

# DOES DIVERSITY EDUCATION MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN TEACHER EDUCATION?

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*This study examined (1) factors influencing pre-service teachers' diversity-related beliefs; (2) sensitivity toward diversity; (3) relationship between personal/professional diversity beliefs; and (4) the effect of diversity-related courses on diversity issues. Participants included junior level students enrolled in a diversity-related course as part of a teacher preparation program. Data collection involved pre- and post-surveys. Results indicated: (1) The number of diversity courses, cross-cultural experiences, and ability to speak another language correlated with some diversity beliefs; (2) Personally, participants showed high sensitivity to race, ability, gender, and cultural diversity; while professionally, participants demonstrated low gender sensitivity and high sensitivity to race, ability, sexual orientation, cultural diversity, and language; (3) More personal than professional sensitivity on issues of race, ability, gender, and cultural diversity was demonstrated, while participants showed more professional than personal sensitivity to language and sexual orientation; and (4) There was significant change on personal language beliefs over the course of the semester.*

**Keywords:** diversity, teacher education, multicultural education, dispositions, language

A fundamental goal of current teacher education programs is to effectively prepare preservice teachers, including largely middle class European-American females with very little exposure to diverse languages and cultures, to successfully work with students from culturally, linguistically, religiously and socially diverse backgrounds. To accomplish this goal, teacher educators need to develop a sound understanding of preservice teachers' level and nature of sensitivity toward diversity issues and of the factors that might impact these views. Teacher educators need strong insight into the effects of diversity courses that are offered to enhance preservice teachers' knowledge, skills and dispositions related to diversity.

## Research on Beliefs and Their Effect on Teaching

Beliefs and dispositions mediate knowledge and action (Bandura, 1982). Concerning cultural sensitivity of teachers, Bandura's theory suggests that teacher's beliefs work as filters for their knowledge bases and affect their instructional practices and interactions. Similarly, research conducted in the past thirty years suggests that beliefs teachers hold about diversity are likely to impact their expectations about diverse students and their academic performance. For example, Avery and Walker (1993) and Tettegah (1996) found that, based on beliefs, teachers have a variety of expectations for and treatment of students. Specifically, teachers perceive lower SES students more negatively and expect them to earn lower grades than middle-class students (Cooper, Baron and Lowe, 1975). Similarly, research (Guttmann and Bar-Tal, 1982) suggests that students' academic outcomes are strongly influenced by teachers' expectations and attitudes toward them. In a classical study, Clark (1963), for example, found that inner city teachers' lower expectations concerning performance of children living in a ghetto jeopardized students' academic achievement.

These far-reaching beliefs and dispositions toward diversity are important to explore. If teachers are to be more responsive to the unique needs of diverse students, they must examine their beliefs regarding diversity and develop a more professional understanding of how their attitudes can influence their interactions with students. However, a growing body of research explores preservice teachers' attitudes concerning diversity, yet much uncertainty regarding these viewpoints remains. Some research suggests, for example, that preservice teachers appear to be sensitive toward diversity (Milner et al., 2003), while other research indicates that educators hold negative or neutral attitudes toward diversity (Hansman et al., 1999; Larke, 1990). This inconsistency suggests a need for further research in this area.

In the past twenty years, a large body of research exploring preservice teachers' beliefs about diversity was almost exclusively devoted to diversity issues of ethnicity and race (e.g. Byrnes and Kiger, 1989; Hansman et al. 1999; Larke, 1990; Shultz et al. 1996; Tettegah, 1996). This limited focus of research supports with the findings of Neuharth-Pritchett, Reiff and Pearson (2001), who found that preservice teachers' understanding and conceptualization about multicultural education was restricted to issues of race and ethnicity. Yet, as Pohan and Aguilar (2001) point out, diversity includes additional important issues such as gender, socio-economic status, ability, religion and language. In addition, Pohan and Aguilar (2001) propose a two-dimensional approach of including professional and personal areas for assessing views related to diversity. They argue that there might a discrepancy between preservice teachers' professional and personal views about the same diversity phenomenon. Exploring this possible disparity might call for a stronger collaboration between school and community.

