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Multicultural Dispositions: A Viable Tool for Teacher Training

Franklin Titus Thompson
University of Nebraska at Omaha, fthompson@unomaha.edu

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Franklin Thompson, Ed.D.
University of Nebraska-Omaha
College of Education
Department of Teacher Education
Kayser Hall 514, 6001 Dodge Street
Omaha, NE 68182-0162, USA.

Abstract

The practice of assessing the dispositions of pre-service educators has gained increasing attention among institutions of teacher preparation. Current debate often centers on the needs and views of P-12 children, researchers, and policy makers, at the expense of a forgotten voice—teacher candidates. In particular, this study examines the multicultural portion of the larger dispositional debate. Education majors (N=420) from a Midwestern metropolitan university were asked to rate the viability of 13 selected multicultural dispositions as a training tool. Utilizing a 9-point Likert Scale, respondents gave strong support for multicultural dispositions not only during the posttest (M=8.38) but also the pretest phase (M=7.89). Significant pretest (M=7.89, SD=0.84) to post-test (M=8.38, SD=0.73) change in mean scores was shown (t(419=-11.70, p<.0005) with a medium effect size (d=.63). When given a chance to delete individual items, respondents chose to retain all 13 dispositions. In addition, students gave high ratings for their personal (M=7.89) and professional (M=8.01) growth. These results demonstrate that (1) students are not intimidate by well-constructed multicultural dispositions, (2) critical instructional efforts over the span of a semester can help students reach higher levels of multicultural awareness, and (3) dispositions can be used to assess changes in student perceptions across a program of professional preparation, which allows them a better opportunity to determine whether or not education is an appropriate professional match.

Introduction

The practice of assessing the dispositions of pre-service educators has gained increasing attention among institutions of higher learning. Teacher dispositions strongly influence the impact educators have on student development (Collinson, Killeavy and Stephenson, 1999; Notar, & Taylor, 2009). Teacher preparation programs must help candidates develop the necessary dispositions to be effective educators (Rike, 2008). Unless teachers are willing to explore beyond the familiar comfort zone of the majority culture, the education of students of color will be shortchanged (Dee and Henkin, 2002).

The movement toward greater professionalization of teaching through assessment based accreditation was spearheaded by the National Accreditation of Teacher Education [NCATE] - the nation's largest accrediting agency - as a way to not only assess knowledge and skills but also to determine whether a person was the right match for the classroom, thus the reinforcement of dispositions. Of all the school factors that bolster student achievement, individual teacher characteristics and the quality of instruction are the most important (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Bransford, Darling-Hammond and Le Page, 2005). Even when home and environmental determinants fail to provide students with tools to succeed academically, well-trained educators make a positive difference in the way students achieve academically (Carter, 2000; Farley, 2010). Training for greater multicultural awareness is an often forgotten part of that preparation (Gay, 2003; Tozer, Senese and Vilas, 2006).
Dispositions and Effective Teaching

Dispositions has been used in so many different contexts that finding a working definition is hard to come by (Borko, Liston and Whitcomb, 2007).

Dispositions are described by Carr and Claxton (2002) as habits of mind and tendencies to respond to situations in certain ways. Cudahy, Finnan, Jaruszewicz, and McCarty (2002) define dispositions as values, commitments, or ethics that are internally held and externally exhibited. Leader and Middleton (2004) describe dispositions as learning experiences that go beyond cognitive abilities into a realm of attitudes and awareness about critical thinking. The term has been used to describe a range of phenomena including expectations, behavior, attitudes, values, temperament, traits, and characteristics. More discrete wording and workable classification of types of dispositions is needed (Duplass and Cruz, 2010). For purposes of this study, the following Gollnick and Chinn (2013) definition will be used: Dispositions are values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence teaching and interactions with students, families, colleagues, and communities.

