

Assessing Student Sensitivity to Cultural Difference
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Introduction

It is projected by 2040 that no ethnic or racial group will make the majority of the national school age population (U.S. Depart of Education, 2004). This significant diversity projection will also be inclusive of socio-economic status, religion, and varied abilities of children (Van Hook, 2000). Contrasts to this diversity are mostly white and female teachers from middle income backgrounds (Edutopia, 2006; Bennett et al., 2000; Zeichner & Melnick, 1996) who often appear overconfident about their capabilities in working with children from diverse cultural settings (Reiff & Carmella, 1992; Weinstein, 1988). Subsequently, they tend to rely on naïve, idealistic beliefs whereby “being white is normal, typical, and functions as a standard for what is right, what is good, and what is true” (McIntyre, 1999). This form of “dysconscious racism” justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order established by white norms (Dixson & Rousseau, 2006; Gillete, 1996; King, 1991). Further, this privileged perspective ignores and denies the fact that ethnic or racial differences can have pedagogical implications (Nieto, 1996; Bollin & Finkel, 1995; Paine, 1989). Consequently, students of color are positioned at an academic deficit vantage point where they are more likely to be represented in special education classrooms than gifted and talented classrooms (Harry & Klinger, 2006).

A number of studies have examined teacher racial bias and its relationship to teacher expectations and its influence on student achievement (Ogbu, 2003; Townsend, 2000; Casteel, 1997; Lezotte, 1991). Ogbu (2003) examined low academic performance of African American students in an affluent suburb. The study reported that some teachers, both African American and white assumed that African American students could not perform like white students. Those

who did perform well were perceived as “exceptional” (Ogbu, 2003). Ogbu’s study also revealed that students had internalized the beliefs expressed by their teachers. During a group discussion between Ogbu and a group of high school students, several students raised their hand in affirmation to the question, “How many of you deeply think in the back of your mind, maybe, white students are really smarter than black students?” One particular student provided an explanation of these collective thoughts.

[Black people] who thought differently than what society taught [them to believe] which was [that] Blacks are inferior to Whites, fought that struggle. And those who fought that struggle, most of those who fought that struggle succeeded. Sometimes in the classroom, [Black] kids seem to think, to have this mentality, this unconscious way of thinking that Blacks are inferior to Whites. And I think that [that] takes a toll on some Black students. [White teachers, counselors, etc.] might not be racist. They might not have anything [against Black students], any negative views of Blacks that [whether] they’re White [or] Black [teachers and counselors]. They just survive in it. [They unconsciously act like society believes Blacks will act because they are inferior] (p.78).

-A Black male student

Ogbu asserts that three important points were made in this student’s commentary. One is that black people, as a category or collectively, had known since slavery that (white) people believed them to be intellectually inferior to whites. The second is that black people had come to believe that they were indeed not as intelligent as white people (i.e. they eventually internalized the white beliefs). The third point is that even today, one can observe the consequences of the internalized white beliefs in the classroom attitudes and behaviors of black students (Ogbu, 2003).

Ogbu’s (2003) study accentuates the need for cultural sensitivity and multicultural education. Teachers with a multicultural philosophy have equally high expectations for all students regardless of gender, race, or ethnic background and are well informed of the relationship between teacher expectations and students’ level of academic achievement (Plata &

Robertson, 1998). Additionally, they know that negative factors such as low expectations, stereotyping, and bias ultimately create inequalities for students of color in the classroom (Lindley, & Keithley, 1991).

Study Purpose

As early as 1969, Smith recognized that there was a need for major re-engineering of teacher education programs to prepare professionals for work in diverse learning environments. Despite this recommendation, Zeichner, in 1993, reported that “There is a lot of evidence that the situation hasn’t changed much”. In recent years, governing bodies of teacher education have addressed the issue of ‘diversity’. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) principles and standards guide state teacher licensing agencies and influence the governance responsibility of a teacher education program’s curriculum, pedagogy and the evaluation through articulation of educational goals into standards (Vavrus, 2002). Unfortunately, the manner in which NCATE and INTASC address cultural competency is limited and unclear thereby making it difficult to assess knowledge, dispositions, and performances that are necessary for transformative multicultural education across teacher education programs (Vavrus, 2002). This lack of clarity is further complicated by NCATE’s decision to drop the language “social justice” which appears in the glossary for the definition of “dispositions” as one of several illustrative examples of professional disposition (Wasley, 2006).