## Factors that Impact Beliefs

Richardson (1996) proposes that belief systems are well established by the time preservice teachers begin their college years. Therefore, Richardson (1996) suggests that teacher beliefs, molded by different factors including age, gender, race, experiences with minorities, family background, and schooling, should be brought to the surface and investigated. Similarly, McCall (1995) states that preservice teachers' backgrounds seem to influence their views about multicultural education as well as their relationship with diverse students. Previous life-experiences, including direct negative experiences with biased people and growing up in a family with little tolerance appear to have an impact on preservice teachers' beliefs about diversity. In addition, Johnson (2002) suggests that perceiving themselves as outsiders due to their socio-economic status or sexual orientation sensitized preservice teachers about diversity issues.

To impact preservice teachers' diversity beliefs, teacher educators recognized the need for multicultural interventions as early as the 1970s. Approaches to such interventions, however, varied widely. These approaches included one or two-day intensive courses or workshops (Cooney and Akintunde, 1999), one-semester diversity courses (Xu, 2000), a series of diversity courses during teacher education years, a combination of theoretical courses and field experience, and community-based cross-cultural immersion (Haberman and Post, 1992; Wiggins and Follo, 1999). However, there are conflicting indications regarding the relationship between attitude toward diversity and the number and nature of multicultural courses in teacher education programs in general. Some studies (Neuharth-Pritchett, Reiff and Pearson, 2001; Tran, Young and Di Lella, 1994) found a positive correlation and suggest that participating in university courses seem to influence attitude and competency related to diversity. Likewise, Burriss and Burriss (2004) revealed significant positive change in preservice teachers' perceptions about certain diversity issues, such as, socioeconomic status, gay/lesbian issues, multicultural education, in general; however, there was no significant growth in the level of comfort with issues related to socioeconomic status and religion after course work in the teacher education program. Additionally, research on the impact of theoretical courses combined with field experiences reports mixed findings. Studies (Mason, 1997; Wiggins and Follo, 1999) suggest positive changes in preservice teachers' attitudes after completing the course work and the field component. Haberman and Post (1992), on the other hand, found that, in spite of the students' field experience with inner-city children, at the end of the "immersion", preservice teachers expressed more negative attitudes and discomfort while describing inner-city children. Therefore, the pure exposure of students to the reality of cultural diversity in a school setting might not result in higher sensitivity for all students.

The purposes of this study are (1) to identify the factors that might have had an impact on pre-service teachers' beliefs about diversity issues, (2) to explore the level of sensitivity that junior education students enrolled in diversity courses demonstrate toward various diversity issues, (3) to explore the relationship between pre-service teachers' personal and professional beliefs regarding diversity, and (4) to investigate whether there is a significant change in students' ratings on diversity related issues after completing a course on diversity issues.

This study provides baseline data for developing teacher education curriculum that promotes experiential factors that might positively influence students' diversity views. In addition, exploring teacher candidates' beliefs about diversity assists teacher educators to more effectively promote diversity sensitivity in their courses. Finally, the investigation of the relationship between personal and professional beliefs calls attention to the need for stronger collaboration between professionals and families, communities and agencies within the global society. Therefore, a clear understanding on preservice teachers' views related to diversity and the various factors including diversity courses that might impact students' disposition toward diversity issues will support the effectiveness of teacher educators' efforts to facilitate students' diversity awareness and sensitivity along with knowledge and skills.

## Method

### Participants

All participants in this study were junior level students of teacher education at a four-year university in the southeastern United States. At the time of the study, participants were enrolled in either a first or a second semester diversity-related course. Of the 104 participants in this study, 96 (92%) were female and 7 (7%) were male, with data missing from one participant. Participants were between 19 and 57 years of age, with a mean age of 23.6 (SD 7.02) years. Eighty-nine students (86%) were White, non-Hispanic, 2 (2%) were Black, 6 (6%) were Hispanic, 1 (1%) was Native American, and 6 (6%) were Bi-racial/Multi-racial (see Table 1).

