

# Crosswalks Care Package #9

September 2006

## News and Updates

### *Sept. 15 North Carolina Association for the Education of Young Children (NCAeyc) Presentations*

Camille Catlett and Florianna Thompson will present a 1½-hour session called *Beyond Songs and Snacks: Strategies to Meet the Needs of Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Children and Families*. The session will highlight strategies for building collaboration, supporting capability and creating responsive and authentic environments. The session will be held from 8:00 – 9:30 and repeated from 10:00 – 11:30. The NCAeyc conference will be held at the Koury Center in Greensboro, NC. Details are available at <http://www.ncaeyc.org/>.

### *November 3 Crosswalks Talk*

**Topic:** Beyond Songs and Snacks: Resources for Increasing the Emphasis on Cultural, Linguistic and Ability Diversity in Preservice Education

**Presenter:** Camille Catlett

**Audience:** **Faculty and providers of early childhood professional development**

**Description:** Recent research (see Kidd, Sánchez & Thorp, below) has highlighted the importance of readings and assignments in shaping the culturally responsive dispositions and teaching practices of college students. This session will highlight resources (activities, print materials, videos, web sites, etc.) that are available to faculty to build these capabilities, and strategies for using them effectively. A guided tour of the Crosswalks toolbox will be included, as well as opportunities for faculty to share resources and strategies they're currently using.

**Time:** 10:00 – 3:00. Participants are invited to visit the FPG “petting zoo” of resources after the workshop.

**Location:** FPG Child Development Institute, 521 S. Greensboro Street, Carrboro, NC 27510

**Logistics:** No fee. Lunch provided. Contact Camille Catlett (919.966.6635 or [catlett@mail.fpg.unc.edu](mailto:catlett@mail.fpg.unc.edu)) to register.

### **July 2007 Crosswalks National Institute in Asheville, North Carolina** Details coming soon!

## Content Resources

### *Care Packages Now Available Online*

Care packages have been distributed every other month since April 2005. Each package includes content resources and instructional tools for increasing the emphasis on cultural, linguistic and ability diversity in preservice education and professional development. Review and download these materials at <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~scpp/crosswalks/pages/carepackages.cfm>. New care packages will be posted as they become available.

## *Crosswalks Talks Materials Now Available Online*

The Crosswalks Talks professional development series for faculty have been offered since August 2005. Each workshop has yielded PowerPoint slides, activities, handouts and content materials and other resources for use in teaching and training. All materials are now available online at <http://www.fpg.unc.edu/~scpp/crosswalks/pages/crosswalktalks.cfm>. Topics have included:

- Language and Culture: Respecting Family Choices
- Using instructional dilemmas to explore issues of culture and social justice
- Seeing the Invisible: Strategies and Resources for Addressing White Privilege
- Culturally Relevant Initiatives to Promote Literacy in Schools and Communities

## *Defining Moments: Developing Culturally Responsive Dispositions and Teaching Practices in Early Childhood Preservice Teachers* (attached)

Kidd, J.K., Sánchez, S.Y., & Thorp, E.K. (2006, April 7). Paper Presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, San Francisco, CA.

A summary of recent research findings on the practices that most powerfully support the development of culturally responsive dispositions and teaching practices are attached for your information and use. The results of this research suggest that teacher educators should consider four broad types of experiences when developing programs designed to promote culturally responsive dispositions and teaching practices. These experiences involve including a variety of **material resources** that focus on issues of culture, race, poverty, and inequality and **field experiences** that encourage interactions with diverse children and their families. These types of experiences combined with **critical reflection** and activities that promote **dialogue and discussion** around issues of diversity contribute to changes and refinements in preservice teachers' dispositions towards children and families with cultures different from their own and influences their willingness and ability to provide curriculum and instruction that is culturally responsive and relevant to the children they teach.

## Instructional Tools and Resources

### *Pre-K and Latinos: The Foundation for America's Future*

According to recent U. S. Census data, one in five children under the age of five in the United States is Hispanic. Research shows that these children are less likely than their white peers to start school with the basic math and reading skills needed for academic success. Only 40 percent of Latino children attend preschool, as compared with 60 percent of white and African American children. This new Pre-K Now report provides an overview of some of the obstacles Latino families face in accessing early learning opportunities for their children and offers strategies for increasing Latino participation in pre-k. Resources to download include:

- Full report ([http://www.preknow.com/documents/Pre-K andLatinos\\_July2006.pdf](http://www.preknow.com/documents/Pre-K andLatinos_July2006.pdf))
- Executive summary ([http://www.preknow.com/documents/exec\\_Pre-KandLatinos\\_July2006.pdf](http://www.preknow.com/documents/exec_Pre-KandLatinos_July2006.pdf))
- Executive summary in Spanish [Resumen Ejecutivo - en español] ([http://www.preknow.com/documents/exec\\_Pre-KandLatinos\\_July2006\\_sp.pdf](http://www.preknow.com/documents/exec_Pre-KandLatinos_July2006_sp.pdf))

