

A Case Study of Seven Preservice Teachers' Emerging Philosophy about Multicultural Education

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ABSTRACT

Students enter a teacher education program with a set of preconceptions about teaching formed from their own personal experiences. As such, this article (1) examines preservice teachers' educational philosophical statements on the importance of multicultural education at three benchmarks during their preservice education program, and (2) describes characteristics of preservice teachers' conceptualizations of multicultural education during their preservice multicultural course and their student teaching experience with diverse learners.

A Case Study of Seven Preservice Teachers' Emerging Philosophy about Multicultural Education

Students enter a teacher education program with a set of preconceptions about teaching formed from their own personal experiences that are often a reflection of the

values and practices of a dominant culture (Nieto, 2009; Nieto & Bode, 2007). In today's school environments, these preconceptions may not "fit" because classrooms are and continue to become more diverse (Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2006; Davidman & Davidman, 2000). It seems then that educators who come from non-diverse experiences and who have been trained in "the traditional programs" are not prepared to teach in environments of diversity (Grossman, 2003; Author, 1992). Higgins and Moule (2009) note that many of these preservice teachers are being prepared to teach in classrooms that are not part of their personal histories. Van Hook (2002) states that preparing student teachers to meet the challenges of school diversity warrants the development of multicultural education courses and the fusing of multicultural education ideologies in all student teacher course work. Multicultural education brings to the forefront the worth of diversity. Multicultural education cements the foundation stones of a philosophy of education that, in turn, sets the parameters within which the value of diversity thrives (Banks & Banks, 2009; Grant, 2009; Sleeter & Grant, 1994; Pang, 2005). Likewise, if preservice teachers are ignorant of their biases, the likelihood of them offering an equitable learning environment within their classrooms is low (Alderman, 1999; Parsons, 2005).

A growing body of literature suggests that a strong association between personal life experiences, values, and one's own teaching style is important in enhancing the awareness of diversity issues to preservice teachers (Sleeter, 2001; Gay, 2000). When the aforementioned philosophical perspectives are implemented effectively in student teacher course work, it is probable that cultural sensitivity levels rise to reflect positive attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors toward culturally and economically diverse students (Hernandez, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Author, 1990). As student teachers develop cultural sensitivity and gain knowledge about human diversity, it is likely that these educators will apply cultural awareness information to ensure that diverse learners are academically successful (Banks & Banks, 2009). Thus, the purpose of this study is to describe how seven future educators developed their philosophy of multicultural education during their teaching education preparation and student teaching experience. More specifically, the study (1) examines preservice teachers' educational philosophical statements on the importance of multicultural education at three benchmarks during their preservice education program, and (2) describes characteristics of preservice teachers' conceptualizations of multicultural education during their preservice multicultural course and their student teaching experience with diverse learners.

Conceptual Framework

Cultural pluralism, a term coined by Horace Kallen 1924, provided the impetus for promoting acceptance and respect for human diversity in the educational system (cited in Golnick & Chinn, 2008). This theory has three basic principles: (a) people do not choose their ancestry; (b) each ethnic group's culture has something positive to share with the American culture; and, (c) the idea of democracy and equality carries an implicit assumption that although there are differences, people should be viewed as equal (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 1992). The ideologies of multicultural education have

been formed from this theory. Multicultural education is viewed as a philosophy, that is, a way of thinking; and as a process, that is, a way of doing. Multicultural education (a) augments the pedagogical knowledge base and sharpens a teacher's effectiveness in facilitating the achievement of all the students regardless of their racial-ethnic identity language ability their socioeconomic status, and (b) modifies a teacher's attitudes, values, and beliefs concerning students of color and poverty. According to Mills (1983), multicultural is defined as: a philosophy and a process by which schools demonstrate- in staffing patterns, curriculum, instructional practices and school-community relations acceptance and respect for human diversity as a means of providing all children an equitable quality education in preparation for living in a culturally pluralistic society. It means that an education system must be cognizant of more than the skin colors, backgrounds and religious beliefs of people (Kyles & Olafson, 2008; Alderman, 1999).

The Study

The subjects in this study were seven European American preservice teachers with similar educational preparatory backgrounds from a large university in the Southwest. The sample includes one male and six females who followed the current teacher education program requirements at the university, received their multicultural education course from the same professor in the same course section during the spring semester. The students were assigned to an elementary school with grades, 2-4, or middle school with grades 5-8 in a small urban community with a diverse population that included 30% African Americans, 30% Hispanics, 30% European Americans and 10% Asian and Native Americans.

Assessment of the change in preservice teacher's philosophy of education was taken three times during the teacher preparation experience. Data were obtained from philosophical statements from each of the subjects before each entered the teacher education program. The students responded to the question prompt: "Why do you want to become a teacher?" A second benchmark statement was taken during the time the students were enrolled in a multicultural education course. Each student was administered a Minority Mentorship Project Questionnaire at the beginning and at the end of the intensive five-week course in multicultural education (Author, 1990).

Additional data taken from preservice teachers' written assignments during their multicultural education course and from the thematic units and supporting lesson plans during their student teaching experiences were analyzed for key domains and further sorted into categorical units (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln, 2003). Preservice teachers' reflective logs and supervisor observations during the student teaching experience, as well as pre-and post-interviews with cooperating teachers and building administrators, were also analyzed for descriptive features.

Discussion

Ironically, preservice teachers began their teacher education program from a relatively similar philosophical stance. The preservice teachers were assigned to schools that reflected a high degree of diversity. Emerging changes in the philosophy of education of each preservice teacher became more apparent during their multicultural education course and were reflected in their journal writing during this time. The most significant changes, however, were noted in their journals written during their student teaching experiences. Through these expressed changes in their perceptions of education, one can draw inferences from the teachers in their elementary or middle school teaching assignments.

