

The Effect of Multicultural Training on Preservice Teachers' Attitudes Toward  
Multiculturalism and Cultural Diversity

By

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ABSTRACT

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The schools in the United States are becoming increasingly diverse. This diversity makes it necessary for teachers to recognize the importance of students' heritage and the influence this heritage has on participation in school. A preservice class on multiculturalism can give future teachers knowledge about different cultures. This knowledge, combined with the use of multicultural techniques in the classroom, and positive attitudes may make them more effective teachers. Therefore, it is important to evaluate the effect a multiculturalism class has on preservice teachers’ attitudes toward multiculturalism.

The purpose of this study was to examine the preservice teachers’ attitudes toward multiculturalism and the change that occurred in these attitudes after completion of multicultural training. It was hypothesized that the preservice teachers would have a more positive attitude

toward multiculturalism and cultural diversity at the end of the multiculturalism class than at the beginning of the class. In order to examine preservice teachers attitudes toward multiculturalism the Multicultural Attitude Questionnaire asked the following six key questions: 1) Are preservice teachers aware of multicultural issues in education? 2) Do preservice teachers believe that their professional courses are preparing them to deal with multicultural approaches to education? 3) Do preservice teachers express interest in receiving additional training in multicultural approaches to education? 4) Are preservice teachers' views of appropriate classroom practices for multicultural education consistent with current research and practice? 5) Do preservice teachers anticipate addressing multicultural issues in their own classrooms? 6) Do preservice teachers have personal attitudes that may prevent them from making effective use of multicultural approaches?

The instrument was administered in two sections of Multiculturalism: Issues and Perspectives course at the University of Wisconsin – Stout in spring 2001. A total of 76 students, most of who were education majors, participated in the study. Results indicate that multicultural training does impact preservice teachers' attitudes towards multiculturalism. Participants began the class with fairly positive attitudes toward multiculturalism. Comparison of the pretest and posttest data indicate that the course helped preservice teachers become more aware of multicultural issues and also increased their belief that their courses helped them deal with multicultural issues in education. Overall, it appears that a multiculturalism course has a positive effect on preservice teachers' attitudes toward multiculturalism.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The demographics of the United States' population are rapidly changing. The growth of African-American, Hispanic, Asian, and American Indian populations has diversified the racial and ethnic makeup of schools, workplaces and neighborhoods. This growing diversity affects the racial and ethnic composition of the current school-aged population. In 1992 minorities accounted for 32% of all children under the age of 18, in 2035 over half of all children under age 18 will be of a minority race (O'Hara, 1993).

While the United States' student population is growing increasingly diverse the teacher population continues to be very homogenous. Sing estimated that by the year 2050, 95% of the teachers would be white, middle-class females (cited in Kea & Utley, 1998). According to Neito, this demographic trend in education has a significant impact on all children. When children do not get the perspective of a minority teacher all children will lose a possible perspective on life, and minority children lose possible role models. Biases, racism, and stereotypes are more likely to continue in a school that doesn't offer its children a diverse staff (cited in Kea & Utley, 1998).

Because of the increasing racial and ethnic diversity of the United States population it is important for school personnel to realize the influence of their own culture on the way they teach and interact with children. It is also important for school personnel to realize the influence children's culture and race has on the way they learn and interact with others. Preservice teachers must be educated in a manner that not only allows them to recognize the effect racial and ethnic diversity has on students and the classroom, but also allows them to capitalize on the



diversity of students and use it as a resource in the classroom. By educating preservice teachers about multiculturalism these teachers can become advocates for multiculturalism.

### Multicultural Education

Multiculturalism can be defined as, “A philosophical position and movement that deems that the gender, ethnic, racial, and cultural diversity of a pluralistic society should be reflected in all of the institutionalized structures of educational institutions, including the staff, the norms, and values, the curriculum, and the student body” (Banks & Banks, 1997, p. 435). Multicultural education is the philosophical concept that all children should have an equal opportunity to learn in school, regardless of the children’s race, social class, or gender. Along with being a philosophical concept, multicultural educational is the reform movement and process, through which the philosophical ideal is being achieved (Banks, 1997).

Multicultural education is a concept that is made up of four different components: content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure. Each of these components must be addressed before multicultural education can be fully realized. 1) Content integration occurs when teachers use examples from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts. When a variety of cultures are integrated into the classroom environment and subject matter, students have the opportunity to recognize, acknowledge, and address cultural biases and how these biases influence the way knowledge is constructed. 2) Prejudice reduction can occur through providing students lessons and other classroom activities that help them develop positive attitudes toward different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups. 3) To establish equity pedagogy the curriculum and teaching methods must take into account the diverse learning styles of all students. When the pedagogy takes into account the learning styles of all students, all students have the opportunity

for academic success. 4) Lastly, an empowering school culture is one that promotes gender, racial, and social class equity. An empowering school culture holds the expectation, for both students and staff, that all individuals will be treated with respect and dignity.

Each of the components, content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure, must be addressed when modifying the school environment. For multicultural education to be implemented successfully the total school environment must be modified; just modifying one or two areas will not be sufficient (Banks, 1997). For example, textbooks that respect and recognize a wide range of cultures will not be effective in the hands of a teacher who does not respect children's cultural backgrounds. All portions of the school environment must reflect multicultural ideology for the reform to be successful.

The broad goals of multicultural education are to enhance understanding, build relationships and self-concepts, improve multicultural climates of schools, and implement curricula that encourage multicultural awareness (Solomon, 1996). Multicultural education allows students to see different points of view, gives minority students validation in the classroom, and decreases the amount of prejudice and misunderstanding that occurs between races (Erickson, 1987/1992). Multicultural education not only educates children about the experiences and histories of students of color but it also encourages students to recognize the social injustices that racial and ethnic minorities face (De La Torre, 1996; Simonson, 1995; Bigelow, 1999). Multicultural education empowers students to change the social inequalities that exist within society (Sleeter & Grant, 1987).

Teachers do more than teach children basic reading, writing, and math skills. Teachers have the power to enhance or discourage a child's educational performance. They also have the

responsibility to use children's cultures and experiences as a vehicle for learning about academics, each other, and building respect for others. Teachers who value multiculturalism empower students to respect themselves, respect others, and become motivated to change social injustice.

### Statement of the Problem

Students bring to school, not only differing racial and ethnic heritages, but also a wide range of histories, perspectives, experiences, expectations, and approaches to learning. All of these factors will influence a child's educational experience (Hixson, 1991). The increasingly diverse student population requires that teachers have a broader range of skills and knowledge to meet these diverse needs of the student body (Bynoe, 1998). It is unacceptable for teachers to have little respect for their students, or to blame poor school performance on the fact that the student did not come prepared to adapt to the school environment (Hixson, 1991).

Teachers must recognize the impact that cultural differences can have on the child and the child's education. Teachers who are aware of the impact of cultural differences are more likely to bring children's cultures into the classroom (Gay, 1994), which offers minority ethnic and racial heritage students the same opportunity for scholastic success as their white peers (Battistich, Solomon, Kim, Watson, & Schaps,, 1995). Not only do teachers have the responsibility to integrate all children's cultural and ethnic heritages into the classroom to benefit the minority students, but through seeing diversity as a cultural resource teachers can use the differing experiences and knowledge of all students to further each child's education and multicultural knowledge and acceptance (Hixson, 1991).

