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An exploratory study of multicultural curriculum and instruction

Bettyjean Roberson-Weser
Clark Atlanta University

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AN EXPLORATORY STUDY OF MULTICULTURAL CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF CLARK ATLANTA UNIVERSITY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SOCIAL WORK

By
BETTYJEAN ROBERSON-WESER

WHITNEY M. YOUNG, JR., SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK

ATLANTA, GEORGIA
MAY 2004
This study examines whether or not student teachers are prepared to work with students from diverse populations. Teachers' perceptions of culture-related identities and their manifestations in the classroom are relevant to school achievement in students. Teachers understanding of students from various cultural backgrounds can provide a caring an supportive learning environment that will more than likely promote the students cultural identity and encourage high academic performance. However, teachers misunderstandings of and reactions to students’ cultural behavior can lead to school and social failure.

A predominantly white college located in Atlanta, Georgia, provided the sample of 35 student teachers. Each participant completed a questionnaire regarding their prior understanding of diverse cultures prior to entering school. The questionnaire also discussed if the schools they are attending includes multicultural instruction and curriculum. The data collected via the questionnaire were analyzed using descriptive, as well as a P-Test. The findings of this study showed that multicultural curriculum and
instruction had no effect on teachers' perceptions when working with students from diverse culture backgrounds. Implications for measuring the variables are also discussed.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I give thanks to God for giving me strength on this long journey. To my mother, Mrs. Betty Savant-Roberson, there are not enough words to describe how you have shaped my life. You taught me to believe in myself and always go after my goals. You always saw my potential and supported me in every endeavor. I can never thank you for instilling the love and importance of education in me. You have always been my number one cheering section. I cannot ever thank you enough for not only giving me life, but helping me live it to the fullest. To my grandmother, Eleanor B. Savant, you have always supported me with love, guidance and compassion. I can never express my heartfelt gratitude for everything you have done to make my educational path a little easier. To my husband, Intef W. Weser, this has been a long road and you never lost faith that I would successfully complete this degree. Thank you for your patience, encouragement, love and guidance. You are a caring and compassionate person who works extremely hard to ensure that his family is well taken care of. I am grateful to have you as my husband. Thank you honey!!! To the rest of my family and friends, there are so many wonderful things that you have done to help me attain my goals. I am truly fortunate to have such a loving family. You have always made sure I was taken care of in every way.
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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Understanding and building upon diversity in education has received national attention (Fuller, 1992). This is primarily due to the increased number of students who are from diverse cultures and linguistic backgrounds, in which these students are at risk of school failure. This is also primarily due to the increased racial and ethnic composition of teachers who are nonminority. These nonminority teachers' find it difficult to integrate and understand multicultural education into the curriculum. In 1979, multicultural education was defined as, “education involving two or more ethnic groups that is designed to help participants clarify their own ethnic identity and appreciate that of others, reduce prejudice and stereotyping, and promote cultural pluralism and equal participation” (ERIC, 2000 p. 540). This chapter consists of the purpose of this study, the background, statement of the problem, and the significance of the study. It will close with a brief summary and description of the chapters that follow.

Purpose

This study was developed in an effort to recognize how multicultural education in the school core curriculum affects teachers’ perceptions and beliefs about students from different culture and linguistic backgrounds. Strategies to ensure that teachers are culturally diverse continue to be a significant research focus. Research has sought to
educate teachers through multicultural endeavors, however, the gap continues to widened. The purpose of this study is to examine if multicultural education and instruction effects teachers’ perceptions when working with students from culture backgrounds.

Background

It is widely recognized that the cultural gap between children in the schools and teachers is large and growing. In 2002, the enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools across the nation were 2.1% white, 13.3% black, 18.7% Hispanic, 18.44% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 8.4% American Indian/Alaskan Native (National center for Education Statistics, 2002). In contrast, the teaching force in 2000, 85% of teachers are white and middle class (Xu, 2000). With the nations schools serving a number of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, white teachers’ perceptions and poor understandings of culture-related behaviors may result in overrepresentation resulting from misidentification made by teachers who mistake cultural differences for cognitive or behavioral disabilities (Neal, 2001).

