

# The Instruction and Assessment of Multicultural Dispositions in Teacher and Counselor Education

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this study was to examine teacher dispositions within an undergraduate and graduate education course aimed at helping students gain a better appreciation for lifelong multicultural education. Education majors (N=202) from a Midwestern metropolitan university were asked to rate the viability of 13 dispositions as a training and instructional tool. Curriculum based on the underlying principles of the dispositions served as the treatment plan. Significant pretest (M=7.92, SD=0.77) to post-test (M=8.45, SD=0.56) change in mean scores was shown for the combined data set ( $t(204)=-10.32, p<.0005$ ) with a large effect size ( $d=.80$ ). Dispositional growth was evident despite a limited impact of selected demographic variables. Results of this institutional review board approved study demonstrate that multicultural dispositions applied within an intentionally inviting learning environment can be used to assess changes in student perceptions over the span of a semester or across a program of professional preparation. This will help college students better assess whether or not teaching and counseling career paths are correct ones for them to pursue.*

## Introduction

From the time that the Nation at Risk Report (U.S. Department of Education, 1983) was published up to more recent debates over President Bush's No Child Left Behind legislation, much attention has been given to school reform (Farley, 2005; Gollnick & Chinn, 2009; Huerta, 2009). Of 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 & Le Page, 2005). Even when home, neighborhood, and environmental determinants fail to provide students with tools to succeed, well-trained educators can make a positive difference in the way students achieve academically (Carter, 2000; Farley, 2005).

Teacher training is incomplete, however, if education preparation programs fail to emphasize the need for school personnel to be intentionally inviting with regards to the policies, places, programs, and processes they utilize to construct school climate (Purkey & Novak, 2008). Schmidt (2004) reminds us that school districts who adopt a

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policy that advocates strict cut-off points on state mandated tests adhere to a misguided belief that everyone should be treated the same, disregarding individual and collective differences. "At the same time, places that reflect only the dominant culture without recognizing the presence of diverse populations practice exclusion rather than inclusion in daily life. Programs that neglect or ignore culture or individual differences [and] processes adopted for the convenience of an elite few, may disinvite people who feel slighted or set apart from the rest of the population," (p.30-31).

### **Theoretical Framework**

The initial impetus and theoretical framework for this study, related to multicultural dispositions, was inspired by recommendations made by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) - the nation's largest accrediting agency. NCATE requires that teacher preparation programs assess the dispositions of their candidates. It is believed by some, though not all, professionals that teacher dispositions play a critical role in teacher quality and effectiveness as do teachers' pedagogical and content knowledge and skills (Wasicsko, 2002).

Additional theoretical impetus was provided from related academic disciplines. From the multicultural education literature comes a recommendation from Klinger & Edwards (2006) and Trent, Kea, & Oh (2008) that beginning teacher education programs and in-service professional development efforts do a better job of equipping educators with culturally responsive, evidence-based strategies.

De' Melendez and Beck (2010) warn against adopting a one-size-fits-all, monocultural mindset when teaching students. Gollnick and Chin (2009) emphasize the need for educators to move beyond the dominant canon of knowledge and ways of knowing. Several counseling education experts (e.g., Arredondo, et al., 1996; Axelson, 1999; Baruth & Manning, 2003; Ivey, D'Andrea, & Simon-Morgan, 2002; Constantine, 2003; Robinson, 2005; Sue & Sue, 2008) advocate a set of disposition-like multicultural competencies that emphasize not only knowledge and skills, but also counselor attitudes and beliefs.

Principles borrowed from Invitational Theory and Practice (ITP) also provide an important theoretical backdrop. When surveying the literature, one can identify a natural link that appears to connect ITP with the multicultural education movement. William Purkey and John Novak (1996), founders of ITP, affirm that, "In the fight against prejudices, teachers cannot be neutral spectators. They should be combatants against the subtle and not so subtle forces that negate the worth and ability of large numbers of their students," (p. 66). However, Schmidt (2004) notes that, "Over the years, literature and research about invitational education has not addressed the nuances of applying this approach with students, parents, employees, clients, or other populations from diverse backgrounds," (p. 44). He proceeds to issue a call for that gap in literature to be closed.

