

Shaping Perceptions: Integrating Community Cultural Wealth Theory into Teacher Education

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Teacher candidates need to be prepared to work effectively with rising numbers of diverse student populations, and yet classroom interventions do not always impact perceptions and attitudes in the field. This study explored the initial steps of integrating Critical Race Theory and community cultural wealth (CCW) theory (Yosso, 2005, 2006) into the teacher education curriculum. The study asked if the candidates applied their knowledge of CCW in reflecting on their face-to-face interactions as hosts for Native American students in a diversity workshop. It further asked which types of (CCW) capital the candidates identified most frequently as they reflected on their experiences with Native American students. Results indicated that candidates can identify CCW in the field, with some types of capital more frequently identified than others. Because the potential exists for knowledge to shape perceptions (Kolb, 1984), the study concludes that CCW could be a valuable addition in teacher education curriculum. A more intensive focus on CCW and the addition of pre-contact activities, such as the sharing of counterstories (Yosso, 2006), may also promote knowledge translating into perception and attitudes.

The 2010 U.S. Census affirmed projected demographic shifts: American classrooms will increasingly include children and youth from diverse populations, resulting in a decrease in the proportion of non-Hispanic White students (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Specifically, from 1986 to 2008 the percentages of White students decreased from 70 to 55 percent, while the overall percentage of Hispanic students rose

from 10 to 21 percent (Snyder, 2011). Changes in child-bearing rates within subgroups and recent immigration trends have further contributed toward dramatic population shifts (Johnson & Lichter, 2010). At the same time, leading educators and policymakers note the challenge of working with diverse populations and the importance of closing the achievement gaps often associated with them (Banks et al., 2005).

For several decades, schools of education and national accreditation agencies have recognized the need to train candidates in the “knowledge, skills, and professional dispositions necessary to help all students learn” (NCATE, 2008, p. 34). These groups also agree that all educators, even those who are themselves from diverse backgrounds, must acquire new perspectives to effectively instruct students across broad socioeconomic and ethnic/racial groups (Howard, 2007).

TEACHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

Many candidates, particularly those from a relatively homogeneous White, middle-class background, may have limited exposure to the diverse populations they will be called upon to teach. At our institution, for example, the student body is 92% White, while less than 1% is Native American, even though the state population is approximately 10% Native American (Lee, 2007).

This demographic pattern of predominately Caucasian teachers generally holds true across the country. According to the National Center for Education Statistics Schools and Staffing Survey 2010 data, 83% of elementary and secondary teachers are White; 7% are Black and 7% are Hispanic (Snyder, 2011). One concern expressed in the literature is that White teachers with limited experiences with diverse student populations might have lower expectations for low-income and minority learners (Bransford, Derry, Berliner, & Hammersness, 2005).

In *We Can't Teach What We Don't Know: White Teachers, Multiracial Schools*, Howard (1999) explored how lack of exposure to other cultures may result in fear. Our reaction to fear, he theorized, determines whether or not we grow in multicultural understanding or remain socially isolated. Howard emphasized that teacher preparation programs must look for ways to bring candidates out of isolation by developing in them the competencies necessary to “become partners in the dance of diversity” (1999, p. 10).

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TEACHER PERSPECTIVES THAT LIMIT CLASSROOM EFFECTIVENESS

One of these critical competencies is a professional expectation that all students can succeed. Villegas and Lucas (2007) have emphasized the importance of believing that all students can learn and deserve equal access to educational opportunities. To ensure that all students have such equal access, reform is needed. Ullucci argued, however, that because educational beliefs and teacher perspectives “form the bedrock on which we build educational policies and practice” (2007, p. 1), school-wide reform is significantly hampered when educators hold negative perceptions. If candidates enter the profession with foregone conclusions about student abilities, they expect less, see less, and get less. From this mindset emerges a cultural deficit model, characterized by descriptions of people and their cultural values as “pathological, [and] deficient in the cognitive, emotional, linguistic, and spiritual resources” (Dudley-Marling, 2006, p. 1). The cultural deficit perspective attaches labels and identifies weaknesses in students’ backgrounds, suggesting that “children of color [are] victims of pathological lifestyles that [hinder] their ability to benefit from schooling” (Ladson-Billings, 2006, p. 4).

Furthermore, when educational systems place the blame for low achievement in their students’ homes and cultures, system-wide practices and policies contributing to the problem are often overlooked (Ullucci, 2007). Shaping teacher beliefs at the pre-service level remains a significant challenge in combating such oppressive perspectives and systems (Ullucci, 2007). At the same time, working toward this reform is a significant goal for teacher preparation programs to embrace, particularly because once teachers are placed within a school, their perspectives may become influenced by the system, making it more difficult for them to change their perceptions.