Questions? Comments? Suggestions? Contact Camille Catlett  
at (919) 966-6635 or [catlett@mail.fpg.unc.edu](mailto:catlett@mail.fpg.unc.edu)

# Defining Moments: Developing Culturally Responsive Dispositions and Teaching Practices in Early Childhood Preservice Teachers

*Julie K. Kidd, Sylvia Y. Sánchez, and Eva K. Thorp*

George Mason University

***Paper Presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting on April 7, 2006 in San Francisco, CA***

As teacher educators in an early childhood program with the expressed purpose of preparing teachers to work with culturally, linguistically, socio-economically, and ability diverse young children (birth to age 8) and their families, we are dedicated to determining what types of experiences open interns' eyes and change their attitudes and beliefs about children and families with cultures different from their own. We have witnessed the biases, assumptions, and lack of understanding about multiculturalism that interns bring with them when they enter their program (Sleeter, 2001). We recognize the influence these attitudes and beliefs have on the way they view the diversity of their students and on the instruction they provide (Lazar, 2001). Knowing the power of interns' dispositions and the effect they have on the instruction that is provided, we have deliberately provided interns with experiences designed to confront their perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes and challenge them to address rather than circumvent issues of race, culture, poverty, and inequity.

A focus on developing culturally responsive dispositions and teaching practices is especially crucial when teachers and children do not share similar cultural, linguistic, and socio-economic backgrounds. When teachers and children come from similar cultural backgrounds, it is easier to provide instruction that takes into account children's backgrounds and needs (Cochran-Smith, 1995). However, it is possible for teachers with cultures different from their students to provide effective instruction when they approach teaching in a way that is responsive to the cultural and linguistic diversity of their students (Au & Kawakami, 1994). If this is to happen, teacher educators must not only teach the skills and knowledge necessary to teach young children, but must also provide experiences that enable preservice teachers to address issues of culture, linguistic diversity, poverty, and social justice in thought-provoking and meaningful ways. Further, learning opportunities must be created that enable preservice teachers to learn from and share their separate experiences and to reflect on ways in which they may have benefited from a system that creates injustice for others (Darling-Hammond, French, & Garcia-Lopez, 2002).

Unfortunately, as Nieto (2002) notes, "discussions of stratification and inequity were largely absent until recently in teacher education courses" and "power and privilege, and how they are implicated in language, culture, and learning, also typically have been invisible in school discourse" (p. 1). It is our hope that this is changing as teacher educators recognize the need to bring these issues to the forefront. However, few existing studies show significant effects on preservice teachers' knowledge of or dispositions toward cultural diversity and social justice. In fact, program experiences examined in recent studies "had modest or uneven effects depending on teachers' backgrounds and quality of supervision and facilitation" (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004, p. 957). Based on the limited research in this area, we recognize there is still a great deal of work ahead for those who are striving to transform teacher education programs.

Our previous research that examined learning from families through gathering their family stories suggests that well-designed assignments and experiences can contribute to shifts in preservice teachers' awareness and understanding of cultures different from their own and that these understandings are taken into account when planning instruction (Kidd, Sánchez, & Thorp, 2004a; Kidd, Sánchez, & Thorp, 2004b; Kidd, Sánchez, & Thorp, 2005). We found that when preservice teachers were engaged in gathering stories from families, they perceived a greater sense of awareness of the socio-cultural context of families and noticed shifts in their assumptions and biases about cultures different from their own (Kidd, Sánchez, & Thorp, 2002). Howard (1999) explains, "Authentic engagement with the reality of those whose stories are

significantly different from our own can allow us to transcend, to some degree, the limits of social positionality and help us see dominance in a clearer light” (p. 36).

Although our earlier research provides valuable insights into one type of assignment that contributed to preservice teachers’ cultural awareness and sensitivity, we wondered what other program experiences were influencing shifts in culturally responsive dispositions and teaching practices. Therefore, in this current study, we explored preservice teachers’ perceptions of the types of program experiences that contributed to developing an awareness and understanding of cultures different from one’s own and teaching practices that take into account the diversity of the children. Specifically, we examined the following research questions:

- (a) What types of program experiences did preservice teachers cite as contributing to the development of culturally responsive dispositions and teaching practices?
- (b) In what ways did the interns perceive that the experiences interacted with each other to influence the development of culturally responsive dispositions and teaching practices?

Method

### ***Participants and Setting***

Participants included 19 preservice teachers (interns) enrolled in a full-time, two-year master’s degree program at a state university in a large metropolitan area. The early childhood program was designed to prepare teachers who are willing and able to work with culturally, linguistically, socio-economically, and ability diverse children and their families. The interns participated as a cohort, and therefore, proceeded through the program in a systematic manner. At the completion of the program, they were eligible for three initial licenses: early childhood (pk-3), early childhood special education (birth – age 5), and English for speakers of other languages (pk-12). Of the 19 interns in the cohort, 63% were White, 21% Black, 10% Asian, and 5% Latina. All were female. They ranged in age from the mid-20s to mid-40s.