This decision has serious implications. For most, the absence of this language fractures and minimizes the role of the teacher in their ability to educate students with knowledge, skills, and values that will enable them to live, interact, and make decisions with fellow citizens from

different racial, ethnic, cultural, language, and religious groups (Banks, 2006). Further, it perpetuates and cultivates the existence of “white privilege” and negates the need to affirm cultural identity in the learning process (Vavrus, 2002). In short, until governing accreditation agencies revise standards requiring diversity knowledge bases be made explicit in teacher education programs, it will be critical that programs provide preservice teachers with foundational information in racism and how “white norms” skew meanings of achievement for those students who are typically disenfranchised because of monolithic classroom practices. (Pritchey-Smith, 2000). The purpose of the present study is to assess dispositions toward cultural diversity among a population of preservice teachers who are primarily white, lived in rural settings, and enrolled in a multicultural education course. Instrumental to this study will be the identification of factors that may be associated with preservice teachers who undergo changes in their dispositions toward diversity.

Methods

Participants

This study included 54 students in an elementary teacher education program enrolled in two sections of a multicultural education course at a large urban public university. Both sections were taught by the same instructor. Most (83%) respondents were female. A substantial portion ranged in age from 18-30 (65%). Nearly all students identified themselves as white (96%). A majority of the students spent their formative years in a rural setting (61%).

Description of the Course

In this multicultural education course, preservice teachers are introduced to content the literature and research suggests are necessary for intercultural competence (DeJaeghere & Zhang,

2008). This content represents various dimensions of culturally responsive teaching. They include cultural self-awareness; awareness of different cultural worldviews; awareness of the social-construction of race, and prejudice and discrimination in historical and contemporary societal and school contexts; knowledge of cultural patterns and culture specific knowledge; knowledge of and skill in using different communication and learning styles; knowledge and skill in using diverse classroom management strategies; ability to adapt the curriculum content to reflect cultural diversity of students; and skills to implement various pedagogies, including discourse, participation and assessment, that are culturally relevant to one's students (Hammer and Bennett, 2001; Gay, 2000; Sleeter, 1992; Bennett, 1993; Cross et al., 1989). Further, preservice teachers examine disability using historical and contemporary perspectives, and instructional dimensions for successfully educating students with special needs.

Another component of this course is field experience. The purpose of the field experience is to provide experiential learning opportunities about urban education, urban communities, and to serve as a platform for reflection about issues regarding diversity, multicultural education, inclusion, special education, child development and learning theories. The preservice teachers are participant observers in urban schools and work with small groups and/or individual students under the guidance of his/her mentor teacher. The focus of the field experience is understanding the students' experiences in the learning environment, the impact of student-teacher relationship in students' learning, and the importance of school climate and school culture to student achievement.

Data Sources

Intercultural Development Inventory

The Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) was used in this study to provide measurable evidence in preservice teacher's growth in sensitivity to cultural difference as addressed in the multicultural education course. The IDI is an empirical operationalization of the theoretical constructs of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). The DMIS is a model of six stages used to describe the increasing more cognitive structures used to view the culturally diverse world (Bennett, 1986). The model defines culture as any group with a set of similar constructs and therefore is not limited to racial and ethnic diversity (Van Hook, 2000). The basic assumption of the model is that as intercultural challenges cause one's experiences of cultural difference to become more complex, one's competence in intercultural relations increases (Endicott et al., 2003).

The DMIS model implies a development progression in an individual's awareness and understanding of cultural difference and does not assume that progression through the stages is one-way or permanent, but unidirectional (Bennett, 1993). However, the acquisition of a more complex worldview makes it nearly impossible to retreat to a more simplistic, less developed view of culture if one has thoughtfully deconstructed and reconstructed their cultural experiences (Greenholtz, 2000). In short, merely having an experience, or "being in the vicinity of events as they occur", does not constitute nor advance (cultural) understanding, but the reflecting and the embracing of the new ways of thinking promote awareness and appreciation for cultural differences (Greenholtz, 2000; Mesirow, 1997).

