

PRESERVICE TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF
A MULTICULTURAL FIELD EXPERIENCE ACTIVITY

By

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This qualitative study examines preservice teachers' perceptions of a field assignment, the Caregiver Conversation Project, designed to begin development of multicultural social competence. The Caregiver Conversation Project is part of a concurrent teacher education course and is situated in a community-based service-learning multicultural field experience, during which each preservice teacher mentors a student who lives in a low-income housing community. Using phenomenological research methods, 15 interviews were conducted with 5 junior-year preservice teachers who were in their first semester of the elementary teacher education program at the University of Florida. The study participants, like the general teaching community, were White middle- to upper-class, female, and had limited past multicultural experience. One main question guided this study: What meanings do preservice teachers make of an activity within a multicultural field experience? Two subquestions were What similarities

are there among the preservice teachers' meaning? and What factors explain these similarities?

Findings suggest that the preservice teachers experienced similar forms of discomfort, including being in the unfamiliar surroundings of the low-income housing community where they lost taken-for-granted cultural cues and norms causing difficulties arranging the Mentee Caregiver Conversation (MCC), and asking questions they perceived would cause discomfort in the caregivers or parents and themselves. Further, they broadened their definitions of a caring caregiver or parent and decided that there were more similarities than differences between their parents' beliefs about education and those of their mentees' caregivers or parents.

Various factors help explain these similarities:

- The preservice teachers came from very similar backgrounds and had similar past multicultural experience.
- They came to the Caregiver Conversation Project with preconceived notions about low-income housing communities and the families who live in them.
- They assumed they knew the kinds of questions their mentees' caregivers or parents would find intrusive.
- They held narrow definitions of a "caring" caregiver/parent.
- They lacked experience asking qualitative interview questions.
- Their desire for high academic achievement in the concurrent teacher education course overshadowed learning about their mentees' families.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The United States population is becoming increasingly diverse. United States census data from 2000 project that by the year 2050, as much as 57% of the student population will be children of color (National Center for Education Statistics, 2004). Currently, approximately 30 million African Americans and 20 million Hispanics comprise almost a third of total school enrollment. Non-European students are the majority in the 25 largest school districts (Utley, Delquardri, Obiakor, & Mims, 2000). As the population of America's schools becomes increasingly diverse, the population of teachers has remained predominantly White, middle class, monolingual, and female (Cochran-Smith, Davis, & Fries, 2004; Cook & Boe, 1995; National Center for Education Statistics, 2004; Sleeter, 1995b). These demographic data highlight the imperative to develop teacher education programs that provide preservice teachers with knowledge, skills, and attitudes to provide appropriate education to children from diverse ethnic, racial, social, linguistic, and ability groups (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004; Delpit, 1995; Dilworth, 1992; Harry, 2002; Harry, Rueda, Kalyanpur, 1999; Sleeter, 1995b).

Given the power of preservice teachers' backgrounds and beliefs over their learning and classroom practice, teacher educators need to know how their students interpret the experiences they encounter in their teacher education programs (Cochran-Smith, 1995a; Delpit, 1995; Gay, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). Insight into preservice teachers' interpretation is particularly important in multicultural teacher education, where

preservice teachers are challenged to examine longstanding assumptions about the role of race, socio-economic class, ethnicity, and language in education.

Recent research has made some aspects of preservice teacher thinking more transparent. For instance, White preservice teachers frequently have fairly naïve stereotypic beliefs about children from cultures other than the dominant culture, especially urban children (Schultz, Neyhart, & Reck, 1996). They often lack awareness or understanding of how discrimination and racism continue to affect society and societal interactions (King, 1991; Sleeter, 2001b; Su, 1996, 1997; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). Because they do not see themselves as having a specific race (Carter, 1995), they believe that they see the world through a neutral lens of *colorblindness* (Cochran-Smith, 1995a). From this perspective, racial, ethnic group, or socio-economic membership is irrelevant to the way individuals are treated in society and to the way individuals treat people different from themselves. Colorblindness is actually a means of coping with fears about racism and cultural differences (Banks, 2001a; Cochran-Smith 1995a; Valli, 1995). Belief in the myth of colorblindness is also a means of coping with ambivalence about the ability to teach culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) children (Cochran-Smith, 1995a; Sleeter, 2001a). Preservice teachers who view teaching from a colorblind perspective often come to believe that the professional knowledge they gain in their teacher education programs is both objective and universal (Kalynpur, Harry, & Skrtic, 2000; Vavrus, 2002)—objective, in that teaching is unaffected by personal feelings or prejudices; and universal, in that knowledge about teaching can be applied in the same manner, no matter the cultural or linguistic background of the students (Kalynpur et al., 2000; Vavrus, 2002).

The multicultural literature (Banks, 2001b; Cochran-Smith, 1995a; Gay, 2000; Irvine, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Sleeter & Grant, 1999) indicates that five areas are necessary for teachers to work successfully with diverse students. First, it is important that teachers develop knowledge about themselves as cultural beings in a culturally diverse society. They need to understand how their racial and social identities affect their worldview and to “examine much of what is usually unexamined in the tightly braided relationships of language, culture, and power in schools and schooling” (Cochran-Smith 1995b, p. 500). This examination includes reflection on personal histories, assumptions about motives and behaviors of children and parents, and pedagogical preferences in the classroom.

Second, it is important that they move beyond greater knowledge of themselves to an understanding of how socially constructed discrimination and racism affect CLD populations. In particular, they need to learn through experience about students, families, and communities. Then they need to learn how to apply the knowledge they gain from the experience to their practice (Gay, 2000; Irvine et al., 2001).

Third, teachers must develop the skill of *multicultural social competence*. They need to develop the ability to understand and be able to function effectively with their CLD students and with the communities from which they come. Inquiry into these areas promotes the development of schema about how teacher practice and curriculum affect student learning.

Fourth, it is vital that teachers become skilled in *culturally responsive* pedagogy that taps into students’ home knowledge and then moves students toward higher levels of achievement and empowerment. They need to know a child and how his/her background and behaviors affect how that child constructs meaning. Teachers need to gain this

knowledge of students through experiences both inside and outside the classroom (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992).

Finally, teachers need to become activists for prejudice reduction and social change within schools and society. They and their students must actively strive for societal change that leads to elimination of inequalities. They need to understand inequalities built into societal structures and teach students how to recognize and correct inequities (Banks, 2001a).

Even though there is agreement among multicultural educators that teacher education must provide opportunities for the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes associated with becoming effective teachers for all students, there has been a disconnect among theory, research, and practice. Valli and Rennert-Ariev (2000) note,

Although accrediting agencies have strong diversity language in their standards . . . , colleges and universities have diversity initiatives . . . , academic interest in multicultural education is robust . . . , and multicultural teacher education design principles have been advanced . . . , teacher candidates still feel inadequately prepared and seldom choose to teach in multicultural schools, especially those with high rates of poverty. In a recent survey of over 3000 teachers, only 12% expressed willingness to teach in an urban school. (p. 15)

Zeichner and Hoeft (1996), in their synthesis of the literature, found that there are trends in the use of specific practices in preservice teacher education programs that are intended to “increase knowledge of cultural diversity and to develop intercultural sensitivity” (p. 541). These include case studies, cultural therapy, and community field experiences. However, evidence of their success and long-term effectiveness is weak.

Bennett (2001) and Sleeter (2001a) both indicated that the research base continues to be thin, and more research is needed to determine the effectiveness of program components that prepare teachers for multicultural education. Bennett, in her synthesis of multicultural education research genres, found that prejudice reduction has

become an important goal of preservice teacher education but that there is little substantive research detailing program components and interventions that actually bring it about.

Sleeter (2001a, 2001b) stresses the need to link preservice education to community-based learning, immersion, or field experiences connected to multicultural coursework. She raises the question of whether exposing White preservice teachers to diverse communities actually accomplishes the purpose of helping them become better multicultural teachers. Once again there is a shortage of studies in this area, which makes it difficult to determine if contact with diverse groups helps preservice teachers alter their attitudes about and practices with individuals different from themselves.

Background of Problem

As a doctoral student, I have taught a first-semester preservice teacher course in the Unified Elementary/Special Education (PROTEACH) program at the University of Florida. This course (EEX3070—Teachers and Learners in Inclusive Schools) is an introduction to teaching diverse learners (including children with disabilities and those from diverse backgrounds) into the general education classroom. The purpose of the course is to raise questions about good teaching in a classroom of diverse students and the teacher's role as a learner and leader. My teaching experience with this course is the root of my desire to better understand the meaning preservice teachers make of their first cross-cultural field experience. I have seen first-semester preservice teachers struggle with understanding their own cultural identities and how these identities affect interaction with children and parents from diverse economic and social backgrounds.

There is a wide spectrum of perspectives and experiences in the preservice teacher classroom. Within that spectrum, I have taught a number of preservice teachers

who have jumped at the chance to expand their views on race and diversity, while others are examples of why multicultural teacher educators advocate for an in-depth understanding of race, culture, and linguistic diversity. What can be done to build the multicultural social competence of those who hesitate? Scholars have agreed that a variety of efforts must be integrated throughout the teacher education program (Vavrus, 2002; Zeichner et al., 1998). One type of effort that has received considerable attention is field experience. Many have argued that to be effective, relevant field experiences must be integrated into the structure of the teacher education program (Fox & Gay, 1995; Obiakor, 2001; Vavrus, 2002; Zeichner et al., 1998). My study was designed to examine the experience of preservice teachers in a field experience integrated into the coursework of a teacher education program.

Purpose of Study

My purpose was to examine preservice teacher perceptions of a field assignment designed to begin development of multicultural social competence. The assignment, called the Caregiver Conversation Project, requires the preservice teacher to conduct two conversations during a multicultural field experience called Bright Futures. Bright Futures is a mentoring program that occurs during the first semester of PROTEACH. The preservice teachers work 2 hours per week over the course of one semester with students who are primarily African American and live in the subsidized public housing communities where the Bright Futures mentoring takes place. The first conversation is with the caregiver or parent of the preservice teacher, and the second conversation is with the caregiver or parent of the child he or she is mentoring.

The purpose of the conversations is threefold:

- To learn directly from parents or caregivers about their children and about their ideas as to their role (and that of other members of their family) as educators of their children.

- To compare and contrast the educational experiences of the preservice teachers' parents or caregivers with those of the parents or caregivers of their mentees.
- To see their mentees' family situation from the viewpoint of the family rather than through a White middle-class lens.

After having the conversations, the preservice teacher compares and contrasts the caregivers'/parents' experiences concerning elementary education. Perceived as challenging by many and intimidating by some, the Caregiver Conversation Project elicits a range of reactions from preservice teachers. My study provides insight into the preservice teachers' ways of responding to the assignment and the meanings they make of it.

The guiding research question for the study was

- What meanings do preservice teachers make of an activity within a multicultural field experience?

More specific questions developed to focus data collection and analysis are as follows:

- What similarities are there among the preservice teachers' meanings?
- What factors explain these similarities?

Significance of Study

There is a great need in the United States for teachers who have well-developed multicultural, social-competence skills. The number of CLD students is rapidly increasing while the preservice teacher population has remained overwhelmingly White and middle class. There has been a good deal of research on the durability of long-held attitudes and beliefs of preservice teachers (Alhquist, 1991; Artiles, Trent, Hoffman-Kipp, & López-Torres, 2000; Goodwin, 1997; McDiarmid, 1990; Pajares, 1992; Zeichner, 1993).

As teacher education programs continue to address this challenge, it is important to look at the meaning preservice teachers construct of diversity and of program practices

designed to influence their perspectives and practices related to CLD children and families. A clearer understanding of their experience will give insight into designing teacher education programs that are more effective in developing self-knowledge, multicultural social competency, culturally responsive pedagogical skills, and, ultimately, social activism. Teacher education programs, as currently structured, are frequently seen as weak attempts to affect long-held cultural beliefs (Artiles et al., 2000; Goodwin, 2001; Larkin & Sleeter, 1995; O'Loughlin, 2001; Tatto, 1996). However, research suggests that integrated field experiences (Vavrus, 2002), especially those that are community-based, may have a significant impact on development of multicultural social competence (Sleeter, 1995a; 2001a). My study investigated one such integrated community-based experience to better understand the meaning five preservice teachers make of their involvement with students and caregivers in a community that may not share the same cultural view of education and educational opportunities as that of the preservice teachers.

In the chapters that follow, I review relevant literature on multicultural teacher education, describe the methods used to study preservice teachers' experience with the Caregiver Conversation, describe the meanings participants make of the experience, and discuss implications of the findings for multicultural teacher education and multicultural teacher education research.

Definition of Terms

Bright Futures

Bright Futures is a multicultural field experience that provides the preservice teachers opportunities to begin development of multicultural social competence. During Bright Futures, each preservice teacher spends 2 hours per week over the course of a semester mentoring one child, helping this child with school-related activities at a

community center located within a public housing complex, and becoming familiar with the child, family, and neighborhood. The children who participate in Bright Futures are primarily African American, live in the neighborhoods in which the program is conducted, and may struggle to succeed in school.

Caregiver Conversation Project

The Caregiver Conversation Project is a course-required activity that occurs in conjunction with Bright Futures. Preservice teachers conduct two conversations. One conversation is with the caregiver or parent of the preservice teacher, and the second conversation is with the caregiver or parent of the child he/she is mentoring. The caregivers or parents of the mentees are from lower socio-economic backgrounds, live in subsidized public housing, are primarily African American, and are frequently either single mothers or grandparents. The conversations are about the parents/caregivers' personal experiences with the American educational system and their ideas about their role as educators of their children.

Multicultural Teacher Education

This term refers to efforts to prepare teachers who have the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions to effectively teach students from diverse cultural, socio-economic, and linguistic backgrounds. These teachers must understand their beliefs about race and society; understand how culture, discrimination, and racism affect others; have the ability to effectively communicate with students and families from diverse backgrounds; and have the ability to develop and use appropriate, culturally responsive pedagogy. Social reconstructionist multicultural teacher education moves beyond these goals to ultimately inspire both teachers and students to strive for societal changes by learning how to advocate for themselves and for social justice issues.

Multicultural Social Competence

This term refers to the ability to understand and be able to communicate effectively with CLD students and with the communities from which they come.

Reflection

The definition for this term stems from Dewey's (1910) conceptualization of reflection as "an active, persistent, and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends" (p. 6). It is the process of moving beyond the "tendencies of one's own biography" (LaBosky, 1994, p. 9) and interpretations based on unexamined cultural assumptions to a systematic analysis of a situation based on viewing and reviewing a variety of perspectives, motivations, and understandings.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Multicultural scholars refer to the *demographic imperative* (Banks, 1995, Dilworth, 1992; Ladson-Billings, 1999) and the *demographic divide* (Gay & Howard, 2000) as ways of naming the inescapable fact that the teaching population and the student population in the United States are becoming increasingly disparate. As the population of America's schools becomes increasingly diverse, the population of teachers has remained predominately White, middle class, monolingual, and female (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004; Cook & Boe, 1995; National Center for Education Statistics, 2001; Sleeter, 1995b).

The divide between teacher and student populations is far greater than the numerical differences indicate (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004). Most White preservice teachers bring with them a naiveté about cultural and ethnic stereotypes (Schultz et al., 1996; Sleeter, 2001b) and little awareness or understanding of discrimination and racism (King, 1991; Su, 1996, 1997). Students and teachers come to school with a marked difference in their biographies, social experiences, and beliefs about schooling and society. They do not have the same cultural referents or points of view (Gay & Howard, 2000), and the personal experience of the preservice teachers often fails to connect with the background knowledge of students of color who may live in poverty and/or not speak English as their first language (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004; Gay, 1993; Gomez, 1996; Irvine, 2003).

The lack of common cultural referents and understandings causes difficulties in the classroom. Teachers who come from backgrounds different from those of their students often have difficulty functioning as role models (Villegas & Lucas, 2002b) or *cultural brokers* (Gay, 1993) who are able to bridge gaps between home, school, and mainstream American cultures (Delpit, 1995). They may adopt an attitude of *colorblindness* and proclaim that all students deserve the same educational opportunities without understanding that equal may not be the same as equitable (Cochran-Smith, 1995a; Vavrus, 2002). Colorblindness frequently leads to minimizing the need for carefully crafted culturally relevant and responsive curriculum (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004; Gomez, 1996; Irvine et al., 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). This is unfortunate because culturally responsive curriculum has a greater chance of engaging students in academic activities due to its focus on prior knowledge and interests. The result is that students who most need educational opportunities connected to their life experiences receive the least. One of the greatest concerns is that the lack of teacher success in a diverse classroom setting will lead him/her to adopt a view of diversity as a deficit that needs remediation rather than as an opportunity to expand the horizons of all students (Zeichner, 1993).

A deficit mentality is dangerous for the very students perceived to be lacking. There is a great disparity between the achievement of students raised within middle-class White American culture and those of color, of lower-socio economic status, or who do not speak English as their first language (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). African-American and Hispanic students have consistently scored lower on National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) mathematics and reading assessments (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2000) and have lower high school graduation rates

(Educational Research Service [ERS], as cited in Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). The achievement gap between groups of students is an indication that our current educational system is not adequately serving large numbers of students. In order to alter how students are taught, it is necessary to reevaluate how teachers are educated in preservice teacher education programs.

This chapter presents an overview of the literature on multicultural teacher education. In particular, I address the desired outcomes of multicultural teacher education and program structures and practices that hold promise for producing these desired outcomes. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the important next steps in multicultural teacher education research and how my study will contribute to the literature base.

Aims of Multicultural Teacher Education

The varied facets of the demographic imperative highlight the importance of designing teacher education programs that develop in preservice teachers the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and dispositions that will help them provide appropriate education to children from diverse ethnic, racial, social, and linguistic groups (Artiles, Barreto, Peña, & McClafferty, 1998; Cochran-Smith, 1999; Delpit, 1995; Dilworth, 1992; Harry et al., 1999; Sleeter, 2001a). Some have said that good multicultural teaching is just good teaching (Gentile, 1988) and that a good general teacher education program can develop qualified multicultural teachers. However, competency in general teacher education and multicultural teacher education are not necessarily coincidental (Fox & Gay, 1995). Acquisition of appropriate multicultural skills must be accomplished through an intertwining of general education practices that include reflection on practice and content knowledge plus multicultural education skills specifically designed for development of

multicultural social competence, culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2000), and advocacy (Cochran-Smith, 1995a; 1995b). The ultimate outcome is the development of well-rounded novice teachers. This well roundedness includes (a) development of multicultural beliefs and competence, (b) development of social reconstructionist commitments, and (c) the ability to develop and implement appropriate culturally responsive pedagogy.

Development of Multicultural Beliefs and Competence

Harry (2002) argues that preservice teachers need to learn in an environment that requires the development and practice of cultural awareness in all areas of education. It is important that they learn to view their cultural backgrounds from a new perspective, one that does not assume middle-class White values, norms, beliefs, and behaviors as the norm for all cultural groups (Banks, 1991; Bennett, 1995; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). As Villegas and Lucas (2002a) point out, there is also a need to be aware that membership in a particular socio-economic and racial group not only shapes beliefs and attitudes but also determines status. Class and race are not neutral categories; some groups have more power than others within a society (Delpit, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a).

Moving beyond an understanding of themselves and their status in society, various scholars assert that development of an appreciation for the values and perspectives of other cultural and linguistic groups is important. Openness to diversity can aid teachers in developing a shared understanding of educational expectations with families and students (Cochran-Smith, 1995a; Harry, 2002; Harry et al., 1999; Ladson-Billings, 1995b), and pedagogy that is both relevant and responsive to student needs (Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

Becoming multicultural

Nieto (1992) states that an important part of being a multicultural teacher is to become a multicultural person. White preservice teachers often arrive in teacher education programs not thinking of themselves as cultural beings (Gay, 1993; Goodwin, 2000). They claim that they have no specific culture or ethnicity, other than American (Bennett, 2001), and are unaware of the ways in which culture, ethnicity, class, and disabilities shape them, their classrooms, and their students.

Multicultural scholars argue that before preservice teachers can address diversity issues in the classroom, they must develop a deeper level of understanding of themselves (Banks, 2001b; Bennett, 2001; Gay, 1995; Pugach & Seidl, 1998; Vavrus, 2002; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). Banks (1991) asserts that preservice teachers must understand their own unique collection of identities (race, ethnicity, gender, language, religion, sexual orientation) and how they, as complex multidimensional people, fit within the American multicultural society. Just as in learning content knowledge, preservice teachers need to reorganize and reconfigure what they already know in order to apply it to new information and in the process transform monocultural people into multicultural people (Pohan & Mathison, 1999).

Through critical examination of taken for granted assumptions and unexamined beliefs, preservice teachers learn to avoid a *this is just the way things are* mentality (Gay & Howard, 2000) and see that class and racial membership have shaped their attitudes and beliefs. As they begin to see themselves as cultural beings and learn about their previously unexplored cultural connections, they must then move to explore their attitudes about those from culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) backgrounds

(Villegas & Lucas, 2002a) and how social power structures influence people who were not raised in White middle-class American culture.

Understanding the effect of culture, discrimination, and racism on others

Because differences in access to power influence a person's experience of the world, it is necessary to examine three realities of American society: it is socially and economically stratified; there are social inequities produced and perpetuated by this stratification; and schools and schooling contribute to and perpetuate this stratification. Schools are not neutral territory (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). There is an intricate connection between schools and the perpetuation of societal values (Cochran-Smith, 1997; Cochran-Smith et al., 2004; Hollins, 1996; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a).

White middle-class preservice teachers frequently enter teacher education programs believing in the impartiality of social institutions and that the knowledge disseminated through these institutions is objective and neutral (McGee Banks, 2001; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). They see the purpose of schooling as the passing on of information from teacher to student. The student absorbs information, uncritically accepts its validity and accuracy, and then repeats it back (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). Critical theory scholars such as Apple (1990) and McLaren (2003) argue that the result is perpetuation of hegemony, the overt and covert exercise of domination of one group over others.

Apple (1990) asserts that hegemony denies dominated groups the ability to create cultural capital. Cultural capital consists of whatever the dominant group considers valuable (e.g., specific types of prior knowledge, language practices, ways of speaking and moving, forms of socializing, and types of school knowledge). With regard to schooling, Slater (2002) states that duplicating cultural capital from generation to

generation lulls dominated groups into accepting that the current system of schooling continues to work well, even when it actually works to the disadvantage of dominated groups. Since White middle-class Americans comprise the dominant culture in the United States and schools, it is their cultural capital that is duplicated and imposed on other groups.

Delpit (1995) believes that for children of color to become literate and successful they must be explicitly taught how to gain access to cultural capital. They must be taught the *codes of power*, the outward signs of cultural capital. Doing otherwise ensures that they and other children from CLD backgrounds will be unable to fully participate in the democratic process.

To weaken the hegemonic structure of schooling, students need teachers who are able to work within and beyond the system. Villegas and Lucas (2002a) argue that preparing preservice teachers to question assumptions about knowledge, power, and schooling requires a complete resocialization of the preservice teacher. This resocialization begins with the examination of previously unexamined beliefs and personal privilege and extends, through critical examination of social status and the culture of power, to learning how to successfully operate in a variety of cultural environments.

Developing multicultural social competence

Bennett (2001) argues that multicultural competence has three components: the ability to interpret intentional communication (i.e., language, signs, gestures), unconscious cues (i.e., body language), and customs. At the same time the teacher must also monitor his/her own culturally conditioned responses to CLD situations.

Gay (2001) states that teachers need to “learn how to culturally decode their attitudes and behaviors from an insider’s viewpoint . . . analyze these attitudes and behaviors from the perspectives of *others*, especially those of their students of color” (p. 217). He believes that these skills are not acquired but must be explicitly taught in teacher education programs. The starting point is development of *critical consciousness*, awareness of personal and societal cultural biases and prejudices. However, awareness does not translate into action inside and outside the classroom unless teachers also develop multicultural social skills in conjunction with critical consciousness.

Gay (1995) identified *multicultural social competence* as one of the major goals of multicultural education whether in the K-12 classroom or teacher education. She wrote,

It is imperative that students learn how to interact with and understand people who are ethnically, racially, and culturally different from themselves. The United States and the world are becoming increasingly more diverse, compact, and interdependent. Yet, for most students, the formative years of their lives are spent in ethnically and culturally isolated or encapsulated enclaves. This existence does not adequately prepare them to function effectively in ethnically different and multicultural settings. Attempts at cross-cultural interactions are often stymied by negative attitudes; cultural blunders; and by trying to impose rules of social etiquette from one cultural system onto another. The results are often heightened interracial and interethnic group frustrations, anxiety, fears, failures, and hostilities. (p. 18)

The difficulty of effective inclusion of multicultural social competencies into teacher education programs lies in the complexity of altering preservice teachers’ existing beliefs, attitudes, and values about people unlike themselves. Pajares (1992) and others (Alhquist, 1992; Artiles et al., 2000; Borko & Putnam, 1996; Kagan, 1992; Melnick & Zeichner, 1995) argue that long-held beliefs are not easily altered. There must be some belief altering experience that requires reevaluation of beliefs that have been reinforced by parents, schools, peers, and society. Artiles and colleagues (1998) add that

the relationship between beliefs and change is complex and dynamic. Preservice teachers' past experiences and understanding of culture and diversity have a direct impact on their receptivity to altering their beliefs about CLD populations and issues.

Development of multicultural social competencies is not an end in itself. It is a step toward the ability to design and use appropriate culturally responsive pedagogy in the classroom. Banks (2001a) states that once teachers are able to understand the cultural roots that lie behind attitudes and behaviors they are better capable of designing "more culturally compatible instructional options" (p. 218) and improve the learning experiences of CLD students.

Development of Social Reconstructionist Commitments

Cochran-Smith (1991, 1995b) argues that it is essential to prepare teachers who see themselves as both educators and activists. She coined the phrase *teaching against the grain* to describe her vision of the role of a successful teacher. A teacher's purpose is to not only provide content instruction but also to inspire students to make societal improvements. James Baldwin (1963/1998) in his essay *A Talk to Teachers* gives substance to the intent behind teaching against the grain:

The purpose of education . . . is to create in a person the ability to look at the world for himself, to make his own decisions, to say to himself this is black or this is white, to decide for himself whether there is a God in heaven or not. To ask questions of the universe, and then learn to live with those questions, is the way he achieves his own identity. But no society is really anxious to have that kind of person around. What societies really, ideally, want is a citizenry which will simply obey the rules of society. If a society succeeds in this, the society is about to perish. The obligation of anyone who thinks of himself as responsible is to examine society and try to change it and to fight it—at no matter what risk. This is the only hope society has. This is the only way societies change. (p. 678).

Awareness of need for social activism

A variety of scholars (Banks, 2001a; Cochran-Smith, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Sleeter & Grant, 1999; Tom, 1997; Vavrus, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a;

Zeichner et al., 1998) see schools and society as intricately interconnected. They see teachers as potential societal change agents who can impact power relationships through curriculum, instructional practices, and personal commitment to challenging and transforming inequities (Zeichner et al., 1998). In order to impact schools and society, teachers need to have a clear understanding of how schooling perpetuates power inequities, and to realize the importance of choosing to actively advocate for social justice. They also need to know how to design pedagogy that can impact and inspire students to high academic achievement and to become change agents in their own right (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a).

Use of social reconstructionist pedagogy

Sleeter and Grant (1999) define *social reconstructionism* as the philosophy behind multicultural education. It is the belief that schools in a democracy can and should prepare and empower students to actively advocate for themselves and for greater equity and social justice in society (Vavrus, 2002). In turn, teacher education programs must aid preservice teachers to reach the same goals. There is concern, however, that programs are not accomplishing this preparation.

Zeichner and Hoeft (1996) concluded that generally teacher education programs continue to prepare teachers for monocultural settings and avoid addressing implications of cultural and linguistic diversity. Grant and Wieczorek (2000) and Nieto (2001) note that there continues to be an emphasis on the universality of knowledge for teaching, learning and schooling rather than acknowledgement that all knowledge is situated within social and historical contexts (Fox & Gay, 1995). Preservice teachers exiting programs continue to be ambivalent about teaching in diverse settings (Gay & Howard, 2000; Vavrus, 2002), especially urban areas (Pang & Sablan, 1998). A study of 3000 teachers

(Villegas & Clewell 1998) found that only 13% of the teachers were willing to teach in urban environments. When observing teachers conducting classroom literacy activities, Gersten, Brengelman, and Jiménez (1994) noted that the teachers avoided addressing social issues connected to their students' lives. The researchers felt that the teachers passed up teachable moments due to personal discomfort with issues of poverty. How can preservice teachers guide students in praxis if they experience discomfort working in a multicultural environment and addressing issues that affect the lives of CLD children in their classrooms?