Table 1: Participant Characteristics

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender	Female	96	92%
	Male	7	7%
	No response	1	1%
Age	Range	19-57 years	
	Mean	23.6 years (SD 7.02)	
Race	White, non-Hispanic	89	86%
	Black	2	2%
	Hispanic	6	6%
	Native American	1	1%
	Bi-racial/Multi-racial	6	6%
Number of courses involving multicultural themes or topics			
	3 courses	5	5%
	4 courses	97	93%
	5 courses	2	2%
Number of cross-cultural experiences (e.g., foreign or domestic travel, work or school in another country, inner-city program work, other)			
	Foreign travel	51	49%
	Domestic travel	79	76%
	Work/study in another country	14	14%
	Peace Corps volunteer/staff	0	0%
	Vista volunteer/staff	10	10%
	Inner-city volunteer/staff	22	21%
Other: Course-related observations/interviews (3), hospital work (1), inner-city work (1), international program work (1), living abroad (1), military and Sherriff's office work (1)			
Religious affiliation	Protestant	22	21%
	Catholic	33	32%
	Other	33	32%
	Not applicable	16	15%
	Jewish	0	0%
	Buddhist	0	0%
	Muslim	0	0%
Religious denomination	Liberal	41	39%
	Rather conservative	47	45%
	Fundamentalist	7	7%
	No response	9	9%
Fluency in a language other than English	Yes	12	12%
	Haitian Creole (1), German (1), Portuguese (1), American Sign Language (2), Spanish (9)		
Current involvement in meaningful cross-cultural friendships/significant relationships	None	6	6%
	Very little	21	20%
	Some	40	39%
	Much	22	21%
	Extensive	15	14%
Enrolled in Block 1: Diversity of Human Experience		38	36.5%
Enrolled in Block 2: Second Language	Acquisition, Communication, Culture	66	63.5%

Students were in the first year of the teacher preparation program. Students were junior-level education majors working on their bachelor's degree and certification to teach either elementary education, special education, or early childhood education. All students were also earning their

endorsement, an add-on to their certification, in teaching English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL).

Of the 104 students, 38 (36.5%) were enrolled in a required course entitled "Diversity of Human Experience," with a content integration of child development, introduction to special education and introduction to ESOL, in the first semester of their major coursework; and 66 (63.5%) students were enrolled in a required second-semester major course entitled "Second Language Acquisition, Communication, and Culture," the content of which focused on educational issues related to second language acquisition, cross-cultural communication, and cultural diversity. The 66 students in the second semester course had previously completed the first semester course in which the other 38 students were currently enrolled. The three instructors of the two courses were white, middle-class females with graduate degrees related to the course content.

Prior and concurrent experiences provided students with additional exposure to diverse students. Before entering the first-semester course, students had been required to complete both an introductory course to education and a survey course on teaching diverse populations. Fifteen hours of field observations were required in educational settings in each of the prerequisite courses. During the first-semester course, students were required to complete fifteen hours of observations in diverse settings, including a wide range of educational settings from early childhood to high school levels that serve significant numbers of students with special needs and/or students from culturally, and linguistically diverse backgrounds. As part of the second-semester course, students were required to complete fifteen hours of field experience, the majority of which involved the requirement of working one-on-one with a limited English proficient student to address student needs.

## Measure

The measure used in this study was a two-faceted survey, *Personal Beliefs About Diversity Scale* and *Professional Beliefs About Diversity Scale* (Pohan and Aguilar, 1999). The scale targeting personal beliefs includes 15 statements about diversity issues and allows for a Likert-type scale response (1 through 5). Similarly, the professional beliefs scale provides 25 statements about diversity in educationally-related contexts with Likert-type responses. The measure includes a demographic information sheet, which includes items such as gender, racial group, number of courses in which multicultural themes or topics were discussed, participation in cross-cultural experiences, religious affiliation, religious denomination, fluency in languages other than English, and current involvement in cross-cultural friendships/significant relationships. (See Table 1 for more detailed information.)