### ***Procedures***

Throughout the two years of the program, a variety of experiences were offered that were designed to encourage interns to learn about, reflect on, and dialogue about issues of race, culture, and poverty. In addition, it was expected that interns would act upon the issues in ways that promote social justice and equity for all children and their families. To assist interns with their journey, a variety of readings were assigned and discussed during the semester orientations and classes. Materials included, to name a few, works by Delpit, McCaleb, Nieto, Dewey, Feire, and Brookfield. In an effort to link the research and theories presented in the readings and class discussions with practice, assignments were designed that required interns to apply what they learned while engaged in their internship and then reflect on what they learned from these practical experiences. These assignments focused on critical reflection; home visits and interactions with families; gathering family stories as a way to learn from and with families; and assessment, planning, and implementing instruction that is developmentally appropriate and takes into account the individual differences of children.

The first fall semester, the interns enrolled in classes and an internship related to working with preschool children and their families. After an orientation week, which focused on beginning to explore issues of race, culture, and poverty as well as logistics of the program, the interns began a rotating schedule in which they attended classes four days of one week and then were at their internship sites the following six days. The classes included four strands: language and literacy, curriculum, development, and assessment. This schedule continued until the end of October. During the month of November, interns were engaged in their full-time internship and did not attend classes. In December, classes reconvened and finished mid-month. The spring and following fall semesters were scheduled in a similar manner. Students attended classes four days of the week, were on site the following six days, and completed a full-time internship towards the end of the semester.

In course activities, readings, assignments, and internships throughout the first fall semester, we focused the interns’ attention on sharing their own personal stories and reflecting on their cultural

identities. Our goal was to assist them in the examination of their own cultural lenses by helping them recognize the values and beliefs they bring to their interactions with others and specifically to their teaching. In addition, we wanted them to realize how their values, beliefs, and teaching practices are shaped by their cultural backgrounds and prior experiences. We also encouraged the interns to interact with and become comfortable with families at their internship sites and during home visits. We were building the foundation for the next semester when they would become involved with a focus family with a culture different from their own and would be pushed even further to examine their own as well as others' beliefs and practices.

The spring semester focused on working with infants and toddlers and their families. During this semester, we emphasized the importance of getting to know families within their socio-cultural context and the value of learning from the stories families share. As we continued to encourage the interns to examine their own cultural backgrounds and stories, we required that they gather stories from a focus family at their internship site. Their assignment was to come back to campus at the end of the semester and tell the family's story to their classmates as if it were their own. During the course of gathering stories, we expected the interns to spend time with the focus family and reflect on similarities and differences between their beliefs, values, and practices and those of their focus family. As they learned from the family, we encouraged them to use the knowledge gained to create continuity between home and the educational setting. Their goal was to implement culturally responsive and developmentally appropriate teaching practices that better met the diverse needs of the infants and toddlers.

The following fall semester emphasized teaching in kindergarten through third-grade classrooms. In this semester, classes developed the four strands included in the previous semesters as well as a mathematics and science strand. The focus on families and the power of stories continued with an emphasis on incorporating families into the curriculum as well as on drawing upon the children's cultural knowledge and experiences during learning opportunities. One of the assignments that spanned several courses was to develop and implement a project that met the state standards of learning while at the same time integrated families into the curriculum and instructional activities. This required interns to think about how a project focused on developing specific state-mandated concepts could authentically incorporate families and the everyday lives of the children.

The final semester occurred during the second spring semester and was referred to as the specialty semester. Interns selected a specialty area for the semester focus. During this semester, interns were engaged in full-time internships for the entire semester. Classes were held in the evening on Tuesdays and Thursdays. One class was a policy class and the other was a conceptual frameworks class that helped them pull together their experiences and articulate their philosophy on teaching and learning. One of the papers written during this class was the guiding principles paper, which became a major part of the interns' final portfolio.

At the conclusion of the program, interns compiled a program portfolio. One component of the portfolio was the guiding principles statement that required interns to reflect on their two years in the program and discuss the principles that have guided or will guide them as they begin their professional careers. We also asked interns to show evidence that they met the program standards and to write reflections that tied the evidence to the standards. After compiling the portfolios, the interns presented their portfolios to a group of their peers. Each group included at least two faculty members.

### ***Data Sources and Analysis***

The guiding principles paper written as part of the conceptual frameworks course and included in the program portfolio was the major source of data in this analysis. We also relied on our field notes for additional information. We used qualitative methodologies to analyze the data. We used a modified post-then-pre retrospective approach (Davis, 2003) to analyze any changes in dispositions that were evident across the two years and to determine what program experiences were cited as influencing those changes. This approach involved coding interns' statements into three categories: (a) dispositions held early in the program, (b) dispositions held at the completion of the program, and (c) specific program experiences or defining moments identified as influencing dispositions and teaching practices across the program. Within each of these categories, we identified statements that pertained to dispositions towards working with

culturally, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse children and families as well as statements related to culturally responsive teaching practices.

