

**EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
ELEMENTARY EDUCATION PRESERVICE
TEACHERS' DISPOSITIONS TOWARD
DIVERSITY AND THEIR APPROACH
TO CURRICULUM AND TEACHING**

By

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The increasing diversity among the student populations within the United States public school system and the increasing lack of diversity among the teacher population has been a cause for concern to the education community for some time (Banks, 1994; Brown, 1995; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ogbu, 1990; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). This concern arises from the claim that the cultural, linguistic, and economic mismatch that exists between diverse student populations and their monocultural, monolingual, middle-class White, and mostly female teacher population has detrimental effects on the learning and teaching of diverse student populations (Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 2000; Lessow-Hurley, 1996; Sleeter, 2001; Swartz, 2003). Some of the outcomes of this mismatch, among other things, include the commonly held deficit perspective of diverse student populations by their White teachers, the blame-the-victim mentality held by White teachers with the belief that their diverse student populations do not try hard enough to learn, the commonly held claim that diverse student populations have discipline problems, the high drop-out rates among diverse student populations, the low achievement scores from diverse student populations compared to their Caucasian student counterparts, the lack of motivation to learn from diverse student populations, the high

numbers of diverse student populations' representation in special education classes, and the list goes on and on (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Banks & Banks, 2004; Duncan, 1993, 2000; Irvine, 2003; Omi & Howard, 1986; Ryan, 1971).

While there have been a number of studies on teaching diverse student populations, the number of studies that investigate White female preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity and how these dispositions impact their curriculum content selection and the selection of their teaching strategies as they work with diverse student populations is still limited. This qualitative study seeks to explore the relationship between elementary education preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity and their approaches to curriculum and teaching. Wenzlaff (1998), talking about teachers and teaching, says teachers' characteristics, attitudes, concepts of self, and intellectual and interpersonal dispositions, in a large measure, determine both the explicit and the hidden curriculum in the classroom. On the other hand, Ladson-Billings (2002) says successful teaching focuses on students' academic achievement, supports students' cultural competence, and promotes students' socio-political consciousness. Wenzlaff sees the characteristics of effective teachers as evolving from their dispositions and these dispositions are the impetus for successful teaching and learning of diverse student populations. For Wenzlaff, teachers are professional educators who are expected to transform young people; to inspire them to think, to feel, and to take social action as citizens in a democratic society, and Wenzlaff further assumes that as teachers take classroom action, they [teachers] are expected to be concerned for young people's present and future welfare. While Wenzlaff acknowledges the important role of teachers'

dispositions, there is no mention of cultural competence in support for students from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Given this description of what teachers are, and what is expected of them, this study argues for and supports the call for teacher education programs to prepare preservice teachers in such a way that they acquire the necessary dispositions that help them meet this expectation – that is to be effective teachers for all students – which is currently not the case. This study seeks to explore the claim that if teachers have positive dispositions toward diversity, they would be able to teach *all* students irrespective of their ethnic, socio-economic, and linguistic background. Positive dispositions toward diversity not only benefit the teaching and learning of diverse student populations, but indeed all students benefit if a teacher has positive dispositions toward diversity.

Background of the Study

National trends on teacher population in the United States indicate a steady decline in diversity within the teacher population, and the likelihood is high that students of all cultural backgrounds will be taught by White teachers (Banks, 1991; Gomez, 1996, Zeichner, 1996). Schools of education are faced with a challenge to prepare effective teachers for *all* students. Schools of education are challenged to prepare preservice teachers who think differently about current practices and the assumptions on which they are based. Schools of education are challenged to prepare preservice teachers who are willing to overcome the developmentally delayed intercultural capacities they frequently exhibit so that they would develop the necessary dispositions needed to effectively teach all students including students from diverse populations (Haberman, 1991a; 1991b; Swartz, 2003; Zeichner, 1996). Dispositions for effective teaching have been discussed

by a number of scholars, and Swartz (2003) states that scholars have identified these dispositions to be thought provoking, engaging, empowering, people centered, and culturally responsive. Swartz (2003) argues that for teachers to be effective and work well with all students, including students from diverse backgrounds, they need to be: critical thinkers, producers of knowledge, creative, continuous learners, self-reflective/aware, and able to integrate theory into practice.

Since the teachers' dispositions influence what goes on in the classroom – both the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum – this study argues for the importance of having teachers who have dispositions that embrace diversity, teachers who acknowledge diversity among student populations. This study calls for teachers who are willing and comfortable working with these diverse student populations. This study however, acknowledges that willingness to work with diverse students and love for children are not the only necessary dispositions required to work effectively and efficiently with diverse student populations. In addition, this study calls on prospective teachers to have the necessary skills to work with, and knowledge about, their culturally diverse students, as well as positive dispositions toward diversity itself to meet the teaching and learning needs of all students.

The Context and Setting of the Study

This study took place at Mobile (pseudonym) Elementary School in a small town in the Midwestern United States. Mobile is one of the six elementary schools within Conrad (pseudonym) School District, and this school was selected for this study because of the diverse nature of the student population. Conrad School District has nine schools: six elementary public schools, two private religious schools, one middle school, one

junior high school and one high school. Within this school district, there were 5,343 students, 310 teachers, and a student/teacher ratio of seventeen to one. The demographic distribution of students in this school district in percentages was seven percent Native American, two percent Hispanic/Latino, nine percent Asian, seven percent Black, and eighty one percent White. The gender distribution of the student population within the Conrad School District was forty nine percent females and fifty one percent males.

However, in Mobile Elementary School, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) (2004 – 2005) described the demographic distribution of students attending at Mobile Elementary School in percentage as:

Ethnicity	Mobile Elementary School in percentages	State Average in percentages
White, not Hispanic	69%	61%
Black, not Hispanic	11%	11%
Asian/Pacific Islander	11%	2%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	6%	19%
Hispanic	3%	8%

Source: NCES, 2004 – 2005.

Further, the NCES also gave the number of children on free or reduced-price lunch program as 46% compared to the 54% State average (NCES, 2004 – 2005). While the student population at Mobile Elementary School was pretty much diverse, the teacher population was predominantly White, and female.

Study participants were four White female preservice teachers from a large Midwestern University within the school district community. This university is a member of the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) group of universities within the United States, and therefore as a member of NCATE, diversity is one of the dispositions that are promoted and cultivated among teacher candidates. Given the cultural diversity among student populations within Mobile Elementary School, and the working relationship that exist between Mobile Elementary School and the College of Education of this large Midwestern University, that gave me an opportunity to use participants from the university and the Mobile Elementary school as my research site to explore the relationship between preservice teachers dispositions toward diversity and their approaches to curriculum content selection and teaching strategies.

To investigate this topic, I decided to use a qualitative case study method of research because I believe that in as much as the result may not be replicated and generalized for other research settings, qualitative research designs have a great potential of producing rich data. I also believe that there are some data that could not be obtained by traditional research methods due to the fact that traditional research methods control for interpretation. With qualitative research, I could observe and interpret my observations, I could establish a relationship and develop trust with the study participants and make them feel at ease and comfortable to discuss and share with me even on issues they regard as personal.

Further, with a qualitative research method, I become the instrument for collecting the data. I bring some biases into the study which is mediated by my beliefs, my experiences, and my cultural background. I am personally invested in this study not

only to meet my academic requirements to graduate, but also to give me an opportunity to influence the education system and bring about change. The change that I am talking about is not only meant for teachers and students in the United States, but even in other countries where teachers are members of the mainstream culture and students are mostly from ethnic minority groups. As an African in the United States, I am classified as a member of one of the ethnic minority groups, and therefore I have lived some of the experiences described by the literature concerning teaching and learning of diverse student populations. Even though my experiences were somewhat different because this happened at college, I imagine the helplessness that young children are subjected to in schools when their cultures and languages are not valued in the classroom and in the school curriculum. Their self esteem and their self worth are put into question, and they doubt themselves now and again. This has happened to me a number of times. The number of instances that I have been treated as the 'other' made me to reflect on my own professional experience prior to joining graduate school.

Looking back and reflecting on my experience as a public secondary/high school teacher in Swaziland and later as an education officer in Swaziland, I now realize and recognize the tension that exist between maintaining the status quo and being a change agent. As I work on this study, I realize that as a member of the mainstream culture in Swaziland I failed to realize that by maintaining the status quo, I compromised the teaching and learning of a number of students in Swaziland. Not only did I compromise the teaching and learning of students from different socioeconomic status in Swaziland, I also compromised the teaching and learning of students from neighboring Mozambique who were in Swaziland displaced by civil war in their country. The fact that I did not pay

attention to these students' cultural differences made it difficult for them to learn. For the Mozambican students, I did not know their language, and they did not know Siswati or English. The Swaziland school system did not have a second language learning program for people whose primary language was not Siswati, but still these students were expected to learn and achieve just like regular Swazi students. When they did not learn, I never stepped back to check myself, but I thought that they were not putting enough effort. I did not take time to know them as students. I looked at them as any other student in the classroom, and yet these were students coming from a war torn country, and had experienced pain, loss, and suffering. If I had taken time to know them I would have realized that their family life was different. If I knew then what I know now, I would have applied culturally responsive pedagogy and those students would have benefited from my teaching. While it is true that I did not know how to implement a culturally responsive pedagogy, it is also equally true that I was blinded by a lack of awareness to diversity. I realize now that following school and government regulations sometimes seemed to be in conflict with paying attention to diverse students' learning needs and this causes tension.

I am an advocate for change; however, I believe that change should be guided by research. It is my hope that some of the findings from this study are going to be useful in helping to improve the teaching and learning of diverse student populations not only in the United States but worldwide. Further, inasmuch as I advocate for cultural sensitivity when working with diverse student populations, I also believe that teachers have a duty to help all students to be functional members of the society. By this I mean that it is good for teachers to be aware of differences among students, but it is another matter for

teachers to neglect teaching children to learn appropriate behaviors for different contexts. Nakata (2003) says if children are not taught how to behave in different contexts, their chances of success and opportunities in the modern world are diminished. Even though it is said that students from diverse backgrounds learn better in groups, I feel it is also important for the teacher not to neglect to build children's skills and confidence of working alone and standing in the spotlight.

With the growing movement of people from place to place, and from country to country, school systems worldwide are faced with cultural mismatch between teachers and students and that impacts teaching and learning. While most schools of education have taken it upon themselves to prepare teachers on how to teach diverse student populations, it is still not clear if they are achieving their goal. In exploring preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity, I seek to address the following research questions:

1. How do the cultural dispositions of preservice teachers relate to their approaches to curriculum and teaching – specifically selection of curriculum content and selection of teaching strategies?
2. How do preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity change, if any change occurs, as they work with culturally diverse populations of students during an intensive field experience?
3. How do preservice teachers' approaches to curriculum and teaching change, if at all, as they work with a culturally diverse population of students?

The Relationship between Dispositions and Effective Teaching

Dispositions are characteristics or traits that a person has which influence trends of action a person takes in a given context (Swartz, 2003), and these actions may be conscious and deliberate or habitual and ‘automatic’ in that they seem intuitive or spontaneous (Raths & Katz, 1985). Raths and Katz (1985) acknowledge that teachers, like other people, have many dispositions, drives, moods, and emotions, but when dispositions related to teaching effectiveness have been identified and incorporated into educational goal statements, they can be addressed legitimately and attentively. For teaching to be effective for *all* students, teachers have to acquire specific dispositions, and these dispositions can be acquired through teacher preparation, hence the importance of the role played by schools of education and their teacher preparation programs as they prepare teachers for diverse student populations (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Gay, 2001; Goodwin, 1996, 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Zeichner, 1996).

Problem Statement

While the demographic landscape of student populations in American schools is changing fast with the increased number of minority students, the teacher population remains predominately White and Eurocentric, and therefore remains different from the culture of the student population (Au, 1998; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Gay, 2002; Irvine, 2003; Johnson & Inoue, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994). This cultural mismatch (Lessow-Hurley, 1996) presents itself as a problem to the teaching and learning of minority students (Gay, 2002; Heilman, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Teacher preparation programs, in response to this challenge, have taken a variety of

strategies including the introduction of multicultural education courses within their curricula, inclusion of diversity within their methods courses and field experiences, as well as encouragement of preservice teachers accepting field experience in culturally diverse populated schools, as ways to expose them to diverse student populations (Hollins & Guzman, 2005).

Inasmuch as these measures have been taken to prepare preservice teachers for diverse student populations, these measures are not enough; some preservice teachers are still resistant to change (Brown, 2004; Chizhik, 2003; Ference & Bell, 2004; Hollins & Guzman, 2005). The United States education system still faces challenges when it comes to the education of minority students. Some of these challenges include teachers having difficulty working with culturally different students – minority students (Groulx, 2001), and there is still a persistent achievement gap between minority students and mainstream students. Perhaps worst of all, there is still high drop-out rates among minority students compared to their mainstream counterparts (Au, 1998; Ference & Bell, 2004; Gay, 2002; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Ogbu, 1990). Therefore this study notes a number of problems in the teaching and learning of diverse student populations in American public schools: firstly, the persistent cultural mismatch between teacher population in American public school system and diverse student populations which negatively impact teaching and learning of diverse student populations; secondly, the persistent resistance to change of preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity which negatively impacts teaching and learning of diverse student populations; thirdly, there is limited literature and studies on preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity which might inform the field on what

should be done to improve teacher education so that they could work effectively and efficiently with diverse student populations.

Purpose of Study

This study seeks to explore the relationship between preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity and examine how these dispositions relate to their approaches to curriculum content selection and teaching strategies that they use when teaching culturally different student populations, students who are culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically different from their teachers (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Heilman, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Teacher education literature states that teachers' dispositions influence what goes on in the classroom, which is represented by the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum (Brown, 2004; Garmon, 2005; Groulx, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Swartz, 2003; Wenzlaff, 1998). There is an increase in the number of minority students within the American education system, and these minority students are culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically different from their teachers (Banks & Banks, 2004; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Dee & Henkin, 2002). Teachers, especially preservice teachers, do not have the necessary dispositions to work with diverse student populations. Further, preservice teachers are slow to change their preexisting stereotypes and hold a deficit model perspective toward diverse student populations (Gomez, 1996), affecting the way they teach students from diverse populations.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity and their approaches to curriculum and teaching with the hope that a better understanding of their dispositions toward diversity

will help inform teacher education programs on how to better prepare teachers who are able to teach *all* students effectively and efficiently regardless of culture, language, and socioeconomic status. The other purpose of this study is to add to the literature on preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity since there is limited literature in this area. This study seeks to address the following research questions: (a) How do cultural dispositions of preservice teachers relate to their approaches to curriculum content and teaching strategy selection during their clinical internship experience? (b) How do preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity change, if any changes occur, as they work with culturally diverse student populations during their clinical internship experience? and (c) How do preservice teachers' approaches to curriculum content and teaching strategy selection change, if changes occur, as they work with culturally diverse student populations?

Theoretical Framework: Culturally Responsive Teaching/Teachers

This study draws from culturally responsive teaching/teacher (Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002) as a theoretical lens to examine the research findings. In her book, *The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children*, Gloria Ladson-Billings (1994) notes that as the American society has changed, teachers must connect with their students regardless of racial, ethnic, social, and behavioral characteristics. Morris and Morris (2002) describe the disposition of care as a missing disposition in American public schools which leads to an achievement gap between diverse student populations and mainstream students. According to Morris and Morris (2002), this missing disposition of care in American public school classrooms contributes to lack of success for students of color, particularly African American

students. According to Ladson-Billings (1992), in order to ensure academic success for all students, teachers need to understand, appreciate, and respect the differences their students bring to the classroom. Furthermore, these classrooms should reflect an atmosphere of unity and diversity, which will lead to social justice, the ultimate goal of multicultural education.

Since Ladson-Billings saw the need and made the call for culturally responsive teachers, several scholars have developed conceptual frameworks for culturally responsive teaching. Gay (2002) and Villegas and Lucas (2002) proposed frameworks for culturally responsive teaching and culturally responsive teachers. For this study, I combine these frameworks as a lens to discuss the study findings and to frame the implications for teacher preparation programs and schools of education.

Gay (2002) discusses five elements of culturally responsive teaching, while Villegas and Lucas (2002) discuss the characteristics of a culturally responsive teacher. Geneva Gay (2002) defines culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of the ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them effectively. Gay's theoretical framework is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of references of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher appeal, and are learned easily and thoroughly. Gay's culturally responsive teaching framework has five essential elements, and these are: (a) developing a culturally diverse knowledge base, (b) designing culturally relevant curricula, (c) demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community, (d) cross-cultural communications, and (e) cultural congruity in classroom instruction.

While Gay (2002) defines culturally responsive teaching, Villegas and Lucas (2002) claim that to successfully move the field of teacher education beyond the fragmented and superficial treatment of diversity that currently prevails, teacher educators must articulate a vision of teaching and learning in a diverse society and use that vision systematically to guide the infusion of multicultural issues throughout preservice curriculum. Villegas and Lucas (2002) offer a vision of culturally responsive teachers that can serve as the starting point for conversations among teacher educators in the process of infusing multicultural education in their curriculum. Villegas and Lucas describe and discuss a culturally responsive teacher as one who: (a) is culturally conscious, (b) has an affirming attitude toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds, (c) has commitment and skills to act as an agent of change, (d) uses constructive views of learning, (e) develops interest in learning about his/her ethnically diverse students, (f) engages in culturally responsive teaching practices (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

For the purpose of this study Gay's (2002) five element framework in conjunction with Villegas and Lucas's (2002) six elements inform this study and form the basis for the discussions of the study's findings. The combined framework's elements are described below.

Element One: Developing a Culturally Diverse Knowledge Base

Gay (2002) believes that for teachers to be culturally responsive, they need to *develop a cultural diversity knowledge base*. Gay says all teachers should have content knowledge and pedagogical skills, and she also says it is imperative for teachers to have explicit knowledge about cultural diversity if they are to meet the learning needs of their

diverse student populations. For Gay culture encompasses a number of characteristics which are important for teachers to know because they directly impact teaching and learning, including ethnic groups' cultural values, traditions, communication, learning styles, contributions, and relational patterns. In addition to this cultural awareness, Gay argues that teachers need to acquire factual information about particularities of specific ethnic groups represented among American student populations (African, Asian, Latino, and Native Americans) to make schooling more interesting and stimulating for, representative of, and responsive to ethnically diverse student populations.

Villegas and Lucas (2002) concur with Gay. To them a culturally responsive teacher should develop sociocultural consciousness. A socioculturally conscious teacher understands that people's ways of thinking, behaving, and being are deeply influenced by factors such as race/ethnicity, social class, and language. Villegas and Lucas (2002) argue that without sociocultural consciousness, teachers are unable to cross the sociocultural boundaries that separate too many of them from their diverse student populations. For Villegas and Lucas (2002) cultural consciousness entails an understanding that differences in social location are not neutral, and therefore prospective teachers need to comprehend how American society is stratified along racial/ethnic, social class, and gender lines. Therefore, Villegas and Lucas (2002) argue, to gain sociocultural consciousness, aspiring teachers must not only understand their own sociocultural identities but also come to recognize the intricate connection between schools and society.