The discussion of multicultural dispositions is less defined compared to the larger dispositional debate, and yet one of the six NCATE standards is dedicated specifically to diversity (NCATE, 2008). In addition to NCATE, dispositions as formulated by the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) - an agency that collaborates with state teacher licensing departments - also provide an important theoretical framework. The following 8 multicultural dispositions are gleaned from a broader set of 43 InTASC recommendations (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011). Effective teachers:

1. Believe that all children can learn at high levels and persist in helping each learner reach his/her potential;
2. Realize that content knowledge is not a fixed body of facts but is complex, culturally situated, and ever evolving;
3. Recognize the potential of bias in his/her representation of the discipline and seeks to appropriately address problems of bias;
4. Respect learners' diverse strengths and needs and is committed to using this information to plan effective instruction;
5. Are committed to deepening awareness and understanding the strengths and needs of diverse learners when planning and adjusting instruction;
6. Value the variety of ways people communicate and encourage learners to develop and use multiple forms of communication;
7. Are committed to deepening an understanding of his/her own frames of reference, the potential for biases in these frames, and their impact on expectations for and relationships with learners and their families, and;
8. Constantly explore how to use disciplinary knowledge as a lens to address local and global issues.

Many sources don't use the word dispositions, and yet they speak of diversity qualities that educators must possess. Stevens and Charles (2005) identify understanding, tolerance, and respect as important attributes. Garmon (2006) highlights openness, self-awareness, self-reflection, and a commitment to social justice as important correlates to effective instruction. Helm's (2006) review of the literature includes kindness, initiative, honesty, humility, healing, a sense of community, and a service-to-others orientation. Researchers from the Invitational Theory and Practice (ITP) literature (Riner, 2008; Schmidt, 2007) warn that unless schools are purposely constructed in a way that invites minority student and parent participation, the educational experience will always be viewed as something that is being done to them.

Assessment of Dispositions

Not all writers agree that dispositions can or should be assessed. At times the debate becomes contentious. Damon (2007), for example, argues that (a) dispositions in teacher education risk becoming poorly defined constructs that are interpreted in open-ended ways to suit the subjective biases of the evaluator, and that (b) while the traditional scientific discussion of a disposition emphasizes a birth-until-now process that impacts personality development, the NCATE definition focuses only on the candidate's here-and-now, value-driven conduct. This can cause a misalignment of purpose between established research and current practice. There is also concern that loosely defined standards of dispositions can lead to the elimination of people who do not pass a political litmus test, which could potentially lead to intimidation and fear of being eliminated from teacher preparation programs (Damon, 2007; Dee and Henkin, 2002).

Critics contend that dispositions (a) are currently defined in non-scientific ways that allow for too much subjective interpretation (Borko, Liston and Whitcomb, 2007; Damon, 2007; Duplass and Cruz, 2010; Murray, 2007); (b) are closely tied to variables [e.g., age, academic exposure, moral development] that are too hard to control for (McKnight, 2004); and (c) cannot be dis-embedded from a larger set of environmental factors [e.g., parent involvement, peer pressure] that account for the total learning experience (Allal, 2002; Sadler, 2002).

Dee and Henkin (2002) call for teacher preparation programs to incorporate rubrics that define what culturally sensitive practice is, and include ways to measure students' progress towards those goals. Other proponents of dispositions (Carr and Claxton, 2002; Villegas, 2007) argue that, even though human behavior is highly dependent on a large number of interwoven factors, dispositions can be defined in a developmental fashion that takes into account differentiation in robustness and socio-cultural sophistication.

Writers who are conflicted about dispositions agree that if done correctly, students can benefit greatly from instruction that encourages an educator code of ethics that can be assessed (Burant, Chubbuck and Whipp, 2007; Diez, 2007). Borko, Liston and Whitcomb (2007) and Duplass and Cruz (2010) believe that despite the lack of metrically sound assessment measures, we must find creative ways to provide on-going constructive feedback for teacher candidates in skills, knowledge, and dispositions. Despite reservations, Damon (2007) believes that students deserve to be instructed by teachers who are ethics-driven. The following are the author's suggestions for dispositional reform:

1. We should not assess attitudes and beliefs that relate to religious preference or political ideologies;
2. We should not assess personal characteristics (such as being gregarious or shy) that only have a speculative relationship with teaching ability.
3. Beliefs that are directly related to a candidate's capacity to teach, as well as personal and professional teacher characteristics should be assessed; and
4. Dispositions must be defined via scholarship and systematic application of established knowledge gained from the behavioral sciences.