Research has shown that colleges have increased the number of culturally diverse core, curriculum courses required of teachers. However, this educating process has not deterred the fact that minority students continue to be placed in special education courses at an alarming rate (Van Hook, 2002). One of the reasons for the overrepresentation is due to school related factors such as the percentage of culturally diverse teachers (Neal, 2001). This is also due to the lack of culture diversity trainings, language barriers and biased judgments that nonminority teachers’ lack.
Statement of the Problem

The student population in this country is becoming increasingly diverse, with predictions of majority students from culture and linguistic background by the year of 2020 (Gersten & Woodward, 1994). The greatest wave of immigration since the turn of the century, combined with escalating birth rates, is creating a society with no distinct majority- one characterized by multicultural enclaves in many cities and rural areas. For example, in many schools there is no longer a majority group, instead of the traditional white dominant racial composition it is Latino, black or Chinese.

Many of these teachers are of white heritage and have little knowledge of teaching students from different culture backgrounds. These same teachers often carry the history of Eurocentric philosophies that are causing a problematic issue (Xu, 2000). According to Xu (2000), few if any, studies have specifically investigated how white student teachers integrate multicultural understandings into literacy instruction for students of diverse backgrounds. Many teacher education programs attempt to help student teachers move beyond their personal educative experiences by directly addressing issues of student diversity. However, many of these courses have little effect on student teachers' attitudes and beliefs. More fundamentally, many teachers have had no sustained contact with individuals of another race prior to entering the inner-city classroom. Not only do they lack familiarity, most are fearful of confronting the issue of race at all. For example, in college they had been taught that “blacks were really the same as white people, except perhaps they were culturally deprived” (Townsend, 2002 p. 222). This study was developed in an effort to examine if teachers limit the ability to work with students from culture and linguistic backgrounds other than their
own. Also, this study will examine the relationship between teachers perceptions and students achievement in the classroom.

Significance of the Study

Studies from the literature have shown that the student population makes up an array of races, cultures, and languages never before seen in single schools or classrooms. Studies have provided numerous information that teachers face multiple and complex issues that challenge many of their educational practices and assumptions (Bains, 1993).

This study will provide knowledge regarding the effectiveness of multicultural education and instruction on teachers' perceptions when teaching students from cultural backgrounds. There is much research that needs to be studied regarding this issue. School educators should become more familiar with students from culture backgrounds. This study will serve as a tool for referring, evaluating, identifying, placing, and serving students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. This study can also be employed to examine and improve educational services for all students.

The following chapter will provide empirical research on this study and limitations of the study. Chapter three will describe the sample, method, setting, measure, design, and procedures. Chapter four consists of an analysis of the findings using figures and graphs. Chapter five will provide an overview of findings and chapter sixth discusses implications for social work practice.
CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Teachers' own culturally biased views of literacy inhibit their ability to recognize and validate alternative literacy uses and styles (Ferdman, 1990). However, programs have introduced multicultural education and other strategies to provide students with diversity experiences in order to work well with students from cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This section will present relevant empirical literature on the importance of preparing teachers to effectively teach children from linguistic and culture backgrounds.

Demographic Reports of Teachers and Students

According to Bains (1993), there is no longer a majority group in any schools. The traditional white dominant, black minority nature of the racial composition may instead be Latino, black or Chinese. However, a number of middle class, Caucasian females with limited exposure to students who come from different culture and linguistic backgrounds continue to teach in urban schools. In fact, according to Van Hook (2002), a majority of prospective teachers were from backgrounds with limited exposure of diversity and in the year of 2000, 95% of elementary school teachers were middle class, Caucasian females (Zimpher & Ashburn, 1989; Van Hook, C. 2002).

In 1996, the enrollment of students of color in public elementary and secondary schools tripled compared to the number of teachers from nonminority background in
1994. In 1996, there were 64% white, 17% black, 14% Hispanic, 4% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 1% American Indian/Alaskan Native (National Center for Education Statistics, 1999; Sleeter, 2001). However, in 1994 the teaching force was 87% non-Hispanic, 7% black, 4% Hispanic, 1% Asian/Pacific Islander and 1% American Indian/Alaskan (U.S. Department of Education, 1997; Sleeter, 2001). However, more than one in seven children between the ages of 5 and 17 speak a language other than English at home; more than one third of them are of limited English proficiency (Villegas & Lucas, 2001).

This striking imbalance between the student and teaching populations appears to ensure that in the near future, all teachers will be instructing students whose cultural backgrounds are different from their own (Grant & Secada, 1990). According to Cushner, McCleland, & Stafford (1996), at the end of the year 2000, children of color comprised of one third of all students enrolled in public schools and it is projected that by the year 2020 this figure will increase to 40%. This is due to the increase of immigration and birth rates population of students in the United States. According to current school populations in Arizona, California, Colorado, New Mexico and Texas students from diverse backgrounds are already majority minority (Terrill & Mark 2000). Therefore, it is imperative that teachers become prepared to effectively instruct cultural groups other than their own.