Ability to Develop and Use Appropriate Pedagogy

Gay and Howard (2000) point out that multicultural pedagogical knowledge and skills consist of two interrelated components: general and content specific. General knowledge and skills include development of culturally responsive teaching through the use of students' *funds of knowledge*, creation of a classroom climate that is conducive to learning for students from diverse backgrounds, and the use of a wide variety of instructional techniques that provide opportunities to teach for social change and social justice. Content specific knowledge and skills refer to the use of general multicultural pedagogical knowledge and skills within content areas, such as, math, science and social studies in order to increase academic achievement by systematically linking content to students' lives. Teachers must be proficient in both types of knowledge and skills in order to develop curricula capable of "reversing the underachievement of students of color" (Gay, 2000, p. 1).

Student funds of knowledge

Funds of knowledge refer to "historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for household or individual functioning and well-being" (Moll et al., 1992, p. 133). In Moll and colleagues' seminal work on the

importance of using student funds of knowledge by teachers, 10 teachers conducted ethnographic action research in their students' homes and became participant observers in the lives of their students. The teachers, through their research, came to know how home culture and knowledge affected and enhanced classroom learning. They discovered that students are not empty vessels waiting to be filled and that home knowledge can be a powerful learning tool (Bennett, 2001). In order to effectively use students' funds of knowledge, teachers must learn how to gain insight into what students already know and how this nonschool knowledge can be utilized in the classroom to increase achievement through culturally responsive teaching (Nieto, 2000; Sleeter, 1995a; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a; Zeichner et al., 1998). At the same time, teachers must ensure that students maintain identification and pride in their home culture and home knowledge. Both teachers and students should think of knowledge learned in school as additive rather than as subtractive (Cummins, 1984). That is, school knowledge is meant to supplement and build on, not replace, what has been learned at home.

Culturally responsive teaching

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) links teacher multicultural social competence and prior student knowledge to classroom instruction for students from CLD backgrounds. CRT is an instructional approach that is based on using students' funds of knowledge as meaningful sources of information for the education of students who are not from the dominant White middle-class culture (Nieto, 2001). It reaches beyond the tradition of teaching about cultural heritages and contributions of ethnic groups and develops a personal interconnectedness that makes content personally meaningful (Banks, 2001a). Ladson-Billings (1994) believes that it "empowers students

intellectually, socially, emotionally, and politically by using cultural referents to impart knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (p. 382).

The conceptual multicultural education literature strongly emphasizes a focus in teacher education programs on the construction of CRT (e.g., Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a; Zeichner et al., 1998). Ladson-Billings (1995a, 1995b) sees it as the critical mediator between multicultural theory and multicultural practice. Zeichner et al. (1998) include it in their list of multicultural teacher education *design principles*. Villegas and Lucas (2002a) employ it as the framework for their *strands* approach for infusion of multicultural education into teacher education programs. The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE, 2002) uses effective implementation of CRT as one of the target criteria for its diversity standard.

Within the structure of teacher education programs, preservice teachers need to learn CRT practices in order to build bridges between home and school cultures (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a), maintain students’ pride and identification in the home culture (Cummins, 1984) while they learn the culture of the school, develop higher order thinking skills, and monitor development and achievement (Obiakor & Utley, 1997). Prospective teachers must learn to use CRT practices within the framework of subject matter instruction (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a) because CRT alone will not result in higher academic achievement (Gay & Howard, 2000). In fact, student achievement is fostered through the combination of teachers developing multicultural social competence, holding positive views of students from diverse backgrounds, affirming the value of students’ funds of knowledge, teaching against the grain in order to encourage social change, and implementing appropriate pedagogy.

The ultimate purpose of CRT is to provide classroom instruction that increases the academic achievement of students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Teachers who are comfortable with CRT practices and who utilize student funds of knowledge support student achievement (Delpit, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Nieto, 2000) through integration of CRT with an intellectually rigorous content curriculum so that all students become capable of favorable academic results (Gay, 2000; Irvine et al., 2001; Pang & Sablan, 1998; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). What program structures and practices determine whether a teacher education program will be effective in developing preservice teachers who are able to accomplish this goal?

Program Structures in Multicultural Teacher Education

There are common areas discussed in the multicultural literature as being necessary for a well-designed multicultural teacher education program. Three areas of focus for multicultural teacher education are discussed earlier in this chapter, and include (a) development of multicultural social competence; (b) development of social reconstructionist commitments; and (c) ability to develop and use culturally responsive pedagogy. In order to achieve these aims, there are specific program structures that need to be considered: (a) program coherence and (b) infusion of multicultural education throughout the curriculum.

Program Coherence

The importance of program coherence is highlighted throughout the conceptual teacher education literature, both in general education (Howey, 1996; NCATE, 2002; Tom, 1997; Zeichner, 1993; Zeichner, Miller, & Silvernail, 2000) and in multicultural teacher education (Nieto, 2000; Vavrus, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a, 2002b; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). A coherent program requires an explicit conceptual framework to ground

and guide it. The purpose of this framework is not to describe or prescribe, but to orient (Tom, 1997). The philosophical viewpoint espoused through the framework determines how the program components are realized. All of the pieces of a program need to fit together as a coherent whole and provide a frame for the various knowledge, skills, and dispositions that preservice teachers must understand and demonstrate in order to become well-rounded professionals (NCATE, 2002; Zeichner et al., 2000). The curriculum that is the result of a coherent shared vision gives faculty and preservice teachers a common language with which to communicate (Webb, Ross, & McCallum, 2005).

In the multicultural teacher education literature, there is general consensus that the overarching conceptual framework for an effective multicultural teacher education program is equity and honoring of students' home cultures and knowledge base (Banks, 2001a, 2001b; Cochran-Smith et al., 2004; Ladson-Billings, 1999; McAllister & Irvine, 2002; Nieto, 2000; Vavrus, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a, 2002b). It is also widely held that multicultural education must be consciously infused throughout a teacher education program in both coursework and fieldwork in order to achieve these aims (Burstein & Cabello, 1989; Gay, 1997; Vavrus, 2002; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a, Zeichner et al., 1998; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996).

Infusion of Multicultural Education throughout the Preservice Curriculum

Results from a study of 103 preservice teachers by Neuharth-Pritchell, Reiff, and Pearson (2001) suggest that preservice/novice teachers frequently have limited positive exposure to multicultural classroom pedagogy due to cooperating teacher discomfort with multicultural education. They concluded that it is, therefore, the role of teacher education programs to integrate this content into all program experiences, coursework and field experiences, in order to assist preservice teachers in developing a positive view

of multicultural education in the K-12 classroom. Many other multicultural researchers and scholars have argued that multicultural teacher education must be systematic and permeate the entire preservice teacher education curriculum practices (Ahlquist, 1991; Grant, 1994; NCATE, 2002; Sleeter, 2001b; Vavrus, 2002; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). Zeichner et al. (1998), for example, argue that limiting multicultural educational experiences to certain courses provides insufficient exposure to multicultural ideas (Artiles et al., 1998; Banks, 2001a; Diaz, 2001). Villegas and Lucas (2002a, 2002b) caution that restricting multicultural topics to a foundations course may cause preservice teachers and faculty to assume that they are not responsible for multicultural issues outside of that course. They write, “In the absence of a broad vision for preparing culturally responsive teachers, such courses can be contradicted by the rest of the curriculum, marginalizing those individual efforts to address diversity issues” (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a, p. xiii).

Preservice teachers, just like K-12 students, bring funds of knowledge and preexisting beliefs to the classroom. Teacher educators and teacher education programs must build bridges between prior knowledge and beliefs about teaching, learning, and diverse populations and the new ideas and situations to which the preservice teachers are exposed. This involves engaging preservice teachers in questioning, interpreting, and analyzing both familiar and unfamiliar information and situations (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a). Oakes and Lipton (1999) note that there is no rigid prescription to teaching or learning to teach. On the contrary, both require thoughtful decision-making and construction of knowledge in situations that are in a constant state of flux and uncertainty (Villegas & Lucas, 2002a).

Program Practices in Multicultural Teacher Education

How multicultural teacher education programs develop opportunities for greater understanding of multicultural issues in the preservice classroom, and how they design opportunities for direct experience with unfamiliar peoples and communities are two of the greatest challenges that confront preservice teacher education and teacher educators (Cochran-Smith, 1997; Fox & Gay, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1999). There is no single program practice that accounts for impact on preservice teachers' beliefs and practice. Rather, many teacher education scholars argue that it is an interrelationship among program components that determines program effectiveness (Gomez, 1996; Holmes Group, 1995; NCATE, 2002; Wideen, Mayer-Smith, & Moon, 1998). Providing opportunities for self-analysis, study of differences, and experience with people from different social, ethnic, racial, and linguistic groups in intercultural situations opens the possibility of deeper critical reflection on long-held unexamined beliefs about society and schooling.

Reflective Practices in the Multicultural Teacher Education Classroom

There is consensus in the multicultural literature that development of one's own cultural, ethnic, and racial identity is an important first step toward developing self-knowledge and multicultural social competence (Banks, 2001b; Cochran-Smith et al., 2004; King, 1991; Zeichner et al., 1998; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). Many multicultural scholars and educators also argue that it is a critical component of becoming an effective teacher for all students (Bennett, 1995; Fox & Gay, 1995; Gay, 2000; LaBoskey, 1994; Zeichner et al., 1998). Preservice teachers who have been raised within the dominant culture of a society are frequently unaware that their beliefs and values are not universally held by all subgroups within that society (Gay, 2000; Good & Brophy, 1994;

Spindler & Spindler, 1994, 2000). If preservice teachers are unaware of holding beliefs and attitudes that act as cultural blinders and that can obstruct the educational achievement of culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students, how can they develop strategies and skills for widening their vision (Bennett, 1995; Gay, 2000)? Structured reflective practices, such as, cultural therapy, reflective journals, case studies/narratives, autobiographies, and simulations are some of the means to stimulating the removal of these cultural blinders.

Cultural therapy

One means of exposing unexamined beliefs and values is through a facilitation model developed by Spindler and Spindler (1994, 2000). This model—*cultural therapy* is

a process of bringing one's own culture, in its manifold forms—assumptions, goals, values, beliefs, communicative modes—to a level of awareness that permits one to perceive it as a potential bias in social interaction and in the acquisition or transmission of skills and knowledge (2000, p. 367).

The idea of process is very important in their definition of cultural therapy. They see culture not as just a factor or an influence on a person, but as the core of society.

Therefore, the therapy to uncover cultural knowledge and bring it into the open so that it can be dealt with as a potential bias in interpersonal relationships must also be a process (1994).

Cultural therapy grew out of an ethnographic research study George Spindler conducted in the 1950s. He was part of a team that conducted case studies of teachers and their classroom practices, principals in their schools, and superintendents in their school systems. He collected information on a novice fifth-grade teacher, his students, and classroom interactions. Data included autobiographical information, self-report data on how the teacher viewed himself as a teacher, and information on how his principal,

school psychologist, and other administrators viewed him and his teaching ability. Spindler found that both the teacher and his superiors rated him very highly. However, when Spindler began an intensive ethnography of the fifth-grade children in the classroom, a different story came to light (Spindler, 2000).

The teacher prided himself on his openness, accessibility, and ability to assist all students. Through the ethnography it was shown that these traits were exhibited only with students who were similar to the teacher (White, Protestant, middle to upper middle class). He was not hostile to the other students; he ignored them. Spindler concluded that the teacher was totally unaware of his biases or how they were exhibited in his classroom. He did not know how to relate to the students who were unlike himself, so he ignored them without realizing that he was doing it. His actions and biases went unnoticed by his supervisors and were therefore unexplored and not evaluated (Spindler, 2000).

Spindler spoke to the teacher about his findings and received a hostile response. The teacher refused to accept what the data indicated. Six months later, Spindler received a call from the teacher requesting a meeting. The teacher may have refused to acknowledge the data when it was originally presented to him, but over the course of the intervening months he had reflected on the findings. The teacher was shocked that he found validity in Spindler's findings, and endeavored to develop a clearer understanding of his beliefs and assumptions (*self-reflection*), and how they were manifested in his classroom (*self-monitoring*). He was now ready to look at his beliefs and actions in a different light and take action to modify future actions (*self-transcendence*).

As indicated in the above description, there are three elements to cultural therapy: *self-reflection*, *self-monitoring*, and *self-transcendence* (Banks, 2001a). Working through

this process by way of reflective activities, such as reflective journaling and autobiography, offers preservice teachers the opportunity to not only pinpoint bias but also to better understand why it exists, how it affects others, and how it can be overcome. Spindler and Spindler (2000) point out that merely relating to White preservice teachers what researchers and scholars say about beliefs is frequently not sufficient to accomplish awareness or change. It is more effective for an individual to see and understand how his/her beliefs and behaviors affect others and to analyze how to “culturally decode his/her attitudes and behaviors” (Gay, 2001, p. 217).

Marx (Marx & Pennington, 2003) studied nine preservice teachers who tutored English Language Learners (ELLs) of color as part of a field experience for a Second Language Acquisition course. She instituted a form of cultural therapy that she called *critical cultural therapy*. Critical cultural therapy followed the procedures as indicated by Spindler and Spindler (2000), but included a critical, race-oriented focus. Marx considers racism an inevitable aspect of White dominated American culture and strove as a *critical cultural therapist* to help the preservice teachers develop awareness of how Whiteness and racism, though invisible, influenced beliefs about and interactions with ELLs. She also saw a strong need for course instructors to draw preservice teachers’ attention to the underlying racism and inconsistencies of their own words, as was done in this study. Focusing on their words sets the stage for opportunities to see that their actions perpetuate racism. Results from the study indicated that this method of focusing on Whiteness and racism is effective. While at first the preservice teachers felt “debilitated by their recognition of White privilege and White racism, and their relationships to them” (Marx & Pennington, p. 106), later in the study they used this knowledge to become empowered to change. Marx concluded that even though studying the Whiteness of

preservice teachers is seen as immaterial or dangerous by a number of teacher educators, it is a necessary component of helping novices develop knowledge and skills to effect societal changes.

Another example of cultural therapy, though not noted as such in her article, is a narrative reflection by Denevi (2000). When she taught a high school English course titled *Ethnic Voices*, she realized that her presence, as a White instructor in a class that included an equal number of White and African-American students, tipped the balance of power. She found that she had to confront her own Whiteness and White privilege to understand what had happened during the course. Her journey began with exploring her own racial identity (self-reflection) and proceeded into self-monitoring her interactions during the semester. She became aware of hidden aspects of her role as the White educator and was ultimately able to identify ways of sharing her power and giving up some privileges in order to obtain a better sense of community and greater equity (self-transcendence).

Reflective journals

Several teacher education scholars (e.g., Carter, 1995; Liston & Zeichner, 1987; Ross, Bondy & Kyle, 1993; Yost, Senter, & Forlenza-Bailey, 2000) argue that it is through reflective writing, such as journals, that preservice teachers make connections between course content and practical application of that content. Journals also provide opportunities to develop deeper levels of thinking about how teaching and learning are constructed (Hoover, 1994; Mayer-Smith & Mitchell, 1997). There are two main types of reflective journals within the context of a course: diary type journals preservice teachers keep to better understand their practice, and dialogue journals—written conversations that occur over an extended period of time between students and instructors or between

students and students (Cole, Raffier, Rogan & Schleicher, 1998). Both journaling forms are intended to give journal keepers opportunities to reflect on experiences and observations. The reflection studies discussed below are examples of diary and dialogue journaling. Since most multicultural teacher education reflection studies are conducted within the context of a field experience, a more detailed discussion of studies with reflective journal components will be discussed in a subsequent section of this chapter.

In a study of 29 preservice teachers who participated in a course connected field experience at an inner city school, Olmedo (1997) found that reflecting on connections between course assignments and experiences helped to alter preservice teacher views about inner city schools and working with CLD children. The study took place in the context of a multicultural fieldwork course that consisted of a 2-hour weekly class that lasted 15 weeks and assisting and observing in an elementary classroom one full day each week. The field experience was at an inner city elementary school that had a large CLD population. Coursework included readings, discussions, and written assignments. Two types of reflective course assignments were ongoing: a reflective journal concerning fieldwork and written reflections on course readings. Additional reflective assignments included a case study of an individual child and an ungraded autobiography. Results obtained through analysis of the written assignments indicated that the field experience provided an opportunity to question assumptions about student motivation, students' ability to learn, the quality of teaching in inner city schools, and the value and meaning of multicultural teacher education. The preservice teachers found that CLD students were more motivated than had originally been believed, and they were able to show academic achievement, sometimes equivalent to that of students from higher socio-economic status schools. The preservice teachers' reflections indicated that they had become more aware

that social, political, and economic forces negatively impacted schools where the majority of the students were from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and that concerns about this negative impact were a reality, not university propaganda.

Dome and colleagues (2005) studied the narrative reflections of 74 preservice teachers enrolled in a course titled *The Role of Cultural Diversity in Schooling*. The researchers determined that the reflections could be divided into four distinct categories: culturally aware (21%), open (36%), superficial (40%), and defensive (3%). Data indicate that discussions that were intense or controversial produced more engaged and in-depth reflective narrative and that, while 57% of the narratives indicated an awareness or openness to cultural diversity, 43% fell in the categories of superficial or defensive. The authors concluded that such a large percentage in the superficial or defensive categories indicated an area that needs further exploration. They speculated that directions given the preservice teachers might have been vague, and this lack of clarity might have affected the quality of the narratives. The authors concluded that the reflections allowed the course instructors to gain deeper insight into the reflection process of their students, and that sharing reflective writing engendered an atmosphere of trust and support among the preservice teachers.

Dialogue journals enable instructors to provide ongoing input to provoke deeper thought (Hoover, 1994; Schmidt & Davison, 1983) and guide the preservice teachers so that they may move to higher levels of knowledge and understanding (Garmon, 1998) than can be obtained through standard reflective journals. Garmon studied the effectiveness of dialogue journals written by preservice teachers in a multicultural education course. In his study, 14 preservice teachers dialogued with him on a weekly basis about course content and reactions to the content. The purpose of the study was

twofold. First, Garmon wanted to determine if preservice teachers who entered the course with more favorable racial attitudes reacted to the course differently than those who came into the course with less favorable attitudes. Second, he wanted to know if the course impacted racial attitudes. He found through analysis of the dialogue journal entries that perspectives on racial issues generally broadened, long-held views were investigated through the ongoing dialogue, and course content was critically critiqued and discussed in more depth than the instructor had experienced in prior courses.

Case studies/narratives

Melnick and Zeichner (1995) suggest that the use of cases can “help prospective teachers develop a social map of a cultural terrain and interpret social meaning of unfamiliar cultural events” (p. 9). They can be used to highlight cross-cultural dilemmas that can occur in multicultural classrooms and communities (Kleinfeld, 1998). Cases offer preservice teachers a sneak preview of a variety of situations in which they might find themselves, and offer them strategies that may be useful in real life situations. The Teachers for Alaska (TFA) Program makes extensive use of cases often written by practicing teachers to introduce preservice teachers to cross-cultural situations that they will encounter when placed in rural school districts in indigenous tribal areas.

Evaluations of TFA have shown measurable improvement in cross-cultural teaching and communication skills (Kleinfeld, 1998). At the start of TFA, only 28% of the preservice teachers were able to see cultural situations from a viewpoint other than their own. At the program midpoint, 62% were able to do so. At the end of the program, 83% were able to do so (Kleinfeld, 1998).

The TFA program consists of six units. Each unit emphasizes a thematically related case. Cases are read, written, and discussed. Reading of cases consists of two

parts—statement of a problem and suggestions of possible solutions from an experienced teacher. Writing of cases consists of the preservice teachers writing about their student teaching experiences. Discussion of cases occurs throughout the semester during seminars. The seminars are designed to assist preservice teachers with their emotional as well as intellectual responses to the various cases, to prepare them for life as part of an indigenous community, and to help the preservice teachers understand that some cases have no clear or easy solution (Kleinfeld, 1998).

Clark and Medina (2000) found that using multicultural literary narratives as a focal point for reflection helped move preservice teachers toward a more critical understanding of literacy, multiculturalism and teaching. The preservice teachers used a variety of reflective practices to follow not only the literacy development of the main character but also the path of his identity development, including all the struggles he endured along the way.

The study focused on eight preservice teachers, out of a class of 60, who were enrolled in a M.Ed. certification course for secondary English, social studies, and foreign language teachers. As a course requirement, all preservice teachers selected one of five book-length literacy narratives. The group of eight chose Luis Rodriguez's *Always Running* (1993). These narratives were read and discussed in small groups outside of class. The course instructor and class observer collected preservice teachers' personal literacy narratives, reading logs, responses to *Always Running*, and final papers on literacy and pedagogy, plus audiotaped group discussions about the narrative, copies of email group discussions, individual preservice teacher interviews, and observer field notes.

The reflection process was recursive and the data indicated subtle shifts in preservice thinking as the process progressed. First, the preservice teachers wrote definitions of literacy. Second, they wrote personal literacy narratives. Next, there was an in-depth discussion. Finally, they wrote a reflective journal entry about *Always Running*. The writing and sharing of personal literacy narratives seemed to have helped mediate the reading of *Always Running*. In turn, the reading of *Always Running* seemed to mediate the preservice teachers' understanding of literacy development and multiculturalism.

Autobiography/cultural memoir

Autobiographical research is based on analysis of the experiences of the writers and how their experiences position them in society. Most frequently the purpose of an autobiography within the context of a multicultural preservice teacher course or field experience is to develop an understanding of the writer's racial identity (Vavrus, 2002). Focusing on racial identity development can help White preservice teachers develop awareness of the privileges they have received based on accident of birth, and the responsibility they have for social justice advocacy (Ladson-Billings, 2001; Sleeter, 1995b). However, "an unfocused autobiographical assignment on *diversity* can result in color-blind drive!" (Vavrus, p. 94).

Florio-Ruane and deTar (1995) invited a group of six elementary preservice teachers (including deTar) to participate in a *Future Teachers' Autobiography Club* where they read, wrote about, and discussed ethnic autobiographies. The club met monthly for dinner and Florio-Ruane documented the club members' responses through field notes, reading assignments, and instructor-preservice teacher correspondence. Meetings were audiotaped and each club member was interviewed at the end of the

study. The purpose of the study was to challenge club members to examine and analyze their own lives “through the lens of culture” (p. 14) in an informal setting through peer discussion.

Florio-Ruane and deTar concluded that the group achieved its goal of initiating dialogue, however, they learned that discussing personal histories was not always productive or comfortable, that instructor guidance is an important part of preservice teacher cross-cultural discourse, and that current personal and social identities affect both autobiography and conversation. The autobiographies, both personal and literary, were the focus of the conversations, but group dynamics and collective history influenced the individual participants’ interactions with each other. The authors found that it was important to critically look at both what was read and the personal narratives offered in response to the readings. The interaction between them produced struggle and conflict. Normally the struggle in an academic conversation is between the instructor’s authoritative viewpoint and the viewpoint of the students. However, within this group where the instructor took on the role of observer, a struggle for power came about when one participant would desire to advance her own beliefs and attempt to move others to share them. Florio-Ruane and deTar concluded that discussion of and reflection about issues of culture can cause conflict in peer discussion. However, this conflict can be a profitable addition to the multicultural teacher education curricula because of the fact that autobiographical literature and responses to it can lead to educative argument about difficult to discuss subjects.

Allen and Hermann-Wilmarth (2004) detailed an evolving practice of preservice teacher autobiography called *cultural memoirs*. Preservice teachers in the context of a language arts methods course spent 30 to 45 minutes of each twice-weekly 3-hour class

in a writer's workshop. They drafted ongoing autobiographical accounts based on reflections about practicum and life experiences. The preservice teachers shared their experiences, and what they learned from them, with colleagues in small and large groups. Through the process the authors saw an increased willingness by the preservice teachers to take risks, involve themselves in thoughtful reflection, and practice deeper autobiographical inquiry than with a one-time autobiographical assignment.

Schmidt (1998) studied a group of preservice teachers through a preservice multicultural teacher education model that she has developed—ABC's of Cultural Understanding and Communication. She intentionally infused multiple opportunities for self and cross-cultural reflection into the model to help preservice teachers develop reflective practice. The ABC's model is a series of program practices: (a) a preservice teacher autobiography, (b) a biography of a culturally different person, (c) a cross-cultural analysis of similarities and differences with regard to the two life stories, (d) a cultural analysis of differences with explanations of personal discomfort and admiration, and (e) a discussion about communication skills and strategies that could build connections based on information gathered in steps a through d. Schmidt collected all written documents over the course of the semester. She recorded notes and made copies of group-generated notes regarding group analyses of data. Three major findings resulted. First, the preservice teachers seemed to gain an appreciation for learning from the past to understand the present and future. They said that writing the autobiographies led to self-knowledge and greater cultural understanding. Second, they discovered an appreciation for differences, which they had not previously considered. Finally, they expressed a need to know their future CLD students' life stories and how these stories could help in the learning process.

Cross-cultural simulations

Simulations are cross-cultural immersion experiences that take place through the use of games and role-plays. They provide an opportunity for reflection on the difficulties and discomforts that may occur in cross-cultural interactions when it is impractical to arrange an authentic experience. One simulation, *BAFA BAFA*, has been used in various cross-cultural settings for over a decade. Participants are divided into two groups. Each group becomes a distinct culture with its own values, rules, expectations and customs. After practicing in order to become comfortable with the rules of the home culture, one individual from each group is chosen to *travel* to the other culture as a tourist. He/she does not know the values, rules, expectations, and customs of this new culture and is not permitted to ask. The only way to interpret cultural norms is through observation and attempts to develop hypotheses about the most effective ways to interact with this new culture.

After the game concludes, the observers return to their home cultures and describe what they saw and share their hypotheses about the cultural values, rules and expectations of the culture they observed. They discuss the successes, reflect on the frustrations that come with not knowing the rules about eye contact, proxemics, and gender roles, and note the challenges of not having language to ask for clarification (Romero, 1990).

Frykholm (1997) examined the experiences of six cohorts of preservice teachers as they participated in a cross-cultural simulation game called *Barnga*. At first glance, *Barnga* is a card game similar to *Hearts* or *Spades*. Playing cards are placed face up on the table by successive players, and the player who lays down the highest card wins the trick. On a deeper level, the goal of the game is to dominate one's own table in order to

advance to, or remain at, the highest-level table. The winners are the players who are seated at the highest-level table at the end of the game. However, there are two complications that are not revealed to the players. Each table has a slightly different set of rules. For example, the most powerful suit in the deck of cards may be different at each table, and the ace may be high or low, depending on the table.

Frykholm (1997) found that the experience effectively addressed issues of equity, diversity, and culture without leaving the classroom. The experience appeared to motivate the individual preservice teachers to think not only about being a cultural outsider but to also consider how this relates to K-12 classroom practice. Frykholm observed that a number of students engaged in critical thinking about how to not perpetuate the status quo. He acknowledged that critics of inauthentic cross-cultural experiences are skeptical about long-term benefits; however, *Barnaga* accomplished the intended purposes of stimulating discussion and reflection.

Research indicates that reflective practices encourage preservice teachers to understand themselves as cultural beings, as well as their future students and the communities from which they come. There is a greater recognition of issues of power, both overt and covert, and how power affects relationships and assumptions about others. With recognition comes the opportunity to question these assumptions and become more aware of how social, political and economic forces affect personal interactions and schooling. However, as particularly noted in the studies by Florio-Ruane and deTar (1995), Marx in Marx and Pennington (2003), and Dome et al. (2005) reflection comes with challenges. Not all preservice teachers react positively to looking into previously unexamined assumptions, and not all preservice teachers learn the lessons intended by course and field experience designers. Each of the studies discussed above had a very

different focus and used very different reflective tools. This emphasizes the need for the integration of a variety of reflective practices into teacher education programs; each type of reflective practice has its own focus, benefits, and risks.

Including reflective practices in the multicultural teacher education classroom is merely the first step in helping preservice teachers develop the ability to teach against the grain. In the classroom they begin to develop awareness by examining previously unexamined beliefs about culture and difference, but during field experiences with diverse communities of people they can bridge the gap between what they have learned and what they will do with students.

Personal Experiences with Diverse Communities of People

Practica in classrooms that include a diverse student population have in the past been the most common form of field experience. However, many educators see this as inadequate cross-cultural preparation (McIntyre, Byrd, & Foxx, 1996; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). Many argue that the most beneficial field experiences are cohesively infused throughout the curriculum and include diverse activities in both schools and communities where the preservice teachers have an opportunity to interact with people who come from cultural backgrounds different from their own (Goodlad, 1990; Moll & Greenberg, 1990; Sleeter, 2001b; Tom, 1997; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a; Zeichner, 1996; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996) and are given opportunities to reevaluate long-held beliefs and stereotypes (McDiarmid, 1990; Sleeter, 2001b; Tom, 1997; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996).