The measure is geared toward separately examining one's personal and professional beliefs about diversity, since these two sets of beliefs could feasibly be in conflict with one another (Pohan and Aguilar, 1999; 2001). The following three criteria were used to develop the measure: 1) approaching diversity with a broader view than other available measures, 2) targeting both personal as well as professional beliefs about diversity, and 3) rigorous and psychometrical soundness (Pohan and Aguilar, 2001). The scales underwent rigorous pilot, preliminary, and field testing. Each of the two scales included items that address essentially the same diversity topics

but were uniquely different. Results of the testing indicated robust reliability (Cronbach's Alpha of .82 and .86 on pre/post administrations, respectively) as well as predictive and construct validity of the measures (Pohan and Aguilar, 1999).

## Procedure

Students completed the pre-survey and the demographic sheet in the first week of the semester and, subsequently, completed the post-survey approximately 14 weeks later, during the last week of the semester. Surveys were completed during class time. All students in attendance completed the survey as a way to explore their own beliefs; however, only responses from students who submitted signed consent were included in this study. As part of the informed consent process, students were told that surveys were numbered to allow for entry into a database, which would be done by student assistants and would not be reviewed by professors during the term, so that professors would not be aware of current, individual student responses.

On the personal and professional scales, items targeted a variety of categories related to diversity. For the purposes of analyzing the data in meaningful ways, the investigators categorized the items on both the personal and professional scales into the following diversity categories of factors: race/ethnicity, special education/abilities, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status (SES), gender, language, religion, and cultural diversity. The researchers categorized the items individually with 95% agreement and, upon discussion, achieved 100% agreement.

A series of data analyses were performed to answer the four research questions. Regarding the first question, a correlation analysis was performed to determine whether there were significant correlations between the demographic factors and the diversity beliefs factors. To answer the second research question, a one sample t-test was performed with a test value of 3.5 to determine whether the participant responses were significantly lower or significantly higher than the test value. With the third research question, a paired sample t-test was performed to determine whether there were significant differences between participants' personal and professional diversity beliefs. Lastly, a paired samples t-test was utilized to answer the fourth research question to determine whether there was a significant change in participants' ratings related to diversity issues after taking a course on diversity.

## Results

Related items on the personal and the professional scales were grouped into meaningful categories for purposes of analysis. The following seven categories of factors related to diversity resulted for practical use in the data analyses: race/ethnicity, special education/abilities, sexual orientation, SES, gender, language, and cultural diversity.

The first three research questions attempt to understand the relationships among participants' diversity beliefs at the beginning of the semester (pre-survey), with the third question venturing into post-survey results, while the fourth research question examines the effects of the diversity-related course in which students were enrolled by comparing pre- and post-survey results.

Participants left some items blank on the survey, therefore affecting the sample size for the reporting of results.

*Research question #1: What factors might have had an impact on pre-service teachers' beliefs about diversity issues?* The first research question examined which demographic factors may have influenced pre-service teachers' beliefs about diversity issues. A correlation analysis between demographic factors and the eight diversity beliefs categories of both personal and professional beliefs as well as the total ratings on personal and professional beliefs was performed. Results revealed that the number of courses related to multicultural education taken by participants, cross-cultural experiences, and the ability to speak a foreign language were all significantly, positively correlated to at least one diversity belief.

More specifically, the number of courses related to multicultural education taken by participants was significantly correlated with total professional beliefs ( $r = .23, p < .05, n = 101$ ) as well as professional beliefs related to the following: race ( $r = .23, p < .05, n = 101$ ), ability ( $r = .28, p < .01, n = 101$ ), and cultural diversity ( $r = .22, p < .05, n = 101$ ). Secondly, cross-cultural experiences noted by participants were significantly correlated with professional beliefs about cultural diversity ( $r = .21, p < .05, n = 101$ ). The ability to speak a foreign language was significantly correlated with personal beliefs about language ( $r = .22, p < .05, n = 101$ ). Lastly, the number of cross-cultural friendships reported by participants was significantly correlated with personal beliefs about race ( $r = .23, p < .05$ ) and with professional beliefs about sexual orientation ( $r = .24, p < .05$ ).

