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## ABSTRACT

This paper describes several practices designed to challenge preservice teachers to question their assumptions regarding multiculturalism and to explore other points of view. The "Culture Walk" at Susquehanna University (Pennsylvania) increases awareness and sensitivity to interpersonal and personal identities. It involves writing and reflecting on one's own background, participating in a guided walk through an urban community, and teaching a lesson in a multicultural setting. The "Hegemonic Process" at Madonna University (Michigan) helps students to assess "normality" in today's society and the impact on students who are marginalized. Two case studies designed to help future teachers analyze their responses in relation to students who are marginalized are included. "Shadow Studies" at Willamette University (Oregon) helps preservice teachers relate more personally to how students are affected by school in order to better understand and meet the needs of their students. Teachers reflect on their own school experiences, examine school culture through the eyes of an ethnic minority student, and carry out group investigations on the needs of diverse students. These three practices encourage teachers to examine their own and others' views, the role of power and privilege attached to those views, and consequences when the assumptions of a dominant racial, social, or cultural group are imposed on others. (Contains 21 references.) (ND)

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## Preparing Teachers to Recognize Multiple Perspectives

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A favorite poster features two footprints facing three footprints. "I like you," the two footprints exclaim. "You're different." Ideally this simple tenet could be replicated regularly across America's schools. With discipline, fighting, violence and gangs still identified as some of the biggest problems facing our schools (Gallup Poll 1995), it is essential that we address issues emanating from our differences and cultivate attitudes of understanding, appreciation and respect. As teacher educators, one of our goals is to guide future teachers to understand and value perspectives of others so that they may successfully meet the needs of all students. It is essential that students--and teachers--understand, appreciate and respect each others' differences and similarities.

Tomorrow's students will be expected to meet challenges of an increasingly multicultural society. By the year 2020, forty percent of America's school population will be composed of students of color (Zeichner 1992). By the year 2080, the U.S. may well have a majority population of "minorities" (Cortes 1994). Tomorrow's teachers must thus understand needs of an increasingly diverse student population and possess attitudes and skills to guide ALL students toward success.

In order to understand the perspectives they bring to the profession, teachers must first understand their own personal and cultural identities. James Banks (1991) advises, "An Anglo-American teacher who is confused about his or her cultural identity...will have a difficult time relating positively to outside ethnic groups." While the vast majority of teachers, 87 percent, represent the majority culture (Lewis 1996), Banks' premise is just as critical for those of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

Teachers must examine the assumptions they have about others and gain experiences in understanding the views and situations of others. McCaleb (1995) challenges teachers to ask themselves: "What

baggage am I bringing along with me? How can my own conscious or unconscious prejudice and even ignorance about 'otherness' limit my effectiveness as a teacher to all my students?" Likewise, Banks (1991) urges teachers "to learn about the values and attitudes they hold toward other ethnic and cultural groups, to clarify and analyze those values, to reflect upon the consequences of their values and attitudes, to consider alternative attitudes and values, and to personally confront some of their latent values and attitudes toward other races." Davidman (1995) advocates a process of self-exploration, self-definition, self-discovery and self-disclosure in order to develop in teacher candidates "a positive personal connection with the content and goals of multicultural education." Through this self-examination, teachers should become aware of their conscious and unconscious cultural values and better understand perspectives and prejudices they may bring to the classroom.

Carlos Cortes (1994) extends this premise with an emphasis on seeing the perspectives of others. The 21st Century Person, he says, "should be able to identify, grapple with, and understand multicultural perspectives...even if this ultimately leads to vigorous disagreement." Classroom teachers, as facilitators and role models for learning, must guide students in confronting controversial issues not by blind acceptance but by careful examination. Helping students learn "to judge on the basis of evidence, not reject on the basis of prejudice" will thus be important.

Bell Hooks (1994), in *Teaching to Transgress*, cautions that most of us were taught in classrooms where "styles of teaching reflected...a single norm of thought and experience, which we were encouraged to believe was universal." How can we help future teachers to recognize multiple perspectives and develop positive personal connections with issues of diversity? The practices described in this article are designed to challenge students to question their assumptions and explore other viewpoints. These strategies focus on examining the culture and identities of individuals, families, schools and communities.

