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Cultivating Multicultural Dispositions: Assessing the Impact of a Multicultural Education Course on Preservice Teachers at an HBCU

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Abstract: This study examines the impact of a multicultural education course on preservice teachers' development of critical dispositions and cultural competence at a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). Grounded in James Banks' (2004; 2015) comprehensive multicultural education framework and utilizing Jensen et al.'s (2023) Multicultural Teacher Dispositions Scale (MTDS), the research explores how the course influences students' self-awareness, recognition of personal biases, and broadening of worldviews. The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative survey data from the MTDS with qualitative reflections from 23 preservice teachers. The MTDS assessed three key dispositions: Meekness, Social Awareness, and Advocacy. Qualitative data were analyzed using thematic analysis to identify emergent themes in students' learning experiences. Results revealed moderate to strong endorsement of the Meekness disposition, characterized by openness to learning from diverse perspectives and self-reflection. Social Awareness showed moderate endorsement, with most students acknowledging systemic inequities and the importance of diverse viewpoints in education. The Advocacy disposition yielded mixed results, indicating areas for continued growth in challenging institutional biases and prioritizing inclusivity. Qualitative findings highlighted three primary themes in students' reflections: embracing discomfort, self-awareness and bias recognition, and effective communication and cultural sensitivity. Students reported broadened worldviews, enhanced appreciation for cultural diversity, and increased confidence in relating to diverse backgrounds. The study provides empirical support for the effectiveness of intentionally designed multicultural education coursework in fostering critical dispositions and cultural competence among preservice teachers. It underscores the value of creating structured opportunities for self-reflection, exploration of diverse perspectives, and confrontation of personal biases and discomfort in teacher preparation programs. These findings have important implications for teacher education programs striving to prepare culturally competent educators for increasingly diverse classrooms. The study suggests the need for continued research on

effective strategies for cultivating multicultural dispositions and long-term impacts on teaching practices and student outcomes.

Keywords: multicultural education, teacher dispositions, cultural competence, preservice teachers, HBCU, teacher preparation.

Introduction

In an increasingly interconnected and diverse global society, the imperative for effective multicultural education has never been more pressing. As classrooms worldwide become more culturally, linguistically, and ethnically diverse, the need for educators equipped with the dispositions and competencies to create inclusive, equitable learning environments has become paramount (Banks, 2015; Gay, 2018). Recent studies have highlighted persistent challenges in preparing teachers for multicultural contexts, including the prevalence of implicit biases (Starck et al., 2020), limited exposure to diverse perspectives (Sleeter, 2017), and inadequate development of critical consciousness (Howard, 2016).

While significant strides have been made in conceptualizing frameworks for multicultural education (Banks, 2015; Gorski, 2016), a gap remains in understanding how these theoretical constructs translate into effective teacher preparation practices, particularly within the unique context of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). This study addresses this gap by examining the impact of a multicultural education course on preservice teachers' development of critical dispositions and cultural competence at an HBCU. Utilizing Jensen et al.'s (2023) innovative Multicultural Teacher Dispositions Scale (MTDS) in conjunction with Banks' (2004; 2015) comprehensive multicultural education framework, this research offers novel insights into the efficacy of intentionally designed coursework in fostering key multicultural teaching dispositions. By employing a mixed-methods approach, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how preservice teachers' self-awareness, recognition of personal biases, and worldviews evolve through engagement with multicultural education curricula. The findings of this research have significant implications for refining teacher preparation programs and advancing educational equity in increasingly diverse global contexts.

Multicultural education in the United States began during the civil rights movement, driven by the quest for equal educational opportunities for marginalized communities. It is rooted in American democratic principles and mid-20th century civil rights efforts to combat discrimination and racism (Gorski, 1999). Scholars like James Banks in the 1980s emphasized educational equality, viewing schools as social systems needing transformation in policies, curricula, and teaching methods (see Banks, 1984 & 1988). In the 1980s and 1990s, scholars like Christine Sleeter, Carl Grant, and Sonia Nieto (see Grant & Sleeter, 2012; Nieto, 1992) expanded on Banks' ideas. They critiqued structural inequities such as tracking, testing, and hiring practices, advocating for systemic changes beyond mere curricular additions to address educational inequities and prepare students for a diverse society (Gorski, 1999).

By the late 20th century, critical theorists like Giroux and McLaren (1992) examined multicultural education through the lenses of power, privilege, and socioeconomics. They emphasized the need for transformation in both schools and society to eliminate injustice. This period saw the development of comprehensive models and frameworks advocating for educational and societal reforms. The 21st century has seen a continued emphasis on multicultural education in response to increasing racial and ethnic diversity. This underscores the need for multicultural education to prepare all students for participation in a pluralistic society (Banks, 2013). The focus has shifted to developing intercultural competence, critical thinking, and global awareness, framing multicultural education as essential for democracy and for equipping students to thrive in an interconnected world (Banks, 2013).

HBCUs have played a unique role in Multicultural education in the United States. Traditionally, HBCUs have focused on African American-centered multiculturalism, reflecting their historical role in providing educational opportunities for Black students. According to Dwyer, (2006), over 50% of HBCU faculty define multiculturalism primarily in terms of African

American experiences. HBCUs tend to integrate multicultural perspectives into the core curriculum. Faculty encourage students to share their experiences, use diverse sources, and challenge conventional notions, with 45% promoting diversity through teaching practices rather than formal curriculum structures (Dwyer, 2006).

