FIRST YEAR
TEACHER EDUCATION CANDIDATES

What Are Their Perceptions about Multicultural Education?

Theron N. Ford & Linda Quinn

Introduction

The racial difference between the demographic profiles of most public school teachers and their students in primarily poor and urban areas elicits great concern. The concern emanates from the differences between the cultural values and attitudes held by some White female teachers and their poor minority students, particularly African American students. There is ample reason for such concern, as numerous investigations of interaction patterns between White teachers and poor, minority students have often indicated negative outcomes for both teachers and especially for the students.

For example, Mark and Terrill (2000) found White teachers who lacked exposure to African American culture were prone to negatively characterize African American students—reported characterizations included terms such as *lackadaisical, violent*, and *unmotivated*. These same students, however, when described by African American teachers emerged as *cooperative* and *free loving*. Such discrepancies between teacher perceptions strongly suggest teachers are more likely to hold positive attitudes toward students who are culturally and ethnically like themselves, since they can more readily relate to their culture (Mark & Terrill, 2000).

Perceiving students as lazy and unmo-

Theron N. Ford is an associate professor in the School of Education at John Carroll University, University Heights, Ohio, and Linda Quinn is an assistant professor in the College of Education at Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio.

tivated presupposes the students are not likely to want to learn and, therefore, will not put forth an effort to learn. Several researchers (Jussim, 1986, 1991; Rist, 1970) found that teachers judged children from higher socio-economic status (SES) more favorably than children lower SES, even when student performance was similar. Yet lower SES is too often a reality for many minority students who comprise the majority of the nation's urban school population. Such findings illustrate the existence of teacher perceptions and demonstrates the potential for teachers to act based on their perceptions.

The characterization of students as violent leads to speculation that White teachers may actually fear African American students. Delpit (2006) offers some support for this speculation when she relates the observations of a twelve-year-old friend who concisely categorized the teachers in his middle school:

> . . . the Black teachers, none of whom are afraid of Black kids; the White teachers, a few of whom are not afraid of Black kid, and the largest group of White teachers, who are all afraid of Black kids. (p. 168)

The youth further stated that it was the last group of teachers who experienced difficulties teaching, and whose students consistently experienced difficulties learning (Delpit, 2006). The question then arises: is it fear of African American students that causes some White teachers to be ineffective in teaching this population? Are there additional factors that contribute to low student achievement within this group, such as teacher dispositions and lack of cultural awareness?

A further examination of White teachers instructing racially and linguisti-

cally diverse students other than African American students indicates similar difficulties. Numerous researchers have observed White, predominately middle-class female teachers struggle to educate culturally diverse students because of a clash of cultures and language barriers within the classroom (Delpit, 2006). Spring (2008) also reported data from the 2004 National Education Association (NEA) report, *Assessment of Diversity in America's Teaching Force: a Call to Action,* which indicated:

♦ Students of color tend to have higher academic, personal, and social performance when taught by teachers from their own ethnic groups.

♦ Teachers from different ethnic groups have demonstrated that when students of color are taught with culturally responsive techniques and content-specific approaches, their academic performance improves significantly.

♦ Teachers of color have higher performance expectations for students of color from their own ethnic group. (p. 265)

Such findings make urgent the need to have more diversity in the teaching workforce, and if lacking that, there is a heightened need for preparing White teachers with the dispositions and skills to be effective teachers of poor and minority students.

A Goal That Eludes

The goal of having a more diverse teaching workforce continues to elude the nation. Having a diverse teaching workforce reflecting an increased number of minorities could also increase the probability of having teachers who have the

dispositions needed to educate minority students more effectively. A quick overview of teacher workforce data indicated, in a 2006 report by the National Center for Education Statistics, some 84% percent of teachers in public schools were White and of these, 83.7 percent were females.

More often than not there is a cultural and economic divide between the White teaching workforce and children of urban schools. Such a divide may make it difficult for White teachers to form meaningful relationships with families of color, ascribing in particular to African American families a lack of value for education (Irvine & York, 1993). Perhaps most significantly, White teachers are more likely to hold lower expectations for students of color than they hold for White students (Garcia & Gauerra, 2004).