Within the school setting, Purkey and Novak (1996) teach that effective educators must

adhere to four fundamental beliefs: That (1) all students deserve to be affirmed as valuable, capable, and responsible, and treated with acceptance, (2) administrators, teachers, and students all have the responsibility to create beneficial messages for themselves and others, (3) all students regardless of their background possess relatively untapped potential in all areas of learning and human development, and (4) human potential is best realized when the administration purposely orchestrates a positive school climate.

Purkey and Novak (1996) further break down effective relationship building into four levels of functioning across a spectrum of helping and harmful behaviors: Policies and practices that are (a) Intentionally Disinviting – blatant racism and sexism fit into this category, (b) Unintentionally Disinviting – indistinctive institutional forms of oppression would be good examples, (c) Unintentionally Inviting – such as great intervention strategies that become hard to duplicate due to a lack of purpose and deliberation, and (d) Intentionally Inviting – intervention and strategies that are purposely designed to invite optimal development and encourage students to realize the potential in themselves and others. “At the intentionally inviting level, educators deliberately choose caring and democratic purpose,” (Purkey & Novak, 2008, p. 30). This study posits that the application of multicultural dispositions as a training tool for classroom teachers and counselors is a prime example of adopting policy and practice that is intentionally

inviting to the benefit of a diverse student population.

### **Dispositions Defined**

The definition of dispositions is varied and imprecise; still, there are commonalities of thought. Early writers (Beyer, 1987; Ennis, 1987) refer to dispositions as tendencies to behave. Katz (1993) defined the term as a voluntary and intentional pattern of behavior exhibited frequently and oriented to broad goals. In later writings, 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 them as learning experiences that go beyond cognitive abilities into a realm of attitudes and awareness about critical thinking. This study relies on a definition provided by Gollnick and Chinn (2009) which views dispositions as, “values, commitments, and professional ethics that influence teaching and interactions with students, families, colleagues, and communities,” (p. 379).

### **Dispositions and Effective Teaching**

The movement toward the greater professionalization of teaching through assessment based accreditation was spearheaded by NCATE as a way to not only assess knowledge and skills but also whether a person was the right match for the classroom, thus the reinforcement of teacher dispositions (McKnight, 2004). Teacher dispositions strongly influence the impact

educators have on student development (Collinson, Killeavy, & Stephenson, 1999). Teacher preparation programs must help candidates develop the necessary dispositions to be effective educators (Florio-Ruane and Lensmire, 1990). Training for greater multicultural awareness is a major part of that preparation (Gay, 2003; Tozer, Senese, & Vilas, 2006).

Information regarding dispositions as it specifically relates to the multicultural training of education majors is less defined compared to the general dispositional discourse, and yet there are important considerations one can glean from the literature. Stevens and Charles (2005) identify understanding, tolerance, and respect as important dispositions. Garmon (2006) highlights openness, self-awareness, self-reflection, and a commitment to social justice as important correlates to effective diversity instruction. Helm's (2006) review of the literature includes kindness, initiative, honesty, humility, healing, a sense of community, and a service-to-others orientation.

Leading multicultural textbook authors address characteristics that have a disposition-like quality without necessarily labeling them as so. For example, Grant and Gomez (2001) emphasize valuing diversity through adopting non-traditional mindsets. Banks (2009) calls for active and meaningful values and character education. Bennett (2007) emphasizes the importance of instilling fair-minded critical thinking. Nieto (2004) is a proponent of shaping cultural sensitivity through a critical

pedagogy that embraces a multiple lens approach to valuing differences. An exception is the Gollnick and Chin (2009) text which actively promotes multicultural dispositions as formulated by the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) - an agency that collaborates with state teacher licensing departments.

The following eight dispositions were gleaned from a larger listing of 36 successful beginning teacher correlates representing the diversity component of the INTASC (1992) recommendations. Effective multicultural teachers:

1. Believe that all children can learn at high levels and persist in helping all children achieve success;
2. Are sensitive to community and cultural norms;
3. Appreciate multiple perspectives and convey to learners how knowledge is developed from the vantage point of the knower;
4. Appreciate and value human diversity, show respect for students' varied talents and perspectives, and is committed to the pursuit of individually configured excellence;
5. Respect students as individuals with differing personal and family backgrounds and various skills, talents, and interests;
6. Appreciate the cultural dimensions of communication, respond appropriately, and seek to foster culturally sensitive

communication by and among all students in the classroom setting;

7. Value and appreciate the importance of all of a child's lived experience; and
8. Make students feel valued for their potential as people, and help them learn to value each other.