The IDI is a psychometrically designed and tested empirical tool for quantifying the constructs underlying the DMIS (DeJaeghere & Zhang, 2008). The IDI (v.2) is a paper and pencil instrument composed of 50 statements to which participants rate their agreement or disagreement on a five point scale (1=disagree, 2=disagree somewhat more than agree, 3=disagree some and agree some, 4=agree somewhat more than disagree, and 5=agree). Table 1 provides sample IDI questions. This self-assessment inventory focuses on how individuals construe their social world in terms of dealing with cultural differences between themselves and people from other social/cultural groups (Bennett, 1993). The IDI measures five dimensions of the DMIS which are represented by five scales; (1) DD (Denial/Defense); (2) Reversal ; (3) Minimization; (4) AA (Acceptance/Adaptation); (5) and Encapsulated Marginality. Results from targeted factor analysis and reliability analyses identified six sub-scales (i.e. Denial, Defense, Minimization, Acceptance, Cognitive Adaptation, and Behavioral Adaptation). Scales and sub-scales were found to be highly reliable with alpha coefficients of 0.80 or higher (Altshuler, et al., 2003). Content and construct validity of the instrument were addressed by the use of raters and a panel of experts who rated each of the generated items in terms of the developmental orientations as described by the DMIS. Construct validity was determined by examining the relationship of the IDI's six sub-scales to theoretically related variables embedded in the "Worldmindedness" scale and the "Intercultural Anxiety" instrument (Hammer et al., 2003).

The IDI provides two overall scores. The "developmental" score reflects the respondents' actual world view and the "perceived" score reflects internalized beliefs about one's level of cultural sensitivity. An overall perceived score more than one standard deviation ($SD=15$) higher than the developmental score would suggest a tendency to overestimate one's intercultural sensitivity and competence.

The IDI can provide a trained interpreter with individual or group profiles of intercultural sensitivity which can translate into professional development action plans (Greenholtz, 2000). The group profile represents the aggregate scores of an organization's members, while the individual profile provides the same information for an individual's scores rather than aggregate scores. Both the individual and group profiles provide knowledge that can facilitate greater awareness and understanding of the process of intercultural development (DeJaeghere & Zhang, 2008). This information gives insight into one's own or one's group current developmental strengths and challenges; especially the individual profile (DeJaeghere & Zhang, 2008).

The IDI can serve several purposes. It can be used to increase self-awareness of intercultural sensitivity, to increase organizational-level understanding of the developmental issues of its members, to identify the training and education needs of client populations, to evaluate the effectiveness of training, and to prepare clients for entry into the new culture or multinational environments (Greenholtz, 2000). For the purpose of this study, the IDI will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a multicultural education course in promoting sensitivity to cultural differences.

Written Assignments

A critical aspect of this study was to identify factors associated with dispositional changes preservice teachers undergo toward members representing diverse racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic, and socio-economic groups. In order to identify these factors, written assignments and course evaluations were analyzed. All written assignments contained a self-reflective component. Therefore, it was anticipated the review of these documents would reveal insights about dispositions toward diversity that were not readily available from IDI findings.

Procedure

Preservice teachers were introduced to the research study on the first day of class. The instructor of this class also served as the principal investigator of the study. The preservice teachers were informed participation was voluntary and explained participation or nonparticipation had no bearing on the outcome of final grades and the analysis of data would not begin until after final grades had been formally submitted for the course. All preservice teachers agreed to participate in this research effort and completed a consent form. IDI pretests were completed on the first day of class while the posttest was administered on the last day. A total of 16 weeks expired between the pretest and posttest.

Data Analysis:

Descriptive statistics were generated from the IDI completed by the preservice teachers. Independent t-tests were conducted between pretests and posttests survey items to determine if mean differences were significant. Further, the constant comparative method was used to examine emerging themes from written assignments and course evaluations. In this process, concrete instances of data were linked together into more general categories and either accumulated for evidence and ideas, or was used for clarification and correction of previously developed themes (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Given the small sample of participants, any assertions based on survey items and qualitative findings were tentative at best.

Research Findings and Discussion

IDI Pretests taken on the first day of the multicultural education class were compared to posttest completed on the last day of class. A comparison of mean ratings between pretest and posttest indicated that there were no significant differences between the scales measured by the IDI (i.e. Denial/Defense, Reversal, Minimization, Acceptance/Adaptation, Encapsulated Marginality) (See table 2).