Field experiences that promote interaction, reflection, reevaluation, and ultimately culturally responsive teaching share a number of salient characteristics. They are carefully planned (Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 2000; Gomez, 1996; Larkin & Sleeter, 1995;

Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Zeichner et al., 1998), occur frequently throughout the program (Boyle-Baise & Sleeter; Fullan, 2001; Holmes Group, 1995), are guided by the theoretical framework of the program, and have clear pedagogical purposes (Grant, 1997). Also, the preservice teachers are well prepared in advance (Gomez, 1996; Zeichner, Grant et al., 1998) and well supported during (Gomez, 1996; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a).

There are a variety of experiences through which preservice teachers can interact with diverse communities of people outside of the traditional classroom practica. They can be classified as cultural immersion experiences and community-based placements. While these discrete categories are a useful means to discuss field experience settings, in reality, the distinctions are not always clear since each type can serve multiple purposes and exist in multiple settings.

Cultural immersion

There are a few examples of cultural immersion in the literature. These programs range from spending a week in an urban setting to full immersion in a community for a semester. Studies about cultural immersion programs have generally reported a powerful impact (Lenski, Crumpler, Stallworth, & Crawford, 2005; Marxen & Rudney, 1999; Noordhoff & Kleinfeld, 1993; Melnick & Zeichner, 1996; Stachowski & Mahan, 1998).

Noordhoff and Kleinfeld (1993) describe the Teach for Alaska fifth-year certification program at the University of Alaska at Fairbanks. This program focuses on preparing teachers for both very small high schools in remote Eskimo and Indian villages as well as inner city schools with large CLD student populations. The final field experience of the program is a 12-week teaching assignment. Many of the preservice teachers choose to be placed in small rural community schools. Through focused

reflective and interactive journals and videotape analysis of classroom instruction, the preservice teachers learn to pose educational problems and find practical solutions.

Noordhoff and Kleinfeld found that the first two preservice teacher cohorts experienced substantial growth in teaching culturally diverse students. This was determined through analysis of the reflective journals and videotaped teaching samples.

Melnick and Zeichner (1996) and Stachowski and Mahan (1998) discuss a long-standing cultural immersion project for students from Indiana University-Bloomington during which preservice teachers spend 17 weeks living and teaching in communities across the Navajo Nation. This program places an emphasis on both classroom teaching and community involvement. Many of the preservice teachers discovered that relationships with reservation personnel and their extended families led to opportunities that few non-Indians have had the opportunity to experience. They also discovered that these experiences helped them gain a better understanding of how a student's community affects and interacts with classroom learning. Melnick and Zeichner note that many of these preservice teachers were for the first time experiencing being a minority, being seen as outsiders, being unsure of how to act in every day situations, and not necessarily being accepted by the majority.

Stachowski and Mahan in their 1998 article also describe an overseas learning experience that preservice teachers at Indiana University may choose in place of living in a Navajo community. The Overseas Project includes an 8-week assignment in schools of England, Wales, Scotland, the Republic of Ireland, India, Australia, or New Zealand after completing a semester of student teaching in Indiana. The authors note that preservice teachers in this program have had comparable experiences to those who chose Navajo

Reservation placements. Contact with people in the community emerges as frequent and important sources of learning and support.

Marxen and Rudney (1999) studied the experience of 25 preservice teachers from the University of Minnesota at Morris, a small public liberal arts university located in a rural Midwestern community, who spent one week living and working with diverse populations in an urban area of Chicago, Illinois. They spent the week working in classrooms and had daily debriefing sessions with their university course instructors. Data sources included observational field notes, participant self-reports, debriefing session records, and two reflective essays written 6 months after completion of the field experience.

Results from the study indicated that the preservice teachers' experiences were unique and personal. However, there were commonalities. They all focused on self, students, and school. Much of their reflections centered on conflicted feelings about being part of the minority culture, many for the first time in their lives. They also made connections between past personal experiences and what they saw and felt during the field experience. Reflections about students and school were centered on differences between personal experience and current observations regarding surface characteristics of physical structures, discipline procedures, and curriculum. Six months after completion of the field experience and graduation from the program, Marxen and Rudney (1999) interviewed six of the seven participants from the first cohort of preservice teachers. Three of the participants were working in culturally diverse educational settings (an Indian Reservation school and a diverse suburban school district). These three felt that they utilized knowledge, skills and attitudes gained in the urban field experience. The other three interviewees taught in rural Minnesota schools where the population was

more homogeneously White. They did not talk about multiculturalism in the same way as the other three. They considered themselves to be more open to diversity and believed that they no longer stereotyped people, but they did not mention the importance of infusing multicultural curriculum into their teaching practices.

Lenski and colleagues (2005) studied 34 preservice teachers who participated in a yearlong cultural immersion internship. The preservice teachers, enrolled in a large Midwestern university, moved 150 miles away to a suburb of a large urban area to teach and study in a professional development school (PDS) for their senior year. All of the 34 preservice teachers identified themselves as European-American; however, four also identified themselves with other cultural groups—Korean-American, Mexican-American and Greek-American. During their time in the PDS they were asked to make ethnographic observations in the community in order to learn more about the cultural groups represented in their classrooms. Ethnographic methodology was part of the curriculum for a concurrent teacher education course. The preservice teachers were specifically instructed to not define cultural groups by ethnicity but “as the patterns of a way of life” (p. 89)—shared traditions, values, and activities. The purpose of widening the definition of culture was to help them avoid stereotypes and focus on commonalities of practice rather than seeing the families as a specific race or ethnic group. Data collected for the study included: observational field notes which included written reflections, researcher observational notes from study group sessions about the observations, and a final paper written as a means of synthesizing data and reflections.

Most of the preservice teachers initially resisted the role of ethnographer. They noted that the assignment was more appropriate for an anthropology course. Also, they were uncomfortable with not having a predefined focus for their observations; even

though the assignment was not graded, the preservice teachers expressed strong concern about the expectations of the researchers and course instructor.

Results of the study indicated that as the observations progressed, the preservice teachers became more comfortable with ethnographic methodology and realized that the observations provided information that they would not otherwise have known, and could inform their work as classroom teachers. Also, the preservice teachers became more aware that worldviews are socially constructed. Lenski and her colleagues (2005) determined that the preservice teachers saw the world through three types of lenses—*how they situated themselves in the site* (their worldview), *how they situated themselves by the purpose of their work* (connecting what they learned through the observations to their personal past experiences), and *how they situated themselves within contested sites of influences* (changed preconceived assumptions as conversations progressed). Results from a follow-up study conducted on the same preservice teachers suggest that the habit of observation and the skills developed during the field experience were influential during their first year of teaching. The preservice teachers had developed a more in-depth awareness of the intricate connections between a teacher's role, knowledge of students' lives, and differentiating curriculum.

Community-based field experiences

Increasingly, multicultural educators argue for community-based field experiences and note that these experiences are often missing from teacher preparation programs (Cochran-Smith, 2003; Cochran-Smith, Davis & Fries, 2004; McIntyre, Byrd, & Foxx, 1996; Murrell, 2001; Sleeter, 2001a; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). Potentially the benefit of community-based learning is twofold. First, it provides preservice teachers with opportunities to learn about communities with which they have been previously

unfamiliar. Second, it provides opportunities to form personal connections with people different from most preservice teachers' previous experiences (Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 2000). Seeing the value of these connections is especially important since preservice teachers will interact with diverse populations for most, if not all, of their future careers, often view parents in low-income situations as not caring while seeing themselves as future professionals who will act as saviors for children who have been in some way deprived (Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 2000), and must understand and value the funds of knowledge that students bring to the K-12 classroom from their families and communities (Moll & Greenberg, 1990).

Community-based field experiences occur in a variety of settings; some are located within schools or service organizations, while others require preservice teachers to venture into their students' homes. The field experiences typically involve either tutoring or teaching CLD students within a school, after-school or community program context, or conducting ethnographic style research about CLD students, their families, and communities. Following a review of the research in each area, I will review research related to the Bright Futures Mentoring Project.

Tutoring/teaching field experiences. The following studies were conducted on field experiences in which preservice teachers taught students either in classrooms or in after-school programs set within schools or CLD communities. The studies were primarily qualitative. However, Vadenboncoeur, Rahm, Aguilera, and LeCompte (1996) used mixed methods in the sense that they gathered descriptive statistics of preservice teacher attitudes to support qualitative findings, and Proctor, Rentz, and Jackson (2001) relied only on survey data.

Bollin (1996) studied a group of elementary preservice teachers at West Chester University. These preservice teachers were in their junior year and participated in a field experience—The Minority Tutoring Project (MTP)—that was designed to increase multicultural awareness. The backgrounds of the preservice teachers were relatively homogeneous, 95% White, 90% female, and 95% middle class, and they all had had relatively little exposure to people from other backgrounds. MTP consisted of three tutoring options: (a) tutoring an Hispanic child in his/her home organized through a local Catholic parish; (b) tutoring an African-American or Hispanic child in an after-school program sponsored by the Police Athletic League; or (c) tutoring a child from a low socio-economic background from an ethnic group other than that of the preservice teacher. The preservice teacher arranged option C without assistance from the teacher education program. The preservice teachers kept weekly journals that included factual information about the tutoring sessions as well as self-evaluations and discussions of personal reactions to the tutoring experience. In addition to the journals, the preservice teachers conducted an observation of the tutored child's classroom and wrote a report that required connections to the tutoring sessions. Bollin found that the preservice teachers showed increased sensitivity to racial and linguistic issues, increased recognition of and respect for the role that parents play in the education of their children, and a greater understanding of themselves as racial beings.

Vadeboncoeur et al. (1996) conducted a mixed method study of a group of preservice teachers who tutored in two after-school programs in a low income community whose population was primarily Latino and Hmong. This field experience was in conjunction with a social foundations of education course that strove to improve preservice teacher understanding of diversity, reduce bias, and develop multicultural

social competencies. Twenty-one preservice teachers took a prefield experience survey, 11 took a postfield experience survey, and 20 provided faculty course evaluation questionnaires. The survey consisted of an open-ended response section and a Likert-type scale. Vadeboncoeur and her colleagues holistically and thematically analyzed the 11-pre/post field experience questionnaires for attitude change and then compared these themes to reflective journal entries and course evaluations.

From the survey data the researchers determined that overall the preservice teachers' responses tended to be more thoughtful and complex on the postfield experience surveys. They also included connections to the negative effects of societal pressures and norms on the achievement of children from nondominant culture groups. The researchers saw a shift from blaming the child and family to placing more blame on unfair societal and school practices and structures.

However, the researchers determined through analysis of the journal entries that not all of the preservice teachers responded in the same way. Sixty-six percent of the preservice teachers remained "surface-level learners" (Vadeboncoeur et al., 1996, p., 198). They seemed to develop greater awareness of societal problems, but did not develop an understanding that they play a role in how the CLD students have been oppressed. These surface-level learners also achieved less intellectually, as determined by coursework and grades, and perceived the course subject as less interesting than deeper-level learners.

From journal entries and class discussions, Vadeboncoeur and colleagues found that there was a discrepancy between the course goals of the preservice teachers and those of the course instructors. Rather than delving into explanations connected to issues of race, culture, and socio-economic status, many of the preservice teachers preferred to

rely on past experience to interpret their experiences in the field. When confronted with evidence that countered their interpretation of a situation, some preservice teachers argued against the possible explanation presented by the instructor and for the legitimacy of their position. They also found it difficult to empathize with colleagues whose past and present experiences differed from their own and tended to stereotype people different from themselves.

The course evaluations provided evidence that the preservice teachers saw the field experience and concurrent course as important entry points for their understanding of cultural diversity. However, the researchers (Vadeboncoeur et al., 1996) remained concerned that many of the preservice teachers had not benefited from the overall experience. They noted that there was insufficient time in the field experience to accomplish course goals. Twelve hours of service learning was too little time to develop cultural awareness and multicultural social competencies. Also, they hypothesized that much of the true learning might occur long after the preservice teachers left the course and program. Therefore, assessing intellectual or emotional growth might not be possible over the short-term.

Murtadha-Watts (1998) conducted a study of 22 preservice teachers in a pilot field experience program connected to an educational psychology course. The preservice teachers tutored students over a 10-week period at a full-service school in a low-income urban area. The school was part of a multiagency collaborative effort to provide an environment that would address both academic and nonacademic needs of students and their families. Most of the preservice teachers had no previous experience with either urban or predominantly African-American communities, schools, or children. Murtadha-Watts found that the preservice teachers' journal entries reflected concerns about

working with CLD populations. In initial journal entries, they often spoke about anxiety and fear. The tone changed for many of the preservice teachers by the end of the field experience; many found that their expectations of the children and neighborhoods proved to be erroneous. However, several stated that their expectations had been confirmed. Murtadha-Watts expressed concern that, because of the structure of the teacher education program at her university, these preservice teachers, and others like them, do not have opportunities early in their teacher education experience to question and challenge their cultural assumptions. She noted that it is vital to encourage development of community-based service learning field experiences early and continuously throughout a teacher education program. This is particularly true of field experiences in urban settings where preservice teachers' beliefs and attitudes about urban children and communities can be challenged.

Boyle-Baise and Sleeter (2002) studied 117 preservice teachers from the Midwest and West who participated in multicultural education courses taught by the researchers from 1994 to 1998. The study participants consisted of 74 White female preservice teachers, 30 White males, seven African-American females, three Mexican-American females, one Mexican-American male, and two Asian-American females. The field experience, a requirement for a multicultural education course, took place in after-school tutoring or recreation programs at local community centers for 20 to 50 hours over the course of a semester. Data for the study were drawn largely from reflective essays written during the field experience, interviews with small groups of preservice teachers who worked at common sites, and end of the semester reflective papers for the course.

The researchers found that at the outset of the field experience that a majority of the White preservice teachers held deficit views of children who lived in low-income

situations. These expectations were not from personal experience but were formed through information from the media and hearsay. Interactions during the field experience challenged some of their negative stereotypes; however, the experience did not have a transformative effect on those holding the strongest negative stereotypes. They continued to blame the parents for the inadequacies in the children's lives rather than seeing a connection between poverty and larger societal contexts. These preservice teachers continued to see themselves as saviors who could offer the children stability and provide role models. Even though many of the preservice teachers' views had not radically changed, the researchers saw the service learning field experience as "eye-opening". Also, since this was the first exposure many of these preservice teachers had had to low-income communities, the preservice teachers referred to the experience as a "reality check" (Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 2002, p. 40).

Proctor, Rentz, and Jackson (2001) studied 35 preservice teachers from a Southwestern university as they tutored or taught reading to students with special needs. They worked with African-American or Hispanic pupils who attended an elementary charter school that catered to students determined to be at-risk by district guidelines and achievement on standardized tests. There were two groups of preservice teachers. The first group consisted of sophomore preservice teachers enrolled in a special education survey course. Pairs tutored individual students with mild learning and/or behavior disabilities. One preservice teacher tutored while the other observed and took notes, and roles were reversed halfway through each tutoring session. The second group of preservice teachers were in their junior year and taught small, homogeneous reading groups 4 days a week for 1 hour. Data were collected through an open-ended survey designed to prompt preservice teacher expectations about teaching in a multicultural

environment. The survey was completed at the end of the university semester under the guise of providing information that would help faculty evaluate the field experiences.

Results from the study indicated that many of the study participants held positive attitudes toward teaching in urban schools and enjoyed the diversity of the student populations. The researchers believed that the careful planning and supervision of the field experience and the schools in which it was situated contributed to the preservice teachers' positive responses. CLD students in both schools showed higher levels of academic achievement.

Proctor et al. (2001) also noted that the study indicated areas of potential field experience improvement. First, even though over half of the preservice teachers considered the concurrent education course helpful, they still felt inadequately prepared to teach in an urban setting. They would have preferred to have had instruction in specific methodologies. The researchers acknowledge that this was true; however, the goal of the field experience was development of multicultural awareness and understanding, not teaching in an urban setting. Second, the preservice teachers were not required to keep reflective journals, nor did they participate in organized sessions to share their experiences. The researchers concluded that results from the study suggest that sharing reactions and reflections was necessary to ameliorate both pessimistic and overly optimistic perceptions that went unchallenged as the field experience.

Ariza (2003) studied a field experience in which preservice teachers tutored English Language Learners (ELLs) as a requirement for an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) course. The tutoring program was located in the media center of a school in a low-income, urban area of Ft. Lauderdale. The purpose of the tutoring was to provide ELLs with language and academic assistance while at the same time providing

the preservice teachers opportunities to connect second language acquisition theories to real life situations. Students needing help with homework or other academic and language assistance came to the center after school and were assigned to a preservice teacher. The researcher noted that both groups experienced positive results. First, the comprehension and language proficiency of the ELLs increased, as reported by classroom teachers through tracking of student work, skills tests, and classroom performance. Second, through a review of reflective journal comments and other course assignments, Ariza determined that the preservice teachers were able to apply theory, methods and strategies learned through teacher education coursework.

Barton's 2000 study differs from the previous studies in that it focuses on development of pedagogy in a particular content area (science) as well as on development of multicultural social competencies. Barton followed a group of 24 preservice teachers over the course of three semesters. The preservice teachers ranged from 21 to 33 years of age and were from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. The field experience was situated in a homeless shelter in a large metropolitan area in the Northeast. Preservice teachers taught science in an after-school and summer program to children living in the shelter. The study was designed to discover ways in which community-based service learning influences views on multicultural science education, to understand what makes multicultural science education a viable alternative to regular science education, and to determine how service learning increases understanding of multicultural science practice. Data collected for the study included an initial focus group, individual interviews, reflective journals, participant observer and supervisory field notes, and information gathered during weekly planning and reflection meetings.

Initial interviews indicated that the preservice teachers' definitions of multicultural science education centered on what needed to be added to a science curriculum to make it multicultural rather than on questions about the nature of science or how it can be made comprehensible to all students. They saw regular science and multicultural science as separate pedagogies. Results from the data indicate that the field experience provided the preservice teachers with opportunities to reconstruct their definitions of multicultural science education. They saw real life situations where multicultural science education met the same objectives as regular science education. Second, the informal setting provided opportunities to experiment with multicultural science curriculum and use of students' funds of knowledge within the curriculum. Third, it provided a context for working with children different from those the preservice teachers had worked with in the past. Barton noted that the nontraditional setting of the shelter provided the preservice teachers opportunities to confront preconceived notions about science education and CLD students. Barton (2000) came to the conclusion that more study is needed to determine how to help both teachers and preservice teachers understand the value of multicultural science education in the traditional classroom.

Ethnographic-style field experiences. The following studies were conducted on preservice teacher action research projects situated within community-based field experiences. They were designed to increase multicultural awareness and development of multicultural competencies through learning more about students, families and communities. These studies are similar to those discussed in the previous section on cultural immersion field experiences. The main difference is that the studies discussed below take place within the same city or region as the teacher education program. One study (Potthoff, Dinsmore, & Stirtz, 2000) used mixed methods rather than only

qualitative; the qualitative reflective journal comments were used to provide confirmation for quantitative survey data.

Narode, Rennie-Hill, and Peterson (1994) conducted a study that included 26 graduate preservice teachers from Portland State University, a major urban public university. Twenty-five of the participants were White. The preservice teachers received training in ethnographic data collection and analysis procedures in a concurrent teacher education course. The data collection took place in urban neighborhoods where the youth population was generally 50% African-American, 10%-30% other ethnic minorities, and 10%-30% White. The individual field assignments included an Urban League tutoring project, a citywide youth gang task force, a community recreation program, neighborhood church activities, a neighborhood arts organization, a teen pregnancy program, and family “adoption” (p. 9). The preservice teachers spent a minimum of 30 hours in the field collecting ethnographic data. Each preservice teacher became well versed in one aspect of the overall study, and this information was shared collectively. The purpose of the study was to determine how community members conceptualized good teaching and what community networks existed to support education.

Narode et al. (1994) found that the preservice teachers came to realize the value of studying a community different from their own. The data showed that they began to appreciate how school-community connections benefited teachers, and how parents are more likely to respond positively to schools that are “comfortable and accessible” (p. 14). The authors also noted that preservice teacher assumptions significantly changed through the course of the field experience. They expected to see a community rife with drug abuse, sexual exploitation, and populated by unemployed, uneducated lazy single parent families. What they found was a generally welcoming community that valued education

and teachers. Community members were open to discussing concerns, community problems, and hopes. They said that lack of communication between the community and school personnel was harmful and encouraged prejudicial beliefs about youth from the community.

Boyle-Baise (1998) studied 65 preservice teachers, the majority of whom were White females, who volunteered at a variety of community service project sites including agencies, churches, and community centers in low-income, culturally diverse communities. The preservice teachers were organized into research teams at each site. Each team spent 20 hours per week for 8 weeks observing and assisting in project activities as participant observers. Data sources included pre/post field experience questionnaires, research team interviews, and reflective essays.

The purpose of the research project was to understand the meanings preservice teachers made from community-based service in a multicultural setting. Boyle-Baise (1998) found a number of contradictions. On the one hand, the preservice teachers found the experience very positive and eye-opening, but it also caused them conflict. Their understandings were “partial, contradictory, and reflective of dominant position perspectives” (p. 58). The results indicated that the community-based service learning field experience supported development of awareness of differences, but did not necessarily move the preservice teachers to acceptance or the ability to see situations from a variety of perspectives. This lack of depth can be attributed to several factors including that the field experience was only one semester long, each preservice teacher came to the field experience with different levels of prior knowledge and experience, and that development of multicultural competence is a process rather than an immediate transformation. Boyle-Baise noted that the preservice teachers did not question the

economic situation of the students and families with whom they worked. Nor did they take a critical stance toward society or societal structures that negatively impacted the students they encountered. The author speculated that the preservice teachers might not have taken a critical stance because the critical connection was not clearly defined by course instructors, or because the information they were processing from the field experience was still too new.

Patton, Silva, and Myers (1999) described the experience of preservice teachers in a community-based family literacy field experience. The purpose of the field experience was to provide an opportunity to interact with CLD families. The preservice teachers met 12 times with a family. The meetings were structured as classes and included lesson plans. The preservice teachers wrote weekly reflective journals, interviewed school personnel involved with the family, observed children from the family in classroom situations, developed in-class updates on the progress of the literacy sessions, and wrote a final reflection project that included pictures, artifacts, sample activities, video and audio segments. The researchers used all of these documents as research data.

Patton and her colleagues (1999) found that intensive contact with the families provided the preservice teachers opportunities to contextualize the experiences of the CLD students and their families. They realized that they had previously underestimated the family's language and literacy abilities because of preexisting assumptions and stereotypes. The researchers also found that the preservice teachers were better able to connect theory to practice after the field experience; whereas previously the preservice teachers had had difficulty devising accommodations, the field experience helped them become more skilled in contextualizing skill development.

Potthoff et al. (2000) conducted a mixed method study of preservice teachers, faculty, and community organization personnel connected with a developmental behavior course offered concurrently with a field experience seminar. The field experience, an internship at a local human services program or agency, included placements where they worked with individuals with disabilities, preschools, at-risk adolescents, education support programs, recreation programs, skill building programs, or programs for families with special needs. Each preservice teacher spent 50 hours at the placement site over the course of the semester. Other field experience requirements included an ongoing reflective journal and an exit interview. Data collected included reflective journals, interview information to collect qualitative comments, and a 53-item Likert scale survey used to assess the field experience from the perspectives of the preservice teachers, faculty and community-based organization personnel.

One hundred thirty-six preservice teachers responded to the survey. The preservice teachers were 93% White, 66% female, and 82% traditional-aged (19-23 years old). Twenty-six faculty members returned the surveys. The faculty make up was 100% White and 58% female. Sixty-five of the community agencies/programs returned the survey.

Potthoff and his colleagues (2000) found that the survey yielded three main insights. First, the field experience helped develop knowledge, skills and dispositions in the preservice teachers that were consistent with the mission of the College of Education—“warmth/caring,” “willingness to serve others,” and “empathy for persons different from yourself”(p. 81). The qualitative comments provided confirmation for the quantitative results. Second, from the survey and the reflective journal comments, Potthoff et al. determined that the greatest growth was attitudinal. Third, the faculty was

the least convinced of the three groups that the field experience facilitated preservice teacher growth. The faculty's impression was that they spent more time doing clerical activities than interacting directly with people from the community. Neither the preservice teachers nor the personnel from the organizations/agencies held this opinion. Overall, the preservice teachers and organization/agency personnel were *very satisfied* with the field experience while the faculty was *less than somewhat* satisfied.

Kidd, Sánchez, and Thorp (2003) examined the effect of collecting family stories on 42 preservice teachers. During a semester-long, school-based internship in the Washington, DC, metropolitan area, the preservice teachers were expected to develop a relationship with families from a different cultural group and collect family stories. Of the 42 preservice teachers 42% were White, 15% Black, 12% Hispanic, 12% Asian, and 5% Other. A majority of the preservice teachers were between the ages of 22 and 31 years of age. Seventeen percent of the families identified one parent as White, 34% identified one parent as Hispanic, and 44% as Black. Considering the cultural diversity of the Washington, DC area, *Black* is a racial category for people from various cultural backgrounds, not only African-Americans. Fifty percent of the 44% consider themselves to be African-American, 39% from Africa, and 11% from the Caribbean. Of the 34% who identified themselves as being Hispanic, 71% were from Central America and 29% from South America.

The assignment was to gather stories that provided insight into cultural differences between themselves and the families. The purpose was to provide opportunities for the preservice teachers to learn about their students' funds of knowledge and gain a clearer understanding of how this knowledge could enhance the preservice teachers' awareness of cultural diversity and enrich their teaching practice.

Since the purpose of the assignment was to collect stories, there was no preset list of interview questions. Instead the preservice teachers were encouraged to build questions out of information gathered during their conversations. After collecting the stories, the preservice teachers reflected on what they had learned and shared a synthesis of the families' stories with their colleagues. Data included the researchers' field notes, responses to pre/post field experience questionnaires, and written reflections.

Data from the study indicated that one of the greatest benefits was development of relationships and gathering of insights that could not be obtained through other means. The preservice teachers were able to see the strength of family relationships and gain perspectives on the underlying beliefs, values, and goals that influenced family decisions. Their conceptions of culture began to evolve through the process of story collecting, and their definitions of culture widened to encompass more than stereotypical racial or ethnic characteristics. They remarked on the amount of influence culture plays in everyday life, and many came to the conclusion that attitudes and behaviors that had seemed wrong or harmful at the beginning were in reality based on previously unseen cultural values and beliefs. This made the preservice teachers take a step back and examine their own hidden assumptions and biases. The experience also caused them to reflect on their teaching practices and recognize that a lack of cultural understanding could limit their ability to provide culturally responsive instruction.

Community-based service learning—The Bright Futures mentoring program

The Bright Futures Mentoring Program (Bright Futures), the community-based service-learning field experience that is the context for this dissertation, has been in existence since 1990 and is collaboratively run with the Gainesville Housing Authority. It has been supported since 1991 by grants from the U.S. Department of Housing and

Urban Development. Currently, this field experience takes place at 4 community centers and 3 after-school programs in low-income areas of the city. Junior year preservice teachers in the Unified Elementary Education Program (PROTEACH) at the University of Florida mentor the predominantly African-American elementary students, most of whom live in local public housing neighborhoods. They meet with their mentees twice per week over a period of 10 weeks for a total of 20 hours. This field experience is the preservice teachers' first exposure to interacting with diverse populations in the teacher education program.

Seven published studies have been conducted on various aspects of Bright Futures. Three of these studies took place soon after Bright Futures was instituted. They focused on preservice teacher (mentor) perspectives about the field experience (Ross & Smith, 1992), and on how a concurrent course affected their experience (Bondy, Schmitz, & Johnson, 1993). Four additional studies have been conducted more recently. Clark (1998) conducted her dissertation research on cognitive and affective attitude change of Bright Futures mentors; Bondy and Davis (2000) studied mentors who experienced difficulties developing relationships with their mentees; Davis (2000) conducted his dissertation research on how mentors identified, defined and resolved dilemmas while working with their mentees; and Adams, Bondy, and Kuhel (2005) examined how the mentors viewed their experience in Bright Futures from various points in PROTEACH.

Beginnings of Bright Futures. Three studies were conducted during the inception of Bright Futures and its inclusion as a field experience in PROTEACH. Ross and Smith (1992) conducted six case studies that endeavored to understand the perspectives preservice teachers held about diversity while mentoring in Bright Futures. All six participants were enrolled in the *Research in Elementary Education* (Research)

course held concurrently with Bright Futures. All were White, and five were female. The researchers examined written artifacts, field notes from classroom observations, and transcripts from two participant interviews.