Element Two: Designing Culturally Relevant Curricula

Gay's (2002) second element on culturally responsive teaching is about designing a culturally relevant curriculum. Gay says in addition to acquiring a knowledge base about ethnic and cultural diversity, teachers need to learn how to convert that knowledge into culturally relevant curriculum designs and instructional strategies. Gay argues that three kinds of curriculum – formal, symbolic, and societal curriculum – are routinely present in the classroom and each offers different opportunities for teaching cultural diversity. On formal curriculum plans for instruction approved by the policy and governing bodies of educational systems, Gay says culturally responsive teachers need to know how to determine the multicultural strengths and weaknesses of such designs and instructional materials in order to make the changes necessary to improve their overall quality. Villegas and Lucas (2002) invite prospective teachers to be agents of change and suggest that they should see school and society as interconnected. To effectively teach all students including students from diverse populations, Villegas and Lucas call on prospective teachers to be aware that schools can be sites for social transformation even as they recognize that schools have typically served to maintain social inequality (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Gay (2002) says the second kind of instructional plans frequently used in schools are called symbolic curriculum, and these include images, symbols, icons, mottoes, awards, celebrities, and other artifacts that are used to teach students knowledge, skills, morals, and values. Gay says classroom walls are valuable spaces and students learn important lessons from what is displayed there. She says over time, students come to expect certain images; value what is present, and de-value that which is absent. Gay

(2002) says the third kind of instructional plans used in school make up societal curriculum, and this is the knowledge, ideas, and impressions about ethnic groups that are portrayed in the mass media. Gay argues that this knowledge is inaccurate and frequently prejudicial, and at the same time too influential; therefore, teachers should pay attention to this knowledge and not ignore it. Gay says culturally responsive teaching includes a thorough and critical analysis of how ethnic groups and their experiences are presented by mass media and popular culture.

In addition, Villegas and Lucas (2002) suggest that teachers use the constructivist perspective of learning, by which students generate meaning in response to new ideas and experiences they encounter in school. Students interpret and process and make sense of the new information and experiences based on their prior knowledge, beliefs, and experiences. Villegas and Lucas therefore argue that the knowledge students bring to school, derived from personal and cultural experiences, is central to their learning, and to overlook this resource is to deny students access to the knowledge construction process.

Element Three: Cultural Caring and Building a Learning Community

Gay's (2002) third element for culturally responsive teaching is demonstrating cultural caring and building a learning community. Gay argues that culturally responsive teaching involves creating classroom climates that are conducive to learning for ethnically diverse student populations, paying attention to pedagogical actions as well as multicultural designs. According to Gay, teachers need to know how to use scaffolding in teaching ethnically diverse students, using students' cultural experiences to expand their intellectual horizons and academic achievements. Gay argues that culturally responsive teachers have to care so much about their diverse student populations and their

achievements such that they accept nothing less than high-level success from them and work diligently to accomplish it. Gay says in culturally responsive teaching, the *knowledge* of interest is the information about ethnically diverse groups, the *strategic thinking* is how cultural knowledge is used to redesign teaching and learning, and the *bounds* are the reciprocity involved in students working with each other and with teachers as partners to improve their achievements.

Element Four: Cross-cultural Communication

Gay's (2002) fourth element of culturally responsive teaching is effective cross-cultural communication. According to Porter and Samovar (1991) culture influences what we talk about; how we talk about it; what we see, attend to, or ignore; how we think; and what we think about. Further, Montagu and Watson (1979) state that communication is the ground of meeting and the foundation of community and human beings; therefore, Gay argues that without this 'meeting' and 'community' in the classroom, learning is difficult to accomplish for some students. Gay further states that determining what ethnically diverse students know and can do, as well as what they are capable of knowing and doing, often depend on how well teachers can communicate with them. According to Gay (2002) intellectual thought of students from different cultural groups is culturally encoded in that its expressive forms and substance are strongly influenced by cultural socialization. Therefore, Gay argues, teachers need to be able to decipher these codes to teach ethnically diverse students more effectively.

Villegas and Lucas (2002) say for teachers to teach all students effectively, they must know not only the subject matter they teach but also their students. Villegas and Lucas further state that teachers need to know about their students' experiences outside

school because teachers who are knowledgeable about their students' family lives are better prepared to understand the students' in-school behavior and to incorporate into classroom activities the 'funds of knowledge' those families possess. Further, teachers who know about their students' hobbies and favorite activities as well as what they excel at outside school can tie the students' interests, concerns, and strengths into their teaching, and thereby enhance their motivation to learn (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Moll & Gonzalez, 1997). In addition to outside school knowledge about their students, teachers need to have insight into how their students' past learning experiences have shaped their current views of school and school knowledge, argue Villegas and Lucas, because if students who have been taught bits of information that bear little or no relationship to the world beyond the school walls are likely to see school knowledge as boring, alien to their lives, and devoid of personal meaning. Villegas and Lucas say these perceptions are particularly problematic for students from historically oppressed groups. Seeing no value in school knowledge for themselves, these students, in most cases, become resistant to learning, and that resistance manifests itself in discipline problems (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Element Five: Cultural Congruity in Classroom Instruction

Cultural congruity in classroom instruction, Gay's (2002) fifth element for culturally responsive teaching, deals with the actual delivery of instruction to ethnically diverse student populations. Gay argues that since culture is embedded in any teaching, teaching ethnically diverse student populations has to be multiculturalized. Gay says a useful way to think about operationalizing cultural congruity in classroom instruction is matching instructional techniques to the learning styles of diverse students. Gay says

cultural characteristics provide the criteria for determining how instructional strategies should be modified for ethnically diverse students. Gay says like all cultural phenomena, learning styles are complex, multidimensional, and dynamic. In addition, Villegas and Lucas (2002) discuss culturally responsive teaching practices and say these practices include involving all students in the construction of knowledge, building on students' personal and cultural strengths, helping them examine the curriculum from multiple perspectives, using varied assessment practices that promote learning, and making the culture of the classroom inclusive of all students.

Gay (2002) claims that ethnic groups' learning styles have internal structures that are configured for each of these ethnic groups. She calls on teachers to know and understand these configurations for each of the ethnic groups if they are to work effectively with diverse student populations. This means that when working with diverse student populations, it is not enough to know about learning styles, but teachers need to also understand and know how different ethnic groups are impacted by the way classroom instruction is delivered and how students receive the instruction. Further, Villegas and Lucas (2002) argue that being a culturally responsive teacher is not simply a matter of applying instructional techniques, nor is it primarily a matter of tailoring instruction to incorporate assumed traits of particular cultural groups. However, being a culturally responsive teacher is to have a high degree of cultural consciousness, hold affirming views of students of diverse backgrounds, see yourself as an agent of change, understand and embrace constructivist views of learning and teaching, and know the students in their classroom. It is the combination of these dispositions, knowledge, and skills that enables a culturally responsive teacher to design instruction that facilitates

students' learning (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). According to Gay (2002) teachers need to develop rich repertoires of multicultural instructional examples to use in teaching ethnically diverse students.

Research Design

This study is an exploratory qualitative inquiry. The data were collected from a naturalistic setting where the participants were conducting their clinical internship; therefore, this study can also be called a naturalistic inquiry. In this study I conducted classroom observations, semi-structured face-to-face in-depth interviews, and document analysis to gather data. The duration of the data collection process was three months during which each of the four participants of this study were observed and interviewed three times. The documents that were analyzed for this study were the participants' lesson plans and participants' journals that they were required by their teacher education program to keep while going through the clinical internship.

Significance of the Study

Findings from this study are expected to contribute to the improvement of teacher preparation programs in graduating teachers who could be skilled, informed, and competent enough to teach/work with diverse student populations who may be culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically differently from their teachers. This study is also expected to add to the literature that investigates preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity with an aim to assessing changes in preservice teachers' dispositions as they work with culturally diverse student populations and in culturally diverse communities. Finally, this study is expected to benefit teacher preparation programs by addressing

some of the gaps found in the teacher preparation literature on the effects of coursework and fieldwork on preservice teachers' dispositions and their pedagogical practices.

Limitations

Like most studies, this study is limited in the sense that the findings are only specific to the research population sampled, and therefore cannot be generalized. Also, since the study participants were preservice teachers and not degreed and certified teachers, their powers and control over what was taught in their classrooms were limited; they relied mostly on the curriculum content selected by their cooperating teachers. It was beyond the scope of this study to interview the cooperating teachers on how they selected the curriculum content they used in their classrooms. Further, this study did not control for researcher bias. I, as a researcher, interpreted and constructed my understanding of the data based on my own dispositions, influenced by my knowledge and understanding of diversity issues in American public schools and my cultural background.

Working Definitions in the Study

Culture	It is a combination of the foundation upon which we begin life, the values and beliefs of those who love and care for us, and experiences that enrich our thinking through our lives (Thomas, 2004).
Curriculum	It is both the planned (formal curriculum) and the unplanned (hidden curriculum) activities by school, enacted by the teachers, and experienced by the students under the guidance of the school (Marsh & Willis, 1999).

Dispositions	These are habits of minds which give rise to the employment of skills manifested ideally by skillful behavior (Katz & Raths, 1985).
Diversity	Refers to cultural diversity as well as it refers to an accumulation of experiences; the continually evolving set of experiences, experienced individually by different people in various situations and circumstances. Further, diversity in this study relates to perceived differences in skin color, linguistic ability, and socioeconomic status. These differences may be manifested in clothes students wear, the words they use, and their attitudes and aspirations related to schooling (Dee & Henkin, 2002; Thomas, 2004).
Eurocentric	In this study it refers to placing at the center of all curriculum and instruction the beliefs and values of the American dominant cultural group, the Caucasian group, which promotes the English language and the western civilization among all students in American schools at the expense of other cultural groups' beliefs systems and values within the American society.
Minority groups	All groups not part of the dominant culture in a given society or group of people.
Preservice teachers	These are students enrolled in the college of education, still preparing to become teachers.

Organization of Study

This study has five chapters. Chapter one is an introduction to the study.

Chapter two is the literature review. Chapter three describes the methodology used in this study. Chapter four is the research findings chapter. Chapter five is the discussion, conclusion, and recommendations chapter which is followed by the reference list. At the end of this study, the following appendices will be found: Appendix A is the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval form; Appendix B is the interview protocol; Appendix C is the observation protocol.

Summary

In this chapter I have introduced the study. I described the background of the study and presented the context, which gives an introductory note about the research setting, the participants, and me as a researcher. I also presented the problem, the purpose, the theoretical framework used to analyze the data. I presented the research design, the significance of the study, limitations, as well as the organization of the whole study.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

To understand the complexities involved with the teaching and learning of diverse student populations in school classrooms requires looking closely at the diverse literature related to the teaching and learning of these diverse student populations. While my study is concerned with diversity in the United States, from the literature I found that the challenges faced by teachers in diversified classrooms are not only found in the United States but also in a number of other countries. The challenge is that in most of these countries teachers are mainly from the dominant group and they teach students who mostly come from minority groups (Allard, 2006; Bander-Szymanski, 2000; Bartolo, Humphrey, Ale, Calleja, Hofsaess, Janikova, Lous, Vilkiene, & Wetso, 2006; Magos, 2006). I also found that there are a number of reasons leading to this social stratification, and these include increased migration from underdeveloped countries to developed countries, displacement of people as a result of social instabilities such as conflicts and wars, and the mainstreaming of people with disabilities in normal classrooms. Therefore, the literature in this chapter does not only present studies conducted in the United States, but I have included studies from other parts of the world. The literature reviewed in this study covers several issues under these categories: first, educating diverse student

populations in the public school system; second, preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity; and third, preparing teachers for diverse populations. I selected this literature through a variety of means, including keyword search and phrases as well as referenced works in major scholarly works and studies. The keywords and phrases I used on computer search engines and databases include the following: teacher preparation, cultural diversity in schools, preservice teachers, dispositions, diversity, multicultural education, race and ethnicity, achievement gap, American schools, minority students, minority teachers and teacher education, culturally responsive teaching, curriculum approaches and teaching strategies for teaching diverse student populations, and social justice in schools, to mention a few.

Educating Diverse Students Populations

Research on teaching suggests that teachers and school administrators often have low achievement and personal expectations for low-income students, language minority students, and students of color (Banks, 1994). This body of research also suggests that there is a salient role that teacher attitude toward diversity plays in the academic success of minority students (Ladson-Billings, 2000). As teachers work with minority students they have preconceived ideas of how these students will perform academically, and that impacts the way they teach and work with minority students.

In the United States teachers typically are culturally different from the culture of their students (Hollins & Guzman, 2005), and therefore may not be able to address the needs of their culturally diverse student populations (Fry & McKinney, 1997; Irvine, 2003). Most teachers come from the dominant Eurocentric culture, and they teach from the dominant perspective (Swartz, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1990). This cultural mismatch

between teachers and diverse student population results in minority students feeling alienated from school, contributing to their low achievement as compared to their White counterparts. For some of these minority students, dropping out of school becomes the next best option (Talbert-Johnson, 2004).

Hollins and Guzman (2005) also state that there is an increase in the number of minority students in public schools while the teaching force has constantly remained White, middle class, and female with dominant ideology. Hollins and Guzman (2005), however, claim that the changing demographic profile of the nations' children in and of itself is not a problem, but the problems are the persistent and pernicious disparities that exist in educational achievement, resources, and life chances between students of color and their White peers (Ladson-Billings, 1990, 2000; Ogbu, 1990). Hollins and Guzman (2005) acknowledge numerous factors that influence educational outcomes in schools serving diverse student populations, and they state that teacher quality is a major factor. Wenglinsky (2002) concludes that one aspect of schools, the quality of the teaching force, does have a major impact on students test scores. Further, Sanders and Horn (1998) argue that teacher quality is the single most important influence on school success and students' achievement, surpassing socioeconomic status, class size, family background, school context, and all other factors that influence achievement.

While teacher education programs have been able to prepare preservice teachers to have strong subject content backgrounds and various teaching strategies, they have not been successful in preparing teachers for cultural and ethnic diversity among the student populations. In a study comparing education students' attitudes toward working in urban schools as they entered teacher preparation and later after student teaching Groulx (2001)

says typically preservice teachers appear overconfident about their capabilities in working with children in diverse cultural settings. Groulx says preservice teachers rely on naïve, idealistic beliefs before they explore their identities as members of a privileged White race, and this leads them to adopt a colorblind perspective, ignoring or denying the fact that ethnic or racial differences can have pedagogical implications. Groulx says preservice teachers tend to see teaching as a way to enact their individual caring for children, protecting them from societal and cultural pressures. Groulx (2001) says preservice teachers see themselves as committed individuals, having good parents, good values, good education, and good sense of what is expected of them as teachers.

Groulx (2001), however, expresses concerns and says preservice teachers see students of color as not having the cultural capital they need to succeed in school; they see them as somehow ‘deficient’. Further, Groulx sees preservice teachers as naïve, and she says this naiveté can be a form of “dysconscious racism,” a pattern of resistance in thinking about differences that is characterized by chronic lack of awareness about one’s own assumptions. Groulx states that when newly hired White teachers are posted in urban schools, they leave the teaching profession more than those posted in other schools. Groulx (2001) states that even though these prospective teachers express confidence about working with culturally diverse students, and even after they have been prepared in a social-constructivist program that explicitly espouses liberal, progressive goals, after working as new teachers in urban schools, they express anguish and emotional exhaustion and they give up hope in minority students and therefore revert to traditional practices in order to survive. Groulx (2001) says many prospective teachers who initially believed that they could make a difference in their students’ lives soon come to conclude

that minority students come to school with so many problems such that they cannot be good students. Groulx says while these new teachers make strong affirmation about being kind and considerate to all children, they also hold the conviction that some of the minority students simply cannot learn.

For teachers to successfully teach diverse student populations they need to develop relevant skills for bridging the gaps that exist between them and their diverse student populations, and that is done by “crossing cultural borders” (Gay, 1997, p. 154). According to Phelan, Davidson, and Yu (1993) these cultural borders impede diverse students’ connections with classroom and contexts. The six cultural borders are psychosocial, sociocultural, socioeconomic, linguistic, gender, and structural, and they are important for teachers to understand and as they try to work with diverse students. Gay (1997) argues that as teachers make decisions to create bridges for connecting and crossing these cultural borders for ethnically diverse students, they need to understand the characteristics, intersections, and potential conflict points of their different cultures. Gay (1997) further states that some of these “cultural borders will be more difficult to cross than others depending on the neutrality, alignment, and compatibility among the students and the teachers” (p. 154). Garcia (1994) describes cultural boundaries as neutral when “sociocultural components experienced by the people on each side of the boundary are perceived equal” (p. 184). According to Garcia (1994), the higher the degree of cultural neutrality that exists between the home culture and the school culture, as is the case with White students, the easier the cultural crossing. The lesser the degree of cultural neutrality between the home culture and the school culture, as is the case with minority

students, the more difficult it is to cross the cultural borders. Garcia (1994) describes this process and says:

When cultural boundary lines are neutral, the movement between cultures occurs with relative ease between social and psychological costs to individual are minimal. Alternatively, when cultural borders are not neutral and separate cultures are not perceived as equal, then individual movement and adaptation across borders is frequently difficult because the knowledge and skills in one culture are more highly valued and esteemed than those in the other culture. Although it is possible for students to navigate nonneutral borders with apparent success, these transitions can incur psychological costs that are invisible to teachers and others. When psychological consequences of adaptation across borders become too great for individuals to face, cultural borders become impenetrable barriers. (p. 184)

Garcia (1994) presents an argument that due to the cultural mismatch that exists between ethnically diverse student populations and the teachers, sociocultural and psychosocial conflict is experienced by diverse students which results in barriers that eventually negatively impacts learning. Other scholars such as Ladson-Billings (1994) and Au and Kawakami (1994) argue that the cultural incompatibilities and discontinuities are the main problems that affect teaching and learning of ethnically diverse students. The fact that teaching and learning take place in particular sociocultural contexts, a misfit or mismatch between the cultural systems of school and homes and communities of various ethnic groups can jeopardize the success of the teaching and learning process. Au and Kawakami (1994) argue that culturally different students, especially those from highly visible, historically oppressed racial minority groups such as Latinos, African

Americans, and Native American, have less opportunity to learn when school lessons and other activities are conducted, or socially organized, in a manner inconsistent with values and norms of their home culture. In such a situation, these students are expected to cross one or more cultural boundaries before they even begin to attend to learning tasks. Therefore when students are called upon to cross these cultural boundaries before learning can take place, great social, psychological, and academic consequences may be incurred (Gay, 1997).

The cultural mismatch witnessed in American classrooms between teachers who represent the dominant culture and students who do not, is also witnessed in other parts of the world. This cultural mismatch impacts the teaching and learning of diverse student populations all over the world where it is experienced. Within the European Union, the increased diversification of classrooms in recent years has placed additional demands upon teachers who strive to facilitate the learning and participation of all students. The increased diversification is seen as arising from three main sources: firstly, at a cultural level, there have been increasing numbers of immigrants and general mobility within and across countries; secondly, landmark policy developments have led to increasing numbers of children with special educational needs attending mainstream schools; thirdly, there have been increasing concerns regarding the difficulties faced by students who fail to achieve adequate levels of literacy or drop out of school, together with an awareness of the multiplicity and complexity of competencies required in modern society (Farrell & Ainscow, 2002; Gregory & Kuzmich, 2005).

Bartolo et al. (2006) conducted a study to explore how primary teachers across Europe understand and respond to diversity in their classrooms. A total of thirty five

teachers from seven countries (Czech Republic, England, Germany, Holland, Lithuania, Malta, and Sweden) participated in semi-structured interviews, answering the following questions: How do primary teachers understand and respond to diversity in European classrooms? What are the key challenges to and enabling factors for effective practices in this regard? The analysis of the data yielded several key themes, including the need for caring and inclusive attitudes and school ethos, facilitating inclusive values and solidarity in students, building collaborative networks, organizing responsive teaching, and facing challenges in responding to diversity. Findings from Bartolo et al.'s study point to the importance of preparing teachers to reflect on their implicit approaches to classes and curriculum in order to develop an appreciation of potential enrichment of diversity. The findings further indicate that inclusion is best understood as a process; it is the way to the goal (Bartolo, Humphrey, Ale, Calleja, Hofsaess, Janikova, Lous, Vilkiene, & Wetso, 2006).

To conclude, the literature in this section indicates how students' cultural diversity is a challenge to mainstream teachers all over the world. Globalization has had a role to play in this. Over the years, there has been a lot of movement from one country to another, especially the movement of people from developing countries to developed countries. Besides the increased number of migrants which results in linguistic, ethnic/racial, religious, and socioeconomic status diversity into receiving countries, each of these countries also deals with the decreasing number of prospective teachers from diverse cultural groups, and this leaves prospective teachers from the dominant groups to be prepared to teach all students. The increased student diversity in school classrooms necessitates changes in the way teachers work with diverse student populations. Teachers

are called upon to teach students whose cultures are different from theirs, and that presents itself as a challenge for teachers. This challenge that teachers face in the classroom calls for teacher education to reconsider the aims and goals of teacher preparation.