At the turn of the century, the American Psychological Association (2002) endorsed multicultural competencies for counselor education. Pope-Davis, Coleman, Lui, and Toporek (2003) produced the most comprehensive handbook to date on multicultural competencies. If multicultural competencies make school counselors more effective, they may also have a similar impact on teachers and administrators (Moore, 2003).

### **Assessment of Dispositions**

Not all writers agree that dispositions can or should be assessed. "Despite all the emphasis on dispositions, professionals believe that dispositions are a vague construct that is hard to define and measure," (Singh & Stoloff, 2008). Damon (2007) argues that while the scientific definition of a disposition emphasizes a birth-until-now process that impacts personality development, the NCATE definition focuses on the candidate's value-driven conduct, hence there is misalignment of purpose between established research and current practice. There is also concern that loosely defined standards of dispositions can lead to program dismissal of people who do not pass a certain political litmus test, as well as intimidate those who are afraid of being eliminated. Damon further warns that

"the politics of multiculturalism," (page 369) should be avoided, but he fails to go into further detail.

Criticism includes the argument that dispositions (a) are currently defined in non-scientific ways that allow for too much subjective interpretation (Damon, 2007; Murray, 2007); (b) like intelligence, cannot be measured directly (Singh & Stoloff, 2008; Wasicsko, 2002), (c) are closely tied to variables [i.e., age, academic exposure, and moral development] that are too hard to control for (McKnight, 2004); and (d) cannot be dis-embedded from a larger set of environmental factors [i.e., parent involvement, peer pressure] that account for the total learning experience (Allal, 2002; Sadler, 2002).

Proponents of dispositions (Carr & 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. Singh and Stoloff (2008) suggest that despite problems with defining and measuring teacher dispositions, teacher preparation programs should continue to conduct research aimed at adding to the emerging literature on the topic. Even 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 effectively assessed (Burant, Chubbuck & Whipp, 2007; Diez, 2007).

Despite reservations about dispositions, Damon (2007) believes that students deserve to be instructed by teachers who are ethics-driven. The following are 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.

Assessment tools aimed at measuring dispositional awareness are high in demand, but short in supply. Fortunately, Thompson (2009) utilized a convenience sample of Midwest undergraduate and graduate education majors ( $N = 1,092$ ) over a 5-year period to create an instrument referred to as the Multicultural Dispositions Index (MDI) aimed at effectively measuring multicultural dispositional growth. Significant pre-test-to-posttest growth of student multicultural dispositions was found, as well as strong student support for adopting dispositions as a program completion requirement. It is believed that the MDI is one of the first assessment tools of its kind.

Regardless of whether one supports dispositions in its current or in an amended form, there is a lack of strategies aimed at examining dispositional instruction in the classroom. This study hopes to address that need. In addition, this paper attempts to fill a small portion of the large gap in literature that previously failed to connect the goals of the Invitational Theory and Practice to the Dispositions movement.

## Research Questions

This study addressed the following research questions:

1. Is there a difference between disposition scores before and after application of a course focused on multicultural education?
2. Given a listing of 13 selected multicultural dispositions, how do education majors rank them as important training tools?

The multicultural course applied a dynamic curriculum developed by the investigator known as the Critical Multicultural Imperative (CMI). CMI teaching techniques are based on the following instructional strategies and principles:

1. Multicultural controversy should be embraced rather than avoided. Students are taught that that political correctness often acts as a filter to cloud important issues that need to be discussed. One example of this might be a need among young people of our time to have an open and honest discussion of why African Americans get to use the N-

Word, but Whites can't;