Ross and Smith (1992) reported that all six preservice teachers developed more complex perspectives on teaching diverse learners. Prior to the field experience the preservice teachers believed that responsibility for academic success or failure lay primarily in the hands of the students. After the field experience, they all moved toward the realization that difference is socially constructed and that cultural background, school curriculum, and teachers have an impact. However, some exhibited more growth than others. Only one preservice teacher discussed how societal views negatively impacted CLD children. The authors concluded that teacher education course content impacted preservice teacher views, but that prior experiences strongly influenced the amount of change seen in the preservice teachers attitudes. Those with the least prior contact with CLD populations showed the least growth. This indicated that there is a need for teacher education programs to provide a variety of field experiences through which preservice teachers could experience and analyze the effect of various forms of curriculum and instruction on student learning.

Bondy et al. (1993) conducted two quantitative studies of Bright Futures and the concurrent Research course. Study #1 focused primarily on the Research course and its impact on the perspectives of the preservice teachers. Study #2 was designed to better understand what combination of coursework and field experience had the most impact on preservice teacher perspectives toward diversity. Like Ross and Smith (1992), the participants in both of these studies were mostly White, middle class, and female.

The first study took place over two successive calendar years, 1990 and 1991, as the Research course was revised and Bright Futures became established. Bondy and her colleagues (1993) wanted to better understand how altering program content to focus more explicitly on issues related to teaching diverse learners impacted preservice teacher learning. One hundred eighty-four preservice teachers enrolled in both Bright Futures and the Research course completed an instrument called *Beliefs about Teaching Children At Risk Inventory* at the beginning and end of the semester. Twenty-five preservice teachers who had taken the Research course prior to course content changes and the addition of Bright Futures acted as the control group. The inventory consisted of 26 items concerning preservice teacher beliefs about teaching culturally diverse at-risk students. Results from ANCOVA and ANOVA procedures showed a strong relationship between taking the Research course in conjunction with Bright Futures and having a broader, more complex view of “the causes and consequences of being different” (p. 61).

The second study conducted by Bondy et al. (1993) sought to discover if the Research course content affected preservice teacher beliefs about diversity. This study included 157 preservice teachers. Bondy and her colleagues found that preservice teachers who took the research course showed significant growth in their views regarding diversity while the control group, same as in Study #1, did not. The authors concluded that guided experience in conjunction with coursework had a positive impact on preservice teachers’ views of diverse learners.

These three studies taken together indicate the need for coordinating teacher education course content with field experiences in order to counter previously held beliefs and assumptions about CLD populations, and to provide preservice teachers with a broader perspective of how societal views impact students, teaching and learning.

Ongoing study of Bright Futures. Four additional studies have been conducted within the context of Bright Futures. Clark (1998) conducted a study on preservice teacher attitude change; Bondy and Davis (2000) studied preservice teachers who struggled with relationship development; Davis (2000) investigated how preservice teachers resolved dilemmas; and Adams et al. (2005) studied how preservice teachers experienced Bright Futures from different points in the teacher education program.

Clark (1998) conducted a quantitative study to investigate changes in preservice teachers' attitudes towards racial diversity, beliefs about students from minority backgrounds, the goals of multicultural education, and attitudes towards teaching as a career. Study participants were 193 junior-year elementary education preservice teachers who participated in Bright Futures, and a control group of 58 junior year special education preservice teachers who did not. The experimental group took a prefield experience attitude inventory prior to receiving one hour of diversity/communications skills training. They then proceeded to mentor in Bright Futures, 20 hours over the course of the 15-week semester. At the end of the term, they took a post field experience attitude inventory. Data were analyzed using analysis of covariance for the first four dependent variables and chi-square tests on the last dependent variable. Five null hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance. Significance was found ($p = .03$) between the two groups on adjusted mean posttest scores on attitudes towards racial diversity. The experimental group had a higher score. This indicated that they had a higher degree of awareness, receptivity, and sensitivity toward racial diversity. No other significant differences were found on any of the other four variables. An additional result was that the experimental group found that the one-hour intervention fostered a more positive attitude towards working with diverse students.

Bondy and Davis (2000) interviewed nine preservice teachers about their relationships with their Bright Futures mentees. The preservice teachers were specifically chosen to participate in the study because they had described their relationship with their mentees as “difficult, uncomfortable or rocky” (p. 54). The researchers found that all of the preservice teachers entered the field experience with “the best of intentions, and claimed to care” (p. 54) about their mentees. However, when building a relationship with the mentees became challenging, some of the preservice teachers persevered while others gave up. Those who felt unsuccessful resorted to blaming their mentees rather than reflecting on their own actions and attitudes. This blaming frequently resulted in stereotyping the children and their families. However, eight out of the nine preservice teachers were able to develop *ways of caring* (e.g., learning students’ funds of knowledge, using center personnel as resources, showing interest in the students’ lives and interests) that permitted them to connect with their mentees by the end of the field experience.

Davis (2000) constructed case studies of four junior-year PROTEACH preservice teachers. All of the preservice teachers were White, female, middle class, and participated in the Bright Futures field experience. The purpose of the study was to describe how the preservice teachers identified, defined and resolved dilemmas while working with their Bright Future mentees. Data were collected through ethnographic interviews and observation field notes. Davis found two distinct reactions by preservice teachers when they encountering dilemmas. Two of the preservice teachers remained committed throughout Bright Futures to helping their mentees succeed in academics while the other two demonstrated a lack of or diminished commitment. Davis concluded that the dilemmas most frequently identified by the preservice teachers revolved around

teaching methods and that their dilemma resolution patterns were diverse. The patterns reflected their life experiences and their definitions of the purposes of the mentoring.

Adams et al. (2005) examined how preservice teachers viewed their experience in Bright Futures from various points in the teacher education program. Eighteen preservice teachers in total participated in the interview study. Two had just finished Bright Futures, two completed it a year earlier, and two completed Bright Futures 2 years prior. All of the participants were White, and five of the six were female. The interview questions focused on whether the preservice teacher expectations for the field experience had been met, and how they were affected by the experience.

Adams and her colleagues (2005) found that the preservice teachers responded to the experience in a variety of ways and often in more than one way. They charted a range of responses that included seven types of responses: (a) dismissing the field experience as having little or no value and resenting having been placed in an unfamiliar setting; (b) becoming more aware of differences; (c) beginning to challenge long-held beliefs and stereotypes; (d) desiring to understand students in order to make academics meaningful to them; (e) realizing the importance of culturally responsive teaching; (f) gaining insights into how societal oppression affects students, and (g) realizing the need for teachers to be advocates for their students. The researchers also found that a number of factors influenced the preservice teachers' experience of Bright Futures. These included prior knowledge and experiences and the type of scaffolding opportunities the preservice education program provided. These opportunities included instructor support, program structures, and reflective program practices.

A summary of the studies about preservice teacher experiences in diverse communities of people indicates that the designers of the field experiences had common

goals. They wanted preservice teachers to interact with people different from themselves, learn how communities affect students' lives, develop multicultural awareness of themselves and others as cultural beings, be exposed to differences in order to challenge negative stereotypes, and question deficit views of students from CLD communities.

Some studies indicated more success than others at meeting these goals. The broader goals of the field experiences appeared generally attainable, such as interacting with diverse populations, development of awareness of differences, connecting with students' lives and funds of knowledge, and constructing knowledge of self and others as cultural beings. However, deeper goals seemed out of reach for at least a portion of the preservice teachers, most notably those in non-immersion experiences. Vadeboncoeur and colleagues (1996) found that some preservice teachers altered their attitudes and developed awareness of how societal pressures and beliefs negatively impact CLD children; however, 7 out of 11 participants in their study experienced superficial change. Murtadha-Watts (1998) found that some study participants found stereotypical expectations of CLD children and communities unjustified, but several had their expectations confirmed. Studies by Boyle-Baise and Sleeter (2000) and Ross and Smith (1992) found that preservice teachers who held the strongest negative stereotypes altered their views the least. Ross and Smith (1992) also found that not all preservice teachers in their study showed growth in their understanding of the complexities of teaching diverse learners. Bondy and Davis (2000) found that mentors who felt unsuccessful resorted to stereotyping and blaming the mentees for their lack of success.

Summary of the Research on Program Practices in Multicultural Teacher Education

There is no single program practice that accounts for impact on preservice teacher beliefs and classroom practice. Rather, many teacher education scholars argue that it is

the interrelationship among program components that determines program effectiveness. Program practices that promote reflection are most often noted as aiding preservice teachers in development of skills that widen vision of self, students, and society, and lead to culturally relevant teaching. Studies of preservice teacher experience—whether through personal journals, autobiographies, education course experiences, or in the field—have common characteristics and findings. First, development of multicultural awareness and competency is a process that requires more than a single opportunity. Multiple opportunities are needed to develop self-knowledge and reflection on long-held unexamined beliefs, feelings, differences, stereotypes, expectations, and frustrations. Change takes place over time and may not be manifested until after completion of a field experience. Even though there are still few studies that follow preservice teachers into their future practice to determine the impact of multicultural field experiences, research indicates that frequent and early field experiences are important.

Second, even though the multicultural teacher education literatures stresses that belief and attitude change is a process, a majority of studies have focused on preservice teacher attitude or belief change brought about through one course or field experience. Change has been measured in a number of ways. The few quantitative studies measure change through pre/post survey responses. Qualitative studies rely mostly on written artifacts created by preservice teachers (journals, course work, videotapes, etc.), or interview data to determine the effect of a course or field experience.

Third, one of the most promising preservice teacher preparation pedagogies that encourages reflection and promotes change appears to be community-based learning, especially service learning. It offers opportunities to actively participate in constructing knowledge about unfamiliar groups of people and communities. Preservice teachers are

able to hear personal stories and have opportunities to interpret the meaning of unfamiliar events through the eyes of the students or families with whom they work, or at the very least gather information that contests past assumptions and preconceptions. The studies of community-based learning indicate that the experiences are not always comfortable, but they are profitable in that they attempt to promote critical thinking and questioning. Some research indicates more success than others. More research is needed on ways to improve field experiences so that all preservice teachers have positive experiences that promote a shift toward social reconstructionist beliefs and pedagogy.

Some studies of community-based field experiences (e.g., Ariza, 2003; Barton, 2000; Bondy et al., 1993; Clark, 1998; Patton et al., 1999) specifically studied connections to course content. Researchers agree that course content that is well orchestrated with community-based field experiences creates a more positive learning experience. More studies are needed to see what specific course activities prove beneficial.

Finally, much of the research on course content, field experiences, or the connection between them has been conducted by teacher educators who are directly involved with the course or field experience. They use their research as a means of reflection in order to evaluate, improve, and grow. Although researchers are contributing to the body of literature on multicultural teacher education, it may be that having a vested interest in a program, course, or field experience could influence the structure of a research study or interpretation of data. In order to have avoid conflicts of interest and increase the validity of teacher education research in the eyes of those outside the field of education, it is important that researchers not directly connected to research outcomes undertake studies in order to provide different perspectives.

Importance of Study

Much of the current research base focuses on the struggles of White preservice teachers to better understand themselves and their ongoing development of cultural awareness. It has provided valuable information about the complexity of multicultural competence development. However, there is a need to go beyond studying the affective views of the preservice teachers and an appreciation of the complexity of developing multicultural social competence. To do so, we must have a clearer understanding of preservice teachers' experience during specific teacher education program practices (Bennett, 2001; Sleeter, 2001a).

Cochran-Smith et al. (2004) state that an important area missing from the literature is research that examines links between teacher preparation practices and preservice teacher learning. Sleeter (2001a) advocates for a focus on how specific program practices address development of multicultural social competence, especially initial field experiences. Only five of the reviewed studies—Ariza (2003), Barton (2000), Boyle-Baise (1998), Clark (1999), Kidd et al. (2003), Patton et al. (1999)—investigate how preservice teachers develop and use newly acquired attitudes or skills to work within the structure of a field experience. Ultimately, it is a clearer understanding of the ways in which preservice teachers develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions that will inform teacher educators about effective program practices that encourage development of multicultural social competence.

The current study is important for four reasons. First, like Boyle-Baise (1999) and Ross and Smith (1992) it focuses on understanding the preservice experience from the perspective of what the preservice teachers do and not if they are resistant or responsive to the experience. Resistance or responsiveness does not help teacher educators

understand what preservice teachers learn from a field experience. Until we know what they learn, we cannot move on to the next and more important question. How do we best provide learning opportunities that provoke change? Second, it strives to shed light on what preservice teachers make of a specific practice and in effect looks at not only what they learn from the field experience in general, but also initial development of multicultural social competencies in particular. There is a need to understand what preservice teachers gain from community-based field experiences in order to develop initial experiences that penetrate deeper than awareness and tolerance. Third, my study links preservice teacher experience to a particular program practice rather than to the field experience as a whole.

Finally, my study adds to the relatively small number of teacher education program studies that have been conducted by noninstructors. Most of the studies discussed in this chapter note a direct connection between the researcher(s) and the field experience. Sleeter (2001a) and others have noted that a high percentage of teacher education studies are conducted in order to study teacher educator practice. This connection does not reduce the value of the studies. However, it may affect objectivity in that faculty members tend to believe in the effectiveness of the practices they use.

I believe that community-based service learning can be productive, and I also believe that PROTEACH strives to effectively coordinate coursework and field experiences in order to link theory to practice. However, the research questions for this dissertation arose out my experience as an instructor during the Bright Futures semester. I taught a course, *Teachers and Learners in Inclusive Schools*, which was directly linked to Bright Futures. As a requirement for this course, preservice teachers wrote a belief statement about teaching based on their experiences in Bright Futures. I do not currently

teach this course, and I have never taught *Family and Community Involvement in Education*, the course most closely linked to the Caregiver Conversations. Having taught during the Bright Futures semester gives me an insider's view of the field experience and connected coursework. My insider status raises my credibility when discussing implications for the field experience and connected coursework. No longer teaching during this semester and having never taught the Family course gives me an outsider's view in that I have nothing to gain or lose from the results of my study.

CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine preservice teachers' interpretations of a specific assignment conducted in a multicultural field experience. In phenomenology the researcher attempts to learn about the experience being studied through the eyes of the participants rather than through the lens of the researcher. The guiding question for my study was What meanings do preservice teachers make of an activity within a multicultural field experience? More specific questions developed to focus data collection and analysis were as follows:

- What similarities are there among the preservice teachers' meanings?
- What factors explain these similarities?

Theoretical Perspective

There must be a philosophical stance that underlies a methodology and the methods used in a qualitative study (Crotty, 1998). In the case of phenomenology the underlying philosophical stance is *interpretivism*. Interpretivism emerged as a response to positivistic attempts to understand and explain human and social reality. Unlike positivist approaches that seek to accomplish value-free, detached observation that offer explanations for human reactions, interpretivist approaches "look for culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (Crotty, p. 67).

Modern interpretivism has its roots in the works of sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920; Weber, 1949) and philosophers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911; Dilthey, 1976), Wilhelm Windelband (1848-1915), and Heinrich

Rickert (1863-1936; Crotty, 1998). Weber proposed that the concern of social science research was *understanding* rather than *explaining*. Dilthey also contrasted *understanding* and *explaining*. He argued that social reality was distinct from natural reality. The social sciences sought to individualize while natural science research sought to generalize, and this difference required distinct research methods.

A focus on individualization of interpretation leads to an acceptance that multiple interpretations of data are possible. Interpretations are not necessarily seen as true or valid but as useful, liberating, oppressive, or rewarding (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000; Crotty, 1998). But that is not to say that interpretivism is equal to subjectivism. The epistemological base of interpretivism is *constructivism*, and in constructivism meaning cannot be seen as simply objective or subjective (Crotty). An example would be the reading of a poem. Subjectivist interpretation would be merely conjuring up meanings and imposing them onto the poem. Objectivism would be to take the words at face value. In constructivism meanings emerge from the reader's interaction with the poem. It is necessary to interact with the content in order to construct meaning from it; bringing in the subjective interpretations of the reader in combination with what is written on the page (Crotty).

In my study, the object is The Caregiver Conversation Project, a multicultural teacher education course assignment situated within a community-based service learning field experience. I interpreted the experience of the preservice teachers. Just as with the poem mentioned above, it was necessary for me, as the researcher, to take what was objectively recorded during the course of my research, and combine it with my subjective knowledge and appraisal of what occurred over the course of data collection and analysis. Phenomenology, as delineated by Moustakas (1994) provides a structure for data

collection and analysis that encourages and supports the balance of objective and subjective interpretation. The phenomenological terminology used in this chapter is that of Moustakas.

Methodology

Phenomenology endeavors to “go back to the things themselves” (Crotty, 1998, p. 59) and revisit particular sets of meanings and interpretations in order to balance the give-and-take of cultural and philosophical influences on the collected data. The purpose of phenomenology is to thoroughly describe the essential meaning of a phenomenon through intense and careful study (Husserl, 1931; Moustakas, 1994). It suggests that if we intentionally set aside, as best we can, prevailing understandings of a phenomenon and revisit the experience, there are possibilities for deriving new meaning, or, at the very least, opportunities for verification and enhancement of former meaning (Crotty). This intentionality lies at the core of phenomenology. It is the starting point for establishing the essential relationship between the subjects—the preservice teachers—and the object, the Caregiver Conversation (Husserl, 1931).

Defining Characteristics of Phenomenology

Epoche. Husserl (1931) refers to the *intentionality* of setting aside prevailing understanding of a phenomenon as *epoche*. In epoche the researcher makes an active effort to contain and bracket personal biases, judgments and feelings in order to observe the data from a fresh perspective (Crotty, 1998; Moustakas, 1994). *Bracketing* is a term used to describe the process of the researcher laying out preconceived ideas and values so that these biases can be overcome (Hutchinson, 1988). Laying out the researcher’s preconceived notions allows for the focus to be on the phenomenon being studied and not on the subjectivity of the researcher. Both Moustakas and Husserl assert that this is not

only possible but also a necessary first step in the phenomenological research process. Even though biases can be bracketed and set aside, a researcher's ways of knowing and thinking will continue to seep into analysis requiring those preconceptions to be explicitly examined (Crotty). The structured processes of phenomenological research, as delineated by Moustakas, help mitigate the influence of these biases.

Phenomenological reduction. Phenomenological reduction is a series of steps that leads to the development of individual and composite descriptions of what the participants experience during the phenomenon:

- First, the researcher locates statements that provide insight into the preservice teachers' experience. Each transcribed statement from each individual research participant is treated equally. The intent is that the researcher will have an opportunity to give the data a fresh look unencumbered by searching for connections among the data (*horizontalization*).
- Second, the researcher eliminates statements from each individual transcript that are irrelevant to the topic of study (*delimited horizons*). The goal is to have a selection of meaningful examples of the phenomenon represented by a cluster of themes and objective descriptions using the words of the participants (*invariant qualities and themes*). All statements, no matter the frequency, are considered across all of the participants in order to insure inclusion of all potentially relevant themes.
- In the third step, the researcher develops an objective summary of individual experiences using the preservice teachers' words (*individual textual descriptions*).
- The fourth step represents the second, and deeper, stage of analysis. It is the first step that draws on researcher interpretation. Moustakas (1994) refers to this stage as *imaginative variation*. Here the researcher develops two types of interpretative, summative descriptions – one for each individual participant (*individual structural descriptions*) and one composite description across participants' experiences (*composite structural description*).
- After completion of imaginative variation, the researcher completes one final step of analysis. Here the researcher integrates the objective and interpretive summaries in order to synthesize the meanings and essences of the participants' experience. From these descriptions the researcher is able to summarize the essential experience of the study participants, relate or differentiate the findings from current literature and relate the findings to potential future research directions and goals (*essence*).

Study Design

The purpose of my study was to examine the meaning preservice teachers make of a multicultural field assignment within a multicultural community-based service learning field experience. The Caregiver Conversation Project elicits a range of reactions from the preservice teachers. My study provides insight into the preservice teachers' ways of responding to the assignment and the meaning they make of it.

Context of the Study

The Unified Elementary and Special Education PROTEACH Program (PROTEACH) began in 1999. The intent of this teacher education program is to prepare teachers with a dual emphasis in elementary and special education. A central program goal is that graduates will be capable of creating and maintaining supportive and productive inclusive classrooms for diverse student populations. An additional program goal is that graduates will be prepared to work collaboratively with school personnel, families, and members of the community to develop alternative ways of educating all children, including those who have traditionally been labeled at-risk and who are culturally and linguistically diverse (Ross, Lane, & McCallum, 2005).

Preservice teachers enter PROTEACH the first semester of their junior year. Their previous college level course work has been either in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at the University of Florida or at a community college. The first semester in PROTEACH includes a strong focus on diversity and social justice issues. Three of the four core courses during this first semester are linked to a semester long community-based field experience (Bright Futures). Bright Futures is a multicultural field experience with diverse learners that provides the preservice teachers opportunities to begin development of multicultural social competence. During Bright Futures, each preservice

teacher spends two hours per week mentoring one child, helping this child with school-related activities at a community center located within a low-income public housing community, and becoming familiar with the child, family, and neighborhood. The children who participate in Bright Futures are primarily African-American, live in the neighborhoods in which the program is conducted, and may struggle to succeed in school. My study was conducted within the context of Bright Futures and the course for which the preservice teachers complete the Caregiver Conversation Project.

The preservice teachers complete the Caregiver Conversation Project in the core course called *Family and Community Involvement in Education* (Family Course). The assignment consists of three parts. First, the preservice teachers conduct an interview with one of their parents/caregivers (PSTCC). They discuss the parent/caregiver's personal experiences with the American educational system and their ideas about their role as educators of their children. Next, the preservice teachers conduct a similar interview of the caregiver or parent of their Bright Futures mentee (MCC) using the same guiding questions (Appendix A). The purpose of the Caregivers Conversation Project is threefold:

- To begin development of multicultural social competence by seeing both the family's situation and the child's situation from the viewpoint of the family rather than through a White middle class lens.
- To learn directly from parents/caregivers about their children and about their ideas as to their role (and that of other members of their family) as educators of their children.
- To compare and contrast the educational experiences of his/her own parents/caregivers with those of the parents/caregivers of the mentee.

Study Participants

In phenomenology, the ideal is to have the participant population as homogeneous as possible in order to focus on similarities of experience. The participant population of

my study consisted of five White monolingual female preservice teachers in their early 20s who had had a small to moderate amount of multicultural experience. All were in their first semester of PROTEACH (first semester of junior-year) and were enrolled in the Family Course. This population was chosen because it predominates both the field of elementary education—73% (United States Census, 2005) and the PROTEACH program (85% early childhood, 79% elementary, and 67% secondary) (personal communication, PROTEACH coordinator, University of Florida, August 5, 2005). The study participants were also all monolingual, from middle to upper class socio-economic backgrounds, grew up and attended public schools in Florida, and saw themselves as open to multicultural experiences but did not necessarily seek out multicultural situations. These characteristics also match the general characteristics of PROTEACH students.

Preservice teachers enter PROTEACH with a wide range of exposure to culturally and linguistically diverse situations; however, a majority has had superficial contact with diverse populations. They attended schools with diverse populations, but generally interacted with people who came from similar social, economic, and racial backgrounds. In order to choose study participants who were neither avid multiculturalists nor anti-multiculturalists, participants were selected based on responses to The Multicultural Self-Report Inventory (MSRI) (Slade & Conoley, 1989) and a multicultural experience survey (Appendix B). It was important to use both tools because they provided complementary information. Slade and Conoley's self-report inventory provided information on attitudes while the experience survey provided information on past exposure to and interactions with diverse populations. Second, the MSRI provided a quick way to determine which preservice teachers felt that their attitudes were mid-range on the MSRI's scale of 0 to 99, with higher scores indicating greater multicultural sensitivity. Respondents who

were located in the mid-range best represent the average PROTEACH preservice teacher. Therefore, I chose to contact respondents who scored closest to the median of 59. The demographic information in the experience survey proved useful to situate the attitudes exhibited in the MSRI and provided background information to be used during the initial interview. Both the MSRI and the experience survey took approximately 10 minutes to administer.

The two instruments were administered to 30 preservice teachers in one section of the Family Course during the 4th week of the semester. The original plan was to administer the instruments during the first 2 weeks of the semester, but the university was closed on two separate occasions due to hurricane warnings. Of the 30 preservice teachers, five were immediately eliminated (one—male, two—lived abroad for extended periods of time, and two—spoke a language other than English as their first language). Of the remaining 25 preservice teachers, I contacted those who received scores between 50 and 61 on the MSRI (total of 9). Two were eliminated because their Bright Futures field experience was located in an after school program rather than at a community center, and two failed to respond.

There were four sections of the Family Course. Originally, the preference was to choose participants from a section taught by an experienced course instructor who had previously taught this course, and who had been identified by the course supervisor as highly competent. The sections taught by experienced instructors during this particular semester, however, participated in an alternate field experience. Therefore, the section instructor from whose course study participants were chosen was not experienced in conducting course requirements in conjunction with the Caregiver Conversation Project.

This section instructor, however, was an experienced teacher and participated in weekly planning meetings with the course supervisor and the three other section instructors.

Data Collection

My study took place during the participants' first semester in PROTEACH (i.e., the first semester of the junior-year). Interviews were the main source of data (Appendices C, D, and E for interview protocols). Two artifacts were collected from the Family Course: (a) the written summary of the conversation with preservice teacher's caregiver(s) (PSTCC Summary), and (b) the Final Report of the Caregiver Conversation Project (Final Report) (See Attachment F for assignment criteria.)

Data were collected during the fall semester 2004 and the spring semester 2005, with the exception of epoche, which began prior to data collection. The PSTCC Summary was collected after it was submitted to the section instructor for grading. I requested this artifact after Interview 1 of the study had been conducted. The Final Report was collected prior to delivery to the course instructor in order to avoid instructor influence over content. I conducted all interviews. Data sources are discussed in more detail below.

Epoche. Moustakas (1994) defines epoche as a "preparation for deriving new knowledge" (p. 85), but he also sees it as an experience in itself. It is a process by which predilections, prejudices, and predispositions are set aside and objects, events and people are seen from fresh viewpoints. The physical representation of epoche was a researcher journal. I kept this journal throughout the data collection and analysis process. The medium for the research journal varied. I sometimes wrote entries electronically or by hand. Initially, I thought that an oral journal would be more efficient, however, it proved to be more difficult due to voice recognition difficulties. The purpose of the journal was

to look and “describe, look again and describe again” (p. 91) (Moustakas). I also considered the journal a place to differentiate between what was said during the interviews and my interpretations of what was said. It was also the place I registered and considered personal biases that needed to be brought out into the light in order to be bracketed.

Interviews. Three informal interviews based on open-ended questions and comments lasting approximately one to two hours each were conducted with each study participant. The interview is an integral part of phenomenological research because actual participant words and phrases are key to understanding the essence of meaning that another person makes of an experience (Moustakas, 1994). It is therefore important to keep in mind that “interviewing is both a research methodology and a social relationship that must be nurtured, sustained, and then ended gracefully” (Seidman, 1998, p. 79).

One of the hallmarks of phenomenological research is that research participants are considered to be coresearchers since it is their lived experience that is the focus of study (Moustakas, 1994). The coresearchers in my study were given opportunities to provide feedback on interview responses during and after each interview, as well as during data analysis. All transcribed interviews, textural descriptions, and structural descriptions of each individual interview were sent electronically to each participant for review. At the beginning of Interviews 2 and 3, I asked if the participants had any comments or questions about the transcripts and descriptions of the previous interview. Information from previous interviews was revisited in subsequent interviews for elaboration and clarification. In addition, individual textural and structural composite descriptions were constructed across all three interviews and these descriptions were sent

to participants by electronic mail for review. Due to timing constraints, a face-to-face conversation was not held with each study participant regarding the descriptions. However, the researcher requested feedback electronically and held phone conversations with two of the participants.

Artifacts. Two participant artifacts were collected for my study: (a) the written summary of the conversation with each preservice teacher's caregiver(s), and (b) the Final Report of the Caregiver Conversation Project (Final Report) (See Appendix F for assignment criteria). Approximately 1 month into the semester, the preservice teachers conducted a conversation with their own caregiver(s). The preservice teachers then wrote a 6 to 8 page summary of the caregiver(s)' responses. Many of the questions asked during this conversation were the same questions as those asked later in the semester during the conversation with the mentees' caregivers (See Appendix F for specifics).

After conducting both of the caregiver conversations, the preservice teachers wrote the Final Report. The purpose of the Final Report was to compare and contrast the responses received during the two conversations. The intent was to help the preservice teachers develop awareness of their own cultural and educational backgrounds and that of their mentees' parents/caregivers, the experiences that the caregivers or parents have had with regard to educational institutions, and the caregivers' or parents' assumptions about learning and school involvement. The Final Report was collected from the preservice teachers prior to their receiving an instructor grade in order to avoid instructor influence over content. I did not converse with the course instructor about the participants or course work so as to avoid influencing the assignments of the preservice teachers.