Preservice Teachers' Dispositions toward Diversity

While there has not been much research done on preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity, such research is very important and necessary for teacher preparation because of its potential to inform the field on how to prepare teacher candidates who are informed and competent to teach diverse student populations. Even though teacher preparation programs have long been criticized for not adequately preparing preservice teachers for teaching culturally diverse student populations, the research community has not done enough to investigate the role played by preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity. As Katz (1998) states, dispositions have an impact on teaching and learning in schools. It is important to understand these dispositions since they are part and parcel of who an individual is. They end up being the taken-for-granted beliefs and stereotypes that, if not challenged, end up impacting negatively the teaching and learning of minority students in culturally diverse schools. This current study calls for an understanding of those dispositions that might hinder teaching and learning of all students, particularly minority students in schools.

Dee and Henkin's (2002) study to assess preservice teachers' attitudes toward cultural diversity prior to their entry into a multicultural education course at an urban university found that teacher education interventions designed to help individuals acquire understanding and skills needed to work effectively with culturally diverse student

populations may not have significant impact unless teachers as learners are willing to explore beyond the familiar comfort zone of the majority cultural status quo.

There has been a call for front-end sorting in teacher education programs because effective multicultural teacher education involves selecting teacher candidates who are predisposed to multiculturalism at the onset and coaching them on a situation-specific basis as they function in the role of teacher (Haberman, 1991a, 1991b; Haberman, 1996; Haberman & Post, 1992). Supporting the same idea of exposing and coaching preservice teachers on how to work with diverse student populations, Milner (2006) developed a course and studied preservice teachers' learning about culture and racial diversity. The course was developed to help them develop competencies, skills, knowledge, attitudes, and dispositions necessary to teach in diverse and urban contexts. Milner used classroom discussion, reflective assignments, interviews, and open-ended feedback questionnaires. Milner's findings do not only support exposing preservice teachers to multicultural education early in their professional preparation, but also supports coaching and helping them on how to gain the skills and competencies to bridge the gap between theory and practice as well as help them to be reflective critical thinkers.

Milner's participants did not only report new levels of enlightenment, awareness, and knowledge on cultural and racial diversity as a result of the course, through critical reflection, they reported that they were able to "focus on themselves, their own experiences, life worlds, privileges, struggles, and dispositions in relation to others (their students, their students' parents, their students' communities, and their ways of knowing)" (Milner, 2006, p.371). Milner calls teacher education programs to play a central role in helping preservice teachers to develop the pedagogical and content

knowledge necessary to meet the learning needs of all students and says “we (teachers in P-12 and teacher educators) cannot teach in a color-blind or culture-blind fashion if we wish to affirm the students under our charge” (p. 369).

While critical reflection by preservice teachers is seen as a useful tool that lets them reflect on their life experiences and early exposure to multicultural education as well as careful selection of preservice teachers upon admission to teacher education programs are seen as strategies that might help preservice teachers gain knowledge and skills to work in diverse settings with all students including minority students (Haberman, 1991a, 1991b; Haberman, 1996; Haberman & Post, 1992; Milner, 2006), Garmon (2004) suggests other factors that appear to be critical in facilitating changes that occur in preservice teachers beliefs and attitudes toward diversity. Through interviews, Garmon (2004) used a twenty-two year old White female student enrolled in a multicultural class, to investigate the factors that appeared to be most critical in the development of her multicultural awareness and sensitivity. Garmon identified six major factors that appeared to be most critical in facilitating changes that occurred in her beliefs and attitudes toward diversity. Three of these factors were dispositional while the other three were experiential. The dispositional factors were openness, self-awareness/self-reflectiveness, and commitment to social justice. The experiential factors were intercultural experiences, support group experience, and educational experiences.

Garmon (2004) draws a number of conclusions: first, although it is true that students’ entering attitudes and beliefs serve as filters for what they learn about diversity from their teacher education program, there appears to be several other factors that may also play a critical role in facilitating students’ learning about diversity. Second, although

multicultural teacher education courses and field experiences are certainly important tools for developing students' awareness of and sensitivity to diversity, these courses and experiences, by themselves, may be insufficient to counteract the power of students' preexisting attitudes and beliefs. Third, the three dispositions identified – openness, self-awareness/self-reflectiveness, and commitment to social justice – may be important predictors of how likely preservice teachers are to develop greater multicultural awareness and sensitivity during their preparation program. Garmon advises that it might not be a bad idea for teacher education programs to consider these dispositions when making admission decisions. Finally, students having personal experiences with diversity, along with the opportunity for appropriate processing of these experiences, may be critical to their developing greater multicultural awareness and sensitivity.

While Dee and Henkin (2002) and Garmon (2004) concentrated on preservice teachers' disposition toward diversity based on the training and experiences of preservice teachers, Swartz (2003) concentrates on dispositions from the educator's perspective. Swartz criticizes her teaching in terms of its capacity to elicit the dispositions preservice teachers need to question and reconsider their perceptions of urban schools and students of color. The challenge for teacher educators concerned about the impact of White preservice teachers' perception on students of color is to develop particular pedagogical and curricular approaches that open up White preservice teachers to question and reconsider their beliefs since national trends within the teaching profession indicate a steady decrease in teachers of color, and that increases the likelihood that students of all cultural backgrounds will be taught by White teachers (Banks, 1991; Gomez, 1996; Swartz, 2003; Zeichner, 1996). Other than being concerned with White preservice

teachers' sources of information about urban schools and people of color, Swartz says White preservice teachers have little or no awareness of the history of racism and colonialism in America and no knowledge of the past and present strengths, accomplishments, and resources of the neocolonized cultural communities they are entering for field work and later for jobs in urban schools. To Swartz, along with the lack of knowledge and the limited or nonexistent personal relatedness to communities of color confirm for them that their students' cultures are substandard, having nothing worth knowing and building on (Ladson-Billings, 2000, 2001), therefore some quickly become wardens, others see themselves as great remediators or missionaries, and a significant number leave the profession within five years.

Preservice teachers are not only faced with challenges to work with diverse student populations, they also have concerns about teaching, have concerns about their students, and also have concerns just about surviving in the teaching profession. Haritos (2004) identifies teacher candidates' teaching concerns and teacher role beliefs and examines the relationship between such concerns and beliefs prior to the candidates' entry into a teacher education program. Haritos (2004) sampled forty-seven elementary and forty-seven secondary teacher candidates, ages 21 – 32, enrolled in their first education course. The participants were asked to complete a written homework assignment on the first day of class where they reflected on two open-ended questions: What do you believe are the challenges of teaching? What do you believe is the role of a teacher? Responses to these questions were subjected to both qualitative and quantitative analysis. On challenges, Haritos (2004) found that early concerns of teacher candidates include teaching situations issues, pupils concerns, and survival issues emerged

simultaneously. On teacher role beliefs Haritos's (2004) findings revealed a multidimensional teacher portrait among candidates that encompassed both social and cognitive components. Social roles in order of decreasing magnitude, included parenting, mentoring, listening, being a positive role model, teaching students right from wrong, and developing a respectful teacher-student relationship. Cognitive roles, also in their decreasing order, included educating, being interesting, facilitating learning, and teaching real-world knowledge. Haritos concluded that to maximize teacher candidates' professional development, teacher education programs must provide self-awareness and reflection exercises that allow candidates to identify their teacher role beliefs and perceptions regarding the challenges teachers face in the classroom and explain the reasoning behind such beliefs before the actual onset of education and fieldwork experiences.

Field experience has been one of the techniques used in teacher education to prepare teacher candidates for their teaching jobs. The effectiveness of field experience during the last semester of the training programs may not be as effective as educators would like to think since it does not leave enough room for working with the teacher candidates to reflect on their experiences in the field. Moore (2003) wanted to find evidence that preservice teachers utilized the constructivist learning theory emphasized in the university classrooms to guide their teaching and instructional decision making in the field practicum. Moore (2003) studied sixty-two mentor classroom teachers and seventy-seven preservice teachers, and the preservice teachers were enrolled as senior education majors in the language arts practicum. Moore used classroom observation, conversations with mentor teachers during classroom observation visits and notes from conversations

with a colleague, reflective journal entries from preservice teachers, and surveys from mentor teachers at the end of the study.

Moore (2003) found that there is need for preservice teachers, their supervisors, and their mentor teachers to examine and discuss the rationale behind pedagogical decisions. Moore also found that building trust among preservice teachers, mentor teachers, and university faculty to confront differing conceptions of practice is integral if theory is to actually inform teaching since only a few of the preservice teachers were able to make the connection on their own. Moore also found that the preservice teachers often adopted the styles and methods expressed by the mentor teacher regardless of whether they were in conflict with the theory or practice suggested in the university classroom.

While all of the above studies have called on teacher education to prepare preservice teachers' dispositions that are positive toward diversity, they have not dealt with the barriers that preservice teachers face as they implement multicultural education in the case of those that might consider implementing it. Van Hook (2002) conducted a study to investigate preservice teachers' perceived barriers for implementing multicultural education. Van Hook's study participants were sixty-eight sophomore-level preservice teachers enrolled in two sections of a teacher education program. The students were asked to reflect on their individual beliefs about the obstacles to the implementation of a diversity curriculum. They were also asked to reflect on barriers they believe could impede the development of a diverse classroom community. Van Hook came up with four major findings as barriers to implementing multicultural education: Difficulty discussing sensitive topics, policies and practical detrimental to diversity, difficulty implementing diversity curriculum, and the inability to recognize and accept diversity.

Van Hook concludes that the true barriers to creating a diverse classroom are the obstacles perceived by the teachers. Whether real or imagined, the teachers' perceived barriers are the greatest determinants to the inclusion of diversity (Van Hook, 2003). Therefore, preservice teachers need to consider the potential barriers to the implementation of diverse curriculum, and one goal of teacher education should be the destruction of these barriers in order for teachers to integrate diversity in the curriculum (Van Hook, 2003).

Preparing Teachers for Diverse Student Populations

Preparing teachers for diverse student populations seems to have been a challenge in a number of countries and not just in the United States. Although my study concentrates on the situation in the United States, other countries also face this challenge. In a number of countries, students' different ethnic and cultural origin affect teachers, who then concentrate their efforts on these students' assimilation into the dominant group (Bender-Szymanski, 2000; Grougeon & Woods, 1990; Wright, 1992). Even though the assimilationist approach taken on diverse student populations to assimilate them into dominant groups proved to be unsuccessful for the most part, a number of teachers still disapprove of school class heterogeneity, discriminate against ethnically and culturally different students and seek for a homogeneous school class (Banks, 2004; Troyna, 1992).

In Greece, Magos (2006) conducted a study to identify changes that in-service training in intercultural education can bring in majority teachers' beliefs and attitudes with regards to the ethnic and cultural 'otherness' after participating in a two-year training program. Magos (2006) states as a problem the myth of a homogenous school class commonly shared among Greek teachers who serve in a strictly ethnic and cultural

educational system. Magos says these teachers see their role as self-appointed guardians of Greek culture and focus their teaching on promoting the official Greek identity. Analyzing the Greek education system, Magos says “it appears that ethnocentrism, xenophobia, and defense of homogeneity remain primary characteristics of teachers’ beliefs” (p. 358). Magos sampled seventy eight teachers with Greek national identity who worked at schools in Thrace, an area of North Greece where the ethnic identity of students is Turkish. Magos used survey questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Magos found that the teachers’ participation in the two-year training encouraged their feeling professionally efficient and satisfied from their work at schools in Thrace, and that impacted their former beliefs and attitudes when dealing with ethnic cultural differences and general heterogeneity of the school class.

In the United States, Hollins and Guzman (2005) state that teacher education has been criticized from both inside and outside the education community, and the teacher education literature they reviewed suggests that traditional preservice and in-service teacher education has not done an adequate job preparing teachers to teach diverse student populations. To address the teacher quality problem, preservice teachers, through preparation programs, need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills to teach equitable all students in their classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 1990; Zeichner & Hoefft, 1996). Swartz (2003) suggests that teacher educators need to help their students [prospective teachers] develop the dispositions they need to rethink the assumptions they have about the other. There has also been some growing concern that teacher education programs have given much attention to instructional methods and yet on the other hand there has been little attention given to issues of diversity (Fry & McKinney, 1998). Fry

and McKinney (1998) further emphasize that when attention is given, often in the form of multicultural education, the effect on teachers' attitudes and behavior has been minimal and in some cases, seems to perpetuate stereotypical thinking.

Issues raised on the preparation of teachers for diverse student populations grow in importance given that the public education system in America has never been challenged to meet the diverse needs of the student population more than it is now (Brown & Evans, 2002; Grant, 2002; Groulx, 2001; Johnson & Inoue, 2003). As more and more people migrate to the U.S., American public schools are faced with the challenge to teach a student population of diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds. While the American public education system is challenged to work with migrant students, the system still has to deal with educating students from the historically marginalized ethnic groups in this country as well.

While the school system is faced with educating three types of student population – students from historically marginalized ethnic groups, students from voluntary immigrant groups, and students from the Caucasian dominant group – the teacher population is mainly White middle class young women from the dominant culture (Irvine, 2003; Johnson & Inoue, 2003), and the population of minority teachers continues to decrease (Foster, 1997). According to Sadker and Sadker (2003), during the 21st century, America has experienced the greatest immigration surge in its history, and about one in every ten Americans is foreign born. Sadker and Sadker (2003) contend:

By 2020 the west (geographic area expected to witness great demographic changes) will become “minority majority”, with no single racial or ethnic group having a majority. The nation has approximately 2.5 million Native Americans, a

number that increases to about four million when including Americans claiming partial Indian heritage on the census. By 2000, the number of Asians, including Asian Indians, in the United States was over ten million or 3.6 percent of the population. About 6 million Americans claimed multicultural heritage with two or more races indicated at census 2000. By 2030, the number of U.S. residents who are nonwhite or Hispanic will be about 140 million or about 40 percent of the U.S. population. (p. 47 – 48)

Demographers are drawing a portrait of a new generation of students far more diverse by race, ethnicity, culture, and language than modern America has ever known. Teachers of the 21st century in America will be expected to teach a more diverse student population, a population that is less Eurocentric than for which they are prepared. Sadker and Sadker (2003) warn preservice teachers that they will be teaching in locations where demographic realities and experiences should shape what is taught in that particular area. This challenges teacher preparation, as teacher educators should be ready to prepare preservice teachers for a more diverse American student population not only in teaching and learning styles, but also on culturally relevant skills and culturally relevant curriculum content.

As an intervention to the problem of preparing teachers for diverse student populations, multicultural education presents itself as a solution (Nieto, 2005). However, multicultural education has not yet been embraced by the entire education community. There has been ongoing debate over multicultural education as an intervention for educating ethnically diverse student populations in the United States. This debate is between the proponents of multicultural education as an intervention for the successful

teaching of diverse students with an aim to helping these students succeed in school versus critics of multicultural education who claim that multicultural education lowers the standards of education, and therefore defend the status quo (Banks, 2005; Cochran-Smith, 2004; Gay, 2002). Both the critics and the proponents of multicultural education focus their debate on teacher preparation and analyze teacher education programs. The debate does not end with the two groups; scholars also continue to discuss some tensions even among the proponents of multicultural education, who do not seem to agree on how to implement the multicultural education intervention in such a way that the learning needs of diverse student populations are met in schools. This debate politicizes multicultural education (Hollins & Guzman, 2005).

Summary

In this chapter I discussed the literature that informs the current study. The literature is in three categories. In the first category I discussed reviewed literature related to teaching diverse student populations, and the literature revealed that the teaching and learning of diverse student populations is not only a challenge to American schools, other developing countries face similar challenges as well due to movement of people from one country to another for various reasons. In the second category I reviewed literature that relates to preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity. The literature revealed that because of cultural mismatch between student populations and the teacher population, teachers from the dominant mainstream culture hold certain beliefs about the diverse student population, and that impacts the way they work with these students. These beliefs directly impact the teaching and learning of diverse student populations. In the third category I reviewed literature relating to teacher preparation for teaching diverse student

populations. With the challenges faced by cultural mismatch between teacher population and the diverse student populations, teacher preparation programs are called upon to reconsider their curriculum and their mission statements in order to be able to meet the teaching learning needs of diverse student populations.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this study I used classroom observation, face-to-face semi-structured interviews, and document content analysis – lesson plans, and preservice teachers’ journals (Rossman & Rallis, 1998; Siedman, 1998) to explore the relationship between elementary school education preservice teachers’ dispositions toward diversity and their approaches to curriculum content selection and teaching strategies. This research was conducted in a naturalistic setting rather than a controlled setting, and it assumed that “humans use what they see, hear, and feel to make meaning of social phenomena ...” (Rossman & Rallis, 1998, p. 7). In this study, based on what I saw, heard, and read during the data collection process, I have interpreted the relationship between elementary school preservice teachers’ dispositions toward diversity and their approaches to curriculum content selection and teaching strategies.

Qualitative research methodology allows the investigator to present more comprehensive, local, case-based findings as opposed to traditional positivist research. While findings from qualitative research are not easy to generalize, they provide a rich and thick description of the phenomenon under investigation. It is for this reason that the

qualitative research paradigm has become widely accepted in educational research literature (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

By exploring the relationship between preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity and their approaches to curriculum and teaching, this study intends to gain some understanding of how preservice teachers worked with diverse student populations during their clinical internship experience. This study examines how such understanding influenced how these preservice teachers taught students who were different from themselves.

Purpose of Study

This study seeks to explore the relationship between preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity and examine how these dispositions relate to their approaches to curriculum content selection and teaching strategies that they use when teaching culturally different student populations; students who are culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically different from their teachers (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Heilman, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Teacher education literature states that teachers' dispositions influence what goes on in the classroom, which is represented by the formal curriculum and the hidden curriculum (Brown, 2004; Garmon, 2005; Groulx, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 2000; Swartz, 2003; Wenzlaff, 1998). According to teacher education research, there is an increase in the number of minority students within the American education system, and these minority students are culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically different from their teachers (Banks & Banks, 2004; Cochran-Smith, 1995; Dee & Henkin, 2002). Many teachers, especially preservice teachers, do not have the necessary dispositions to work with diverse student populations. Preservice teachers

are slow to change their preexisting stereotypes and deficit model perspective they hold for diverse student populations (Gomez, 1996), that affect the way they teach students from diverse populations.

Therefore the purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity and their approaches to curriculum and teaching with the hope that a better understanding of their dispositions toward diversity will help inform teacher education programs on how to better prepare teachers who are able to teach *all* students effectively and efficiently regardless of culture, language, and socioeconomic status. The other purpose of this study is to add to the literature on preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity since there is limited literature in this area.

Research Questions

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do the cultural dispositions of preservice teachers relate to their approaches to curriculum and teaching – specifically selection of curriculum content and selection of teaching strategies?
2. How do preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity change, if any change occurs, as they work with culturally diverse populations of students during an intensive field experience?
3. How do preservice teachers' approaches to curriculum and teaching change, if at all, as they work with a culturally diverse population of students?

Research Design

This inquiry seeks to explore the relationship between preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity and examines how these dispositions relate to their approaches to curriculum and teaching strategies. The research instrument for this study consisted of (a) in-depth face-to-face interviews; (b) classroom teaching observations; and (c) document analysis (preservice teachers' lesson plans and preservice teachers' journal entries).