The following sections contain summaries of some of the major themes that emerged over time as preservice teachers evolved into student teachers and eventually into degreed undergraduates in elementary education. Each preservice/student teacher/undergraduate teacher is designated by a capital letter to maintain anonymity. The major common themes addressed in this paper are the initial philosophy of education statement; reactions, and sensitivity levels during the multicultural education course; categories related to diversity during the student teaching experience; and the philosophy of education and multicultural education after undergraduate graduation.

The Initial Philosophy of Education

Teacher A

Teacher A attended a small, rural school, was involved in the academic decathlon, vocational programs, 4-H, and highly active in sports. His previous experience with children began with a pre-employment childcare program he took in high school. He enjoyed the first course so much that he decided to take the second year of the course. In college, Teacher A continued to work in a KIDS KLUB in the after school program as a staff person and eventually, as a supervisor at an elementary school site. "Since I was in high school I've known I wanted to be a teacher." Teacher A continues on his student teaching application..."I want to become a teacher because I love kids....working with them and watching them learn and grow." He continues that teaching is difficult and frustrating but that he believes that he will be one of those "special teachers" who gives students the tools to build on their natural love of learning.

He requested a science education position with older elementary students. Teacher A was assigned to a seventh grade physical science classroom in an upper middle school. The first day in his journal, Teacher A revealed that he was getting nervous about being a student teacher. The classes that he "loved" had been successful at making people feel relaxed and comfortable around me. I enjoy making them laugh and talk about themselves. I think this is especially important when you work with children." When he first heard about his student teaching assignment, he expressed concern. After he visited the school site, he reported that he was excited about the experience.

Teacher B

Teacher B, on the other hand, wanted to be a teacher because she had several relatives in the teaching profession and they had encouraged her to become a teacher. Her first experience teaching had been in a Vacation Bible School. Since that time, she had taught flag routine to other students in high school. From these experiences, she felt that teaching was a profession where a person has the "opportunity to really make a difference in the lives of others."

Like Teacher A, Teacher B came from a small, rural setting. Her area of academic specialization was mathematics and she had requested lower elementary grades. She had graduated as valedictorian of her class, voted the ideal student, and most versatile in her class. She was assigned to a third-grade, lower-tracked classroom.

Teacher C

When Teacher C entered the teacher education program, she saw the classroom as a place to find challenges, experiences, and opportunities for success in teaching children. She considered herself motivated to meet these challenges. Teaching, she felt, would be an interesting and rewarding experience, one where it would be possible to learn from making mistakes. As a teacher, she anticipated that she would take pride that "her job will help shape the future of our world and our nation by shaping children's learning and giving students the knowledge and skills they would need to become competent, successful adults...to make a difference in their lives."

Teacher C requested a lower elementary placement in reading and language arts. She was placed in a seventh grade reading classroom for students with remedial or enrichment needs in reading. In high school she was voted the "wittiest" and felt that this was a special quality to be an effective teacher. I made inferences from their summative essays on the values of education especially in a multicultural settings and the role of the teacher in diverse learning environments.

Teacher D

Teacher D had a similar background to the other student teachers in the study. She graduated second in her class, served as class president for four years, was active in sports, and won several academic scholarships. She also requested a lower elementary classroom with a specialization in reading. Unlike Teacher B, she was assigned to a high tracked fourth grade classroom.

Teacher D also felt that she had much to contribute to the knowledge base of a student. "Children have so much to learn and I want to contribute to their knowledge." Moreover, she writes, "I enjoy watching children learn and being a part of the complex profession called teaching." Before she entered the teacher education program, Teacher D, like the other preservice teachers, had little teaching experience. She had taught in a Bible School and tutored in an advanced middle school science program.

Teacher E

Teacher E begin her reason for becoming a teacher with a common phrase..."Coming from a family of relatives in the teaching field, I learned early how important a teaching career was from each one of them...my family puts a great deal of work into their job. ..their stories, concerns, and pride...told me it was all worth their while." Teacher E further wrote that she always enjoyed children. She had experience helping her younger brother with schoolwork. She writes, "He has learning problems and I enjoyed the challenge of motivating him and helping him read." She concluded that teaching was a job she would enjoy doing and something in which she would be successful. Teacher E moved from a large city when she was in high school to a small rural area when her father lost his job. She had worked during high school in after-school clerical positions in the school district. During her preservice course work she continued to work part-time as a clerk in the university bookstore. She quit her job halfway though her student teaching experience. She requested a primary classroom with a specialization in reading. Her placement was in a remedial third grade classroom.

Teacher F

Teacher F entered the teacher education program because teaching "excited her" and she wanted to help children learn. Before she entered the teacher education program, Teacher F had experienced several "wonderful" teachers whom she felt make an "incredible" difference in her life. She felt that even though teaching would not be easy, she would welcome the challenge. She hoped to use several instructional approaches like "whole language experience" and "holistic thinking" in her classroom. She adds, "I want to see how theory looks when it is put into practice."

Teacher F had previous experience working with younger children. She worked in a Bible school, helped in a preschool program and cared for children since she was in seventh grade. During college, she worked as a waitress part-time in a popular restaurant but continued to do volunteer work in an after school preschool program. She had requested a lower elementary classroom with a specialization in language arts. She was assigned the highest tracked second-grade classroom in the district.

Teacher G

Teacher G stated before she entered the professional program that she would not teach school. She planned on attending graduate school after she completed her bachelor's degree in order to pursue a degree in speech pathology. She chose elementary education because she felt it would be a beneficial experience in her future career. She adds, "I truly love children and always have...I enjoy my education classes and am happy in my major."

Like the other student teachers, Teacher G attended high school in a small, rural setting. In school, she had been active in cheerleading, class leadership roles, and the

National Honor Society. Her working experiences included clerical work at a law office and the campus library. She felt she had little experience with children. "My teaching experience has only been through the nursery at church." Even though she requested a lower elementary classroom with a specialization in reading, she was placed in a sixth grade lower level tracked classroom.