Eurocentric Perspective

Approximately 88% to 90% of teachers are middle class European-American and two thirds are women and less than 5% claim fluency in a language other than English (Terrill, & Mark, 2000). Although demographic reports indicate that the racial/ethnic
composition of teachers continues to have a wide increase in nonminority teachers, it is imperative that teachers become aware of other culture perspectives. However, according to Lindsey (1985), historically teacher education has prepared teachers to effectively instruct only one cultural group—dominant, mainstream America. The American educational systems in general, remain firmly entrenched in paradigms of Eurocentrism—in its focus as well as its heritage, methodologies and conceptual structure (Simoni, 1999).

Keeping this perspective in mind, Caucasian teachers often employ their Eurocentric educational philosophies and other assimilationist in an attempt to mold "different" children to the dominant cultural and linguistic norms (Delpit, 1983). In a 2-year study of 26 white student teachers, a staff development program designed to teach multicultural content and strategies found that teachers denied the salience of race by adopting a color-blind approach and viewed the experiences of students of color as if they were white ethnic immigrants who would eventually assimilate into mainstream society (Sleeter, 1992). When working with children from diverse cultures, white student teachers stereotypic beliefs become obstacles. According to Sleeter (2001), white student teachers are fairly naive and have stereotypic beliefs about urban children, such as believing that urban children bring attitudes that interfere with education. Many white student teachers have little awareness of understanding of discrimination, especially racism. In a study, Su (1996, 1997) found that white student teachers interpret social change as meaning almost any kind of change except changing structural inequalities, and many regard programs to remedy racial discrimination as discriminatory against whites. These preconceived ideas about teaching influences teachers attitudes and beliefs
therefore the perceived obstacles for teaching a diverse curriculum are imbedded in these beliefs and attitudes (Van Hook, 2002).

Teacher Education Programs

According to Van Hook (2002), teacher education programs have a responsibility to prepare student teachers for working with diverse populations and implementing an effective multicultural curriculum. Therefore, teacher educators must focus their efforts on developing programs that better prepare future teachers for the realities of 21st-century classrooms. Colleges are addressing issues for preparing student teachers for diversity through multicultural education classes, field experiences, and community involvement in urban areas. These activities are very important in order for teachers to teach all students who live in diverse communities (Pettus, & Allain, 1999).

In a survey conducted by 19 Midwest Holmes Group teacher preparation programs, 94% of their faculty and students were white (Fuller, 1992). Only 56% of these institutions required elementary education students to complete a multicultural education course. By the time they student taught, the student teachers were concerned mainly about surviving in the classroom. Those in urban schools were completely unprepared for the students and the setting and had great difficulty (Fuller, 1992).

A study that consisted of 103 participants investigated the following student teachers' early childhood education curriculum for; (a) definitions of multicultural education, (b) sources of information from which to construct their definition, (c) perceptions of multicultural education in schools, and (d) perceptions of the ways that multicultural education should be implemented. The study found that students in all
levels of professional development continue to struggle with multicultural education (Simoni, 1999).

These two studies show a profound importance for college education programs to become more proactive in addressing student teachers' feelings concerning multicultural education and their own experiences with cultural diversity. Teacher education programs must also assist students in their conceptualization and critical reflection on multicultural education by capitalizing on opportunities throughout the students' experiences for them to critically reflect and examine their own and others' experiences regarding diversity (Neuharth-Pritchett, Reiff, & Pearson, 2001).

In contrast, many researchers and teacher educators have investigated different approaches to enhance the effectiveness of multicultural education courses. One approach is to immerse student teachers in cultural communities different from theirs (Xu, 2000). Another is to place student teachers in schools with students of diverse backgrounds for field experiences or student teaching (Xu, 2000). Few, if any, studies have specifically investigated how student teachers integrate multicultural understandings into literacy instruction for students of diverse backgrounds. A second approach is using an empathic disposition has been seen as a desirable trait for teachers in diverse settings (McAllister, & Irvine, 2002). In a study consisting of 51 teachers, results showed supported that empathetic disposition led to more positive interactions with their students, supportive classroom climates, and student-centered pedagogy. These characteristics often lead to children who perform well academically (McAllister & Irvine, 2002).