2. Partisan political pandering is often challenged. Students are taught that BOTH of the major American political parties have positive things to offer to the larger multicultural discourse, as well as things that need to be eliminated or modified in order for meaningful social progress to be made;
  3. The attainment of skill sets aimed at conflict resolution is a top priority of multicultural education. It should never be just a feel-good or a simple awareness-only exercise.
  4. 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;
  5. Successful instruction must pay attention to both content and process. If certain groups know about a certain truth on one hand, but they don't "feel it" or "feel you" as being an authentic helper on the other hand, it becomes harder for them to experience the change that they need;
  6. Significant attention must be paid to combating multicultural learner resistance and what multicultural counseling experts refer to as ego defense mechanisms;
  7. The instructor must become adept at releasing students from historical guilt about race and ethnicity, while at the same time encouraging and recruiting students to become change agents for the future;
  8. Multicultural education is enhanced when instruction highlights the pain and suffering of human relations, as well as testimonials of how obstacles were overcome. A delicate balance of both perspectives is needed;
  9. Once race, ethnicity, religious, gender, and disabilities issues are thoroughly established and discussed, significant attention must also be paid to going beyond those factors and exploring a phenomenon known as the abuse of power and privilege. Failure to look at the human condition above and beyond traditional indicators will result in only a partial awareness of the bigger diversity picture;
  10. Multicultural education is greatly enhanced when traditional lecture instruction is augmented with interactive learning experiences;
  11. On-going reflection and self-assessment improve teacher and counselor performance on both a professional and personal level; and
  12. Educators and counselors who adopt a multicultural dispositions mindset will have a greater opportunity to bring about positive and meaningful social change compared to those who are dispositional critics.
- This study is primarily aimed at addressing the viability of the last tenet, the importance of teacher candidates adopting a multicultural dispositional mindset.
- Student outcomes for the multicultural course itself included the following expect-

tations. Essentially, it was expected that students would:

1. Endorse multicultural dispositions as a useful program completion requirement;
2. Be positively impacted by dispositional instruction and experience statistically significant pretest-to-posttest mean score gains;
3. Closely mirror the investigator's initial ranking of the selected dispositions; and
4. See no need to eliminate any of the dispositions.

It was also believed that the demographics of the student might play a role in their interaction with the disposition instruction, and thus the scores before and after the course. For example, it was hypothesized that Caucasian, Republican, older, and male respondents might have lower pre-test disposition scores compared to younger, female, minority, and Democrat or Independent respondents. The researcher acknowledges that these demographics expectations can potentially be related to stereotyping, but it is the very investigation of such diversity myths that need to be considered, studied, and confronted in such disposition instruction research. It was hoped that the application of CMI instruction in the course would perhaps have a leveling effect on post test scores.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Participants who comprised a convenience sample for this study were teacher and

counselor candidates (N=201) who attended a Midwestern metropolitan university situated in an urban setting of 800,000 people. Fifty-two of the individuals surveyed were male and 149 were female. One hundred eighty-five persons (92%) were Caucasian, while 16 were non-majority group members. Of those sixteen, 6 were African American, 5 were Hispanic, and 5 were Asian. Low percentages of students of color applying to become educators have been a long-standing issue for the community.

There were 68 persons who fell in the 17-19 age range, 76 persons who fell in the 20-24 age range and 57 individuals who were 25 to 56 years old. One hundred and fifty one persons had only a high school degree, while 50 persons had obtained a bachelor's degree. One hundred and fifty one respondents were undergraduate education majors, while 31 were graduates studying to be counselors (16 school counselors and 15 community counselors). Nineteen were non-education majors. Sixty one individuals classified themselves as being a Democrat, while 66 and 33 persons said they were Republican and Independent respectively. Forty-one respondents were politically undecided.

### **The Survey Instrument**

The dispositions assessment tool developed for this study was based on an interdisciplinary theoretical framework. That framework included (1) disposition recommendations from NCATE and INTASC – two professional education agencies, (2) input gleaned from a careful review of multicultural education,



multicultural counseling, critical pedagogy, critical race theory, and invitational theory and practice literature, and (3) craft knowledge of the investigator gained from 34 years of teaching multicultural education and race relations. Appendix A is the actual survey given to respondents. Appendix B provides an explanation of how the items included in the survey instrument were linked to the review of literature.

Prior to the implementation of the survey and during the development of the instrument, the investigator allowed colleagues and students an opportunity to have input on each disposition over a period of time. Originally, there were 20 survey items, but a three-year development and vetting process paired the initial listing down to 13. The following is an example of a disposition that was eliminated during the development phase: Educators should endorse an eclectic political stance towards race, gender, sexual orientation, and physical impairment issues. Because it was decided that the statement might infringe upon the free speech rights of certain politically-minded educators, a more universal disposition—It's not about me, my politics, or my creature comforts, but rather it's about the needs of my students and clients—was substituted. Through the vetting process, the instrument was refined into its final form as represented in Appendix A.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Completion of the dispositions assessment instrument was an instructor requirement for students who took a semester long, state mandated, human relations course

designated for teacher and counselor certification. The utilization of the data collected for research was voluntary and anonymous. Pre and post treatment surveys were distributed over the course of a semester. Student participation in the voluntary portion that led to this research was 98%.