### **Culture Walk (Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania)**

The ability of teachers to acknowledge and deal with their own cultural perspectives is closely linked with their teaching effectiveness. Since self-knowledge regarding relationships to families is important to this task (Banks 1991), future teachers benefit from exploring their own family relationships. The "culture walk" as a teaching strategy is used at Susquehanna University to increase awareness and sensitivity to interpersonal and personal identities. It involves three parts: 1) writing

and reflecting on one's own family of origin, 2) participating in a guided walk through an urban community and 3) teaching a lesson in a multicultural setting.

*Family Matrix as a Foundation:* The family matrix plays a formative role in establishing cultural, ethnic, gender and class identity. Teachers must thus be skilled in understanding how families function. Given the multiplicity of family forms and ethnicities in the United States and the deep feelings evoked by ethnicity (Banks & McGee 1993; Mindel, Habernstein & Wright 1988), teachers are increasingly challenged. Not only must they become more sensitive to diversity's myriad forms, they must avoid unconsciously adopting one set of values, family forms and lifestyles as the standard for all groups. Understanding the role that power plays in promoting the world view of those with privileged positions is an important part of knowing about one's family forms. Cultural, gender and class contexts of families have major impacts on family forms, patterns, belief systems and values. Cultivating awareness of these contexts is critical.

Knowledge of self as part of the family context is a foundation for teaching practices, and an understanding of the "assumptions in which we are drenched" has long been viewed as a key to such self-knowledge (Rich 1979). In order to develop such foundations, teacher education students typically read material related to multicultural education, explore case studies, write papers based on their learning and participate in supervised field experience. In Susquehanna University's teacher education program, students learn about multicultural identities by participating in a "culture walk."

*Culture Walk Methodology:* The culture walk, which takes place during the senior level teaching methods block, includes a two-day field trip and overnight stay in an urban community. This field experience follows an initial foundation of reading, activities and discussion about multicultural education. Students take responsibility for organizing the field trip, which includes an overnight stay at a community church, dinner at a local ethnic restaurant and teaching in a nearby school.

Prior to the trip, students reflect on their families of origin by preparing a genogram of family members. Drawing on the format developed by McGoldrick and Gerson (1985), students talk with significant family members and gather information dating back at least to their grandparents. McGoldrick and Gerson describe a format for creating a genogram that involves three steps: mapping the family structure, recording family information and delineating family relationships. Students first

map their family structure, charting how intergenerational family members are biologically and legally related. Figures such as circles and squares are used to denote males and females. Students then record information related to family messages about their own education and complete a values continuum. Through these two activities, students examine their own family experiences and values related to cultural attitudes, gender attitudes and class attitudes.

At their urban field site, the group members walk for two hours through the Upper Darby residential and shopping area, stopping to dine at a local Korean restaurant. Students return for a reflection session where they discuss their feelings in response to guided questions. Reflecting on their observations and speculations, they synthesize the experience in relation to their own beliefs and attitudes.

After staying overnight at the church, students teach at a nearby school the next morning. Lessons have been planned to reflect an integrated and multicultural approach to teaching. The teaching activity provides education students with an opportunity to apply theoretical knowledge in a meaningful setting. Lessons are team taught, and a debriefing session follows. A final reflection session is conducted prior to leaving the field site.

*Implications for Teacher Preparation:* The culture walk attempts to move from context-stripping processes to uncover some of life's complex web of interconnections. Through an emphasis on the importance of context and their own family groups, students are encouraged to review their own beliefs and attitudes. Emphasizing their own heritage and inner dialogue about this heritage helps students to internalize their knowledge about various culture groups. This can help them to develop multiple frames of reference and attitudes necessary for successfully working in diverse settings. Students often rediscover their families of origin, gaining fresh perspectives on strengths and weaknesses and why family members believed and acted as they did. Often they recognize that their behavior patterns have intergenerational roots.

After the walk and teaching experience, students draw comparisons between their own families and the families under discussion. Discussion often becomes so engaging that groups of students continue after class, drawing examples from their own families and comparing them with each other. Many report an easing of tensions related to multicultural education and urban classrooms. Repeatedly students have

identified this method of exploring multicultural education as one of their most challenging and rewarding learning experiences.

The culture walk, combined with journal writing and reflection, offers a useful format for personal exploration. Writing helps order one's thinking through the development of an affective and cognitive inner voice. By writing journals, students express the inner speech of both emotion and thought and reflect on their own lives. This methodology speaks to the primacy of family relations and human connections. The sharing of individual life histories helps students from rural communities to reorient their conceptual frameworks and include more urban and diverse settings.