*Research question #2: What level of sensitivity do junior education students enrolled in diversity courses demonstrate toward various diversity issues?* To answer the second research question, a one sample t-test was performed with a test value of 3.5 to determine whether participants' responses on both the pre-surveys (professional and personal) were significantly lower or higher than this value (see Table X). The test value of 3.5 was chosen for comparison to represent the response level above the undecided range of 3.00 on the Likert scale. Statistically significant results of this analysis indicated that, personally, participants demonstrated relatively low sensitivity to language ( $t = -3.00, p < .01, n = 101$ ) and relatively high sensitivity to race ( $t = 14.28, p < .01, n = 101$ ), ability ( $t = 22.19, p < .01, n = 101$ ), gender ( $t = 4.93, p < .01, n = 101$ ), and cultural diversity ( $t = 6.01, p < .01, n = 101$ ). Professionally, participants' sensitivity to gender was relatively low ( $t = -2.64, p = .01, n = 101$ ), whereas sensitivity to issues of race ( $t = 7.60, p < .01, n = 101$ ), ability ( $t = 10.66, p < .01, n = 101$ ), sexual orientation ( $t = 11.19, p < .01, n = 101$ ), cultural diversity ( $t = 3.71, p < .01, n = 101$ ), and language ( $t = 6.93, p < .01, n = 101$ ) were relatively high. On the remaining categories of sexual orientation and SES (personal;  $t = -0.56, p = .58, n = 101$  and  $t = .96, p = .34, n = 101$ , respectively) and SES (professional;  $t = -0.51, p = .61, n = 101$ ), analyses yielded statistically non-significant results, indicating that participants were relatively undecided.

Table 2: Levels of Personal and Professional Sensitivity Toward Diversity Issues

Significantly lower than 3.5	Undecided	Significantly higher than 3.5
	Personal Beliefs	
Language	Sexual Orientation SES	Race Ability Gender Cultural Diversity
	Professional Beliefs	
Gender	SES	Race Ability Sexual Orientation Cultural Diversity Language

*Research question #3: What is the relationship between their personal and professional beliefs regarding diversity?* Analysis to answer this question included a paired-samples t-test to compare participants' pre-survey ratings on personal diversity beliefs to their professional diversity beliefs. Results indicated that, on issues of race ( $t = 8.84, p < .01, n = 101$ ), ability ( $t = 11.80, p < .01, n = 101$ ), gender ( $t = 6.18, p < .01, n = 101$ ), and cultural diversity ( $t = 2.78, p < .01, n = 101$ ), participants demonstrated statistically significantly more personal than professional sensitivity. Participants were significantly more professionally than personally sensitive to the issue of sexual orientation ( $t = -10.43, p < .01, n = 101$ ) and language ( $t = -7.39, p < .01, n = 101$ ). Post-survey comparisons yielded results with similar significance and directionality.

*Research question #4: Is there a significant change in students' ratings on diversity related issues after completing a course on diversity issues?* To examine this question, a paired samples t-test was performed to compare participants' pre-survey ratings to their post-survey ratings. Results indicate that there was a significant, positive change on personal ratings of language beliefs ( $t = 5.26, p < .01, n = 98$ ). Additionally, results on professional ratings of cultural diversity beliefs revealed a positive change that neared statistical significance ( $t = 1.89, p = .06, n = 98$ ). Regarding the other diversity areas, no significant changes were found.