Each of the three of us began by coding statements within the same three guiding principles papers using the coding scheme above. We then compared our coding and discussed any differences. Upon reaching consensus, we continued coding the rest of the papers. Once the papers were coded, we each once again coded the same three guiding principles papers. Using constant comparative analysis, we analyzed the statements related to culturally responsive dispositions and teaching practices upon entering the program and at the completion of the program as well as the experiences or defining moments that contributed to changes in dispositions. We highlighted key ideas, identified categories that emerged, and coded responses based on the themes identified (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). We discussed the themes that emerged, reached consensus on any that differed, and coded the rest of the papers.

We then looked specifically at the passages that described experiences the interns cited as influencing their dispositions toward culturally, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse children and families and culturally responsive teaching practices. To maintain the richness of the data situated within the stories shared, we examined the relationships among the experiences discussed within each passage (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This connectivity approach allowed us to explore how the experiences interacted to influence interns' culturally responsive dispositions and teaching practices.

To address issues of bias, a graduate research assistant who had no involvement in the program or in the collection of data independently coded the data. The results of her coding were compared and discussed. Consensus was reached where differences arose. In addition, once the scheme was determined, it was compared to the raw data to determine whether the scheme accounted for most of the raw data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

## Findings

From our analyses of the experiences interns cited as contributing to changes in their dispositions and teaching practices, four types of experiences emerged: material resources, field experiences with diverse children and families, critical reflection, and activities that included discussions and dialogues. Upon further analysis, we found that the interns discussed how each of these types of experiences interacted with and supported the impact of other experiences.

### **Material Resources**

All of the interns cited readings and other material resources, such as videos, as influencing their culturally responsive dispositions and teaching practices. Because of the nature of the data, an academic paper that required supporting references, it is not surprising that all interns cited a variety of readings. An analysis of the resources cited most often was of greater interest to us. We discovered that Delpit's (1995) *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflicts in the Classroom* and McCaleb's (1997) *Building Communities of Learners: Collaboration Among Teachers* were the works noted most often with 12 interns citing each one. Other authors cited frequently were Nieto (7); Ovando, Collier, and Combs (7); Brookfield (6); and deMelendez and Ostertag (6). The following is one example of how interns used these works to support a point they were making:

It was only after naming the beliefs that I have about life that I could begin to hear and explore new ideas in a way that was relevant to me. This is the premise Nieto (1999) operates under as she stresses the fact that *every* child has valuable experiences to pull from in their learning. The sad truth is that often, the experiences of the dominant culture are valued and drawn upon more, by default, than the experiences of other, equally valuable cultures.

In addition to analyzing the frequency resources were cited, we also examined how often particular readings were cited as being instrumental in transforming the interns' thinking about culture, families, and culturally responsive teaching practices. Reading Delpit's *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflicts in the Classroom* was cited most often (7) as a pivotal experience followed by Nieto (4), McCaleb (3), and Tatum (3). For example, one intern wrote, "In *Other People's Children*, [Delpit's] words really stirred me up;

therefore, I looked inside myself, analyzed my core values and made some real personal changes.” Others wrote about transformations that occurred after reading Beverly Tatum’s *Why Are All the Black Kids Sitting Together in the Cafeteria? and Other Conversations About Race*. One intern’s statement echoed what others wrote: “The biggest surprise...was to realize that I was White and that my Whiteness has given me privileges and opportunities I never earned by merit.” Another explained, “I am a White teacher. Like the fish that is last to figure out she lives in water, I finally see that I am White. Several [program] experiences made this reality possible. My first exposure to the thought was in reading Beverly Tatum’s [book].” She later stated, “Tatum challenged me to abandon individual racism and to oppose institutionalized and cultural racism.”

For some interns, it was a combination of readings rather than one specific reading that brought about changes in thinking and practices. Interns, like this one, explained the effect that the interaction of two or more readings had on their thinking: “Fortunately, Lisa Delpit’s *Other People’s Children* and Paulo Friere’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* provided concrete ideals that I could begin to wrap my mind around....Friere (1997) recognizes the anguish I feel as the oppressor but warns me that anguish alone does not align me with the oppressed.”

### ***Field Experiences***

Another theme supported by all interns was the significant influence their diverse field experiences had on their culturally responsive dispositions and teaching practices. This included interacting with other professionals, working with children in diverse settings, and building relationships with families. Although there were many stories to share illustrating each of these sub-themes, we have selected ones that are representative of the stories told.

When discussing field experiences in general, one intern summed up the interns’ feelings in her statement: “I learned a great deal from the [program] classes, but I believe that nothing can better prepare someone for the classroom better than actually being in one.” There were others, like this intern, who shared specific thoughts about a change in their thinking as a result of being involved in diverse internships:

Previous to [this program], I did not take into account the influence of family and culture on a child’s development. Yet, my internships have shown me time and again that these influences are primary to the ways in which individual children develop. The beliefs and values of one family can differ from another and their two children who may be in the same class will develop in different ways along the same basic path. For me, as an educator of young children, this intermingling between the universal and the diversity of development is a fascinating relationship, and one I did not even identify. Now that I am aware of this duality, it is something that I will continue to examine in young children for the rest of my career.