### **Hegemonic Process** (Madonna University, Livonia, Michigan)

A psychologically-based process, grounded on the work of France Fanon (1967), forms the foundation for developing cultural awareness in Madonna University's teacher preparation program. The hegemonic process studies the effects of oppression and the perceptions of normality. This forms the initial step in thinking critically and viewing common, taken-for-granted truths or beliefs from new perspectives. Teacher education students use the hegemonic process to examine normality in today's society and the impact on students who are marginalized.

*Hegemony as a Foundation:* Fanon, a black psychiatrist from the island of Martinique, had observed a startling phenomenon among his patients. In *Black Skin, White Masks*, he noted that many of his patients manifested tremendous affinity and acceptance for all things French, including French standards of beauty, culture and language. Victims of French colonial oppression, many of these patients seemingly accepted this oppression despite its demeaning impact upon their psyche as persons of African heritage. From his observations, Fanon posited that black Martiniquians had in fact come to participate in their own oppression. The French controlled the numerically superior population of black and racially mixed islanders not by sheer exercise of power but through consensus. The French had therefore obtained hegemony, the acceptance of French standards of beauty, French standards of humanity and other French norms.

*Assessing Normality:* By examining unquestioned truths or beliefs, future teachers can begin to discover their own cultural capital and its origins. This process can assist individuals in overcoming a tendency to position their own truths, beliefs and values at the apex. Future teachers can thus come to

understand how societal norms are constructed and how these may change significantly over time and from locale to locale. Examples of such social norms include slavery, women smoking in public and women with bare breasts.

Students at Madonna University participate in an exercise to assess their own perceptions of normality in this society by examining the following questions: What are commonly accepted characteristics of a normal person? How would one characterize cognitive ability? height? weight? gender? language? race/ethnicity? age? physical ability? socio-economic status? sexual orientation? Typically students construct an image of "normal" as one of a healthy, young, middle class, heterosexual, English-speaking, white male of average intelligence, height and weight. Students begin to recognize the small scale of society's perception of "normality" and the consequences for those who do not fit the norm. Foremost, those individuals who are marginalized are not full participants in many social interactions. Being marginalized means one cannot freely enjoy the options available to persons without exceptionalities. As an illustration, students consider taking a family vacation. Many could share tales of their parents packing the car in anticipation of a warm, summer holiday at the beach. For an African American family, especially in the southern states, that trip might be quite different. Because their skin color does not fit the norm, people of color are often denied full social acceptance. That circumstance exists for those with other exceptionalities as well. It is rare, for example, to see blind persons or deaf persons or those with cerebral palsy employed in positions which provide them middle class standards of living. In some states, mentally retarded citizens are excluded from driving, voting or marrying. Other infrequent or inconceivable examples might include retarded teenagers at a night club or a short, dark skinned, full-figured young woman crowned as Miss America.

Students with cultural capital that differs significantly from that of the teacher's often face obstacles in the educational environment. Cultural capital implies those characteristics which help define an individual's social position. If teachers, who are primarily white and middle class, cannot understand the perspectives of culturally diverse students, the stage is set for major cultural clashes. In such clashes, it is the student who is educationally shortchanged and disadvantaged.

*Simulations:* The following cross-cultural episodes are designed to help future teachers analyze their responses in relation to students who are marginalized:

### Case Study #1

*Nebechi, an African student from Nigeria, is the eldest of six children. He and his family have been living in the United States for a little over a year. Their extended family, including two uncles, numerous cousins and a grandparent, enjoys close, frequent interaction. Family members were extremely proud when, after completing high school, Nebechi was offered an academic scholarship at a small state university. His award was a major topic of family conversation, and his good fortune was shared with family members living in Nigeria. Words of congratulation and praise were laden upon Nebechi from family and others in the Nigerian community.*

*When Nebechi began his university program, it was not unusual for him to attend classes with 100 or more students. Professors and teaching assistants treated the students fairly equally in class and in lab settings. Special attention was given when students came to professors' offices with questions or when students felt they need extra assistance. Since he was confident he was making more than adequate academic progress, Nebechi seldom had need for these individual sessions. However, Nebechi felt that his contributions during class and labs were not given sufficient attention and follow-up by the rest of the class. After a few months, Nebechi began to lose interest in his coursework. His grades suffered and he considered dropping out. If Nebechi came to you to sort out his feelings, what issue(s) would you raise? Why?*