Johnston, Almerico, Henriott, and Shapiro (2011) conducted a review of literature and identified dispositional assessment tools that are currently being used at higher learning institutions such as Eastern Kentucky, Memphis, Jackson State, and Arkansas State Universities. They brought together the best elements from various instruments with a two-prong goal of (1) creating greater item description and clarity, and (2) increasing inter-rater interpretation and reliability of their synthesis product. Although the stated goals were successfully met, the effort fell short in that a factor analysis to determine instrument structure was not performed.

An ambitious effort by Thompson (2009) showed that both regular and multicultural dispositions could be constructed in such a way as to avoid the typical political pitfalls associated with unsuccessful efforts. This was accomplished (a) through careful interdisciplinary wording of initial items, (b) by using a pilot study that allowed students an opportunity to edit and pare down the initial listing, (c) by allowing students – not instructors – to do the final ratings [i.e., student self-assessment], and (d) by giving students the final say as to whether or not disposition scores qualified them to remain in their program of study. One of the major flaws of the current debate is that dispositions have become a mostly top-down edict that ignores the voice of teacher candidates. Thompson showed that respondents endorse the usage of dispositions as evidenced by a 7.2 out of 9 rating [N=1038], and that his Multicultural Dispositions Index [MDI] was able to pass the statistical scrutiny needed for it to become a viable assessment tool. Currently, the MDI is being used at the University of Nebraska at Omaha and James Madison University. This particular research seeks to fill a gap in the literature by further defining and expanding the multicultural aspect of the overall dispositions debate.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. Are education students intimidated by multicultural dispositions that are more narrowly defined than what is typically found in the literature?
2. Can the application of multicultural dispositions strengthen the learning experiences of education candidates? Is there a difference between disposition scores before and after application of a course focused on thirteen selected dispositions and CMI instruction?

3. Given a listing of selected multicultural dispositions, which item will students target as ones that should be eliminated?
4. Given a listing of selected multicultural dispositions, how do education majors rank-order them as to their impact on student learning?
5. Will the results of the analyses investigating the previous two questions be disaggregated along lines of race, gender, age, and political allegiance?

Going into the study, the investigator accepted the null hypothesis for questions 1 and 3, while rejecting the null hypothesis for questions 2 and 5. Question 4 was deemed exploratory in nature.

Method

Participants

Participants who comprised a convenience sample for this study were teacher and counselor candidates (*N*=420) who attended a Midwestern metropolitan university situated in an urban setting of 800,000 people. Five respondents (1%) chose not to provide demographic information. Ninety-four of the individuals surveyed (23%) were male and 321 (77%) were female. Three hundred seventy-seven persons (91%) were Caucasian, while 38 (9%) were race minority students. Of those thirty eight, 13 were African American, 11 were Hispanic, and 8 were Asian, 5 were Native American, and 1 was Hawaiian. A problem of low numbers of students of color applying to become educators is a long-standing issue for this community.

There were 272 persons (65%) who fell in the 17-22 age range, 98 persons (23%) who were age 23-30, and 45 individuals (11%) who were 31 to 62 years old. Three hundred and twelve persons had only a high school degree, 94 persons had obtained an associates or a bachelor's degree, and 9 had obtained a masters or higher degree. Three hundred and twenty one respondents (76%) were studying to be classroom teachers, forty three were graduate students in the counseling program (26 school counselors and 17 agency counselors), and fifty one were a combination of speech pathology, library, athletic training, and nursing majors. During the posttest phase, 123 individuals (30%) classified themselves as a Democrat, 117 (28%) as a Republican and 85 (20%) as an Independent. Seventy-five respondents (18%) chose the undecided and 13 (3%) chose the "I refuse to answer" option.

The Survey Instrument

The theoretical framework used to formulate items in the assessment tool included input from (1) NCATE and InTASC recommendations, (2) a review of multicultural – counseling psychology – and ITP literature, (3) student input, and (4) craft knowledge gleaned from the investigator's 35 years of diversity teaching experience. Appendix B provides additional information regarding the interdisciplinary input used to establish the theoretical framework.

By way of a pilot study, an initial listing of 22 dispositions was whittled down to the 13 that are presented here. An example of an item that was dropped includes the following: "The teacher values social justice." Appendix A contains the final version of the survey used in this study. Completion of the instrument was required for all students enrolled in a state mandated course for teacher certification. The instructional goal was to encourage students to (a) become more aware of the potential impact their views might have on children from diverse backgrounds, and (b) accept the concept of on-going self-assessment. Pre and post treatment surveys were distributed over the course of a semester. The utilization of the data for research purposes, however, was voluntary and anonymous. Student participation in the voluntary portion of the project was 98%.

