.

Sarah's passion for *Sold* is obvious within the first line when she states that "the book holds so much power" to "raise awareness" about the important issues of sexual trafficking. By positioning the book as a wielder of power, she shifts the agency from herself to the inanimate book, claiming it "presents an authentic and emotional story" (line 13). Sarah clearly has some previous knowledge in the topic of sexual trafficking when she calls it "an issue that isn't receiving enough attention" (line 12), implying that she is already committed to social issues or, at the very least, has some knowledge of them, and especially those connected to sex trafficking. Thus, Sarah may already be predisposed to taking on and understanding different or alternative perspectives and her figured world may already be predisposed towards social justice.

Her point of reference shifts, however, at line 16 when she says, "I was on the fence about teaching this in a middle school classroom…". Before this line, she wrote about the book from her own opinion; now she shifts to her teacherly self and considers the possibilities and implications of teaching this book. She even takes on an authority position when she comments on the age-appropriate reading level for the book (lines 18-19) and when she writes that "we" tend to limit students' access to books because they might not be able to handle or "comprehend" (line 24) sensitive material (lines 22-25). Her use of "we" in these lines positions herself in a community of progressive educators – those who believe that books can affect the behavior of children in positive ways. Sarah concludes that *Sold*, like *Mockingbird*, "challenges" (line 21) readers "to put themselves in someone elses (sic) shoes" (lines 9 and 21) so that they might experience how someone else lives. This common adage is the very point of perspective-taking, and Sarah's identity as a social justice-oriented individual is strengthened as a result of her perspective-taking.

Sarah provides a similarly nuanced commentary to *American Born Chinese* by stating that the book "challenge[s]" (line 29) the many stereotypes that are "showcased" (line 28) in it. She recognizes that the book makes a social commentary by "satirizing" (line 30) the seemingly ridiculous stereotypes that exist about Asian Americans, and thus makes a point that neither Students 1 nor 2 does. She expands

upon her comments when she writes that the targets of the book are "those who produce and maintain stereotypes" (line 31) rather than Asian-Americans and the stereotypes themselves. This comment positions Sarah in the Discourses around the book, not just in and through the perspectives of characters in the book. Highlighting this point, she notes that reading the book caused her "to also question the possible stereotypes I may have held subconsciously and where they came from" (lines 33-34). She now "questions" stereotypes that have become so normal or ingrained that they are "subconscious" (line 34) to her, recognizing the role the book plays in exposing deep-seeded and potentially damaging misunderstandings about Asian-Americans. Finally, Sarah maintains an "I" identity throughout her response here, grounding it in her own figured world and suggesting a change in her own habit of mind or understanding about how the world works when it comes to stereotype production.

4. DISCUSSION

In this section, I first talk about the students individually to make claims about their emergent identities. I include each student's brief, final capstone reflection, which had them respond to the prompt, "I am ____" by listing as many descriptive words and phrases about themselves as possible in roughly one minute (see Tatum, 2000). These descriptive statements nuance my analysis by offering a depiction of the students at the end of the semester. After discussing each student individually, I make some overall points consistent across their responses. Finally, I revisit the broader conceptual frameworks of this paper.

> **Becky**: girl, young, a procrastinator, in college, open, a daughter, sister, girlfriend, creator, someone who works well with people, someone who loves her friends, a good friend, a good teammate, teacher, student, determined, anxious.

Overall, Becky's three Summary Statement responses reveal a tension or resistance in her ability to take on alternative perspectives. These tensions might be characterized in three ways. First, as is the case with *Rules* and *American Born Chinese*, there is a tension between her own figured world and the world of the book. In this case, Becky's figured world remains in tact, leaving little room for any identity negotiation. Second, there exists a tension between the imagined world of her students and that of the book, as with *Sold*, when she considers the merits of the book solely in terms of the perspective of her students instead of herself. The book would be good, she writes, for her students to read, but she makes no mention of its effects on her. And, finally, there is a tension between her role as a future teacher and the benefits of the book, as with *Sold* and *American Born Chinese*. Once again, as she considers the pedagogical merits of the book, she neglects to disrupt her own figured world even as she considers those of her future, hypothetical students. These tensions along with the strong positioning of herself as a future educator result in her overall *inability* or *unwillingness* toward a process of per-

spective-taking. As such, her emergent identity at the end of the semester, as evidenced in her capstone response, shows little nod to difference and diversity. Instead, her reflection is characterized by general claims or descriptions about herself that in no way reveal her own ethnicity, race, or culture. Because she did little to challenge her own figured worlds, her capstone reads as a generic, uncharacteristic personality description.