### Case Study #2

*Mrs. Daniels, a bright, eager kindergarten teacher, is in her fourth year of teaching and has earned much praise from her principal. This year Mrs. Daniels is teaching a very diverse class, with students who not only have a wide range of cognitive ability but, for the first time, have greatly differing socio-economic status. As a result of the school board's decision to allow families to send their children to any school in the district, Jimmy Postwaithe is in Mrs. Daniels' class. Jimmy and his mother live in an area comprised mainly of blue collar working class families. Hit hard by changes in the economy, many of these families are receiving public assistance. The only businesses which have continued to flourish are bars and party stores.*

*While teaching the alphabet and holding up the letter "A," Mrs. Daniels asked Jimmy, "What comes after 'A,' Jimmy?" Confidently, Jimmy replied, "P!" Mrs. Daniels tersely replied, "Wrong, Jimmy. Think! What comes after 'A'?" This time Jimmy was not so sure. Hesitantly, he replied "P" again. Realizing that Mrs. Daniels was not pleased, he became quiet and withdrawn.*

*Mrs. Daniels began to feel frustrated with her responsibility for teaching a student like Jimmy. How could you help her sort out this problem and teach children like Jimmy?*

*Implications for Teacher Preparation:* Like much of the nation's population, future teachers share a common image of an "average normal person." Far too many narrowly interpret what it means to be normal; and, in doing so, literally construct prisons in their own minds. Clearly we must enable future teachers to critically examine their own belief systems and to recognize social consequences confronting learners who are "different," whether by reasons of cognitive or physical ability, race,



gender, language, sexual orientation, ethnicity or religion. When we are no longer resistant to the needs of exceptional students, we have taken the first step toward bringing about modifications in teacher expectations, teaching methodology and curriculum. When teachers begin to approach students' differences as opportunities and challenges rather than negative characteristics, they experience their own independent professional development. Students of these teachers can receive instruction that is individualized to meet their diverse needs, gain the academic "boost" from high expectations and enjoy dignity as valued and unique human beings.

The hegemonic process can help future teachers to become more reflective while also reducing their reluctance to interact with exceptional learners. After becoming familiar with the process, some students have extended their placements with exceptional students, have become advocates for rights of exceptional citizens or have chosen to become special education teachers. While some enthusiastically endorsed this process as "eye-opening," one cannot expect it to be without controversy. When students articulate their perceptions and these opinions are critiqued by peers and instructors, tense discussions can result. Yet such exchanges, conducted in open, safe forums, must be an integral part of teacher preparation programs.

### **Shadow Studies (Willamette University, Salem, Oregon)**

Guiding future teachers from more detached roles as observers to those of insiders with greater empathy for their students' dilemmas is a challenging but important aspect of teacher preparation. By identifying commonalities in their own backgrounds and relating more personally to how students are affected by school, teachers can begin to develop more positive, personal connections in order to better understand and meet needs of their students (Davidman 1995). Future teachers at Willamette University participate in three exercises: 1) personal reflections on their own school experiences, relating to personal and family culture, 2) an examination of school culture through the eyes of an ethnic minority student and 3) group investigations based on questions collectively raised about needs of diverse students.

*Self-Reflection as a Foundation:* To assess their own experiences (Banks 1991, Davidman 1995), teacher education students reflect on times when they each felt "different" at school, asking themselves: What happened? How did I feel? Did anyone say or do anything to emphasize my differences and make me feel uncomfortable? Did anyone say or do anything to make me feel included

and more comfortable? What would have helped? Students thus begin examining elements in their own culture or their “ways of being, knowing and doing” (Protheroe and Barsdate 1992). By identifying personal artifacts (objects, symbols and values important to them), they begin to recognize what is often taken for granted as their cultural circles broaden to encompass families, friends and communities. It is also important for them to recall times when they have been challenged by new encounters, such as the first day of college, a new class, a visit to an elementary school or the prospect of student teaching. While most have understandable anxieties about student teaching, it would likely be even more difficult to imagine student teaching in a different country or culture. Yet, a similar obstacle or cultural discontinuity occurs for one of every seven public school students, who speak another language and grew up with other cultural experiences (Gersten 1996). The common thread between teachers and students who all feel different at some time is a necessary self-understanding.