## Discussion

### Possible Factors Related to Preservice Teachers' Beliefs about Diversity Issues

The number of courses related to multicultural education taken by participants was correlated with overall professional beliefs as well as professional beliefs specifically related to race, ability, and cultural diversity. This is aligned with the findings of Pohan (1996), who state that, although a significant, positive correlation does not imply causation, it is feasible that completing more multicultural courses would help to promote cross-cultural competence and teaching that is responsive to the students' culture. Similarly, Neuharth-Prichett, Reiff and Person (2001) reported on students' claims that college courses increased their knowledge about multicultural

education, although the increased knowledge base did not necessarily imply change in attitudes and beliefs. Further, Garmon (2004) states that college-level educational experiences such as reading assignments and class discussions related to diversity seemed to have a positive influence on diversity sensitivity; however, no correlation was found between the number of multicultural courses taken and personal beliefs related to diversity issues.

The correlation analysis in the present study indicates a positive relationship between the extent of cross-cultural experiences and preservice teachers' professional beliefs related to cultural diversity as well as between the number of cross-cultural friendships and both personal beliefs related to race and professional beliefs about sexual orientation. Similarly, previous research studies (Bennett, 1995; McAllister and Irvine, 2002; Smith, Moallem and Sherrill, 1997) Found that effective and positive cross-cultural experiences, including working with people from other cultures, dating and personal visits seem to have a positive impact on sensitivity. However, given that a correlation analysis does not imply causation, the possibility should be considered that people with more awareness of and sensitive toward cultures might seek opportunities for cross-cultural experiences. Nevertheless, Garmon (2004) states that cross-cultural experiences are essential in the development of students' thoughts and feelings about diversity.

Results indicate a positive relationship between students' ability to speak another language and sensitivity toward language issues on a personal level. Due to the nature of the correlation analysis, there is no cause and effect between the variables. Previous research literature (Byram and Morgan, 1994; Robinson, 1978) also points out the lack of empirical evidence for attitudinal change to cultures and languages due to ability of speaking more than one language. However, ability to use another language can become an important tool in the construction of understanding and disposition about cultures (Roberts et al., 2001).

No relationship was found between the preservice teachers' racial backgrounds and their overall beliefs related to diversity. This finding suggests that preservice students from minority racial backgrounds may not have less biased or prejudiced views than their majority peers. Similarly, McAllister and Irvine (2002) found that African American teachers who had limited exposure to other minority groups such Latino and Vietnamese communities tended to hold biases and prejudices. Research suggests (Johnson, 2002; Neuharth-Prichett, Reiff and Person, 2001) that preservice teachers from minority backgrounds demonstrate a more in-depth understanding and sensitivity toward diversity issues only if they have had some experience as a minority being excluded or discriminated against. Further, McAllister and Irvine (2002) suggest that African American teachers reconsidered their beliefs about cultural groups with whom they had been previously unfamiliar only after direct exposure through community visits. These findings call for including all teacher education students regardless of race into intervention addressing change in knowledge, skills and attitude related to diversity.

## Preservice Teachers' Level of Sensitivity Toward Diversity Issues

Students demonstrated varying levels of sensitivity on the seven diversity areas. (See Table 2 in Results section). Ratings fall into the categories of (1) high sensitivity on both personal and professional levels, (2) high sensitivity on personal level only, and (3) high sensitivity on professional level only.

(1) *High sensitivity on both personal and professional levels.* Students enrolled in diversity courses demonstrated a high sensitivity level on issues related to race, ability, and cultural diversity both on professional and personal levels. Traditionally, courses on multicultural education and diversity tend to focus on race, ethnicity, and cultural diversity (Banks, 1994). Therefore, students are likely to have had exposure to these issues in their previous multicultural education courses, as in this study, 96% of participants had previously taken between 1 and 7 courses with multicultural themes or topics. Furthermore, preservice teachers' conceptualization of multicultural education as well as their level of competence and comfort lay in the areas of race/ethnicity and culture (Burriss and Burriss, 2004; Neuharth-Prichett, Reiff and Person, 2001). In addition to the exposure to racial and cultural issues in teacher education programs and in their personal lives outside the university, this favorable sensitivity might be generated by potential direct contact with people with diverse racial and cultural backgrounds. This is supported by correlation analysis of this study, which also indicated the relationship between cross-cultural experience/cross-cultural friendships and sensitivity level toward diversity.