The Research Site – Mobile (Pseudonym) Elementary School

Mobile Elementary School is one of the six elementary schools within Conrad (pseudonym) School District. Mobile (pseudonym) Elementary School, the research site for this study, at the time of the study had approximately four hundred and seventy-eight students enrolled from Pre-Kindergarten through fifth grade. Each of the grade levels had more than one class – they all had multiple streams. There were twenty-six full-time White female teachers. The student/teacher ratio was eighteen students to one teacher. The students' ethnic distribution in percentages was twelve percent Asian, nine percent Black, three percent Hispanic/Latino, seven percent Native American, and seventy percent White/Other. The school curriculum, in addition to the academic curriculum, had the following extra curricular programs: Music, English Language Learning (ELL), Gifted and Talented, Spanish. According to the NCES (2003 – 2004) report posted on the school district website, about 49% of students at this school were eligible for free or reduced-price lunch. This school had ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity, and fitted the characteristics needed for this study setting.

The mission statement for this elementary school was “to provide a nurturing; child centered environment that encourages personal growth, lifelong learning, and a challenging curriculum for children of all races and backgrounds.” In addition to the mosaic nature of the American population, the student population at this elementary school was diverse due to its proximity to a large Midwestern University, where a number of foreign students and faculty members involved with this university had their children attend. This means that Mobile Elementary school did not only cater to the American diverse population (African, Asian, European, Latino, and American) it also catered to recent (long and short term) immigrants. Due to the diverse nature of the student population, Mobile Elementary School was the only elementary school that offered the English as a Second Language (ESL) program within Conrad (pseudonym) School District. Further, students in this school were taught Spanish on a weekly basis by community volunteers. In addition to the ethnic diversity represented by students, there was also economic diversity at Mobile Elementary School.

Mobile Elementary School had close working relationships with this large Midwestern University through the Excellence in Collaborative Experiential Learning (ExCEL) program. The ExCEL program began at least five years ago, offering Midwestern University Elementary Education majors an option to completing their required methods courses in a public school, thus affording them the opportunity to integrate content areas and theoretical foundations regarding best teaching practices with the day-to-day practical world of Mobile Elementary School within the Conrad School District. For the ExCEL program, the twenty Elementary Education major students were made aware that the time commitment for this program exceeded that of the typical

semester prior to student teaching. The selected twenty students spent three full days each week in a classroom, beginning with teacher professional days prior to the first day of school and continuing for sixteen weeks. For these twenty students, content-area methods classes were held two days each week on the university campus and related seminars took place on-site at Mobile elementary school. Each ExCEL student spent over three hundred hours in this comprehensive, integrated field experience during the sixteen-week semester.

According to the information pamphlet designed by the university about the ExCEL program, during the semester prior to student teaching the experiences of ExCEL students included a number of activities in Mobile Elementary School. These activities included, but were not limited to:

- Continuous mentoring by a classroom teacher.
- Developing and implementing individual lessons with help from mentor teacher.
- Supervision of students: lunches, playground, assemblies, and bus duties.
- Assisting in special classrooms: reading, gifted/talented, special education, ESL, counselor, librarian, music, and physical education.

(Midwestern University ExCEL Program Flier).

From this list of activities, the ExCEL program initiated these Elementary Education majors with some of the experiences that later became useful and handy during their student teaching or their clinical internship experience. Further, students from this large Midwestern University who were completing their work in the College of Education had an opportunity to conduct their clinical internship during the spring semester. Therefore Mobile Elementary School was an ideal site for this current study.

Population Sampling Strategy: Purposive Sampling

While sample size matters in other research methodologies such as in quantitative research, qualitative studies such as this one are mainly interested in the depth and the richness of the information/data collected from each setting (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993). Purposive sampling was used in this study (Erlandson et al, 1993). One of the advantages of purposive sampling is that it produces information-rich results. For instance, for this study, not all elementary preservice teachers from this large Midwestern University were used, but only those that were placed at the one elementary school with a diverse student population within the university's surrounding community.

According to Erlandson et al. (1993), purposive and directed sampling through human instrumentation increases the range of data exposure and maximizes the researcher's ability to identify emerging themes that take adequate accounts of contextual conditions, and cultural norms. Patton (1990) says that the logic and power of purposive sampling depends on the selecting of information-rich cases for study in depth.

Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the research, thus the term *purposive or purposeful sampling*.

Erlandson et al. (1993) state that there are two basic decisions a researcher has to make in purposive sampling: first, he/she must select who and what to study; that is, the sources that will most help answer the basic research questions and fit the basic purpose of the study. Second, the researcher must choose who and what not to investigate; that is, there must be a process of elimination in order to narrow the pool of all possible sources.

According to Erlandson et al. (1993) the basic rule about sample size is that "there are no rules for sample size" (p. 83). They say in qualitative research such as this one, the main

aim is to get more quality than quantity, more information richness than information volume.

Research Population

After securing the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the school district's approval, I sent a letter introducing myself and my research to the Clinical Internship Coordinator of the university to recruit preservice teachers placed at Mobile Elementary to be part of the study. After I described the study and made sure all attendees understood their rights according to informed consent and confidentiality, four preservice teachers agreed to participate in the study.

Therefore the population for this study consisted of four apparently Caucasian female elementary education majors from a pool of eight preservice teachers studying at a large Midwestern University who were conducting their clinical internship at Mobile (pseudonym) Elementary School, one of the culturally diverse public elementary schools within the public school's community. Mobile Elementary School was selected for this study because of the diverse nature of its student population. These four preservice teachers were conducting their clinical internship in third, fourth, and fifth grade classrooms.

Research Participants

Research participants for this study were four 22- to 26-year old Caucasian female elementary education preservice teachers. All four participants described themselves as coming from middle to high income families. Most of them had limited experience with diverse populations. These twelve weeks of clinical internship was their first time to be

exposed to such a diverse population for such a long period of time in their lives. These participants/preservice teachers were Alicia who taught third grade, Sandra who taught fourth grade, Michelle who taught fifth grade and Helen who also taught fifth grade [All names used in this study are pseudonyms].

Alicia

Alicia, a third grade preservice teacher, was born in Iowa. She and her family left Iowa at an early age and stayed in four other states before finally settling in Texas because of her father's job. Her mother taught at an inner city school, and her father worked for a business company in Texas. Other than traveling within the United States, Alicia had opportunities to travel outside the United States. Her university experience, through the Study Abroad Program, took her to Brazil, Florence, Italy, and finally to Australia.

Talking about her education experience, Alicia said she attended an elementary school a few blocks away from her house, and this public elementary school was not culturally diverse. She then attended a private magnet middle school which was a little bit diverse because it admitted students who were not necessarily coming from the neighborhood where the school was. Since the students had to apply to be admitted to this magnet school, they came from other areas of the community. She then attended a regular public high school. In all these stages in her life Alicia said she never associated herself with someone culturally different from herself. Though she played soccer during her high school years, she said she never took the initiative to associate with people other than Caucasians. Even during her travels, she never associated with anyone who was not Caucasian. Though she had traveled to Brazil and Italy, English was still the language she

used to get along with most people – she was never linguistically out of her comfort zone even though she was not in the United States.

Alicia said she never thought in her life that she would be in this part of the Midwest; however, after visiting one of her relatives attending college in this large Midwestern University, she fell in love with the university, and then decided to come and enroll with the College of Education as an elementary education major. She said one thing she loved about the College of Education was that it met her expectations, and she felt at home; her faculty members were Caucasian, her classmates were Caucasian, let alone the fact that they were young females. She fitted in well.

Besides the cultural comfort that Alicia enjoyed in her life, she also enjoyed economic comfort. She said her parents took care of her and her brother's financial needs all the way through college. She said her parents never allowed her and her brother to work while they were going through college. Alicia said she was privileged to have parents like hers, and she felt blessed not to go through the struggles other people go through in life – she had things done for her.

Sandra

Sandra, a fourth grade preservice teacher, was born and raised in an upper middle class family in one of the suburbs just outside Oklahoma City. Her father was an engineer, and her mother was a homemaker. Sandra said when she was growing up, her mother was very involved with her school activities and very involved in Parent-Teacher Association (PTA). Sandra was the youngest of the three children in her family. She said her family moved quite a bit within Oklahoma and they finally settled in California. In spite of these moves, Sandra said she and her siblings were good at adjusting to the new

communities they found themselves in. Though Sandra attended public schools throughout her K-12 years, these schools were suburban schools. The school population was basically Caucasian and not culturally diverse; all her teachers were Caucasian, and so, too, were all her friends.

Sandra said her life was shaped and influenced by her parents. They instilled love for school and love for church. She said they instilled basic values, and modeled work ethics for her. Sandra grew up in an economically stable family; however, she soon learned that there were other people who were not as economically stable as her family was. Sandra said it was as early as her first grade that she was surprised to learn that there were people who were living in apartments because they could not afford to buy a home. While Sandra realized that there were people living a life different from hers, she said she never had an experience with ethnically and culturally different people all her life up until her experience at Mobile Elementary School with the ExCEL program which she participated in just a semester prior to her clinical internship experience.

Talking about her reasons for choosing teaching as a career, Sandra said she had always wanted to be a teacher because she liked children. She said when growing up she played school a lot with her sister and friend. She baby-sat a lot, indicating her love for children. She said thinking about her situation; it was funny because other than her love for children which motivated her to be a teacher, she never had anyone else inspiring her to be a teacher. One of Sandra's reasons for being a teacher was to instill values. She felt that the current student population lacked discipline.

Michelle

Michelle, a fifth grade preservice teacher, was an only child in her family from one of the suburbs in the outskirts of Tulsa. Her parents were very much involved in church ministry, and both parents sat on various church and business boards. Her father was a district manager at a pump company and her mother worked for the same company as a warehouse manager. Their jobs involved a bit of travel within and outside the United States. They traveled annually to Russia and Mexico on either church mission trips or business trips which most often were followed by family vacations. Michelle worked in several places, mostly working with children, and she said that inspired her to choose teaching as a career.

Growing up, Michelle said she attended mostly private schools until her senior year when she enrolled in public school. The private schools she attended were church owned and suburban schools. Students in those schools were from either middle-class or upper-class families. Even though she attended a public high school, she said there was no difference between her private schools and her public school in terms of social class. Michelle said most students in her high school were rich regardless of race and ethnicity. She said though her public school was pretty much culturally diverse, there were no low income students because of the location of the school; it was located near a private university, and had many children whose parents were associated with this private university.

While the church and the public school experiences exposed her to other cultural and ethnic groups, she never had close contacts, such as friends, across cultural and ethnic lines. She only worked with those children, providing service to them and nothing

else. However, she said she empathized with children from other cultures because of her experiences in Mexico and Russia, where she felt how it was to be a minority person.

Helen

Helen, a fifth grade preservice teacher, was one of three children in her family and was born in one of the small towns in Oklahoma, but occasionally traveled with her family to Texas and Colorado to visit relatives. Her father worked in an education related field and her mother worked for a medical company. Growing up, Helen said she attended a gifted and talented school in her town and then attended public school until she graduated high school. Helen said her hometown was very small such that she knew everyone in her school at all grade levels. She said she had never had experiences with people from other social groups other than Caucasians before in her life until she participated in the ExCEL program, beginning a semester prior to her clinical internship experience. Helen said she was going through culture shock at Mobile Elementary School because people in her hometown were only from the mainstream/dominant group and from her up-bringing she knew the world according to one perspective – the dominant perspective, and any other view was considered wrong. She said she wanted to learn more about diversity.

Methods

This study used the qualitative data collection methods of observations, interviews and document analysis. Data collection took place between February and April 2006. To get to know the participants, I spent time with each of the participants in their homerooms whenever the students were out of class for other sessions like library or

music or physical education (PE). I also spent my lunch breaks with all four participants in the teacher's lounge with the other teachers. By doing this, I became acquainted with the participants, and we also used lunch breaks to plan for my subsequent visits. While my focus at Mobile Elementary School was on the four participants' interactions with their students in their classrooms, I ended up knowing how they interacted with the other preservice teachers who were not part of this study as well as how they interacted with the rest of the teachers at the school.

Data Sources

This study's data came from three sources: classroom teaching observation, face-to-face in-depth interviews, and document content analysis. The first data source was classroom teaching observations. I observed (Glesne, 1998) each one of the four participants one day a month for three months between February and April 2006 during the clinical internship. Using Lightfoot (1983), Harris (2005) found that educational sites can also be observed using theater imagery. According to Harris (2005), when conducting observations in educational sites, there is the stage, the cast, the plot, and time. In educational sites the stage takes multiple forms; however, for this current study the stage was made up of the four classrooms where the four participants were conducting their clinical internship (one third grade, one fourth grade, and two fifth grade classrooms) at Mobile Elementary School. In this study I describe the four different classrooms as multiple stages where the action by the actors [preservice teachers] was taking place (Brown, 2002; Glesne, 1998). I observed the preservice teachers in action with their students – “the cast of players” (Harris, 2005, p. 69), and I described the classroom interaction between the preservice teachers and the students in the classroom. I observed

the development of the plot, and described the activities that were going on in the classroom. During observation I looked for culturally relevant curricular materials, diverse instructional strategies, home/language congruence, critical thinking, classroom management, and interaction with parents with regards to the preservice teachers (Brown, 2002; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Finally, as in theater, performances have time frames, so that even in the classroom, time is important. I observed how time was used and valued by these preservice teachers (Harris, 2005).

Face-to-face in-depth interviews were the second data source for this study. I conducted three sixty- to ninety- minute tape recorded, in-depth, face-to-face interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 1995) with each of the four participants between February and April (one in February, one in March, and one in April). The venues for the interviews were the participants' choice; all chose to have interviews take place in their classrooms at the end of the school day on the same day I observed since I did not want to interfere with their school time. Interviews covered a variety of topics related to the preservice teachers' experiences with diverse populations with an aim of eliciting their dispositions toward diversity (Bennett, 1995; Gilbert, 1995).

The first interview covered questions seeking biographical information, with the aim of establishing the preservice teachers' dispositions toward diverse populations. The second interview sought information on the preservice teachers' experiences working/teaching diverse student populations. The third interview sought information on changes, if any, on the preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity and teaching diverse student populations, changes, if any on the preservice teachers' curricular choices and teaching strategies for teaching diverse student populations. All interviews were tape-

recorded with the permission of the participants, and each interview, on average, lasted for one hour to one hour and thirty minutes. I (researcher) transcribed all twelve tapes verbatim, and the transcripts bore no identity of either the school or the study participants. These transcripts provided data for analysis. Interview and observation protocols are found in appendix B and Appendix C respectively.

The third source of data for this study was documentation. Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen (1993) say documents constitute a third source of evidence in naturalistic research. They say the term ‘document’ refers to a broad range of written and symbolic records, as well as any available materials and data” (p. 99). For this current study, in addition to the classroom observation, and the in-depth interviews, with the participants’ permission, they shared with me their lesson plans as well as their journal entries which they were required to keep as they went through their clinical internship experience. I collected these documents from all four participants for the duration of their entire clinical internship experience. These documents were analyzed as part of data for this study.

Data Analysis

Glaser and Strauss (1967) state that qualitative data is best analyzed through a “constant comparative method” combining a specific way to unitize and code the data with an ongoing analysis and reorganization of the data. On the other hand van Manen (1990) argues that themes are the best way to “give shape to the shapeless” – this huge massive pile of data that a researcher ends up having, and therefore cautions the researcher not to forget that an “emergent theme is always a reduction of the notion” (van Manen, 1990, p. 88). While van Manen (1990) concurs with Glaser and Strauss (1967) on

the fact that themes can be derived from qualitative data, van Manen allows for a broader interpretation of data analysis, using constant comparison in an ongoing fashion with three approaches toward uncovering themes from qualitative data. van Manen's (1990) approaches include: "(1) the wholistic or sententious approach; (2) the selecting or highlighting approach; (3) the detailed or line-by-line approach" (p. 92 – 93).

For this study, I used van Manen's first two approaches; the wholistic or sententious approach, and the selecting or highlighting approach to analyze and interpret the data. The analysis of the data followed data collection. Due to time constraints, I was not able to transcribe all the data and have the analysis ongoing at the same time. First, after transcribing the data set for each month, I read the transcripts several times to interpret the data and compared the data across the participants in light of the culturally relevant theoretical framework. I applied van Manen's first and second approaches, the wholistic and selection and highlighting, where I looked for and highlighted sentences and phrases that respond to the research questions. I compared all four participants' data and derived some themes on biographical information in relation to cultural dispositions as they relate to teaching strategies and curriculum content selection. Secondly, I repeated the process for the second data set from the second month. I read the data several times and selected and highlighted sentences and phrases that related to the second research question which was looking for changes in the participants' dispositions and I derived some themes. Finally, I went through the same process for the third set of data. I read the data several times from all four participants. I selected sentences and phrases and highlighted these that related to the third research question which was looking for changes in the participants' approaches to teaching and curriculum content selection. I

continued lifting and capturing phrases and statements from all three data sources that seemed to have the essence or meaning about the relationship between elementary education preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity and their approaches toward curriculum content selection and teaching strategies for teaching diverse student populations.

Trustworthiness

For dependability and trustworthiness (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993) I utilized triangulation of data collection methods and data sources – the interviews, the classroom observations, and the documents analysis. Further, this study benefited from the researcher's prolonged stay in the field. I observed each of the participants one day per month for a period of three months. I also conducted one sixty to ninety-minute in-depth interview per month for three months with each of the four participants, from February to April, 2006. I also reviewed their lesson plans that the participants gave me for the clinical internship. Finally I reviewed their journal entries for the clinical internship period to get additional rich data from the participants about their experience teaching diverse student populations – student populations different from the participants' lived experiences and way of life.

Assumptions

I embarked on this study with the following assumptions: first some preservice teachers from a Midwestern University would be willing to participate in this study the way I wanted them to participate, i.e. agree to be observed, interviewed, and let me have copies of their journal and lesson plans. Second, teacher preparation programs could

benefit from the findings from this study if they implemented suggestions from preservice teachers resulting from their experiences with diverse student population. Third, preservice teachers who were not exposed to diversity prior to their clinical internship experience would realize that the type of dispositions they have toward diversity impact how they work with diverse student populations. Fourth, that by encouraging Caucasian preservice teachers to reflect on their past experiences, they might change their dispositions. Fifth, preservice teachers will be concerned that they will find themselves faced with challenges when teaching students from diverse cultural backgrounds, and therefore will recommend that teacher preparation programs better equip preservice teachers with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively teach students from diverse backgrounds.

Ethical Issues

In interpretive inquiry, it is very important for the researcher to consider ethics, as “the naturalistic researcher proactively initiates ethical standards into the research process because ethics are the essence of what research is all about and ethics can only enhance the interpretive research” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 155). In line with the ethics of interpretive inquiry, this study was not intended to harm anyone or cause any pain to anyone. Research participants’ rights were made clear to them before they consented to participate in the study. Participants were told that they were free to withdraw from the study at any time they felt like it with no questions asked. Study participants were also told that they reserved the right to respond or not to questions at their own will. Study participants were also told and assured that their names and school name were not going to be disclosed throughout the study, only pseudonyms and

numbers were to be used. I told study participants that they were not going to have access to the information or data regarding other participants. Since I could not predict before I started what the data collection process would be like with the study participants, I remained open and flexible to “daily renegotiate and expand the basis for informed consent as new opportunities for collaborative activity emerge” (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, & Allen, 1993, p. 155). For instance, I had planned that I was going to conduct interviews when participants were at the university campus. This arrangement did not work very well for the study participants; they suggested the interview venues suitable for each one of them, and I complied. Further, we fixed observation dates according to their schedules, taking into account that if something came up in school, and they would call/e-mail me to arrange for a change of date, and I would comply.

Summary

In this chapter I have described the methodology that I used in this study. I described the research design, where I described the study setting, sampling strategy, research participants, methods used for data collection, and data analysis. I also described how I dealt with issues of trustworthiness of this research. I presented my assumptions. I described how I dealt with ethical issues in this study.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS

Introduction

In this study I explore the relationship between preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity and their approaches to curriculum content and teaching strategy selection to help inform the field of teacher education about preparing teachers who will effectively teach all students regardless of culture, language, and socioeconomic status. Four elementary education preservice teachers – Alicia, Sandra, Michelle, and Helen – from a large Midwestern University who were conducting their clinical internship in a culturally diverse public elementary school within the university's community participated in this study. I conducted classroom observations, and in-depth face-to-face interviews with these four participants, and I analyzed their lesson plans and their journal entries about their clinical experiences to address the following research questions:

1. How do the cultural dispositions of preservice teachers relate to their approaches to curriculum and teaching – specifically selection of curriculum content and selection of teaching strategies as they work with culturally diverse student populations?