Overall, it appears that prior to beginning their student teaching experience, none of the teachers had extensive experience teaching, especially working with students of diversity. Their understanding of being an educator was developed from personal models, especially family members who generally had positive teaching experiences. All of the teachers gained most of their "know-how" of the classroom and how it operates from their own experiences in small, rural classrooms. While it is uncertain if the teachers had been in tracked programs, it seems that all of them were in the top ten percent of their class academically. It also appears that each of these teachers, as they began their professional program in education, perceive themselves in a contributory role. In other words, they believed that the role of the educator is to provide knowledge to students so they could be successful in the future. The seven teachers also felt that they enjoyed working with children and were anticipating working with them in a teaching-learning environment.

Reactions and Sensitivity During the Multicultural Education Course

The seven students were enrolled in a daily, five-week course along with 14 other preservice teachers. Data collected during this time demonstrated that each of the teachers demonstrated differing degrees of sensitivity development during the course. However, the sensitivity instrument used in the study failed to demonstrate a significant change in sensitivity during their course work. A more revealing source during this time was their journal entries where there were references made to the multicultural education course. Teacher A made one entry about the course. "I feel that I will be learning a lot from the multicultural education class." After this journal entry, Teacher A made no more mention of the multicultural education course. Teacher B referred to the course because she became interested in multicultural literature. She developed a multicultural social studies unit and as part of the process, she seeking out books about Japan and Japanese Americans.

The activity made her "more excited" about getting into a classroom where she could share all the books she found with her class. Teacher C did not mention the multicultural course in her journal. She appeared to be more concerned that she had been assigned to do her student teaching in seventh grade reading. She felt that people "made faces" when she told them what grade she was assigned. She also wrote about her concern for effective discipline but concluded, "I'll do fine...it will be nice to be out of this hectic school setting and into the classroom."

Teachers D and F probably spent the most time writing in their journals about their multicultural education experiences. Teacher D wrote how she gave an oral report on a holiday called the Carnival and felt that she learned from others in the class about different international holidays. She felt that celebrating international holidays would be

great to do in her classroom when she became a teacher. She added, "Kids should become familiar with various cultures and their traditions." The following day, Teacher D had a test in another class. She felt she learned a lot of information that she knew she would forget right after the test. She writes, "I hope that in my future classroom, I will not require my class to have to memorize a lot of facts for a test...I want learning to be more fun!" A movie that Teacher D saw the following weekend also impacted her philosophy of multicultural education. She found that the movie seemed to say that existence on earth is minute compared to the larger scheme of life. She disagreed with the movie, and countered that each person needs to make the best of his/her life and do what can be done to make life enjoyable. The movie also brought up issues that Teacher D had not experienced like the poverty state of low-income of Blacks in L.A. She writes, "A lot of bad things go on out there that I've never had to deal with...It feels good to keep up with what is going on because the children in our classes will all have different experiences. We need to try to relate to each one of them."

Teacher E did not appreciate the timing and the placement of the multicultural education course. She began her student teaching semester with two emotional states - fatigue and excitement. She found that course work during this time was "frustrating." Too much material was being crammed into five weeks." She felt that if teachers contained at this pace, she would be "sooo, burnt out." She added, "I'm already tired of hearing multicultural this and that. It's not that I don't think it's important but - four hours a day, five days a week for five weeks is a little much,"

Teacher F and G, on the other hand, had high praise. Each preservice teacher's first entries into the journal were highly positive about her multicultural education course, Teacher F found the course interesting because even though she felt she knew the information, it was important for the preservice teachers to be reminded about multicultural education. In her next entry, she describes several multicultural literature books she bought for her future classroom. She found the teacher to be "a highly informative, dynamic person." She found that although she enjoyed "all the time we have with her," she was surprised to discover that many of the students did not agree with the multicultural education teacher, Teacher F concluded, "It proves that I as a teacher may not be able to get through to every student. Sometimes, my opinion will clash with others because my teaching style may conflict with others' learning styles."

Teacher G found the multicultural education enjoyable. She felt that the class got into many interesting classroom discussions about school in general and why some students get a better education than others. She added, "We also have had some classes dealing with prejudice in the class and with parents. She found it interesting to listen to other class members' perspectives on this "touchy" subject. By the end of the course, however, teacher G grew impatient and like teacher E, felt that she had enough schoolwork and was ready to put practical knowledge into action She added, "We are not exposed to classrooms sufficiently. I never observed a classroom until last semester...that is crazy." Preservice teachers, she wrote, are taught how to write units and lesson plans. The real lessons however, she felt should be learned and practiced in the classroom.

In summary, the preservice teachers had mixed feelings about the multicultural education course. Some of the negative reactions might be credited to the time it was scheduled in the preservice student coursework. For some of the preservice teachers, it

was impractical to plan in an artificial situation when the realistic situation was less than five weeks away. It also seemed "same-old" knowledge for some of the preservice teachers who had been exposed to multicultural concepts in another college course. Teacher F might have effectively summed up the feeling of many preservice teachers during their five-week multicultural course in a journal entry, "What we (preservice teachers) need is an 'eye-ful' of classroom experiences, not an 'ear-ful' of information on methods and theories."

Emerging Categories Related to Diversity during Student Teaching Experience

First Reactions to the Diverse Learner

None of the preservice teachers had previous experience with students of diversity. The first impressions of the diverse classroom were captured in some of the journal entries. The descriptions suggest that the preservice teachers as a whole were unfamiliar with the appearance, actions, and processing of the students. Sometimes, their apprehensions were reflected in how they perceived students as global learners. Other times, student teachers focused in more on specific characteristics.