Although general statements such as these were made, specific statements about various aspects of the field experiences were also discussed.

*Interactions with other professionals.* Seven interns discussed how interactions with other professionals influenced their views of cultural diversity, families, and culturally responsive teaching practices. Those who cited experiences they perceived as being positive shared stories about how their interactions with other professionals helped them form their own culturally responsive practices. One intern related:

In my early [program] experiences, I was fortunate to work with a cooperating professional who conducted home visits every afternoon. My observation of her seasoned, respectful approach with the families and the information gathered on those occasions convinced me that there is inherent value of building family relationships. My course work validated what I witnessed. When I was responsible in the subsequent semesters for initiating relationships with families, I drew on the examples set for me in the first semester. I was respectful, resourceful, persistent, and genuine in my pursuit.

Those who cited experiences they perceived as being negative shared stories about attitudes, beliefs, and practices that they found to be contrary to what they believed about working with diverse children and families. One wrote:

Even when the environment presented challenges, such as an unwelcoming administration, to a set-in-her-ways CP [cooperating professional], to teachers that easily wrote off children as “unteachable,” each and every experience I had provided valuable learning. Even when I went home crying from frustration, I learned. I would even venture to say that when things went well, I didn’t learn as much as when they didn’t.

*Working with diverse children and families.* Eighteen interns shared stories of their work with diverse children and families that changed the way they thought about cultural diversity, families, and culturally responsive teaching practices. The stories they shared not only discussed what they learned about children and families, but also what they learned from children and families that helped them become more culturally aware teachers. Their stories fell into four categories: (a) understanding the important role families play in children’s learning and development, (b) becoming aware of how listening to families can help them provide instruction that takes into account the individual needs of the children, (c) examining their own cultural lenses, and (d) realizing the effect their beliefs and attitudes have on their teaching practices. The interns cited observing and interacting with children, home visits, and gathering family stories as the types of experiences that changed their dispositions and teaching practices.

One type of experience that seemed to be especially powerful was home visits. Interns discussed how their interactions with families on home visits helped them realize how much there was to learn from families that could help them better meet the individual needs of the children. One intern who made this point shared:

From the beginning days of my internship, Taylor ... was always in his own little world. No matter what I did or say, I could not get his attention let alone understand him. Whenever I visited his home, it was if I saw a totally different child. He was active, energetic, interacting and communicating with his mother. Their relationship was so strong and wonderful. I felt like, “They don’t need my help.” What I failed to realize back then was that I was the one needing Jennifer’s help. I lacked tapping into Taylor’s world, which prevented me from helping him to grow as a learner.

Other interns explained that home visits were instrumental in prompting them to examine their own cultural lenses and recognize the biases and assumptions they possessed. One intern wrote, “I grew up in Maryland and had little interaction with people of color. My neighborhoods were White, and the schools only had a few minority students. News representations and books colored my perspectives, but it changed after the home visit to Timothy’s house.” She goes on to explain that she made assumptions that were proven to be incorrect, and it was through her visit to the home that she was able to confront her biases and stereotypes.

In addition, interns explained how their interactions with children and families caused them to think about how their own values and beliefs affected their teaching. One example was shared by this intern who struggled with the cultural mismatch between her and the family:

In working with one of my focus families, I taught a child named Emily who had a physical disability. Due to her gross and motor coordination, Emily would fall frequently and hurt herself. My first and natural instinct was to run to her rescue; however, Emily’s parents felt quite differently. They wanted her to be independent and strong. If she fell, she fell. They wanted their daughter to learn to get back up all on her own. As I examined my cultural lens, I realized how my culture embodied interdependence. In our culture, the idea of interdependence is frequently represented in our relationship with young children. It is in our nature to want and need to tend to young children, especially if they are distressed. To confess, there were several times when I followed my cultural beliefs and helped Emily up when no one was looking.

Gathering family stories was another experience interns cited as influencing the dispositions and teaching practices. The interns felt that, as they listened to families, they learned the importance of building upon children's cultural knowledge and previous experiences, gained a greater understanding of other people's perspectives, and implemented curriculum and instruction that took into account children's individual differences. For example, one intern wrote, "Gathering the family story from my focus family from Egypt solidified for me the value of family knowledge and added to my worldview." Another explained:

I had never even fathomed finding out families' stories before. Truth be told, I had never fathomed that I could learn something from the families of the children I worked with. However, the first family I attempted to [gather family stories] with taught me their story of strength and resilience that helped me to see people immigrating to this country today in a new light in comparison with all of the opportunities I take for granted because of my own story.

Interns also discussed how gathering family stories helped them examine their own cultural lenses and become aware of and understand beliefs and values that were different from their own. One intern shared this account of the power of listening to others' stories:

One of the assignments that helped me understand other people's perspectives and experiences through their cultural lens was gathering family stories. My experience with gathering my focus child's family story gave me a whole picture of the child. It provided continuity between the home and the classroom, as well as providing a stronger connection between family and the school community. Learning about my focus child's family story gave me a sense of his life and what his parents went through in order to provide him with a good life. It also provided me with an opportunity to establish rapport with the family. The most important thing I learned when gathering this family's story was how people's views change when they learn to trust you.