Multicultural education is very important because it is the tool to change teacher thinking to maximize student learning (Bynoe, 1998). Education can alter preservice teachers' attitudes

towards multiculturalism and the acceptance of diversity, which will alter their performance in the classroom (Hixson, 1991). The purpose of this study is to examine the multicultural attitudes of preservice teachers and the change that occurred in these attitudes after completion of multicultural training. The subjects were a cluster sample of college students who were enrolled in Multiculturalism: Issues and Perspectives class during Spring 2001. The students completed the Multicultural Awareness Questionnaire at the beginning of the class and after the class had ended. It was hypothesized that the preservice teachers would have a more positive attitude toward multiculturalism and cultural diversity at the end of the multiculturalism class than at the beginning of the class.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The demographics of the United States are changing. Individuals from all areas of the world are populating every area of the United States. These individuals bring different cultures, values, religions, and languages that interact with and change the communities in which they live. As America continues to diversify, our youth must be taught how to interact with others who may be different from themselves. It has become the schools' responsibility to teach both minority and non-minority students the academics and social skills they will need to function in the ever-changing world. Unfortunately, the monocultural curriculum, currently used in the majority of schools is not adequate (Hughes, 1996/1997). It focuses on Eurocentric ways of communicating, understanding, and interpreting the past and the present. Monocultural curriculums place little regard on the experiences of and interpretations made by children whose heritage are not of European decent. The inadequacy of the current curriculum can be seen by the high school failure rate of many minority youth (Burstein & Cabello, 1989), and through the small amount of educating done about communication, cultural appreciation, and the ability to value difference (Hughes, 1996/1997). It is only when schools educate students about cultural and ethnic differences that these differences between people will begin to be respected. It is important for schools and teachers to be knowledgeable about and to implement the principles of multicultural education, so that Caucasian and minority students can receive the education that will best prepare them to function in a diverse environment.

This chapter will define the term multiculturalism; discuss the history and legislation of multiculturalism, along with the differences between traditional and multicultural pedagogy. The importance of multicultural teacher training and the effects of teachers' multicultural

awareness on students' learning will be described. The influence of a multicultural school environment on the student body will be explained. Lastly, different methods of how a multicultural school environment can be created will be discussed.

### Definition of Multiculturalism

First, the term “multiculturalism” will be defined, along with differentiation between “cultural diversity” and “multiculturalism.” Some critics of multiculturalism argue that multiculturalism focuses on only the needs of minority students and not the needs of students with European heritage, however this accusation is false. Multiculturalism realizes the needs of all children in the classroom, not just the needs of students with ethnic and racial minority heritage (Simonson, 1995). Although multiculturalism *is* concerned about creating opportunities for ethnic minority youth, it is also concerned with empowering all youth through cross-cultural interaction, and teaching all children to respect differences between cultures (Bernard, 1991).

### Multiculturalism vs. cultural diversity.

There is confusion in the literature and among individuals about the difference between multiculturalism and cultural diversity. It is important to note that these concepts are not synonymous. Essentially, the difference between cultural diversity and multiculturalism is people's attitudes towards diversity. Multiculturalism not only respects differences between people, but also believes these differences are necessary for a healthy society. Cultural diversity, on the other hand, is the phenomenon of racially, culturally, and ethnically different people inhabiting the same physical space. Cultural diversity occurs when differences between people are seen from a hierarchical perspective; one group of people is valued over another group of people based upon specific characteristics. When cultural diversity without multiculturalism occurs, the children who are viewed to be at the bottom of the hierarchy are especially at risk.

But when this viewpoint permeates the school environment none of the children's needs are being met (Robinson, 1992). When children are not taught to respect others' heritages the educational system is not appropriately preparing them to function in the global environment.

### Goals of Multiculturalism

The central goal of multicultural education is to provide equity and equality in education for all kids. Multicultural education looks at issues surrounding race, class, gender, sexuality and disability and also recognizes the issues that come out of these cultures (Schofield, 1993). While some individuals believe that emphasizing differences in the curriculum will inflame division, research offers the opposite conclusion. If the schools' curriculum silences students' experiences, differences, and criticism against the way things are, resistance will be intensified (De La Torre, 1996).

### Multiculturalism in an educational environment.

According to Banks (cited in Gallagher, 1998) there are five characteristics that are inherent in schools with a multicultural environment. The characteristics include: content integration, knowledge construction, pedagogy, prejudice reduction, and an empowering school culture. Content integration is the expansion of the curriculum to acknowledge the experiences of diverse groups, not just the experiences and point of view of the dominant culture. Through content integration knowledge construction takes place. Knowledge construction occurs when teachers take the responsibility to help students understand how individuals' beliefs are based upon their cultural and ethnic heritage and life experiences. Teachers who strive to implement a multicultural environment also understand that the pedagogy used in the classroom must include strategies that lead to higher achievement for minority students. Traditional instructional strategies often include concepts or methods of instruction that are not familiar to students whose

heritage is not of European decent. Teachers who value multiculturalism also strive to reduce prejudice through helping students develop more positive attitudes about people of different races and ethnicities. Lastly, teachers need to strive to create an empowering school environment through examining the impact of school policies on students with different backgrounds and creating policies that help all students without hindering and unfairly discriminating against some students.

Discriminating school policies can create a large amount of conflict within the schools. School policies that discriminate between groups essentially create two or more separate groups. If individuals are divided into groups they tend to favor the in-group and discriminate against the out-group, even if these groups have not previously experience conflict. Thus, if one creates racial or ethnically homogenous groups through school policies that resegregate students, already existing tendencies toward stereotyping and discrimination will be magnified. Great care should be taken to avoid institutional policies that lead to resegregation and an effort should be made to adopt policies that encourage interaction between all children (Schofield, 1993). A multicultural school environment assures all students are encouraged to respect the differences between people. Considering this country's history of racism it is important to understand the historical development and foundation of multicultural education.

### History of Multicultural Education

The multicultural movement grew out of the civil rights movement during the 1960's. People of color demanded that schools reform so that the school curricula reflected their experience and history. The minority groups also demanded that the schools hire more teachers and administrators that were people of color so that minority children would have role models. In the 1960's and 1970's single group studies were implemented. Holidays, ethnic celebrations,



and elective ethnic study courses were put into effect (Erickson, 1987/1992). These types of ethnic celebrations actually reinforce stereotypes and make minority cultures seem exotic or create the illusion that these groups only existed in the past (De La Torre, 1996; Menkart, 1999). In addition, by celebrating different cultures separately from the Anglo curriculum, the view of the dominant group is maintained and the knowledge of the other racial and ethnic groups was selectively passed on to the students (De La Torre, 1996).

While single group studies actually amplified the differences between groups, the goal of multicultural education is to amplify the similarities between groups. Multicultural education is not a one-day celebration of a single ethnic group, but it permeates the entire curriculum year-round. Children given a multicultural education should have the ability to recognize similarities between groups of people, while recognizing and respecting the differences between these same groups. The multicultural education movement's goal is to modify and enhance the school environment so that all children have an equitable opportunity for academic success, and to educate students about social inequities, and give them the skills to challenge these inequities (Solomon, 1996). The goals of multiculturalism need to be achieved by youth if they are to be successful in the increasingly diverse and global environment. Although the importance of multicultural education is recognized, it has received little legislative support. Legislation effecting the education of minority groups, and the goals of multicultural education will be discussed in the following section.

### Multiculturalism and Legislation

The need for multicultural education can be seen in classrooms across the United States. Unfortunately, government aide and legislation do not parallel the need for the implementation of multicultural education. Few types of federal legislation have increased the accessibility and

quality of education available to minority individuals. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act prohibited discrimination in schools; although it did not ensure that the unique needs of students with various cultural and ethnic backgrounds would be met. Other types of federal legislation have been created, such as the Bilingual Education Act of 1968, the Indian Education Act of 1988, and the Emergency Immigrant Education Act of 1984. A few federal laws have been enacted that deal with the rights of ethnic minorities to have a quality education, overall, most federal legislation does not promote multicultural education (Gollnick, 1995).

While federal legislation can address the issue of accessibility to a public education, states have the ability to address a wider range of issues. States legislative ability can have a more far-reaching effect than the laws created by the federal government. In a review of state legislation, policies, and guidelines, all states follow federal mandates related to the education of low-income students, migrant students, and students with disabilities. In addition, Wisconsin is one of the six states, which singled out an ethnic group, Native Americans, to be studied in a K-12 curriculum. Wisconsin also requires teacher candidates to develop competencies in human relations. As part of the competency requirement, teacher candidates must understand contributions of and lifestyles of various racial, cultural, and economic groups, individuals with disabilities, and both gender groups, and to have 50 hours of experience working with diverse groups of people (Gollnick, 1995).