Many times, it is often difficult for educational programs to include multicultural education courses when student teachers do not feel it is important. Many student
teachers' attitudes remain unchanged, because they often do not consider multicultural education to be important (McCall, 1996). Even when teacher preparation programs offer opportunities for teacher educators to become more aware of their backgrounds, explain their conceptions, and articulate their concerns (McCall, 1996). Research overwhelmingly suggests that student teacher education programs, in general, do not alter students' attitudes and beliefs. (Neuharth-Pritchett, Reiff, & Pearson, 2001).

Limitations of the Literature

Most of the literature identified as useful for this study focused on the paradigms of Eurocentric educational philosophies and how white student teachers attempt to assimilate these ideas into the curriculum. One gap in the literature is the lack of information on how effective multicultural education is and how many schools are implementing these courses into their program.

There is also a dearth of information available about white student teachers' perceived barriers when teaching multicultural education, which implies that there is far more research needed in that area. A majority of the studies focused on teachers' perceptions and beliefs when working with other culture groups. However, there has been limited research on investigating teachers' perceived barriers. According to Van Hook (2002), one's perception, based on an individual belief system, of barriers is most important in the preparation of teachers. Once these have been identified, teacher education programs should consider strategies for helping students confront these barriers.
Proposed Study

The proposed study seeks to determine if multicultural curriculum and instructions affect student teachers' perceptions to effectively teach students from different cultural backgrounds. For this study, three variables were measured: (1) the effectiveness of schools' multicultural curriculum, (2) student teachers' understanding of working with diverse cultures prior to entering school, (3) student teachers' current understanding of working with diverse cultures. The dependent variables are the effectiveness of multicultural curriculum and instruction. The independent variable is student teachers' perceptions.

This chapter presented an in-depth presentation of existing literature related to this study, as well as a discussion of the limitations of the literature and the proposed study. The following chapter will provide an in-depth discussion of the conceptual theoretical framework, statement of research questions, and hypothesis.
CHAPTER THREE

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In order to begin exploring how student teachers' exposure to multicultural curriculum and their perceptions affect their ability to work with students from different culture backgrounds, it is important to look at the General Systems Theory. This theory will provide an outlook of how colleges can address issues for preparing student teachers for diversity through multicultural education classes, field experiences, and community involvement in urban areas.

According to Myer (1983), the general system theory first came to the attention of the scientific community in the 1960s through the efforts of biologist Ludwig Von Bertalanffy and it is defined as standing in interaction" as a whole made up of interrelated dependent parts. Concepts derived from general systems theory have also influenced several approaches to social work practice, such as ecosystems, biopsychosocial, and person-in-environment models (Myer, 1983). This theory consists of five components: 1) boundaries, 2) open system, 3) input, 4) output, and 5) feedback. Each of these components interact in a way which is distinct from their interaction with other entities and which endures over a period of time. The following example shows how the school system can use the general systems theory to systematically increase and encourage knowledge of multicultural education in the classroom. An example of how the general system theory is incorporated through this study is as follows:
Figure 1. General Systems Theory Model: The model depicts how the school system can address issues for preparing teachers for diversity.
Boundaries

Boundaries implies that any system that is distinct in its own right has either spatial or dynamic boundaries that in some form separate it from the rest of the environment and give it a distinct identity (Ward, 1992). For example, in this study the school system is considered the boundary.

Structure

Structure refers to the set of all elements within the boundaries and the enduring patterns of their relationships. In other words, while energy exchange may take place, the system maintains a recognizable sameness in its structural characteristics (Ward, 1992). The structure within this study consists of students, teachers, board members, and school administrators.

Hierarchy

The third concept which defines the system is hierarchy which means that systems are nested within other systems and have subsystems within themselves (Ward, 1992). An example of a hierarchy in the school system is the board members, president, vice president, dean, teachers, and students.

Transactional

The fourth concept is transactional in which the system interacts not only with other systems, but also within the hierarchy of subsystems (Ward, 1992). School administrations, board members, and students interact with families, and communities.
Input

Input is the means by which the system takes in energy, matter, and information from the environment. Biological and psychosocial survival and growth are provided for through the input process. Once accepted into the system, the input substance is acted upon, transformed and used for the functioning of the system (Ward, 1992). For example, the teacher integrates goals of multicultural curriculum into the classroom in order to provide a viable plan of action. It is also determined by the teachers’ experience with diversity groups and their position on improving and/or changing the curriculum. A person at this stage acts on the environmental input not only with his/her personality, but also with awareness of the scope of the situation in his/her role in the impinging social systems, and in reference to his/her particular cultural ideology (Ward, 1992).

Transformation

Transformation occurs between the input stage and output which involves the proper functioning of the system (Ward, 1992). For example, school administration can alter curriculum to fit the needs of students from various culture and linguistic backgrounds. If school administration establish or alters programs it can create change in students.