Pre-existing favorable dispositions toward diversity may explain the lack of significant difference on scale scores between pretests and posttests. Garmon (1996) and others (Pohan, 1996; Kagan, 1992; McGeehan, 1982) reported that preservice teachers who began a diversity course favorably disposed toward racial/cultural diversity tended to become more favorable during the course whereas those who were unfavorably disposed tended to become less favorable. Although causation cannot be inferred, findings from this present study might indicate that personal experiences (i.e. friendships, education, travel, etc.) prior to the course favorably predisposed preservice teachers toward cultural diversity. Though speculative, this predisposition rendered non-significant findings between pre and posttests.

The post overall development score of 102.69 compared to the pretest score of 98.71 suggests a trend toward more intercultural sensitivity. As such, preservice teachers do not endorse defensive attitudes towards those who are culturally different but construct difference from a “minimization” worldview. A minimization worldview highlights cultural commonality and universal issues. Further, it suggests cultural differences are subordinated to similarities (DeJaeghere & Zhang, 2008). Objective culture differences, such as dress, may be “seen”, but the subjective culture differences such as values are not often understood, and rather are assumed

to be similar to one's own values. Based on the DMIS model, the preservice teachers' cultural competence will continue to increase if they are actively and consistently engaged in more complex intercultural relations. These experiences may eventually place them in position of a worldview (Acceptance/Adaptation/) that can comprehend and accommodate complex cultural differences.

To determine what contributed to the increase in the overall developmental posttest score, an examination of each survey item was conducted between pre and posttest. As noted earlier, the preservice teachers' minimization profile is an expression of a belief in the basic similarity of all people and/or disavowal of deep cultural differences (Bennett, 1993). The significant findings on the posttest minimization scale survey items noted in Table 3 suggest the preservice teachers have less tendency to subsume difference into more familiar and similar categories.

The Adaptation scale measures one's tendency to shift perspective and behavior according to cultural context. The significant findings on specified survey items suggest that preservice teachers have moved to a position where they can consciously try to imagine how the other person is thinking about things and shift their mental perspective into the "insiders" point of view (Paige, et al., 2003). Further, they employ alternative ways of thinking when they are solving problems, making decisions, and communicating with people from other cultures (Paige, et al., 2003).

The Encapsulated Marginality scale indicates a world view that incorporates a multicultural identify with confused cultural perspectives. This confusion was evident for the preservice teachers in this study who were 96% white. Early in the semester, many of the white students expressed they did not have a culture. This misconception that ethnic and cultural diversity is

only about people who are “different than” whites is a widely held perspective by members of that race (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2005). It has also been reported that whites do not grow up with a race discourse, do not think of their life choices in racial ways, and do not consider themselves as belonging to a racial group (Leonardo, 2009). The significant findings between pre and post survey items suggest preservice teachers are more aware of their cultural connections and have less of an investment in their “whiteness” (Leonardo, 2009).

Findings from this study suggest preservice teachers who were nearly all white were overconfident in their abilities in working with culturally diverse populations (Reiff & Cannella, 1992; Weinstein, 1988). The preservice teachers’ overall “developmental” score reflects their actual world view while the “perceived” score reflects internalized beliefs about one’s level of cultural sensitivity. Because the overall “perceived” score (122.15) is higher than the “developmental” score (98.71), it suggests a tendency to overestimate one’s intercultural sensitivity and competence (DeJaeghere & Zhang, 2008). Given the difference between the two scores is more than one standard deviation ($SD=15$) this finding is considered significant (Hammer & Bennett, 2001).

From the analysis of assignments and course evaluations, two major factors appeared to be most critical in facilitating changes towards the preservice teachers dispositions as previously described. Both were experiential in nature. One related to support group discussions, while the other was associated with intercultural experiences. A support group in this case is defined as individuals who encourage a person’s growth through listening to him or her, helping him or her process and make sense of relevant information and/or experiences, questioning or challenging the person words/or actions as means of pushing him or her to think more deeply, and sometimes expanding the person’s knowledge or awareness by providing additional information when

needed (Garmon, 2004, Fry & McKinney, 1997). Throughout the semester, time was allocated during each class meeting to discuss readings, group activities, and field experiences. Based on the responses to the course evaluation question, “What has/have been the most significant aspect(s) of this course”, it became evident the support group experiences helped foster growth of multicultural awareness and sensitivity. Table 4 provides a description of the most frequently cited responses which related to group discussions by the preservice teachers.