Companion Curriculum

Although the treatment plan is mostly based on the 13 selected dispositions, a companion curriculum developed by the investigator known as the Critical Multicultural Imperative (CMI) was used to augment instruction. The following principles help to describe the CMI approach:

1. Controversy should not be shunned, but rather embraced. Good learning happens when instructors face head on and skillfully address—not avoid controversy;
2. Multicultural education should never be a feel-good or an awareness-only exercise. The acquisition of cross-cultural and communication skills, greater insight, and self-efficacy are preferred goals;
3. A color-blind oriented curriculum is viewed as insufficient. Its ultimate goal appears to make people feel good without adequately addressing and explaining economic, social and academic inequality. It also does little to properly address the phenomenon of low self-esteem among many disenfranchised students;

4. Once traditional race, ethnicity, religious, gender, and disability issues are accounted for, additional attention must be given to power and privilege issues and the abuses that often flow from it;
5. Multicultural education must take an interdisciplinary approach. It should include a synthesis of information gathered from many fields of study. It should not only investigate people, places, and events, but also pay attention to psychological forces that explain multicultural rejection and ego defense mechanisms that encourage resistance;
6. Successful instruction must pay attention to both content and process;
7. In order for life-long learning to take place, instruction must simultaneously be aimed at the head (academic), gut (feeling), and heart (social change) levels;
8. The instructor must become adept at releasing majority group students from historical guilt, while at the same time recruiting them to become change agents;
9. Effective multicultural education is enhanced when instruction highlights the pain and suffering of human relations, as well as testimonials about how obstacles were overcome. A delicate balance between messages of pain and triumph is needed for the success of both minority and majority group students;
10. Effective multicultural education is greatly enhanced by engaging in interactive learning experiences;
11. Partisan political pandering is viewed as counter-productive to the ultimate goals of a diverse society. Eclectic collaboration by the various political ideologies and groups is highly encouraged;
12. Student reflection and on-going self-assessment make for a better professional, and;
13. Educators who adopt a well-conceived dispositional mindset will have a greater opportunity to bring about meaningful social change compared to those who are dispositional critics.

Data Analysis

Utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program, the following statistical analyses were conducted:

1. A summarization of descriptive data, including student rankings of the dispositions and the impact the course had on personal and professional growth;
2. A paired-samples t-test analysis of pretest-to-posttest mean score differences to assess the impact of dispositional instruction; and
3. Several ANOVA analyses to estimate relationships between respondents' pretest and posttest scores as they are potentially mediated by selected demographic attribute variables.

Although previously discussed multicultural dispositions and CMI principles are closely related, they are nonetheless separate and distinct entities. The majority of the analysis will focus on the specific impact of the selected dispositions. There are three quality control items, however (i.e., rate your personal growth, rate your professional growth, and "the instructor should have experimented less"), that will take into account the interplay between dispositions and CMI instruction.

Results

Descriptive Findings

Descriptive findings of survey results can be found in Tables 1 and 2. Education majors in this study clearly endorsed multicultural dispositions as a useful training tool. Surprisingly, this was true not only for the posttest ($M = 8.38$), a desired outcome of this study, but also for pretest results ($M = 7.89$). When looking at quality control questions, we see that personal growth was rated at 7.89 and professional growth at 8.01. When ask whether or not instruction would have been improved if the instructor had experimented less, respondents disagreed with a 2.32 rating.

Table 1 : Student ratings of various multicultural issues: Utilizing a Likert Scale of 1 to 9, with 1 being low and/or strongly disagree, and 9 being high and/or strongly agree.