### **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 and student rankings of the dispositions;
2. An analysis of pretest-to-posttest mean score differences by conducting a paired-samples t-test; and
3. A two-way ANOVA to estimate potential relationships between respondents' pretest and posttest scores as they were potentially mediated by selected demographic attribute variables.

## **Results**

### **Descriptive Findings**

Descriptive findings of survey results can be found in Table 1. Education majors clearly endorsed the collective set of multicultural dispositions as a useful training tool, as witnessed by significant means scores reflecting student acceptance. Surprisingly, this was true not only of posttest results ( $M = 8.45$ ), but also of pretest results ( $M = 7.95$ ). Students came into the semester not being intimidated by multicultural dis-

positions, and then went on to experience additional growth in their appreciation of them as a result of meaningful instruction. When separated, all 13 dispositions were also supported.

Although respondents rated all the dispositions as important tools of professional development, the following were ranked as the top five: (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 everyone to agree on various diversity issues is ideal, true multicultural instruction must first demonstrate how to disagree without being disagreeable. Curriculum based on these principles can become life-changing.

The prioritization of each disposition by students was relatively similar to the instructor's initial rankings (see Table 2). Although respondents and the instructor did not have an exact match, the first eight dispositions were relatively ranked 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]. Still, general consensus between the student and instructor rankings may be evidence that the instructor may have had some limited influence on the developing dispositions of the students. Also, 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 opposition, and even then there was a 96% approval rating for that item.

Table 1

Paired-Sample T-Test Results for: Respondent Acceptance of Multicultural Teacher Dispositions, Pretest-to-Posttest Change in Mean Scores (N = 200).

	Pretest Mean	SD	Posttest Mean	SD	Mean Diff.	df	t-score	p	d
I. Combined Results:	7.92	0.77	8.45	0.56	0.53	204	-10.32	< .0005	.80
II. Individual Dispositions:									
1. It's not about me; it's about my kids/clients.	7.82	1.39	8.53	0.77	0.71	199	-7.13	< .0005	.66
2. Kids from all ethnic groups can learn.	8.29	1.25	8.70	0.81	0.41	199	-4.29	< .0005	.40
3. Don't fear diversity; celebrate differences.	7.92	1.29	8.55	0.87	0.63	199	-6.69	< .0005	.58
4. Many truths exist simultaneously.	7.52	1.50	8.32	1.01	0.80	199	-7.81	< .0005	.64
5. I must disagree with-out being disagreeable.	8.25	1.05	8.65	0.60	0.40	199	-5.24	< .0005	.48
6. MC clichés not enough; need critical analyses.	7.75	1.19	8.45	0.83	0.70	199	-8.28	< .0005	.69
7. We must regularly question status quo.	6.75	2.03	7.54	1.93	0.79	197	-4.49	< .0005	.40
8. Teach all sides, then trust your students.	8.33	0.98	8.59	0.78	0.26	199	-3.31	< .001	.30
9. Educators/Counselors can't be fragile.	7.59	1.49	8.43	0.96	0.84	199	-9.19	< .0005	.69
10. Good intentions are not good enough.	8.18	1.01	8.59	0.68	0.41	199	-6.12	< .0005	.49
11. Need more than foods& festivals approach.	7.90	1.19	8.44	0.98	0.54	199	-5.71	< .0005	.50
12. Social change must start with me.	8.29	1.00	8.62	0.73	0.33	199	-4.38	< .0005	.38
13. Lifelong self-analysis is a good thing.	8.29	0.95	8.67	0.66	0.38	199	-5.50	< .0005	.47

**Alpha = .05**

Table 2

Student Ranking of the Most-to-Least Important Disposition that Impacted Professional Growth.