> **Kristy**: I am culturally relevant, white, middle class, a woman, liberal, spontaneous, a little sister, a teacher, a Christian, a single story, a heterosexual accepting of homosexuality, an identity not an issue.

Kristy's responses suggest, as a whole, an investment in alternative perspectives and a willingness to either see things from different perspectives or to change in some way because of the perspectives offered in the book. That willingness seems to develop over the course of these assignments. In this way, her figured worlds seem open to change and disruption through alternative perspectives and viewpoints, as evidenced across all three of her responses. Kristy's repeated use of action words like "experience", "empathy", and "real-life" reveal her openness. In keeping with the topic of the course, she also shows a *willingness* to recognize how these books describe experiences *other* than her own and from the perspective of a different culture, country, or mindset with her explicit and regular references to the populations targeted in the books, which certainly contributes to her acknowledgement of difference and diversity. While all of her responses evoke a strong sense of self through her repeated index of "I", Kristy clearly tries on different perspectives, and her capstone reflection captures her emergent identity in the context of course concepts and themes connected to difference and diversity ("culturally-relevant"; "an identity not an issue", "a single-story"). She also indexes the dominant aspects of her identity: White, middle class, Christian, and heterosexual, suggesting she had undergone a successful process towards perspective-taking.

> **Sarah**: I am a singer, an artist, a photographer. I am a minority in the sense I am a woman. I am not a minority - I am middle class, young, white. I am a stressed, anxious student. I am a stereotype - a future woman teacher. I am my own story, a mix of my own culture, my own person, my own identity. I am a human being.

Overall, though Sarah is less specific in writing about how she tried on alternative perspectives and what she learned about other populations through these books, her responses strongly indicate a *change* in the way she thinks about the world or about how values are formed, produced, and maintained, as evidenced across all of her responses but most notably in her response to *Sold* and *American Born Chinese*. Thein et. al (2007) argue that these observations still capture the idea of perspective taking, but I would suggest that these observations, coupled with her lack of specificity about new perspectives, might suggest a more nuanced practice of perspective-taking – Sarah's comments reflect a larger understanding of *systematic* inequalities and concerns for social justice (Paris, 2012), instead of just learning for and about other perspectives. Additionally, Sarah maintained a strong sense of self

throughout her responses, shifting only once to her identity as a future teacher. Focusing her perspective-taking in this way perhaps allowed her to more easily evidence the change in her understanding and figured worlds. With this in mind, the practice of perspective-taking may not be a new tool for Sarah; perhaps she has an inherent proclivity toward taking on alternative perspectives, toward challenging and disrupting her own figured worlds, and toward social justice overall. This is not surprising as a student who aspires to be a teacher and whose education courses are grounded in issues of diversity, equity, and social justice. Thus, her capstone response indexes her independent identity ("my own identity") through a set of complicated statements and tensions, suggesting that her identity cannot be neatly defined or delineated; it is a mix of conflicting and perhaps inconsistent, iterative tensions and contradictions ("I am a minority", "I am not a minority"; "I am a stereotype").

4.1 Case-Based Themes

In all three cases, the students jockeyed with their different identity categories and figured worlds. Most notably, the students vacillated between their own perspectives of the books and their identities as a future teacher. In some cases, they even took on the perspectives of their future, yet hypothetical, students when considering the pedagogical value of the book. This is not surprising being that all of the students in the course were registered pre-service teachers, with some of them already teaching or working in the field under the tutelage of a mentor teacher. This vacillation suggests that their emergent identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005) as a future teacher was a strong one, and it sometimes (as in the case of Becky, perhaps) trumped their emergent identity as a student in a multicultural literature class working towards a set of skills, values, or dispositions as set out by me, the instructor, and the course goals. Their pre-service teacher identity provoked them, whether they meant to or not, to wade into the "political" territory of the books and to ponder their pedagogical and value-laden messages and purposes. Thus, the process the students had undergone during the course was mediated by their future roles as teachers – if they were able to separate their own figured world from their teacherly selves, then they seemed more open to the perspective-taking opportunities the book provided. When they focused on themselves as a learner in a multicultural literature class (as with Sarah), evidence of their successful perspective-taking was clearer and stronger.