In order for some minority groups to perform well academically, they need to develop a positive relationship with their teachers. That finding is in keeping with research that suggests that some minority students, particularly African Americans, are field-dependent learners (Irvine & York, 1995). Such learners tend to learn more easily working in groups, accessing materials more easily through use of humor and within a social context. However, this particular learning style often conflicts with the traditional learning environment common in most schools. Such teacher-student mismatches can contribute to the academic difficulties of minority students and to the high attrition rates of White teachers from urban schools.

Given the ongoing cultural difference between the majority of the teaching workforce and the student population, the question for teacher education programs is how they might assist future teachers in developing those dispositions that will increase their ability to interact and teach diverse students effectively and in a culturally responsive manner. Ritchhart (2001) views dispositions as a collection of cognitive tendencies that capture one's patterns of thinking. Ritchhart's definition is grounded in a dispositional view of intelligence and is premised on the concept that "intelligent performance is more than an exercise of ability—dispositions concern not only what one can do, one's abilities, but also what one is disposed to do."

Thus dispositions address the often-noticed gap between our abilities and our actions" (Ritchhart, 2001, p. 3). Wasicsko (2002) maintains that dispositions are attitudes, perceptions, and/or beliefs that form the basis of behavior. Dispositions lie inside us and are not available for direct measurement, though they can be assessed.

Wilkerson and Lang (2007) assert dispositions are "teacher affect, attitudes, values, and beliefs that influence the application and use of knowledge and skill" (p. 2).

Professional Standards

The National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) recognized the importance of "dispositions" in 2000, and in 2002 created standards related to "Candidate Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions." NCATE advocates for a workforce of culturally responsive teachers and understands the imperative of teachers possessing key dispositions if they are to be culturally responsive. Broadly, the NCATE definition of dispositions is the "values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence a teacher's behavior toward his/her students, families, colleagues, and communities." These dispositions affect student learning, student motivation, and student development. They also impact an educator's own professional growth.

Dispositions are guided by beliefs and attitudes related to values such as caring, fairness, honesty, responsibility, and social justice. For example, dispositions might include a belief that all students can learn. Further, dispositions might include a vision of high and challenging standards, or an intense commitment to safe and supportive learning environments. In June 2006, NCATE affirmed its dedication to holding schools, colleges, and departments of education accountable for producing high quality educators who can help students learn. Further, NCATE Standard 4 expects "institutions to ensure that candidates demonstrate dispositions that value fairness and learning by all students."

Manifesting desired behaviors toward diverse students can promote understanding between teacher and students, facilitate student academic achievement, and instill a sense of professional fulfillment for teachers. This does not occur automatically for every teacher, and it can be a particularly problematic issue for some White teachers when they receive assignments in the nation's poorest and most racially segregated schools. Such assignments involve a lack of resources and often teaching in an area outside a teacher's licensed field, as well as having little connection with the students and their families. In such circumstances, it would not be unusual for a teacher's dispositions to manifest. Dispositions are a tendency to act in a certain manner under given circumstances.

Sleeter (1995) suggests how many White teachers may have difficulty with that standard:

Most [Whites] have never been victims of racism in America nor have they experienced racial minority communities in the same way Americans of color do. Whites draw on their own experience to understand inequality, and their interpretation of that experience usually upholds their belief that the rules of society apply roughly the same to everyone… (p.118)

Many white Americans believe in the *Great School Legend* and the ideology of *meritocracy*, both of which purport that there exists in our society a level playing field on which all are free to compete equally. Thus, any failure to achieve is fully the responsibility of the individual. Likewise, some White Americans traditionally question the innate intelligence of persons of color (Herrnstein & Murray, 1994). Indeed, Herrnstein and Murray (1994) purportedly used empirical statistical analysis to confirm this conjecture. If a Harvard psychologist and a scientist from a conservative think-tank share a belief in the inferior intellectual ability of African American students, it is easy to understand how ordinary citizens might come to share similar beliefs; and it is from the ranks of ordinary citizens that public education attracts its teachers.

Research by Rubie-Davies (2006) expands on earlier reports that examined the impact of teacher expectations. Rubie-Davies reports that there is an effect on student self-perceptions depending upon whether the teachers exhibit high or low expectations for the students. Having a teacher or a series of teachers who hold low expectations of students' academic ability can take a negative toll on those students. Perceiving one's self poorly can result in low academic performance.