On both professional and personal levels, the high sensitivity level on ability might be the result of the growing number of inclusive educational programs since the early 1980's. These preservice teachers, to varying extents, seem to develop understanding to issues related to ability differences. In addition, the teacher education program in which the study was conducted, has incorporated issues of special education and differentiated instruction in many courses to prepare students for educating children with special needs in inclusive settings. Regarding results of other studies, preservice teachers' attitudes toward inclusion, services for children with special needs, and the effect of teacher education of these perceptions are mixed (Male, 2003; Wilkins and Nietfeld, 2004). However, the findings of this study are in harmony with studies which found a more accepting attitude among preservice teachers enrolled in education classes (e.g. Campbell, Gilmore and Cuskelly, 2003; Garriott, Miller and Snyder, 2003).

(2) *High sensitivity on personal level only.* Only on a personal level, students demonstrated a high level of sensitivity to gender. Some possible explanations could include the gender proportion of the subjects in the study as well as the nature of the gender-related items on the survey. Ninety-two percent of the respondents were females. Additionally, the gender-related statements on the personal survey were both more polarizing and protective about the female status. Furthermore, the relevancy of the statements on the personal survey seemed to be closer to the age and the experience of the participants, which can help to explain why they demonstrated high personal sensitivity. Similarly, the irrelevancy of the statements on the professional survey can also help to explain the lack of sensitivity on professional gender issues. All the previously mentioned reasons related to gender sensitivity support the notion that students have knowledge and higher sensitivity

toward issues with which they have direct experience (Burriss and Burriss, 2004).

On a personal level, students demonstrated low sensitivity level in language-related issues. This could be explained by the high percentage of monolingual students (89%). This is also supported by the correlation analysis, which indicated a positive relationship between personal beliefs on language and the ability to speak another language. Considering these two findings, on one hand, we could hypothesize that the lack of ability to speak more than one language hinders preservice teachers' personal awareness and sensitivity toward language diversity. However, on the other hand, considering the survey items, the sole personal item related to language beliefs was related to whether learning English was more important for immigrants than maintaining their first language. Logically, if it had to be a choice, it would seem to make sense to choose English, which may explain the lower scores on personal sensitivity to language issues.

On personal level, students expressed relative neutrality on issues related to sexual orientation and socio-economic status. Students do not seem to be challenged to construct understanding and views about these issues. These findings should be interpreted in the context of the limited focus on these issues in diversity courses in the teacher education program, limited exposure to homosexual community members, and the overwhelming percentage of middle class status of the participants (Johnson, 2002).

(3) *High sensitivity on professional level only.* On a professional level, students seem to hold positive beliefs about more diversity issues. In addition to race, cultural diversity and ability, they demonstrated high sensitivity toward language and sexual orientation. The positive attitude about school-related language issues may be attributable to the nature of the professional beliefs survey's language items, which related to acceptance of bilingualism and bilingual education. Furthermore, this result could be related to college courses that focus on language diversity (Neuharth-Prichett, Reiff and Person, 2001) and to the field experiences that students accomplished in previous semesters in the surrounding diverse communities. A growing body of research also indicates that field experience in culturally diverse communities as well as interaction with their members might have a positive influence on preservice teacher's diversity views (Bateman, 2002; Seidle and Friend, 2002). The relative neutrality on SES issues may, again, be due to the relative affluence of the area in which the university is located and the students' middle class SES. Students' low levels of professional sensitivity on gender-related issues may be due to their limited exposure to gender issues in school systems.

### Relationship Between Personal and Professional Diversity-Related Beliefs

Students demonstrated higher personal sensitivity than they did professional sensitivity on issues related to race, ability, gender, and cultural diversity. These are the common diversity concepts which are most often considered, even outside university classrooms. Possibly, the relatively accepting views about these issues were established prior to entering the program (Kagan, 1992; McCall, 1995; Richardson, 1996). On the other hand, the low professional sensitivity on these issues could be the result of the participants' limited exposure to classroom experiences as professionals due to their

junior-level status in the teacher education program. During the first two semesters of the teacher education program, students are often observers during the field experience with limited experience as agents, and their relatively passive roles do not seem to effectively assist students in constructing strong positive professional beliefs related to diversity.