*Shadowing Project:* Preservice teachers gain insight into a day in the life of a minority student by “shadowing” and interviewing a student during school. “The real curriculum is the one the pupil experiences,” observed the late Kimbell Wiles. “Actually, the expectations of curriculum designers may be illusions and the teacher’s guides and syllabi mere paper representations of hollow hopes” (NASSP 1985). What counts is what the individual pupil experiences--and that may differ from what the teacher teaches or what the rest of the class experiences.

Future teachers address these questions: How would you characterize the culture of your school? What is the school day for a student really like? How might you view school if you considered it through a student’s own eyes? And, with our increasingly diverse society, how might you begin to personalize the needs of students from broad backgrounds? To give them a basis for seeing school through the eyes of its most important participants, the students, future teachers each “shadow” an ethnic minority student for one or two regular school days. They each record data at five to seven minute intervals about their student’s behaviors, the learning environment and their impressions. At the end of the day, they interview their students about their experiences and their views on school. Shadowed students are selected with advice from supervising teachers and with parental permission. To ensure anonymity, they are given pseudonyms. After viewing school through student eyes, future teachers have raised questions about such issues as interactions between minority and majority students, singling out minority students for reprimand, the rapid pace of middle school students and the need for extra efforts

to include "invisible students." This exercise is adapted from shadowing studies conducted by the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP 1985; NASSP 1990).

*Group Investigations:* After reflecting individually on the culture of their school and what schools do or do not do to meet needs of students, teacher education students discuss their observations with others in small groups. Cautioned that each of their experiences is but a singular one, they focus on the following issues: How does the experience of YOUR student compare with those of others? How do YOUR own views compare with those of others who conducted shadowing projects? What have YOU learned? What questions emerge about the school life of ethnic minority students? What issues will affect how YOU fulfill your role as a teacher? How can YOU effectively meet the needs of ethnic minority students in your classes?

To address these questions, teacher education students participate in group investigations using cooperative learning (Sharan 1990). Based on their shadowing, members of their group brainstorm: What else would you like to know? What questions were left unanswered? What do you still want to investigate? What still needs to be addressed? They then select a group question and determine a strategy for addressing it. Strategies might include: conducting interviews with students, teachers, specialists and administrators; examining curriculum and resource materials; contacting community agencies; and expanding literature surveys. Group members make decisions about specific questions they will ask and how they plan to divide responsibilities within their group. They are then responsible for analyzing their findings, drawing conclusions and determining how they might apply what they learned in their own classrooms. Sample topics have included: How do teachers view multicultural education? How do schools address the needs of ESL students? How can teachers use themes in literature to explore cultural perspectives? Finally, group members share their findings in short, innovative presentations, emphasizing what their classmates should know and do to meet needs of diverse students more effectively.

*Implications for Teachers:* The transition from self-reflection to shadow study to group investigation parallels a useful process in teachers' own professional acculturation. Educators benefit from continued examinations of their own moments of discomfort, for all of us, teachers and students, feel "different" at some time. That personal consciousness and shared experience can be an important step in developing sensitivity for the numerous obstacles students face each day. Viewing school through a

student's eyes is one way to increase empathy for students' experiences. As with the group investigations, it is essential that teachers continue to raise questions from the students' points of view and collaborate with other staff members to openly address solutions to those issues.

The shadow study is a strategy for helping future teachers to become more sensitized to the daily challenges faced by students. The insights they gain can have a direct effect on practices they adopt and attitudes they convey in their teaching roles. "I have developed more sensitivity to 'camouflaged strangers,'" one concluded about students whose cultural differences are not easily identified. Another confided, "I've learned not to jump to conclusions about anyone," after observing a Bolivian girl who did not speak Spanish. The value of recognizing both differences and similarities was internalized by one student, who concluded, "I must remember that these children are different but that they have the same needs as any other student." For educators, broadening the traditional boundaries of teaching to encompass realistic student views and experiences is critical.

The intent of these practices at all three teacher preparation programs is to extend teaching and learning beyond the mere exchange of knowledge and to enhance positive personal connections with the subject matter and with the students. It is also important that teachers examine their own and others' views, the role of power and privilege attached to those views and consequences when the assumptions of a dominant racial, social or cultural group are imposed on others. Understanding the cultural baggage we bring to the classroom and recognizing and appreciating multiple perspectives is vital if we are to meet the needs of our 21st Century students..

\* \* \* \* \*

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