Disposition	Ranking	Mean	SD	N	Retain (f)	Omit (f)
2. Kids from all ethnic groups can learn.	1 <sup>st</sup>	3.87	3.04	198	199	0
1. It's not about me; it's about my students.	2 <sup>nd</sup>	4.22	3.65	198	199	0
3. Don't fear diversity; celebrate it!	3 <sup>rd</sup>	5.56	3.40	198	198	1
12. Social change must start with me.	4 <sup>th</sup>	6.52	3.90	198	199	0
5. Disagree without being disagreeable.	5 <sup>th</sup>	6.63	3.49	197	199	0
4. Many truths simultaneously exist.	6 <sup>th</sup>	7.01	3.33	197	197	2
10. Good intentions are not good enough.	7 <sup>th</sup>	7.27	3.12	197	199	0
6. Instructors must teach critical analysis.	8 <sup>th</sup>	7.52	3.15	198	199	0
9. Educators/Counselors can't be fragile.	9 <sup>th</sup>	7.67	3.58	197	196	3
8. Teach all sides, then trust your students.	10 <sup>th</sup>	7.80	3.07	197	199	0
13. Lifelong self-analysis is a good thing.	11 <sup>th</sup>	7.82	4.08	197	199	0
11. Need more than foods/festivals approach.	12 <sup>th</sup>	9.39	2.92	197	197	2
7. Regularly question the status quo.	13 <sup>th</sup>	9.45	3.01	197	191	8

### Paired Sample t-Tests

Within the course, students appeared to be positively impacted by the application of the 13 multicultural dispositions. Results (see Table 1) show that respondents gave multicultural dispositions a pre-treatment rating of 7.92 (SD=.77) and a post-treatment rating of 8.45 (SD=.56). A mean difference of 0.53 for the combined data set was statistically significant  $t(199) = -9.19, p < .0005$  with a relatively large effect size ( $d = .80$ ). These findings 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.

In addition to the student ranking previously mentioned, the largest individual gain in mean scores representing dispositional growth included: Disposition #9 – educators

cannot afford to be fragile [this disposition had a mean score gain of .84 with a high-medium effect size of .69]; Disposition #6 – critical analysis is needed [a gain of .70 with a high-medium effect size of .69]; Disposition #1 – multicultural education is not about me [a gain of .71 with a high-medium effect size of .66]; Disposition #4 – many truths exist simultaneously [a gain of .80 with a high-medium effect size of .64]; Disposition #7 – we must constantly examine the status quo [a gain of .79 with a medium effect size of .40], and finally; Disposition 3 – we must celebrate, not fear our diversity differences [a gain of .63 with a medium effect size of .58]. These findings highlight areas that prior education may not have made a deep impact on the dispositional consciousness of an important group of students wishing to become classroom teachers and counselors. Teacher preparation programs must go beyond

merely training their candidates about content knowledge. This is true whether or not they work with a diverse population of students and parents.

### **Two-Way ANOVA Analyses**

By and large, increases in pretest-to-posttest means appeared to be relatively independent of the demographic variables selected for this study. There were, however, a few exceptions when looking at the relationship of age and college major with a few of the dispositions. Older students appeared to have had a greater appreciation for multicultural dispositions compared to younger students. As expected, counseling (i.e., graduate level) students were more culturally sensitive to dispositions compared to pre-service teacher candidates. 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. Political affiliation did not make an impact on the findings. Democrats and Republicans showed no significant statistical differences at either the pretest or the posttest levels. Independents and Undecided persons did show significant differences with Democrats and Republicans on disposition #1 (kidfocus), but even those findings were above the .01 alpha level as often designated for multiple testing designs.

The results of this study indicate that a generally high rating of multicultural dispositions by a convenience sample of (92% Caucasian) education majors is evidence of the strength of the instructive quality of multicultural dispositions as a

learning tool. 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 multicultural perception and awareness that cannot be obtained without their usage.

### **Discussion**

The dispositions covered in the undergraduate and graduate courses investigated in this study were developed and applied in a fair and systematic way. Care was taken to avoid the pitfalls of failed efforts, namely, (a) vague and spurious dispositions such as “the teacher believes in social justice” were purposely 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 multicultural resistance and the misunderstood dynamics of majority group power and privilege—yet it was done in a way that was non-threatening, (c) students, not instructors, were responsible for the assessment of their own growth or lack thereof, and (c) although a few students were privately counseled, no student was punished or involuntarily exited from the program as a result of their dispositional stance. It is believed that most education candidates who are resistant to multicultural dispositions will either modify their perspectives or voluntarily exit themselves from teacher education programs. Those who continue to resist dispositions still have to pass multicultural scrutiny during most hiring processes. Either way, the First Amendment rights of education majors are

protected while the human relations safeguards of public and private school children are strongly emphasized.