National Education Policy

In recent years, teacher quality has become a top priority of national education policy. Given the empirical evidence that suggests that there is a significant correlation between teacher quality and student achievement, teacher excellence is deemed absolutely essential. Wenglinsky's (2002) research indicates that the correlation between teacher quality and student achievement is actually stronger than the one that exists between students' socioeconomic status (SES), other background characteristics, and achievement. Teacher excellence, therefore, must encompass not only mastery of content and pedagogy, but cultural competence. Possessing the right dispositions is a foundation upon which to build cultural competence.

It is difficult for some White teachers entering the classroom to leave behind

their culturally ingrained values, but is so necessary that they do so if they are to develop desired dispositions for teaching. Many times the teachers themselves hold such ingrained values unconsciously. Picower's (2009) qualitative study of ways in which White pre-service teachers' life-experiences shaped their understanding of race reported evidence of a set of *"tool of Whiteness"* that protects and maintains dominant and stereotypical understandings of race. Such understandings allow white teachers to view themselves at once as both non-racist and superior.

By contrast, children of color, particularly African American children, learn at an early age that race matters and it functions negatively for them. Re-enactments of Clark's classic 1954 doll study by Edney (2006) indicated children internalize society's biases and prejudices, resulting in African American children describing a Black doll as looking "bad" and the White doll as "nice."

If African American children come to internalize such negative perceptions associated with themselves, it should not be surprising that White teachers would hold misperceptions about these children and their academic abilities. This misperception seems to be the manifestation of the low expectations some White teachers have for students, and as such, this may actually support low student achievement (Rubie-Davies, Hattie, & Hamilton, 2006).

A True Dilemma

Future educators who enter the profession with such cultural baggage related to diversity issues pose a true dilemma for the our schools and the teaching profession. Yet, teacher education institutions historically have prepared teachers to teach middle class, Anglo-American students (Manson, 2003). Only within the past 25 years have teacher education programs begun to address issues of diversity for future educators. Traditionally, few programs contained specific training to inculcate dispositions toward diverse cultures, races, or ethnicities (Manson, 2003).

What is, perhaps, most needed is for White teachers to have the ability to comprehend "Whiteness" and all of its complex social implications. Beginning with the nation's Constitution, which declared each of America's enslaved Black humans as only 3/5 of a human, and on into recent times, some Whites in American have entertained a deep sense of superiority against people of color and Blacks in particular.

This has been marked historically by a prevailing sentiment that education was wasted on Blacks, so much so that laws specifically prohibited the education of slaves. It is indeed difficult for some White teachers to comprehend how education has been built upon the normalcy of Whiteness. Historically, schools functioned to assimilate children from cultural, racial, and linguistic backgrounds who were not Western European, Protestant, and English-speaking (Provenza, 2002). Children who did not possess this most prized cultural capital have included Catholic students, the Irish, Jews, and other Southern and Eastern Europeans. These groups were, however, over time able to make the leap to assimilation and became part of White America. Students of color, even if they adopt all aspects of the cultural capital of the dominant culture, still face the reality that the most important element of the dominant culture eludes them; they are not White.

Within the context of the normalcy of Whiteness, some White teachers assume a stance of colorblindness which allows them to avoid seeing racial issues, discussing racial issues, and especially, avoid examining their own racial attitudes. Self-awareness which would confront the nation's racist history and openly discuss racial inequalities would be emotionally charged and might lead to cognitive dissonance (Ford & Glimps, in press).

Confronting a Complex Task

Confronted with these realities, the John Carroll University (JCU) Teacher Education program faces a complex task. The demographic profile of the students in the program suggests a traditional-aged, White population, many of whom have transitioned from a K-12 Catholic education into a Catholic higher education setting. Many of these students also enjoy an affluent socio-economic status and, as such, they have managed to engage in their daily activities nearly exclusively in the company of other White Americans.

This could possibly connote a *culturally deprived* status because of the extensive homogeneous life experiences these students have had. Frequently, they express fear when informed they may have to spend time within an urban educational or community setting. Most routinely express doubt about their ability to teach effectively children who are poor or minorities. In one or two extreme instances, students had parents intervene in hope of avoiding a mandatory "border crossing" (Giroux, 1998) experience involved in a service-learning assignment. Such responses clearly indicate the challenge of creating new dispositions in the John Carroll teacher education students.