Regarding sexual orientation and language, students demonstrated higher professional sensitivity while their ratings were low on these issues at a personal level. The discrepancy between students' higher professional than personal sensitivity to issues of language and sexual orientation may be attributable to a more conscious approach to these issues with which they have little personal experience combined with the limited exposure in professional courses. As one student explained in a class discussion, he had developed an awareness of the need to demonstrate fairness to people with alternative lifestyles in professional settings, regardless of his personal beliefs.

### Change in Sensitivity Ratings on Diversity-Related Issues After Completing the Course

There was a significant, positive change in students' sensitivity ratings on language-related issues, with a nearly significant, positive change in the area of cultural diversity. In other areas of diversity, no significant changes were found. The significant change in language and, nearly, cultural diversity may be explained with an examination of the course content, which shows a strong focus on language and cultural diversity issues and, only in the first semester course, a broader treatment of other diversity areas. This finding is in accordance with studies (Bateman, 2002; Garmon 2004; Neuharth-Pritchett, Reiff and Person, 2001; Paige, 1993) that suggest the more extensively preservice teachers are exposed to certain diversity issues in teacher education courses, the more in-depth they construct different concepts of and sensitivity to diversity issues. By the end of the semester, the areas of language and cultural diversity were clearly approached not only cognitively but behaviorally and affectively through course activities and assignments, such as ethnographic interviews with linguistically diverse families and one-on-one tutoring experiences with limited English proficient children. The lack of significant change in other areas of diversity could be explained by previous research which concluded that attitudes and beliefs are not easily altered (Kagan, 1992, Pohan, 1996) and that teacher education candidates enter teacher preparation programs with well-established beliefs (Kagan, 1992; McCall, 1995; Richardson, 1996), especially when the exposure to diversity is restricted to areas, such as gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, as well as the nature of the exploration of diversity issues (i.e., pure theoretical courses versus direct interaction and actions in field experience).

### Implications of the Study

With an eye toward more effective diversity education in teacher preparation programs, the implications of this study can inform teacher preparation programs and program planners. Students' high sensitivity on race, ability, and cultural diversity along with their low sensitivity on gender, sexual orientation, and religion indicate a need for effective intervention in all

diversity areas. Additionally, the difference between students' personal and professional beliefs suggests a need for awareness of this difference among teacher educators. A wide-ranging and long-term family/school/community collaboration should be efficiently established and carried out to enable students to construct culturally responsive views from early years of their lives. Further, diversity education courses seem to have a larger effect on professional beliefs than on personal beliefs. Other interventions, such as cross-cultural experiences and friendships, study abroad programs, well-organized internships in schools with minority students as well as exposure to languages might be useful means to supplement efforts to increase diversity sensitivity of teacher candidates.

The significant gain in sensitivity toward language and, nearly, cultural diversity issues by the end of the diversity courses indicates that in-depth study and active immersion in certain diversity areas can be effective ways to increase sensitivity. Therefore, it is recommended that teacher preparation programs serving mainly monolingual teacher candidates include courses on second language acquisition and culture. In addition, the positive correlation between the number of languages spoken and sensitivity to language-related issues suggests that teacher education programs should require a more meaningful and in-depth engagement in foreign languages.

### Recommendations for Further Research

While the present study involved collection of survey data, cross-validation of the information gained through surveys could be collected via observation, such as in the contexts of students' internships, interviews, and reflective journals, thus providing a more complete picture of students' dispositions. Furthermore, surveys in this study were distributed by the professors of the courses, which, regardless of reassurances of professors not accessing data connected with names during the semester involved, could affect the data gathered. One solution to maintaining the purity of the data would be to involve unconnected parties, such as research assistants, in the data collection. Lastly, despite the rigorous testing of the survey instrument, in the interest of clarity, some items on the survey may require further modification.

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