While HBCUs initially focused on African American students, they have seen increasing racial and ethnic diversity. As of 2018, approximately 25% of students at HBCUs were from non-Black racial backgrounds, according to data from the National Center for Education Statistics. This shift reflects a contentious strategic effort by many HBCUs to enhance racial diversity to attract increased financial support (Stewart, 2021). Multicultural education at HBCUs, though rooted in African American experiences, now integrates diverse perspectives through faculty pedagogy. This evolution reflects an increasing recognition of the need to serve the growing racial and ethnic diversity on campuses, preparing students for an increasingly diverse society.

Research Problem, Aim, and Research Questions

College students, including those at HBCUs, often face challenges in developing cultural competence, including recognizing and addressing their own biases. Given the diverse and evolving demographics of HBCU campuses, there is a need for innovative educational approaches to effectively enhance self-awareness and cultural understanding among future educators (Gay, 2018; Nieto, 2000).

This study aims to explore how a multicultural education course at an HBCU impacted students' self-awareness, recognition of personal biases, and broadening of worldviews. Specifically, the research questions were:

1. How does a multicultural education course at an HBCU enhance students' self-awareness and recognition of personal biases?
2. In what ways do students report changes in their understanding and management of their own biases after completing the course?
3. How do students at an HBCU describe broadening their worldviews and understanding of various cultures through a multicultural education course?

The article aims to demonstrate the effectiveness of a multicultural education course at an HBCU in fostering critical dispositions and cultural competence among preservice teachers. Specifically, it argues that the course succeeded in cultivating the key dispositions of Meekness, Social Awareness, and Advocacy, as conceptualized in Jensen et al.'s (2023) multicultural teacher dispositions framework and aligned with Banks' (2004, 2015) seminal multicultural education approach.

This study contributes to the existing body of research on multicultural education and teacher preparation, offering insights into effective strategies for enhancing cultural competence. The findings aim to provide innovative solutions for teacher education programs, emphasizing the importance of self-awareness, bias recognition, and cultural understanding.

Literature Review

Research has shown that self-awareness is crucial for educators to understand their own cultural identities and biases, which can affect their teaching practices and interactions with students. Biases, both positive and negative associations linked to the race of individual, can significantly influence decision-making processes in unconscious ways (Chin et al., 2020; Jacoby-Senghor et al., 2016; Staats, 2016; Warikoo, 2016). Staats (2016) highlighted that these biases, activated involuntarily and without conscious

awareness, profoundly impact our actions and decisions, especially in educational settings. For instance, Jacoby-Senghor et al. (2016) found that educators' implicit biases could affect their pedagogical effectiveness, leading to poorer academic performance among racially marginalized students. They demonstrated that higher levels of implicit racial bias in white instructors were associated with increased anxiety and decreased quality of instruction, which negatively impacted the performance of Black learners. Similarly, Adams et al. (2014) explored the use of the Implicit Association Test (IAT) as an educational tool, finding that it significantly raised students' awareness of their own implicit biases, although it did not necessarily increase their motivation to control these biases. Together, these studies underscore the critical need for interventions that address implicit biases in educational contexts to foster equitable learning environments.

Additionally, Starck et al. (2020) examined the implicit and explicit racial biases of teachers and compares these biases to those of other non-teachers, American adults with similar demographic characteristics. The goal was to understand whether teachers, as agents of education and social development, possess different levels of racial bias which could influence educational outcomes and perpetuate racial inequalities. They found that Both teachers and non-teachers exhibited significant levels of pro-White bias. However, the differences between teachers and non-teachers were generally small and statistically insignificant in many of the models, suggesting that teachers' biases are reflective of broader societal biases rather than being distinctly different (Starck et al., 2020).

Various strategies, including reflective practices, cultural immersion, and bias training, help people recognize and address their biases. Research indicates that these strategies are effective in enhancing cultural competence. In terms of impact on teacher practices, a broader cultural understanding influences teaching practices by fostering a more inclusive and respectful classroom environment. Studies show that culturally competent teachers can better engage students in their classrooms (Cherng & Davis, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Villegas & Lukas, 2002).

Finally, Chang (2019) explored the impact of reflection on learning in an online learning environment. Reflection was intentionally designed and embedded in various assignments. Chang identified five themes demonstrating the impact of reflection on learning: increasing the depth of knowledge, identifying areas that are missing or deficient, personalizing and contextualizing knowledge, providing comparative references in learning, and helping learners build structural connections in knowledge and social connections among learners. This study provides foundational ideas for designing reflective activities to enhance students' learning in online environments. Similarly, Leberman and Martin (2004) investigated how a structured post-course follow-up reflection activity affects the depth of reflection and facilitates the transfer of learning. Their findings suggest that post-course reflection activities enable participants to "make meaning" from their experiences, enhancing the transfer of learning. Together, these studies highlight the crucial role of reflective activities in deepening learning and facilitating the application of knowledge.

Theoretical Framework

Content integration, knowledge construction, and equity pedagogy are key components of multicultural education frameworks aimed at promoting educational equity and inclusivity. James A. Banks' five dimensions of multicultural education provide a comprehensive approach to integrating diverse perspectives and experiences into the curriculum and instructional practices (Banks, 2004; 2015). Banks' five dimensions are as follows:

1. **Content Integration:** Incorporating diverse cultures, experiences, and perspectives into the curriculum through examples, data, and information to illustrate key concepts and principles across subject areas.
2. **Knowledge Construction:** Helping students understand how knowledge is created and shaped by the racial, ethnic, and cultural positionalities and experiences of different groups. Students learn to critically analyze and construct knowledge from multiple viewpoints.
3. **Equity Pedagogy:** Using a variety of teaching strategies and methods that are culturally relevant and responsive to the diverse learning needs of students from different racial, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds.
4. **Prejudice Reduction:** Fostering positive attitudes and beliefs about racial, ethnic, and cultural groups through lessons, activities, and interactions that challenge stereotypes and biases.
5. **Empowering School Culture and Social Structure:** Restructuring the culture, organization, and policies of educational institutions to promote gender, racial, and social-class equity.