In addition to anecdotal evidence such as this, how can we assess dispositions? What is important for teacher educators to recognize is the intersection of human personality and behavioral patterns. Dispositions are a dimension of human personality and, as such, there is frequently a degree of consistency about them that is likely to manifest as consistent behaviors.

If we can facilitate the development of desired dispositions we can expect a manifestation of new behaviors that may become consistent over time. Garmon's (2004) research with a sole White female pre-service teacher provides some clarity. Garmon suggests there are six indicators that may be associated with facilitating development of positive, pro-active dispositions related to multiculturalism and diversity:

1. openness to diversity,
2. self-awareness,
3. commitment to social justice,
4. intercultural experiences,
5. support group experiences, and
6. educational experiences.

Garmon associates these indicators with human personality that work in tandem with experiential factors; intercultural experiences, support group experience, and educational experience.

Ford (2003) reported that self-identified advocates of multicultural education, when asked to use three adjectives to describe themselves, had answers that indicated two themes. The first was persistence and the second was altruism. Altruism and social justice, it seems, can aid in creating teachers with the kind of dispositions needed by White teachers if they are to be effective instructors of minority students. Similarly, Freedman, and Appleman (2009) found that retention of teachers in high-poverty urban schools is often due to six key factors:

1. a sense of mission;

2. a disposition for hard work and persistence;

3. substantive preparation;

4. training in assuming the reflective stance of a teacher as researcher;

5. the opportunity to change schools while remaining in the profession; and

6. ongoing support. (p. 329)

The first two factors in Freedman and Appleman's findings seem to support the research by Garmon and Ford. Moreover, these findings suggest that the preparation of White teachers who can become effective and stable teachers of the nation's poorest students, who are most often dispropor-

tionately minority students, is possible if teacher education programs can instill in teacher education candidates self-awareness, the sense of mission and social justice, and the value of persistence.

There are those who suggest that assessing student dispositions is difficult and that trying to influence dispositions is even more challenging. Yet, Dee & Henkin (2002) have successfully employed a diversity attitude assessment survey with 150 students. Whether a single-subject study or multiple-subject study, assessment of dispositions is possible and can yield useful data across numerous domains.

Statement of Problem

White students generally lack a deep cross-cultural background, flowing from personal experiences. Indeed many White students manage to live most of their pre-pubescent years in a cocoon of Whiteness. Yet teacher education programs must prepare these future teachers to be effective teachers in culturally diverse classrooms. Melnick and Zeichner (1995) have lamented evidence indicating teacher education programs are not meeting this challenge.

The statement of one JCU teacher education candidate illustrates the problem vividly. Her lack of cross cultural experiences resulted in an all–to-familiar stance when requested to speak to the issue of White teachers working in urban setting; she wrote that such teachers may have values and expectations that *"may be too high for the students."* This statement suggests a perception that urban students are deficient in values and ability. Yet another candidate revealed her total distain for persons living in poverty: *"I am very proud of my standard of living—if poor people want to get out of poverty they should get two jobs."* Neither of these two female students exhibits any understanding of the abilities, needs, or life experiences of poor minority children and their families.

Clearly, understanding which practices, knowledge, and experiences most influence the development of desired dispositions is essential. Possession of that information would allow the JCU Teacher Education Program to maximize its efforts and increase desired outcomes. There is, however, a first task, specifically, the need to ascertain the students' present dispositions related to multicultural education. The effort described here seeks to identify student dispositions related to multicultural education at an initial stage—that is, student dispositions before they have had college coursework in the education core and, specifically, before the sole multicultural education course. The effort sought to ascertain student dispositions related to multicultural education developed largely through their personal experiences and exposure within the K-12 educational setting.

Methods

Participants

One-hundred sixty-three potential teacher education candidates enrolled in the first course in the JCU education sequence participated in this study. This represents candidates from eight different classes over four different semesters: Fall 2006 (28.2%), Spring 2007 (8.6%), Fall 2007 (38%), and Fall 2008 (25.2%). There were 119 (73.0%) females and 43 (26.4%) males with one missing response. Self-reported race/ethnicity was: 122 (74.8%) European-Americans; four (2.5%) African-American; four (2.5%) Hispanic-Latino; one (.6%) Asian-American; and 31 (19%) who identified as other. Based on the University profile, the category *other* is consistent with students who identify as Middle-Eastern or multi-racial.