2. How do preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity change, if any changes occur, as they work with culturally diverse populations of students during an intensive field experience?
3. How do preservice teachers' approaches to curriculum and teaching change, if at all, as they work with a culturally diverse population of students?

In this study I use culturally responsive teaching/teacher as a theoretical lens to analyze the data. Findings from this study mainly come from classroom observations and face-to-face interviews. Even though participants' lessons plans and journals were analyzed, the information from these two sources was not substantial enough to show support or non-support of the research questions. For instance, on lesson plans it was only Sandra's lesson plans that were detailed enough to state what she did when teaching students with disability, and there was no mention of how she teaches culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse student populations. The other three participants' lessons plans only had topics of what they were teaching on the days I visited their classrooms, and these were not detailed lesson plans. On the journal entries, participants picked a student in each of their classes on whom to focus journal entries, and in most of these entries they wrote about challenges they were facing about that student they were following. The students they followed were Caucasian, and I was told by the participants that each of the students had some kind of learning disability. While Michelle would occasionally write about discipline problems in her journal entries, the entries were also in relation to how these problems were affecting the student she was following.

The culturally responsive teaching/teacher theoretical lens calls for teachers working with culturally diverse students to: develop a culturally diverse knowledge base; be able to design culturally relevant curricula for their teaching; be culturally caring and be able to build learning communities among students in their classrooms; develop cross-cultural communication with students and their parents and communities; and to develop cultural congruity in classroom instructions so that students from diverse backgrounds in the classroom could identify with what is going on in the classroom. The findings are grouped into the following themes: (a) Lack of awareness and lack of experience with diversity, (b) family influence, (c) active/silent resistance, (d) missionary/savior mentality, and (e) selective ‘othering’.

Lack of Awareness and Lack of Experience

Data from this study indicate that the four participants had minimal exposure to cultural diversity prior to their clinical internship experience. They lacked awareness on how to work with culturally diverse student populations. The study participants not only lack experience with culturally diverse populations, they also lacked experience with populations from lower socioeconomic status. All four participants self identified as being raised in middle to upper class income families, and they did not see themselves as needing anything that their parents could not provide.

Even though the four participants attended public schools, they never took initiatives to identify themselves with students from other cultural groups. Alicia told me that she played soccer during her high school years, and her school used to play with schools that had students from other cultural groups. While this was an opportune moment to interact with these students, she never took advantage of that opportunity. She

only saw those culturally different students as members of an opposite team, and not people to interact with closely. She never had a friend or associated herself with any of these students. Alicia never had a close relationship with people from other cultures than hers. Even with her teachers and professors, Alicia said she never had teachers and professors from other cultural groups; all were from the Caucasian group. Alicia acknowledged that she did not know much about other American ethnic groups' cultures besides the Caucasian culture; however, she said she was aware that their lives were different. She felt that her life was better in some ways because she did not have to work while going to college because her parents took care of her and her brother's financial needs and paid for their living expenses as well. Talking about the socioeconomic status of other ethnic groups compared to her own, Alicia said:

I would say from looking at the children from my mom's class they come from a lower socioeconomic group, and so they are, of course, less privileged ... In just their home life some children don't have water, you know, for a couple of weeks. Some do not have, you know, the appropriate clothing, things like that, and some of these students ... I know a couple that, you know ... one little girl here did not have mittens to wear in winter ... things like that just because ... I mean I don't know why, but I would say I am more privileged in that way. I have things given to me.

Alicia clearly saw herself as economically better than the students in her class and her mother's class. Alicia gave a description of children whose basic needs were not met, and she saw herself as privileged because her parents were able to take care of her basic needs and her educational expenses, since she did not have to work to support herself.

While Alicia was aware of the differences that existed between her and the students, she still said she did not know why there were such differences. This is an indication of lack of awareness and ignorance of some historical factors behind the social stratification of the American society. There is no indication that Alicia was interested to know why there were such differences among life experiences of the different ethnic groups.

Helen presented an almost similar situation. Helen was born and raised in a very small town where the only ethnic group was the Caucasian group. She said her town was so small such that everybody knew everyone. She said she knew every student's name from elementary to high school. While at Mobile Elementary School, Helen said she was going through culture shock because it was the first time in her life to be in such a diversely populated environment. Helen had neither experience nor awareness of working with diverse student populations. Helen said her worldview was from one perspective, the Eurocentric perspective. She said all the cultural diversity that she was exposed to at Mobile Elementary School was new to her. She said she felt lucky to be in such a school because this experience was introducing her to real life and as the world is, and not the way she was brought up. She said:

It feels good to be here, you know ... I mean I felt sheltered growing up in my hometown. We didn't ... I mean Caucasian was the only race, and so I was shocked coming here. It's really good. I think it's really neat to be around this cultural diversity all the time because that is how the real world is.

Helen's appreciation of the exposure to diverse cultures at Mobile Elementary School resulted in her willingness to learn more about diverse cultures. The willingness to learn about diverse cultures influenced positively how she worked with her students

during her clinical internship. She tried as best as she could to modify her lessons to fit the learning needs of her minority students, but she expressed concerns about her lack of preparedness on how to work with culturally diverse student populations. Helen said from her college preparation program she was told about diverse student populations and what to expect, but what she was going through was more than what her college professors prepared her for. She said:

I would like to have more experience in a more diverse classroom because usually you are taught how to view a classroom, and what beliefs you should have, and that every child should be taught the same, and that every child has a right to learn ... and they say this over and over, and you can keep saying it, but until you are in the classroom, and actually know what is out there, it's a lot different because ... this school is a lot different than my hometown. And it's ... it's gonna be different no matter what state you are going to. And you can't teach what you don't know. It's just ... I just don't think cultural diversity was ever really emphasized in our coursework. It was more just doing ... way to teach, I guess ... and assessment was a huge thing, and we did do some special needs, and that was the only course.

Helen also expressed some frustrations working with students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds when it came to assigning homework. She said these students were not able to do homework because their parents were not always home to help them with their homework since they were mostly at work. She said:

It is hard to teach them because, you know, they are not going to get a lot done from home. So basically what you do at school is all what they are gonna get. There is no parent involvement a lot of times. I know that might be stereotyping,

but it is the case a lot of the time that all their support, all their attention is coming from school.

To Helen, lower socioeconomic status parents do not support their children's learning needs, and that is seen as a problem that impacts how she worked with these students. Lack of awareness and knowledge about challenges faced by minority families caused Helen to problematize lack of parental support on the part of these children.

While Alicia and Helen acknowledged that some differences existed between their cultures and their diverse student populations' cultures, Sandra did not seem to acknowledge that difference. Sandra, too, never had experience with any other ethnic group other than the Caucasian group. Her friends and teachers, as well as her professors were Caucasian. Sandra was so blind to or resisted diversity such that she did not recognize culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse student populations in her class. Sandra said her students were not so culturally diverse as to call for her to effect drastic lesson modifications. She said:

I haven't really had to do that [modifications] a whole lot because I didn't really have that much diversity in my classroom last semester, and there is a little bit in this classroom, too, this semester, but not anything severe enough to really have to make drastic modifications to reach the students because they are pretty acclimatized to what is going on in the classroom already. But I supposed if I have a student who had a little drastic different culture, something that I would need to be aware of, like their culture so that you do not offend them.

For Sandra, the students were not "severe enough" in terms of diversity for her to modify the lessons for them and yet there were five students in her class whose primary language

was not English. They were coming from other cultures such as Asia and Latin America. In addition to these immigrant students, there were three students who were visibly from the American historically minority groups – African Americans, whose cultures were different from hers. Helen’s comments indicate racial and ethnic blindness. She lacked awareness and sensitivity to cultural diversity among the student populations in her classroom.

Michelle presented a little different picture. Although the data indicate that she was similar in every respect to the other participants in terms of cultural diversity awareness and experience, Michelle felt she was well prepared to work with culturally diverse student populations. Talking about her preparedness, Michelle said college courses could only prepare a person for so much, but most of the training and preparation had to come from experience. While Michelle claimed to be prepared to work with diverse student populations, she did not have knowledge about different American ethnic groups; she did not even acknowledge that the different American ethnic groups have different histories and experiences that influence their school experiences. Michelle was more accommodating and empathetic to immigrant students than American minority students. For class activities she paired students according to their experience in the United States. She told me that she makes sure that the newly arrived students work with those that have been in the school for a longer period so that they could help the new ones to acclimatize.

Based on her biographic information, Michelle never had friends and close interactions with other minority groups other than Caucasian groups. The lack of exposure to culturally diverse populations made her not realize the type of information

she needed to have in order to work effectively and efficiently with diverse student populations; she counted on the fact that she was at a school with culturally diverse student populations, and failed to acknowledge that teachers need to have specific knowledge and specific information and skills to work with culturally diverse student populations.

In summary, all four participants lacked knowledge and awareness on how to work with cultural diverse student populations. They were never exposed to diverse populations prior to their clinical internship. The lack of exposure and lack of knowledge and skills on how to work with culturally diverse student populations made them unable to select culturally relevant curricula for their culturally diverse student populations. They relied on their cooperating teachers, who also did not use culturally relevant pedagogy according to what I observed. Therefore, students from culturally diverse backgrounds were expected to assimilate to the dominant mainstream culture which was represented by the teachers.

Family Influences

The study participants talked about the role of family as the major influence that shaped their lives. Each one of them described how close they were with the rest of their families. These ties did not just end with their parents, but extended to grandparents as well. The family influences are seen from the participants' way of life from college choice to career path. All four participants described how their lives were linked to parents through college financial support and how they saw their parents, especially their fathers, as their role models.

Alicia explained how her life has been made comfortable by her parents' taking care of all her financial needs at college level, and they did not want her to work while attending college. Her duty was to study and forget about bothering about living expenses because they were taking care of all that. She explained that during holidays she drives eight hours to be home with her parents. Even though she said it was her fifth grade teacher who inspired her to be a teacher, she does not deny the fact her mother also was her role model, and because of her, she always wanted to be a teacher.

Helen talked about how she used to go to her father's office after school and watch him grade students' work, and that made her want to be a teacher. She talked about how much her father loved his work, and that planted her love for teaching. She also talked about choosing a college after high school, and said the reason she attended this large Midwestern University was because her father attended the same university and her grandparents were also alumni of the same university. Not only did they attend the same university, but they were also in the field of education. Her brother also attends the same university. To Helen, her father is her greatest model. The bond between her father and Helen was also strengthened when Helen was punished by her fifth grade teacher for cheating on homework. Helen told her father how the teacher gave her a zero grade after the teacher caught her copying from her friend's book. Helen's father took Helen's side and blamed the teacher for overreacting. Helen stated that this incident strengthened the bond between her and her father. Her parents still took care of her college expenses and paid her living expenses.

Sandra's father was an engineer and her mother was a stay at home mother, and even though her parents were not in education, Sandra said her mother followed all her

school activities and she said they both shaped the way she is today. Her career choice and the university she attended was the same as her parents and grandparents. Sandra said she could have gone to any university on the west coast, but decided to come to this university because of where it was located. She said she loved this university because it was in a small town, and she said she loved the small town mentality. She said she wanted to be a teacher because of her love for children and she also wanted to instill values in young children. She said:

Well, I know most people have some kind of experience and/or about a teacher that particularly inspired them, but I don't really (laughs) ... I mean I think I've just always wanted to be a teacher because I have always liked kids, you know. I babysat, and I played school with my sister and friends and stuff like that, but there is no particular experience that made me want to do that. But then when I got to college I thought about doing something else but I have always been an elementary education major, I never switched or anything, you know. When I got into the school [Mobile Elementary School] last semester, you know, it was good. And I also kinda wanted to be a teacher because I think it's really important that children get ... learn the basics, you know, values of life and stuff because the way society is going today, what parents are not teaching their children these things they should or children are getting out of control, and have no idea between right and wrong and other things. Besides, you know, the curriculum that, you know, you have to teach at school, I think that's really important that they have values, especially for future generations to ... to have that. I like elementary school because you want to start when children are really young so that they know

that from the beginning. It's so much easier to teach them when they are little than to undo everything that's been wrong from the beginning.

Sandra felt she had a role in teaching students the right values of life while they were young rather than to try to undo wrong values of life when the students are older. She felt being an elementary school teacher was the best place to achieve the goal of instilling life's values to the future generation. While Sandra saw the need to instill values in her students, she never stopped to think that the values she was talking about were not universal, but these were values that she got from her parents. Therefore to Sandra, her family values were good such that she had to pass them on to every child that she worked with regardless of the cultural background of that child. This failure to recognize diversity by Sandra indicates the type of dispositions toward diversity she had. With such dispositions toward diversity there is limited room for change.

While Michelle, like Helen, did not have a parent who worked in education, Michelle's parents were involved with children through church activities. Michelle talked about how she started attending church youth camps as early as she could remember. She said her parents' work introduced her into working with children. She talked of leading youth teams and teaching Sunday school. She said based on her role as a youth leader and Sunday school teacher, she developed the love for working with children, and she decided on teaching as a career. As an only child, Michelle is very close to her parents, and she talked about her parents as her friends because she spends most of her time with them. She said her parents take care of all her needs, and she stays with them.

In summary, the four participants expressed their closeness to their families. They described how their family members influenced and shaped their thinking. Therefore

because of the strong influence these participants had from their parents, their dispositions are shaped by their parents' dispositions. The fact that the participants were not exposed to diverse populations while growing up may indicate the type of dispositions their parents had about diverse populations. Even though these participants were now adults who could make their own decisions, but because of the fact that they still have not yet broken the bond they had with their parents, and they were still dependent on their parents. It comes as no surprise that their dispositions toward diversity are the way they are. The participants are still not in a position to see the world in a different way because they are still under the shadows of their parents. The participants saw their parents as the best thing that has ever happened to them. It is no wonder that they did not have any knowledge about people from other cultures and their way of life; their parents never exposed them to such diversity because it was not important to them, therefore it seems like their daughters also did not develop the importance of knowing about people from other cultures.

Active/Silent Resistance

With this theme, by active resistance I am referring to a situation where the participants openly express resistance to an alternative way of thinking or of viewing a situation. By silent resistance I am referring to a situation where the participant does not openly resist an alternative point of view, but tries as much as possible to justify why she cannot accept a different way of seeing or of viewing.

From looking at their biographical information, the four participants display active resistance to cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity. Even though they attended public schools, they never took initiatives to associate with any one culturally,

linguistically, and socioeconomically different from themselves. The schools they attended made them feel comfortable and they were never out of their comfort zone. The university they attended was predominantly white, and all their professors were white. The teacher preparation program they followed at college never challenged them out of their comfort zone. They loved the program because it was in line with their values of life.

As they graduated from high school to college, the university they all attended offered them some opportunities to work with diverse student populations for two semesters – a semester prior to their clinical internship, and the clinical internship semester. Even though they experienced some frustrations and challenges of working with culturally diverse student populations, they blamed the students for lacking discipline, instead of looking at themselves and the curriculum to see why the students were acting that way. The participants felt the first semester helped them to be familiar with the classroom, but they did not pay attention to the fact that they had no knowledge and skills about the culturally diverse students they had in their class. This is an indicator of silent resistance because instead of trying to know more about these students, and to develop culturally relevant teaching materials so that culturally diverse student populations could identify with, they felt that all these children were the same, and therefore they felt students should be expected to learn the same curriculum content. Yet such curriculum content represents the mainstream culture, a culture represented by the teachers and different from the students' culture. They all hid behind the justification that the curriculum content is handed down to the schools by the school district; therefore, they did not have power to change that. Further, they also claimed that the homeroom

teachers had already selected the curriculum when they started their clinical internship. While these claims might be true, it does not rule out the fact that they were not even aware that there is some different types of knowledge not represented by mainstream curriculum which needed to be in the school curriculum. The participants were not sensitive to the fact that they subjected all the students to one curriculum, thus subjecting culturally diverse students to an assimilationist education, and denying them an educational experience that could be more meaningful to them.

The participants actively resisted seeing difference among the students in their classrooms, and by such resistance the learning experiences of culturally diverse students were affected. For example this is what I observed in Sandra's classroom:

Sandra asked students to return to their desks. She moved to the center of the room and said, "Today we are starting a new science topic." She passed to all students some sheets of paper which had questions. Students were asked to provide the information required. I noticed that some students had some difficulties with the activity. There were several hands up. Sandra was moving around the classroom helping those who had their hands up. Almost all the students had their hands up, calling for Sandra to help them. I noticed that Natra's (one of the immigrant students in the class) hand was not up; she was sitting at her desk looking everywhere in the classroom like someone who was absent minded. She kept on twisting her left ear with her left hand, had a pencil on her right hand. She would occasionally write something and erase it again. She never called for help; she never talked to anyone, nor did she show any emotion on her face. Sandra did not get to her, nor did she seem to notice anything about her. When

time was over for the activity, Sandra collected all the sheets of paper from all the students, and Natra's sheet of paper did not have any answers.

While all four participants were able to recognize cultural difference among their immigrant students, they resisted seeing difference from students coming from American historically marginalized ethnic groups; they treated them just like the rest of the students from the mainstream culture. Other than Sandra, who flatly refused to modify her lessons even for immigrant students in her class because she claimed that "this was not drastic diversity," the other three participants tried to modify their teaching strategies to make sure that the immigrant students were assimilated, and they felt that since these students were in America, they should be expected to assimilate and fit into the American culture.

On the students from historically marginalized ethnic groups, the participants shared the same views; for instance, Michelle said:

I think most of it in America you learn in certain ways, and I think the only thing that would be different among the ethnic groups is just older people ... older influences, if the students were influenced by someone ... just influences ... These influences come from their parents or their grandparents; their family members and friends, you know things like that. I mean, I know that I am influenced by my parents, and they were influenced by their parents, so it's something that is handed down. I think that would be the only thing I think that would make their [American culturally diverse students] learning different. I don't think specifically there is really any difference ... I don't think that one is smarter than the other group or one can do something better than the other. So here in America I don't think an Asian American, or African American or

Hispanic American or anybody ... I don't think that any of us learn differently, I think it's just influences from the family.

Thus, Michelle's views on ethnic diversity within the American society suggest active resistance to acknowledge that students from these various ethnic groups have different historical experiences which impacts how they view school. Michelle and the rest of the participants represent silent resistance by refusing to acknowledge that the school system – both the hidden curriculum and the overt curriculum – represents the ideologies of the mainstream culture, of which students from culturally diverse background are not party. These students have different cultural and different historical experiences which influence the way they think about school and the way they experience school. The school curriculum does not reflect the type of knowledge and information that students from culturally diverse populations identify with; these students do not see themselves and their values of life reflected in the school curriculum, and that presents itself as a challenge to their learning. When the teachers, who are mostly from the mainstream culture, fail to reach out to culturally diverse students, most of these students lose their motivation to learn, and therefore end up creating discipline and disruption in class, while some eventually drop out of school.

Missionary/Savior Mentality

Inasmuch as all four participants openly stated that they lacked knowledge on working with culturally diverse students and they also had no information on how to select culturally relevant curricular materials to meet the teaching/learning needs of culturally diverse student populations, and they were also not prepared at the college level to work with culturally diverse student populations, they failed to see their role as

teachers from the students' perspectives. The preservice teachers who participated in this study did not see that as a problem because they were following in the footsteps of their predecessors. To the participants, their roles as teachers were to 'save' minority students from whatever was going on in their lives. The savior mentality starts from the fact that they looked at these students as lacking something. For Sandra, it was lack of values of life. She felt that these students needed to be taught values of life because she believed that their parents were not able to teach them these values. Sandra saw herself as someone called to save these students at a early age, "so that when they grow up they will know right from wrong, and they will respect other people's possessions and also learn to work together even if they do not like each other." By this statement, Sandra openly claims that parents of culturally diverse student populations are not able to teach values to their children, so as a teacher, she has to play that role as a knower – someone who knows what is best for students. Sandra did not pay attention to the type of values that she wanted to instill to these students. She never questioned that her values were best; therefore, the students should all be exposed to those values.