Materials and Methods

This study employed a mixed methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to provide a comprehensive understanding of the impact of a multicultural education course on preservice teachers' development of critical dispositions and cultural competence. Specifically, we utilized a convergent parallel mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017), where quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently, analyzed separately, and then merged for interpretation.

The quantitative component involved administering the Multicultural Teacher Dispositions Scale (MTDS) developed by Jensen et al. (2023) at the beginning and end of the semester. This pre-post survey design allowed us to assess changes in students' multicultural dispositions across three key dimensions: Meekness, Social Awareness, and Advocacy.

The qualitative component consisted of open-ended reflection questions posed to students at the end of the course. These reflections provided rich, descriptive data on students' perceptions of how the course broadened their worldviews and what they learned that they could apply to their lives.

The rationale for using a mixed methods approach was to leverage the strengths of both quantitative and qualitative data (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). The quantitative data provided measurable indicators of changes in students' dispositions, while the

qualitative data offered insights into the nuances of students' experiences and learning processes. By integrating these two forms of data, we aimed to develop a more comprehensive understanding of the course's impact than either method could provide alone.

This mixed methods design aligns with our research questions, which sought to examine both the measurable changes in students' dispositions (addressed by the quantitative component) and the ways in which students described their learning experiences and intended applications (addressed by the qualitative component). The integration of these methods allowed for a more holistic evaluation of the multicultural education course's effectiveness in fostering critical dispositions and cultural competence among preservice teachers.

Sample and Participants

In this research study, the sample consisted of 23 students enrolled in a Multicultural Education course in an HBCU university in the Midwest of the U.S. Participants were selected through convenience sampling, based on their enrollment in the course. They had diverse demographic backgrounds (see Table 1). The sample included 19 females, 3 males, and one non-binary individual. Most of the participants were female. The sample comprised students from various racial and ethnic backgrounds, including Black or African American, White, and one who preferred not to disclose their race. There was a notable balance between Black or African American and White students in the sample, but no representation of Latinx students. The sample included students from different academic years, ranging from freshmen to seniors, with 40% being freshmen. The participants exhibited balanced levels of religiosity between very religious, religious, somewhat religious, and non-religious individuals.

Table 1. Sample Demographic Information (n=23)

	Count
Gender identity	
Female	19
Male	3
Non-binary	1
Racial and Ethnic Identity	
Black	11
White	11
Prefer not to say	1
Not Hispanic	25
University year	
Freshman	9
Sophomore	5
Junior	5
Senior	4
Mother's education	
Less than high school	1
High school graduate	4

Some college	7
Two-year degree	3
Four-year degree	5
Professional Degree	3
Religiosity	
Not religious	6
Somewhat religious	6
Religious	6
Very religious	5
Speaker of another language	
No	22
Yes	1

Only one student spoke another language beside English. Finally, the sample included students whose mothers had attained different levels of education, ranging from less than high school to professional degrees. A significant portion of the participants had mothers who had completed some college or obtained a two-year or four-year degree. Overall, the sample demonstrated diversity across multiple demographic factors, including gender, race/ethnicity, academic year, religiosity, language proficiency, and parental educational attainment.

Instrument and Procedure

Students completed the Multicultural Teacher Disposition Survey (MTDS), developed by Jensen and colleagues (2023) at the start and conclusion of the semester, to evaluate key aspects of multicultural dispositions essential for creating an equitable and inclusive educational atmosphere. This survey measures students' awareness, empathy, advocacy, and readiness to engage with cultural diversity within educational settings. The development of the MTDS involved detailed item analyses, such as Rasch modeling and exploratory factor analyses, resulting in a concise 15-item instrument organized around three core dispositions: Social Awareness, Meekness, and Advocacy for Students. For this study, we used a previous version of the final survey with 20 items. Each item was rated on an agreement 6-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The survey responses were gathered anonymously using paper surveys during class sessions.

In the semester's final weeks, in addition to the survey, students in the multicultural education course were invited to reflect and respond to two open-ended questions. These questions aimed to draw out students' personal insights into how the course influenced their perceptions and understanding of cultural diversity in education. The two questions were: Has the class helped you broaden your worldview or understanding of various cultures? And, what have you learned that you will be able to apply to your life? The responses to these reflective questions were collected via the course's online discussion boards, allowing a deeper exploration of students' learning experiences and outcomes.

Data Analysis

The survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and the reflections provided by students were examined using thematic analysis, as described by Clarke and Braun (2017). This method included a review of the reflective entries to pinpoint recurring themes and patterns in the students' feedback. The primary goal of conducting a thematic analysis was to gain a deeper understanding of the students' perspectives on their learning journeys.

Results

Survey Results

Jensen et al. (2023) developed and refined the MTDS survey through multiple phases to measure these three key dispositions deemed important for teachers working with culturally diverse students. The three main multicultural teacher dispositions measured by the Multicultural Teacher Dispositions Scale (MTDS) are:

1. Meekness - Being open, teachable, and able to embrace ambiguity. Willing to learn from diverse students and seek out new, even uncomfortable, experiences.
2. Social Awareness - Having an understanding and consciousness of how teachers' own experiences fit into a larger societal context. Being self-aware and mindful of societal inequities. Reflecting on own privileges and biases.
3. Advocacy - Having a sense of responsibility to advocate for underprivileged students. Addressing issues of privilege, prejudice, discrimination in the classroom. Willing to confront difficulty and have uncomfortable conversations related to inequality.