Instrument

A 21-item instrument, adapted from a survey by Ponterotto, Baluch, Greig, and Rivera (1998), collected data related to students' dispositions. The scale shows strong internal consistency in this sample with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.848.

Design and Analysis

This is a descriptive study of the entry level undergraduate education students' dispositions to multicultural education. The individual questions were treated as ordinal data and analyzed for differences in semester, gender, and race using Mann-Whitney U statistics. The scale score was treated as interval and was analyzed for differences in semester, gender, and race using ANOVA. Analyses were conducted in SPSS PC Version 16.0 and used an overall significance level of 0.05.

Results

The overall score ranged from 26 to 85 with a mean of 46.4 (95% CI: 45.0, 47.8). There was a statistically significant (p=0.041) difference in gender between males (n=43; M=48.8; SD=6.9) and females (n=118; M=45.5; SD=9.5) with females showing larger agreement in multicultural dispositions. There was also a statistically significant (p=0.035) difference in race/ethnicity between European-Americans (n=121; M=47.2; SD=8.9) and all others (n=40; M=43.8; SD=9.0) with non European-Americans showing larger agreement in multicultural dispositions.

An item-level frequency analysis is presented in Table 1. Some items were answered strongly in agreement and other strongly in the negative. Other items showed the reluctance of student candidates to choose a side.

An item analysis to determine differences between genders identified four questions displayed in Table 2, where males show lower levels of agreemen. There were also significant differences between European Americans and all others on five questions, as displayed in Table 3.

Discussion

Currently it is not fashionable, nor acceptable, to engage in blatantly racist behavior, as more White Americans seek to develop a persona that conveys racial tolerance. Many public K-12 schools routinely engage in some type of observance to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, and, yet, we would argue that such observances are a kind of bastardization of multicultural education. Too often this entails a misunderstanding or repudiation of multicultural education objectives and tenets, with the result that the effort is reduced to celebrating holidays, honoring a representative member of a specific race or culture, or enjoying the music and food of the same.

Such activities, if present in the K-12 setting, can be quite entertaining but never actually challenge the existing social inequalities. Therefore, those students who express knowledge of multicultural education generally exhibit a benign attitude toward the concept. Nevertheless, in a self-reporting survey, students are not likely to reveal themselves in a negative light when reflecting on issues of diversity and the equal rights of fellow Americans and their children. Findings for several of the survey items support that supposition.

Looking first at data in Table 1, for example, we find Item 1 had only one student strongly disagree and only one disagree with the statement that "teaching culturally diverse student is personally rewarding." This overwhelming response of strong agreement from 33 students plus agreement from another 42 students is confounding given that the majority of the students had little or no exposure to persons who are culturally or racially different from themselves.

Item 21, likewise, produced skewed findings—52 students strongly agreed and 38 agreed that they felt comfortable with people culturally different from themselves.

Table 1
Percent Frequency Distribution of all Respondents

#	Question	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Neutral %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %
1	Teaching culturally diverse student groups is personally rewarding.	33	42	23	1	1
2	Successful teaching for culturally diverse students requires that teaching methods be adapted to meet their needs.	34	48	12	4	2
3	Multicultural education receives too much emphasis.	2	6	37	45	9
4	Teachers have a responsibility to be aware of their students' cultural backgrounds.	31	47	14	6	1
5	When I become a teacher, I will frequently invite extended family members (e.g. cousins, grandparents, godparents) to attend parent-teacher conferences.	9	15	29	36	12
6	Teachers have a responsibility to encourage culturally diverse students to have pride in their own culture.	36	35	21	6	2
7	As classrooms become more culturally diverse, the teacher's job becomes increasingly challenging.	8	42	35	12	4
8	I believe that the teacher's role needs to be redefined to address the needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds.	7	31	41	18	2
9	Teachers should only use multicultural instructional practices when the students are culturally diverse.	4	11	25	46	15
10	I will be successful teaching culturally diverse students because I have no cultural biases.	28	44	21	6	2
11	Having students with culturally different backgrounds can be a great learning experience for me.	48	43	4	2	3
12	Learning the goals and instructional methods of multicultural teaching is a necessary part of teacher training.	28	52	15	4	1
13	All students should learn to communicate in English only.	5	11	25	39	20
14	Teaching students about cultural diversity will create conflict in the classroom.	1	7	18	50	24
15	Multicultural awareness is not needed for the subject areas or grade level I plan to teach.	2	9	19	46	23
16	I am aware of my own culture and its values.	38	50	6	2	3
17	Teachers frequently interpret communication styles of bilingual students and some racial minority students as behavioral problems.	5	22	50	19	4
18	I feel I have the ability to teach poor minority students successfully.	23	43	28	4	1
19	Immigrant students should quickly learn how to be Americans.	1	14	35	39	12
20	The curriculum in American schools should emphasize our European heritage.	3	13	54	22	8
21	I am comfortable being with people culturally different from me.	52	38	3	3	3