Teachers A, C, and F reflected the concerns of inexperienced teachers who look at diverse learners from a global perspective. Teacher A felt that he was not prepared to work in a middle school based on his limited observation experience. Moreover, he was nervous about student teaching because the sixth grade that he observed was "different" from the other elementary program he observed, and teachers were telling him that his upcoming middle school experience would be a challenge. To become better prepared, he found a sixth grader down the street from his home and played basketball with him. After this, Teacher A found more confidence working with middle school students by becoming involved in a Big-Brother program at a local middle school. When he visited the school site and met his cooperating teacher and students, Teacher A felt he became more confident with middle school students. He found there was a wide range of intellectual abilities ranging from "some whiz kids to some very low students."

In like manner, Teacher C, who also taught seventh graders, looked at her students from a teacher-learner perspective. She found that her cooperating teacher considered students from two perspectives as positive individuals and different learners. Seasoned teachers thought she was "crazy" because she enjoyed the students. She felt that one of her challenges was adapting to learning styles and individual abilities. Teacher F found on her first visit to the school that the class "seemed diverse and exciting." During her student teaching experience, she made several entries into the journal, which reflected her concern for adjusting the instructional pace of the lesson and bringing in a diversity of art materials, multicultural literature, and speakers from the community. Overall, these teachers did not single out students in their classes by their race, ethnicity, socioeconomic level, or intellectual ability.

The other female preservice teachers, on the other hand, brought out these student characteristics in their journal writing. Teacher B found the fifth grade classroom where she would be working as "very diverse." She adds, "The class was pretty much equally

divided between African Americans, Whites, and Hispanics.” Her cooperating teacher told her the class was the "lowest and most immature" group she had in 20 years of teaching. She added that if Teacher B could teach "these children," she could teach almost anywhere. During her student teaching experience, Teacher B found two African American boys and one African American girl as constant discipline problems. She referred to a small, quiet Hispanic male as her favorite student. The African American students had "bad home lives," "cried easily," and were constantly in trouble.

Teacher D wrote a research paper during the five-week course work on African American children's behaviors in the classroom and concluded that African American children are still being discriminated against in the classroom. She wrote in her journal, "This (situation) has to change. " The second week of student teaching, Teacher D wrote about a "multicultural experience. "I had an African American child come up to me and tell me someone called him the ['f] word. Since I didn't hear this when it happened, there was nothing I could do. I really felt sorry for the student, though." In another classroom incident, one of her fourth grade students told other students in the class that the new girl in the class had been raped. What Teacher D found out was that the story was true, she did not react to the incident any further. Her next sentence in the journal,..."I have a school loan meeting tonight...I need to find resources to go to graduate school."

Teacher E found the students "adorable" and added in her journal entry, "they look to be lower SES." In further describing the students, Teacher E found that the second graders in the class were unconcerned about their appearance. "Most of them had ratted windblown hair and all seemed to accept each other." She compared the students to others with whom she had worked in a higher socioeconomic elementary site, a place where "it was obvious that their parents were 'professionals' and the students were a little more spoiled and self-centered." In a follow-up phone call to the school, her cooperating teacher told Teacher E that one of the students had guessed what the student teacher would look like. It seems that when the cooperating teacher told the class they would have a student teacher, one of the students asked if the new teacher would be White or Black. Another student said, "I'll bet she's White." The teacher reports that when she saw Teacher E, she realized she was right and made sure to remind the cooperating teacher about her accurate prediction. Teacher E concluded the journal entry wondering if the girl was disappointed.

Teacher G received her first "shock" about her students during an introductory phone conversation with her cooperating teacher. It seems that one of the fifth graders brought a condom to school and showed it to her friends. Teacher G was shocked that a fifth grader would have a condom. The student, when brought to the principal's office, explained that the condom belonged to her older (fourteen-year-old) sister. Teacher F adds, "What is happening in our society when fourteen-year-olds are having sex?" She concludes, "That's why I could never teach junior high school."

When Teacher G visited the classroom the first time, a "little Black girl" greeted her at the school building door and showed her to the classroom. Teacher G described the child as "a mess...one of her front teeth is cracked in half... so prissy and definitely a strong influence in the room." She added, "I hope I can handle her. "She described two "little Black boys" as "shy" and slower than the rest of the students. She felt after the visit that the students overall were all lower middle class to poor. Demographically speaking,

the classroom was 50% White, 30% Black, and 20% Hispanic. During her student teaching experience, Teacher G found that she was having trouble with the two "shy" Black boys. A "Mexican" boy, a student who just moved to the United States from Mexico during the year, was not a problem. "He just sits there and does nothing...except in the afternoon when he goes to ESL." She found that she just wanted to reach out and help him but she felt helpless not knowing his language.

Behavior Management

The common concern for all the student teachers was effective behavior management. During their student teaching experience, the teachers worked in classrooms that used a modified assertive discipline-type program. For some students, this was a minimal concern. Teacher A, for example, found that by the second week, his most difficult class had developed a collaborative spirit. They sang "Friends in Low Places" together at the end of the class period. For the other students, especially the females, the behavior management program seemed difficult to learn and largely inconsistent. Some of the teachers linked misbehavior with students of diversity. The other teachers were more concerned with misbehavior and effective behavior management techniques for the classroom rather than focusing on a particular student.

Teacher B, for example, found that she had three students in particular, all Black students, who had consistent behavior problems. One of the students, Fred, refused to do his work and repeatedly was sent to the office. The other two students got their names on the board because they shouted out in class, talked to other students during instruction, and called other students names. Teacher B also felt that the most disruptive student modeled negative behaviors for other students. For example, when one male student tried to look up a female student's dress, Teacher B felt that the student was being affected by Fred's behavior. The cooperating teacher used assertive discipline technique, monitoring negative behavior by placing straight pins by the student's name when the student did not follow a direction. When this did not work, the student teacher tried to use another tracking device, two school buses. All the students' names were placed on the "good" school bus. If the student did not follow the rules, he or she was moved to the "bad" school bus. That meant the student did not get to play on the playground that day. If the student followed the rules for the following day, the student could move back to the "good" bus. At the end of the week, all the students on the "good" school bus got popcorn. The first week, the bus idea worked. After that, the same three Black students stayed on the "bad" bus all week. Gradually, it got more "crowded" on the "bad" bus with names of other students. Fred eventually was suspended from school several times. The other Black boy's mother came to school and demanded to see the "real" teacher. After the conference, the mother decided to go to the school board with her complaint. The Black girl was sent to the office several times; eventually, she became very quiet and withdrawn in the classroom.