Variable	Pretest Mean	SD	Posttest Mean	SD	N
1. Student rating of disposition usage:	7.89	0.84	8.38	0.73	420
2. Student rating of personal growth:	------	------	7.88	1.41	215
3. Student rating of professional growth:	------	------	8.01	1.36	215
4. Teacher should have experimented less:	------	------	2.32	1.64	215

Student prioritization of how each disposition impacts learning was relatively similar to the instructor's hypothesized ranking (see Table 2). Although respondents and the instructor did not have an exact match, the first eight dispositions were ranked relatively the same—with the exception of the fact that respondents put greater emphasis on disposition #12 [change must start with me] and #10 [good intentions are not good enough]. General consensus between student and instructor rankings could be viewed as evidence that the instructor had strong influence on the developing dispositions of students. The reader is also reminded, however, that the instructor's ranking was initially influenced by student input from the pilot phase of the project.

When given a chance to eliminate one or more of the 13 dispositions, respondents clearly chose to retain them all. Only disposition #7 [educators must teach students to constantly examine the status quo] received any real opposition, and even then there was a 96% approval rating for that item.

Table 2: Student ranking of: (a) The most-to-least important disposition that impacted professional growth, and (b) Survey items that should be eliminated.

Disposition	Ranking	Mean	SD	Ranking N	Retain N	Exclude N
2. Kids from all ethnic groups can learn.	1st	3.87	3.04	198	271	0
1. It's not about me; it's about my students.	2nd	4.22	3.65	198	271	0
3. Don't fear diversity; celebrate it!	3rd	5.56	3.40	198	270	1
12. Social change must start with me.	4th	6.52	3.90	198	271	0
5. Disagree without being disagreeable.	5th	6.63	3.49	197	271	0
4. Many truths simultaneously exist	6th	7.01	3.33	197	267	4
10. Good intentions are not good enough.	7th	7.27	3.12	197	271	0
6. Instructors must teach critical analysis.	8th	7.52	3.15	198	271	0
9. Educators/Counselors can't be fragile.	9th	7.67	3.58	197	266	5
8. Teach all sides, then trust your students.	10th	7.80	3.07	197	271	0
13. Lifelong self-analysis is a good thing.	11th	7.82	4.08	197	271	0
7. Regularly question the status quo.	13th	9.45	3.01	197	261	10

Paired Sample t-Tests

As a result of instruction, students appeared to be positively impacted by the application of the 13 selected multicultural dispositions. Table 3 shows a mean difference of 0.53 between pretest (M=7.92, SD .77) and posttest (M=8.45, SD=.56) scores $t(199)$ = -9.19).

This mean change over the semester was highly significant (p = <.0005) with a medium effect size (d = .63). In summary, students came into the semester not being intimidated by the 13 multicultural dispositions. They then went on to experience additional growth in their appreciation of multicultural dispositions.

When investigated individually all 13 dispositions displayed significant results, with disposition 4 [many truths exists simultaneously], disposition7 [we should diplomatically question the status quo], disposition 1 [it's not about me—it's about my students], disposition 9 [educators can't be fragile], disposition 6 [multicultural clichés and warm feelings aren't enough], and disposition 11 [we need more than foods and festivals] showing the most pretest-to-post-test change, .90, .83, .74, .66, .61, and .54 respectively. Effects sizes for each of the pre-to-posttest differences are included in the analyses (see Table 2).

Table 3: Paired-Sample T-Test Results for: Acceptance of Multicultural Teacher Dispositions, Pretest-to-Posttest Change in Mean Scores (N = 420).

Variable	Pretest Mean	*SD*	*Post* Mean	*SD*	Mean Diff.	*df*	*t-score*	*p*	*d*
I. Combined Results:	7.89	0.84	8.38	0.73	0.49	419	-11.70	< .0005	.63
II. Individual Dispositions:									
1. It's not about me; it's about my kids/clients.	7.66	1.63	8.32	1.63	0.66	412	-7.85	< .0005	.47
2. All kids from all ethnic groups can learn.	8.47	1.12	8.67	0.86	0.21	417	-3.32	.001	.21
3. Don't fear diversity; celebrate differences!	8.00	1.39	8.52	0.96	0.52	417	-7.14	< .0005	.44
4. Many truths exists simultaneously.	7.37	1.66	8.11	1.35	0.90	414	-8.60	< .0005	.49
5. I must disagree without being disagreeable.	8.37	0.98	8.57	0.92	0.21	416	-3.53	< .0005	.21
6. MC clichés not enough; need critical analyses.	7.76	1.24	8.42	0.93	0.61	416	-10.32	< .0005	.61
7. Regularly question the status quo.	6.75	1.97	7.49	1.91	0.74	412	-6.50	< .0005	.38
8. Teach all sides, then trust your students.	8.18	1.11	8.50	0.97	0.27	416	-4.43	< .0005	.25
9. Educators/Counselors can't be fragile.	7.58	1.52	8.41	1.02	0.83	416	-9.77	< .0005	.65
10. Good intentions are not good enough.	8.12	1.11	8.52	0.85	0.40	416	-6.95	< .0005	.40
11. Need more than foods & festivals approach.	7.84	1.27	8.38	1.08	0.54	416	-7.67	< .0005	.46
12. Social change must start with me.	8.22	1.13	8.54	0.90	0.33	416	-5.56	< .0005	.33
13. Lifelong self-analysis is a good thing.	8.28	0.78	8.61	0.78	0.33	414	-6.39	< .0005	.36