Output

The theory states that once the process begins, the system actively responds to the environment (Ward, 1992). In schools outputs includes student achievements, and how student teachers integrate multicultural instruction into the curriculum.
Feedback

Feedback consists of positive and negative information which acts either to maintain system equilibrium or to disrupt the system, promoting change (Ward, 1992). For instance, teachers are held accountable through state testing and multicultural education in order to improve the teaching and learning styles. This will enable teachers to perform to the best of their ability.

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of this study was:

HO: Teachers exposure to multicultural education and prior perceptions of working with diverse cultures has no effect on students who come from different cultural backgrounds.

HA: Teachers exposure to multicultural education and prior perceptions of working with diverse cultures does have an effect on students who come from different cultural backgrounds.

This chapter presented an in-depth discussion of this study’s conceptual framework and hypothesis. The variables discussed were teachers’ exposure to multicultural curriculum and instruction and student teachers perceptions when working with students from diverse cultures. The following chapter will provide an in depth discussion of the methods that took place during this study.
CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY

This study explored if multicultural curriculum and instruction can effect student teachers perceptions to effectively teach students from diverse cultural backgrounds. This chapter describes the research procedures that were used for this study. Included in this section are the setting, sample, measure and research design.

Setting

This study took place on the metro campus of Georgia State University in a classroom in the education building. The study consisted of undergraduate students who are in the Education field. The setting is conducive to the study because the population has knowledge of their beliefs and perceptions when it comes to working with children from cultural and linguistic backgrounds. The study consisted of a majority of women.

Sample

The study consisted of thirty five undergraduate students who were enrolled at Georgia State University. The students were provided with detailed information regarding the study and then asked for their participation. The students were asked, before their class began, if they were interested in participating in the study. Those who agreed were given an informed consent form as well as a survey. The student teachers were allotted enough time to complete the questionnaire. They had approximately 40 minutes before and
during their class to complete the forms. Education students were allowed to participate in the study if they desired. This study is a sample of convenience that will consequently give low external validity and consequently the findings can not be used at all, it is only relevant to the drawn sample.

Measure

The data for this study was collected using a 24 item questionnaire (Appendix A). The questionnaire consisted of a series of questions inquiring about the participant’s gender, culture, their school’s implementation of multicultural instruction, and knowledge of diverse cultures. The questions contained a mixed response format with some multiple choice, as well as Likert type response questions, in order to assess the client’s objective knowledge as it relates to the study. The Nebraska Multicultural Education Questionnaire (Bureau of Sociological Research, 2003) prepared for the U.S. Department of Education served as the guide to help develop the questionnaire. To increase the reliability of the measurement, the test-retest reliability was performed. The questionnaire was reviewed by graduate students in the education field who did not participate in this study. The graduate students reviewed the questionnaire and examined the instrument for the following areas (1) clear and concise questions (2) content and (3) ideas of improvement.

Design

The design for this proposal is: O

This exploratory design uses the cross-sectional survey. The notation of this design is: O. The study will not apply treatment or interventions to the sample; therefore O represents
the measurement of the student teachers understanding of diverse cultures as it relates to working with diverse cultures.

The internal validity was threatened due to history. The measurement did not include the students' personal history as it relates to working and understanding diverse cultures. This variable may have a profound effect on the outcome of this study. However, an effort was made to reduce this threat, by asking one question relating to their understanding of working with diverse cultures prior to entering school.

Procedure

The data collection for this research took approximately two days to complete. The questionnaire was drafted and then distributed to the participants before their diversity class and some participants were given the questionnaire before other classes that were held in the education building. Though all of the students were asked to participate, some students exercised their right to decline. One limitation to collecting the data before class was that the participants may have had their minds focused on their class which may have hampered their concentration. Furthermore, students may have rushed in an effort to be prepared for class. Efforts were made to decrease this limitation, by allowing them to return the survey after class. This was done to eliminate rushing the survey.

Data Analysis

The study seeks to explore the effects of multicultural curriculum and instruction can effect white student teachers perceptions of working with students from diverse cultures. Because the study attempted to explore the students understanding prior to
working the method of data analysis used was T-test analysis. The average score of each variable was compared, as it relates to each participant’s prior and afterwards understanding of working with diverse cultures. A item level descriptive coefficient summary table that depicts the questions mean and standard deviation is offered in Appendix C. All analysis was done using the SPSS-PC statistical package.