Overwhelmingly, field experiences had a profound impact on how the preservice teachers thought and felt about cultural diversity. During the course of the semester, students participated in field experience at an elementary school setting once a week for three hours for seven consecutive weeks for a total of 21 hours. These professional development sites were located in urban settings. In most instances, the racial demographics of the student body were predominately African-American and Latino. While in the field, preservice teachers worked with small groups of students, individual students, and observed the multiple responsibilities of classroom teachers as they responded to the constantly changing demands of teaching.

Research on the effects of field experiences yielded mixed results. Findings from the current study closely resemble research which reported that field experience has a positive effect on preservice teachers’ attitudes and beliefs on diversity (Procter, Rentz, & Jackson, 2001; Wolffe, 1996; Kemp et al., 1994; Sleeter, 1985). This finding is corroborated by responses to a course evaluation question, “What was the most significant aspect of the multicultural education course?” Table 5 provides a description of the most frequent narratives in response to the course evaluation question.

Additional, data suggests preservice teachers experienced a change in their career expectations whereby they were more inclined to teach in a culturally diverse school. Many of these preservice teachers who spent most of their developmental years in a rural setting attributed this decision to field experience. The responses to reflective prompts in the Community Assessment Survey assignment provide evidence which supports this new position towards urban schools. See Appendix 1 for a description of this assignment. The following narratives are a sample of the responses to the question, “After conducting this Community Assessment Survey and interacting with students, teachers, and administrators at your professional development site, how have your perceptions changed about urban schools? Re-examine your biases/stereotypes. Where do you see yourself now?”

“I am now seriously considering teaching in a urban setting. I have fallen in love with the children; plus it is refreshing to be around people who are different than myself. It reminds me what a big world we live in and all of the things I still have to learn.”

“My perceptions about urban schools have changed. I know that at first I was scared to go into an urban school. I thought that the children would not respond to me and see me as a threat. I now know after being there I was very welcomed by all the staff and students. I felt very accepted by everyone and this made my original worries disappear. Knowing what I know now I would be more than willing to work in an urban setting.”

“Once in these schools, I found that these children are no harder to teach than in XXXX Township. I was thrilled to realize that we shared many similarities, differences, likes, dislikes, hobbies! My previous fears and assumptions’ were put to rest after I understood that urban schools were in need of the same committed, enthusiastic, and passionate teachers that every other schools need. I see myself now loving urban school more than any other district because I feel I can make the most impact there.”

“After completing this survey and interacting with staff and children at XXXX Elementary school, I feel that I judged urban schools too quickly. Communities are very complex and different factors make up the residents who reside there. I was quick to think that urban schools primarily consisted of lower income and African American families. I now know families who are involved in urban schools come from all backgrounds and deserve the best education like all students do. I know teachers, including myself of all backgrounds and experiences can teach in urban schools and be part of the positive experiences for all children.”

“After conducting this Community Assessment Survey and interacting with those at XXXX Elementary School, my perceptions have changed tremendously. Just from the one day of observation, so far I see students in Miss XXXX class are just like student in every class I have ever been in or observed. This helped me not to be biased or afraid of teaching in an urban setting. I see myself now as not being apprehensive about one day teaching in an urban environment.”

“Working in an urban school was very different from anything I expected. The students were far from what I expected. In fact, instead of being the disrespectful wild kids I thought they would be, they were the best behaved class of students I have ever encountered. They also treated one another and authority figures with tremendous respect. Even in times when I thought their teacher was not treating them with respect they deserved, they were still respectful towards her. I now think it would be a great experience to work in an urban school.”

In summary, the current research suggests field experience in culturally diverse (i.e. racial, ethnic, linguistic, and socio-economic) settings combined with discussions are key essentials in altering preservice teachers dispositions in a positive manner toward those who are culturally different. Ultimately, it is believed these attitudinal changes will be reflected in pedagogical practices which undergird equity in schools and society (Garmon, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1992, Cooper, Beane, Thormon, 1990; Pine & Hilliard, 1990).