During the final week of student teaching, Teacher B was confronted with a problem she had never anticipated. One of the students was acting very quiet and, after the students began their group work, she burst into tears. She became highly upset and

when she calmed down a little, she told Teacher B that someone came into her room during the night and touched her where he wasn't suppose to. Teacher B took the student to the office to see the counselor (who was not there), and waited until the girl talked to the female assistant principal. The assistant principal contacted someone from child protective services who promised to go home with the girl that afternoon. By the next day, Teacher B found out that the man was a friend of her father's who had been released from prison that week after serving time for molesting children. Teacher B writes that the student seemed better the rest of the day but that "as for me, I was pretty shook up...I don't remember being prepared for this situation in my classes. .I just went by instinct and what little I've heard about dealing with these problems."

Teacher B and the cooperating teacher continued to explore ways to control their students' behaviors. The cooperating teacher contacted parents and got permission to paddle the students. These techniques seemed to settle the students down. By the middle of the following month, the students had settled into a more consistent routine of good behavior. One day the students were able to get all the squares filled in and earned 15 minutes of recess. By the afternoon, however, things returned to normal, that is, too many names on the board, Teacher B writes about this frustration, "I try to stay positive and think that different ideas will work, but so far they only seem to work for a few hours and then the behavior goes back being unacceptable...17 names on the board...I'm running out of ideas." Even though Teacher B never felt she found the behavior management plan that worked, she felt in reflection she tried several techniques that worked for a time effectively.

Teacher C wrote in her journal that discipline would be one of her biggest challenges, but she did not "blame" any particular student for the problem. Rather, she credited the misbehavior to adolescent development. 'Nature is having its way with the students right now so people should not judge the students so harshly.'" However, she was also realistic that behavior problems would exist. She added, "Serious problems need to be handled swiftly and surely." By the end of the second week, Teacher C exclaimed in her journal, "I still like my kids!" She found that although she used different behavior management techniques than her cooperating teacher, she found the students responded positively. The most serious problem that Teacher C felt existed was with the class scheduled the last period of the day. Once in her journal, she described them as a "nightmare," a time when she felt "helpless" unless she worked directly with them. Even though she felt frustrated by the class, she also felt she was doing an "okay" job working with them. Another time when seventh period acted out again, she wrote, "I really don't dislike the kids, but I just can't understand why they refuse to cooperate with me." She looked to herself for the solution to their behavior. "I need to get a good grip on several strategies for dealing with them on days like today,"

During her full teaching responsibilities, Teacher C felt that while everything went well, the "discipline was messy" and she did not feel "on" at times. Their behavior escalated later that week and she writes, "I knew the day would be coming. I had no idea how bad it would be." She writes that the problems started sixth period when she sent her first student ever to the office. Until that time, she had always handled all the discipline problems in the class. When she tried to give a full class period lecture, students continued their "ugly" behavior. When she felt she could no longer tolerate their

behavior, she had them put their heads on their desks for 5 minutes. The next day, the students behaved, the class discussion was interesting, and in two of the classes, "students asked higher order questions." From these experiences, Teacher C concludes in her last entry in the journal, "I have really had a positive experience in student teaching and a great experience working with diverse learners. I now have confidence I can handle the challengers I will face in my classroom."

Teacher D also had a global view about behavior management and classroom behavior. After a fairly uneventful start to student teaching, she confronted her first behavior problem. Toward the end of the second week, she writes in the journal about a problem she had with student classified as hyperactive. The student wrote that she hated Teacher D on a piece of paper. The child was sent to the time-out area in the room for five minutes. When the child returned from the area, she hit two girls with a stick. The cooperating teacher called the student's mother to get permission to paddle the student. When the mother refused permission, the student was assigned two-week cafeteria clean-up duty as punishment. Teacher D credited the next series of behavior problems with the proximity to spring break. During this time, Teacher D treated misbehavior lightly. "It is close to the break and they (the class) are hyper...kids are getting worse...had discipline problems today but understandable...Hurrah for spring break." She also seemed to enjoy students' excuses for their behavior. One student was absent for four days. When she returned, she announced to the class that she had her appendix taken out the previous day. Another student challenged this statement by telling the student she also had her appendix out and was out of school for two weeks. The returning student countered this statement by saying, "Well, I have to go back today so they (the doctors) can finish."

Teacher D reflected more concern for her teacher's behavior than that of her students. When two students were not paying attention during a lesson, she reported their behavior to her cooperating teacher. However, Teacher D adds, "I don't think she (the cooperating teacher) will do anything about it." For the most part, however, Teacher D remained enthusiastic about the students and maintained a positive outlook on their behavior. "I thoroughly enjoyed today," Teacher D writes in one of her last journal entries. She adds, "I tried a new discipline procedure...instead of using the board to record the names of students being bad, I wrote down students' names for being good." By the end of the day, she was able to write every student's name in the class on the board.

Teacher E began her student teaching experience in a stressed condition. She writes, "Today wasn't so good. I left with a real headache. The kids were bad." It seems that when she took the students to the bathroom, one of the students spent 5 minutes in the boy's bathroom. When she went into the bathroom and asked the students to hurry up, he told her did not need to rush because she did not know his real name. Another student told her she could not do anything anyway because she was not a "real" teacher.

Even though Teacher E's cooperating teacher "took care of the misbehaving students, Teacher E was concerned about the incident. She felt her cooperating teacher did not have an effective behavior management system. The cooperating teacher was new to the district and even though she was a veteran elementary teacher, most of her

experience had been in a small, rural Midwestern school. She reported to Teacher E that she not experienced discipline problems like this previously.