This chapter provided a discussion of the setting and sample and the reliability and validity threats that occurred in this study. It also provided an in depth description of the tools of measurement, the type of design notation, procedures of the study, and the analysis of the data collected. The next chapter provides the study’s findings. For this study, tables and graphs were chosen to portray what was included in the frequency and descriptive analysis, as well as, the T-Test analysis.
CHAPTER FIVE

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of this study. This chapter also includes the demographics of the participants, as well as, the results of the questionnaires.

Demographics

The 35 participants in this study were students at Georgia State University. All thirty-five participants were undergraduate education students. As specified in the methodology, 31 participants were female, and 4 of the participants were males. Specifically, 1 participant was American Indian or Alaska native, 3 were Asian, 10 were African-American or black, 21 were white. The participants were asked what part of the United States were they from because the study specified that the sample would be white student teachers from the northern region of the country. This information is included in table 1.
Table 1

Demographics (n=35)

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</table>
Variables

Of the 35 participants, 25.7 percent rated their understanding of diverse cultures prior to entering school as excellent. 51.4 percent indicated that their understanding was good, while some of the other participants 14.3 percent answered that their understanding of diverse cultures prior to entering school was fair, and 8.6 percent indicated that their understanding was poor. This information is displayed in Figure 1.

![Pie chart](image)

**Figure 2.** Participants’ rate their understanding of diverse cultures

Of the 35 participants, one indicated that the school’s curriculum did not at all include the culture of diverse cultural groups, six indicated that the curriculum somewhat includes the culture of diverse cultural groups, ten indicated quite a bit to, sixteen answered very much. Lastly, two participants indicated they did not know if the school’s curriculum included the culture of diverse cultural groups. This information is displayed in Figure 2.
Figure 3. Participants’ understanding of their school’s curriculum

The participants involved in the study indicated that 11.4 percent did not at all feel that the school changed their understanding of working with diverse cultures, and 40 percent indicated that the school somewhat changed their understanding. Of the participants remaining 22.9 percent indicated that the school’s curriculum quite a bit changed their understanding and 14.3 percent believed that the school very much changed their understanding. While 11.4 percent did not know if the school they were attending had changed their understanding of working with diverse cultures. The participants understanding of working with diverse cultures are displayed in Figure 3.
Four people 11.4 percent stated that the school has not at all changed their understanding of working with diverse cultures compared to three people 8.6 percent of the participants had a poor understanding prior to entering school. A majority of the participants 40 percent, felt the school provided fair changes of their understanding of working with diverse cultures compared to 14.3 percent of the participants had a fair understanding of working with diverse cultures prior to entering school. An overwhelming number of the participants, 51.4 percent, stated they had a good understanding of working with diverse cultures prior to entering school. While 22.9 percent stated that the school provided a good understanding of working with diverse
cultures. However, 25.7 percent stated that they had an excellent understanding of working with diverse cultures, while 14.3 percent state the school also provided an excellent understanding of working with diverse cultures.

![Bar chart](image)

**Figure 5.** Participants’ effectiveness of their student teacher training.

On the questions about how effective was your student teacher education in preparing you to deal with multicultural issues and to instruct students of various cultural backgrounds, 11 participants indicated that the education received was somewhat effective, 10 participants answered quite a bit, 5 participants indicated the education received was very much effective and 12 participants indicated they did not know.
CHAPTER SIX

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the reader with a discussion of the findings of this study and how those findings compared to studies previously done in the area. It also provides the reader with a discussion of further research that may be needed in the area based on the results of this study.

The findings of this study showed that multicultural curriculum and instruction had no effect on teachers’ perceptions when working with students from diverse culture backgrounds. The research reviewed in this study does not provide clear guidance about how to train student teacher in multicultural education. This is a limitation of the research.

The focus of this study was to attempt to explain if multicultural education and instruction effects white teachers’ perceptions when working with students from culture backgrounds. Much of the literature supports that a majority of prospective teachers are from backgrounds with limited exposure to diversity. In fact, 95 percent of elementary school teachers are middle class, Caucasian females (Van Hook, 2002). Even though there has been several studies to prepare white student teachers to teach in culturally diverse schools, they continue to bring little awareness or understanding of discrimination, especially racism (Su, 1996, 1997). It is evident that further research must be done to better prepare white student teachers in this area.
Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of this study was that there was no way of discerning how truthful the participants were in their answers. For example, the participants may have felt rushed due to their class beginning, or they wanted to prepare for their class before the class began. Attempts were made to minimize this limitation by allowing the participants to hand back the surveys after class.