Meekness

The Meekness factor of the Multicultural Teacher Dispositions Scale (MTDS) aims to assess teachers' openness, willingness to learn, and ability to appreciate differing perspectives. The survey items measuring this disposition among the preservice teachers in the multicultural education course yielded insightful results.

Table 2. Meekness Section Survey Results

Item	StA	A	SA	SD	D	StD
Teachers ought to be flexible with students who need extra help (e.g., assignment deadlines).	12 (46.2%)	5 (19.2%)	5 (19.2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.8%)
Admitting when I am wrong to students improves my relationship with them.	14 (53.8%)	8 (30.8%)	1 (3.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
It is my responsibility to discuss social issues like poverty and discrimination with all of my students.	7 (26.9%)	7 (26.9%)	5 (19.2%)	2 (7.7%)	1 (3.8%)	1 (3.8%)
The past experiences of my life shape how I see others in the world.	8 (30.8%)	6 (23.1%)	5 (19.2%)	3 (11.5%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.8%)
Teachers should connect classroom learning with students' personal experiences with injustice.	5 (19.2%)	8 (30.8%)	6 (23.1%)	2 (7.7%)	1 (3.8%)	1 (3.8%)
Conventional ways of interacting in classrooms privilege some students over others.	5 (19.2%)	7 (26.9%)	8 (30.8%)	3 (11.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
I seek to learn from others whose experiences differ from mine.	10 (38.5%)	9 (34.6%)	3 (11.5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.8%)

Note: Scale: StA: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, SA: Somewhat Agree, SD: Somewhat Disagree, D: Disagree, StD: Strongly Disagree).

An overwhelming majority of respondents, 84.6%, either strongly agreed or agreed that "admitting when I am wrong to students improves my relationship with them." This endorsement reflects a willingness among these preservice teachers to acknowledge their fallibility and learn from students—a key aspect of the Meekness disposition construct.

Similarly, 73.1% strongly agreed or agreed that they "seek to learn from others whose experiences differ from mine," demonstrating an openness to perspectives beyond their own lived realities. As the authors note, meek teachers embrace ambiguity and "seek out opportunities for new, even uncomfortable, experiences to learn from diverse students and their parents" (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 3).

The item "The past experiences of my life shape how I see others in the world" garnered 73.1% strong agreement or agreement, suggesting an awareness among respondents of how their backgrounds influence their worldviews. This self-reflective stance aligns with the characterization of Meekness as involving critical examination of one's core beliefs and upbringing (Schussler, 2006, as cited in Jensen et al., 2016).

However, some items assessing Meekness dispositions yielded more mixed results. While 65.4% strongly agreed or agreed that "teachers ought to be flexible with students who need extra help," 19.2% only somewhat agreed, indicating potential resistance or uncertainty regarding this aspect of Meekness among a notable minority. Similarly, responses were divided on whether "teachers should connect classroom learning with students' personal experiences with injustice," with 50% strongly agreeing or agreeing but 30.8% only somewhat agreeing.

These findings suggest that while the preservice teachers demonstrated strong endorsement of certain Meekness aspects like openness to learning and self-reflection, some faced challenges fully embracing the notion of flexible, responsive teaching that validates students' lived experiences, including those shaped by injustice. This resonates with Jensen et al.'s (2016) acknowledgment that fostering critical dispositions like Meekness remains an area for continued development in teacher preparation programs.

Overall, the survey results provide moderate to strong empirical support for the Meekness factor among this sample of preservice teachers. While encouraging in many respects, the findings also reveal opportunities for further cultivating key dimensions of this pivotal multicultural disposition.

Social Awareness

The Social Awareness factor of the MTDS assesses teachers' understanding of how social identities, power dynamics, and systemic inequities shape lived experiences and educational opportunities. Several survey items probed this critical disposition among the preservice teachers.

Table 3. Social Awareness Section of the Survey

Item	StA	A	SA	SD	D	StD
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Teachers need to make themselves vulnerable to connect with students and their families.	7 (26.9%)	7 (26.9%)	5 (19.2%)	0 (0%)	2 (7.7%)	2 (7.7%)
Differing perspectives on social issues enrich discussion in the classroom.	11 (42.3%)	9 (34.6%)	2 (7.7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.8%)
My status and social position (e.g., race, gender) shape how I interact with others.	5 (19.2%)	5 (19.2%)	6 (23.1%)	3 (11.5%)	1 (3.8%)	3 (11.5%)
Being white is associated with more opportunity in the U.S.	12 (46.2%)	3 (11.5%)	3 (11.5%)	2 (7.7%)	2 (7.7%)	1 (3.8%)
Schools are structured in ways that reproduce societal privileges.	8 (30.8%)	2 (7.7%)	8 (30.8%)	3 (11.5%)	1 (3.8%)	1 (3.8%)
Teachers should go out of their way to use culturally-relevant curricula with their students.	6 (23.1%)	9 (34.6%)	6 (23.1%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (7.7%)
I am willing to be uncomfortable in order to learn from my students' experiences.	9 (34.6%)	6 (23.1%)	5 (19.2%)	1 (3.8%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.8%)

Note: Scale: StA: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, SA: Somewhat Agree, SD: Somewhat Disagree, D: Disagree, StD: Strongly Disagree).

Sixty-nine percent either strongly agreed or agreed that "being white is associated with more opportunity in the U.S.," demonstrating an awareness of racial privilege and its societal impacts. However, 15.4% disagreed with this statement to some degree, suggesting areas for further development in recognizing dynamics of racial inequity.