Of all the student teachers, Teacher E was the most focused on the behavior management program in the classroom. By the third week, she questioned the worth and effectiveness of the behavior management program in place in the classroom. The students did not seem to respond to rewards and punishment. They had a substitute teacher and acted up all day. By the end of the day, Teacher E wrote, "I'm just so glad the day is over. I don't want to think about or talk about student teaching again until Sunday night."

After this two-day break, Teacher E hypothesized that she needed to relax more and learn more from her time in the classroom. This change in attitude may have helped make a difference in students' behaviors the following days. Teacher E reports the students were calm and cooperative. The next time she confronted student misbehavior, she felt angry and upset with the students but deduced, "I am learning - that's good and I will figure out how to handle these boys without driving myself insane." The more Teacher E focused on the positive, the less she perceived behavior problems. The first few entries in her journal after spring break reflect Teacher E's more positive outlook on her students' behavior. She found that it was easier to ignore a student's negative behavior and to consider students as "kids" not "robots" and for some of them, she adds, "School is not where they choose to be." By the end of her student teaching experience, Teacher E found that she would be sad to finish her student teaching experience. At first, she writes, "I didn't sit back, enjoy the kids, and enjoy myself I am so glad I have this last week off from teaching so I can really enjoy them." She concludes, "they aren't really bad - they're just kids."

Teacher F entered student teaching highly enthusiastic about the two units she had previously prepared. She found that the students "tested" her initially and she had to write some of their names on the board. Information from her journal entries and supervising teacher reports during this time, however, appear to suggest that she was unhappy with the district and classroom program. She did not enjoy following the highly structured math program and basal reading series. Even though she felt that the students needed the basics, "the programs did not foster a deeper understanding of concepts. She found her teacher to be an effective disciplinarian but highly traditional. Teacher F hoped to use journals in the classroom, have students work in cooperative groups, and write their own books.

Teacher F writes little about student misbehavior. Even though one of the students brought bullets to school, chewed them, and passed them around the classroom, she did not seem to be alarmed in her journal entry. The student was sent to the office and the bullets were confiscated from him. During this time, Teacher F appeared to be more concerned with personal problems - her car breakdowns, her boyfriend break-up, and her sister's admissions to a psychiatric unit. Personal problems appear to have affected her teaching performance. Her formative evaluation report during this time from her supervising teacher and cooperating teacher reflect concern that Teacher E was unprepared for the lesson, delivered a fragmented lesson, and used minimal reinforcement.

As Teacher F worked through her personal problems, she appeared to become more concerned about the behavior management program in the classroom. She set the students into cooperative groups and developed a behavior management program for each group. In the plan, groups would receive points for correct behavior. The teacher would ignore negative behavior. At the end of the week, the groups that have the fewest marks will eat lunch in the classroom with Teacher F and the cooperating teacher. Even though Teacher F never adopted the behavior management program of the classroom entirely, she found that this modified plan was an effective compromise.

Initially, Teacher G found her cooperating teacher "all together" and "nice." After the first week of student teaching, Teacher G was not pleased with the behavior management program in the classroom. She felt that the behavior problems in the class existed because the cooperating teacher had "no" behavior management program. Three students in particular, two Black boys and a Hispanic boy, took advantage of this situation. She also felt un-stimulated by the classroom. "The class, I hate to say, is very boring," she writes. She felt she had too many high expectations from her education classes at college, a place where the settings are ideal. In contrast, in the classroom the teacher uses basal readers in every subject and "everything seems lifeless and mundane...no higher order thinking going on."

Teacher G adds, "The teacher uses assertive discipline which I don't like and yet, she does not seem to have control over some of the students, especially the Black boys." Teacher G felt she would not have the same problem because the boys "loved" her.

By the fourth week, Teacher G was having trouble getting the two Black boys (who loved her) to complete their work, stay in their seat, and stop shouting out. She sent them out into the hall, talked to them sternly, and finally, sent them to the office. She writes of her frustration, "Even when I spoke to them firmly in the teachers' lounge, they did not take me seriously. They laughed and talked back." She recounts, "I just wanted to hit all three of them I really don't think they respect me or are scared."

A month into student teaching, Teacher G taught her first lesson -in health. She felt that the lesson went "fine." Students in the classroom, however, continued to misbehave. Teacher G found typically inappropriate behaviors consisted of shout-outs, laughing, shouting, silly remarks, put-down comments, and poor listening. She concluded that she needed to be explicit before she started a lesson, to tell the students "only speak when I call on you." She reports that she felt disappointed that the students were old and mature enough to know this and grew to realize that they did not.

Several times in the journal entries Teacher G wrote that she felt the problem lay with the cooperating teacher. Basically, she felt her cooperating teacher ignored Teacher G's comments and concerns about the classroom. As the behavior problems in the classroom continued, the cooperating teacher told Teacher G to handle them herself. When she felt she "had reached the limit," Teacher G took a student to the principal's office and the principal called his mother. The student, one of the Black boys, told her, "it's ok, call my mother. She wants to talk with you, too." The next week, Teacher G's cooperating teacher disappointed her again. It seems that her cooperating teacher was flirting with another teacher during lunch. She felt that the behavior was plain embarrassing and the individuals were not acting like professionals. During the incident, Teacher G reports she "kept a smile on her face...like a good little student teacher."

As time passed in her student teaching experience, the toll of behavior problems and her unhappiness with her classroom placement seemed to be the main message of her journal writing. "The days seem to be getting better...I have resorted to becoming a witch." Teacher G found that in order to be an effective teacher, she needed to act this way. However, she felt that it was important to be "extra friendly" in the halls or on the way to lunch. She was excited about her upcoming units on Japan and Mexico. However, she concludes the journal with thoughts for the future, "I am glad we only have six more weeks. I'm ready to go on...although I will really miss [the university] and [her sorority]. She also writes, I HATE TEACHING 6TH GRADE AND I'LL NEVER TEACH THIS GRADE AGAIN.