While states in general, and Wisconsin in particular, does mandate that its teachers gain experience in understanding and working with minority groups, it is important for teacher education programs to take the initiative to implement these mandates. In order for multiculturalism to truly become a part of America's schools, teacher education programs must emphasize the importance of multiculturalism to preservice teachers. Teachers are seen as

agents of change and as a result become an important part of the change process (Hughes, 1996/1997). Teachers and schools implement multiculturalism in a wide variety of ways. The different multicultural approaches will be explained in the following section.

### Types of Multicultural Education

There are several approaches to integrating ethnic and racial content into a school curriculum. The different approaches include: Contributions Approach, Additive Approach, Transformation Approach, and the Decision-Making and Social Action Approach. The different approaches are occasionally used as steps when beginning to integrate a multicultural environment in a school (Banks, 1988). The school may begin by implementing the Contributions Approach and gradually modify the structure of the environment to move through the approaches, eventually reaching the Decision-Making and Social Action Approach. One should be warned against implementing one of the three lower-level approaches without the intention of modifying the environment to eventually reach the higher order approach. The lower-level approaches have flaws, which may eventually lead to further discrimination between groups.

The Contributions Approach is one of the most frequently used approaches. In this approach ethnic heroes and special days are inserted into the mainstream curriculum, while the central part of the curriculum remains unchanged. While this approach is the easiest to integrate into the curriculum. However, it does not allow students to obtain a global view of ethnic and cultural groups because different groups are viewed as just an addition to the regular curriculum. In addition, the Contributions Approach does not address issues such as victimization, oppression, racism or poverty. Because of its failure to address issues of discrimination and inequality, the Contributions Approach trivializes different cultures and reinforces stereotypes

and misconceptions. The Additive Approach occurs when various ethnic heritage themes and perspectives are added to the basic curriculum without changing the curriculum in a significant way. This approach shares the disadvantages of the Contributions Approach; it also fails to help students view society from diverse ethnic perspectives (Banks, 1988). Teachers who revise their curriculum by including literature and histories of women and peoples of color do not validate these people's voices; the basic assumptions and values of the dominant group remain unchallenged and unchanged despite the ethnic content (De La Torre, 1996).

The Transformation Approach differs fundamentally from both the Contributions and Additive Approaches. This approach changes the basic assumptions of the curriculum and enables students to see concepts from several points of view. The Transformation Approach also infuses perspectives and content from various groups, which help increase the students' understanding of society and different cultures. The highest-level approach, Decision-Making and Social Action Approach, includes all elements of the Transformation Approach but adds the requirement that students must make decisions and take action on issues related to the concepts that they have studied. The major goals of the Decision-Making and Social Action Approach are to teach students thinking and decision making skills and to empower them (Banks, 1988). The Decision-Making and Social Action Approach not only teaches children to respect differences between people, but also prepares them to recognize inequality and discrimination in the school and work place and empowers them to take action against the discrimination. The goals and strategies of multicultural education are very different from the traditional approach to education. The differences between traditional and multicultural pedagogy will be explained in the next section.

### Traditional Pedagogy Compared to Multicultural Pedagogy

Traditional, reductionistic pedagogy is currently the dominant pedagogy used in schools (Rivera & Poplin, 1995). In traditional pedagogy the role of the teacher is to dispense knowledge (Hixson, 1991) that has previously been constructed by others. Students are rewarded or punished based upon the quantity of information learned (Rivera & Poplin, 1995). The learning process, in traditional pedagogy, is not a process commonly used in any other part of a child's life. Traditional pedagogy organizes lessons around a recitation script, in which teachers ask "known information questions," students answer these questions, and then are praised or punished by the teacher based upon their response. Conversations between students and teachers are created through teachers quizzing students about the information they have learned (Mehan, Lintz, Okamoto, & Wills, 1995).

As you can see, practices in place in the classrooms are not parallel to the communication practices used in family structures or any other institution. Children's ways of learning and doing that have been taught to them at home, often conflict with the ways of learning and doing that are practiced in the typical American classroom. Cultural mismatches in schools create significant barriers to student success because schools are created to serve a homogenous, Caucasian student population, and not students from a wide variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. A multicultural approach to instruction requires that teachers learn how to assess and build on the personal, cultural and social strengths and skills that students bring to the classrooms; that they help students build on those strengths, and that they help students see connections between curricular content, their current realities, and their future possibilities (Hixson, 1991).

Multicultural instruction means teachers must understand that student diversity is a resource and it should be the foundation around which instruction should be organized. In order to best serve the student population teachers need to create collaborative classroom environments, which allow student to become active participants in their own learning. Teachers no longer can assume the role of the dispenser of information, but need to act as coaches and resources that assist students in gathering their own knowledge (Hixson, 1991).

Cooperative learning groups in multicultural pedagogy.

One way students can become partners in the learning process is through the use of cooperative learning groups. The method in which the cooperative learning groups are implemented influences whether or not they will meet the goals and objectives of multicultural education. In fact, cooperative learning is used by both the traditional and multicultural pedagogies, but for different reasons. Depending on the reason cooperative learning is used, the strategy, the content, and the practice will be very different. Unfortunately, in practice, teachers are often taught methods of instruction with no theoretical reasoning attached. Teachers need to understand both theory and practices behind multicultural education for it to be successful in the classroom. Just implementing the strategies, without any reference to the theory, will not change classroom dynamics nor will it empower students of all ethnic and cultural heritages to become active participants in their education (Rivera & Poplin, 1995).

Traditional, reductionistic educators use cooperative learning to teach cooperative behaviors (Rivera & Poplin, 1995). Traditional educational strategies place children into teams, and emphasize the completion of the task, require no interdependence between team members, and include no way to assess individual performance. Placing children into groups and telling

them to cooperate, does not ensure that they know how to cooperate with one another nor does it ensure that they will cooperate even if they know how (Siciliano, 2001).

Multicultural educators, on the other hand, use cooperative learning groups because they are more compatible with cultures that value cooperation, and thus assist the learning process of students from these cultures. The goals of cooperative learning in a multicultural environment are to have children work together in small groups to achieve positive interdependence, and individual accountability (Siciliano, 2001).

Cooperative learning has five principles: positive interdependence, face-to-face promotive interaction, individual accountability, social skills, and group processing. Positive interdependence is achieved when students have to rely on one another to achieve the desired outcome. Within group processes can be put in place that will help cooperative learning groups achieve positive interdependence: Cooperative learning groups can be given a team goal which requires them to agree on strategies used to solve problems, assigning each student a role within the group requires the team members to rely on one another for task completion, requiring the individuals in the group to share resources requires cooperation among group members, and joint rewards encourages group members to help one another.

Face-to-face promotive interaction among student exists when they help and support each other's learning and success. Individual accountability is created when results of each individual's performance are given to the individual and the team; by giving the team the results of an individual's performance the team can better assess who needs help with the materials and assignments. Social skills are essential for cooperative learning. Social skills are used more often when teams are given bonus points each time a member uses specific social skills. Peer evaluations also help students recognize their place within the group and what social skills they

need to work on. Lastly, group processing is used to determine if the goals were met, look at the relationships among group members, and the efficacy of the team's functioning (Siciliano, 2001). In order for cooperative learning groups, or any multicultural instructional strategy, to be implemented correctly teachers must be trained in the theory, necessity, and practices of multicultural education. The need for preservice teacher education in the area of multiculturalism will be discussed in the next section.

### Teacher Training

Although teachers' job duties are broadening and diversifying, teachers are often unprepared to meet the expectations of their new and expanded roles (Hughes, 1996/1997). In fact, a study by King found that many preservice teachers displayed "Dysconscious Racism". Dysconscious Racism is "the uncritical habit of mind, such as attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs, which justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as given (cited in De La Torre, 1996)." Dysconscious racism may exist because of the struggle that preservice training programs face in defining multicultural education, changing preservice teachers' attitudes and beliefs, and developing competencies for a diverse classroom (Hughes, 1996/1997).