Another limitation to this study was the inability of the study to effectively measure how multicultural education and instruction effects student teachers perceptions. For example, the survey examined what the participants’ prior understanding and current learning of culture diversity. However, the research never expounded on what the students actually learned in their courses. It would have been beneficial to this study to actually examine how multicultural education coursework is taught to student teachers.

The results of this study present a wide array of ideas for further research. For example another approach to enhance this study is to actually follow the student teachers into the classroom during their student teaching to find out how much they have learned about cultural diversity. Some schools require student teachers to tutor children from urban communities. Following these students would provide knowledge and awareness of their own stereotypes.

Implications for Social Work

The purpose of this study was to determine if student teachers are prepared to work with students from diverse populations. It allows social work practitioners and other professionals to educate and recognize how prejudice and discrimination affects the
client. It also sets the foundation to inform leaders and researchers with knowledge and understanding of these issues.

Since diversity is increasing it is important for the school social worker to approach these issues from an ecological and strengths prospective. An ecological approach demonstrates the families problems are generated as a result of interaction with other individuals, groups, organizations and social institutions (Longress, 2000). The strengths perspective elevates the client’s motivation and the potential for positive change (Longress, 2000).

From an ecological perspective, the school social worker can help the parent participate effectively in their children’s education, link students and their families to available programs, and use school and community resources effectively. From a strength perspective the school social worker can provide staff development and multicultural trainings, help develop effective teaching skills, and empower the individual to understand

This chapter presented a discussion of the findings of this study, as it relates to research previously done in the area. It also presented a discussion of the limitations of this study, as well as, a discussion of the implications for social work that this, and other similar studies have, as well as suggestions for further research.
APPENDIX A: QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to obtain information about one’s knowledge concerning multicultural education and instruction.

Directions: Please fill out the following questionnaire to the best of your ability.

Demographics

1. What is your gender?
   (1) Male (2) Female

2. What is your academic status?
   (1) undergraduate student (2) graduate student

3. Which best describes your race?
   (1) American Indian or Alaska Native
   (2) Asian
   (3) Black or African American
   (4) Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
   (5) White
   (6) Other

4. What part of the United States are you from?
   (1) Northern region (ex: Montana, Illinois, North Dakota)
   (2) Southern region (ex: Texas, Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee)
   (3) Western region (ex: California, Washington, Oregon, Nevada)
   (4) Eastern region (ex: New York, New Hampshire, Maine)
   (5) Other
5. Do you feel comfortable working with a diverse student population?
   (1) Not at all  (2) Somewhat  (3) Quite a bit  (4) Very much  (5) Don’t Know

6. How would you rate your understanding of diverse cultures prior to entering
   school?
   (1) Excellent  (2) Good  (3) Fair  (4) Poor

Curriculum and Instruction
This section explores the context of multicultural education in your school. Answer these as candidly as possible. Remember that your answers will not be linked to any particular school.

7. Are there opportunities for discussion and resolution of issues that arise in the
   implementation of multicultural instruction and curriculum?
   (1) Yes  (2) No  (3) Don’t Know

8. Does your school’s curriculum include the culture of diverse cultural groups?
   (1) Not at all  (2) Somewhat  (3) Quite a bit  (4) Very much  (5) Don’t Know

9. Does your school’s curriculum include the history of diverse cultural groups?
   (1) Not at all  (2) Somewhat  (3) Quite a bit  (4) Very much  (5) Don’t Know

10. Does your school’s curriculum include the contributions of diverse cultural
    groups?
    (1) Not at all  (2) Somewhat  (3) Quite a bit  (4) Very much  (5) Don’t Know

11. Are the instructional programs developing the student’s ability to recognize bias
    and stereotypes in media?
    (1) Not at all  (2) Somewhat  (3) Quite a bit  (4) Very much  (5) Don’t Know
12. Are the instructional programs developing the student's ability to recognize stereotypes in literature?

(1) Not at all  (2) Somewhat  (3) Quite a bit  (4) Very much  (5) Don't Know

13. Are the instructional programs at your school providing students with the learning activities that will lead to improved relationship among diverse groups of students?