n=163 for all questions except question # 4, 15-21 where n=162

Table 2
Significant Agreement Differences between Males and Females: Questions 1, 9, 15, and 19

#	Question	Male Agreement %	Female Agreement %	p-value*
1	Teaching culturally diverse student groups is personally rewarding.	62.8	79.0	.038
9	Teachers should only use multicultural instructional practices when the students are culturally diverse.	25.6	10.1	.002
15	Multicultural awareness is not needed for the subject areas or grade level I plan to teach.	16.3	10.1	.029
19	Immigrant students should quickly learn how to be Americans.	27.9	10.1	.003

* Mann-Whitney U two sample test

Table 3
Significant Agreement Differences between European Americans and All Others: Questions 1, 12, 13, 17, and 18

#	Question	European-American Agreement %	All Other Agreement %	p-value*
1	Teaching culturally diverse student groups is personally rewarding.	72.9	80.0	.028
12	Learning the goals and instructional methods of multicultural teaching is a necessary part of teacher training.	77.1	87.5	.032
13	All students should learn to communicate in English only.	18.1	10.0	.032
17	Teachers frequently interpret communication styles of bilingual students and some racial minority students as behavioral problems.	23.0	40.0	.021
18	I feel I have the ability to teach poor minority students successfully.	59.8	87.5	.004

* Mann-Whitney U two sample test

Again, these responses must be questioned, since the typical JCU student has had very limited interaction with persons from other cultural, racial, or ethnic backgrounds. This becomes evident when the students actually progress to a course in which a mandated service-learning assignment is required at a site that is initially often culturally challenging for them.

Similarly, item 10 elicited responses that attest to the students' desire to present themselves positively. Twenty-eight students strongly agreed and 44 agreed with the statement "I will be successful teaching culturally diverse stduents because I have no cultural biases." Based on the students' inability to articulate the characteristics of their own culture, it is difficult to imagine that they would even be aware of any cultural biases they hold. Repeatedly, students in the teacher education program produce a list of five of the most prominent characteristics of American culture, featuring *freedom, democracy, family,* and *success*. Racism, consumerism, capitalism, competition, and individualism seldom are mentioned. Yet, these traits are clearly embedded in the dominant American culture (Provenzo, 2008).

Item 3 is also informative, asking the students to comment on degree of emphasis given multicultural education. More than a third of those responding took a neutral position on "Multicultural education receives too much emphasis." Those who disagreed numbered 45. Both of these numbers suggest that either the students truly believe that multicultural education does not receive too much emphasis, or, more likely, the students did not have very much exposure to multicultural education during their K-12 school experiences.

Item 5 is, perhaps, most illustrative of persons operating from a monocultural paradigm. Nearly two-thirds of responses indicate that the idea of including extended family members in the parent-teacher con-ference experience is something they disagree with or are non-committal toward. Numerous racial and ethnic communities, such as the Chaldeans of Greater Detroit, African Americans, Africans, and Puerto Ricans, routinely conceptualize "family" to include extended members such as grandparents, aunts and uncles, and even cousins. Indeed, in some communities the most important family may not be the parents, but rather the grandmother. Future teachers need to have this cultural awareness as they go forth to work in diverse communities.