Preservice teachers are often educated about a variety of ethnic, cultural, and religious groups in a manner that makes these groups appear self-contained. Educating preservice teachers about different ethnic and cultural groups in isolation can lead teachers to believe that all children from an ethnic minority group will behave in specific way learned at home. It does not take into account how interactions with teachers and peers in school can influence a child's thoughts and behavior. In addition, by portraying different ethnic and cultural groups as self-contained, preservice teachers are not prepared to help children from different groups learn to interact and communicate with one another (Montecinos, 1995). Teachers must reflect upon



their own assumptions about issues of racism and sexism before they are able to understand how students' differences affect perceptions of themselves. Preservice teachers who do not question their own race and class privileges believe that issues of inequality cannot be overcome (De La Torre, 1996), and therefore are ill-prepared to deal with diversity and possible prejudice in their classroom.

Preservice teacher training must be transformed if teachers are going to have the skills and abilities to meet the needs of the student population. The first step is to recognize that a multicultural approach to education is not an addition to core classes; it is a necessary and integral part of the educational process that will lead to effective teachers. It must also be recognized that multicultural awareness is important not only for educators who plan to teach in schools comprised of minority students, but it is also important for teachers who plan to or will work in a school whose student population is comprised completely of Caucasian students. These students must also understand and appreciate cultural diversity, and teachers must be prepared to illustrate the importance of cultural awareness to students who may have not had the opportunity to witness cultural differences first-hand. Lastly, preservice education must also incorporate diverse cultural experiences with all kinds of students and schools. All teachers must gain experience in working with a diverse student body. This experience will allow teachers to develop an understanding of various cultural groups, along with helping teachers understand and create instructional strategies that take into consideration the diverse learning styles of all students (Hixson, 1991).

Along with educating preservice teachers about learning styles of students, multicultural teacher education must also help preservice teachers recognize the inequalities that may exist in schools. Preservice teachers must have the ability to recognize when differences between

individuals lead to differential treatment. They must also be instilled with the ability to attempt to change these inequalities. “Multicultural education of preservice teachers must make them aware of how all of their behaviors either aid in social transitions or maintain the status quo” (Montecinos, 1995). When teachers take social action against discrimination they have the ability to change students’ self-concepts and empower students to attempt to change their environment. On the other hand, teachers who maintain the status quo instill a sense of hopelessness in students. Teachers’ multicultural attitudes have a powerful effect on their students. The positive or negative effects that the level of a teacher’s multicultural awareness can have on students’ learning will be discussed in the next section.

### Effects of Teachers’ Level of Multicultural Awareness

#### Teachers views of multicultural education.

Teachers view multiculturalism in a variety of different ways. In a study conducted by Banister and Maher (1998) four themes were identified around teachers’ conceptions of multicultural education: 1) Multiculturalism means diversity, 2) It is difference and the melting pot, 3) We don’t need “it” here, and 4) We lack the resources and the means. *Multiculturalism means diversity* was presented through teachers’ descriptions of their student populations as culturally diverse and therefore multicultural. When teachers’ understand multiculturalism as classroom diversity it is reduced to superficial elements and does not increase students awareness of one another or society. The attitude that *multiculturalism is difference and the melting pot* was produced when teachers spoke of their desire to value differences in conjunction with their description of how distinctions fade as cultures become integrated. The melting pot theory has maintained Western values in schools and does not allow integration of ideas from other cultures. For these teachers respect for other cultures meant

learning about them with an underlying assumption that they melt into dominant culture. Teachers who said they did not need multiculturalism at their school because their student population was homogenous expressed the *we don't need "it" here* view. This attitude increases Caucasian students Eurocentric view by creating an in-group/out-group attitude and atmosphere within the school. Teachers who claimed that they lacked the resources and the means stated that did not have time, materials, or support from administrators. It is important that teachers receive support for implementing multicultural curriculum through release time, wider availability of resources, and administrative support. By viewing multiculturalism as something that must take up space in the curriculum at the expense of more important agendas teachers can dismiss the possibilities of multiculturalism.

#### The influence of teachers multiculturalism on students' learning.

Hillard (cited in Kea & Utley, 1998) asserted that the largest source of variation in school achievement among students is variation in the quality of teaching services. Many students of color view teachers as greater threats of racist attitudes than fellow students, because teachers have the authority and power to overrule them. In addition, when teachers allow racist attitudes to permeate the school the safety of minority students is threatened (McLean-Donaldson, 1994).

A critical step in providing multicultural education involves the cultural awareness and sensitivity of teachers (Ponterotto, Baluch, Greig, Rivera, 1998). Teachers interact with students on a daily basis, so their perceptions of multiculturalism are very important. A teacher's beliefs may influence that teacher's actions in ways he or she may not be aware of. A teacher's beliefs can be shown in whom the teacher calls on and whom he doesn't, and who is praised and for what (Kendall, 1996, pp. 5-6). In addition, teachers' unconscious nonverbal signals can significantly influence a child's self-concept and self-expectations (Robinson, 1992).

Gilbert and Gay found that teachers' attitudes and perceptions of students influence teacher's expectations and treatment these of students (cited in Larke, Wiseman, & Bradley, 1990). Race, along with sex and social class, are factors that can influence teachers' expectations of students (Larke et al., 1990). Studies by Gay have found that both Mexican American students and African American students are not given as many opportunities to participate in classroom interactions with teachers; these students had fewer and easier questions asked of them, had less time to give a response to the questions, and were given less praise for a response than the Euro-American students (Gay, 1994). A study by Roscigno and Ainsworth-Darnell (1999) found that teachers perceptions of students' academic track, attentiveness in class, completion of homework, and effort put into school work was significantly lower for African American students than for white students. Research shows that teachers have lower expectations for ethnic minority youth. Teachers' low expectations get played out in interpersonal interactions, but also in instructional programs, such as allowing access to gifted program to students who are already performing well academically and giving the watered down curriculum to students who are not performing well academically (Bernard, 1991).

Teachers' expectations can become a self-fulfilling prophecy for the student even when there is no real evidence for that teacher's expectations (Kendall, 1996, p.6). This can be seen through the increasingly poorer performance of minority children the longer that they stay in school. In the early grades the achievement of minority students is similar to the achievement of white students. The longer the minority students stay within the school system the more their achievement lags behind the achievement of white students (Gay, 1994). Another way that the teacher's beliefs about the abilities of the students can influence the student's academic achievement is through the Pygmalion effect. The Pygmalion effect describes the fact that

people achieve at the level at which they are expected to achieve (Kendall, 1996, p. 6). If a teacher believes that children of color can only perform at a remedial level these children will perform at this level because this is what is expected of them.

Teachers are in an influential position with respect to students and can communicate significant messages concerning expectations, evaluations, and performance. Children's social learning is influenced by modeling (Kendall, 1996, pp. 5-6). A teachers' multicultural attitude can influence a child's school performance through that teacher's modeling of correct or incorrect behaviors, or through that teacher's expectations of the abilities and achievements of the minority students. While teachers multicultural attitudes can be influential on students' academic success; the influence of the overall school environment is also critical to students' academic and social success. The importance and influence of a multicultural school environment will be discussed in the following section.

#### The Importance and Effects of a Multicultural School Environment

Because the school is the major institution of socialization it is a critical arena in which inequality is perpetuated (Bernard, 1991). Schools have the ability to spread the ideology of multiculturalism and create an environment and student body which values acceptance, or it can create an environment which breeds racism and discrimination. Children are aware of racial differences before entering school, but the school can influence a child's attitudes towards these differences.

Children come to school with preconceived ideas regarding the issue of diversity. In fact, six-month-old infants notice skin color differences and two-year-old children began to ask questions regarding skin color differences. Awareness of racial and ethnic differences develops until the age of nine years. At the young age of nine years children's views on diversity tend to

remain constant unless altered by life-changing events (cited in Wham, Barnhart, & Cook, 1996). It is important for schools to address racial differences early and effectively in the school curriculum so children can be exposed to positive attitudes towards racial differences. A study performed by Wham, Barhart, and Cook (1996) found that without a diversity program children's appreciation of diversity might decline over the course of a school year.