Conclusions and Implications

The results of this study must be considered in the context of its limitations. First, the research consisted of only 54 students. Therefore, research findings have limited generalizations. The researcher acknowledges that students’ entering attitudes and beliefs serve as filters for what they learn. This study did not examine experiential cultural factors which may have influenced the research participants’ dispositions towards cultural differences prior to entering the course. As such, tentative assertions can only be made about the degree of influence experiential experiences incorporated in the multicultural education course had on the development of cultural sensitivity and awareness among the preservice teachers. Further, this study would have

benefited from a control group to determine the impact of course on students' perspectives on cultural diversity.

The Intercultural Development Inventory measures “entry point” dispositions towards cultural differences. Information gathered on dispositions can inform program design, guide the development of instructional strategies that provide situation-specific coaching for intercultural encounters, assist in the construction of curricular responses to person-specific needs of prospective preservice teachers and stimulate a broad discussion of the role of cultural diversity in human pluralism (Dee & Henkin, 2002; Tjeerdsma et al., 2000). Although the knowledge of entry point dispositions lends itself to effective instructional programming, the researcher of the current study is not recommending knowledge of entry point dispositions be used for “front end” sorting of prospective students, whereby admittance to teacher education programs is based on predispositions to cultural difference (Haberman & Post, 1998). However, if cultural awareness is deemed an important outcome of teacher education programs, the program's student assessment plan should incorporate rubrics that define what culturally sensitive practice is and include ways to measure students' progress toward those goals (Dee & Henkin, 2002). Further, it is also important that multicultural education principles and ideas be introduced and developed across an entire teacher program, not just added as one more component; otherwise, students may view these efforts as “another course to pass” rather than as a vital aspect of personal and professional development (Groulx, 2001; Chisholm, 1994; Reiff & Cannella, 1992).

The basic assumption of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity that as intercultural challenges cause one's experiences of cultural difference become more complex, one's competence in intercultural relations increases (Endicott, et al. 2003) was supported by this study. Implications from this finding suggest preservice teachers with less favorable dispositions

toward diversity have the potential for developing more positive dispositions by participating in a provision of early, ample, and carefully supported fieldwork in urban schools and support group experiences (i.e. class discussions) (Garmon, 2004). Though not conclusive, this research also suggests field experiences in culturally different settings affect the career expectations of preservice teachers by heightening their consideration of teaching in an urban setting.

In closing, the journey to becoming a culturally competent educator requires one to overcome obstacles and barriers which necessitate a paradigm shift in how one view others' culture and their own. By doing so, educators will be better positioned to create culturally responsive and "socially just" classrooms which are evidenced by rigorous subject matter, differentiated pedagogy, an ethic of care, equitable inclusion, and social action pedagogy whereby teaching encourages the development of democratic citizens who understand and engage social issues (Kose, 2007; Banks, 2006).

Table 1. Sample Questions from the Intercultural Development Inventory

Scale	Question
Denial	There would be fewer problems in the world if culturally different groups kept to themselves.
Defense	If only other cultures were more like ours, the world would be a better place.
Minimization	People are the same; we have the same needs, interests, and goals in life.
Acceptance	I am often aware of cultural differences in how decisions are made.
Adaptation	I use different cultural criteria for interpreting and evaluating situations.

Table 2. Mean Scores for Intercultural Development Inventory Pretest and Posttest

IDI Scales	Pretest		Posttest	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Defense/Denial	1.64	.90	1.65	.90
Reversal	2.06	1.13	2.01	1.05
Minimization	3.15	1.19	2.98	1.32
Acceptance/Adaptation	2.99	1.16	3.08	1.25
Encapsulated Marginality	2.09	1.25	1.80	.99