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed in accordance with the phenomenological analysis procedures as established by Moustakas (1994), and his terminology can be found in parentheses

throughout this section. Also, I added one procedure to help organize the process—a documentary summary sheet was attached to each participant interview transcript (Appendix G). The purpose of this summary was to encourage continuous epoche throughout the research process. The summary included interpretive reflection about the interview as well as nonverbal data that could not be captured on an audio recorder (e.g., facial expressions and body language).

I conducted phenomenological reduction, which consisted of three parts. First, I located statements within the participant transcripts that provided insight into the preservice teachers' experiences while completing the various parts of the Caregiver Conversation Project. At this initial stage in the analysis process, each transcribed statement was treated as equal in that increased frequency of a statement did not increase its significance. The intent was to look for possible connections among the data (*horizontalization*). Second, I eliminated statements that were irrelevant to the topic of the study or that were repetitive (*delimited horizons*). The purpose of this step was theme development through verbatim quotes (*invariant qualities and themes*). Third, I developed a descriptive summary by drawing on the words of the participants (*individual textural descriptions*).

Following completion of phenomenological reduction, I moved into the stage of interpretive analysis (*imaginative variation*). I constructed an interpretive summary of each participant's experience across the three interviews (*individual composite structural descriptions*). Next, I constructed an interpretive composite description across all 5 participants. These interpretive descriptions were obtained through three substeps: (a) analysis of possible interpretive meanings of what was said during the interviews; (b) recognition of underlying themes; (c) a search for verbatim examples that clearly illustrate the themes and provide description of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

After completion of imaginative variation, the final stage of analysis began. In this stage, I integrated the verbatim descriptive summaries and the interpretive summaries in order to synthesize the meanings and essences of the participants' experience. An example would be the description of a person enjoying the view of a river. If you were to only describe the physical characteristics of the river, the result would be only physical description. If you were to only describe the enjoyment, the description would be emotional and interpretive. However, by combining the physical description of the river with the description of enjoyment a more complete account of the experience is provided. From these descriptions I was able to summarize the participants essential experience of the Caregivers Conversation Project.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Several techniques were employed to enhance the trustworthiness of the findings from my study: (a) general adherence to phenomenological procedures as delineated by Moustakas (1994) which include triangulation of data sources: interview data, participant debriefing, and artifacts, (b) peer debriefing, and (c) rich, thick description. These strategies are a combination of those determined by the research approach of phenomenology (Moustakas; van Kaam, 1966) and those suggested by Creswell (1998). Each technique is discussed below as it relates to my study.

Phenomenological procedures/triangulation. Attention to the data collection and analysis procedures as outlined by Moustakas (1994) provided numerous opportunities to compare descriptive and interpretive (*textural* and *structural*) interpretations of the data. In conjunction with the data analysis procedures and ongoing attempt to bracket my biases through epoche, I asked study participants to provide feedback on textural and structural summaries of the data. This form of triangulation is

an integral part of phenomenological analysis as framed by Moustakas because it establishes *intersubjective validity*, the testing out of the researcher's "understanding through a back-and-forth social interaction" (Creswell, 1998, p. 207).

The PSTCC Summary and the Final Report were used to provide content material for the second and third interview, respectively. Questions about what was included or not included in the artifacts were used to gain insight into the study participants thinking. For example, the Final Report focused on similarities between the caregivers or parents of the preservice teachers and those of their mentees. However, the study interviews included a much stronger focus on differences.

Peer debriefing. Peer debriefing is another source for developing trustworthiness. It is a common technique used by qualitative researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1988) and provides an external outlet to further protect against researcher bias. I used two peer debriefers. First, I met on a regular basis with the chair of my dissertation committee. Second, I met in person or by telephone, with a colleague who was also using phenomenological methodology for her dissertation. Meetings with these two peer debriefers assisted me because they asked probing questions and suggesting alternative interpretations. Participant confidentiality was protected at all times.

Rich, thick description. Rich, thick description allows the reader to make decisions regarding transferability of the data analysis and findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1989). The details in the description of the participants, the experience, and the essential meaning made by the participants enable the reader to decide on the transferability of the findings to other contexts and settings (Creswell, 1998). I accomplished rich, thick description through verbatim transcripts of participant

comments and the descriptive and interpretative summaries of what was experienced by the preservice teachers.

Clarifying Researcher Position

Phenomenological analysis requires that the researcher note any past experiences, biases, assumptions, prejudices, and orientations that may shape or influence his/her approach to the phenomenon under investigation and the interpretation of data. These influences and preconceptions must then be bracketed in order to fully understand the experience from the viewpoint of the participants and to avoid imposing *a priori* hypothesis (Creswell, 1998).

Multicultural experiences. I am a White middle-class female who grew up in a homogeneous White working class neighborhood and who had little contact with people of color until college. Although the neighborhood in which I grew up did not include people of color, there was ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity. Most of the families were first or second generation Americans whose families immigrated primarily from Germany and Eastern Europe. It was common to hear Polish, Ukrainian, and German spoken on a daily basis. I chose to attend a university in Washington, DC, that was fairly homogeneously White, but had a representation of students from a variety of ethnic and linguistic backgrounds. This was my first experience developing friendships with people from non-White cultural groups. I lived in a predominantly African-American neighborhood and made an effort to be active in community service and political activities. Many of my first experiences of being *the other* occurred within the context of my university and neighborhood experiences.

Throughout my adult life I have striven to understand other cultures and the experience of being the other. Prior to entering the field of education, I worked in the

travel industry for a number of years and interacted with people from a variety of cultures and economic groups on a daily basis. I have a Master's degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (MATESOL) and have studied and worked in the area of multicultural education for over a decade. I have traveled throughout the world (52 countries), spent extended periods of time in Costa Rica, Guatemala and Ecuador, lived in Brazil, and speak (or mangle) both Portuguese and Spanish.

Philosophical outlook. My personal philosophy is rooted in critical theory and has been heavily influenced by the writings of Paulo Freire, other critical theorists, and Michel Foucault. I see schooling as situated within both an historical context and as part of an existing framework of political structures whose purpose is to maintain the status quo (Freire, 1970/1986). I see diversity issues through a Foucaultian lens of looking at the *economies of power* in any given society; that is, all members of a society are “enmeshed within networks of power interwoven with other kinds of relationships, including economic, legal, familial and sexual” (Foucault, 1984, p. 64). The dominant social group of a culture that marginalizes and disempowers other groups within a culture controls these networks of power.

Beliefs about teacher education. I strongly believe that preservice teachers need to understand and appreciate difference. The teaching workforce may be predominantly White, but the school population is not and is becoming less so (NCES, 2000). Ideally, preservice teachers should be able to effectively communicate and interact with people from a variety of ethnic, linguistic and ability backgrounds. They should honor cultural differences and see difference, not deficit, when interacting with families.

As a doctoral student I have taught one of the core diversity courses in the first-semester of PROTEACH—Teachers and Learners in Inclusive Schools. This experience

is the root of my desire to better understand the meaning preservice teachers make of their first cross-cultural field experience. While many preservice teachers have taken up the challenge of self-examination and have easily adapted to working with diverse groups of people, I have also seen first-semester preservice teachers struggle with understanding their own cultural identities. I have seen discomfort when faced with children and adults who do not share their priorities and views about education. I have heard some voice the belief that if only people from lower socio-economic groups would work harder, they would achieve economic and educational success. I have heard them argue that these families must alter their value systems and traditions so that their children can succeed in school. When these preservice teachers look at the gap between some elementary students' life circumstances and middle class standards, they frequently assign blame—"it's because of their parents and home life that these children come to school unprepared to learn."

These past experiences, beliefs, and biases are not fatal flaws to conducting a phenomenological study, but it is vital that they be explicitly indicated and discussed since in phenomenological research it is expected that these experiences, beliefs, and biases be bracketed. I chose to begin the process of epoche the day I proposed this research topic. I realized that my critical stance had the potential to influence my collection and analysis of data. This was one of the reasons that I chose a structured form of data collection and analysis. I believe that this structure helped in bracketing my biases, expectations, and assumptions about the phenomenon under study.

Study Limitations

There are a number of potential limitations to my study. These limitations include the following:

- The participant population of my study was restricted to White females who lack multicultural social competence or are at the beginning levels of competence development. This affects the transferability of study findings.
- Bracketing personal experiences was difficult. I tried very hard to keep my views from influencing the collection and analysis of data. The rigorous attention to the development of textural and structural analyses was very helpful. The weakest link was the process of epoche. Epoche is demanding and does not guarantee the exclusion of biases in the collection or analysis of data. Combining audio and written journals was not effective. The epoche journals are disjointed and some audio journals were lost when a computer hard drive crashed. Not keeping an organized sequential journal impeded effective epoche.
- Viewing study participants as “co-researchers” was problematic for a couple of reasons: (a) it was difficult to make face to face contact regarding the composite structural description because it was completed at the end of the semester when they were busy with exams and papers; and (b) most of the participants did not thoroughly read the transcripts and descriptions, and did not provide extensive feedback to the researcher. This potentially could affect trustworthiness of the study. However, the lack of feedback was offset by close attention to phenomenological reduction procedures and extensive use of participant quotes to enhance rich, thick description of the phenomena.

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of my study was to examine preservice teacher perceptions of a multicultural field experience designed to begin development of multicultural social competence. The assignment, the Caregiver Conversation Project, requires preservice teachers to conduct two conversations, one with their caregiver or parent and one with the caregiver or parent of their Bright Future's mentee. When talking about their experiences conducting the two conversations and writing the Caregiver Conversations Final Report (Final Report), the five preservice teachers in my study focused on four essential components. First, in making arrangements for the Mentee Caregiver Conversation (MCC), they expressed common concerns and undertook common courses of action. Second, they noted common obstacles that they encountered while conducting the MCC. Third, they gained common insights through conducting both the MCC and the Preservice Teacher Caregiver Conversation (PSTCC) with their mothers. Finally, they approached writing the Final Report in a similar fashion.

This chapter begins with a description of common experiences across the five participants using their own words (composite textural description). The second section contains researcher comments that interpret the participants' experience and make connections between their common experiences, Bright Futures and the preservice teacher education program (composite structural description). In other words, in the

structural description I interpret the words of the preservice teachers in order to explain why they experienced the Caregiver Conversation Project as they did. The chapter concludes with a description of the essence of the participants' experience of the Caregiver Conversation Project. The conclusion serves as the answer to the primary research question: What meanings do preservice teachers make of an activity within a multicultural field experience?

Composite Textural Description

Overall, the preservice teachers felt that the Caregiver Conversation Project was positive and worthwhile. Their comments included: "I think it was a good experience (Jenn, 85). "It went well" (Nancy, 42). "It was a really good program" (Autumn, 42). "I think it's been an easy, not easy, comfortable experience" (Tina, 21). Throughout the project, however, they encountered challenges that colored their experiences.

Arranging for the Mentee Caregiver Conversation

The preservice teachers had three common experiences while arranging for the MCC. First, they experienced concerns about being in an unfamiliar situation. Second, at the time of Interview 1, and until the time of the MCC in some cases, they felt that a number of their questions about how to arrange for and conduct the MCC remained unanswered. Third, each of the preservice teachers individually chose a specific course of action for arranging the MCC; however, there were important commonalities among their choices.

When discussing how to arrange the MCC, the preservice teachers often spoke of concerns about the physical situations in which they found themselves. How they felt about being in an unfamiliar environment impacted arranging for and conducting the MCC.

The neighborhood

Arranging for the MCC included more than contacting the caregiver or parent and arranging a time and place. Because Bright Futures and the Caregiver Conversation Project took place within an unfamiliar community, the preservice teachers' concerns including being placed in a position where they felt like outsiders. All mentored in community centers located within subsidized government housing communities. This setting was new for them, and each expressed concerns. Autumn noted the unfamiliarity of the surroundings, "When I pulled up I have to say I thought this would be interesting. That's a good word to describe it. I've never been in a situation like that before." Tina had a negative reaction to the way the neighborhood looked, "The whole area seemed really dead" (184). Others addressed more specific feelings about the upcoming MCC and the community. Nancy and Bonnie, for example, felt uncomfortable about how people in the community perceived them. Nancy talked about how she felt when she first met her mentee's mother, "What is she thinking about you when you're talking to her? What does she see when she sees me?" (533-535). Bonnie focused on the community as a whole.

I go there [the community center] with my car, a nice car. My parents gave me that car and I'm not paying for it. I do feel like they look at me like I'm . . . I feel like they look at me as if I think I'm better than them. But that is totally perception. I'm not even sure if they think about that or if they think we're helping and they think it's [Bright Futures] a positive thing. I can't really tell (210-214). Maybe because we're White and most of the children were African-American. . . . Just the fact that they are a minority is one factor in that I think. (184-187)

All of the preservice teachers noted that they felt more comfortable being in the neighborhood once they had tutored there for a few weeks. Tina expressed it best.

I walked and drove though the neighborhood to where my girl lives, but I've never gone to the center [alone]. I think if I were to go now I would not feel

uncomfortable (317-319) because I know how it is now. If I had gone by myself the first time, I would have been scared because I had no clue where I was going. . . . Now I know the neighborhood. Many of the people were very friendly and I'm familiar with what's around it. (321-325)

Even though the preservice teachers generally became more comfortable in the unfamiliar setting of the community center, concern about the neighborhood continued throughout Bright Futures and into arranging for and conducting the MCC. Jenn expressed concerns about feeling intimidated.

I was just nervous about it. I just didn't know how to approach it. I didn't know how receptive the parents would be (50-51). It wasn't necessarily that I ever met them [people in the neighborhood] or knew their demeanor, but just that they would all sit outside on the lot and just yell and they'd be loud and it just wasn't something that I'm used to and it's just...stereotypical of me, but...how my mind functions sometimes. There are Black men over there sitting by a car and they're out talking, like are they talking about, to, me. It just wasn't a comfortable situation of the neighborhood I was in (539-545). I didn't want to go to the house because it is in a rough neighborhood and I was completely out of my element. I was intimidated by the people I saw around the neighborhood and was just nervous about going to the house alone. (email February 21, 2005)

Nancy noted that specific characteristics of her mentee's mother fed her discomfort.

Just the way she talked to me. I don't want to say a certain part of their culture or affect, but the dialect is a bit different. And I don't want this to sound negative or anything, but the gold teeth. I don't think even ghetto is the right word, but a different world that they live in. They live in a housing project area. It is a different experience. If you've never been in one, it's scary in that aspect. (528-533)

Unanswered questions

Bright Futures mentoring began the first week in October. The MCC was to occur at some point prior to the end of the semester so that the Final Report could be handed in for grading during the last week of the semester (See Table 4-1 for a detailed timeline). At the time of Interview 1, which occurred as they were beginning Bright Futures and just after they conducted the PSTCC with their mothers, the preservice teachers noted that they had a number of questions that had not yet been answered about the MCC.

Table 4-1. Study interview/caregiver conversation project timetable

Data	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan.
PSTCC	X				
Interview 1 of study		1 st week of Oct., 1 st week of Bright Futures			
MCC			X		
Interview 2 of study			Conducted late Nov. to early Dec., after MCC		
Final report			Written late Nov. to early Dec., after Interview 2 of study		
Interview 3 of study					X

Arranging for the MCC was a concern for all of the preservice teachers, whether they actually experienced difficulties or not. All expressed similar concerns, and the following quotes represent examples. Bonnie expressed her discomfort through wondering how she would be perceived. “I feel like maybe [they] will feel like why is this girl interviewing us? Why should she care” (403-405)? Autumn talked about the discomfort of not knowing how to contact her mentee’s caregiver.

Not really knowing how to get in touch with parents. We don’t see them or are ever around them, so it’s going to be kind of hard to get a hold of them and schedule the time with them (403-405). Do you just send a letter home with him [mentee] and hope they get it if you don’t see them because we don’t have phone numbers. Do you walk with him home and try to go meet with them? I don’t know how to go about setting up the actual interview itself. (408-412)

Jenn verbalized general discomfort about the unknown.

They [colleagues] are just out of everything that they know. It’s just like fear of the unknown or maybe it isn’t completely unknown. You may have ideas about what it is going to be like. I mean the neighborhood that I’m in is just uncomfortable in general, especially when they tell you that when it gets dark early we will let you go before it gets dark because we do not want you here after dark. That makes people nervous. People at other centers have to be walked out to their cars. . . . If that’s the kind of neighborhood that you’re supposed to drive or walk to someone’s house and interview them in, that doesn’t give you an air of comfort to begin with and then to just go into an unknown situation with people completely different from you. (318-328)

Tina used negative stories she had heard from colleagues who had previously completed the Caregiver Conversations Project to illustrate the awkwardness of the situation for her.

I've heard of people last year, their experiences. . . . They said it was very difficult. One of the girls had to redo, or had to reschedule it [the MCC] like 10 times because she would go there and the mother had been drinking and she didn't want to do it then. It was really a different experience, awkward situation to put yourself in, so I think hearing other people's stories made me a little worried about it. (351-358). . . . because I don't know them and because they are different, they are a completely different type of person than I am. Not personality wise. How they were raised. They have different values, different beliefs, different, you know, they could have the same, I don't know, it's just very awkward because I don't know them at all. (366-370)

Courses of action taken by the preservice teachers

As noted by Autumn, sending a note home was the first course of action for each of the preservice teachers. In most cases, the note included the phone number of the preservice teacher and a request for the caregiver or parent to decide upon a convenient time and place to meet. Only Jenn received an immediate response. The others found it necessary to make repeated attempts. Mentors experienced a range of difficulty in setting up the MCC. Nancy wrote a few more notes and then walked home with her mentee. Autumn, Bonnie and Tina continued to send follow-up notes with little success. Those who did not receive immediate or nearly immediate responses waited until close to the end of the semester to use alternative means or seek assistance. Autumn, for example, asked for help as a last resort.

I asked for it [caregiver's phone number] just before Thanksgiving. It was almost a last resort and I would have asked for it a lot sooner. Maybe even calling her right when I began mentoring (402-404). I assumed that they [center staff] wouldn't give it to me or that they didn't have it (406-407). The center was great and they were very willing to help us help the kids. Maybe if I had realized that sooner, I would have asked for the phone number. Knowing that they would definitely have given it to me (666-668). So I ended up calling her at home and saying that I really need to get the interview done. (210-211)

Tina used a field trip as an opportunity to arrange for the MCC.

We [Tina and a colleague] had to get the parent permission slips [to take their mentees to the Homecoming Parade in mid-November], so I sent that home. . . . We actually went to [our mentees'] school [to pick up the permission slips]. . . . We got the permission slips and got the phone number. . . . I called the grandma confirming about the parade, and then she went on about the interview, . . . So we would do it the following Monday, so we did it then. (414-427)

Initially, Bonnie thought arranging for the MCC would be easy because she had been invited into her mentee's home on the first day of Bright Futures.

I thought it was going to go well. I guess because I had met her mom and feeling, you know. . . . That day [the first day of BF] I didn't have a great a conversation with her or anything, but "Hi, I'm Bonnie." And I thought they'd be more involved. (498-502)

However, of all the preservice teachers she had the most difficulty. Seven weeks after the first meeting with her mentee's mother, Bonnie finally arranged the MCC. In the interim, she sent numerous letters home, went to the house to find no one home, left notes on the front door, and left a message with a man who answered the door on one of her attempts. Her mentee came to the center on the last day of Bright Futures to attend the final celebration party; at that point Bonnie was finally able to arrange a date and time.

So finally it came to the final celebration and I didn't know if my girl was going to show up because I hadn't been able to get in contact with her. . . . Then I walked back with her. I walked to her house, which I was a little, I felt weird doing it because of all the times I had tried and they hadn't gotten back to me. I thought maybe it was something personal; that they didn't want to talk about it. So that's a lot of the reason why I think that I was leery of talking to them. I thought they just didn't want to do it [the MCC]. But I finally got to their house and the mom came to the door. I tried to be, "Oh, there's an interview I have to do." It was like the first time she'd heard it or something. I told her about it. I asked if she would be able to do it now? And she said, "No." She was busy and had her hands full. I said "OK. What about tomorrow?" She said, "Yeh, come by." I said, "What about 12." And she said, "Yeh, I won't be doing anything. Just come by then and we'll do it." (425-442)

Study participants were not the only Bright Futures mentors to experience difficulties. They reported that a number of their colleagues had also encountered delays

in one form or another. Jenn noted a conversation she had with a colleague. “I talked to her (a colleague). . . . She didn’t get to talk to the parents that much and she finally did get to interview them, but I think it was just over the phone” (80-84). Nancy reported her impression from what she had overheard. “I think some are still doing it [the MCC at the time of Interview 3 which took place during the last two weeks of the semester]” (276). Autumn related information from colleagues who, close to the end of the semester, were still trying to decide who to interview.

I know people who have still not interviewed, at all, and just trying to . . . deciding who to interview. I know some people have kids who live with their grandmothers, but their mom was involved. They weren’t sure to interview the grandmother or mother. Just trying to get hold of them and setting up the actual time has been. (217-221)

Obstacles to Asking Questions During the Mentee Caregiver Conversation

The preservice teachers encountered two main obstacles to conducting the MCC. First, they expressed concern about intruding into the privacy of their mentees’ caregivers or parents. Second, they indirectly talked about their own discomfort with the interview questions and the answers they received or might have received, if they had asked exploratory questions.

The preservice teachers saw personal questions as a cause for concern. Direct or exploratory questions constituted prying into the lives of the families, an outcome the preservice teachers preferred to avoid. There was a general belief that “yes” or “no” answers were indicators of discomfort. Therefore, if the preservice teachers received a brief answer, they moved on to the next question rather than delving deeper for clarification and elaboration. All of the preservice teachers expressed this concern. Quotations from Autumn and Bonnie provide examples of typical preservice teacher

comments. Autumn said that she skipped questions because she felt her mentee's mother seemed unwilling to provide details.

There are some questions that I skipped over because I could tell that, I don't know if it was as much that she didn't want to answer them or she was just preoccupied, but some of the answers that led into some of the questions were very short and non-descriptive, so I just moved on to the next question. (374-378)

Bonnie noted that both she and colleagues frequently received "yes/no" responses with little elaboration, and that she interpreted these abbreviated responses as a sign that the caregivers or parents were unwilling to provide more detail.

A lot of people expressed that their [mentee's] parents were the same as mine, where they were extremely brief with the interview. A lot of their answers were 'yes' and 'no'. They feel like they didn't want to intrude on the family. That is what I felt. I didn't want to bother her with questions she didn't want to talk about. I think a lot of the other people felt this way too because they didn't want to pry into their lives. (161-165)

Questions that the preservice teachers most frequently mentioned as intrusive were factual questions about the family or the caregiver. Areas of concern included family demographics (e.g., who was considered family, number of people living in the home), information about family members the mentee had not mentioned during mentoring sessions, personal information about the caregiver or parent (e.g., occupation, education level), and information about the community. Interspersed within the statements about fear of causing discomfort were comments that indicated a concern about their own level of discomfort with the conversations, questions, and responses.

Jenn, for example, chose not to ask exploratory questions about her mentee's brother. This was an area she saw as too *touchy-feely*, which she defined as "questions that go into too much personal detail" (personal email, February 21, 2005). "Just generally asking questions. Not that they were touchy-feely, but asking about their education stuff" (335-336). She also avoided subjects that her mentee never discussed.

None of it was uncomfortable, that I didn't ask, except about her son. That kind of seemed taboo in the way the girls brought it up. I wasn't going to bring it up. No. They avoided the question; I wasn't going to just go after it. (427-430)

Autumn felt similarly.

I guess I would have really liked to know the role his mother and his grandfather, and the father, for that matter, played in his life and his education. But I can also see why I was uncomfortable and why I didn't want to push that. My mentee never talked about them, and that kind of gave me a signal that that's a subject not everyone wants to talk about. I still feel that it would have been information that would have helped. To know the role his mom and dad played. (216-221)

Autumn was also hesitant about asking questions regarding the low-income housing community in which her mentee lived. She was not sure that her mentee's mother would want to discuss the community and its effects on her child, or why the family lived in public housing.

Just the whole idea of public housing. I don't know if someone would be willing to share that and share their experiences in the community. Like there was a question, 'How does the community affect your grandchild's life?' even that in itself I don't know if she would say it's really positive and the center provides a lot of stuff for him. Or another part, that it's taught him to be very cautious of where he's going and the people he needs to be safe around. (594-599)

I guess one of the questions that I didn't necessarily [ask], and it was a simple question, just where does your family live? I didn't so much know who she would include as family and if she would be like, I don't want to use the word proud, but willing to say where they lived and how they lived there and why they live there, and how long they've lived there. But just the living arrangement and how they went about living where they live. (583-588)

Bonnie was concerned she might embarrass her mentee and family by asking direct questions about her mentee's father, who was in jail; about why the extended family lived in the same household:

The one [question] that I actually felt weird asking was "Who are the members of your family and which ones live in the home now?" because of what my mentee had told me about her father [being in jail] and just the amount of people that are living there. I just didn't know if she would feel comfortable telling me all that information (599-602).

and about the mother's employment status since she seemed to be unemployed.

Also, there is a lot of stuff about the mother's background data like, "What kind of work do you and your family caregivers do?" . . . I'm not even sure she has a job. She says she went to college and she worked at a hospital, but when I asked her if she's working there now, she said no. And then she just, you know, I could tell she really didn't want to talk about it. I think those were the main questions that were hard. (606-612)

Nancy was interested in the composition of her mentee's extended family, but felt that this information was too private and not necessary for a teacher to know.

I wanted to ask why she was taking care of her nephews, but I wasn't going to go there because it wasn't any of my business. Even as a teacher, that's none of my business why someone else is taking care of [them]. (472-474)

I didn't know if it was really my place to ask her if she dropped out, but I did. I had to ask her. Some of the things I told her I had to do with the interview with my mom, and that if [she] can't answer a question or doesn't understand; that's fine. I wanted her to realize that I'm not just doing this to her. (415-418)

Autumn and Bonnie offered linguistic evidence that indicated ambiguity about whose discomfort concerned them. For example, they would change pronouns in mid thought. Autumn noted, "When he [SDS instructor] said that we could skip questions that *we* felt uncomfortable with. I was really just happy to know that if *they* didn't feel comfortable answering, we didn't have to make them answer it" (298-300). Another example is when Bonnie talked about feeling like she was prying.

Well, with my specific caregiver it seemed like I was prying when I was asking her about her education. *It seemed like she didn't really want to talk about it* (267-268). I could just tell with her facial expressions. You know, I was just kind of like, "You went to high school? Where did you go to high school?" I asked, "Did you go to college?" And she said, "Yeh." *It was just a really awkward situation for me.* (169-172)

Learning from the Caregiver Conversations

The preservice teachers gained insights into three separate, but interconnected areas during the MCCs and PSTCCs: insights into the meaning of a *caring* caregiver or

parent, insights into caregiver or parent involvement, and insights into shared beliefs of caregivers or parents from different cultural groups. The preservice teachers found that caring adults were involved in their children's lives and education. However, from the MCC they learned that evidence of care and involvement differed from the definition they brought with them into the field experience assignment.

Insights into the meaning of a “caring” caregiver or parent

All five preservice teachers talked about changes in definition of a caring caregiver or parent that came about through their experiences with the Caregiver Conversation Project. Autumn, Nancy, and Tina expressed it best.

Autumn realized that her mentee's mother had responsibilities that might have caused her not to respond or be involved with the Bright Future's mentoring.

Just because she wasn't responding to my letters and always there asking how he was doing didn't mean she isn't interested. It could be a matter of she's at work and just can't get there. There's a lot of stuff that she's focused on outside of that. At first I thought, “Why didn't she respond? Why can't she write a letter back?” I just want a little response back from her acknowledging she's getting the letters. I thought that maybe she doesn't care, but I think the interview definitely helped me see that she wasn't just not responding because she didn't want to respond. The interview helped me see that she played a role in his education and in his life. (780-790)

In fact, the MCC and a one-time meeting with her mentee's mother at the center convinced Autumn that her mentee's mother did care.

Just a better understanding of how much, how much she cares about his education. It was very evident in that exchange [at the center] and in the interview [the MCC] that she wants him to do well and she wants him to succeed. Any problem that he has, she's very willing to address them, and try to find a way to work it out. (513-516)

Overall, Nancy considered the Caregiver Conversation Project to be a positive learning experience that affected her thinking about the role of parents in schooling.

“They just made me realize that parents have a huge impact on their child” (543). She also realized that,

You can’t assume what a parent’s role is in a child’s education. They might surprise you. They might feel very strongly about participating and you can’t assume. You have to go in with an open mind. I think it made me realize how my mentee’s mom is in school and how strongly she felt about involvement. (644-647)

Tina found that her mentee’s grandmother was concerned about her granddaughter’s education and believed in school involvement. “I enjoyed just hearing that she does care about her schooling and that she does make the effort to go there” (510-512). She also noted that there were extenuating circumstances that precluded her involvement.