Disaggregated results show that race and gender did not make a significant difference on how multicultural dispositions were viewed. The fact that both genders and representatives from majority and minority groups embraced multicultural dispositions as a needed component of teacher and counselor training is encouraging to say the least. This outcome may very well be a function of the quality of candidates who choose to enter the field, but it may also say something about the expectations of students set by the multicultural mission statement of the college. It is unclear whether or not a similar endorsement for multicultural dispositions would come from students attending a different university or students from fields of study other than education. More research needs to be conducted to answer these questions.

Results did show older students having a greater appreciation for multicultural dispositions compared to younger students. The same is true for graduate level counseling majors compared to undergraduate pre-service teachers. This may largely be due to the fact that age and time spent working with pre-college students brings about a greater awareness of what their diversity needs are. It's one thing to grow up having close friends of another race or ethnicity. It's another thing having to actually devise strategies that help underprivileged groups navigate the societal

roadblocks they encounter as they climb academic and career ladders.

The results by political party 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. This finding goes against popular contemporary culture which states that Republicans are against things that help minority causes and that Democrats are a minority and underprivileged person's best friend. Caution must be taken, however, not to sanitize history or candy-coat the fact that over the years a lot of legislation aimed at increasing diversity initiatives was often torpedoed by people who represent the far right wing of the Republican Party. Caution must also be taken not to assume that 100% of the philosophy of modern day Democrats is in fact what the doctor should order for a "patient" who has needed healing for quite some time. Somehow, the real truth seems to lie in a critical middle yet to be discovered. The good news is that educators from varying political perspectives have the potential to create a school climate that is intentionally inviting to students of multiple backgrounds.

At the end of the 2007 fall semester, one Caucasian male offered the following testimony on the open-ended portion of his evaluation of the course:

"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.”

Each semester, there are more than a few personal testimonies such as this one that highlight the predictive quality of utilizing multicultural dispositions as a training tool.

## **Conclusions**

This research is not comprehensive in its attention to multicultural disposition instruction and assessment. It does, however, provide additional evidence that (1) dispositions can be defined and framed in meaningful ways, (2) student input on the viability and structure of dispositions can go a long way in making the instructional process more meaningful for education majors, and (3) teachers and counselor candidates can be effectively trained how to master the multicultural portion of the larger task of creating schools that are intentionally inviting.

The findings of this study appear to point to the fact that a false polemic probably 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 arguments 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 the instructional separation between individuals. Proponents must also avoid dispositional pitfalls that seek to convert students in partisan political ways. Nevertheless, the adoption of a dispositional approach encourages education majors to critically reflect and move beyond feel-good multicultural education. It must also be stated that benefits of dispositions go far beyond just making minority students feel more included. In this study, majority group students reported that multicultural dispositions broadened their horizons.

Multicultural dispositions were only one part of a broader strategy known as the Critical Multicultural Imperative (CMI) that the investigator developed to obtain positive results. A twelve point plan describing the makeup of the approach was included in this paper. Further explanation of other elements of the approach will be addressed in follow-up publications. The cornerstone of CMI curriculum, however, is the 13 multicultural dispositions investigated by this study. It is important to mention that this is just one listing of dispositions that happened to work for one group of education students from the Midwest. To be sure, there are other worthy listings not identified by this research. The dispositions from this study are offered as one possible model.

A pleasant by-product of the research came in the form of discovering a great amount of commonality that existed between the 13 dispositions and the writings of Invitational Theory and Practice writers. For example, in an editorial piece written by Phil Riner (2006) we find that helping behavior that is done with a selfish motive might not qualify as truly being inviting. Back in 1996, the writer developed disposition #1 – Education is not about me, my feelings, or my set of philosophical and political beliefs; rather, it's about my students/clients and what they need – as the foundation upon which he developed CMI instruction. Although not 100% the same, the similarity in dispositional mindset between the writer and Riner (2006) is encouraging, especially in light of the fact that they were arrived at separately and independently.