Similarly, 69.2% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that "schools are structured in ways that reproduce societal privileges." This alignment with the notion that educational institutions can perpetuate broader systemic inequities reflects a social awareness highlighted by Jensen et al. (2016) as crucial for effective multicultural teaching. Still, 19.2% expressed disagreement, revealing some divergence in perspectives.

Responses were more varied regarding whether "my status and social position (e.g., race, gender) shape how I interact with others." While 42.3% strongly agreed or agreed, highlighting self-awareness, 26.9% somewhat or strongly disagreed—suggesting a lack of recognition about how identities influence social interactions for over a quarter of respondents.

The item "differing perspectives on social issues enrich discussion in the classroom" garnered robust agreement (76.9% strongly agree or agree), aligning with Jensen et al.'s (2016) emphasis on teachers' "consciousness of how teachers' own experiences may fit into a larger set of realities" (p. 3). Minimal disagreement (3.8%) indicates a strong social awareness of the pedagogical value in exploring diverse viewpoints.

Overall, the survey results suggest moderate endorsement of the Social Awareness disposition. While most preservice teachers demonstrated recognition of racial privilege, intersecting identities, systemic educational inequities, and the importance of exploring diverse perspectives, some responses revealed areas for continued growth. These findings resonate with the authors' acknowledgment that self-reflection and "an

awareness of one's own beliefs and attitudes" (Garmon, 2004, p. 205) is an ongoing process in developing critical multicultural dispositions like Social Awareness.

Advocacy

The Advocacy factor of the Multicultural Teacher Dispositions Scale (MTDS) assesses teachers' commitment to challenging inequities, amplifying marginalized voices, and creating inclusive learning environments. Several survey items probed this pivotal disposition among the preservice teachers.

Table 4. Advocacy Survey Results

Item	StA	A	SA	SD	D	StD
I am able to communicate my views without speaking down to those who disagree with me.	13 (50%)	9 (34.6%)	1 (3.8%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
Teachers should encourage students from marginalized communities to share what they know from their experiences.	5 (19.2%)	10 (38.5%)	6 (23.1%)	1 (3.8%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.8%)
Students who are disruptive engage in classroom learning when their life circumstances are understood and respected.	8 (30.8%)	4 (15.4%)	7 (26.9%)	2 (7.7%)	2 (7.7%)	0 (0%)
Teachers should challenge school procedures that privilege some students or their families over others.	8 (30.8%)	5 (19.2%)	2 (7.7%)	2 (7.7%)	2 (7.7%)	4 (15.4%)
I am willing to be inconvenienced to make students feel accepted and included.	8 (30.8%)	9 (34.6%)	2 (7.7%)	1 (3.8%)	2 (7.7%)	1 (3.8%)
I have biases of others even when I am well-intended.	3 (11.5%)	4 (15.4%)	7 (26.9%)	3 (11.5%)	3 (11.5%)	3 (11.5%)
It is my responsibility to find the resources that underprivileged students need to succeed in school.	6 (23.1%)	9 (34.6%)	3 (11.5%)	2 (7.7%)	1 (3.8%)	2 (7.7%)

Note: Scale: StA: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, SA: Somewhat Agree, SD: Somewhat Disagree, D: Disagree, StD: Strongly Disagree).

An overwhelming 84.6% either strongly agreed or agreed that they are "able to communicate [their] views without speaking down to those who disagree." This display of respectful dialogue aligns with Jensen et al.'s (2016) characterization of advocate teachers who engage in "uncomfortable situations and difficult conversations" (p. 5) as learning opportunities.

The item "teachers should encourage students from marginalized communities to share what they know from their experiences" garnered 57.7% strong agreement or agreement. This suggests a moderate commitment among respondents to elevating diverse voices and connecting students' lived experiences to classroom learning—practices associated with effective multicultural education (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

Responses were more divided regarding whether "students who are disruptive engage in classroom learning when their life circumstances are understood and respected." While 46.2% strongly agreed or agreed, 15.4% disagreed, revealing some

skepticism about the role of empathy and sociocultural awareness in improving engagement.

The statement "teachers should challenge school procedures that privilege some students or their families over others" yielded an even split, with 50% strongly agreeing or agreeing and 30.8% disagreeing. This highlights contrasting perspectives on whether advocacy entails confronting institutional biases and discriminatory policies.

Almost two thirds, 65.4%, of the participants strongly agreed or agreed that they are "willing to be inconvenienced to make students feel accepted and included." This aligns with Jensen et al.'s (2016) emphasis on inclusive practices that ensure "all students—across ability, native language, social class, and so on—have equitable access to learning opportunities" (p. 4).

Overall, while the preservice teachers demonstrated strong endorsement of respectful communication and moderate support for amplifying marginalized voices, there were mixed perspectives on employing empathy, challenging institutional inequities, and prioritizing inclusivity over personal convenience. These findings suggest the Advocacy disposition, which requires "confront[ing] personal vulnerability and discomfort" (Jensen et al., 2016, p. 5), remains an area for continued growth.

The survey results provide further empirical support for Mills and Ballantyne's (2016) assertion that advocacy represents an "advanced" multicultural disposition. As Jensen et al. (2016) argue, reliable measurement can inform efforts to more effectively cultivate critical dispositions like Advocacy through thoughtfully designed coursework, field experiences, and interventions.

Reflection Questions

At the end of the course, the students were asked to reflect on aspects related to their learning and its content. Students wrote the reflections as discussion board entries. All entries and comments were analyzed and themes from each question emerged. Two questions were part of this analysis. The themes and codes are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Codes and Themes.