Shirley investigated the effects of integrating multicultural activities into English, social studies, and reading curricula on the self-concept, racial attitudes, and achievement of students in racially integrated fifth-and sixth-grade classes. There were no statistically significant changes in the self-concept and achievement levels of African-American students in the experimental groups. However, the racial attitudes of the white students in the experimental groups became more positive than the racial attitudes of the white students in the control groups (as cited in Banks, 1991). It is not only important, but also necessary, to evaluate teachers and students' levels of multicultural awareness. Only through the proper implementation of multiculturalism can all students receive the education that is necessary for their success (Simonson, 1995). Many preservice teachers who value multiculturalism will be placed into environments where the ideology of multiculturalism is not put into practice. Steps that can be used to increase the level of multicultural awareness in a school environment will be described in the next section.

#### Creating a Multicultural School Environment

Many plans for establishing multiculturalism in a school use the teachers as vehicles of knowledge. Pullen (2000) suggests that a series of in-service workshops will assist in preparing teachers in creating a multicultural school environment. The workshops consist of four phases: self-inventory, mini-lectures, a multicultural mentoring program, and a mandatory multicultural lesson. The self-inventory portion provides the teacher a measure of his/her cultural awareness

and tolerance. Mini-lectures are presented by individuals of a wide-range of ethnicities, such as, students, teachers, and professors of multicultural education. A multicultural mentoring program would allow teachers of different ethnicities to share in question and answer sessions which may help lead to understanding and education. After the teacher has completed the first three phases of the workshops the teacher is required to teach a multicultural lesson based upon the information that he/she received at the workshop.

For teachers to be effective in implementing a multicultural program in their classrooms and schools they must have the ability to recognize their feelings and attitudes as part of their cultural norms and biases. Teachers must also recognize the value of ethnic and cultural diversity as a basis for societal enrichment, cohesiveness, and survival. They must also know in detail about experiences, viewpoints, and needs of various cultural groups so that they are able to teach their students about these different groups. Teachers need to acquire sensitivity to words and actions insulting or hurtful to minority groups so they can be aware of their own biases and discrimination towards different groups, and also discourage students actions and words that may be hurtful to individuals. Teachers must use various classroom techniques to demonstrate how people of various cultures and backgrounds can communicate effectively and work cooperatively. Lastly, teachers must evaluate instructional materials to make sure that they are unbiased and factual and complete in describing the influence and contributions of individuals of minority race (Gallagher, 1998).

The pre-packaged multicultural school environment plans are easy to implement, but often do not address all of the needs of a particular school and community environment (Gallagher, 1998). As in any change effort the active involvement of the school community is necessary. Community involvement includes the establishment of a multicultural task force that

consists of youth, teachers, parents, principal, school personnel, and community representatives from a wide variety of cultures and backgrounds. The task force must create a mission statement/policy that embraces the philosophy that the school is committed to all students receiving an education that affirms human diversity and validates the history and culture of all ethnic groups, based on high expectations for academic success for all students, and encourages students' active participation in the school (Bernard, 1991).

When modifying the structure of the school environment it is important to redistribute power and authority in the classroom in a manner that empowers ethnic minority children and allows all teachers and youth to work together. Redistribution of power in this manner leads to equality in the schools. In addition, teachers must hold high expectations for ethnic minority children because a teacher's expectations about a student have a very powerful effect on the student. In fact, teachers' expectations can influence a student even when students' hold negative attitudes towards the teacher. Lastly, multicultural content must be infused throughout the curriculum. This can be accomplished by placing value the primary language of minority children, not stereotyping learning styles of ethnic minority children, and hiring ethnic minority teachers, teachers with a second-language competency, and teachers with English as Second Language training (Bernard, 1991). The impact of a teacher and the school environment on a child's academic and social development cannot be denied. Both minority and Caucasian children benefit greatly when attitudes, beliefs, and contributions of people from all walks of life are respected. A multicultural education best prepares our children for success both academically and socially. It is important the preservice teachers are taught the theoretical basis and goals of multicultural education, and have an attitude that will create an environment conducive to the learning of all students from all walks of life.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to assess preservice teachers' attitudes toward multicultural education, and whether a change in attitudes occurred as a result of the Multiculturalism: Issues and Perspectives class. This section includes a description of sample selection, instrumentation, research procedures used, and limitations of the study.

#### Participants

The participants for this study were 76 college students enrolled in Multiculturalism: Issues and Perspectives Class at the University of Wisconsin – Stout. Two separate sections of the multiculturalism class were used. One class was a weekend class that met on the weekends of February 23, 2001 and March 7, 2001. From this class 31 students took the pretest and 30 students took the posttest. The second class was a two-week class that began on May 29, 2001 and ended on June 7, 2001. From the second class, 47 students took the pretest and 44 students took the posttest.

#### Instrument

The Multicultural Attitude Questionnaire, created by Barry and Lechner (1995) was administered for this study. This instrument measures attitudes about the awareness of multicultural teaching and learning. Items for the original questionnaire were created based upon a literature review, informal interviews with preservice teachers, teachers, and teacher educators. Items on the questionnaire were grouped according to the six research questions in Barry and Lechner's (1995) study. The research questions and cluster reliabilities follow: 1) Are preservice teachers aware of multicultural issues in education? ( $r = .7582, p < .05$ )

2) Do preservice teachers believe that their professional courses are preparing them to deal with multicultural approaches to education? ( $r = .8874, p < .05$ ) 3) Do preservice teachers express interest in receiving additional training in multicultural approaches to education? ( $r = .9286, p < .05$ ) 4) Are preservice teachers' views of appropriate classroom practices for multicultural education consistent with current research and practice? ( $r = -.1322, p < .05$ ) 5) Do preservice teachers anticipate addressing multicultural issues in their own classrooms? ( $r = .8389, p < .05$ ) 6) Do preservice teachers have personal attitudes that may prevent them from making effective use of multicultural approaches? ( $r = .8050, p < .05$ )

Demographic information was also collected from the students. This information included gender, status in school (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate, or other), major, race/ethnicity, age, and whether the students had received any prior multicultural training.

### Procedures

Two multiculturalism classes were given the Multicultural Attitude Questionnaire. The questionnaire was given as a pretest at the beginning of the course and as a posttest at the conclusion of the course. On the first day of the multiculturalism course the experimenter attended the class, introduced herself, and explained the purpose of the study. The informed consent was read to the participants and the experimenter answered any questions the participants had regarding the study. The informed consent forms and questionnaire were handed out. The examiner explained if anyone chose not to participate in the study they could place both forms in the appropriate envelopes blank. After all the forms were turned in the examiner thanked the participants for their time and left. The examiner returned the last day of class and reminded them of the pretest taken at the beginning of the class and asked the participants to fill out the same survey again.

The researcher asked if there any questions regarding the questionnaire, and passed out the instrument. After all instruments were completed and returned the examiner thanked the participants for their time and left.

#### Limitations of the Study

There may be some limitations of how representative the sample is to the population. Because a convenience sampling technique was used the samples were not random, so they may contain sampling bias and may not be representative of the population. Although the extent of the generalizability of this research is questionable, it is hoped that to the extent that others are similar to this sample, the results may be applicable

#### Data Analysis

Analysis was performed on the two classes to be sure that they were equal before data analyses based upon the research question began. The two classes differed on some pretest cluster scores, so therefore the scores of the two classes could not be combined. Analysis of variance (ANOVA), frequencies, and percentages were the types of data analysis used in this study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### RESULTS

This chapter presents the survey findings of preservice teachers' attitudes toward multicultural education, along with demographic information collected in the study. In reporting the results of the study it is important to review the research question. The purpose of this study was to examine preservice teachers' attitudes toward multiculturalism and the change that occurred in these attitudes after completion of multicultural training. It was hypothesized that the preservice teachers would have a more positive attitude toward multiculturalism and cultural diversity at the end of the multiculturalism class than at the beginning of the class. This research question was evaluated using the Multicultural Attitude Questionnaire.