Teacher G ends the journal with... "I 'm ready for this to be over. I'm sorry, but it's the truth." In her last entry as a student teacher, Teacher G reflects back that she would miss "my" class. She felt that some of the students who had given her the most trouble really did like her. She felt that she had not given the experience a 100% effort and that probably the burn out of school affected how well she did in students teaching. She also felt that she walked into a situation where there had been no established discipline or classroom management She also felt that she walked into a situation where there had been no established discipline or classroom management. She added that it was difficult to get the situation in order during the short time she was there...or as she stated, "I felt like I was beating a dead horse."

Collectively, the student teachers found that their perceptions affected the degree to which they experienced discipline problems. The teachers who looked at discipline in a more global perspective seemed to experience less frequent and less severe discipline problems. Teachers who perceived their placement as inappropriate, attributed discipline problems to external conditions -the cooperating teacher, the ineffective discipline plan imposed by the district. As the teachers looked to internal conditions like "becoming more relaxed with the students," they did not focus as much on a particular student's or the class's behavior problem.

The Philosophy of Education and Multicultural Education after Graduation

A month after the student teachers graduated from school, they were contracted by mail and asked to write their reactions to several open-ended questions: "How do you perceive the role of a teacher...of a student in the educational learning process?" "What instructional strategies and curricula materials did you find effective with the diverse learner?" "How important is multicultural education in today's classroom? today's school? today's world?" "What additional insights about teaching have you gained from your student teaching experience?" Most of the students answered the questions by the middle of July. Teacher A and C completed the questions after the second letter was sent.

One reason Teacher A offered for his late response was his 'whirlwind' experience with job interviewing. Within a week after he finished student teaching, Teacher A had received four offers for a teaching position. He accepted middle school position in a setting similar to his student teaching setting. In his philosophical statement

about education, Teacher A reports that he found that teaching was a challenge because students were different day-by-day .

These differences made the classroom unpredictable and even with a strong behavior management program, the most effective way he found to make learning meaningful was to work with students in cooperative groups. Even though he had not worked with middle school students previous to his experience, Teacher A found that this setting was highly rewarding and challenging. Teacher A also felt that while multicultural education as a formal course is important, it is more essential for preservice teachers to gain real life experiences in order to be effective with diverse populations. His final words continued to reflect his positive philosophy about teaching" "I am excited about beginning my teaching in the fall and intend to use the summer to get ready for the challenges that I will face in my classroom."

In a follow-up letter, Teacher B reported that she intended to begin teaching at a junior high school in a small town by her home. Her philosophy of education, however, reflected a growth in her perception of education. She writes "With the current emphasis on the ability of Americans to compete in a global economy and the necessity to deal with many social problems in this country, education is more important than ever." She continues that in a diverse society of learners, in a society where values are no longer being taught in the home, it is the role of education to provide for these challenges and encourage students to set high goals. Teacher B adds that it is the role of teachers to teach real-life skills that are relevant to students' daily lives. It is also important that instructional materials should be used that related to the experiences that students have had, but also allow students to learn about new ways of life. It is only through gaining respect for their own and other cultures will students be better able to be successful members of the emerging global village. She adds that it is important that teachers accommodate different learning styles but that these differences need to be accepted but not over-emphasized.

Teacher B also suggests that teachers of today play a stronger role on students. "In the nontraditional family, "she adds, "the teacher has more influence on the lives of children than their own parents. In these situations, teachers should act as positive role models and teach students to respect the opinions and feelings of others. Students need to be encouraged to participate in their community and to be contributing members of society." She concludes that "teachers have a unique opportunity to make the lives of our students more productive and rewarding." Reflecting on her experiences during student teaching, Teacher B writes, "I learned that no college classroom experience is as valuable as actually being in the school. During our course work, I feel we need to have more instruction about classroom management and gaining control of a classroom. I certainly did not feel prepared to do this during my student teaching experience."

Teacher C was given a position two months later as a seventh grade-reading teacher in a predominately Hispanic school district. She writes, "I could not have hand-picked this job better...only 60 different students...I am nervous and very excited." She continues, "I see my role as a teacher to do more than relay information." She adds that a teacher needs to motivate, facilitate, attract the students toward learning, and monitor the learning that takes place. Also, she adds, "a teacher must work with each learner as needed for specific skills and theories. Everything that a teacher does, she continues,

needs to be centered on the student. The student is a sponge in the process, taking in new information and it the teacher's role to ensure that each student has an adventure in the discovery process of learning. "

Teacher C perceived multicultural education as "the state of education everywhere today." " It makes sense to address multicultural education," she concludes, "because we live in a multicultural world. It should not be a question of what we include; we need to integrate multicultural education as a natural component of education."

In her follow-up letter, Teacher D writes that she had begun graduate school and was looking for a job in an elementary school by the university. In her philosophy of education statement, Teacher D continued to look at learning through the eyes of the learner." She adds that if students do not enjoy school, they will have limited learning. She continues, "Children should be able to relate what they learn to real life, and it is the job of the teacher to help motivate children to learn." She writes in her next paragraph that "each child is an individual learner, and a teacher needs to use various approaches in teaching like cooperative learning, peer tutoring, student-centered activities and manipulative to ensure that all students learn." "Some of the students," she continues, "develop at different rates and operate in the classroom at different levels. It is the role of the teacher to act as a 'guide,' to keep students moving in their learning and to explore learning on their own."

On the aspect of multicultural education, Teacher D writes, "Multicultural education should be brought into the classroom." She adds that even though the United States is a pluralistic society, schools don't reflect this. She found that diverse students should not feel like outsiders and teachers need to "attend to their needs too...to help them feel successful." She concludes, "Multicultural education benefits all children...we can learn a lot through exploring the various cultures of the world."