Themes		
1. Embracing Discomfort	2. Self-Awareness and Bias Recognition	3. Effective Communication and Cultural Sensitivity
Learning from Diversity	Understanding Personal Bias	Navigating Cultural Differences in Communication
Personal Growth through Discomfort	Confronting Prejudices	Respectful Engagement with Diversity
Enhanced Communication Skills	Impact on Future Professional Roles	Critical Thinking in Communication
Enhanced Communication Skills	Personal Growth through Bias Recognition	Awareness of Non-Verbal Cues
Realizing the Value of New Experiences:	Enhancing Interpersonal Relationships	Acknowledging and Overcoming Language Barriers
Preparation for Future Professional Interactions		Sensitivity to Cultural Nuances

Broadened Worldview and Cultural Understanding

One of the questions was “Has the class helped you broaden your worldview or understanding of various cultures?” This is a summary of the themes that emerged from the reflections.

Most students in the multicultural education course felt that the class significantly broadened their worldview and understanding of various cultures. The students reported that learning about different cultures, biases, and perspectives was an eye-opening experience. Many expressed that before taking the class, their knowledge and understanding of cultures outside their own were limited. They often focused primarily on their own cultural perspectives and biases without being aware of them.

Through various class activities, lectures, and assignments, students gained exposure to new cultures, traditions, values, and viewpoints. This exposure was described as eye-opening, with students realizing the vast diversity of the world and acknowledging how much they still had to learn. Specific examples that students mentioned included learning about different communication styles, family relationships, dress customs, music, and the struggles or accomplishments of various cultures and religions.

This increased awareness led many students to appreciate and respect cultural differences more. They felt that they now had a broader perspective on the world and humanity. Some students also mentioned feeling more confident in their ability to understand and connect with people from diverse backgrounds in their future careers.

One student encapsulated this sentiment, saying:

"This class has helped me broaden my worldview and understanding of various cultures. Like I said earlier, diversity day really helped me learn about a lot of different cultures. Since I want to become an elementary school teacher, it is really important I learn and understand different cultures so that I can be the best teacher I can be for the students. This class has helped me so much and I am very grateful because it will and has benefited me."

This quote illustrates how the class activities, particularly the diversity day, provided practical knowledge and exposure to various cultures. The student emphasized that understanding diversity is crucial for their future role as a teacher.

Increased Confidence in Relating to Diverse Backgrounds

Many students felt that the class increased their confidence in relating to people from different backgrounds, which they believed would be beneficial in their future careers. Two students shared:

"This class has brought me a lot of confidence so that I am able to be there for every student as much as I can. My worldview has definitely been broadened and I feel so much better."

"With the help of this class, I feel like I will continue to learn and, most importantly, appreciate various cultures. I also feel that my understanding of myself will help me relate to others and be a better social worker."

These quotes demonstrate that students felt the class equipped them with the skills and perspectives necessary to understand and connect with people from diverse backgrounds. The first student noted an increased confidence in supporting all students

as a future teacher, while the second student felt that the class enhanced their ability to appreciate diverse cultures, aiding in their future role as a social worker.

Existing Open-Mindedness and Continued Learning

Some students entered the class already feeling culturally open-minded but still acknowledged that they learned new things. For example, one student stated:

"I think it has slightly, but not much. The only reason I say not much is before the class, I already try to be an open-minded person and try to immerse myself in other cultures."

Another student, reflecting on a specific assignment, said:

"The activities I least enjoyed were mainly the TV show discussion post because they were confusing to me. Although I did get to see more examples of the terms we went over in class such as bias, throughout the TV shows assigned I still was very bored watching the old TV shows. Those assignments did broaden my view and made me realize the difference between our course terms which I was confused on at first."

While the first student felt their worldview did not expand significantly because they were already open-minded, the second student highlighted that even less engaging activities helped them gain a better understanding of concepts like bias and stereotypes.

For the question regarding the course broadening their understanding of other cultures, most students agreed that the multicultural education class was beneficial in making them more open, curious, and appreciative of other cultures and perspectives. It better prepared them to interact positively with diversity in their future careers and personal lives. While a few students did not feel their worldview broadened significantly, they still acknowledged learning valuable lessons about cultural awareness and media stereotypes. Overall, the class succeeded in fostering a greater appreciation for diversity and equipping students with the skills to engage with diverse groups respectfully and effectively.

The reflections of students enrolled in the multicultural education course reveal several key learnings and insights that they plan to apply to their lives. These insights are categorized into three primary themes: embracing discomfort, self-awareness and bias recognition, and effective communication and cultural sensitivity.

Theme 1. Embracing Discomfort

Many students highlighted the importance of stepping out of their comfort zones. They learned to interact with diverse groups of people, which enriched their experiences and broadened their perspectives.

Learning from Diversity. One student noted, "The most important thing that I have learned that I will use my entire life is getting uncomfortable. As much as we all want to stay with the people we know, it really is a lot of fun to meet new people." This reflects the realization that engaging with diverse groups can be both challenging and rewarding.

Personal Growth through Discomfort. Another student shared, "I think the most important thing I have learned in this class which is probably not one of the main goals, is to become comfortable in the uncomfortable." This shows an understanding of how stepping out of the comfort zone can lead to personal growth.

Enhanced Communication Skills. A student mentioned, "I have had to dance, speak, and group in front of or with new people. I have learned that it seems scary but has made me a better student." This demonstrates how embracing discomfort helped improve their ability to communicate in diverse settings.

Breaking Pre-existing Barriers. One student described how the course setup facilitated this learning: "In this class, at times we are forced to sit with other people and learn about different cultures." This approach encouraged students to interact with peers they might not have chosen to engage with otherwise.