Also, for me to be aware that her grandma works and can’t volunteer every day, but when she can she does go in. Just because they are not there every day, doesn’t mean her parents don’t care about her education. Not everyone can. They work eight hours a day during school hours, so it’s hard for them to get there; to be aware of that. (597-602)

Insights into caregiver or parental involvement

The preservice teachers learned that their definition of involvement (e.g., being active in the PTA, volunteering in the classroom, and chaperoning field trips) was not a universally held definition. Jenn noted, “They just did parent conferences. . . . They went for festivals or open houses” (413-414). They also learned that caregivers or parents who did not subscribe to their definition still cared about their charges’ education. Autumn learn that,

I think it [the MCC] has just shown me that no matter who’s raising the child, who’s the caregiver that you see in your classroom, or how involved they are in your actual class, they can still be very involved in that child’s education and care a lot about what they are learning and their school (360-363).

Nancy realized that,

I think seeing how much she wanted to be part of my mentee's education and knowing that she has a lot of things on her plate, but yet she is trying to do the best she can do. That's great and that's OK. Realizing that she might not be able to do as much as the next mom. But she's doing everything that she can and that's what matters. When I tell her how his spelling is and she said, "He likes spelling everything out to the T" and it's true. You're like, "OK, stop sounding it out now. You're done." It was kind of funny hearing her say that she's seeing that and she was enjoying it. She realizes that it's just part of him learning and she accepted it. It wasn't like he can't spell, or Why aren't you working on spelling with him? (478-487)

The preservice teachers came to realize, as expressed by Tina, that life circumstances affected the type and level of involvement.

I guess because her grandma works all day and she's the main caregiver, so she really can't volunteer. So to just realize that just because she can't come [to the community center] doesn't mean she doesn't care. The grandma will once in awhile stop in just to make sure everything is going OK, but she can't go on field trips. She can't do other things; doesn't mean she doesn't care. (55-60)

They also noted that reasons for caregiver or parent activity, or non-activity, were different from those of the preservice teachers' parents. For example, the grandmother of Tina's mentee went to school to monitor behavior rather than academics.

Although my mentee's grandma said that lately she has been going to school and surprising my mentee because she hasn't been behaving well. The grandmother's been going to school and showing up unexpectedly to see how my mentee would react. Her grandma seems like she does care about her school and she does try. She seems different from how her mother was in school. (228-232)

The mother of Nancy's mentee was more involved with his school now that he attends one closer to home. Attending a school far from his neighborhood had restricted his mother's ability to be involved. "She said that the fact that she wasn't as involved in his school before [was] because it was so far, and she didn't have time to do it. Now that it's closer, it's easier for her to do it" (433-435).

The grandmother of Nancy's mentee noted that people define involvement based on their own previous experiences.

I think the interesting thing that really stuck out for me is that she made a reference to different races and different involvement. . . . What she basically was saying was that people in the neighborhood didn't feel that they should be involved in their kids' education. . . . I think she was saying because of how they were brought up. However you're brought up is how you're going to teach your kids. At some point they need to realize that they need to break this thing down. Just because your parents did it this way doesn't mean that this is how you should to. She said that that's what people in this neighborhood do. They do whatever they were taught. (435-447)

Most of the preservice teachers found that hearing about involvement directly from their mentees' caregivers or parents expanded their definitions and gave them insights into how life circumstances influence caregiver or parent actions. However, not all of the realizations were positive. Bonnie thought that the difference in definition might have resulted in negative consequences for her mentee.

Well, I guess it's good they support the school and realize that the school is there to educate them. I think it would be better if they had a little bit more involvement in the school. She said that she goes to PTA meetings and school trips, but I don't think she was as involved as my parents were. I think maybe I could see where that would go hand in hand with my mentee's [lack of] motivation. Maybe she [mentee's mother] just doesn't see how it relates outside of school. (559-564)

Insights into shared beliefs of caregivers or parents from different cultural groups

Prior to conducting the MCC, the preservice teachers did not express opinions about similarities or differences of beliefs between their parents and their mentees' caregivers or parents. However, after conducting the MCC, they were surprised by the number of similarities despite background and cultural differences.

Autumn, for example, found both similarities and differences in information she collected during the MCC and the PSTCC, but she found the similarities more interesting.

Just the idea of respecting elders, initiative, working hard to get what you want. She taught him you have to work hard. School is your job and you need to work hard to get what you want in life. My mom taught me that. To get what you want you can't just play around, you have to work ... I expected more differences because we came from such different backgrounds. I think that just finding the similarities unexpectedly was kind of interesting (442-449). A caregiver to any child, in terms of their education, wants the best for them. I don't think where you're from or how old you are, anything like that. You are just interested in getting the best for your child. I think that is across culture, gender and everything like that. (251-254)

Jenn noted four main shared beliefs between her mother and her mentee's mother: development of independence, positive attitude about school, learning of new things, and the need to work hard.

I'm sure my mom wanted me to be independent, too. She also taught me to do my homework and get things done by yourself (471-473). The most important thing she wanted to teach them [was] to be independent, stay away from bad stuff, be positive, and to learn new things (463-466). She wanted them to learn new things and be positive about school, be independent, and get their work done. That's generally what my parent said, in a different way. But it's generally the same thing. (480-483)

Nancy was surprised at how many common themes arose between information gathered during the PSTCC and the MCC. "I was pretty impressed by what she was saying. Everything she was saying, I wanted to hear. I never expected for these common themes to be coming out. I really didn't expect that" (448-450). Nancy also noted one similarity was the reason why involvement was so important.

I don't know what I was expecting. I wasn't really expecting any of this. She said the same thing my mom said, "The only reason I'm involved in the school is that it's the only way for me to know what my kid is doing." My mom, in my interview, she said, "I was involved in your school by choice because I wanted to know what you were doing in school. I wanted to get to know your teachers. That's the only way I could know what you were really learning and doing." I mean, it was the same thing. It made me realize that there are common themes. (452-458)

Tina did not expect both her mentee's mom and her parents to have the same goals:

It was interesting to see that my mother and my caregiver, the girl that I mentored, her grandmother had the same goals. At the beginning, I guess I didn't expect them to. So, that was interesting to see that they wanted the same things for their children. (14-17)

Two similarities that Tina noted were responsibility and confidence. "The thing that was similar was that they both wanted their children to be responsible, to have confidence.

When she was answering that I realized those are some of the things my mom and dad wanted" (525-527).

Writing About the Caregiver Conversations

The purpose of the final course assignment, The Caregiver Conversation Project Final Report (Final Report), was to provide the preservice teachers opportunities to reflect on information gathered during the two caregiver conversations, and on how the experience affected them. However, for a variety of reasons, reflection became a secondary focus. Completion of the project for a high course grade took precedence.

Focus on course grade over learning

Receiving a high grade on the Final Report, and the Family Course in general, was a high priority for the preservice teachers in my study. Their focus on grades affected both how they conducted the MCC and the content they included in the Final Report.

Autumn was concerned that if she upset her mentee's mother she might refuse to answer questions, then Autumn would be unable to write the Final Report. "I was worried that if she [her mentee's caregiver] felt pressured to answer, uncomfortable, that she would just stop answering and that would be all. I was careful to read her answers [from notes taken during the conversation] and I would go on to the next question" (529-531). Nancy wanted to insure that the information she collected for the Final Report

exactly matched the details of the project rubric. “I checked off everything [on the rubric]. I talked about everything I was supposed to in my paper” (293). Tina expressed a similar view. She also strictly relied on the assignment’s rubric when asking questions.

You do papers mostly for the grade. So when you have to answer these questions in order, those were the questions he was grading on, and so he had, or whoever developed the interview project, or the Caregiver Conversations, they had headings and then under each they had specific things you had to answer. So you go through and make sure you answer those specific things. There were a couple [of questions] that made you think, but I think the other ones just seemed kind of straightforward. (130-136)

Tina also felt that collecting information specifically for the Final Report outweighed making connections with her mentee’s grandmother.

It was probably bad but when I was doing the interview I wanted to make sure. . . . I did want to hear stuff. The way I am it’s obviously for grades. I wanted to make sure. Even if I were to have a good interview that connects with her, have a really good interview. If I didn’t answer the questions, I wouldn’t get a good grade on it. Even though the interview could have been amazing. (588-594)

Bonnie believed that her colleagues in general considered the course grade the most important factor. She also noted that her level of frustration and lack of future contact with her mentee influenced her focus on receiving a high grade over making connections.

I think they [colleagues] kind of thought this is just a grade for a class and we just have to do it for the class also. That’s kind of the way I looked at it, too though. . . . Just, just because I didn’t have that great of experience. I kind of gave up at the end, this past week or so. I gave up with it because fine I just need this for a grade. I’m not going to see your child again. I’m just frustrated, so . . . it would have been different if I had still tutoring her after the interview. (527-534)

Absence of commentary on concerns and struggles

The Final Report contained little discussion of the struggles the preservice teachers encountered while arranging and conducting the MCC. When asked why this information was not included, the preservice teachers commented on the structure of the Final Report.

Autumn struggled throughout the semester to arrange for the MCC and in the end conducted the conversation over the phone. When asked why her struggles were not mentioned, she replied, “I probably just ran out of room” (116). “I think we could only have a certain number of pages, and I just focused more on the actual analysis of the interview than my personal experiences” (120-121).

Bonnie who almost failed to complete the MCC, which would have greatly impacted her grade, included none of her discomfort or frustration. In fact, the Final Report was very positive in tone. She attributed this to when the report was written and the report’s format. “Probably I [did not include information about the discomfort and difficulties] because it was the last week or two of the semester and I was fed up with everything so I probably didn’t put as much as I could have” (119-120). “Tiredness” (151).

When Tina was asked why she did not mention any of the discomfort she felt asking factual questions of her mentee’s grandmother, she responded, “No specific reason” (148). Tina had also talked extensively in Interviews 2 and 3 about negative feelings she had about her mentee’s mother abdicating responsibility for her daughter.

I also didn’t mention how when I asked her which home she [her mentee] has. I don’t think I mentioned that in the paper either and I don’t know why. (118-121)

I think when I was following the rubric for the paper that I really didn’t know where it [information about her mentee’s house] fell under. I really didn’t think it fell under any of the topics. I could have thrown it in, but I just didn’t. No real reason as to why I didn’t. (123-127)

Jenn did not experience problems arranging the MCC, but she did experience an abbreviated conversation because her mentee’s grandmother was waiting in the car while the mother talked to Jenn. When asked why the brevity of the MCC was not mentioned in the Final Report, Jenn responded, “I don’t know” (301 and 306). She also noted that the

timing of writing the Final Report affected what she chose to include. “Probably I was just doing that the night before [it was due] and I just didn’t think enough about it, so, it wasn’t . . . nothing that I left out was like intentionally left out” (313-315). “I just was probably not thinking straight. It was right during finals and my paper was due at the very end of all my finals, so I was probably just getting it done” (319-321).

Even though Nancy had the easiest time of all the preservice teachers, she too failed to include a significant event that occurred immediately prior to the MCC. She and her mentee picked some books out of a trashcan en route to her mentee’s home. Nancy did not see anything wrong with taking the books and giving them to her mentee since she and her mother had taken objects out of the trash for personal use a number of times in the past. However, when she told her mentee’s mother about the books, Nancy became embarrassed.

I was thinking, “Man, how does that possibly sound?” I didn’t really realize it until afterwards, and I really shouldn’t have said that because it was like I was trying to say that they can’t afford books, and we have to go into the trashcan to get them. I tried to clarify that they were perfectly good books, and I don’t know why they were throwing them away, but I was thinking that I was digging a bigger hole than I’m already in. (L200-205)

Nothing about this experience or Nancy’s feelings were included in the Final Report.

When asked, she said, “Oh, I think because by that point [after writing the final report] I’d become comfortable with everything I talked about. My comfort level was better, and also I had seen the caregiver again after that” (414-416).

Composite Structural Description

The preservice teachers who participated in my study encountered people and situations that were different from those they had experienced in the past. All had previously worked with children. However, not all had worked with children from lower

socio-economic neighborhoods or from different racial and/or ethnic backgrounds, and none had spent time in a low-income housing community. These differences caused the preservice teachers to have concerns and discomforts from the beginning to the end of the Caregiver Conversation Project. These concerns and discomforts also influenced the written course assignment, the Final Report. The purpose of the Final Report was to discuss what they had learned from the caregivers or parents through a comparison and contrast of the two caregiver conversations, and to reflect on their reactions to what they had learned.

Arranging for the Mentee Caregiver Conversation

Arranging for the MCC was one of the most uncomfortable aspects of the entire Caregiver Conversation Project for the preservice teachers. They found themselves in an unfamiliar environment, interacting with people who came from an unfamiliar cultural context. Past experiences had not necessarily provided adequate understanding or skills to cope with the tasks at hand. They had common concerns and common courses of action based on their cultural assumptions.

Common concerns

One of the common concerns was feeling like *the other*. Upon entering their mentees' communities they discovered that they felt uncomfortable having lost familiar cultural cues, and that they and their possessions stood out. They were concerned about how they were perceived based on the cars they drove, their skin color, and their level of education. They noted that this discomfort existed even though they had not interacted with people from the communities, nor had anyone said anything negative to them. They saw differences around them and projected feelings on to people from the neighborhoods. This is not to say that their concerns were illegitimate. In at least two instances, center

personnel warned preservice teachers about security issues. Autumn was directed not to go outside alone with her mentee during Bright Futures, and Jenn was told that it was not a good idea to be in the neighborhood after dark. She also noted that personnel at other centers sometimes escorted the preservice teachers to their cars when it got dark.

This discomfort about being in an unfamiliar environment lessened as the preservice teachers became more familiar with the neighborhoods, but it never disappeared. Interactions with center personnel and caregivers or parents continued to be influenced by the preservice teacher discomfort. For example, Nancy noted that various cultural and physical aspects of her mentee's mother made her uncomfortable (i.e., her demeanor, dialect, gold teeth). At the same time, Nancy and her colleagues were also concerned about caregiver or parent perception of them.

Discomfort carried over into arranging for the MCC. During Interview 1 of my study, the preservice teachers speculated about the best means of making contact with the caregivers or parents of their mentees. The general feeling was that they did not know how to do it. There were few opportunities to meet the caregivers or parents at the community centers. They did not know if it was appropriate to walk their mentees home, especially in light of the concerns they had about the neighborhoods. They had heard negative stories about caregivers or parents from colleagues who had already completed the Bright Futures field experience. Based on the information that they had, they believed that speaking with the caregivers or parents of their mentees had the potential to make them uncomfortable.

Common courses of action

The preservice teachers resorted to contact techniques that had worked with their parents, such as sending notes home. All assumed that their mentee's caregivers or

parents would immediately respond with a date and time for the MCC. This only occurred for one preservice teacher (Jenn). Jenn speculated that her ease in setting up the MCC was due to the mother's strong views about the responsibility of caregivers or parents to participate in the MCC as a requirement for their children's participation in Bright Futures. The other preservice teachers encountered a range of difficulty. Nancy wrote a few additional notes before deciding to walk home with her mentee. Autumn, Bonnie, and Tina continued to rely on notes until close to the end of the semester, at which time they became concerned about completing the project. Tina arranged a field trip for her mentee and used that as a means of contacting her grandmother about the MCC. Autumn and Bonnie waited until just before Thanksgiving to ask for assistance from community center staff, who readily provided the caregivers' phone numbers.

Bonnie had the most difficulty, which was interesting because at the beginning of the semester she was the one who felt the most confident. She had met her mentee's mother the first day of Bright Futures and had been invited into the home, which reminded her of an ex-boyfriend's home. She made numerous written and face-to-face attempts to arrange the MCC. Finally, as a last resort, she left the written questions with her mentee's mother and picked up the responses the next day. As reported by the preservice teachers, their experiences were not unusual; they noted hearing similar stories from colleagues.

Obstacles to Asking Questions During the Mentee Caregiver Conversation

During the MCC, other areas of concern and discomfort arose. The preservice teachers found it difficult to ask follow-up exploratory questions for three reasons. First, they held assumptions about the caregivers or parents of their mentees and the communities in which they lived. They believed that the caregivers or parents would find

certain types of questions intrusive. Second, the preservice teachers anticipated being uncomfortable hearing responses to the exploratory questions. Third, the preservice teachers' lack of experience conducting qualitative interviews affected their ability to ask for more in-depth information.

Discomfort asking questions of caregivers or parents

When a caregiver or parent responded “yes” or “no” to an initial question during the MCC, the preservice teachers moved on to the next topic because they interpreted the brief response as an indicator of discomfort. Questions the preservice teachers most frequently mentioned as intrusive were factual questions about the family or the caregiver or parent. This included questions about family composition, number of family members living in the home, caregiver or parent occupation, level of caregiver or parent education, the community in which the family lived, and areas that the mentee had not mentioned during Bright Futures. For example, Jenn did not ask questions about her mentee's brother because he never came up in their conversations. She perceived that her mentee and her mentee's mother avoided the topic, so Jenn was not willing to broach it. Autumn's mentee never talked about specific family members, and she viewed that as a signal that asking questions about them was taboo. Bonnie believed that her mentee's father was in jail. She did not know if her mentee's mother would have been comfortable talking about him, so Bonnie felt uncomfortable asking questions like, “Who are the members of the family and which ones live in the home now?”

The preservice teachers never said that they were uncomfortable hearing responses to questions. However, this must be considered. Was their discomfort only due to anxiety about causing embarrassment to the caregivers or parents? Or were they also anticipating their own embarrassment learning about living in a government subsidized housing community or finding out a parent was in jail? Both are plausible.

Of most concern was that the preservice teachers avoided questions that could provide vital information for a classroom teacher because they saw the questions as intrusive. Nancy, for example, considered it inappropriate to ask why the caregiver was raising her nephews as well as her own children. However, this knowledge helps a teacher understand classroom behaviors and how long a child may remain in a classroom. Bonnie and others were uncomfortable asking about level of education. Knowing what assistance a parent can provide at home, especially with regard to literacy development, might shape classroom instruction, and possibly the form of caregiver or parent and teacher communication.

Lack of experience with interview questioning techniques

Another possible explanation for the brevity of the MCC and the lack of follow-up exploratory questions was the preservice teachers' lack of knowledge of and experience in qualitative interview techniques. When they interviewed their own mothers, they spent an hour or more talking about their childhoods, hearing old and new family stories, and learning things that they had not known about their past and their families. They asked every question from the list distributed through the Family Course (see Appendix A), and their mothers' elaborated on most questions. Jenn noted, "They [the questions] were very extensive, very in-depth questions that took a lot of contemplation and [thought about] what are your beliefs" (393-394). The following comments illustrate a common experience with the PSTCC. Nancy said, "It took me an hour with my mom. I know my mom was getting tired, but she knew it was an assignment" (454). "I asked my mom every single question" (651). Autumn stated that, "When I interviewed my mom, I asked her every question and it took a long time" (297-298). Tina noted, "A lot of the questions were how she taught me, and that took awhile" (455-456).

This attention to detail and inclusion of exploratory questions did not occur during the MCC. The questions recommended for the MCC included the same list of questions asked during the PSTCC, plus a group of additional questions specific to the mentee and his/her family. Even with these additional questions, the MCC lasted between 10 and 30 minutes; a much shorter duration than the hour to an hour and a half they spent talking to their mothers.

Successful interviewing techniques include asking open-ended questions that can be expanded upon through the use of follow-up questions. Follow-up questioning explores areas of interest in more detail and provides opportunities for the interviewer to move beyond generalities and uncover the details that provide the entire story (Seidman, 1998). When conducting the MCC, the preservice teachers rarely delved below the surface. Only Tina and Nancy systematically asked exploratory questions. The grandmother of Tina's mentee readily expanded on each question and even offered information. This may have been because she had done the MCC in previous semesters and considered participation a requirement for having her grandchild in Bright Futures. Nancy was not happy about asking more in-depth questions, but she did so because she wanted to be sure to have sufficient material for the Final Report. She expressed annoyance that her colleagues had not done the same.

The preservice teachers' explanations for not asking follow-up questions included a belief that requesting similar information in different ways was repetitive. Tina combined questions that appeared to cover similar material, "I thought it would take awhile because I was looking through the questions. It seemed like a lot of questions, but a lot of the questions kind of go together" (451-252). Also, they believed that they knew

the kind of questions they needed to ask. Jenn methodically chose which questions to ask and which to eliminate.

I went through and highlighted the questions that I wanted to ask, from the list of questions. . . . I knew that I didn't want to ask all of them because some of them were very, like the ones I asked my mom, very in-depth and she had to really think about [them]. I just wanted to get a general overview (434-438). This was the first time I had ever met her and . . . I'm just not quite as comfortable asking people deeper questions. (164-165)

When the preservice teachers asked follow-up questions, they found it difficult to phrase them in such a way as to get more detailed information. Jenn, noted, "I tried to phrase it in a different way to get more out of her, and I mean that was the most difficult part, just trying to get answers" (455-457). Bonnie had a similar experience. "I wanted to ask more in-depth questions, but when I asked them, they were still just general answers, 'Yes,' 'No,' 'Good'" (521-522).

While not knowing how to ask questions is not a discomfort, it set the stage for not knowing how to talk to the caregivers or parents, not gathering rich descriptions of their mentee's lives, and not gaining insights into caregiver or parental involvement. This deeper knowledge could then have been used to provide a detailed comparison or contrast with the experiences of the preservice teachers' parents. The combination of a lack of skills and discomfort asking questions that they perceived as causing distress to their mentees' caregivers or parents or themselves resulted in gathering a limited amount of information.

Learning from the Caregiver Conversations

Two areas of learning in particular became apparent from the study interviews and the Final Report. First, The preservice teachers realized that their initial definitions of care and school involvement were narrow. Second, they gained insights into beliefs

shared by their parents and the caregivers or parents of their mentees. However, in the process of recognizing similarities they came to disregard differences.

Definitions of care and school involvement

The preservice teachers entered both Bright Futures and the Caregiver Conversation Project with preconceived notions about what constitutes caregiver or parent care and involvement. These preconceptions were shaped by their personal family experiences and their definitions of the norm. They believed that concerned parents joined the PTA, volunteered in the classroom, went on field trips, and attended evening functions and parent/teacher meetings. Through arranging and conducting the MCC, they came to understand that care and involvement can take different forms from family to family and caregiver to caregiver, and that outside circumstances can affect the role a plays in a child's life. By the end of the semester, their definitions of both involvement and care had broadened.

All five of the preservice teachers mentioned attitude change over the course of the field experience. They came to realize that their mentees' caregivers or parents had not failed to respond to their notes out of lack of interest, but because they had other more pressing responsibilities. They also realized that the caregivers or parents of their mentees believed in school involvement and wanted their children to succeed, and that care, involvement, priorities, and success were not as easily defined as they had first thought.

However, language used toward the end of the field experience still seemed to indicate that they held a negative view of the caregivers and their roles. Autumn concluded that the grandmother of her mentee wanted him to succeed like *normal* parents, "You could tell that they both [grandmother and mentee] care about each other

and were interested in the best for him. Interested in helping him succeed in life. Like normal parents would do” (398-400). Nancy was surprised that her mentee’s mother helped him with schoolwork, “I was surprised how much she taught my mentee” (351). Tina was pleased her mentee’s grandmother was concerned about school, “I enjoyed just hearing that she does care about her schooling” (508). Their choice of words is telling and gives insight into how little they expected of the caregivers or parents, and how unusual they saw the family groupings, which did not look like the traditional nuclear family of mother, father, and a couple of children. Their experience in Bright Futures and the Caregiver Conversation Project generally helped to widen their perspectives, but not change them.

They also expressed the belief that their experience conducting the MCC would impact future interactions in the classroom. Nancy said it best, “You can’t assume what a parent’s role is in a child’s education. They might surprise you. They might feel very strongly about participating and you can’t assume. You have to go in with an open mind” (644-646).

Insights into shared beliefs of caregivers or parents from different cultural groups

The preservice teachers assumed at the outset of the Caregiver Conversation Project that economic and cultural differences would impact the caregivers or parents’ definitions of care and involvement. Although they frequently mentioned differences in beliefs during the interviews, similarities were the focus of the Final Report. The similarities they noted were general societal ideals that are not necessarily dependent on subculture norms, such as respect for elders, the need to work hard, development of independence, being positive about school, and the importance of developing

responsibility and confidence. These similarities are generally accepted as important across cultures.

Writing About the Caregiver Conversations

The culminating assignment of the Caregiver Conversation Project was the Caregiver Conversation Project Final Report (Final Report). The purpose of the Final Report was to present what had been learned from the caregivers or parents about their children's strengths, weaknesses and interests; caregiver or parents' desires for their children; caregiver or parental understanding of school involvement, and insights into the lives of the mentees. The content of the Final Report was determined by an assignment rubric (Appendix F). Beyond the areas mentioned above, the rubric also contained a section on reflection in which the preservice teachers were to note their reactions to the caregiver or parents' perspectives, and what they gained from interviewing their parents and the caregivers or parents of their mentees.

Three factors directly affected the quality and quantity of the preservice teachers' discussion in the Final Report. First, the preservice teachers placed more weight on following the exact specifications of the rubric, in order to receive a high grade, than on using the experience as an opportunity to synthesize and reflect upon what they had learned. Some of the preservice teachers specifically went through the list of questions and determined which would most likely be needed for the Final Report (Autumn, Nancy, Tina). Bonnie was so concerned about potentially not completing the assignment that she was just happy her mentee's mother gave her information, even though it was through brief written answers.

The second factor was the limited amount of information the preservice teachers collected during the MCC. Because of their lack of knowledge about qualitative

interview techniques and their level of discomfort asking follow-up questions, as previously discussed in this chapter, they did not have a great deal of material to compare and contrast.

Finally, the way in which the preservice teachers interpreted instructions from the Family Course instructor contributed to the lack of information gathered during the MCC. He had indicated that it was acceptable not to ask follow-up questions as long as an explanation was included in the Final Report. The preservice teachers interpreted this to mean that any question they perceived as uncomfortable, for either themselves or the caregiver or parent, could be eliminated. Also, even though they believed the questions could be eliminated with an explanation, their explanations were weak to non-existent in the Final Reports.

As a result of the desire for a high grade, lack of information to compare and contrast, and a restrictive interpretation of instructions, there were missed opportunities for learning in the Final Report. The missed opportunities included a lack of discussion about difficulties encountered in arranging and conducting the MCC, and a strong focus on similarities between the two families rather than on the differences that can help a teacher match instruction and classroom climate to the needs of students who come from culturally and linguistically diverse homes.

Some attributed excluding mention of their struggles in the Final Reports to lack of space. The Final Report was to be 6 to 8 pages in length, and they did not know how the instructor would feel about exceeding the limit. Others noted that it was the last assignment due from all their courses, and they just wanted to finish the semester. Bonnie, who almost failed to complete the assignment, mentioned none of her struggles

and was very positive in tone even though she was rarely positive during the three interviews for my study.

Essence

The Caregiver Conversation Project consists of three interconnecting components: the Preservice Teacher Caregiver Conversation (PSTCC), the Mentee Caregiver Conversation (MCC), and the Caregiver Conversation Project Final Report (Final Report). All of these assignment components were situated within Bright Futures. While all three influenced the preservice teachers' experience, the essence arose from the MCC, and was affected by what occurred during the PSTCC, the Final Report, and Bright Futures. The essence of the experience included assumptions made by the preservice teachers with regard to the types of questions the caregivers or parents might find intrusive, preservice teachers' discomfort in asking these questions, surprise at the answers they received from caregivers or parents regarding involvement in their children's education, and academic considerations that overrode the purpose of the Caregiver Conversation Project for the preservice teachers.

Discomfort

The preservice teachers experienced two kinds of discomfort while arranging for and conducting the MCC. The first form of discomfort arose from being placed in unfamiliar surroundings and situations. The second occurred while asking questions of the caregivers or parents during the MCC.

Discomfort in unfamiliar surroundings

The unfamiliar surroundings of a low-income housing community caused the preservice teachers discomfort. Being in this setting influenced all aspects of their field experience, especially the MCC. All of the preservice teachers grew up in White upper-

middle class to upper class neighborhoods. They all had had some experience with racial, ethnic, and economic diversity. However, little of what they experienced in the past prepared them to navigate the unfamiliar cultural setting of this low-income housing community. They came into the field experience holding negative assumptions about the neighborhoods and their citizens, behavior patterns, and unexamined definitions of the role caregivers or parents and community play in a child's life and education. The cultural norms in the neighborhoods were different enough that the preservice teachers felt like *the other*, possibly for the first time in their lives. They had difficulty interpreting what they experienced in the community and worried that people in the community held a negative opinion of them.