Michelle, too, saw herself as a savior on a mission to save minority students. Talking about the type of school where she was planning to teach, she said she was planning to work at a school with a large number of minority students because she felt minority students are hungry for knowledge, and they will yearn for the knowledge that she will be teaching them. She also described her students that lower socioeconomic status as not getting any help from their parents because their parents "refuse to help their children with homework." That is why she does not give homework to her students. Michelle said she would not like to work at a school that has students from the

mainstream culture because such students have everything provided for them, and therefore they do not appreciate the information that a teacher brings to class. She said mainstream students come from homes that have all the facilities that promote learning whereas minority students come from homes that do not have such facilities. Therefore she was willing to go out of her way to help these minority students get the knowledge they are yearning for, and she also said she will get some satisfaction from the fact that these students who will appreciate her for what she will be doing for them. Based on Michelle's motive for working with diverse student populations, it indicates that she was planning on doing that for her own satisfaction more than the students' benefit. In as much as she plans to 'save' their situation, she is also looking forward to being praised for her role as their teacher.

Alicia also saw herself on a mission to save minority students. She talked about her mother's classroom and the type of students she had. She felt such students need education to improve their lives; therefore she was open to working with public schools including inner city schools. While she based her motive on her mother's students, there was no indication that she was able to develop culturally relevant curriculum nor was she able to show skills required for teaching culturally diverse student populations. She stated that cultural diversity was not stressed in her college preparatory program; therefore she had no idea on how to teach culturally diverse student populations. Therefore her motives to work with these students with such cultural mismatch makes me wonder how she was planning to save these students to make them love school and identify with the curriculum if the curriculum still did not reflect views, values, and knowledge from diverse cultures but only the mainstream culture.

Helen also expressed a desire to work with diverse student populations; she said she wanted to learn more about diversity by working in a diversely populated school. While this sounds like a noble idea, the question is: how is she going to learn just by being in such a school? While Helen seemed open to learn about diversity, it seemed like she was expecting her students to be the ones teaching her how to teach them. Helen's case is interesting.

In summary, three of the participants, with the exception of Helen, clearly see their teacher roles as saviors of diverse student populations. They feel they are on a mission to save diverse student populations even though they do not have skills and knowledge required for culturally relevant teaching. The participants simply followed the footsteps of their predecessors; continuing to see culturally diverse students as lacking something and only could be saved by the teacher. As for Helen, she seemed to be representing those teachers who leave the duty of learning about minority people to those minorities to educate the mainstream how they should treat and work with minority people. All the participants were just following the footsteps of those who have the same pathway before them.

Selective 'Othering'

The data indicates that the four participants looked at their students as the 'other' since there were culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically different from them. The students were not part of the mainstream culture. Even though most of the students in their classrooms were American born, with a few exceptions of some international students whose parents who were associated with the university community, these students were different from their teachers. This cultural mismatch resulted in 'othering'

the students. I use 'selective othering' to refer to how the participants worked with their students. They saw all American students as the same and therefore needing the same treatment, and saw all the immigrant students as different, therefore cautiously tried their best to respect their cultures, and treated them as the 'exotic other'. The participants expressed willingness to learn about these students' cultures, they wanted to know more about them; however, the knowledge did not alter the school curriculum.

For the American born students from the diverse ethnic groups, all the participants did not believe that such students needed modifications for their learning. To them, these students were Americans, therefore did not need any special treatment. The mentality of 'sameness' resulted in a number of problems in the classroom, including behavior problems, and discipline problems, which eventually affected teaching. This racial/ethnic blindness on the part of the participants affected how they viewed their students. They saw them as problems, and therefore hard to control in class. Most of the time these students were on 'time-out' or out of class for some discipline problems. The time they spent out of class was time lost for the students, and also the time the teacher spent in trying to manage the classroom, was teaching time lost on the part of the teacher. This was an indication of lack of cultural understanding between the teachers and the students. By not paying attention to cultural differences among the American born students from the various ethnic groups, the participants were not doing justice to the teaching and learning needs of these students. The participants failed to realize that treating every student the same does not always equate to justice and fairness, since that means that by not acknowledging difference, they were denying the existence of what

constitutes each of these students' identities and they were denying their experiences and silencing their voices – they were not meeting their learning needs.

On the other hand, by looking at the immigrant students as the exotic 'other' the participants did not meet the learning needs of these students either because they did not push them to learn new things in addition to what they already knew. All four participants played it safe with these students. They all claimed that they wanted to know more about these students' cultures; therefore these students were turned into 'teachers'. The participants did not involve these students in a lot of discussions and in most cases they were left on their own under the pretext of not interfering with their cultures. In Alicia's and Michelle's classrooms, there were students from the Middle East who were not taking all the subjects, and were allowed to leave class for prayers every now and then. These students were also made 'representatives' of their group, and they were asked to talk on behalf of some Middle Eastern cultures, where the rest of the students were asking them questions about the Middle East. While this might be useful, at times it presents a stressful situation to be representative of some group.

When talking about diverse cultures, all four participants used the immigrants as diverse students, and they never saw the Americans as diverse ethnic groups that need their learning needs to be met. While these participants saw diversity among these immigrant students, they did not have the skills to connect the school experiences of these students to their home lives. Therefore, inasmuch as difference was recognized, the participants were not able to meet the learning needs of these students as well because they were not able to come up with culturally responsive pedagogy too.

Researcher's Views on Participants' Responses

The findings make me have mixed feelings about the importance stressed on the teaching and learning of diverse student populations. I am wondering if diverse student populations' education is a priority or not for educators. If it is, then what is stopping educators from exposing teacher candidates to multicultural education? Teacher candidates need the skills and knowledge to be well-equipped to teach diverse student populations. Based on the lack of knowledge and skills on teaching culturally relevant curriculum and teaching practices found in participants in this study, I ask myself if the concern about achievement gap between minority students and their mainstream counterpart, as well as the high drop-out rate among minority students are genuine concerns among schools of education and teacher educators have, or they are just being politically correct in expressing the need for teacher candidates to know how to teach culturally diverse student populations. If schools of education and educators are genuinely concerned, then the fact that some preservice teachers are still not exposed to multicultural education, and therefore, lack skills and knowledge on how to work with culturally diverse student populations is a problem. Is it because most educators, themselves, were not exposed to multicultural education, and therefore do not have the knowledge and the skills to pass on to teacher candidates or is it simply a lack of interest on the matter?

I feel empathetic with the study participants because it feels like we, the society, expect them to do something they are not prepared for. The study findings show that participants are asked to teach culturally diverse students for which they are ill-equipped to handle. Howard (1999), referring to White teachers and multicultural education, says

“we cannot teach what we don’t know”. Howard challenges White teachers to reflect on their privileges and to walk in the shoes of minority students to understand their plight and their situations before they could pass judgment that minority people are not putting enough effort in learning.

Based on the responses given by participants in this study, I deduce that the problem of lack of skills and knowledge to work with culturally diverse student populations does not lie with teacher candidates who cannot teach diverse student populations, but with teacher preparation programs that do not adequately prepare teacher candidates on cultural diversity. Even though there is some talk of promoting cultural diversity in most colleges of education, the talk does not seem to have translated into practice in instilling the necessary skills and knowledge to embrace cultural diversity in teacher preparation programs’ curriculum. There is need for program review within teacher preparation programs to make sure that cultural diversity is addressed through provision of core courses that exposes teacher candidates to cultural diversity before they complete teacher education programs. Without such program review the talk about promoting cultural diversity will remain just that unless and until corrective measures are instituted.

Summary

Looking at the findings through the culturally responsive lens, the data indicate that all four participants were not prepared to work with culturally diverse student populations. They lacked awareness and working experience with culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse populations. They did not know what type of knowledge constitutes culturally responsive curriculum. They did not have the skills to

use the existing curriculum and adjust it to be culturally relevant for their student populations. Even though they were working with diverse students populations, their dispositions did not make them to suitable to work with diverse student populations. The participants were not culturally responsive teachers. They were following the steps of their predecessors.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

In exploring the relationship between preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity and examining how these dispositions relate to preservice teachers' approaches to curriculum content selection and the teaching strategies used when teaching culturally different student populations – students who are culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically different from their teachers (Cochran-Smith, 1995, Ladson-Billings, 1994; 2000), I used the culturally responsive teaching/teacher theoretical framework as a lens to understand and discuss the data findings. The changing demographics of student populations in public schools in the United States and elsewhere in the world where the student population is increasingly culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse and the teacher population remains monocultural, monolingual, and middle class, presents itself as a problem to the teaching and learning of diverse student populations. Such cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic mismatch between teachers from the dominant and mainstream culture and students from minority groups, result in problems such as achievement gap between minority students and mainstream students, lack of motivation and resistance to learn from minority students, and high drop-out rates among minority students (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1994; 2000; Nieto, 2005).

These problems deprive and rob minority students some opportunities and life chances to fully and successfully participate in society as functional citizens (Foster, 1997; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1990).

In the United States, the problems of changing demographics and changing classrooms have been an issue for quite some time, and a number of theories have been proposed to explain the achievement gap and drop-out rates of minority students. These theories include genetic and cultural inferiority; economic and social reproduction theories; cultural incompatibility theory; sociocultural explanations for school achievement; students as caste-like minorities; resistance theory; care, student achievement, and social capital; and the latest one, multicultural education (Nieto, 2005). According to Nieto (2005) all these theories failed to adequately address the problems of teaching and learning of minority students, and multicultural education seems to be offering some hope to address this problem. On multicultural education, Nieto states:

Multicultural education is viewed as a way to achieve the elusive goal of an equal educational opportunity for students of all backgrounds and circumstances.

Multicultural education was based on a number of premises: that all children bring resources and strengths to their learning; that racism and other individual and institutional biases frequently get in the way of an equitable education; that other societal and school environments and structures can also hinder learning; that acknowledging and supporting the culture, backgrounds, and communities of all children can be a positive ingredient in their education; and that schools can become places of affirmation and success for all children. (2005, p. 57)

From this statement, multicultural education does not only address teaching and learning needs of minority students, it also addresses learning needs of mainstream students – multicultural education addresses teaching and learning needs of *all* students. For mainstream students, multicultural education provides opportunities and a platform to interrogate and negotiate cultural knowledge different from the norm and they are exposed to types of knowledge other than their own which is portrayed within the school curriculum and represented by the formal and the hidden curriculum as well as by the teachers. For minority students multicultural education provides an opportunity and a forum to interrogate and negotiate the cultural knowledge from various ethnic groups. They are exposed to different types of knowledge on how to be functional members of society while at the same time learning about who they are within the whole complex nature of knowledge acquisition. For the teacher, multicultural education provides an opportunity for knowledge scaffolding and a forum to interrogate different types of knowledge in relation to his/her students' cultural, linguistical, and socioeconomic experiences. In this way, teaching and learning is not from a single perspective, but from a variety of perspectives. In multicultural education the teacher acknowledges differences among her students, uses his/her students' experiences to construct learning opportunities, and teacher affirms his/her students' diversity. In multicultural education, both students and the teacher are partners in the teaching and learning process. They learn about each others' cultures, knowledge, values and beliefs, as well as learn to respect each other as human beings. In multicultural education diversity is recognized and celebrated. However, while multicultural education seems to be a promising solution to addressing teaching and learning needs of diverse student populations, the skills and

knowledge needed to be a multicultural teacher and educator are hard to acquire for most teachers and teacher educators.

Teacher education programs have tried a number of strategies to prepare teacher candidates to be able to teach diverse student populations, including the introduction of multicultural education courses within their curricula, inclusion of diversity within their methods courses and field experiences, as well as encouraging teacher candidates to accept field placement in culturally diverse populated schools, as a way to expose them to diverse student populations (Hollins & Guzman, 2005). Inasmuch as these measures have been taken, they are still not enough; some teacher candidates are still resistant to change. The education system still faces the challenge of educating minority students. These challenges include teachers having difficulties working with culturally different students, and the persistent achievement gap between minority students and mainstream students. Perhaps, worst of all, there is still a high drop-out rate among minority students compared to their mainstream counterparts (Au, 1998; Ference & Bell, 2004; Gay, 2002; Hollins & Guzman, 2005; Ogbu, 1990).

The purpose of this study is to gain understanding of preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity with the hope that a better understanding of these dispositions will help inform teacher education programs on how to prepare teachers who are able to teach all students effectively and efficiently regardless of culture, language, and socioeconomic status (Au, 1998; Au & Kawakami, 1994; Bartolo et al., 2006; Gay, 2002; Hollins & Guzman, 2005). Four elementary education preservice teachers – Alicia, Sandra, Michelle, and Helen – from a large Midwestern University, who were conducting

their clinical internship at Mobile Elementary School, a culturally diverse public school within Conrad School District, participated in this study.

I conducted classroom observations, and in-depth face-to-face interviews with all four participants, and I analyzed their lesson plans and their journal entries about their clinical experiences to answer the following research questions: How do the cultural dispositions of preservice teachers relate to their approaches to curriculum and teaching – specifically the selection of curriculum content and the selection of teaching strategies when teaching diverse student populations? How do preservice teachers’ dispositions toward diversity change, if any changes occur, as they work with culturally diverse populations of students during an intensive field experience? How do preservice teachers’ approaches to curriculum and teaching change, if any changes occur, as they work with culturally diverse student population? I used the culturally responsive teaching and teacher theoretical framework as a lens to discuss and make sense of the data.

Discussion

The culturally responsive teaching and teacher lens combines Gay’s (2002) and Villegas and Lucas’s (2002) frameworks. Gay (2002) defines culturally responsive teaching as using the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of the ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them effectively, and is based on the assumption that when academic knowledge and skills are situated within lived experiences and frames of references of students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher appeal, and are learned easily and thoroughly. Gay’s culturally responsive teaching framework has five essential elements: Developing a culturally diverse knowledge base, designing culturally relevant curricula, demonstrating cultural caring

and building a learning community, cross-cultural communications, and cultural congruity in classroom instructions. On the other hand, Villegas and Lucas (2002) describe a culturally responsive teacher as someone who: is culturally conscious, has an affirming attitude toward students from culturally diverse backgrounds, has commitment and skills to act as an agent of change, uses constructivist views of learning, develops interest in learning about his/her ethnically diverse students, and engages in culturally responsive teaching practices.

Since this study explores the relationship between preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity as they select curriculum content, and their teaching strategies as they teach diverse student populations, it looks at the teaching materials as well as how the teacher teaches; therefore, I combined Gay's (2002) culturally responsive teaching framework and Villegas and Lucas' (2002) culturally responsive teacher framework as on theoretical lens to make sense of the data. Five themes emerged from the data, and these are: Lack of awareness and lack of experience with diversity, family influence, active/silent resistance, missionary/savior mentality, and selective 'othering'. The following section will discuss the data in relation to the theoretical lens and how they relate to the emergent themes and the research questions.

Need for a Culturally Diverse Knowledge Base

According to Gay (2002) and Villegas and Lucas (2002), for teachers to successfully teach to meet the learning needs of diverse student populations they need to develop a culturally diverse knowledge base – they need to develop a sociocultural consciousness. Villegas and Lucas (2002) argue that without a sociocultural consciousness, teachers are not able to cross the sociocultural boundaries that separate

many mainstream teachers from their diverse student populations. In this study, the participants did not have any opportunity to develop the cultural knowledge base required for them to teach culturally diverse student populations. Data from this study indicate that all four participants lacked awareness and lacked experience with diversity. They were never exposed to cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic diversity. They lacked the cultural consciousness that entails an understanding that differences in social locations are not neutral, but are stratified along racial/ethnic, social class, and linguistic lines. These participants lacked understanding of their sociocultural identities in relation to their diverse student populations. They did not recognize the intricate connection between the American public school systems and the rest of the American society. Therefore, they lacked the knowledge and skills to select culturally relevant curriculum content and culturally relevant teaching strategies to meet the teaching and learning needs of the culturally diverse student populations in their respective classroom.

All four participants claimed that they lacked power over curriculum content selection for their diverse student populations because of the following reasons: by the time they started their clinical internship their respective grade level teachers had already selected the curriculum, schools receive the curriculum from the school district, and teachers are expected to follow that curriculum. While these may be valid reasons, the data also indicate that they did not have the knowledge and skills to select culturally responsive curriculum. Gay (2002) argues that for teachers to be culturally responsive, in addition to subject content knowledge and pedagogical skills, they have to have an explicit knowledge about cultural diversity. The concept of culture is important in culturally responsive teaching because culture encompasses a number of characteristics

which are important for teachers to know because they directly impact teaching and learning, including ethnic groups' cultural values, traditions, communication, learning styles, contributions, and relational patterns (Gay, 2002). Further, for teachers to effectively meet the learning needs of diverse student populations, they need to acquire factual information about particularities of specific ethnic groups represented among American student populations to make schooling more interesting and stimulating for, representative of, and responsive to ethnically diverse student populations (Au, 1998; Cochran-Smith, 2002; Gay, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Due to these participants' lack of exposure to cultural diversity and lack of knowledge about diverse cultures, they lacked the cultural consciousness which entails understanding that differences in social locations, including schools, are not neutral but they are responsible for maintaining the status quo, representing the ideologies of the dominant culture at the detriment of minority groups (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

The lack of cultural awareness and lack of experience with diversity contributed to these participants' failure to comprehend how the American society is stratified along racial/ethnic, social class, and linguistic lines. The participants did not seem to realize that to be culturally responsive teachers they needed to understand that social inequalities are reproduced and perpetuated through systematic discrimination and justified through a societal ideology of merit, social mobility, and individual responsibility (Nieto, 2005), and therefore, if they were to address the learning needs of their diverse student population, they needed to challenge the social inequality and injustice that is reproduced in schools. On the other hand, I also acknowledge the fact that a person can be aware of social inequality and choose not to do anything about it, thus rejecting the need to be a

change agent. All four participants lacked a diverse cultural knowledge base. They all grew up in monocultural environments, attended monocultural and mainstream public schools and were taught by monolingual, monocultural, and middle class teachers and professors from the mainstream culture, and therefore were not afforded opportunities to develop a diverse cultural knowledge base. Based on the findings from the data, all four participants lacked the knowledge and skills to be change agents for culturally responsive pedagogy and it also did not seem like they were keen enough to take the initiatives to be change agents. As they were still uncertified teachers, the confidence and the courage to undertake such an initiative might have been too much to expect from them.

Need for Knowledge and Skills for Designing Culturally Relevant Curricula

Culturally responsive teaching calls for teachers and prospective teachers to be able to design culturally relevant curriculum, and that means that teachers and prospective teachers need to know how to convert the three kinds of curriculum – formal, symbolic, and societal curriculum – routinely found in classrooms into culturally relevant curriculum design and instructional strategies (Gay, 2002). To be able to design culturally relevant curriculum designs and instructional strategies, culturally responsive teachers need to know how to determine the multicultural strengths and weaknesses of such designs and instructional materials in order to make the changes necessary to improve their overall quality. Further, Villegas and Lucas (2002) argue that in designing culturally relevant curriculum designs and instructional strategies, teachers and prospective teachers need to acknowledge and see that school and society are interconnected. They also need to be aware that schools can be sites for social transformation as much as they have

mostly served to maintain social inequality through the school curriculum and instructional strategies.

Culturally relevant curriculum designs and instructional strategies involve the use of symbolic curriculum such as images, symbols, icons, mottoes, awards, celebrities, and other artifacts that are used to impart to students knowledge, skills, morals and values from various racial/ethnic groups represented within the American society, and not just the dominant group (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Culturally responsive teachers and prospective teachers use classroom walls as valuable spaces and students learn important lessons from what is displayed on the classroom walls such that over time, students come to expect certain images, value what is displayed, and devalue that which is not displayed.