Likewise, John Schmidt's 2007 call for "celebrating unique differences that individuals and groups possess and through which they enrich the greater community," (p. 17) is very similar to disposition #3 used in this study (see Appendix A). It is also similar to the third, fourth, and fifth INTASC teacher disposition highlighted in this paper. Schmidt (2007) goes on to recommend that educators must (a) set high expectations for ALL students [very similar to disposition 2], (b) empower others with a sense of control over the decisions they face [somewhat similar to disposition 8], and (c) challenge traditional programs and outmoded policies that intentionally or unintentionally discriminate [somewhat similar to disposition 7].

The review of literature conducted for this study suggests that there is a natural connection between portions of the Dispositions, Multicultural Education, Multicultural Counseling, and the Invitational Theory and Practice (ITP) movements that are not always brought to the forefront. The instructive tenets of ITP have the potential to act as a glue that cements the disciplines into an overall interdisciplinary approach for school reform. To one degree or another, there is a desire in each of the disciplines to create policies, places, programs and processes aimed at ensuring holistic development for all children regardless of their ethnic or cultural background. Each discipline attempts to place the student or the client at the center of our attention. They also strive to enrich the larger society by highlighting the views and perspectives of individuals and groups who traditionally do not have input into the dominant literary canon.

Students and clients are better served when our invitations are intentionally inviting. However, organizations wishing to be equitable must be careful, "not to confuse fair and just practices with the misguided notion of treating everyone the same. Such confusion would fail to recognize the uniqueness that each person brings to a relationship," (Schmidt, 2007, p. 17). At the very heart of multicultural education is a noble desire to constantly redefine the concept of democracy. "The primary purpose of education is to summon people cordially to realize their potential in all areas of worthwhile human activity. This includes meeting the democratic goals of society and



participating in the progress of civilization,” (Purkey & Novak, 2008, p. 34). Novak (2002) calls for educational conditions that relate to a “deepening of an understanding of democracy,” (p. 152). It is believed that this research effort accomplishes a small but important part of these democratic goals.

More importantly, this study suggests that students are not intimidated by dispositions, but rather they are positively impacted by those that are carefully constructed and

applied. It also provides a solid base that encourages educators to consider how to go about developing meaningful multicultural curriculum that impacts students for a lifetime. Multicultural dispositions can be used to assess changes in perceptions over the span of a semester or across a program of professional preparation to help candidates determine if teaching and counseling are appropriate professional matches.

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# Appendix A

## Survey Instrument

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### 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/clients and what they need. Therefore, it is not ethical for me to use my classroom or the counseling session in a way that simply validates or justifies a particular worldview I happen to hold;
2. Adopt the premise that students, regardless of their ethnic or socioeconomic background, have the potential to learn higher order thinking skills. Therefore, all students deserve my best teaching effort.
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. Remain professional to others even when communicating with people we 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 (i.e., “Can’t we just all get along?”) do not in and of themselves solve problems in the multicultural and diversity 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 when it comes to accepting multicultural education and social justice themes;
- \_\_\_\_\_ 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 nation’s past;
- \_\_\_\_\_ 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 on a history-foods-and-festivals-only perspective. Rather, a multi-disciplinary approach that incorporates research and knowledge gained from many diverse fields of human behavior will yield the most complete results;
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Acknowledge that social progress starts with me—I must be the change my community seeks after. I must acknowledge that educators 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 teachers 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, **BUT** they still should emphasize dispositions and other important diversity mindsets for the sake of better preparing teacher candidates for public service.
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 professional: Looking at **Disposition #1** 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 the 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:

## 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 (1992) standards that have similar verbiage:	Disposition 2, 3, and 13.
II. Aligned with James Banks (2009) multicultural literature and research:	Disposition 8 and 11.
III. Aligned with Critical Pedagogy research – Paulo Freire (2005), and Joan Wink (2000):	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 – Sue & Sue (2008):	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. Multicultural Dispositions that are aligned to one degree or another with Invitational Theory and Practice teachings:	(a.) John J. Schmidt (2007) – Disposition 2, 3, 7, and 8 (b.) Phil Riner (2006) – Disposition 1

\* Note: Refer to Appendix A for the actual wording of each disposition.