Alpha = .05

One-Way ANOVA Analyses

The hypothesis that significant differences would be found as a result of disaggregating the data by demographic variables had to be rejected. By and large, pretest-to-posttest differences appeared to be relatively independent of demographic input. Differences based on race and gender were not found to be statistically significant—ethnic minorities and females were not more sensitive to multicultural dispositions than were Whites and males. Older and graduate students did appear to have a greater appreciation for multicultural dispositions, but that is expected because of greater exposure to education and life experience. The data was also disaggregating by political allegiance, but no meaningful significant differences were found. A sometimes popular conservative fear that educators are oppressed by a multicultural imperative in the form of state mandated training, or by instructor required dispositions is not supported by these findings.

Discussion

The dispositions used for this study were developed and applied in a fair and systematic way. Much care was taken to avoid the pitfalls of failed efforts, namely, (a) spurious dispositions were omitted, (b) special attention was given to constructing certain dispositions (i.e., 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, and 10) that purposely highlighted the crippling impact of the phenomenon otherwise known as multicultural resistance and majority power group denial—yet it was done in a way that encouraged deeper thinking, (c) students, not instructors, were responsible for the assessment of their own growth or lack thereof, and (d) although a few students were privately counseled, no student was punished or exited from the program as a result of their dispositional stance.

The fact that both genders and persons from the various ethnic and cultural (i.e., sub) groups embraced multicultural dispositions as a needed component of teacher and counselor training is very encouraging to say the least. Disaggregated results show that race and gender did not make a significant difference on how multicultural dispositions were viewed. Democrats, Republicans, and Independents showed no significant differences at either the pretest or the posttest levels. These results tend to corroborate the findings of Adorno, Frekel, Levinson and Sanford (1950) that both liberal and conservative individuals have the ability to be unprejudiced, as well as findings by Sniderman and Piazza (1993) that conservatism and prejudice, often viewed as one in the same, are separate measures.

It is unclear whether a similar political finding would come from students in a different university setting or students from other fields of study. The question of whether or not there is greater sophistication with regards to how people self-report answers on political surveys is a topic for another study. Political and racial optimism may very well be the result of the quality of Midwest students, or the character traits of candidates who choose to become educators. No one knows. The good news is that educators from varying political perspectives are willing to create a school climate that is intentionally inviting to students of multiple backgrounds.

Although respondents rated all 13 dispositions as important tools of professional development, the following five were identified as particularly important: (1) a belief that kids from all backgrounds have the ability to learn and that ALL kids deserve an educator's best effort, (2) that true multicultural teaching and counseling cannot have a "what-about-me" focus, (3) that differences should be celebrated and not feared, (4) that if change is needed in my school or within my community it must start with positive acts initiated by me, and (5) that while getting a person to open up their worldview is ideal, true multicultural instruction must first demonstrate how to disagree without being disagreeable. The reader will note that while dispositions were the main thrust of this study, the treatment plan was augmented by a more encompassing curricular approach known as the Critical Multicultural Imperative (CMI). Although a quick overview of that approach was provided, a deeper explanation of CMI instruction will have to be addressed in follow-up publications.