Realizing the Value of New Experiences. Reflecting on a specific activity, a student said, "I was worried I would run out of things to talk about but ended up finding a girl in my class who was a lot like me." This highlights how initial discomfort can lead to unexpected and meaningful connections.

Preparation for Future Professional Interactions. A future educator mentioned, "I know when I eventually become an educator I will have to talk to new students and those I work with. Becoming comfortable with branching out is necessary for my career choice." This student recognizes the long-term value of these skills.

These reflections illustrate that embracing discomfort was a transformative experience for many students. It not only challenged their preconceptions and comfort levels but also equipped them with crucial skills for interacting in a diverse and globalized world. The experience appears to have fostered a greater sense of empathy, adaptability, and openness to different cultures and perspectives.

Theme 2. Self-Awareness and Bias Recognition

A recurrent theme was the recognition of personal biases and prejudices. Students noted the importance of being self-aware and understanding their own backgrounds and beliefs as a precursor to understanding others.

Understanding Personal Bias. One student candidly expressed, "One thing that stood out to me in class that I will apply to my life is being able to understand myself before understanding others." This highlights the recognition of the need for self-reflection as a foundation for understanding others.

Confronting Prejudices. Another student shared a personal realization: "I form bias and prejudice when thinking about how people differ from me at times, but the differences between people keep things interesting and fun." This reflection shows an awareness of innate biases and an appreciation for diversity.

Impact on Future Professional Roles. A student contemplating a career in education stated, "I have learned to realize my own bias and beliefs before applying or assuming something about someone else. This could benefit me in my future and I can be more aware of how different the world can be." The realization of biases is seen as integral to their professional and personal development.

Personal Growth through Bias Recognition. A student acknowledged, "I have learned that I have a very biased personality. But now after realizing that, I can change to have a more open perspective of life." This shows a commitment to personal growth through the recognition of their biases.

Enhancing Interpersonal Relationships. Another student mentioned, "I have learned how to be more conscious of my own bias or assumptions about other people. By being more self-aware I can be even more understanding toward others." This illustrates how self-awareness can lead to improved relationships with others.

These reflections showcase how the course encouraged students to engage in self-reflection, leading to a greater awareness of their own biases and prejudices. This self-awareness is seen as crucial for engaging more empathetically and effectively with people from diverse backgrounds. Recognizing and addressing personal biases is a key step in becoming more open-minded and respectful of others' perspectives, a lesson that students identified as valuable for both their personal and professional lives.

Theme 3. Effective Communication and Cultural Sensitivity

Improved communication skills, especially in multicultural settings, were mentioned. Students learned to be more respectful and sensitive to cultural differences, enhancing their ability to engage in meaningful dialogues.

Navigating Cultural Differences in Communication. A student explained their growth in communication skills: "I've learned in this course that I will be able to apply in my life is communication. I say this because at first, I didn't know how to communicate with certain people, therefore I wouldn't talk as much, but now I do know how to communicate the correct way." This shows an evolution from hesitation to confidence in cross-cultural communication.

Respectful Engagement with Diversity. A reflection on respectful communication was shared: "I've learned other ways to go about things to come off more respectful to the world." This indicates an increased understanding of how to engage respectfully with people from diverse backgrounds.

Critical Thinking in Communication. Another student emphasized the importance of thoughtful communication: "What this class has taught me, is definitely to critically think and question statements... Outlandish phrases or things that people say should and can be dissected so I can see the truth." This illustrates the development of a more analytical approach to communication, especially in challenging conversations.

Awareness of Non-Verbal Cues. One student discussed the importance of being attuned to non-verbal signals: "For example, if I'm having a conversation with an individual and I notice that they have their arms crossed and look irritated, I won't keep talking, instead, I would ask them like hey are you okay or ask them would they like to talk about what's on their mind." This shows an awareness of the importance of body language and emotional cues in communication.

Acknowledging and Overcoming Language Barriers. A student noted, "I've learned about different cultures and that not everyone speaks English." This realization highlights the importance of being mindful of language barriers in communication.

Sensitivity to Cultural Nuances. A student captured the essence of cultural sensitivity: "I will apply my knowledge from this course by acknowledging the differences in the cultures and when I meet someone from a different culture to not make them feel isolated or alone, but however share some of their traditions and rituals

with them so that they do not feel so isolated." This shows an understanding of the importance of cultural inclusivity in communication.

These reflections demonstrate how students have learned to navigate the complexities of multicultural communication. They have gained skills in being more observant, respectful, and thoughtful in their interactions, which are crucial for effective communication in diverse settings. The emphasis on cultural sensitivity shows a deeper understanding of how cultural backgrounds can influence communication styles and the importance of adapting to these differences to foster meaningful and respectful interactions.

Regarding the application of their multicultural skills, the reflections of students in the multicultural education course indicate that they have gained valuable insights and skills that they plan to apply to their personal and professional lives. The themes of embracing discomfort, self-awareness and bias recognition, and effective communication and cultural sensitivity highlight the transformative impact of the course on their perspectives and abilities to engage with diverse groups.

Conclusion and Discussion

The findings from this study offer valuable insights into the impact of a multicultural education course on preservice teachers' development of critical dispositions and cultural competence. The results demonstrate the transformative potential of carefully designed coursework in fostering key multicultural teaching dispositions, as conceptualized by Jensen et al. (2023) and aligned with James Banks' (2004; 2015) groundbreaking multicultural education framework.

The survey data revealed moderate to strong endorsement of the Meekness disposition, characterized by openness to learning from diverse perspectives, self-reflection, and a willingness to embrace ambiguity and discomfort (Jensen et al., 2023). Particularly encouraging were students' acknowledgments of seeking to learn from differing experiences, admitting fallibility to strengthen relationships with students, and recognizing how personal backgrounds shape worldviews. These findings suggest the course cultivated a foundational openness and humility essential for effective multicultural teaching (Gorski, 1999; Schussler, 2006).