Other than the symbolic curriculum, culturally responsive teaching calls for teachers to use societal curriculum, that is, the knowledge, ideas, and impressions about ethnic groups that are portrayed in the mass media. Gay (2002) argues that in most cases this knowledge is not accurate and frequently prejudicial, and yet at the same time influential. Therefore, culturally responsive teachers pay attention to this knowledge. They critically analyze how ethnic groups and their experiences are presented by the mass media and popular culture. They encourage their students to generate meanings in response to new ideas and experiences. Their students interpret, process, and make sense of new information and experiences based on their prior knowledge, beliefs, values, and experiences. The knowledge, skills and abilities to design culturally relevant curriculum and instructional strategies is not an innate thing, but is acquired through learning,

experience and exposure at home, at school, and through social interaction (Gay, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Data from this study indicate that the participants were not exposed to information on historical backgrounds of the diverse racial/ethnic groups found within the American society which is represented by the diverse student populations within American public school classrooms. All four participants self-identified as being raised in middle to upper class families, and lacked experience with people from lower socioeconomic status, as well as lacked experience with non-English speakers. Their experience at Mobile Elementary School with its relatively diverse student body, was a culture shock for them. This lack of exposure can be attributed to their families because all of them said their families influenced and shaped their lives.

The participants' families were helpful to shape their lives by not exposing them to diverse populations, and by influencing their values and their perspectives on life which included even career choices. They all talked about choosing teaching as a career because someone in their families had something to do with teaching or education. They also talked about how they were still dependent on their families not only for college financial support, but also for their living expenses as well. These ties to their families caused them to live under the constant shadow of their parents, and thus live under and be subjected to their parents' belief, values, attitudes, as well as dispositions. The fact that their parents never exposed them to culturally diverse populations meant that their dispositions toward diversity were not positive; therefore, they passed that on to their children – the participants of this study.

Coming to Mobile Elementary School was an eye opener for these participants. The data characterizes a slight change in their dispositions toward diversity. They started to be aware that they were different from their culturally diverse student population. While they all realized the difference between them and their culturally diverse students, it is how they reacted to this realization that is different. I looked at the change in the participants' dispositions on a continuum, with Sandra experiencing no change at all to Helen experiencing almost complete change, and with Alicia and Michelle falling in the middle of the continuum. While Sandra realized that her culturally diverse students were having a hard time learning, she never modified her lessons to accommodate the learning needs of her students, but Helen, on the other hand, realized how much the "real world was different from her home town", where she felt she was "sheltered, and taught everything according to one perspective and world view". Helen became open to learning about diversity. She modified her lessons to cater to the learning needs of her diverse students; however, she was limited by a lack of skills and knowledge to design culturally responsive pedagogy.

Even though Helen acknowledged a lack of knowledge and skills on working with culturally diverse student populations, and expressed some willingness to learn more about diversity (Garmon, 2004; 2005), Alicia and Michelle did not feel the same way about their knowledge and skills on working with diverse student populations. Based on their parents' work experiences – Alicia's mother teaches minority students in inner city schools, so therefore Alicia claims that her mother shares with her some knowledge on how to work with culturally diverse students, and Michelle, whose parents work with a church congregation where she leads youth camps – they felt they were not having

problems working with culturally diverse students. However, based on my observations, they were not able to manage their classrooms. Teaching time was spent on trying to deal with discipline problems. While I do acknowledge the fact that most preservice teachers face a number of discipline problems and classroom management issues while undergoing their clinical internship experience, the cultural mismatch between the teacher and the students compound the challenge as was the case with Alicia and Michelle when they were working with culturally diverse student population. Michelle shared with me that one parent - a mother of one of the African American boys in her class, expressed a feeling that her son was not as troublesome as the teachers claim to be, but the teachers were discriminating against him because he was African American. Michelle expressed her frustration in implementing classroom discipline, and therefore relied on her cooperating teacher to help her deal with some of the discipline problems in her class.

Looking at changes in these participants' dispositions toward diversity, the data indicates that there were some changes in Helen's dispositions, and no change in Sandra. It is difficult to say if there were some changes in Alicia and Michelle because they failed to acknowledge that they were lacking skills and knowledge to work with culturally diverse student populations. For Alicia and Michelle, the two semesters they spent at Mobile Elementary School during semester Y and semester Z made them feel confident that they were ready to work with diverse student populations. Yet they still lacked the skills and cultural knowledge to design culturally relevant curriculum, and also to implement culturally relevant teaching strategies.

Need for Cultural Caring and Building a Learning Community

According to Gay (2002) culturally responsive teaching demonstrates cultural caring and building a learning community in the classroom. Culturally responsive teachers create classroom climates that are conducive to learning for ethnically diverse student populations by paying attention to pedagogical actions as well as multicultural designs. They use scaffolding in teaching ethnically diverse students, using students' cultural experiences to expand their intellectual horizons and academic achievements (FERENCE & BELL, 2004; FOSTER, 1997; GAY, 2002; GOODWIN, 1999). Culturally responsive teachers develop interest in learning about their students, and they care so much about them such that they accept nothing less than high-level success from them and work diligently to accomplish cultural caring and building of a learning community. Without developing interest in the students as individuals, it would be difficult for the teacher to care about the students, and to develop a learning community. Care as a disposition is one of the important characteristics of culturally responsive teaching.

Morris and Morris (2002) argue that even though segregated African American schools did not have suitable facilities, African American students performed much better than in desegregated schools because the Black teachers cared so much about their students. African American students knew that their teachers cared for them, and they had high expectations from them and they knew their abilities, and therefore in return, the students performed to their teachers' expectations (FOSTER, 1997; LADSON-BILLINGS, 1994). Black teachers created learning communities in the classrooms, and they were also role models for African American students to identify with. However, currently, there are not many Black teachers in American public schools; therefore, minority students do not

have role models to look up to. White teachers have to step up to the plate, fill that cultural gap, and create a multicultural and caring environment that accommodates all the students. They need to create learning communities that would be conducive for all the students be able to learn.

While participants in this study cared for their students, their care lacked the cultural aspect. They did not have enough cultural knowledge to create culturally caring communities because they only had knowledge about one cultural group. The lack of diverse cultural knowledge was a great handicap on their part, and that resulted in lack of cultural caring and learning communities. This lack of cultural caring resulted in frustrations on both culturally diverse students as well as frustrations on the participants because the cultural mismatch. The participants in this study did not know much about their students and their students' communities. The lack of knowledge resulted in participants' interpretation of parents' lack of support on their children' education as lack of interest or refusal to help in their children's education. The outcome was less educational expectations from teachers. The participants assumed that minority parents had the same problems; instead of trying to find out why the parents were not helping their children, they followed the Mobile School policy of not giving homework to students. This school policy compromised the learning opportunities of students, and it is an indicator of a lack of cultural caring on the part of the teachers. Sine it was beyond the scope of this research to interview the school teachers and the principal, I was not able to find out if this homework policy was a school wide policy, and therefore applying to all grade levels in the school.

Need for Cross-Cultural Communication

Culture is a very important aspect of communication because it influences what people talk about, how they talk about it, what they see, what they attend to, what they ignore, how they think, and what they think about (Porter & Samovar, 1991).

Communication is the meeting and foundation of community and human beings, therefore, without communication that is cultural in the classroom, learning is difficult to accomplish for some students (Gay, 2002; Montagu & Watson, 1979). Gay argues that determining what ethnically diverse students can do, as well as what they are capable of knowing and doing, often depends on how well teachers communicate with them. Further, intellectual thought for students from culturally diverse students is culturally encoded in that its expressive forms and substance are strongly influenced by cultural socialization. Teachers need to be able to decipher these codes to teach ethnically diverse students effectively, argues Gay.

Data from this study did not indicate any evidence of cross-cultural communication between the participants and the diverse student populations. The students' cultures had minimal influence on what went on in the classroom. With the exception of Michelle who encouraged her students to share about their home lives, the other three participants – Alicia, Sandra, and Helen – did not encourage their students to share any life experiences in their classrooms. The cultural sharing experiences in Michelle's classroom gave students an opportunity to inquire about the new cultures they had in their classroom. Compared to the other three participants' classrooms, Michelle's students seemed to have experienced more cross-cultural sharing opportunities. However, even though the diverse student populations shared about their culture in this classroom,

it seemed that it was more for the benefit of the mainstream students. Michelle told me that she wanted her students to understand why the students from other cultures wore differently from the mainstream students; she wanted them to understand that people from other countries had different cultures and way of life. This translated to the fact that Michelle only saw differences in students from other countries but not differences between and among local students even though there were visible differences within these local students.

Villegas and Lucas (2002) say teachers need to know their students' experiences outside of school. Teachers who know their students' family lives are likely to be better prepared to understand the students' in-school behavior and to incorporate into classroom activities the 'funds of knowledge' those families possess. Further, teachers who know about their students' hobbies and favorite activities as well as what they excel at outside of school can tie the students' interests, concerns, and strengths into their teaching, and thereby enhance their motivation to learn (Allard, 2006; Au & Kawakami, 1994; Brown, 2002; Ladson-Billings, 1994). The data did not show evidence that the participants knew their students' lives outside class. Since the participants were only in the school for their clinical internship, it might not have been possible to know their students very well given that they only worked with them for a short time. I believe that to know the student's hobbies and interests would have required the participants to be in the school longer than the time they spent for their clinical internship.

Teacher also need to have an insight into how their students' past learning experiences shape their current views of school and school knowledge because if students have been taught bits of information that bear little or no relationship to the world beyond

the school walls, they are likely to see school knowledge as boring, alien to their lives, and devoid of personal meaning (Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Villegas and Lucas (2002) argue that such perceptions are particularly problematic for students from historically oppressed groups. Seeing no value in school knowledge, in most cases, these students become resistant to learning, and that resistance manifests itself in discipline problems, or worst in school drop-out (Foster, 1997; Goodwin, 1996; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1994; 2000).

The importance of cross-cultural communication between students and teachers is vital in culturally responsive teaching. However, based on the data, participants in this study were not able to implement such communication with their students. In addition to lack of cultural knowledge about their students, they also have language barrier problems. Participants in this study also had to deal with language issues where the students had limited English language proficiency. At the same time the participants were English language speakers only, and therefore there was often no communication. While in some instances there was someone to translate for the student as was the case in Alicia's class, in Helen's and Sandra's classes, there were no translators. Communication was a problem. The students were the ones expected to learn the teacher's language – English, and not vice versa. The students were expected to assimilate into the teachers' culture, and language to be able to learn. There was no cross-cultural communication.

Need for Cultural Congruity in Classroom Instruction

In teaching diverse student populations, it is not enough to know about different learning styles. Teachers also need to know how different ethnic groups are impacted by the way class instruction is delivered and how students receive the instruction. Villegas

and Lucas (2002) argue that being a culturally responsive teacher is not simply a matter of applying instructional techniques, nor is it primarily a matter of tailoring instruction to incorporate assumed traits of particular cultural groups. It is to have a high degree of cultural consciousness, hold affirming views of students from diverse backgrounds, see yourself – the teacher – as a change agent, and understanding and embracing constructivist views of learning and teaching, and finally to know your students. Teachers for diverse student populations are called on to develop rich repertoires of multicultural instructional examples to use in their teaching as a way to operationalize cultural congruity in matching instructional techniques to the learning styles of diverse student populations (Gay, 2002).

To be able to develop cultural congruity within their instructional strategies, teachers need cultural knowledge to determine how to modify instructional strategies for diverse student populations. At the same time they need to understand that like all cultural phenomena, cultural learning styles are complex, multidimensional, and dynamic. Further, these cultural instructional practices include involving all students in the construction of knowledge, building on students' personal and cultural strengths, helping students examine the curriculum from multiple perspectives, using varied assessment practices that promote learning, and making the culture of the classroom inclusive of all students (Villegas & Lucas, 2002).

Participants in this study did not have the knowledge and skills to design a culturally relevant curriculum from the given school curriculum. They did not have the knowledge to create and effect culturally congruity in their classroom instructions because of their dispositions. They were also not able to select culturally relevant

curriculum materials and culturally relevant teaching strategies for their culturally diverse student populations. These participants were not culturally conscious, and they lacked the skills to be change agents.

Conclusion

This study is limited by the type of study participants. The fact that the study participants were preservice teachers made it hard for the research questions to be well answered by the data. If the participants were certified teachers who had power and autonomy in their classrooms; participants who would have spent more time with the diverse student populations, I assume the findings would have been different. Given what I know now, if I were to do this study again, I would substitute preservice teachers for classroom teachers. I would also substitute clinical internship which a specific number of years in teaching. Therefore, my research questions would be:

1. How do the cultural dispositions of classroom teachers relate to their approaches to curriculum and teaching – specifically the selection of curriculum content and selection of teaching strategies as they work with diverse student populations in a culturally diverse setting?
2. How do classroom teachers' dispositions toward diversity change, if any changes occur, as they work with culturally diverse populations of students during a period of at least two years in a culturally diverse setting?
3. How do classroom teachers' approaches to curriculum and teaching change, if at all any changes occur, as they work with culturally diverse student populations?

However, given the participants I had for this study, I draw several conclusions. First, there is a significant relationship between preservice teachers' dispositions toward

diversity, their curriculum content selection, and their teaching strategies as they worked with culturally diverse student populations. While curriculum may mean the materials that are used in teaching and learning, curriculum is broadly used to define everything that goes on in school under the supervision of the teacher (Marsh & Willis, 1999). Even though the participants claimed that they did not have power to influence the curriculum, I believe that they did have some power over the hidden curriculum. The values taught through the hidden curriculum were values from the dominant culture. By curriculum here, I am referring to both the material content used in teaching as well as the hidden curriculum which is expressed by the beliefs and values of the dominant culture which is represented in the school system. Since these preservice teachers were not exposed to culturally relevant knowledge and information on various racial/ethnic groups, it was not possible for them to be able to select culturally relevant materials and culturally relevant teaching strategies for diverse student populations. The lack of exposure of the participants in this study to diverse populations led their dispositions toward diversity to be unsuitable for working with diverse student populations. They did not have the cultural consciousness and skills they needed and required to select material and teaching strategies for teaching diverse student populations.

Second, since the school system in which they were conducting their clinical internship was also not using culturally responsive curriculum and teaching strategies, these participants did not feel the need to incorporate strategies other than what the school was using. Therefore these preservice teachers were following what their cooperating teachers were doing instead of bringing new innovations to address the teaching and learning needs of diverse student populations. However, since preservice

teachers have to deal with a number of issues during their clinical internship, it might not have been possible for the participants to take the opportunity to introduce some innovations in their classroom.

Third, even though this large Midwestern University is a member of NCATE, which promotes diversity as one of the dispositions, the findings of this study indicate that the diversity that the participants reported on being exposed to was mostly on physical diversity and diversity on learning styles and assessment. They all reported that even though they were made aware of cultural diversity among students, their college preparation did not pay attention to cultural diversity as compared to physical diversity and diversity of learning styles and assessment. Therefore, this means that the term ‘diversity’ is used as an umbrella term. Once college programs have it on their policy, there is sometimes no follow up to find out which aspects of diversity are addressed within the teacher preparation programs. As a result of this oversight, prospective teachers complete their program and start teaching without being prepared to meet the teaching and learning needs of culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse student populations.

Fourth, field experience is one of the strategies used to promote cultural diversity whereby participants are placed in environments that make them experience first hand what they learned in their college preparation programs; however, field experience alone does not apparently have a positive impact on some participants. They do not experience any changes in their dispositions and attitudes toward diverse populations (Garmon, 2005, Groulx, 2001). Garmon (2005) argues that preservice teachers need educational support from teacher education programs to be able to deal with challenges that field

experience place on them. Therefore field experience without educational support yields no positive dispositional changes among preservice teachers as is the case in this study. In this study, these participants were in a culturally diverse school for two semesters. Since they were not aware of cultural diversity, the field experience did not help them to learn about cultural diversity and how to work with diverse student populations other than to assimilate them into the mainstream culture.

Participants' Dispositions Toward Diversity

On the study participants I also draw a conclusion that their dispositions toward diversity were not the same. Even though all four participants did not have necessary knowledge and skills to work effectively and efficiently with diverse student populations, they did not have similar dispositions toward diversity. Even though Alicia and Michelle naively believed that they were able to work with diverse student populations because they some exposure to culturally diverse populations while growing up, their dispositions to diversity did not make them suitable to work with diverse student populations. Their dispositions made them blind to the invisible privileges they had as members of the dominant ethnic group within the American society. This blindness to their own privileges made them not understand the need to realize racial/ethnic differences among their students, and they worked toward assimilating their students to the dominant/mainstream culture. Further, their dispositions did not make them realize that they needed different skills and different knowledge to teach diverse student populations; the type of knowledge that was affirming to diverse cultures to make their diverse students feel part of what was going on in the classroom.

While Sandra and Helen also fell in the same category as Alicia and Michelle in terms of difference blindness, Sandra was somewhat different from the other three participants in that her dispositions to diversity moved her toward resistance. Sandra's dispositions toward diversity were negative in that she resisted modifying her teaching to cater for the learning needs of diverse student populations in her class. She believed that if students are in American schools, they had to learn American values and beliefs as portrayed by the dominant system. Sandra wanted her students to assimilate into the mainstream culture.

On the other hand, Helen acknowledged her lack of knowledge and skills on how to work with diverse student populations. She acknowledged that she was never exposed to diverse cultural populations while growing up, and therefore, realized that she needed help, she needed to learn how to work with diverse student populations. Helen did not stop at realizing the need to learn about diversity, she took action; she sought a teaching position at a culturally diverse school setting with the hope that if she could spend time working with diverse students in a diverse setting chances are she would learn more about diversity. This indicated a positive disposition toward diversity. In her class, Helen also modified her lessons to meet the needs of her students. She also used other students who shared the same languages to translate for her and for each other.

Therefore, in looking at the four participants' dispositions toward diversity, I conclude that even though Alicia and Michelle thought that they had positive dispositions toward diversity, their dispositions were not necessarily affirming toward diversity, and they were working toward assimilating their diverse students into the mainstream. Sandra was clear about her position; she wanted diverse students to be assimilated into the

mainstream culture, and she did not even try to claim to be knowledgeable and skilled on working with diverse students. Helen on the other hand was willing to try to learn more about diversity, she was willing to change her dispositions toward diversity. Therefore, in terms of changes, Alicia and Michelle did not feel the need to change their dispositions toward diversity because they felt content with their dispositions toward diversity even though they acknowledged that they did not have knowledge and skills to work with diverse student populations. Sandra completely resisted changing her dispositions toward diversity, and Helen was the only one who was willing to change her dispositions toward diversity.

Research Findings in Response to Research Questions

Research question one: How do the cultural dispositions of preservice teachers relate to their approaches to curriculum and teaching – specifically selections of curriculum content and selection of teaching strategies? All four participants were not able to select culturally relevant curriculum materials and culturally relevant teaching strategies when teaching diverse student populations. The study participants lacked the knowledge and skills to design culturally responsive instructional materials and to practice culturally responsive teaching practices when teaching culturally diverse student populations. The lack of exposure to culturally diverse populations deprived these participants of opportunities to learn about culturally diverse populations, thus resulting in lack of experience, lack of knowledge and skills to work effectively and efficiently with diverse student populations.