Limitations of this study include the following: One could easily argue that the product offered here is not purely dispositional because some of the items are pedagogical in nature. This is true in part due to the fact that current teaching practice is not totally devoid of the needs of disempowered groups. The fact that some of the needed protections for minorities are naturally incorporated into current pedagogy is a positive thing. Still, too many kids are physically and emotionally dropping out because they are unable to make education relevant to their daily lives. One could also make a case that the set of dispositions offered here are not politically neutral due to the fact that most of it promotes a collaborative, moderate paradigm.

To that end, all of education may be guilty to one degree or another of not being apolitical. Many would argue, for example, that the teaching of topics such as evolution or birth control is both scientific and political. Fact is, we may never be able to totally disentangle politics from science and the need for social change.

Conclusions

The adoption of a dispositional approach to teacher training and certification encourages education majors to critically reflect and move beyond feel-good multicultural education. This research is not comprehensive in its attention to multicultural disposition instruction and assessment. It is just one listing of multicultural dispositions that happened to work for a group of education students from the Midwest. To be sure, there are other worthy listings not identified by this research. The 13 dispositions and overall CMI instructional approach are offered as just one of many possible models. This work does, however, provide evidence that (1) dispositions can be defined and framed in meaningful ways, and (2) that education majors welcome the growth they experience from reflecting on them.

Dispositional benefits go far beyond simply making minority students feel more included. Majority group students, too, reported that multicultural dispositions broadened their horizons. At the end of the 2007 fall semester, one Caucasian male student wrote the following evaluation:

> "I admit to a slightly defensive attitude after the first few classes. The things you were talking about were very different from what I have previously been exposed to. However, as the semester went on, I began to see a different perspective on the topic of race and discrimination, white privilege, minority groups, and multicultural dispositions that I had never seen before. I felt that my eyes were being opened to an entirely different reality that was there all along despite my blindness to it."

One of the major flaws of the current debate is that dispositions have become a mostly top-down edict that ignores the voice of the middle person. Current debate appears to center on the needs and views of P-12 children, researchers, and policy makers at the expense of the voice of the forgotten: teacher candidates. The findings from this study go a long way in helping to silence a suggestion by some critics that dispositions are being forced on teacher candidates, or that they short-circuit the democratic process in education. If applied democratically, most candidates who are resistant to multicultural dispositions will either modify their perspectives or voluntarily exit themselves from teacher education programs. Either way, P-12 public and private school children benefit.

A false polemic exists among those who fight over the implementation of dispositions. Dispositions and democracy are not natural enemies as some critics would have us believe. Still, there are legitimate concerns about dispositions that must be addressed. In particular, dispositions must be defined and developed in more systematic ways. Although they can become important tools for career counseling, dispositions should never be used as a hammer for program-related punishments or for instructional separation between classmates. Proponents must avoid dispositional pitfalls that seek to convert students in partisan political ways. *If properly developed and applied*, dispositions are not only palatable with the goals of teacher preparation programs, they have the power to provide a measure of growth in cultural awareness skill development that cannot be obtained without their usage.

This study demonstrates that (1) students are not intimidate by well-constructed multicultural dispositions, (2) critical instructional efforts over the span of a semester can help students reach higher levels of multicultural awareness, and (3) dispositions can be used to assess changes in student multicultural perceptions across a program of professional preparation, which allows them a better opportunity to determine whether or not education is an appropriate professional match. To be sure this set of dispositions are not perfect but at least they promote critical thinking, collaboration, community consensus, and a need for putting the needs of our children above all else. The main difference with this set of dispositions is that they are endorsed by the ones who have to learn them. That is an important first step in healing the dispositions rift among educators.

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Appendix A

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Dr. Franklin Thompson, College of Education
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Multicultural Educator Dispositions Survey

4 Digit ID

_____

Scale

Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Clearly Agree	Strongly Agree

1		2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

Directions: Use the above scale to register your agreement or disagreement with the following proposed multicultural and human relations teacher dispositions. Do not give answers that you think the instructor wants to hear, but rather ones that reflect your true feelings.