The books played a role in mediating the students' process and development toward perspective-taking. All three students attributed great agency and even *power* to the books we read, not necessarily the class discussions, papers, or activities. The *book*, in other words, not necessarily our class discussions or activities, acted as a key *actor* in their ability and willingness to take on perspectives and to alter their figured worlds. For example, the most passionate and generative responses came after students read and discussed *Sold*, a highly gripping, emotional,

and descriptive text. Their visceral response alone encouraged them to rethink their own lives and take on a perspective other than their own. Similarly, there was a difference in the responses to the different books read during our week discussing abelism and individuals with disabilities. *Rules*, as read by Becky, was clearly the inferior book to *Mockingbird* (which was read by Kristy and Sarah), perhaps because it was not told from the perspective of someone who had the disability. As a result, Becky was adverse to believing and taking on the perspective presented. So, the text mattered.

That said, Kristy and Sarah's cases reveal that when the students were willing to disrupt their own figured worlds (the way they think about and understand the world and the different populations we discussed), they were made more aware of their own emergent identities connected to difference and diversity, as confirmed in their capstone reflections. While moments of perspective-taking may indeed be transitory, there exists a correlation between the weekly Summary Statement responses and the final capstone reflection: learning about difference, diversity, and experiences other than their own helped them to recognize and acknowledge their own dominant positioning and identities. They do not take the dominant – or marginalized or stereotypical – aspects of their identity for granted.

Finally, in considering the linguistic foundation that informed this paper, the students' responses suggest how they reveal their own identities and implicate the figured worlds of both themselves and others. Specifically, the correlation between the Summary Statement assignments and the capstone reflection was linguistically realized in that final reflection. Bucholtz & Hall (2005) refer to identity as a "sociocultural phenomenon" embedded in discourse and interaction. For Kristy and Sarah, the classroom conversations gave them a foundation for their linguistic declarations of new worlds and emerging identities. They affirm Gee's contention that as they communicate, they build identities and figured worlds (Rogers, 2011). Becky, however, presents an interesting disconnect within this model. During class discussions, she was active and participatory, and many times, she maintained and supported the classroom conversations with critical insight about the books we read. During these moments, she certainly revealed an emerging or developing identity connected to difference and diversity, but when it was time for her to express her thoughts and ideas individually and independently (without the oversight of her peers), she revealed a resistance to that same identity. In the space without interaction and influence, Becky shut down figured worlds different from her own, and if identity membership is a linguistic construct, then Becky, for the most part, maintained her identity over the course of the semester – the linguistic declaration of herself at the end of the course (e.g., her capstone reflection) revealed little multicultural insight.

Similarly, the ways in which the students linguistically positioned others provides insight into their own emerging identities. For example, all of the students throughout their Summary Statements considered their future and potential students or teacherly selves. In some ways, these hypothetical identities allowed them

to hedge or protect their own identities and figured worlds. At other times, and with Kristy and Sarah especially, talking about hypothetical students made a stronger case for them to espouse a cultural perspective and, thus, for them to linguistically alter or develop their emerging multicultural identity.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Whereas similar research offers possibilities for student and pre-service teacher transformation through the reading of multicultural texts (Haddix and Price-Dennis, 2013; Ambe, 2006; Thein et al., 2007; Louie, 2005), this study, in bringing together the phenomenon and relationship among emergent identities, figured worlds, and perspective-taking, offers a series of complications and tensions embedded in classrooms like this, where white students read multicultural literature for the purposes of change and social justice in an educational context – the tension between the student-as-student and the student as-future-teacher, the contradiction between oral and written discourse as connected to identity and positioning, and the role or "power" of the multicultural text itself These tensions offer a number of considerations for future research and literature pedagogy.

The pedagogical tool of perspective-taking can be useful in helping pre-service teachers think differently about themselves and their future students. However, students' identities as pre-service teachers sometimes overshadowed the larger goals and objectives of the class; they sometimes slipped (too easily or unknowingly) into the mindset of a future teacher, which hampered with their own willingness or ability to take on alternative perspectives. Though they did take on the perspective of their future students, that process did not help them to shake their *own* figured worlds, let alone to potentially misappropriate those of their future students. More work on behalf of the instructor to focus students on their own identity and figured worlds instead of on their teacherly-selves could produce more effective insights.