They found that their twice-weekly mentoring trips into the neighborhood helped them develop familiarity and comfort. However, familiarity did not erase their concerns and discomfort, it only helped ease them. They continued to encounter novel situations in both Bright Futures and the MCC that kept them off balance. For example, they were told in Bright Futures that it was not safe to take the children outdoors during mentoring. Parents seemed to have strong emotional, physical, and verbal reactions to children's misbehavior, reactions the preservice teachers considered excessive. Also, mentees were less amenable to following the mentors' activity plans than expected.

Arranging for the MCC was particularly stressful for the preservice teachers because they were unsure of the best way to approach the caregivers or parents of their mentees. As with their experiences in the neighborhood, they did not know what to expect because their knowledge base came from a different cultural setting. They assumed that writing notes home would elicit what they considered to be the appropriate response, a return note indicating a place and time to hold the MCC. They were surprised

when the caregivers or parents did not immediately respond, as their mothers would have. This lack of a response once again placed them in a situation where they lost their cultural cues. Rather than change tactics, three of the five preservice teachers continued to wait for a response. Two waited so long that they risked not completing the assignment. Once they successfully arranged for the MCC, their discomfort did not dissipate but was transferred to what occurred during the MCC.

Discomfort about caregiver or parent discomfort

On the day of the MCC, the preservice teachers continued to feel discomfort. Four of the five preservice teachers ran into unexpected circumstances that could have adversely affected the MCC. Caregivers or parents were not on time or had to reschedule. In one case, a family member waited in the car while the parent talked to the preservice teacher. Two of the preservice teachers used alternative methods for the MCC. Autumn conducted the conversation over the phone, and Bonnie left the questions with her mentee's mother in the hope that the written responses would provide sufficient information for the Final Report. Neither option was particularly fruitful. All of these experiences caused continued discomfort for the preservice teachers, but a more specific and important form of discomfort occurred during the MCC itself.

The preservice teachers anticipated that asking questions about their mentees' families and communities might be problematic. "Yes" or "no" responses caused the preservice teachers to move on to the next question rather than pausing to gather more in-depth information. Oftentimes the questions the preservice teachers found most problematic were factual questions about family members, educational background, or the community in which the family lived. This suggests that the preservice teachers assumed that the caregivers or parents would be ashamed or embarrassed by the answers

to these questions. From the preservice teachers' perspective there was shame and disgrace associated with living in the community and having a family structure that did not match the one in which they grew up. As a result, the preservice teachers rarely delved below the surface of the families' lives or experiences with the education system. Ultimately, this lack of depth affected what the preservice teachers learned from the MCC, and the quality and quantity of information available to write the Final Report. It also precluded them from obtaining information that could prove valuable to teachers who want to better understand how to teach and interact with students and families from diverse backgrounds.

An additional factor that may have impacted the preservice teachers' ability to ask exploratory questions was their lack of experience with interviewing techniques. The mothers of the preservice teachers readily answered all of the questions during the PSTCC without hesitation. They automatically elaborated without the preservice teachers asking for expansion. The preservice teachers had not needed to ask follow-up questions and therefore lacked experience asking exploratory questions when they reached the MCC. Although the preservice teachers had practiced role-plays during the Family Course, they did not transfer skills learned there to the MCC. Because of a lack of questioning skills, the MCCs were substantially shorter, 10 to 30 minutes as compared to over an hour for the PSTCCs, even though more questions were required of the MCC than the PSTCC.

Learning from the Caregiver Conversations

Through comparing beliefs of their mentees' caregivers or parents and their own parents the preservice teachers gained insight into the value of difference, but they also learned to ignore it.

Definitions of care and school involvement

The preservice teachers came into the field experience with preconceived notions of what constitutes caregiver or parental care and school involvement. Once again they drew upon past experience and knowledge. Through arranging the MCC, conducting it, and writing the Final Report, they came to understand that definitions of care and involvement are more complicated than they had previously thought. They spoke in the interviews about realizing that their mentees' caregivers or parents cared about school and the future, and they used words of surprise to talk about this realization. They came to the Caregiver Conversation Project with a deficit view of their mentees' families and were pleasantly surprised when their negative views proved to be wrong.

Insights into shared beliefs of caregivers or parents from different cultural groups

While debunking stereotypes is a very important first step in development of multicultural social competence, there is a danger of embracing similarity to the extent that the preservice teachers move to the other end of the spectrum—colorblindness. Differences are the most frequent cause of misunderstandings in intercultural communication, and they need to be acknowledged rather than ignored. The preservice teachers noted far more similarities between their parents and the caregivers or parents of their mentees. For example, both held expectations that children would respect their elders, work hard, become independent, be positive about school, and develop responsibility and confidence. These are very important goals, but they represent general societal beliefs that do not necessarily vary from subculture to subculture within American society.

Focusing on commonalities may cause these future teachers to ignore information that could prove vital to forging positive links with culturally and linguistically diverse

students and their families. Assuming that we are all the same eliminates the need to provide differentiated instruction to support the success of all students, modify classroom structure, and alter teacher behavior. Possible causes for the preservice teachers' shift to the positive may have been a need to balance their prior negativity and/or a means of compensating for discomforts they experienced during the field experience.

Focus on grade over learning

The purpose of the Final Report was to provide the preservice teachers an opportunity to reflect on what they learned through the PSTCC and the MCC and to make connections between the two conversations. There were three interrelated factors that influenced its content: desire for a high grade, lack of experience in conducting qualitative interviews, and misinterpretation of assignment instructions. The overriding factor was receiving a high grade in the Family Course. They used the assignment rubric as the defining structure for the questions they chose to ask during the MCC. Some went through the questions and directly linked them to sections of the rubric in order to be sure that they collected the required information. Fulfilling the requirements of the Final Report rubric took precedence over getting to know and better understand the families of their mentees.

The second factor, lack of experience conducting qualitative interviews, affected the amount and quality of information available for inclusion in the Final Report. Since the preservice teachers did not ask many follow-up questions and relied on the rubric to guide their questioning, they had little detail to include in the summary of their experiences.

Interpretation of the assignment instructions, the third factor, also influenced the preservice teachers' choices. The Final Report was to be 6 to 8 pages in length. The

preservice teachers religiously remained within the page limit. Some were concerned about not having enough material, while others felt they had too much. The ones with too much information deleted personal struggles because *struggles* were not included in the rubric; those with too little information included personal experiences. The preservice teachers also used leeway given to them by the instructor to avoid asking questions they saw as problematic. The instructor indicated that a rationale for any deleted questions needed to be included in the Final Report, but the preservice teachers rarely included a rationale.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of my study was to examine preservice teacher perceptions of a field assignment, The Caregiver Conversation Project. This project provides preservice teachers with opportunities to reflect on information gathered during conversations with their mothers and the caregivers or parents of their Bright Futures mentees, and on how conducting the conversations affected the preservice teachers. The research questions guiding the study were as follows: What meanings do preservice teachers make of an activity within a multicultural field experience? What similarities are there among the preservice teachers' meanings? What factors explain these similarities?

Multicultural social competence is the ability to communicate effectively with culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) children and the communities from which they come. The development of multicultural social competence has become increasingly important in education because the population of the United States is becoming increasingly diverse while the population of teachers has remained predominantly White, middle class, monolingual, and female (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004; National Center for Educational Statistics, 2004). This difference in economic and racial backgrounds is important because most White preservice teachers bring with them a naiveté about how cultural and ethnic stereotypes influence their perceptions of CLD children and families (Schultz et al., 1996; Sleeter 2001b). They have different cultural referents and points of view (Gay & Howard, 2000); therefore, the preservice teachers often have a difficult time

connecting with background knowledge of students of color and those who do not speak English as their first language (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004; Gay 1993; Gomez, 1996; Irvine, 1997). In addition to a lack of background knowledge, the preservice teachers also have little understanding of the effect of discrimination and racism (King, 1991; Su, 1996; 1997) on their future students.

In my study, I used phenomenology to describe the essential meaning of the preservice teachers' experience (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology is structured to intentionally set aside, as best one can, personal understandings of a phenomenon in order to revisit an experience from the viewpoint of the participants. In this case the phenomenon was the Caregiver Conversation Project, a multicultural field experience assignment designed to begin development of multicultural social competence through comparing and contrasting the lives and educational experiences of the parents of the preservice teachers with the lives and experiences of the caregivers and parents of their Bright Futures mentees. I selected 5 participants from the Unified Elementary and Special Education PROTEACH Program (PROTEACH). All of the participants were in their first semester of PROTEACH (first semester of junior-year) and were enrolled in a core preservice teacher education course called *Family and Community Involvement in Education* (Family Course). The study participants were also all monolingual, from middle to upper class socio-economic backgrounds, grew up and attended public schools in Florida, and saw themselves as open to multicultural experiences but did not necessarily seek out multicultural situations. These characteristics match the general characteristics of PROTEACH students and those of teacher education students in the United States.

Data collection and analysis was consistent with phenomenology as described by Moustakas (1994). Interviews were the main source of data. Two artifacts were also collected from the Family Course: the written summary of the conversation with preservice teachers' mothers, and the Final Report of the Caregiver Conversation Project (Final Report). Data analysis included a series of steps (Phenomenological Reduction) that led to the development of individual and composite (across the 5 participants) descriptions of what the participants experienced during the Caregiver Conversation Project. There were two types of written descriptions. The individual and composite textural summaries were more objective in that they used the preservice teachers' words to describe their experiences. The individual and composite structural summaries focused on the researcher's interpretation of the preservice teachers' comments. Also, I kept an ongoing research journal as a means of epoche—an active effort to bracket personal biases, judgments and feelings.

Chapter 4 includes a description of common preservice teacher experiences across all participants using their words (composite textural description), a summary of researcher comments that explain interpretations of the participants' experience (composite structural description), and a summary of their essential shared experience (essence). There were five main findings. First, discomfort was an integral part of the preservice teachers' experience. It took a variety of forms and included both preservice teachers' feelings and concerns about causing discomfort in the caregivers or parents of their mentees. Second, the preservice teachers broadened their definitions of caregiver or parental involvement over the course of the field experience. Third, they gained insights into shared beliefs of caregivers from different cultural groups. Fourth, in the Final Report the preservice teachers focused on similarities rather than differences between

their families and the families of their mentees and provided little evidence of reflection on the two caregiver conversations. Finally, the preservice teachers' reluctance or inability to ask in-depth questions of their mentees' caregivers or parents in conjunction with a focus on course grade over content reduced the depth of the Final Report.

Extending Existing Literature

The preservice teachers who participated in my study had similar experiences with regard to feelings of discomfort, changes in definition of caregiver or parent involvement, and the impact of personal academic expectations on the experience of the Caregiver Conversation Project. Bennett (2001) and Sleeter (2001a) in their syntheses of current multicultural teacher education research indicated that the research base on specific program practices that propose to increase knowledge of diversity is growing, but is still thin; more research is needed on the effectiveness of program components that prepare teachers for the CLD classroom. The findings of my study extend the multicultural preservice teacher education literature to include phenomenological research on just such a program practice.

Discomfort. Discomfort was a very important aspect of the essence of the study participants' experience, and it took a variety of forms. The most common causes of discomfort were unfamiliar settings of the mentees' neighborhood and questions the preservice teachers perceived as potentially uncomfortable for either the caregivers or parents of their mentees or themselves.

Discomfort in unfamiliar surroundings. Much of the multicultural preservice teacher education research has centered on attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge development about diversity. These studies have focused on descriptions of basic attitudes about diversity (Bollin, 1996; Bondy & Davis, 2000; Dome et al., 2005; Goodwin, 1997;

Neuharth-Pritchett et al., 2001; Pang & Sablan, 1998; Proctor et al., 2001; Schmidt, 1998), factors that caused questioning of attitudes or beliefs (Adams et al., 2005; Clark, 1998; Clark & Medina, 2000; Frykholm, 1997; Kidd et al., 2003; Olmedo, 1997); or learning that occurred over the course of a field experience, course, or assignment (Ariza, 2003; Barton, 2000; Bondy et al., 1993; Garmon, 1998; Marxer & Rudney, 1999; Narode et al., 1994; Noordhoff & Kleinfield, 1993; Potthoff et al., 2000; Ross & Smith, 1992; Vadebonoeur et al., 1996). A few studies concentrated more directly on preservice teacher experience while participating in a field experience or course (Boyle-Baise, 1998; Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 2002; Davis, 2000; Lenski et al., 2005; Marxen & Rudney, 1999; Murtadha-Watts, 1998; Patton et al., 1999).

Seven studies directly addressed participants' discomfort or conflicted feelings. The discomfort was linked to feeling out of place in an unfamiliar cultural context and questioning previously held beliefs. Florio-Ruane and deTar (1995) found that talking about differences of opinion amongst participants caused discomfort which led to struggle and conflict that had to be mediated by the project moderator. Spindler and Spindler (1994) and Marx and Pennington (2003) indicated that participants experienced internal conflict when reflecting on their own actions or beliefs. Melnick and Zeichner (1995) and Marxen and Rudney (1999) indicated that participants felt discomfort because they found themselves, for the first time, in situations in which they were the minority. The preservice teachers found it difficult to adjust to their change of status. Boyle-Baise (1998) found that working within an unfamiliar community could be a positive, eye-opening experience for the preservice teachers, but it could also cause internal conflict due to questioning of long-held beliefs. Boyle-Baise and Sleeter (2002) found that community service learning offered opportunities to gain cross-cultural understanding.

However, preservice teachers who developed increased awareness often experienced discomfort when long-held beliefs were contradicted.

Findings from my study support the conclusions of previous studies; being in unfamiliar surroundings can cause discomfort. It goes beyond recognition and shows various factors that contribute to preservice teacher discomfort within the context of a community-based service learning field experience. Discomfort—due to previously held beliefs about the community, loss of cultural cues, concern for personal safety, and feeling out of place—contributed to not being proactive in arranging the Mentee Caregiver Conversation (MCC) and not asking questions that the preservice teachers stated would be uncomfortable for the caregivers or parents of their mentees.

While arranging for the MCC, the preservice teachers assumed that all caregivers or parents would act as their parents would have acted. They wrote notes home to their mentees' caregivers or parents and expected instantaneous replies noting a convenient day and time for the MCC. Those participants who did not receive timely replies waited rather than seeking alternative means of contact. This intensified their discomfort while arranging for the MCC and carried over into the conversation itself.

Discomfort about caregiver or parent discomfort. Two aspects of the MCC caused the preservice teachers discomfort: anticipating answers that did not meet their expectations, and interviewing techniques. Lenski et al. (2005) found that the preservice teachers in their study resisted the role of ethnographer. They thought this role was more appropriate for an anthropology course. Once they realized, however, that the observations provided information that could not be obtained through any other format, they became more comfortable. Kidd et al. (2003) did not discuss comfort levels, but she

and her colleagues noted that the preservice teachers in their study found significant value in hearing family stories.

The participants in my study were placed in much the same situation as those in the Lenski et al. (2005) and Kidd et al. (2003) studies. The main difference was that the participants did not reach a level of comfort; rather they avoided asking the very questions that might have given them insights into their mentees' lives, families, and communities because of anticipated discomfort. The structure of the Caregiver Conversation Project and the fact that questioning techniques were not effectively introduced during the concurrent preservice teacher education course influenced their ability to ask exploratory questions. Role-plays were used to help them prepare for interaction with caregivers and parents, but there was little explicit focus, according to study participants, on the need to ask exploratory questions and the benefit of rephrasing questions. In addition, the assignments in the studies by Lenski, Kidd and colleagues were ongoing investigations while the Caregiver Conversation Project consists of only one conversation with the mentees' caregivers or parents. There was little opportunity to develop comfort through familiarity.

The main barrier encountered by the preservice teachers was discomfort based on anticipation of caregiver or parent responses. The preservice teachers were not sure if the caregivers or parents would be embarrassed to talk about living in a low-income housing community, family members in jail, or level of education. Also, through their unwillingness to ask difficult questions, the preservice teachers indicated discomfort hearing the responses. Possibly, the preservice teachers projected their own perspectives on the situation. Because they would have been embarrassed, they assumed that the caregiver or parents would also be embarrassed. A second possibility is that the

preservice teachers would be placed in a position where they would have to acknowledge social inequities, be confronted with their privileged status in society, or find it necessary to contemplate alternatives to their current beliefs. This is difficult for preservice teachers in general as noted by Vadeboncoeur and colleagues (1996). They found that 66% of the preservice teachers in their study remained surface learners who never addressed deeper more volatile issues like inequity and oppression.

Although attention to interviewing techniques might have alleviated some level of discomfort for the preservice teachers, it might also have added to it. The questions that the preservice teachers found most problematic—questions about family composition, caregiver or parent education level, the community in which the family lived, and areas not mentioned by the mentees during mentoring sessions—were the ones to most likely contradict preservice teacher beliefs about caregivers or parents from CLD backgrounds and American society. Currently, there is no research on the effect of qualitative interviewing technique instruction on preservice teacher comfort levels. However, Kidd et al. (2003) found that with time and experience preservice teachers developed a level of comfort with interviewing techniques.

Assumptions about Caregiver or Parent Attitudes and Involvement

The preservice teachers entered both Bright Futures and the Caregiver Conversation Project with preconceived notions about what constitutes caregiver or parent involvement in a child's education. They had only their past experiences to draw upon as reference (Gay 2000; Good & Brophy, 1994; Spindler & Spindler, 1994, 2000); therefore, they made assumptions about their mentees' families. The preservice teachers in my study were similar to those from previous studies (Boyle-Baise, 1998; Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 2000; Kidd et al., 2003; Narode et al., 1994; Patton et al., 1999). These studies

found that preservice teachers entered field experiences with preexisting negative assumptions and stereotypes about low-income families and caregivers or parents' attitude towards education and school involvement (Bollin, 1996; Murtadha-Watts, 1998; Narode et al., 1994; Patton et al., 1999). Most of the studies found that preservice teachers broadened their definitions of involvement. However, Boyle-Baise (1998) and Boyle-Baise and Sleeter (2000) found that the preservice teacher responses were mixed. Those with the least amount of previous multicultural experience made the least amount of movement toward relinquishing negative stereotypes. Boyle-Baise (1998) also found that the community-based field experience she studied supported development of awareness of differences, but it did not move the preservice teachers to a deeper level of acceptance, or help them develop the ability to see situations from a variety of perspectives.

Results of my study indicated that all five of the study participants talked about attitude change over the course of the field experience. They entered with negative stereotypes of low-income families and were surprised by the level of care and concern exhibited by the caregivers or parents. The reassessment of long-held beliefs prompted them to shift their focus from differences to similarities between their mentees' families and their own. The change in attitude indicates a deeper level of awareness of similarities and possibly acknowledgment of stereotypes. However, Boyle-Baise (1998) found in her study that increased awareness does not necessarily lead to greater acceptance of differences, at least at the completion of the field experience. Community service learning supports awareness and acceptance of diversity, but it also has the potential for reinforcing stereotypes. In my study, it was not the similarities but the differences that caused the preservice teachers discomfort and will eventually inform how they interact

with children and parents in the future. Cochran-Smith (1995a) and others (Gay, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a) noted that colorblindness is not a positive quality in a teacher. It often leads to minimizing the need for a carefully crafted culturally relevant and responsive curriculum because of the preservice teachers' lack of understanding that CLD students have different needs from those of the majority culture. Different may be interpreted as deficient rather than as an opportunity for expanding the horizons of all students.

Impact of Academic Expectations

Grades are an intricate part of most academic preparation. The preservice teachers who participated in my study were particularly concerned about how their work would be perceived and graded. In fact, their desire for a high grade took precedence over learning from the two caregiver conversations. Information not requested on the assignment rubric was not included in the Final Report. Although they did learn from the experience and included a level of reflection in the Final Report, neither learning nor reflection figured prominently.

In conjunction with the preservice teachers' over-reliance on the assignment rubric, the course instructor's directions, or the preservice teachers' interpretation of them, contributed to a lack of substance in the Final Reports. First, when the preservice teachers asked if they could skip questions they considered potentially uncomfortable for themselves or the caregivers or parents, he indicated that it was acceptable; however, he required the preservice teachers to include an explanation for the exclusion. Second, the rubric did not specifically stipulate that the preservice teachers could or should discuss the struggles or concerns they encountered before, during, or after the two caregiver conversations. This was unfortunate because arranging and conducting the MCC proved

to be the most challenging and problematic aspect of the Caregiver Conversation Project for the preservice teachers. Additionally, there was no specific rubric category for integration of course content and experiences in the field. The preservice teachers found it difficult to indicate which readings or course activities provided support or caused them to think differently about something they encountered during the Caregiver Conversation Project. They also did not make connections to course content in their Final Reports.

There is general agreement in the teacher education literature that field experiences in general, and multicultural field experiences in particular, must be carefully planned (Holmes Group, 1995; Villegas & Lucas, 2002a; Wilson et al., 2001; Zeichner et al., 1998) in order to be both cohesive and coherent (NCATE 2002; Tom, 1997; Zeichner et al., 1998), and that preservice teachers must be carefully scaffolded during their time in the field (Noordhoff & Kleinfield, 1993; Tom, 1997; Zeichner et al., 1998). Courses within PROTEACH are specifically designed to be both coherent and cohesive (Ross et al., 2005; Webb et al., 2005). The Caregiver Conversation Project, as part of PROTEACH, has been carefully constructed. It has cross-course, cross-departmental, and program support. It is administered within a course that focuses on family and community issues and is set within a larger field experience (Bright Futures) that is connected to *Teachers and Learners in Inclusive Schools*, a course that directly addresses issues of diversity, equity and equality and a course on child development. However, the preservice teachers appear to need more support linking information from their field experience to their teacher education courses, and visa versa. They found it difficult to connect course supported strategies specifically designed to help with the MCC and

content from the two main teacher education courses that would have deepened their reflection in the Final Report.

Conclusion

Overall, results from my study reaffirm previous research on preservice teacher attitude change during field experiences and the impact of a concurrent course on preservice teacher learning. Attitude change is the greatest positive factor that preservice teachers derive from multicultural field experiences and contact with diverse groups of people. However, as Boyle-Baise found in her 1998 study, increased awareness does not necessarily lead to elimination of stereotypes and may result in development of an attitude of colorblindness that can be detrimental to CLD students.

Additionally, the results shed light on areas that have been less frequently discussed in the multicultural teacher education literature: effects of preservice teacher discomfort on development of multicultural social competence and the negative impact of a desire for academic achievement over learning about CLD students and their families. It has been frequently noted that preservice teachers experience discomfort in unfamiliar situations (Boyle-Baise, 1998; Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 2000; Florio-Ruane & deTar, 1995; Lenski et al., 2005; Marx & Pennington, 2003; Marxen & Rudney, 1999; Melnick & Zeichner, 1995; Spindler & Spindler, 1994). Findings from my study support this conclusion, but move beyond recognition of discomfort to illustrating some specific factors that contribute to preservice teacher discomfort, and how initial discomfort can affect every aspect of a field experience activity.

Little can be found in the multicultural teacher education literature on the impact of a desire for personal academic achievement on preservice teacher learning. The preservice teachers in my study were so intent on receiving a high grade by adhering to

the rubric requirements that they lost sight of the purpose of the Caregiver Conversation Project. The result was that they missed many opportunities to learn about their mentees, their families, and their communities, while at the same time interpreting their failure to gather pertinent information as a success.

Implications

The nature of phenomenology makes it difficult to generalize findings from my study to other preservice teacher contexts. First, the participants were chosen for their homogeneity and resemblance to the average PROTEACH preservice teacher. Second, each field experience is unique, and therefore the nature of the field experience impacts how and what is learned by the preservice teachers who participate in it. However, through the rich, thick descriptions and use of both verbatim participant comments and interpretive summary, the reader can make decisions regarding transferability of the findings to his/her context.

Implications for Preservice Teacher Educators and Program Designers

It must be remembered that the Caregiver Conversation Project is an early field experience activity that is situated within the preservice teachers' first multicultural field experience in their teacher education program. The preservice teachers must start somewhere on their journey to becoming teachers with a strong set of multicultural social competencies, and both Bright Futures and the Caregiver Conversation Project provide ample opportunities for growth. The objective is to determine how to help the preservice teachers bridge the theory to practice gap. Even in well-designed programs and courses there are areas that can be improved. The following implications are meant to assist in that process.

The intent of an assignment such as the Caregiver Conversation Project is admirable and challenging for an initial field experience, and there are a number of issues that teacher educators should consider based on study findings. First, the Final Report is meant to be the culminating experience of the Caregiver Conversation Project. It is designed to promote preservice teacher reflection through comparing and contrasting the lives and viewpoints of the families of their Bright Future mentees with their own families. However, it loses focus in translation to practice. From an outsider's viewpoint, it appears that the aim of the curriculum designers was to make the Caregiver Conversation Project either a type of cultural therapy (Spindler & Spindler, 1994, 2000) or a variation of Schmidt's ABC's of Cultural Understanding and Communication (Schmidt, 1998). As a form of cultural therapy, (a) the preservice teachers would develop awareness of their unexamined beliefs about CLD children and the communities from which they come; (b) self-monitor their beliefs, experiences, and reactions through reflection and comparison/contrast with their own family's experiences; and then (c) look at how their experience in the Caregiver Conversation Project and Bright Futures can impact their future classroom and students. As a variation of the ABCs, (a) the Preservice Teacher Caregiver Conversation (PSTCC) is the equivalent of the preservice teacher's autobiography; (b) the MCC replaces the biography of a culturally different person; (c) the Final Report is the cross-cultural analysis in which cultural differences are identified.

Under both scenarios there appears to be an assumption that reflection will occur with the level of scaffolding currently provided. However, the participants in my study did not make deeper connections with the current level of support provided them. They failed to connect classroom content and readings to their experience and rigidly restricted their learning to the course provided rubric. They shifted from seeing differences to

seeing similarities between their families and those of their mentees, but did not reflect on the importance of recognizing the differences. What seems to be missing is carefully structured scaffolding that encourages moving beyond the minimum course requirements and into exploration. Teacher education scholars and researchers have noted that careful preparation of preservice teachers before, during, and after a field experience is a key element to success (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004; Sleeter, 2001b; Tom, 1997; Zeichner et al., 1998). Researchers have also found that carefully constructed teacher education course assignments can impact the ability of preservice teachers to connect course content and experiences in the field (Barton, 2000; Bondy et al., 1993; Kidd et al., 2003; Patton et al., 1999; Ross & Smith, 1992) There is also evidence that guided reflection (Dome et al., 2005; Murtadha-Watts, 1998; Olmedo, 1997; Patton et al., 1999; Ross et al., 1993; Yost et al., 2000) and ongoing field experience related interventions (Noordhoff & Kleinfeld, 1993; Proctor et al., 2001) increase preservice teacher growth in a variety of ways including, reduction of anxiety and frustration, deeper levels of reflection, and alteration of beliefs. In the case of the preservice teachers who participated in my study, these supports might have reduced their frustration with the process of arranging and conducting the MCC and their discomfort asking follow-up questions. The supports may also have enriched their reflective practice. There are two aspects to scaffolding: What preservice teacher educators need to know in order to provide scaffolding, and what constitutes appropriate scaffolding.

Preservice teacher educator knowledge base

Course instructors in programs that promote exploration of diversity and social justice issues need to be skilled in more than content knowledge. They need to understand the kinds of situations, concerns, and discomforts that preservice teachers will

encounter in their coursework and field experiences. They also need to be aware of their own social identities and confront their own biases in order to be able to offer support, suggestions, and skill development to those encountering situations that might cause questioning of previously unexamined beliefs (Bell, Washington, Weinstein, & Love, 2003). Along with a higher degree of self-knowledge and awareness of potential areas of difficulty, preservice teacher educators need to be able to devise course content, course activities, and assessment tools that encourage reflection on a variety of levels.

Scaffolding that promotes reflection

Hatton and Smith (1995) propose that there are 5 levels of reflection:

- Level 1: Technical (reporting of events with a focus on immediate experiences).
- Level 2: Descriptive (providing reasons based on personal judgment, course activities or readings).
- Level 3: Dialogic (acknowledging different viewpoints and exploring different perspectives).
- Level 4: Critical (linking one's actions to a broader cultural historical context and questioning the status quo).
- Level 5: Contextual (ability to apply Levels 1-4 as new situations arise).

Ideally with an assignment such as the Caregiver Conversation Project, the goal should be for the preservice teachers to reflect Critically or Contextually. It must be noted that each of the levels has value and that Technical is an essential part of initial reflection. It is also important to note that deeper reflection may be an unrealistic expectation for first-semester preservice teachers who have had limited experience with structured reflection. However, results from my study indicate that the structure of the assignment and the assignment rubric seem to encourage the preservice teachers to remain in Technical with only occasional forays into Descriptive and Dialogic.