However, some responses indicated areas for continued growth, such as fully embracing flexible, responsive teaching that validates students' lived experiences, including those shaped by injustice. This resonates with Jensen et al.'s (2016) acknowledgment that fostering critical dispositions like Meekness remains an ongoing process in teacher preparation programs. Continued efforts to create opportunities for preservice teachers to engage with diverse perspectives and confront personal discomfort could further strengthen this pivotal disposition.

The survey results demonstrated moderate endorsement of the Social Awareness disposition, characterized by recognition of systemic inequities, intersecting identities, and the pedagogical value of exploring diverse viewpoints (Jensen et al., 2023). Notably, most students acknowledged racial privilege, systemic educational biases, and the importance of incorporating multiple perspectives in the classroom. This alignment with key tenets of Banks' (2004; 2015) multicultural education framework suggests the course effectively cultivated critical consciousness and an understanding of how social identities shape lived experiences.

However, some responses revealed areas for continued growth in recognizing how intersecting identities influence social interactions and embracing the notion that

educational institutions can perpetuate broader societal inequities. These findings resonate with Jensen et al.'s (2016) emphasis on the ongoing nature of self-reflection and developing "an awareness of one's own beliefs and attitudes" (Garmon, 2004, p. 205) integral to Social Awareness.

The survey data revealed mixed perspectives regarding the Advocacy disposition, which Jensen et al. (2016) characterize as involving "confronting personal vulnerability and discomfort" (p. 5) to challenge inequities and amplify marginalized voices. While most students demonstrated strong endorsement of respectful communication and inclusive practices, responses were more divided on employing empathy to improve student engagement, challenging institutional biases, and prioritizing inclusivity over personal convenience.

These findings align with Mills and Ballantyne's (2016) assertion that Advocacy represents an "advanced" multicultural disposition, underscoring the need for continued efforts to cultivate this critical stance through carefully designed coursework, field experiences, and interventions. Intentionally creating opportunities for preservice teachers to practice advocacy skills and confront personal discomfort could further strengthen this pivotal disposition (Jensen et al., 2016).

The qualitative data from students' reflections provided rich insights into the transformative impact of the multicultural education course. Notably, many students expressed how the course broadened their worldviews, enhanced their appreciation for cultural diversity, and increased their confidence in relating to diverse backgrounds – all crucial outcomes for developing intercultural competence and preparing educators for increasingly pluralistic classrooms (Banks, 2013).

Furthermore, students' reflections highlighted key learnings they plan to apply to their personal and professional lives, including embracing discomfort, recognizing personal biases, and enhancing communication skills for effective cross-cultural interactions. These insights align with research emphasizing the importance of self-awareness, empathy, and cultural sensitivity in creating inclusive learning environments (Cherng & Davis, 2019; Staats, 2016).

Significantly, many students acknowledged the value of stepping outside their comfort zones and engaging with diverse perspectives, recognizing personal growth and the development of crucial interpersonal skills. This resonates with Jensen et al.'s (2016) emphasis on the discomfort inherent in cultivating critical dispositions like Meekness and Advocacy.

The recognition of personal biases and prejudices, and the commitment to self-reflection and open-mindedness, aligns with research underscoring the importance of addressing implicit biases in educational contexts (Chin et al., 2020; Jacoby-Senghor et al., 2016; Staats, 2016). By acknowledging their own biases, students demonstrated a foundational step towards creating equitable learning environments and engaging more empathetically with diverse students (Starck et al., 2020; Warikoo et al., 2016).

Additionally, students' reflections on enhancing communication skills, especially in multicultural settings, align with research highlighting the importance of culturally responsive pedagogy and validating students' lived experiences (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The emphasis on respectful engagement, sensitivity to cultural nuances, and thoughtful communication suggests the course effectively cultivated crucial competencies for navigating diverse educational contexts.

Collectively, these findings suggest that the multicultural education course, grounded in Banks' (2004; 2015) comprehensive framework, effectively fostered the development of critical dispositions and cultural competence among preservice

teachers. The mixed-methods approach provided a nuanced understanding of students' growth trajectories, highlighting areas of strength and opportunities for continued development.

Implications and suggestions for future research

As teacher education programs strive to prepare educators for increasingly diverse classrooms, the insights from this study underscore the value of intentionally designed coursework that integrates content integration, knowledge construction, equity pedagogy, and strategies for prejudice reduction (Banks, 2004; 2015). By creating structured opportunities for self-reflection, exploration of diverse perspectives, and confrontation of personal biases and discomfort, teacher preparation programs can effectively cultivate the critical dispositions and cultural competence necessary for promoting educational equity and inclusivity.

Furthermore, the findings suggest the importance of continued research and evaluation to refine and enhance multicultural education practices. Longitudinal studies tracking the long-term impact of such interventions on teaching practices and student outcomes could provide valuable insights. Additionally, exploring the effectiveness of specific instructional strategies, reflective activities, and immersive experiences in fostering critical dispositions could inform the development of more targeted and impactful interventions.

As educational institutions, HBCUs or otherwise, strive to address systemic inequities and prepare students for participation in an increasingly interconnected world, the insights from this study underscore the pivotal role of multicultural education in cultivating culturally competent, socially conscious, and advocacy-oriented educators. By embracing discomfort, recognizing biases, and fostering inclusive and empathetic communication, educators can create transformative learning experiences that celebrate diversity, challenge injustice, and empower all students to thrive.

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