Research question two: How do preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity change, if any change occurs, as they work with culturally diverse populations of students

during an intensive field experience? There were slight changes in their dispositions toward diversity. Helen expressed a desire to want to know more about cultural diversity and how to work with diverse student populations. Alicia and Michelle expressed confidence in their knowledge on how to work with diverse student populations. Sandra flatly refused to accommodate the teaching and learning needs of diverse student populations in her class. All these changes were in line with their dispositions. For Helen and Sandra, Mobile's diverse population was a culture shock because they had never interacted with diverse populations before their experience at Mobile Elementary School. While Helen embraced diversity, she still lacked the skills and knowledge on how to deal with it. On the other hand, to Sandra, the lack of skills and knowledge on how to deal with this diversity led her to give up trying anything. She, therefore, stuck with what she knew best, to follow the footsteps of those who have gone before her. She gave up on her diverse student population, and finally said she was going to secure a teaching position in schools similar to those she attended. For Alicia and Michelle, even though they never intimately interacted with culturally diverse populations, they were exposed to them, they had the opportunity, but they did not use it to get to know more about them. Due to that minimal exposure, these two participants felt confident, and they naively claimed that they were able to teach diverse student populations. Yet the opposite was true based on the findings from this study. This naïveté on Alicia and Michelle's part led them to fall in the middle of the continuum which had Helen with significant change and Sandra with completely no change in dispositions toward diversity. Helen seemed to indicate some changes in her disposition; she moved from no exposure toward diversity to expressing culture shock, and acknowledging that she has no skills and knowledge about diversity.

She expressed her intention to learn more about diverse cultures. Therefore, by the end of her clinical internship experience she accepted a teaching position in a culturally diverse school.

Research question three: How do preservice teachers' approaches to curriculum and teaching change, if at all, as they work with culturally diverse populations of students? All four participants did not acknowledge the fact that American students from historically marginalized racial/ethnic groups had different learning experiences compared to White students. Therefore they all felt that these diverse students did not need instructional modifications. Secondly, all but Sandra empathized with newly migrant students. They tried to learn something about their culture, but they did not change their teaching materials and their teaching strategies to be culturally responsive to these students' needs. Therefore I conclude that even if they would have wanted to try to meet the teaching and learning needs of these students, they still did not have the necessary skills and knowledge to design culturally responsive curriculum and teaching strategies. Therefore they were limited in their diverse cultural knowledge and skills and as a result they were not well suited to teach diverse student populations.

Recommendations

Due to the increasing diversity and the changing demographics of student populations in the United States and other countries where the teacher population has remained the same – mainly monocultural, monolingual, and middle to upper middle class, the need to have teachers who are able to teach all student populations regardless of culture, language, and socioeconomic status is also increasing. The shortage of teachers from minority ethnic groups makes the problem of cultural mismatch between teachers

and diverse student populations to be more pressing and in need of urgent attention from schools of education and teacher educators.

Multicultural education seems to have the potential of helping prospective teachers to gain skills and knowledge on how to work with diverse student populations, implement culturally responsive teaching and be culturally responsive teachers. Therefore I recommend that schools of education and teacher educators start to consider implementing multicultural education in their teacher preparation programs. There are several ways to introduce teacher candidates to cultural diversity. Schools of education could have stand alone multicultural education courses for prospective students as the main strategy. However, the danger is that if such a course is an elective, left open to students to enroll at their own free will, students might not enroll in that course because the issues discussed in such courses take students out of their comfort zone. To avoid that situation, a stand alone multicultural course needs to be a core course for all prospective teachers. Further, the teacher educators responsible for that course need to be people who are highly committed to the implementation of multicultural education because if they are not that committed they would not put the time and effort that the course needs in terms of gathering cultural teaching materials required for teaching about culturally responsive teaching strategies. Also, if the educator is not that committed, he/she will not be able to discuss some of the sensitive issues, especially those relating to race, that are embedded in multicultural education.

An option that would be complementary to the multicultural education core course would be to expose all prospective teachers in multicultural knowledge through the infusion of diverse cultural knowledge in most of the courses taught in teacher

preparation programs within schools of education. The danger here is that there might be some professors who are not committed to multicultural education. Therefore this would not put forth the effort to infuse diverse cultural knowledge within their curriculum content, and would not practice culturally responsive teaching practices. However if they are committed to instilling multicultural education, they could expose their students to culturally diverse knowledge by prescribing materials from diverse ethnic sources other than from one ethnic source. Even if the teacher candidates did not have diverse cultural experiences growing up, the schools of education and educators need to make sure that the teaching materials are from a wide variety of sources in terms of ethnic representation of the authors and the knowledge and the values they represent and promote. It would have been worthwhile to know the types of teaching learning materials that these participants used during their college preparatory experience; however, it was beyond the scope of this study to find that information.

There are also other ways to complement the multicultural education core course. Another strategy of promoting multicultural diversity experiences for college students is to invite guest speakers to present and reinforce some of the cultural experiences that students are exposed to in their college courses. These speakers should cover a wide range of experiences and racial/ethnic representations, language, and socioeconomic status. I believe that if students are able to put a face on someone representing the theory/knowledge/concept, they are more likely to internalize and remember that than if there were to just read a book about it. Therefore, guest speakers come in handy for promoting multicultural education and diversity.

Another strategy to expose teacher candidates to diverse cultures is for schools of education to engage in active recruitment and retention of minority faculty and minority students. I do not believe that the teaching of multicultural education courses needs to be limited to minority faculty. However, I do believe that if the students see minority people as faculty members they are likely to be motivated to learn something from such members since they would act as role models for prospective teachers (Foster, 1997). Again, minority faculty members could be resources for prospective students if they need to consult on specific concepts pertinent to a particular ethnic group. Having minority faculty members could also serve to challenge beliefs by mainstream students who have internalized stereotypical opinions that minority people cannot make it to the level equivalent to levels of mainstream members (Banks, 1995; Groulx, 2001).

Mainstream students also need to be given opportunities to challenge their belief systems about their privileges in relation to culturally diverse populations. Such opportunities include field placement in diversely populated schools. I am aware that field placement can sometimes result in negative dispositions toward diversity, but I do believe that field placement in settings with diverse population together with necessary support from faculty could yield in positive dispositions toward diversity from prospective teachers. Therefore, while preservice teachers are going through the field experience, faculty members need to make sure that they give them all the necessary support in the form of knowledge and skills to negotiate gain from the experience and to understand why they are placed in such conditions (Garmon, 2005). Faculty members need to lead by example. They need to embrace diversity and believe in multicultural education. However, faculty members should not be disappointed if teacher candidates do

not embrace diversity and multicultural education even after field placement. They need to persistently nurture and care for the teacher candidates and let them see the advantages of multicultural education and diversity in promoting the teaching and learning of diverse student populations.

Future Research

Based on the findings from this study, it would be useful to carry out a further analysis on the most effective measures that educators might use to prepare teacher candidates to be culturally responsive and be able to teach culturally, linguistically, and socioeconomically diverse student populations. I am also interested in understanding how diversity is understood by different schools of education who are members of NCATE and also to finding out measures taken by NCATE to make sure that diversity is promoted in the United States. Internationally, with the growing populations of displaced people in developing countries due to various reasons (Allard, 2006), it would be useful to find out how different countries' education systems are dealing with cultural diversity within teacher preparation programs to meet the teaching and learning needs of diverse student populations.

Summary

In this study, findings indicate that there is a close relationship between preservice teachers' dispositions and their selection of teaching materials and teaching strategies for teaching diverse student populations. The findings from this study indicate that if teacher candidates are not exposed to diverse cultural knowledge they lack skills to work with culturally diverse student populations. They are not able to implement culturally

responsive teaching, and therefore they are not culturally responsive teachers. For teacher candidates to effectively work with culturally diverse student populations they need diverse cultural exposure. Such an exposure could be through enrolling in a multicultural core course, field placement in culturally diverse settings, inviting culturally diverse guest speakers to deliver talks to teachers candidates about different experiences of different racial/ethnic groups, as well as infusing different curriculum content knowledge from a wide variety of racial/ethnic sources. The findings from this study indicate that the concern about the teaching and learning of diverse student populations is in danger of remaining just 'talk'. There is need for a higher level of commitment to cultural diversity in teacher preparation programs. Unless and until major measures are taken to include cultural diversity in teacher preparation programs, I believe the achievement gap between diverse student populations will remain below that of mainstream students. The cultural mismatch between culturally diverse student populations and mainstream teachers would still be problematic in that there would still be that disconnection which negatively impacts the teaching and learning of diverse student populations.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Institutional Review Board Approval Form

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date: Monday, February 06, 2006
IRB Application No: ED0674
Proposal Title: Exploring the Relationship Between Pre-service Teachers' Dispositions Towards Diversity and Their Approaches to Curriculum and Teaching
Reviewed and Processed as: Expedited

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved Protocol Expires: 2/5/2007

Principal Investigator(s)

Sibongile M. Mtshali-Dlami 14 N. Univ. Place Apt. 10 Stillwater, OK 74075	Pamela Fry 339 Willard Stillwater, OK 74078
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The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 415 Whitehurst (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,



Sue C. Jacobs, Chair
Institutional Review Board

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

First interview

1. Biographical information

- Tell me about yourself: childhood up to where you are right now.
- Tell me about your Pre-K to 16 schooling experience;
 - i. Probe for types of schools you attended (Rural/urban, private/public, small/large, multiracial/nonracial).
 - ii. Probe for friends you had
 - iii. Probe for teachers you had
 - iv. Probe for the impact this experience had on you
- Can you reflect on one or two major experiences in your life that have shaped and influenced your life to be what it is today?
 - i. Probe: When did that happen?
 - ii. Probe: How did these experiences shape/influence your life?
- Describe for me your first encounter, if any, with someone from a culture (way of life, different language, and socio-economic status) different from yours.
 - i. Probe: Where was that encounter?
 - ii. Probe: How different were you?
 - iii. Probe: What led to that encounter?
 - iv. Probe: How did you feel about that encounter?
 - v. Probe: What impact, if any, did that encounter have on you?
- What privileges have you had/not had because of your identity?

- i. Probe: Describe what happened.
- ii. Probe: How did you know that this was happening because of your identity?
- iii. Probe: What action did you take after that incident?
- iv. Probe: What did you learn from that incident?
- v. Probe: How has that influenced your views about your identity?
- What are your views about working with students who have a different culture (way of life) from yours, who come from lower socioeconomic status than yours, and are linguistically challenged (do not speak English as a first language as you do)?
 - i. Probe: How should they be treated in school?

2. Professional journey

- What influenced your decision to become a teacher?
- How did you decide on the college that you attend?
- How did you decide on this school for your clinical field experience?
- What does the term *diversity* in the classroom mean to you?
- How does your understanding of the term *diversity* show itself in your choice of curriculum content and choices of teaching strategies?
- How prepared/not prepared do you feel to work with these students
 - i. Probe for cultural reasons
 - ii. Probe for socioeconomic reasons
 - iii. Probe for linguistic reasons

- What skills do you have/do not have that make you feel that you are prepared/not prepared to work with these students?
- What knowledge do you have/do not have that makes you feel that you are prepared/not prepared to work with these students?
- What opportunities, if any, do you anticipate in working with these students?
- What challenges, if any, do you anticipate in working with these students?
- Describe your views about whether or not minority students should get the same curriculum as mainstream students in school. Explain your response.
- How do you structure your curriculum in a way that the learning needs of these culturally, socioeconomic, and linguistically different students are met?
- What teaching strategies do you use in a way that the learning needs of these culturally, socioeconomic, and linguistically different students are met?
- How do you create the classroom environment so that all students in your classroom feel welcome and motivated to participate and learn?
- What are your views about teaching and learning of minority students in general?

Second interview

1. Field experience

- How is this clinical internship experience influencing, if at all, your views about working with these diverse student populations?

- i. Probe for culture
 - ii. Probe for socioeconomics
 - iii. Probe for language
- How has your cultural background impacted your work with these diverse student populations?
- How has your course work from college prepared/not prepared you for working with these diverse student populations?
- What changes, if any, have you made to this classroom to make it culturally relevant for the diverse student populations?
- How important is it to you to have a classroom environment that is culturally relevant for diverse student population? Why?
- How does the classroom environment positively/negatively impact teaching and learning of diverse student populations?
- How does integrating your students' cultures, if any, in your classroom environment impact your teaching?
- How has this clinical field experience impacted your dispositions, attitudes, views and beliefs about the learning experiences of diverse student populations?

2. Curriculum and teaching strategies

- In what way is your curriculum content meeting the learning needs of your diverse student population?
- In what way are your teaching strategies meeting the needs of your diverse student population?

- How do you integrate your students' cultures in your classroom?
- How do you encourage cross-cultural interaction and friendship among your students in the classroom?
- How prepared/not prepared do you feel to make curricular choices and choices on teaching strategies to meet the learning needs of culturally, socioeconomic, and linguistically different student populations? Why?
- What do you think could have prepared you for this experience?

Third Interview

1. Professional growth/changes based on field experience

- As we are almost at the end of this clinical field experience, can you describe changes, if any, which you are undergoing because of this experience?
- What skills would you have loved to have prior to this clinical experience to be able to work successfully with student different from you?
- What information would you have loved to have prior to this clinical experience to be able to work successfully with student different from you?
- What pedagogical strategies have you used during this clinical field experience to make school and home experiences for these diverse students to be congruent?
- How would you describe the strengths of embracing students' cultures, dialects, and languages in the learning of diverse learners in your classroom?

- How would you describe the weaknesses of embracing students' cultures, dialects, and languages in the learning of diverse learners in your classroom?
- What curriculum content you used to encourage/promote cultural competence among diverse student populations in your classroom?
- What teaching strategies you used to encourage/promote cultural competence among diverse student populations in your classroom?
- What skills would you have loved to have before embarking on this clinical field experience, and why?
- What information would you have loved to have before embarking on this clinical field experience, and why?

2. Way forward

- If you were to undergo this clinical experience again, what would you do differently? And why?
- If you were to undergo this clinical experience again, what would you keep the same, and why?
- If you had power and means, based on this clinical experience, what would you: to make this experience a success?
 - i. change,
 - ii. introduce,
 - iii. advocate for,
- What kind of skills would you recommend to be taught in teacher preparation programs for preservice teachers to be able to work with

students from lower socioeconomic status, cultures different from the mainstream culture in American schools, and whose first language or home languages are different from mainstream American language?

- What kind of information would you recommend to be taught in teacher preparation programs for preservice teachers to be able to work with students from lower socioeconomic status, cultures different from the mainstream culture in American schools, and whose first language or home languages are different from mainstream American language?
- What are you taking, if any, out of this clinical field experience to help you to be the teacher you plan to be?
- What type of school do you want to secure your teaching profession after your graduation? Why?
- Is there anything you would like to ask me?
- Thank you for your time.

Appendix C: Observation Protocol

1. Cultural relevant curriculum material

- What curricular materials or visual images are on the classroom walls?
- How do the curricular materials on the walls match up with the cultural diversity of the student population in the classroom?
- How does the curricular material match up with the cultural diversity of the student population in the classroom?
- Which culture is depicted on the materials used in the classroom?
- Based on the diversity in this classroom, what culture(s) is/are omitted in this classroom?
- Who is represented in this classroom culturally? (Classroom cultural dynamics)
- How does the teacher link the students' primary culture with mainstream culture in this classroom?
- How are students accommodated in this classroom? (In the curriculum content, in the cultural activities, in the teaching strategies)

2. Instructional strategies

- Where is the teacher positioned in this classroom? (Front of the class, moves around among the students, at the side of the classroom, etc).
- How are the sitting positions of the students in this classroom? (clusters of tables, desks in rows, permanently positioned for the rest of the semester, allows them to move to form groups for different activities, work as same

groups for the rest of the semester, work with different students for different assignments, etc)

- How does the teacher interact with students? (able to mingle with the rest of the class easily, asks students to come to her desk if they need help, pays attention to few or capable students, pays attention to low achieving students, pays attention to students with discipline problems, work with all students equitable)
- When asking questions, how does the teacher ask questions; does she/he pause before asking the question, does he/she say the name of the student before asking the question? Does she/he move closer to the student expected to respond to the question? Does she/he wait for a while to give time to the students to think and respond to the question? Does she/he repeat the question enough for all the students to grasp and understand what the question requires? Once a student is called upon to respond to the question, does the teacher makes sure that other students in the class are not interrupting the process?)
- How are students expected to respond to question and answer sessions in this classroom? (Do they raise hands? Do they shout answers aloud? Do they write answers on paper? Do they consult with friends? Do they have options of not participating?)
- How is active participation by all students in this classroom ensured in this classroom?

- How flexible is the teacher in accommodating different learning styles and academic abilities in this classroom?
- What motivational strategies and activities does this teacher use for low and higher achievers in this classroom?

3. Language congruence

- How does the teacher in this classroom recognize language as central to cognitive, social, and cultural development of the individual students?
- How does this teacher respond to students' dialects in this classroom?
- Are students' dialects encouraged/embraced or eradicated in this classroom?
- How does the teacher improve the self-confidence of linguistically challenged students in this classroom?
- How are students motivated to learn despite their linguistic, socioeconomic, and cultural status in this classroom?

4. Critical thinking

- How is critical thinking stimulated in this classroom?
- How are students expected to present their critical thoughts?
- What issues are students critical about?
- What subject areas are students more critical about?
- Who, among the students, are more critical?
- How does the teacher handle tensions resulting from critical thinking among students in this classroom?

5. Lesson closure

- How does the teacher reinforce her/his lesson to make sure that all students have mastered it?
- How much time does the teacher set aside for closing/winding up the lesson?
- What opportunities does the teacher provide for the students to demonstrate their mastery of the lesson?
- How does the teacher ensure that all students demonstrate their mastery of the lesson?
- For those who have not mastered the lesson, what help does the teacher provide for them before closing the lesson?

6. Classroom management

- How does the teacher maintain order in this classroom?
- Who, among the students, are the most disruptive?
- What kind of disruption is common in this classroom?
- What other help does this teacher have to maintain order in this classroom?

7. Interaction with parents

- How does the pre-service teacher interact with parents?
- Under what circumstances does the pre-service teacher have to deal with parents?
- What is the observed racial profile of the parents

VITA

Sibongile M. Mtshali-Dlamini

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Thesis: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRSERVICE
TEACHERS' DISPOSITIONS TOWARD DIVERSITY AND THEIR
APPROACHES TO CURRICULUM AND TEACHING

Major Field: Education

Biographical:

Personal Data: Born in Mankayane, Swaziland, on August 10, 1961, the daughter of father Johnson S. Mtshali and Mother Catherine G. Dlamini

Education: Graduated from Mbuluzi Girls High School, Mbabane, Swaziland, in November, 1979 and received the Cambridge Ordinary Level Certificate. Graduated from the University of Swaziland, Kwaluseni, Swaziland in September 1984, and received a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Humanities and a Concurrent Diploma in Education. Graduated from Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in May, 2001 and received a Master of Science in Curriculum and Instruction. I completed the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy in Education at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma, in May 2007.

Experience: Research and college teaching at Oklahoma State University, College of Education, August 2001 to May, 2007; School inspection and curriculum supervision, Ministry of Education, Mbabane, Swaziland, October 1995 to August, 2001; Adult training, United States Peace Corps, Mbabane, May 1994 to October, 1995; Curriculum Designing, National Curriculum Center, Manzini, Swaziland, May, 1991 to May, 1994; High school teaching in Swaziland, May, 1984 to May, 1991.

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Title of Study: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ELEMENATARY
EDUCATION PRESERVICE TEACHERS' DISPOSITIONS TOWARD
DIVERSITY AND THEIR APPROACHES TO CURRICULUM AND
TEACHING

Pages in Study: 147

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Major Field of Study: Education

Scope and Method of Study: Using the culturally responsive teaching/teacher theoretical lens, this qualitative study sought to explore the relationship between elementary preservice teachers' dispositions toward diversity and examine how these dispositions relate to their curriculum content selection and teaching strategies when teaching student populations that are culturally linguistically, and socioeconomically different from them. Four White female elementary preservice teachers, conducting their clinical internship in a culturally diverse elementary school participated in the study.

Findings and Conclusion: There was a significant relationship between the preservice teachers' dispositions and their curriculum content selection and their teaching strategy selection. Findings indicated the following: (a) lack of awareness and lack of experience, (b) family influence, (c) active/silent resistance, (d) savior/missionary mentality, and (e) selective othering. From the findings, I concluded that since the participants did not have culturally diverse knowledge base, and skills, they were not able to select culturally relevant curriculum and teaching strategies for culturally diverse student populations. Teacher educators still have a challenge to prepare teacher candidates to work with diverse student populations.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Pamela U. Brown