Thein and Sloan (2012) suggest that tying perspective-taking to a pedagogy of *ethical* reading might help to break away from traditional approaches and expectations of literature instruction. Under this model, "the emphasis… moves from how one says something to how one thinks about what she says both during her initial response and as she continually reconsiders and revises that response through genuinely entertaining the stances of others" (p. 322). In this way, students engage in a "recursive process of continually questioning what it means to accept various interpretive invitations" and value "fluid and tentative interpretations" (p. 321) as they negotiate different perspectives. While this model could help students to see how their emerging identities develop over a period of time, to dismiss "how" one says something would be to ignore the linguistic implications and assumptions that drive this study: namely, that when we speak, we build identities and figured worlds. Incorporating a linguistic approach to an ethical reading pedagogy – having students speak and compose their belief statements – could help them to take ac-

count of larger figured worlds, and at the same time, to meaningfully and knowingly construct their own identity/ies in relation to those worlds.

Further, this was an elective course – students were not required to take it, and many of them knew its purpose and content. So, their purposes for taking the course could be more explicitly vetted. Did they just want to read books? Avoid enrolling in another class (with a different workload)? Were they already predisposed to multicultural perspectives and issues of social justice and diversity? Or, were they sincere in their intentions to learn more about others different from them? Obviously, these varied purposes could affect students' willingness toward perspective-taking, and thus their own figured worlds and multicultural identity.

Becoming multiculturally aware "allows conscious commitment to certain ways of *being* and *doing* that constitute construction of new identities, within and across *new* 'figured worlds'" (as appropriated from Coffey & Street, 2008, p. 453). If perspective-taking dwells largely "in the mind," then simply "being" a student in a class may not warrant multicultural change or action based upon new figured worlds and emergent identities. A perspective-taking approach grounded in some practice-component, some field component, can gauge how students enact new multicultural identities and understanding. Connecting multicultural literature pedagogy to a site outside of the classroom would certainly break away from the traditional approaches of (multicultural) literature instruction and would allow for more evidence of students' concretized emergent identities. Similarly, it would have been worthwhile to follow these students into their own classrooms to see how their emergent, multicultural identities played out in an actual context. More research can be done of pre-service teachers studying multicultural literature, the tools by which their emergent identities are crafted, and the connections or tensions between pre-service teachers' linguistic (both written and oral) identities and those they may bring into classrooms or, importantly, to literature.

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APPENDIX: LIST AND DESCRIPTION OF ALL BOOKS STUDIED DURING THE SEMESTER

Week	Book and Author	Description
2	Selections from *Grimm's Fairy Tales* Selections from *The Bloody Chamber* by Angela Carter	The Grimm selections include classic versions familiar to readers. The Carter selections include classic fairy tales told from different perspectives and with vastly different interpretations and plots.
4	*I Hadn't Meant To Tell You This* by Jacqueline Woodson	This book is told from the perspective of Marie, an African-American girl, and details her friendship with Lena, a white girl.
5	*Heart of a Chief* by Joseph Bruchac *The Indian in the Cupboard* by Lynn Reid Banks	*** During this week, students were given a choice of books.* *Heart* is told from the perspective of Chris, a Native American boy. *Indian* is told from the perspective of a white boy. The book carries problematic representations of Native Americans.
6	*The Absolutely True Story of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie	This book is told from the perspective of Junior, who leaves his school on the Reservation for a suburban, white school.
7	*Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi	Persepolis is a memoir of the young Marjane growing up during the Islamic Revolution.
9	*Rules* by Cynthia Lord *Mockingbird* by Kathryn Erskine	*** During this week, students were given several options of books with character(s) of some type of disability* *Rules* is told from the perspective of Catherine, a 13 year-old girl, whose brother has Autism. *Mockingbird* is told from the perspective of Caitlin, an 11 year-old girl with Asperger's Syndrome, as she deals with her brother's death.
10	*Sold* by Patricia McCormick	*Sold* is told from the perspective of Lakshmi, a 13 year-old girl living in Nepal, who is eventually and unknowingly sold into sexual slavery to pay off her family's debts.
13	*American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang	This book interweaves three seemingly unrelated stories about Jin Wang, a young, Chinese American student, as he navigates his life in a new neighborhood and school as the only Chinese student.