#### Demographic Information

Table 1

#### Demographic Information of Study Participants

	Pretest N	Pretest %	Posttest N	Posttest %
Gender				
Male	23	29	22	30
Female	55	71	52	70
Status				
Freshman	0	0	0	0
Sophomore	1	1	1	1
Junior	21	27	21	28
Senior	25	32	20	27
Graduate	26	33	27	37
Other	5	6	5	7
Major				
Education	57	73	51	69
Other	20	26	23	31
Ethnic Background				
Caucasian	74	95	70	95
African American	1	1	1	1
Hispanic	0	0	0	0
Asian Heritage	2	3	2	3
Native American	1	1	1	1
Previous Multicultural Training				
Yes	36	46	31	42
No	42	54	43	58

Participants were college students enrolled in a multiculturalism class at the University of Wisconsin – Stout in Spring 2001. Seventy-eight students took the pretest and 74 students participated in the posttest. Demographic data regarding the participants' gender, status in school, major, race/ethnicity, age, and amount of multicultural training was collected. The majority of the participants were female. There were 55 females in the pretest group and 52 in the posttest group. The participant population was overwhelmingly Caucasian; 74 out of 78 of the pretest group and 70 out of 74 of the posttest group were Caucasian. One African American, two Asian Americans, and one Native American participated in the study. There was a narrow range of ages in the classes surveyed. In the pretest group there were two participants age 19, 56 in their 20's, nine in their 30's, ten in their 40's, and one above the age of 50. In the posttest group there was one participant age 19, 54 in their 20's, eight in their 30's, eight in their 40's, one above age 50, and two that did not give a response to this question.

The participants' status in school varied, but most were upper classmen or graduate students. In the pretest group there was one sophomore, 21 juniors, 25 seniors, 26 graduate students, and five who marked "other". In the posttest group there was one sophomore, 21 juniors, 20 seniors, 27 graduate students, and five who marked "other". Students who marked "other" on the response form specified special student status, nontraditional status, or Education Specialist Degree status. The majority of the participants were education majors. In the pretest group 57 of the participants were education majors, 20 stated they were not education majors, and one participant did not respond to this question. In the posttest group 51 participants were education majors and 23 were not. Participants who were not education majors indicated hospitality and tourism, business, industrial design, psychology, school guidance, and school psychology as their majors. About half of the participants indicated that they had previously

received multicultural training. Participants indicated that previous multicultural training included: training for a job or volunteer experience, other multicultural classes, classes dealing with specific populations (e.g.: Native American Literature), armed services training, and other general classes which mentioned multiculturalism as part of the class.

### Key Question One

In order to examine preservice teachers' attitudes toward multiculturalism the Multicultural Attitude Questionnaire asked the following six key questions: 1) Are preservice teachers aware of multicultural issues in education? 2) Do preservice teachers believe that their professional courses are preparing them to deal with multicultural approaches to education? 3) Do preservice teachers express interest in receiving additional training in multicultural approaches to education? 4) Are preservice teachers' views of appropriate classroom practices for multicultural education consistent with current research and practice? 5) Do preservice teachers anticipate addressing multicultural issues in their own classrooms? 6) Do preservice teachers have personal attitudes that may prevent them from making effective use of multicultural approaches?

The first key question determined whether preservice teachers are aware of multicultural issues in education. Survey items one through three attempted to answer this question. The following items were considered for this research question:

- 1) Students with different ethnic backgrounds may respond to classroom activities differently.
- 2) Students with different cultural identities may respond to classroom activities differently.

- 3) Students with different religious beliefs may respond to classroom activities differently.

There was a significant difference between the two classes awareness of issues in multicultural education ( $F = 7.052, p < .01$ ). The two-week class was more aware of multicultural issues than the weekend course was. Both classes became more aware of multicultural issues throughout the duration of the class ( $F = 9.591, p < .01$ ). The weekend class average pretest cluster score,  $M = 4.11$ , increased to  $M = 4.39$  on the posttest. The two-week class average cluster score increased from  $M = 4.35$  to  $M = 4.67$  on the posttest, which indicated increased awareness of multicultural issues.

An evaluation of participants' attitudes indicates they were aware of multicultural issues in education prior to the multiculturalism class. They recognized that students' cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds may influence how they view educational activities. After participation in the multiculturalism class they became more aware of the influence culture, ethnicity, and religion may have on a child's education. Future educators will most likely be working with children from a variety of backgrounds. It is important for them to realize the influences of these backgrounds on children's perceptions so these differences can be used as assets in the classroom and children's learning can be maximized.

### Key Question Two

The second key question determined whether participants' professional courses prepare them to deal with multicultural approaches to education. Survey items 4 through 14 attempted to answer this question. The following issues were considered when determining whether preservice teachers believe coursework is preparing them to deal with multicultural approaches to education:

- 4) My professional education courses have presented me with techniques for bringing a variety of cultures into classroom.
- 5) My professional education courses have made me more aware of cultural diversity in the U.S.A.
- 6) My professional education courses have made me more aware of the need for cultural diversity in education.
- 7) My professional education courses have presented me with techniques for effectively teaching children whose national and/or racial background differ from my own.
- 8) My professional education courses have presented me with techniques for effectively teaching children whose cultural identity differs from my own.
- 9) My professional education courses have presented me with techniques for effectively teaching children whose religious beliefs differ from my own.
- 10) My professional education courses have helped me communicate with students from diverse backgrounds.
- 11) My professional education courses have given me the knowledge to be able to locate and evaluate culturally diverse materials.
- 12) My professional education courses have helped me to communicate with the families of students from diverse backgrounds.
- 13) When I complete my training at this university, I will be sufficiently prepared to meet the educational needs of students from diverse ethnic and cultural heritage.
- 14) When I complete my training at this university, I will be sufficiently prepared to teach my students about different cultures.



There was a significant difference between the pretest and posttest groups attitudes on how well courses have prepared them to deal with multicultural approaches to education ( $F = 20.983, p < .01$ ). Participants' change in attitude could be seen through the various questions they agreed more strongly with on the posttest than they had on the pretest. After the class participants agreed more strongly that their courses taught them the need for multiculturalism in education, taught them techniques for teaching children from a variety of backgrounds, and gave them the ability to communicate with families and students from diverse backgrounds. However, they agreed less strongly to the statement, "When I complete my training at this university, I will be sufficiently prepared to meet the educational needs of students from diverse ethnic and cultural heritage." The weakening agreement on this specific statement could have resulted from the fact that this is a very broad statement, and participants recognized that experience, research, and cultural understanding are necessary to meet the needs of students from differing backgrounds.

### Key Question Three

The third question dealt with whether participants expressed interest in receiving additional training in multicultural education. Questionnaire items 15 through 18 attempted to answer this question. The following issues were considered when determining participants' interest in receiving more multicultural education training:

- 15) I would like to receive more training in ways to teach students with different cultural backgrounds.
- 16) I would like to receive more training in ways to bring other cultures into the classroom.

17) I would like to receive more training in evaluating the educational achievements of students from culturally diverse backgrounds.

18) I would like to receive more training in identifying and evaluating culturally diverse materials for use in the classroom.

Participants expressed interest in receiving additional training in multicultural education. There was a significant difference between the two classes in response to this cluster ( $F = 12.248, p < .01$ ). The two-week class expressed more interest in receiving additional training than the weekend class did. The differences between classes may have been due to the fact that the weekend class received the information in a condensed form and felt saturated with information, while the two-week class received the information over a greater length of time and felt less overwhelmed. The differences between the classes' response to this item could have also been caused by pre-existing differences between the two groups.