Interns realized that incorporating family stories in the classroom was also very powerful. They noticed changes in the children when familiar stories were shared in the classroom and their home cultures and languages were validated. One intern shared a story that exemplified classroom experiences noted by other interns:

As part of a project on family stories, one child and his father prepared a poster on Egypt to share with the class. His attitude and his excitement about school visibly changed. I felt like through these experiences, his cultural, linguistic, and family backgrounds were validated. We learned a great deal about him, and he began to learn more about his family as well.

### ***Critical Reflection***

Seventeen interns discussed the role of critical reflection in changes in their growth as culturally responsive practitioners. For example, one intern stated, "Throughout the program, I have seen myself change and grow a great deal. I have really begun to examine my own cultural lens, which helps me interact with my children and their families." The consensus among the interns was that critically reflecting on their own beliefs and practices as well as on experiences, whether they were readings, field experiences, or dialogues and discussion, influenced their thinking about issues of culture, race, poverty, and inequality as well as their teaching practices. The importance placed on critical reflection was evident in statements like the following:

Because every person views the world through a cultural lens that was shaped by their family, community, and personal experiences, I first need to recognize my own cultural lens through which I view the world, and through my recognition, I can begin the process "slowly, slowly, one by one" to understand and embrace the culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse children and their families.

The change referred to in the above statement was discussed in more detail by interns like the one who shared the following:

I have to admit that I entered [the program] having read many of the articles recounting risk factors and providing names for groups of people touting those risks. In fact, I entered the program with the vision of learning how to save those particular children—"the disadvantaged"—that I had worked

with throughout my undergraduate career in Psychology. Yes, I saw the positive attributes in particular children, but I always viewed them in light of their deficits. However, this program unexpectedly encouraged me to examine and re-examine those biases that colored my vision of the children I had worked with in the past and those I would work with in the future. Now, I not only hold fast to the belief that every child can learn, but I am also influenced by Skrtic's (2003) assertion that "educational equity is a precondition for creating and sustaining educational excellence" (p. 52).

Others, like this intern, discussed the challenges associated with recognizing their own biases and assumptions and acting to change them:

It is difficult to share my previous mentality towards people with special needs and non English speakers. I feel ashamed and embarrassed that I could have been so obtuse as to think I couldn't work with children who were not 'normal' (Brookfield, 1987). The program has changed my life and perspective in more ways than I could possibly express. I am now able to see the errors of my past thoughts and actions as well as critically think and reflect upon my total life experiences with a new frame of reference in which I attempt to view all people as deserving of equality in every aspect of the word.

In addition, reflecting on their own cultural background helped interns realize the impact their upbringings and beliefs had on their teaching practices. The interns remarked on how they were amazed to discover the effect their backgrounds and experiences have on their approach to teaching. One intern captured this view: "In further delving into my socialization, I am fascinated to discover how much of my Korean culture impacted my teaching style." Another intern expanded on this idea:

Being a multicultural educator is especially difficult when there is a cultural mismatch between my teaching practices and the family's beliefs. I am still in the process of refining my skills in learning how to dialogue with families and embrace their cultural values. I strive towards reflecting upon my socialization and cultural lens as I continue to work with children and families different from my cultural background.

Others discussed how critical reflection helped them improve their teaching practices:

Reflection, in the course of my [program] experience, has taught me to include my own diversity into the classroom. In order to best serve culturally, linguistically, and ability diverse children and their families, I must know what their individuality means to me and proceed to work together with them. It is important to remember that both the families and I must remain true to one's self-identity. In order for me to do this, constant reflection and self-awareness is crucial in building an authentic relationship with the families. This is perhaps the most challenging, yet pivotal part of the [program] philosophical base for me to grasp.

For example, one intern wrote: "I have learned that without critically reflecting about myself, my thoughts and actions, as well as my students and the environment in which I am teaching, I will learn very little about how to improve my teaching and how to best meet the needs of the children and families with whom I work." The interns felt, like this one, that reflecting on their experiences enhanced their teaching and benefited the children:

There are numerous opportunities to reflect and question what I do with the children as well as every other aspect of my life. I strive to understand my private self and thoughts in the context of a social world. Understanding how my thoughts were constructed is a step in learning how to teach and think about children.

### ***Activities That Promote Dialogue and Discussion***

Thirteen interns discussed how activities that promoted dialogue and discussion affected their culturally responsive dispositions and teaching practices. They indicated that their interactions with classmates, professors, and other professionals served as a form of critical reflection that helped them clarify or change their thinking about families from cultures different from their own and their teaching practices. For example, one intern wrote:

Another method of reflection in which I have benefited greatly is through dialogue with my professors, classmates, and cooperating professionals. There have been times when putting my reflective thoughts into words while speaking has helped me to process and learn more about my experiences (Brookfield, 1987). I have had many opportunities to share my stories, get opinions and suggestions, as well as to communicate what I have learned to others in their reflective practices.