Effective multicultural classroom teachers and school counselors must:

_____ 1. Accept the premise that the business of teaching and counseling is not about me, my feelings, or my set of philosophical and political beliefs. Rather, it's about my students and clients and what they need;

_____ 2. Adopt the premise that all students, regardless of their ethnic or socioeconomic background, have the potential to learn;

_____ 3. Embrace a belief that views different as just what it is; different, and not better or worse. Ethnic and cultural differences should be celebrated, not feared;

_____ 4. Accept the premise that many truths exist simultaneously in the world, and that truth defined solely by the group in power without the input of out-group members has a higher probability of only being partial truth;

_____ 5. Maintain a professional demeanor with others even when working with people I disagree with. In order for me to be an effective multicultural and human relations communicator, *I must learn how to disagree without being disagreeable*;

_____ 6. Realize that warm feelings and nice sounding phrases (e.g., "Can't we just all get along?") do not in and of themselves solve problems in the multicultural arena of life. Rather, *a critical analysis of power and privilege is needed* in order to understand the bigger picture of racism and problems that flow from academic, social, and economic disadvantage;

_____ 7. Constantly remind themselves of factors within society that make it easy to justify the status quo and engage in denial and resistance behaviors that potentially keep me from seeing the bigger picture of inequality and social injustice;

_____ 8. Accept the premise that while it may be next to impossible to get everyone to agree on multicultural content, it is nonetheless necessary that educators allow students an opportunity to hear the facts about living in this society from multiple perspectives, and then proceed to trust them to form their own worldview independent of the instructor's beliefs or the traditions of their family upbringing;

_____ 9. Realize that I cannot be an effective multicultural educator if I am a fragile person. In order to positively impact people who come from poor neighborhoods and tough backgrounds, I must acquire thick skin and a deeper knowledge base;

_____ 10. Realize that general awareness and good intentions are not good enough. In addition to possessing a good heart, I must gain the necessary *abilities and skills* to communicate and work across cultural lines;

_____ 11. Realize that it is hard to make a lasting multicultural impact on my students by relying solely on a history-foods-and-festivals perspective. Rather, a multi-disciplinary approach that incorporates research and knowledge gained from many diverse fields of science and human behavior will yield a wider set of results;

_____ 12. Acknowledge that social progress starts with me—I must be the change my community seeks after. I must acknowledge that educators and counselors have the power and responsibility to make a positive impact on the lives of young people even when other forces make a negative impact; and

_____ 13. Willingly embrace the practice of on-going self-assessment and reflection. The more classroom teacher know about themselves, the more benefit will be accrued to children.

Additional Survey Questions:

_____ 14. College teacher & counselor preparation programs *should not exit students who are weak in multicultural dispositions* from their program of study. Nevertheless, *schools of education should still emphasize dispositions* and other important diversity mindsets for the sake of preparing educators and help-professionals to work with children and adults from diverse backgrounds.

15. Rank the multicultural counselor dispositions in order of the most (1st) to the least (13th) important factor that you feel makes a person an effective educator: Looking at **Disposition #1** (D1) listed above, I give it a _____ ranking; D2 _____ D3 _____ D4 _____ D5_____ D6 _____ D7 _____ D8_____ D9 _____ D10 _____ D11 _____ D12 _____ D13 _____

16. The one disposition I think should most be dropped from this assessment is number _____ (put a N/A for "Not Applicable" if you think all of the dispositions should be required of students).

17. Open-ended student comments and feedback to the instructor:

Appendix B

Theoretical framework utilized for development of the 13 multicultural educator dispositions.

_____

Source of inspiration   Targeted disposition investigated by this study

_____

I.   Aligned with current InTASC (2011) standards that have similar verbiage:
        Disposition 2, 3, and 13.

II.   Aligned with James Banks (2009) multicultural research and literature:
        Disposition 8 and 11.

III.   Aligned with Critical Pedagogy research – Paulo Freire (2005), and Joan Wink (2010).
        Disposition 4.

IV.   Aligned with principles from Critical Race Theory – Derrick Bell (2004), and Gloria Ladson-Billings (2003):
        Disposition 6 and 7

V.   Aligned with multicultural counseling research and literature – Sue & Sue (2013):
        Disposition 9 and 10.

VI.   Aligned with the teachings of M. Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and John F. Kennedy:
        Disposition 12.

VII.   Craft knowledge – new dispositions based on investigator teaching experience:
        Disposition 1 and 5.

VIII.   Dispositions that are aligned with Invitational Theory and Practice literature and research:
        a.   John J. Schmidt (2007) –
              Disposition 2, 3, 7, and 8
        b.   Phil Riner (2006) –
              Disposition 1

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