In follow-up correspondence, Teacher E reported that she had found a position in a small rural elementary school similar to the one in which she had worked. Reflecting back on her time at the university student teaching practicum, Teacher E felt that she had made significant growth and change in her philosophy of education. She writes, "I believe that students learn from many different viewpoints. Furthermore, they don't act like each other. The problem sometimes is that teachers expect students to act differently and that is all right." She adds, "multicultural education is important so that students can recognize that each one of them is different from another and that each one shares some similarities with others."

Teacher F completed her student teaching assignment quietly. The last week, she visited other classrooms and talked with teachers about their techniques. She also spent a day going through her cooperating teacher's files. Most of her notes are effective in an upper elementary grade(i.e.,3rd -5th grade). Teacher F, ironically, became a seventh grade-reading teacher at a moderately diverse middle school. Just before she received her position, Teacher F writes, "As a teacher, I feel that I need to address the students' basic needs before I begin to tech them. Once the child's sense of belonging, love, and worth is intact, it is possible to develop mutual respect between the teacher and child. The teacher at this point becomes the guide of the classroom." She adds that the teacher shifts roles - sometimes leads and sometimes watches in an attempt to have students take control of their own learning process. The students also have a role -to take control of their own

learning. To do this, students need to work individually, in pairs, or in groups to reach educational goals.

Furthermore, Teacher F perceives multicultural education as exceedingly important. She felt that just having the knowledge of groups and cultural differences is not enough. "We, as teachers, must learn and teach others the way to accept differences. Sometimes, it is productive to show differences and sometimes, it is not effective. The knowledge of attributes and deficits should be used as a base to improve, not a crutch to explain why something did not work."

In a follow-up letter, Teacher G reflected that the role of the teacher was to act as a facilitator of learning, acting as a guide in the learning process. She added, "Teachers must not dictate, but rather initiate and allow students to manage their learning as much as is practical. Students, she felt, need to be active participants in the ideas, goals, curricula, and activities. The student, also, she adds, must feel like an important player in the classrooms. Multicultural education, she concludes, is of utmost importance in today's classroom. "I feel the classroom is the one place, besides the home, where racial tension and prejudice can be "nipped at the bud." We, as teacher, are with these young people the majority of the day, how influential we must and can be. It is important for students to study other cultures. They are learning about their friends. For example, she found that in the unit she taught about Mexico, about 30% of the class was Hispanic and the teacher felt that the Hispanic students especially enjoyed the unit and felt a sense of pride. She concludes, "The diverse learner must be identified and the curricula should be personally meaningful in order for all to be given the best education."

Discussion and Implications

One of the noteworthy issues brought out in this paper is that the most impactful course for each teacher was student teaching. It appears from the data gathered in this case study that coursework previous to this time did not seriously impact any of these teachers' philosophy of the issues of diversity as they appear in the context of the classroom. Teacher F appears to have emerged from the course with the highest course in sensitivity. However, the realities of the classroom and her personal problems affected her overall performance in student teaching and possibly limited her ability to apply the processes and knowledge she learned in the multicultural education course.

Another strong message that comes from this study is that typically, teachers perceive multicultural education as a quality that is important in the lives of their students. They, however, remained distanced from thinking of themselves as multicultural students. Each of these teachers affirmed that multicultural education is an important aspect of education. Students need to respect the differences of others and appreciate what each other bring to the classroom. However, as McLaren (1989) has pointed out in his work, educators persist in thinking of themselves in benevolent relationships. Each of these teachers in some degree continued to perceive of himself or herself as one who acting as an "expert" in multicultural education would help those who presumably lack these resources. What was missed or perhaps perceived but not spoken of in this study is that the individuals needed to have opportunities to continue reflective

processes and sensitivity of self-awareness. It seems that once these teachers left the course, completed student teaching, they began to lose sight of how they impacted their students' perceptions through their own perceptions and modeling. While their responses to the questions appear to be "text-book correct," they missed the key ingredient in multicultural learning-"Who am I?" followed by "Who are we?"

Also, it is interesting to note that the student teachers shared a series of common concerns - student teaching grade placement and behavior management. It is more interesting to note that each student teacher's perspective of the situation impacted how the issue was handled. The more objective or global the student teacher became about the situation, the easier the student teacher handled the situation. When Teacher D looked at student teaching as a learning experience rather than a time to "try out all the wonderful ideas in her unit," the more relaxed and energized she became. As she reports, the more she "enjoyed her students."

In like manner, student teachers who looked at their actions in the classroom rather than focusing on the actions of others, who were able to ask themselves, "What else can I try?", felt enthusiastic at the end of their student teaching assignment. Teacher B who continued studies in graduate school and Teacher E who entered advanced coursework in speech pathology remained the most distant from their involvement in the classroom. The other teachers, especially Teachers A and C began to search within themselves for alternative strategies from the first week. When they left their student teaching assignments, their students, unlike the other student teacher classrooms, gave them going away parties. While these are not strong cases, it might suggest that a stronger emphasis on reflectivity skills during preservice teaching empowers a student teacher. As McLaren (2003) suggests, students who develop a high degree of reflectivity are able to "critically appropriate knowledge existing outside their immediate experience in order to broaden their understanding of themselves, the world, and the possibilities for transforming the taken-for granted assumptions about the way we live" (p.186).

What are the implications for future teacher education programs that hope to instill a richer sense of multicultural awareness through self-perceptions? One possibility is to make the lessons of this case study explicit. For example, each of the "stories" in this case could be written as a scenario and preservice teachers could analyze the situations in light of a multicultural education course. Another possibility is to continue this line of research and develop more effective checkpoints where preservice teachers and inservice teachers could conduct a more thorough self-analysis of their perceptions. In this study, the checkpoints were data points. It would also be interesting to have these times also serve as reflection points about some common issues. Finally, the student teachers in this study came from a similar background a small, rural, homogeneous high school. It would be interesting to see if there was a difference if the sample came from a large inner city school setting with high diversity.

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