Another intern, like others, expanded on this idea by explaining how the dialogues helped her become aware of her cultural lenses and the effects they have on her interactions with others and specifically on her teaching:

From the first day in the program, the subject of culture, and its effects on the many aspects of our lives, has permeated our dialogues. I was asked to critically think and reflect upon my own culture, family, and experiences to discover my "cultural lens." The idea that my teaching style and ability, as well as how I interact with all people, is influenced by my personal lens, or view of the world, was a pivotal moment in my conscious awareness. The concept was easily accepted by me. It seemed to be logical and it made sense, yet I am still surprised at how such an apparently simple idea has changed my entire outlook in respect to myself and all people with whom I come into contact.

When discussing the impact of dialogue and discussion, the interns also referred to several specific activities that helped them think about issues of race, culture, and poverty and their own biases and assumptions about people whose cultures are different from their own. The most often cited were activities that took place during the semester orientations and monthly seminars that drew from the work of the National Coalition Building Institute. The following is one example that is representative of the experiences that were discussed:

Because I am white, I will never understand fully what it is to be a person of color. However, the idea that I was racist so challenged me that I couldn't glean from Tatum's work where I should begin and I didn't know how to begin a dialogue about it. The experience of attending National Coalition Building Institute really opened my eyes and ears to the reality of other people's experiences. The "things I never want to hear you say again" activity exposed the raw pain felt by many different groups of people present. The group that exposed me inwardly for my racial attitude were the thoughts that Young Black Women never want to hear again. Statement after statement convicted me of my blind arrogance and white privilege. I left that day so aware of my whiteness and all the pain that it caused that I was raw. Yet, I still couldn't mentally find a place to begin. There were too many choices and I needed directions.

### ***Interaction among Experiences***

When we examined the stories the interns shared throughout their guiding principles papers and looked at how the experiences they cited were connected, we discovered that the stories often contained references to how two or more types of program experiences interacted to influence their dispositions toward culturally, linguistically, and socio-economically diverse children and families and their culturally responsive teaching practices. According to the interns, their readings provided the foundation for making sense of the experiences that followed. In addition, critical reflection, including self examination and dialogues with others, helped them make the connections between the readings and the experiences. This, in turn, led to changes in dispositions and teaching practices that enabled them to be culturally responsive teachers. One intern explained:

Tatum (1996) gives us a framework and helps us to see our experiences in the broader context of a White dominated society. In turn, the framework can help us to look inward at things we may not want to see in ourselves. We can listen to ourselves and the record that plays in the back of our minds, repeating the messages of prejudice that are infused in our culture. Only by listening to this record can we work to change it. For me personally, it is very difficult to face the possibility that I may have prejudice or may act in some biased way towards a person because of their "status" in the world. However, as a teacher and as a citizen, I feel it is my responsibility to try in order to live in the world I wish for: one of freedom, equity, and democracy.

In a similar manner, interns discussed the impact of materials read after an experience. They felt that the readings helped them look back at and critically think about earlier experiences. They indicated that the readings also provided a foundation for discussions with others about their experiences. Likewise, the interns discussed how the combination of readings, reflection, and dialogue with others affected their future experiences. This discussion by one intern illustrates this relationship among the readings, previous experiences, reflection, and future experiences:

I came to this program ready to save children from their family and home situations. As I look back in light of deMelendez and Ostertag (1997), I realize that I really wanted to save them from themselves—everything that made them who they are and that caused them not to fit the mold of success. One of my first journal entries read: “Believing families have the motivation to do what is best for their children will be a challenge for me as I work with families, especially families from underprivileged backgrounds who seem to me not to realize what’s best for their children.” Later I confessed that “I tend to think that my way of being raised is correct and others are questionable. The disconnect between what I read in deMelendez and Ostertag and my own lens coming into the program jolted me, priming me for what I would experience later.

Overall, the interns described the interaction of program experiences as being truly transformative. They recognized, like this intern, that regardless of their thinking and practices early in the program, the program experiences pushed them to re-evaluate their beliefs and attitudes toward issues of culture, race, and poverty and resulted in new or refined ways of thinking that contributed to teaching practices that took into account the diversity of individual children and their families:

When I first entered the program, I considered myself to be culturally sensitive. Little did I know that, through my [program] experiences, many of my ideas and pillars of belief would be challenged to the ground and rebuilt to include a breadth and depth of knowledge from and about diverse young children and their families I did not know was possible.

## Discussion

There are many more stories to share and much more to learn from these rich data. However, identifying the types of experiences influential in changes or refinements in interns’ dispositions toward diverse children and families and their commitment to culturally responsive teaching practices is an important step in the process of determining what teacher educators can do to prepare teachers who possess dispositions that lead to teaching practices that take into account the individual differences of children and families. This is a significant step in a journey that challenges teacher educators to create programs that infuse issues of race, culture, poverty, and social justice throughout their programs. Sleeter (2006) explains that although it is “not a bad thing” to include multicultural courses or courses focused on teaching English Language Learners in programs, “the existence of separate courses too often takes the burden off the rest of the program to directly focus teachers’ preparation to learning to teach diverse students well” (p. 1). This is an issue that, as program faculty, we have taken to heart as we have worked to develop and refine an approach to preparing culturally responsive teachers that is integrated across courses, field experiences, and other program activities.