There was no difference between pretest and posttest scores of the participants. Participants did not feel more strongly the need for additional multicultural education after the class than they had prior to completing the class. However, participants indicated they were interested in additional training prior to completing the multiculturalism class. Multiculturalism, especially its effect and use in education, is an area in which professionals in education need to keep informed. It is encouraging that participants felt the need to learn more on this topic.

#### Key Question Four

The fourth key question dealt with the consistency between participant views on appropriate classroom practices and current research and practice on the issue of multicultural education. Items 19 through 22 attempted to answer this research question. The following

issues were considered when determining how consistent opinions were with practice and research.

- 19) Teaching children in their native languages along with English retards their reading development.
- 20) It is important for children to read/hear stories, songs, and information about their own ethnic/cultural backgrounds.
- 21) For non-English speaking children, a skills approach to reading is preferable to literature-based approach.
- 22) School curriculum throughout the U.S.A. reflects the cultural make-up of the larger society.

Overall participants' attitudes were neutral on this issue. The only statement that did not elicit a neutral response was, "It is important for children to read/hear stories, songs, and information about their own ethnic/cultural backgrounds." Respondents agreed with this statement. The consistent neutrality of participants' responses may indicate that they were not sure how to respond to these statements. The neutral responses for this key question have significant implications. It is important for individuals in education to be knowledgeable about the most appropriate ways to teach students from a variety of cultural and ethnic backgrounds. The lack of opinionated responses made it appear that participants were not prepared in this area.

#### Key Question Five

The fifth key question dealt with whether or not preservice teachers anticipated addressing multicultural issues in their own classrooms. Questionnaire items 23 through 28 attempted to answer this research question. The following issues were considered when

determining teachers' beliefs about whether or not they would be addressing multicultural issues in their classrooms.

23) When I become a teacher, I will probably have students from different cultural/racial backgrounds.

24) When I become a teacher, I will probably have students from different religious backgrounds.

25) When I become a teacher, I will probably have students from different cultural backgrounds.

26) When I become a teacher, I expect to teach my students about different cultures.

27) When I become a teacher, I expect to teach my students about different ethnic groups.

28) When I become a teacher, I expect to teach my students about other religions.

In general, participants anticipate addressing multicultural issues in their classrooms.

There was a significant difference in responses between the two different classes ( $F = 9.007$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The two-week class agreed more strongly that they would be addressing multicultural issues in their classrooms than did the weekend class.

There was not a significant difference between the pretest and posttest attitudes of the participants. Participants experienced no change in attitude in whether they would address multicultural issues in their own classroom. Since the student population is becoming more diverse, it is very likely that teachers will have a variety of cultures and ethnicities in their classrooms. Even if teachers have a very homogenous student population it is important for them to realize the responsibility they have to their students to educate them so they can interact in a very diverse world.

### Key Question Six

The sixth key question identified whether or not preservice teachers have any personal attitudes that may prevent them from making effective use of multicultural approaches. Survey items 29 through 43 attempted to answer this research question. The following issues were considered when determining whether attitudes could prevent effective use of multicultural approaches.

- 29) Foreign music makes me feel uncomfortable.
- 30) I dislike it when people change familiar stories or use different versions.
- 31) Stories from many cultures are too different or strange for children to understand.
- 32) Elementary school age children find stories and songs from diverse cultures boring.
- 33) Children almost always prefer familiar stories and songs.
- 34) Too much diversity lowers educational standards
- 35) Students should be exposed to a variety of cultures in and out of the classroom.
- 36) Students need to know about cultures that differ from their own.
- 37) The teacher should be more concerned with teaching about the cultures of his or her students than with teaching about other cultures.
- 38) One of the goals of American education is to bring everyone into the cultural mainstream.
- 39) Students with different language backgrounds should all be taught in English to assure rapid educational progress.
- 40) Children should speak, read, and write Standard English at all times while in school.
- 41) Exposing children to the “classics” best assures that they will learn the basics.

42) If you have no minority students in your school, you don't need to be concerned with multicultural materials.

43) I believe learning about different cultures is important, but there isn't time to fit all of that into the school day.

Participants did not report having attitudes that may prevent them from making effective use of multicultural approaches. There was a significant difference between the two classes responses ( $F = 5.84, p < .05$ ). Both classes scored low in this cluster, in that they did not report having personal attitudes that would prevent them from making effective use of multicultural approaches. The two-week course, however, had a significantly lower score than did the weekend course. The length of the two-week class may have given the students the opportunity to focus on and evaluate their attitudes toward multiculturalism more so than did the weekend class. There was no significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores. Since participants entered the class with very few negative personal attitudes, the lack of change that occurred after the class is not surprising.

### Summary

In summary, a change in attitudes occurred in some areas explored by the questionnaire but not in others. Participants were more aware of multicultural issues in education after taking the class than they were prior to taking the class. A positive change in attitudes also occurred in the second key question. After taking the multiculturalism class participants felt more prepared by their professional courses to deal with multicultural issues in education than they did before taking the course. This result may be interpreted in two ways. This could mean that they multiculturalism course itself made the participants more prepared to deal with multicultural

approaches to education, or it could mean that the multiculturalism course helped them pool information gained from all courses and look at it from a multicultural perspective.

Significant differences between the two-week class and the weekend class were also found. A significant difference between classes was found on the first key question: Are preservice teachers aware of multicultural issues in education? The two-week class was more aware of multicultural issues in education than the weekend course. A significant difference between classes was also found on the amount of interest in receiving more training in multicultural education. The two-week class expressed more interest in receiving additional training than the weekend class. A significant difference was also found in whether or not participants believed that they would be addressing multicultural issues in their classrooms. The two-week class agreed more strongly that they would be addressing multicultural issues in their classrooms. Lastly, there was a significant difference between classes, in whether participants had any personal attitudes that may prevent them from making effective use of multicultural approaches. Although both classes had relatively few attitudes that would prevent them from making use of multicultural approaches, the two-week class had less negative attitudes than the weekend classes.

In all cases where there was a significant difference between classes, the two-week class had more positive multicultural attitudes than the weekend class. The large amount of differences between classes could be caused by the difference in populations that were enrolled in the courses. The two-week class had a large amount of graduate students enrolled, while the weekend course had a lot of undergraduates. The graduate students may have more experience with multicultural issues through working and education, which may give them a broader perspective. The differences between classes could also be affected by the condensed format of

the weekend course. While students from the weekend course may feel saturated by information and stressed by the short-time frame in which the course is presented in, participants enrolled in the two-week course had the opportunity to absorb the information over a longer period of time.

The following chart depicts the average responses for the six key questions addressed by the questionnaire. As can be seen on the chart participants pretest attitudes toward multiculturalism were positive. Participants' attitudes either became more positive toward multicultural education or remained constant throughout the duration of the class.

Table 2

Mean Responses to Key Questions

Key Questions	Weekend Class Pretest	Weekend Class Posttest	Two-week Class Pretest	Two-week Class Posttest
1. Are preservice teachers aware of multicultural issues in education?	4.11	4.39	4.35	4.67
2. Do participants' believe that their professional courses are preparing them to deal with multicultural approaches to education?	3.12	3.57	3.18	3.74
3. Do preservice teachers express interest in receiving additional training multicultural approaches to education?	3.98	3.98	4.22	4.50
4. Are preservice teachers' views of appropriate classroom practices for multicultural education consistent with current research and practice?	3.26	3.16	3.23	3.09
5. Do preservice teachers anticipate addressing multicultural issues in their own classrooms?	3.91	3.99	4.19	4.33
6. Do preservice teachers have personal attitudes that may prevent them from making effective use of multicultural approaches?	2.62	2.56	2.49	2.35



The hypothesis for this study that preservice teachers would have more positive attitudes toward multiculturalism and cultural diversity at the end of the multiculturalism class than at the beginning of the class. As can be seen by the statistics in table two, the hypothesis for this study was supported. In most key questions preservice teachers' attitudes did become more positive after taking the multiculturalism class than they were prior to taking the class.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Summary

This study was conducted to examine preservice teachers' attitudes toward multiculturalism and the change that occurred in these attitudes after completion of multicultural training. It was hypothesized that the preservice teachers would have a more positive attitude toward multiculturalism and cultural diversity at the end of the multiculturalism class than at the beginning of the class. This research question was evaluated using the Multicultural Attitude Questionnaire.