Haddon and Smith (1995) also note that there are specific problems associated with including reflection in teacher education programs. First, course instructors need to find ways to help preservice teachers realize that reflection is an important part of their role as teachers. Teaching is often seen by preservice and novice teachers as a practical endeavor to provide students with content knowledge, and reflection is considered a more academic pursuit unconnected to practice (Haddon & Smith). However, reflection is an essential part of working with CLD students and their families. Learning to work with people from different backgrounds and providing differentiated instruction that draws on students' funds of knowledge requires both teacher educators and preservice teachers to think beyond their own beliefs and experiences. Based on information gathered in my study, three areas in particular stand out: providing structured opportunities for debriefings and problem solving, restructuring of the assignment assessment rubric, and increased focus on teaching interviewing skills.

Structured debriefing and problem solving opportunities. There needs to be both time and opportunity for development of reflective skills suitable for this specific assignment. The Caregiver Conversation Project provides the opportunity, but the current structure of the semester provides little time for scaffolding. One option would be to provide ongoing problem solving sessions either during one of the concurrent teacher education courses or outside course time in order to provide a venue for the preservice teachers to vent their frustrations and, at the same time, help each other by brainstorming solutions to problems. An example would be Critical Friends Groups (National School Reform Faculty, 2005) where preservice teachers could engage in structured dialogue and problem solving activities. These sessions would give them voice, encourage reflection and problem-solving over complaining about discomforts and frustrations, and provide

structure so that the preservice teachers are better able to move beyond reporting (Technical) and describing (Descriptive) events. They would be scaffolded to move into acknowledging and exploring different points of view (Dialogic), and linking their beliefs and actions to a broader cultural historical context to help them question the cultural status quo (Critical). This would be especially important for preservice teachers such as Autumn and Bonnie. These two preservice teachers held the most negative opinions about the Caregiver Conversation Project, and they also experienced the most frustration throughout the process of conducting the MCC.

Assignment assessment. Another form of scaffolding would be to closely evaluate the connection between course grades and learning. Assignment rubrics need to be carefully constructed to encourage reflection through the making of connections between field experience learning and content across all of the concurrent teacher education courses. The preservice teachers in my study over-relied on the assignment rubric. They let the rubric inhibit their learning rather than guide it. Tina noted that her main goal was a high grade. No matter how much she might have learned about her mentee's family and life, she would have seen her experience as a failure if she had received an unacceptable grade on the Final Report. Why not use this overreliance on the rubric as a tool to push for deeper reflection? This would require very careful restructuring of rubric components to include reflection on feeling like the other, difficulties, discomforts, struggles, and surprises in addition to more objective reporting of conversation data.

The only preservice teacher who included reflection on struggles encountered while arranging and conducting the MCC was Nancy, and she only mentioned them because she was afraid that she would not meet the 6- to 8-page limit requirement of the

Final Report. Also, the study participants were unable to link their learning in the Caregiver Conversation Project to information from any of their courses, including the Family Course. With regard to the Family Course, the preservice teachers were only able to connect a couple of role-plays that were useful, a discussion about diversity, and one reading, *Four pennies to my name: What it's like on welfare* (1979), during the interviews for my study. No connections were noted in their Final Reports. Restructuring the rubric to require direct reference in the Final Report to course readings and activities would encourage reflection on struggles and differences encountered in the Caregiver Conversation Project and how they link to course content. The rubric could also be restructured to include opportunities to reflect on how it felt to be the other, possibly for the first time in the preservice teachers' lives.

Interviewing techniques. Interviewing techniques, while not a form of reflection, set the stage by providing the information to be compared and contrasted in the Final Report. The preservice teachers in my study did not have sufficient information to write a reflective Final Report partially due to lack of interviewing skills. While they did role-plays in the Family Course, they failed to transfer what they learned to the MCC. They did not ask follow-up questions that could have given them deeper insight into their mentees' lives. This information could then have been used to reflect on both the similarities and differences they encountered. Also, the discomfort they felt asking follow-up questions could have been used as a base for reflection on why they struggled to ask factual questions about their mentees' lives.

Finally, the preservice teachers were surprised to find that their parents and the caregivers or parents of their mentees held similar views about education and goals for their children. This surprise caused the preservice teachers to focus on similarities rather

than differences. If the two groups of caregivers or parents had such similar beliefs, then why are children from lower socioeconomic, minority, and linguistically different homes less successful in school than middle-class White children? This is an important question to ask because the lack of success for CLD children lies in their differences not their similarities to White middle-class children. It is vital that teacher educators address this issue in class through readings, activities, and discussions to help preservice teachers see difference not as a deficit but as a tool (Cochran-Smith, 1995; Gay 2000; Irvine, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1999). Again, providing time and structure for group reflective activities, refining assignment rubrics, improving interviewing skills, and increasing opportunities for explicit reflection in the Final Report would encourage the preservice teachers to adapt the in-class role plays, activities, and course readings to make the most of arranging and conducting the MCC.

Implications for Further Research

My study raises a number of important questions about this field experience assignment in particular and other field experiences that propose to effect change in preservice teachers' beliefs and actions. Teacher education programs are often seen as weak interventions (Artiles et al., 2000; Larkin & Sleeter, 1995; O'Loughlin, 2001; Tatto, 1996). More research needs to be conducted on specific program practices to determine what specific structures provide effective support for preservice teachers. Which types of scaffolding will most effectively link course content and field experiences? How can interviewing techniques be taught effectively to preservice teachers in the early stages of a teacher education program? It is important that this research be conducted by researchers who do not have a vested interest in the outcome of the practice. Teacher educators believe that the practices they use are effective so, as in my study, it is

important to have an outside view, not to prove a practice is good or bad but to help improve its impact on future teachers and their students.

In addition to studies on other program practices that promote multicultural social competence, it is important that follow-up studies be done to see if there is a delayed effect on preservice teachers. As Vadeboncour (1996) and Adams et al. (2005) note, field experiences often occur for too short a duration of time to determine what preservice teachers actually learn from an experience, especially one that challenges them. Learning may not occur until long after the preservice teachers have completed the teacher education program. It is important to see what these preservice teachers do once they get into the classroom (Cochran-Smith et al., 2004; Sleeter, 2001a). Will some aspect of the Caregiver Conversation Project prove to be a trigger for developing multicultural social competence in the future? Will their experience in the Caregiver Conversation Project give rise later to Critical or Contextual reflection? Will some experience during the Caregiver Conversation Project lead a novice teacher to reevaluate a long-held belief or move toward a social reconstructionist commitment? Only longitudinal or follow-up studies can reveal long-term impact of program experiences such as the Caregiver Conversation Project. I hope to follow these preservice teachers through their time in PROTEACH and into their novice year of teaching to witness their development.

APPENDIX A
DIVERSE CAREGIVER CONVERSATION

(Course Requirement for SDS3430)

Purpose: The purpose of this assignment is to give you an opportunity to learn directly from a parent/caregiver about their child and about their ideas as to their role (and that of other members of their family) as educators of their children. You are asked to talk with your mentee's parent/caregiver to learn about: (a) the child's strengths, weaknesses and interests, (b) the types of learning the parents/caregivers have experienced in their family and community which they hope to provide to their child, and (c) their ideas about the type of relationship which they wish to develop with the teacher(s) of their child. Hopefully this experience will result in you gaining some wonderful insights into the lives and thoughts of students and their parents/caregivers, as well as give parents/caregivers an opportunity to speak about their expectations for working with the school in the education of their children.

Informal Explanation Presented to the Parent/ Caregiver: “ I know that you and your family have been your child's first teachers and will continue to be their teacher long after I am gone. You know your child in a way that teachers or tests never can. So I would like to arrange a time in which I can learn from you about your child. Would you have about 45 minutes for us to meet so that I may learn about your child, about some of the things you and your family have taught your child, and about how you would like for me or other school staff to work with you?”

Note to Student: The following list of questions is organized into three areas. **You need not ask all questions, nor is it necessary to ask the questions in the order listed.** These questions simply serve as a guide. (Notice how these questions can be interpreted in multiple ways and how the questions are open-ended).

Section I (Questions to be used only for the interview of the mentee's caregiver or parent):

Parent's/Caregiver's Knowledge about Their Child

1. What strengths or positive qualities do you see in your child?
2. Tell me a little bit about your family. Is this your only child or do you have other children? What ages are they? What kinds of home responsibilities do you expect your child to complete?
3. Tell me about your child's friendships. Who does he or she play with (i.e. socialize with) outside of school?

4. What does your child say about school?
5. What kinds of activities, at school or elsewhere, excite and interest your child? What does he/she like to play? What is your child's favorite subject or activity?
6. What kinds of activities, at school or elsewhere, seem to frustrate your child?
7. What kinds of skills/things would you like for your child to learn this year?
8. What else would you like me to know about your child? Are there any concerns you have about your child that I should know about?

Section II (Questions to be used for both conversations with preservice teacher and mentee's caregivers or parents—wording to be modified as necessary):

Parents'/Caregivers' learning experiences in their family and their formal schooling and their ideas about what learning experiences they provide to their children

1. What are some of your earliest memories of learning in your own family growing up? How and what did the members of your family teach you?
2. Who do you remember as a wise person in your family or community? What valuable knowledge did they possess? How did they share their knowledge with others?
3. What are your earliest memories of school? Did school learning seem similar to or different from the kinds of learning you had participated in before in your family? How would you describe yourself as a student?
4. What was your family's involvement in your school experience? How did they expect parents to be involved with them? Looking back, do you think that was an appropriate expectation?
5. Tell me about some of the activities and experiences that you like to do together with your child?
6. In what ways do you feel that you teach your children? What and how do they teach you? What important things do you feel it is your responsibility to teach them?
7. What do you feel your child learns from other members of your family, and how do they teach your child/children?

Section III (Questions to be used for both conversations with preservice teacher and mentee's caregivers or parents—wording to be modified as necessary):

Parent's/Caregiver's Ideas about the Possible Bridge Between Their Child's Learning Experiences at Home and in School

1. Tell me about your child's school experience. How would you evaluate it? What is the school providing for your child? How will your child's future life be affected by his/her present school experience?
2. What is your involvement with your child's school? How have you been invited, approached, or excluded by the school? How do you think teachers and administrators feel about parents? How do they express these feelings?
3. Tell me about the ways in which the school does or does not support what you teach your child at home? What differences do you see between school and home learning? In what ways do you see the two connecting? How could this connection be improved?

4. What are your feelings about the home/family and school working together to improve your child's learning? What do you see your role as in your child's education and learning as well as that of the school?
5. What things do you think might prevent schools and families from working together to help children learn? What road blocks/barriers have you yourself experienced in trying to be active in your child's education?

APPENDIX B
PARTICIPANT SELECTION TOOLS

Name: _____

Please answer all questions to the best of your ability.

- 1) What is your 1st spoken language? _____
- 2) Do you speak a 2nd language?
Yes (please specify which language) _____ No _____

If yes, where did you learn it? _____
- 3) Are there additional languages spoken by other members of your family?
Yes (please specify which language) _____ No _____
- 4) Have you lived outside of the United States? If yes, where and for how long?

- 5) Have you traveled outside of the United States? If yes, where and for how long?

- 6) Briefly describe the racial and ethnic composition of the neighborhood where you grew up.

- 7) Think about your *best friends* in **your neighborhood**. Describe your best friends by circling all of the following that apply:
 - a. All from a single gender
 - b. All from the same race
 - c. At least one person was of a different race or ethnicity than yourself
 - d. The group was mixed in terms of race and ethnicity.
 - e. All were from the same socio-economic status as yourself
 - f. At least one person was from a different socio-economic class than yourself
 - g. The group was mixed in terms of socio-economic level

- 8) Think about your *extended group of friends* in **your neighborhood**. Describe your “group” by circling all of the following that apply:
- h. All from a single gender
 - i. All from the same race
 - j. At least one person was of a different race or ethnicity than yourself
 - k. The group was mixed in terms of race and ethnicity.
 - l. All were from the same socio-economic status as yourself
 - m. At least one person was from a different socio-economic class than yourself
 - n. The group was mixed in terms of socio-economic level
- 9) Think about your *best friends* in **elementary school**. Describe your best friends by circling all of the following that apply:
- o. All from a single gender
 - p. All from the same race
 - q. At least one person was of a different race or ethnicity than yourself
 - r. The group was mixed in terms of race and ethnicity.
 - s. All were from the same socio-economic status as yourself
 - t. At least one person was from a different socio-economic class than yourself
 - u. The group was mixed in terms of socio-economic level
- 10) Think about your *extended group of friends* in **elementary school**. Describe your “group” by circling all of the following that apply:
- a. All from a single gender
 - b. All from the same race
 - c. At least one person was of a different race or ethnicity than yourself
 - d. The group was mixed in terms of race and ethnicity.
 - e. All were from the same socio-economic status as yourself
 - f. At least one person was from a different socio-economic class than yourself
 - g. The group was mixed in terms of socio-economic status
- 11) The community of the high school you graduated from can be described as _____
- a. Rural
 - b. Large Urban
 - c. Small Urban
 - d. Suburban
- 12) What was the size of your high school graduating class?
- e. Under 50 students
 - f. 51-100 students
 - g. 101-200 students
 - h. Larger than 200 students
- 13) Was the high school you graduated from _____?
- i. Public
 - j. Private
 - k. Charter
 - l. Other _____

- 14) Think about your *best friends* in **high school**. Describe your best friends by circling all of the following that apply:
- a. All from a single gender
 - b. All from the same race
 - m. At least one person was of a different race or ethnicity than yourself
 - n. The group was mixed in terms of race and ethnicity.
 - o. All were from the same socio-economic status as yourself
 - p. At least one person was from a different socio-economic class than yourself
 - q. The group was mixed in terms of socio-economic level
- 15) Think about your *extended group of friends* in **high school**. Describe your “group” by circling all of the following that apply:
- a. All from a single gender
 - b. All from the same race
 - c. At least one person was of a different race or ethnicity than yourself
 - d. The group was mixed in terms of race and ethnicity.
 - e. All were from the same socio-economic status as yourself
 - f. At least one person was from a different socio-economic class than yourself
 - g. The group was mixed in terms of socio-economic status
- 16) Think about the people involved in the extra-curricular activities you participated in during **high school**. (Circle all the following that apply.)
- a. All from a single gender
 - b. All from the same race
 - c. At least one person was of a different race or ethnicity than yourself
 - d. The group was mixed in terms of race and ethnicity.
 - e. All were from the same socio-economic status as yourself
 - f. At least one person was from a different socio-economic class than yourself
 - g. The group was mixed in terms of socio-economic status
 - h. There was a strong crossover between your “extended group of friends”
 - i. There was a strong crossover between your “best friends”
 - j. There was little crossover between you and peers that you interacted with during extra-curricular activities
- 17) Where did you attend your first two years of college?
- a. Community College (please specify) _____
 - b. University of Florida
 - c. A 4-year college (not UF) in Florida (please specify) _____
 - d. An out of state institution (please specify) _____

- 18) Where do you see yourself teaching after you finish PROTEACH? (Circle all the following that apply.)
- a. In a school like the one you attended
 - b. In an inner-city school located in a low socio-economic area
 - c. In a rural school located in a low socio-economic area
 - d. In a school located in a middle to higher socio-economic area
 - e. In a school where the majority of the students are at or above grade level
 - f. In a school where the majority of the students are considered “struggling students”
 - g. In a gifted program
 - h. In a program where the students do not speak English as their first language
- 19) How frequently during college have you been in situations or settings where you were the minority?
- a. Never
 - b. Occasionally
 - c. Frequently
- 20) How frequently during college have you chosen to be in situations or settings where you were the minority?
- a. Never
 - b. Occasionally
 - c. Frequently
- 21) In five sentences or less, communicate why you want to become a teacher.
- 22) Is there any other information about past multicultural experiences that were not addressed through these questions? If yes, please explain.

(Developed by Kuhel & Sabis-Burns, 2003)

Multicultural Self-Report Inventory

SA = Strongly Agree
 MA = Moderately Agree
 U = Undecided

	SA	MA	U	MD	SD
1. I am interested in exploring cultures different from my own.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I have enough experience with cultures different from my own.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I seem to like some cultures and ethnic groups better than other	1	2	3	4	5
4. Part of the role of a good teacher is to encourage children to adopt middle class values.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I feel that cultural differences in students do not affect students' behavior in school	1	2	3	4	5
6. As students progress through school, they should adopt the mainstream culture.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am comfortable around people whose cultural background is different from mine.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I can identify attitudes of my own that are peculiar to my culture.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I believe I can recognize attitudes or behaviors in children that are a reflection of cultural or ethnic differences.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I feel I can take the point of view of a child from a different culture.	1	2	3	4	5
11. It makes me uncomfortable when I hear people talking in a language that I cannot understand.	1	2	3	4	5
12. Values and attitudes learned in minority cultures keep children from making progress in school.	1	2	3	4	5
13. Only people who are part of a culture can really understand and empathize with children from that culture.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I have had a few cross-cultural experiences.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Multicultural education is an important part of a school curriculum.	1	2	3	4	5
16. I am prejudiced in favor of some ethnic or cultural group or groups.	1	2	3	4	5
17. Some ethnic groups make less desirable citizens than others.	1	2	3	4	5
18. Some ethnic groups are more reluctant to talk about family matters than other cultural groups.	1	2	3	4	5
19. Children from differing ethnic groups are likely to differ in their attitudes toward teacher authority.	1	2	3	4	5
20. Personally, I have never identified any prejudice in myself.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I am prejudiced against some ethnic or cultural groups.	1	2	3	4	5
22. In the United States, given equal intelligence and physical ability, every individual has equal access to success.	1	2	3	4	5

(Slade & Conoley, 1989).

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW 1: BEFORE CAREGIVER CONVERSATION

For your Families class, you will conduct an interview with a caregiver of the child you will work with in a public housing neighborhood. I want to talk with you before this takes place, while you are working with your mentee and again after you complete the interview. I'm going to ask you some questions about this assignment. Your name will not be attached to your answers, so no one will know what you have said. You will have an opportunity to read the transcripts of all three interviews to be sure that I have accurately quoted you. After both interviews have been completed, you will also be able to review any summaries that I write about our conversations.

1. Let's start with some information about you.
Tell me about your family.
Where did you grow up?
Tell me about your elementary school
What was elementary school like for you?
Were your parents involved in school? Explain.
How would you describe your childhood?
You mentioned in the demographic survey that you had/didn't have friends different from yourself (use info from the demographic survey, both elementary and high school)?

(If yes -- Tell me about some experiences you had when you were getting to know your friends' families. What kinds of experience helped you get to know these friends and their families? What was that like for you? Did you have any experiences that caused you to think about the differences between you and your friend(s)? How did these experiences make you feel? Did they make you rethink why your family did things in a particular way?)

(If no – Tell me about any experiences you might have had with people and places that were different from what you were accustomed? These experiences can be from school, in your neighborhood, church, etc.) What were these experiences like for you? How did they make you feel?

2. You mentioned in the demographic survey that you want to teach in (type of school environment). Could you elaborate a bit for me? Tell me why this kind of environment appeals to you.

- Have you started meeting with your mentee yet? How is it going? Are you enjoying it? What do you find most enjoyable/most frustrating about working with your mentee?
- Tell me a bit about the center you are at. Based on what you're hearing about other centers, how do you think yours stacks up?
- Tell me what you understand to be the purpose(s) of the Caregiver Conversation Project.
 - How is your instructor preparing you to do this assignment?
 - What questions do other students have to say about doing this assignment, not only in your own cohort, but when you talk to or overhear people talking in the hallway or in the vending machine area? Why do you think your colleagues feel this way? Are your feelings about the assignment similar to or different than your colleagues? Please explain.
 - What questions or concerns do you have about doing the assignment?
 - Are there things that seem interesting to you about this assignment? Please explain.
 - What seems difficult about doing this assignment? (Making contact with the family? Scheduling a time for the interview? Establishing a comfortable atmosphere for the interview?) Do you anticipate any difficulty with the questions when you have the caregiver conversation? If yes, explain.
 - What would help you be successful with this assignment?
 - You are reading a number of things in your classes that relate to Bright Futures and the Caregiver Conversation. Can you think of any reading you have done that has helped you think about these two experiences?

APPENDIX D
INTERVIEW 2: AFTER CAREGIVER CONVERSATION BUT BEFORE THE FINAL
REPORT OF CAREGIVER CONVERSATION PROJECT IS WRITTEN

This is our second interview. You've just completed the caregiver conversation for your Families class. I'm going to ask you some questions about your experience. Your name will not be attached to your answers, so no one will know what you have said. You will have an opportunity to read the transcripts of all three interviews to be sure that I have accurately quoted you. After both interviews have been completed, you will also be able to review any summaries that I write about our conversations.

1. How is Bright Futures going? What are some things you've learned from the experience so far? Do you still find the most enjoyable thing? Please explain. Do you still find the most frustrating thing? Please explain.
2. Has working with your mentee made any difference in the kind of school environment you want to teach in? Please explain.
3. How did the assignment go for your colleagues, not only those in your cohort, but what you are "hearing" in the hallway. Why do you think your colleagues feel this way? Are your feelings about the assignment similar to or different than your colleagues? Please explain.
4. Tell me the story of your Caregiver Conversation from the point of setting it up until the conversation ended (when, where, and with whom you conducted the Caregiver Conversation).
 - Did it go as you anticipated? In what ways?
 - What was surprising or interesting about the experience? Please explain
 - What seemed difficult about the assignment? (If not the same as mentioned in the first interview --) You said in the first interview. Did this turn out not to be a problem? Were there any other challenges?
 - Imagine I'm a new PROTEACH student who will do the Caregiver Conversation assignment next semester. What do you want me to know about it?

- Give me your opinion of the questions in the course handout. Did you find any of the questions difficult to ask your parent/caregiver (show the participant a copy of the handout)? Please explain.
 - Do you still have any unanswered questions or concerns about the conversation? Please explain. What was the most enjoyable aspect of the conversation? The most non-enjoyable?
5. You are reading a number of things in your classes that relate to Bright Futures and the Caregiver Conversation. Can you think of any reading you have done that has helped you think about these two experiences?
 6. As you did the interview with your mentee's caregiver or parent, did you think about or make connections with the interview you did with your parent? What occurred to you?
 7. How has the Caregiver Conversation affected you?
 - Do you feel that you were successful with the Caregiver Conversation assignment? Please explain. Did you make any personal connections during the conversation?
 - As you look back at this conversation, how would you describe your feelings about it? Would you change anything if you had to do it all over again? What do you want to be sure to remember for the future?
 8. Are there other experiences you've had in your life or that you're currently having that would affect the way you're thinking or feeling about the caregiver conversation and your mentee's caregiver? Please explain.
 9. How do you think this conversation might affect you as a future teacher?

APPENDIX E
INTERVIEW #3: AFTER FINAL REPORT ON CAREGIVER CONVERSATION
PROJECT HAS BEEN WRITTEN

This is our final interview. You have completed the final report on the Caregiver Conversation project at the end of last semester. I'm going to ask you some questions about your experience. Your name will not be attached to your responses, so no one will know what you have said. You will have an opportunity to read the transcripts of all three interviews to be sure that I have accurately quoted you. After both interviews have been completed, you will also be able to review any summaries that I write about our conversations.

1. You had a break between writing the report on the Caregiver Conversation and this interview. Has anything happened to you over the break that might have changed your mind about anything in the Caregiver Conversation? Have you reflected on any part of the experience that might change how you see it or have any of your colleagues mentioned anything that made you think differently about it? Please explain.
 - What was it like for you to actually write up the report? Did any similarities or differences between your parents and the caregivers come up?
 - Did any aspect of conversation make the report difficult for you to write? Useful to you? Please explain. Did the report make you think differently about any aspect of the two conversations?
 - In your report you state that Could you elaborate for me? (Additional questions related to the report.) In your comparison between your family and your mentee's family you said that Could you elaborate on that for me?
 - During our last interview you made the following connection (if any) with the interview with your caregiver or parent. This was/wasn't mentioned in your report. Why did you decide not to include that connection? (Or, I noticed that you elaborated on this particular point in your report but it wasn't mentioned in our last interview. Why did you decide to include it? What caused you to think about it after our interview?

2. How has the entire experience of the Caregiver Conversation affected you? Please explain.
 - During one of our interviews you mentioned that was something you found interesting/difficult about the conversation. Do you still agree, or is there something else that now stands out in your mind? Please explain.
 - You also mentioned in our last interview that you found the most enjoyable/most difficult aspect of the experience. Is this still true after you've written your report?
3. Do you think your view of families has been affected? Please explain.
4. How do you think this conversation may affect you as a future teacher?
5. Proteach students sometimes complain about busywork assignments. How did the conversation rate?
6. Here is an experience a new mentor (this semester) reports to you. What would you say to her?

Scenario: The mentor worked with a nine-year-old student, Cody, to draw a poster of the solar system. Cody is excited about the poster and wanted the mentor to come to his house with him to show his mother. The two arrived at his door and knocked because it is locked. A voice inside said, "Who is it?" Cody replied, "It's me and my tutor, Mama!" The door opened several inches, and a woman looked out at Cody. He said, "Hey, Mama, look what we made!" She replied, "Get in here, now. It's late." Cody said, "But Mama, I want you to see this me and my tutor did!" His mother said, "I don't have time for that now; you get in here." She reached for his arm and pulled him inside. The mentor was still standing at the door, holding the poster.

- How would you explain Cody's mother's behavior to the new mentor?
- What action would you suggest she take?
- How do you think your experience with the Caregiver Conversation impacted your response to the mentor?

APPENDIX F
 SCORING TEMPLATE FOR THE FINAL REPORT OF THE CAREGIVER
 CONVERSATION PROJECT

If you did not discuss a particular topic in the conversation guide, be sure to address that omission in your final report and explain why you did not discuss it. Otherwise, points will be deducted.

Component	Comments	Points
Description of Your Mentee and Mentee’s Family		(10)
• Mentee’s characteristics		
<i>Family Composition</i>		
• Expressed values and beliefs about learning		
• What similarities and/or differences are there between your family’s characteristics and that of your mentee		
<i>Learning Experiences of Caregivers</i>		(5)
• Memories of family/community learning		
• Memories of formal school learning and experiences as a student		
• Experiences of parents’ family with schoolsHow do their experiences correlate with those of your caregiver		
<i>Caregivers’ Experiences with Children</i>		(5)
• Caregiver’s efforts to teach their child		
• Child’s learning experiences with other family or community members		
• Similarities and/or differences with your learning experiences in your family unit		
<i>Caregivers Perspective on Home-School Bridges</i>		(5)
• Caregivers’ experiences in connecting with school		
• Caregivers’ expectations about how home and school could work together		
• Caregivers’ ideas about strategies for overcoming barriers to partnerships		
Personal Reflections		(10)
• Reactions to caregiver’s perspectives		
• Paradigm depicted by mentee’s caregiver and your caregiver		
• Ideas for fostering connections with families as a teacher		
• What value, if any did you derive from completing this assignment		
• Communication log		
Paper Mechanics (Grammar, Spelling, Clarity of Thought)		(5)

APPENDIX G
DOCUMENT SUMMARY FORM

Participant Code: _____

Date: _____

Type of Document: _____

Relevant visual information not available from the oral textural data:

Structural reflection notes to be transferred to Research Journal

Unusual circumstances during the experience?

Questions posed by this data?

Summary of researcher epoche from Research Journal concerning this data collection experience:

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Karen A. Kuhel was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio. She received her bachelor's degree from the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, and became a long-time Washington area resident. After a successful career in adventure travel, during which she spent 20 years roaming the world (visiting 52 countries with extended stays in Costa Rica, Guatemala, and Ecuador) she decided a career move was in order. Karen volunteered with a refugee assistance program and found that her intercultural experience served as a useful start to a new career. She entered the Master's of Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (MATESOL) program at American University in Washington, DC. While working on her master's degree, she taught ESOL through Montgomery County Public Schools and held a number of freelance ESOL jobs teaching English for specific purposes around the Washington, DC area. After completing her master's degree in 1995, she taught for 1 year at George Washington University as an adjunct professor in the Department of English as a Foreign Language. Karen then jumped at an opportunity to live and work overseas. She moved to Recife, Pernambuco, Brazil, to teach and develop teacher education programs at Associação Brasil-América, a 2000 student binational cultural and language center.

In 2000, Karen returned to the United States to begin a doctorate in teacher education at the University of Florida. First, however, she recognized the need for a teacher educator in the United States to have experience in K-12 education. To address this hole in her work experience, she taught as a Title I resource teacher to grades 3

through 5 at P. K. Yonge Developmental Research School in Gainesville, Florida. After teaching at P. K. Yonge for a year, she received a fellowship through the Florida Leadership and Inquiry in Teacher Education grant, funded through the Office for Special Education Programs. The purpose of the fellowship was to develop education leaders who are able to function as bridges between general and special education. Karen lives in Marietta, Georgia, where she serves as Assistant Professor of ESOL in the Department of Special Education at Kennesaw State University.