(1) Not at all  (2) Somewhat  (3) Quite a bit  (4) Very much  (5) Don’t Know

14. Does the curriculum place emphasis on human relations to all cultures?

(1) Not at all  (2) Somewhat  (3) Quite a bit  (4) Very much  (5) Don’t Know

15. Does the curriculum place emphasis on sensitivity to all cultures?

(1) Not at all  (2) Somewhat  (3) Quite a bit  (4) Very much  (5) Don’t Know

16. How adequate is the library collection of multicultural resource materials for staff?

(1) Not at all  (2) Somewhat  (3) Quite a bit  (4) Very much  (5) Don’t Know

17. How adequate is the library collection of multicultural resource materials for students?

(1) Not at all  (2) Somewhat  (3) Quite a bit  (4) Very much  (5) Don’t Know

18. Have multicultural education needs of teachers and staff been assessed?

(1) Not at all  (2) Somewhat  (3) Quite a bit  (4) Very much  (5) Don’t Know
APPENDIX A continued

19. How effective was your preservice (student teacher) teacher education in preparing you to deal with multicultural issues and to instruct students of various cultural backgrounds?

(1) Not at all (2) Somewhat (3) Quite a bit (4) Very much (5) Don’t Know

20. Do teachers recognize the need for multicultural education in your school?

(1) Not at all (2) Somewhat (3) Quite a bit (4) Very much (5) Don’t Know

21. Do teachers recognize racial and cultural biases in themselves and attempt to overcome them?

(1) Not at all (2) Somewhat (3) Quite a bit (4) Very much (5) Don’t Know

22. Do teachers recognize racial and cultural biases in students and attempt to overcome them?

(1) Not at all (2) Somewhat (3) Quite a bit (4) Very much (5) Don’t Know

23. In matters related to multicultural education, overall, I feel this school has changed my understanding of working with diverse cultures.

(1) Not at all (2) Somewhat (3) Quite a bit (4) Very much (5) Don’t Know

24. In matters related to multicultural education, overall, I feel this school is doing a job best characterized as:

(2) Excellent (2) Good (3) Fair (4) Poor

Thank you for taking the time to complete the survey.
APPENDIX B: STUDENT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I, ____________________________________________, have been invited to participate in this research study which has been explained to me by Bettyjean Roberson –Weser. This research is conducted to fulfill the requirements for the proposal.

The purpose of this study is to examine student teachers knowledge of multicultural curriculum and instruction when working with students from diverse populations.

The study involves completing a 24 answer questionnaire. Participation in this study will require approximately 30 minutes of your time.

There are no risks or discomforts associated in this study.

I understand that this study is not expected to be of direct benefit to me, but the knowledge gained may be of benefit to others.

For more information about this research, I can contact Dr. Sarita Davis, Bettyjean Roberson-Weser’s advisor, at Clark Atlanta University by calling (404) 880-8000.

I understand that any information about me obtained as a result of my participation in this research will be kept as confidential as legally possible. I understand also that my research records, just like hospital records, may be subpoenaed by a court order or may be inspected by federal regulatory authorities. In any publications that result
APPENDIX B continued

from this research neither my name nor any information from which I might be identified
will be published without by consent.

Participation in this study is voluntary. I understand that I am free to withdraw my
consent to participate in this study at any time. Refusal to participate or withdrawal will
involve no penalty or loss of benefits. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions
about the research, and I have received answers concerning areas I did not understand.

Upon signing this form, I will receive a copy.

I willingly consent and participate in this study.

________________________________________  __________________________
Signature of research participant        Date
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<th>Question</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
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<td>2. What best describes your race?</td>
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<td>3. What is your academic status?</td>
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<td>.697</td>
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<td>6. How would you rate your understanding of diverse cultures prior to entering school?</td>
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<td>2.06</td>
<td>.873</td>
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<td>7. Are there opportunities for discussion and resolution of issues that arise in the implementation of multicultural instructions and curriculum?</td>
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<td>8. Does your school’s curriculum include the culture of diverse cultural groups?</td>
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<td>9. Does your school’s curriculum include the history of diverse cultural groups?</td>
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<td>10. Does your school’s curriculum include the contributions of diverse cultural groups?</td>
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### APPENDIX C: TABLE continued

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<td>diverse groups of students?</td>
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<td>Have multicultural education needs of teachers and staff been assessed?</td>
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<td>deal with multicultural issues and to instruct students of various</td>
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<td>3.29</td>
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<td>1.098</td>
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<td>21. Do teachers recognize racial and cultural biases in themselves and attempt to overcome them?</td>
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<td>3.26</td>
<td>1.291</td>
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<td>22. Do teachers recognize racial and cultural biases in students and attempt to overcome them?</td>
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<td>1.221</td>
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<td>23. In matters related to multicultural education, overall, I feel this school has changed my understanding of working with diverse cultures.</td>
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<td>2.15</td>
<td>.364</td>
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BIBLIOGRAPHY