The questionnaire asked the following six key questions: 1) Are preservice teachers aware of multicultural issues in education? 2) Do preservice teachers believe that their professional courses are preparing them to deal with multicultural approaches to education? 3) Do preservice teachers express interest in receiving additional training in multicultural approaches to education? 4) Are preservice teachers' views of appropriate classroom practices for multicultural education consistent with current research and practice? 5) Do preservice teachers anticipate addressing multicultural issues in their own classrooms? 6) Do preservice teachers have personal attitudes that may prevent them from making effective use of multicultural approaches?

Seventy-six students enrolled in one of two sections of Multiculturalism: Issues and Perspectives course participated in the study. The research study consisted of a pretest and posttest that were given at the beginning and conclusion of the course to evaluate whether or not a change in attitudes occurred.

## Conclusions

Results of this study indicate that multicultural training does have an effect on preservice teachers' attitudes toward multiculturalism and cultural diversity. Participants reported being more aware of multicultural issues in education after taking the class than they were prior to taking the class. Participants also responded feeling more prepared by their professional courses to deal with multicultural issues in education after taking the class than they had prior to taking the course. This result may be interpreted in a variety of ways. The multiculturalism course itself could have made the participants feel more prepared to deal with multicultural approaches to education, or the course could have helped them look at previously learned information from a multicultural perspective.

Significant differences between the weekend and two-week classes' attitudes were also found. The two-week class was more aware of multicultural issues in education, was more interested in receiving additional training in multicultural education, believed more strongly that they would be addressing multicultural issues in their classrooms, and had fewer personal attitudes that would prevent them from making effective use of multicultural approaches. The differences between classes could have been effected by pre-existing differences between participants enrolled in each class, or could be a result of the format in which the class was taught. The finding that there were differences in attitudes between the classes was an unexpected result of the study.

## Recommendations

The results of this study raised some unanswered questions that should be addressed in future research. As stated previously, the differences in attitudes between the weekend and two-week classes were an unexpected outcome in the study. Research should be done further looking

at the format of the class and how it affects participants' attitudes toward multiculturalism. How would a semester long class compare to a weekend and two-week course in the amount of change which occurred in preservice teachers' attitudes toward multiculturalism? Another component of the multiculturalism class is the multicultural field experience, which requires 50 hours of experience working with culturally diverse youth. Future research should investigate the effects of the field experience in comparison to the classroom experience on preservice teachers' attitudes toward multiculturalism.

Lastly, although a change in attitude was seen immediately at the conclusion of the class it is important to know whether positive attitudes toward multiculturalism in education carry over to the classroom. Further research should be conducted to evaluate whether the change in attitude facilitated by multicultural training maintains throughout student teaching and employment experiences. It is important that preservice teachers are educated about various cultures and how to use multicultural principles in the classroom so that all students have an equal opportunity for academic success. Just educating preservice teachers about multiculturalism and multicultural issues is not enough; they also must be instilled with attitude that envelops the principles of multiculturalism. The effect of multicultural training must not only be an increase of knowledge, but also result in positive attitudes toward multiculturalism and cultural diversity that can be carried into employment and life in the classroom.

## APPENDIX

## MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS QUESTIONNAIRE

**General Instructions:** Read each item carefully and mark the appropriate space or write your response in the appropriate space. Please respond to all statements.

A. Demographic Information

Gender

\_\_\_ Male  
\_\_\_ Female

Status

\_\_\_ Freshman  
\_\_\_ Sophomore  
\_\_\_ Junior  
\_\_\_ Senior  
\_\_\_ Graduate  
\_\_\_ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Major

\_\_\_ Education (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Race/Ethnicity

\_\_\_ Caucasian  
\_\_\_ African American  
\_\_\_ Hispanic  
\_\_\_ Asian Heritage  
\_\_\_ Native American  
\_\_\_ Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Age:

\_\_\_ Years old

Have you received any multicultural training other than the class you are currently enrolled in?

\_\_\_ No  
\_\_\_ Yes (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements by circling the appropriate letter following the statement.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree	
SD	D	N	A	SA	
1. Students with different ethnic backgrounds may respond to classroom activities differently.	SD	D	N	A	SA
2. Students with different cultural identities may respond to classroom activities differently.	SD	D	N	A	SA
3. Students with different religious beliefs may respond to classroom activities differently.	SD	D	N	A	SA
4. My professional education courses have presented me with techniques for bringing a variety of cultures into the classroom.	SD	D	N	A	SA
5. My professional education courses have made me more aware of cultural diversity in the U.S.A.	SD	D	N	A	SA
6. My professional education courses have made me more aware of the need for cultural diversity in education.	SD	D	N	A	SA
7. My professional education courses have presented me with techniques for effectively teaching children whose national and/or racial background differ from my own.	SD	D	N	A	SA
8. My professional education courses have presented me with techniques for effectively teaching children whose cultural identity differs from my own.	SD	D	N	A	SA
9. My professional education courses have presented me with techniques for effectively teaching children whose religious beliefs differ from my own.	SD	D	N	A	SA
10. My professional education courses have helped me communicate with students from diverse backgrounds.	SD	D	N	A	SA
11. My professional education courses have given me the knowledge to be able to locate and evaluate culturally diverse materials.	SD	D	N	A	SA
12. My professional education courses have helped me to communicate with the families of students from diverse backgrounds.	SD	D	N	A	SA
13. When I complete my training at this university, I will be sufficiently prepared to meet the educational needs of students from diverse ethnic and cultural heritage.	SD	D	N	A	SA
14. When I complete my training at this university, I will be sufficiently prepared to teach my students about different cultures.	SD	D	N	A	SA

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	
<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	
15. I would like to receive more training in ways to teach students with different cultural backgrounds.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
16. I would like to receive more training in ways to bring other cultures into the classroom.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
17. I would like to receive more training in evaluating the educational achievements of students from culturally diverse backgrounds.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
18. I would like to receive more training in identifying and evaluating culturally diverse materials for use in the classroom.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
19. Teaching children in their native languages along with English retards their reading development.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
20. It is important for children to read/hear stories, songs, and information about their own ethnic/cultural backgrounds.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
21. For non-English speaking children, a skills approach to reading is preferable to literature-based approach.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
22. School curriculum throughout the U.S.A. reflects the cultural make-up of the larger society.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
23. When I become a teacher, I will probably have students from different cultural/racial backgrounds.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
24. When I become a teacher, I will probably have students from different religious backgrounds.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
25. When I become a teacher, I probably have students from different cultural backgrounds.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
26. When I become a teacher, I expect to teach my students about different cultures.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
27. When I become a teacher, I expect to teach my students about different ethnic groups.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
28. When I become a teacher, I expect to teach my students about other religions.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
29. Foreign music makes me feel uncomfortable.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
30. I dislike it when people change familiar stories or use different versions.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
31. Stories from many cultures are too different or strange for children to understand.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Neutral</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>	
<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	
32. Elementary school age children find stories and songs from diverse cultures boring.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
33. Children almost always prefer familiar stories and songs.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
34. Too much diversity lowers educational standards.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
35. Students should be exposed to a variety of cultures in and out of the classroom.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
36. Students need to know about cultures that differ from their own.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
37. The teacher should be more concerned with teaching about the cultures of his or her students than with teaching about other cultures.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
38. One of the goals of American education is to bring everyone into the cultural mainstream.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
39. Students with different language backgrounds should all be taught in English to assure rapid educational progress.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
40. Children should speak, read, and write Standard English at all times while in school.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
41. Exposing children to the “classics” best assures that they will learn the basics.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
42. If you have no minority students in your school, you don’t need to be concerned with multicultural materials.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>
43. I believe learning about different cultures is important, but there isn’t time to fit all of that into the school day.	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>

**Please write any comments that you may have about this class or this questionnaire here:**



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