Table 3. Significant Intercultural Development Inventory Survey Items

Scale/Survey Item	Pretest M (SD)	Posttest M (SD)	t
<i>Minimization</i>			
Despite some cultural differences, it is more important to recognize that people are all alike in their humanity. ^a	4.30 (.82)	3.77 (1.31)	3.50 ***
Cultural differences are less important than the fact that people have the same needs, interests, and goals in life. ^a	3.17 (1.42)	2.64 (1.45)	2.63**
People are fundamentally the same despite apparent differences in cultures. ^a	3.75 (1.19)	3.33 (1.34)	2.41*
Universal moral principles provide an effective guide for behavior in other cultures. ^a	3.08 (.98)	2.66 (1.21)	2.80**
<i>Adaptation</i>			
I can look at the world through the eyes of a person from another culture.	2.81 (1.20)	3.15 (1.25)	-2.02*
I evaluate situations in my own culture based on my experiences and knowledge of other cultures.	3.07 (1.31)	3.41 (1.30)	-1.94*
I use different culture criteria for interpreting and evaluating situations	2.94 (1.09)	3.38 (1.25)	-2.74**
<i>Encapsulated Marginality</i>			
I feel rootless because I do not think I have a cultural identification. ^a	1.21 (.12)	.89 (.09)	2.39*
I do not feel I am a member of any one culture or combination of cultures. ^a	1.40 (.14)	1.16 (.12)	2.51**

^a Reversed-scored item

***p<.001

**p<0.01

*p<0.05

Table 4. What has/have been the most significant aspect(s) of this Multicultural Education Course?

Most Frequently Cited Support Group Responses

The class discussions have been the most significant thing for me

I feel we learn so much by our conversations with each other

I love all of the real life situations that we discuss

I have really enjoyed our discussions over cultural diversity

The class discussions really help me see other perspectives

Discussions

Table 5. What has/have been the most significant aspect(s) of this Multicultural Education Course?

Most Frequently Cited Field Experience Responses

The field experiences have been significant in the way of actually experiencing diversity

I have enjoyed the field experiences

The field experiences...I feel like I am learning so much from my mentor teacher

Going to the school and being able to have the first had experiences

Being immersed within an urban school

I think that the field experiences and the readings that pertain to how e create a supportive environment for all learners

The field experiences have reconfirmed the fact that I want to teach

The field experiences have been great

Doing the field experiences...It is hands on experience that I enjoy

Being in class and working with students

The individual time I get to spend with the kids in field experience

The field experiences have given me great ideas to do in my classroom

Field experience

Appendix 1

ASSET-BASED COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT ASSIGNMENT

“The way schools values students is often reflected in the way they understand the community.”

Overview of the Assignment

As stated in the literature, notions of urban schools are based on myths and stereotypes that are never explored and are sometimes based on deficit views of schools or community. By identifying assets and resources that exist within the community, teachers (and other human service providers) can explore their assumptions by identifying assets that create the culture of the community and the impact it has on students and their families. Communities influence schools and the children that attend those schools. Therefore, understanding the connections that the community has to the schools gives teachers a holistic view of students, their cultures, and the knowledge they bring to the classroom. It allows teachers to examine the student’s world outside the context of the classroom. According to Moll, et al (1992), “This approach is particularly important in dealing with students whose households are usually viewed as being poor, not only economically but in terms of the quality of experiences for the child.” The process allows teachers a means to establishing a social relationship with students; one that allows for communication and mutual trust.

This study also allows teacher to become culturally knowledge and a process to adopting culturally responsive teaching (CRT). CRT is the idea that thinking and learning as synthesis of the child, curriculum, and community for children coming from marginalized communities and dominant social groups. CRT creates conditions in which the cultural experiences and interests of the children from dominant cultures synthesize with the curriculum and community as a strategy to ensure that students “maintain their cultural integrity while succeeding academically” (Ladson-Billings, 1995, p 476). The challenge to culturally responsive teaching lies not in the discussion of theoretical ideas but rather enacting those ideas in a classroom where you know very little about the students, their families, and their communities. Using culture as a tool for learning and teaching fosters cultural pluralism in urban communities where the complexity of issues is overwhelming to teachers that view students from a deficit perspective.

The purpose of this assignment is to give you the opportunity to discover the cultural assets that exist within the school community where you will be completing your early field experience. This experience may increase your awareness of issues that currently exist in the community and how they may affect student learning. It may provide you the space for dialogue with students and community members that support your teaching. Finally, it is a pragmatic approach to action research, an opportunity to develop a general understanding of the community and the construction of discourse that facilitate co-generative learning. Through research, critical reflection, and authentic experiences, finding effective solutions to problems becomes a meaningful and fulfilling.