In this study, we initially set out to determine the defining moments instrumental in changes in dispositions and teaching practices. However, we discovered that although there were various transformative moments that changed or helped interns refine their thinking, these defining moments were influenced and supported by other program experiences and were not isolated experiences. We also realized that the impact of the experiences varied from intern to intern depending upon where they saw themselves on this particular journey and the nature of the experience. This helped us see that although we could identify key types of experiences, we could not ensure that the experiences we provided had the same impact on each of the interns. In fact, it became clear that the strength of our program came from our multi-faceted approach that provided multiple opportunities for interns to interact with issues of culture, race, poverty, and inequalities. This reinforced our belief that teacher educators can increase the likelihood of preparing teachers who are willing and able to work with diverse children and families by providing programs that

focus on issues related to multiculturalism and social justice throughout the program rather than in a course or two with this expressed mission.

Through close examination of the stories of change shared by interns, it was evident that the interaction of four types of experiences contributed to changes in dispositions and teaching practices. One type of experience that formed a foundation upon which to build culturally responsive beliefs and practices was the use of material resources that focused on issues of culture, race, poverty, and inequalities. The readings assigned or suggested throughout the program provided a foundation for change that, in combination with diverse internship experiences, critical reflection, and activities that promoted dialogue and discussion, were instrumental in shifts in culturally responsive dispositions and teaching practices.

We were encouraged to discover that interns recognized the impact the readings had on their beliefs and actions. Although we believed that readings were instrumental in effecting change, we often felt that interns were not completing assigned readings and were not fully benefiting from their impact. The fact that the interns were not only reading key assignments, but were also using them to help make sense of their interactions with diverse children and families was an important finding in this study. It was interesting to discover that in some cases, the reading itself was transformative and interns attributed changes in their thinking and actions to reading and reflecting on the assigned materials. In other cases, the interns found that the readings helped them initially think about issues and then provided a foundation for interpreting, understanding, and learning from future experiences. Likewise, materials read after key experiences provided a framework for reflecting back on experiences and making sense of what happened in ways that helped interns learn from the interactions.

We were not surprised to find that interns indicated that their engagement in diverse internships was also instrumental in changes in their dispositions and teaching practices. As anticipated based on our previous research (Kidd et al., 2002a; Kidd et al., 2002b; Kidd et al., 2005), interactions with children and families, including home visits and gathering family stories, had an impact on the interns' views of cultures different from their own and their willingness to examine their own cultural lenses. In addition, we found that the interns perceived that their relationships with families helped them recognize the important role families play in the development of their children and the impact the interns' own cultural backgrounds had on their interactions with others as well as their teaching practices. It was also clear that the interactions interns had with other professionals in the field, both those perceived as positive and those perceived as negative, contributed to their thoughts about working with culturally diverse families and influenced their teaching practices.

It was also evident that critical reflection and activities that promoted dialogue and discussion played a major role in changes in dispositions and teaching practices. It was through thinking about and discussing experiences in a critical and systematic manner that interns realized the significance of what they learned. By taking the time to reflect on material resources and diverse field experiences and discuss these experiences with others, interns gained greater insight into cultures different from their own, biases and assumptions they held toward families with different beliefs and practices than their own, and the impact of their own cultural backgrounds on their interactions with others and their teaching practices. This increased understanding shaped their dispositions toward families whose cultures were different from their own and enabled interns to provide curriculum and instruction that took into account the strengths, needs, backgrounds, and cultural knowledge of the children they taught.

## Conclusion

Although this particular line of research is in its early stages, we are confident that these initial findings provide insight for teacher educators who are working to create or refine teacher preparation programs that focus on issues of race, culture, poverty, and social justice. A commitment to facilitating cultural awareness and promoting family-centered practices is not enough to ensure that culturally responsive dispositions and teaching practices are fostered. It is important to systematically examine the types of experiences instrumental in contributing to culturally responsive dispositions and teaching practices. Determining the types of experiences that influence dispositions and teaching practices will

increase the likelihood that teacher educators will be able to design program experiences that promote teaching practices that enhance the development of diverse young children.

The results of this research suggest that teacher educators should consider four broad types of experiences when developing programs designed to promote culturally responsive dispositions and teaching practices. These experiences involve including a variety of material resources that focus on issues of culture, race, poverty, and inequality and field experiences that encourage interactions with diverse children and their families. These types of experiences combined with critical reflection and activities that promote dialogue and discussion around issues of diversity contribute to changes and refinements in preservice teachers' dispositions towards children and families with cultures different from their own and influences their willingness and ability to provide curriculum and instruction that is culturally responsive and relevant to the children they teach.

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