Different Responses by Gender

Table 2, revealing gender differences in responses to four items, displays significant disagreement on items 9 and 15. In both instances males expressed strong agreement with the statement by more than 2 to 1. The statement in item 9 is one frequently expressed by students in the JCU Teacher Education Program and by many in the education profession, revealing that they do not recognize the essential need to teach from a multicultural perspective even when the student enrollment lacks diversity.

Indeed, some multicultural scholars (Sleeter & Bynoe, 2006) posit in such instances that it is even more crucial for classrooms that lack diversity to engage in multicultural education than when there is diversity. This is so especially in classrooms populated by students who are affluent members of the dominant culture. It is such students who will, in all probability, be in leadership positions in the nation's financial, medical, educational, and political structures. Further, it is these individuals who need to have a sense of social justice in order to work with others to effect social change aimed at social equity.

Item 19 reflects the long-held view of some Americans that all immigrants should become assimilated as quickly as possible. Such a stance assumes that immigrants cannot become Americans while retaining much of their own cultural heritage. Rather than push for full assimilation of immigrants, there should be space for immigrants to gain accommodation for their cultural heritage. Ford and Merritt (2007) speak to the difficulties confronting the nation's newest immigrants, extending beyond issues of language to issues of racial identity.

Differences in Responses by Race

In Table 3, differences in racial perceptions related to multicultural education are displayed. Item 17 indicates that the non-White students have a more accurate understanding of how linguistic differences in students can lead to some White teachers to view an inability to speak Standard English as problematic. Moreover, students who historically have Limited English Proficiency (LEP) may actually find themselves assessed and classified for special education, an issue with historic roots in the field of special education.

Frequently, academically successful minority persons possess the ability to code switch. In the formal education setting, in the world of work, they speak the language of the dominant culture. Yet, in the confines of their own homes and communities they may revert to first language, be it Spanish, Black English, or a Jamaican patois. White teachers who cannot appreciate their role in facilitating this process for students with LEP may unknowingly assure that such students are not academically successful.

Item 18 replicates findings observed during informal class discussion. The vast majority of the White students lack a sense of self-efficacy when confronted with the challenge of effectively educating poor minority students. Non-White students,

by contrast, exhibit no such deficiency. A strong sense of self-efficacy may be displayed even by non-White students who are not, themselves, poor. These data suggest that non-White students possess the ability to not only understand cultural differences, but that they also may possess the essential characteristics of persistence, self-awareness, and a keen desire for social justice.

Item 1 in Table 3 reveals another difference that was not unexpected. This is so because many JCU future teachers express a desire to return to teach in schools very similar to those in which they received their education. It is not uncommon to witness these students attempt to obtain employment in the very schools from which they graduated. Many of these schools are in affluent suburban areas with limited racial and socio-economic diversity. If the non-White students are expressing a similar sentiment, the likelihood exists that the schools from which they graduated contained a greater degree of socio-economic, racial, and ethnic diversity than did the schools of their White JCU peers.

Lastly, Item 12 may reflect the elements of several other survey items. Specifically, White students responded in greater numbers than did non-White students that they felt multicultural education was not important to the grade or subject they planned to teach. Additionally, similar results occurred related to the question posed about the degree of diversity with a classroom. There was an 87.5% level of support among non-White students on the position that multicultural education is an important component of their teacher education program compared with only 77.1% on the part of White students. This could again be partially due to the kind of schools White students envision for themselves as teachers. Perhaps, also, it could reflect some degree of avoidance.

What often occurs among some White JCU teacher education students is a compartmentalization. They may be receptive of multicultural education within the confines of that specific course, but they may not be open to having exposure to it again in other courses. A statement heard with too much regularity is "We had this in the multicultural course, why are we having this again?" Such a posture makes clear that some students do not understand that a person cannot become culturally competent from just one course on multiculturalism.

Conclusion

Candidates in the JCU Teacher Education Program often arrive having spent the first 18 years of their lives in a protected and culturally restricted reality. The program has a challenging task to cultivate within these students the social consciousness, persistence, and self-awareness needed to ensure that the NCATE dispositions standard is addressed.

As Corbett, Wilson, and Williams (2002) posit, teachers must look inward and affect what is within their control. Not until there is a critical mass of teachers who are competent multicultural educators will public schools in urban areas serving the nation's students most in need see significant progress in providing them a quality education.

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