Step One

There are several steps to this assignment. Start by conducting a “survey” of the professional development site’s community. As you drive or walk through the community, develop your perceptions of what you **See, Hear, Smell, Touch, and Feel**. You will be responsible for completing a composite of information collected through personal observations about people, their life-styles, and the environment in which they live and work. For the purposes of this assignment, community will be defined as the professional development site’s (school) boundaries. Here are some basic observations that should be included in your written report:

Housing and Zoning

1. How are neighborhoods alike or different in age, types of architecture, material of constructions, types of housing available to residents?
2. How houses are spaced (detached, attached, grass area, lot size)?

Space Use

1. How land is used (open space, residential, industrial, commercial, agricultural, natural land preservation)?
2. Is open space public or private? Used by whom?
3. What effect does the geography or proximity of the community have on its life?

Boundaries

1. What signs tell you where this community begins and ends? Are boundaries natural (river, terrain change, etc.) or political (city limits), economic (differences in real estate, presence of industry, commercial units), cultural, or ethnic?
2. Does the community have a “local name” (unofficial)? Is the name visually displayed?

Common Areas

1. What are the “hangout” places where community members (residents, families, etc.) gather?
2. How do “hangout” places differ by age, sex, socioeconomic status or other factors?
3. Are common areas “territorial” or open to strangers?

Transportation

1. How do people get in and out of the community?
2. How do streets, roads, sidewalks, and methods of transportation appear to affect the Community life? Are potential accidents or problem areas visible?
3. Is public transportation available?
4. How do street names reveal history or other community characteristics?

Service Centers

1. What type of social agencies, health facilities, recreation centers, libraries, fire stations, Goodwill, etc. are available in the community?
2. What services are offered at the professional development site after regular school hours?

Stores

1. Where do residents shop?
2. What are the differences in shopping among different neighborhoods in the community?
3. What kinds of goods are available to local residents?

Culture

1. What evidence do you see or hear of racial/ethnic or language characteristics other than English?
2. What denominations are the churches and what type of services do they offer (e.g. daycare, food pantry, clothing give-a-way, sermons in Spanish, etc.)?
3. Are there faith base organizations?

Politics

1. What type of political campaign posters/signage do you see?
2. What party affiliations do you see?

Media

1. What kinds of community, local, national magazines, newspapers, etc. are available to residents?
2. What products do billboard advertise?

Environment

1. How are “eco friendly” practices evidenced at the professional development site (i.e. classroom and school-wide)?
2. How are “eco friendly” practices evidenced in the community?

Accessibility

1. What is the accessibility for those with disabilities? Are there obvious barriers for individuals who travel in a wheelchair or use other assistive devices?
2. Do these spaces promote independence or do they handicap those with disabilities? How? What evidence do you see?
3. How does the community provide access to individuals whose primary language is not English, blind, or deaf?
4. Consider the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements when looking at facilities. Are they up to date? Do they merely uphold the letter of the law or the spirit of the law as well? How?

Step Two

Written Report: Each intern will prepare a written report. The written report should include responses to the data collected during the “survey” and from reflective prompts noted below. Documents supporting your observations are also encouraged (i.e. community flyers, web-based community information, pictures, etc.) but not mandated. **Please Note:** FOR LEGAL REASONS YOU SHOULD NOT PHOTOGRAPH STUDENTS.

Reflective Prompts

1. Describe where you live now relative to setting (i.e. rural, urban, suburban), diversity (i.e. racial/ethnic diversity), income levels of community members, and other descriptors which capture your community.
2. In what ways is this professional development site community similar to the community where you grew up or where you live now?
3. Prior to the start of your field experience, what did you think it would be like teaching in an urban school with students of diverse ethnic and sociocultural backgrounds? Who/what influenced these perceptions?
4. After conducting this Community Assessment Survey and interacting with students, teachers, and administrators at your professional development site, how have your perceptions changed about urban schools? Examine your biases/stereotypes. Where do you see yourself now?
5. What aspects (i.e. interactions with students, teachers, and administrators) of your field experience have encouraged you to consider teaching in an urban setting? What concerns continue to linger and possibly discourage you from teaching in a urban setting?
6. After talking with your mentor teacher, what discoveries did you uncover regarding his or her method(s) of connecting cultural background information to the curriculum?
7. As a teacher of children from this community, what else would you want to know about the area? Why?
8. Consider the grade you want to teach. How might identified community assets from the survey influence classroom practices given the developmental level of your students?
9. Describe how discoveries made in the community of your professional development site connect with readings and other course content.

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