CRITICAL RACE THEORY IN TEACHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

Critical approaches in research look beyond examining and understanding to include a larger goal of reforming and improving (Patton, 2002). Bell, Crenshaw and Delgado popularized the Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework in the 1970s to identify systemic racism (see Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995 for a complete background on the development of this theory). Subsequently, it has been utilized as a critique in many disciplines, including teacher education (Kohli, 2008).

As a teacher educator who promotes multicultural education, Vavrus (2002) has suggested that adding knowledge of CRT to the

teacher education curriculum could foster increased cross-cultural competencies. Yosso (2005, 2006) also affirmed CRT as a basis for examining the ways that race impacts schools. Two central tenets of CRT are particularly relevant for teacher education: 1) CRT challenges “the traditional claims of the educational system and its institutions to objectivity [and] meritocracy” (Solorzano, 1998, p. 123);¹ and 2) CRT places a value on the experiences and applied knowledge of minority cultures (Solorzano, 1998), examining the lives of real people to understand how actual events have shaped their understandings and status. CRT asks educators to consider what important experiences minority students bring to school and how those experiences might be viewed as resources increasing the students’ likelihood of success.

Both CRT and applied learning place experiences at the center of the learning process. Although developmental theorists such as Piaget have focused on the formal learning process as occurring in stages prior to adulthood (Kolb, 1984), CRT has emphasized that lived experiences throughout one’s entire life can bring insight and knowledge to learning (Solorzano, 1998). Schwartzman and Henry (2009) likewise note “the true test of knowledge lies in its connection to lived experience” (p. 6).

COMMUNITY CULTURAL WEALTH MODEL

Yosso (2005) has applied CRT’s approach of valuing student experiences to Chicano/a students and identified specific categories of what she terms “community cultural wealth” (CCW). These CCW categories identify an “array of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged” (Yosso, 2005, p. 69). CCW, thus, offers concrete alternatives to the cultural deficit perspective and serves as a means to challenge the social injustice that Yosso believes is endemic in schools. CCW guides teachers to acknowledge the strength of culturally-related attributes, such as bilingual homes and large extended families, instead of seeing those qualities as barriers to success (Yosso, 2005, 2006).

The CCW model defines six forms of cultural “capital” (Yosso, 2005), which often overlap and intertwine:

1. *Aspirational Capital*: the resilient nature of people who hold on to their “hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers” (Yosso, 2005, p. 77).

¹ Meritocracy is the belief that all students can be successful if they only work hard enough. Gladwell (2008) points out that this American belief ignores the advantages of money, family/cultural background, social status, and other factors outside an individual’s control. Gladwell labels meritocracy as a myth.

2. *Linguistic Capital*: the “skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language and/or style” (Yosso, 2005, p. 78), including communication through musical and visual arts.
3. *Familial Capital*: the ways that “familia (kin) ...carry a sense of community history, memory” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79).
4. *Social Capital*: the “networks of people and community resources...both instrumental and emotional support to navigate through society’s institutions” (Yosso, 2005, p. 79), extending the concept of familial capital into a broader and more extensive system of relationships to provide information and reinforce confidence.
5. *Navigational Capital*: “skills maneuvering through social institutions” (Yosso, 2005 p. 80) or the ability to work and even thrive in hostile and unresponsive environments.
6. *Resistant Capital*: “those knowledges and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenges inequality” (Yosso, 2005, p. 80) or asserting oneself in the face of repression.

INTEGRATION OF COMMUNITY CULTURAL WEALTH INTO TEACHER EDUCATION CURRICULUM

The basic principle of identifying strengths in other cultures as a foundation for building positive expectations is well-grounded in cross-cultural theory. “Both learning and development are deeply embedded in cultural contexts.... Teachers must understand and appreciate the variety of ways children’s experiences can differ, and be able to see and build upon cultural strengths if they are to help all students succeed” (Horowitz, Darling-Hammond, & Bransford, 2005, p. 93). However, little research has been conducted that investigates the integration of CCW in teacher candidates’ (pre-service teachers) experiences working with Native American populations.

METHOD

This study describes the initial steps taken to integrate CCW theory into a required teacher education diversity course as it partnered in a service-learning project with a federally operated Native American boarding high school, the Flandreau Indian School. This partnership operates within the Flandreau Indian Success Academy (FISA), a cross-cultural program that encourages the university at large to adopt the CCW perspective of “respect for the families, communities and tribes from which our students come” (Lee, 2007, p. 106).² Within the FISA,

²For a more thorough explanation of the philosophy and history of the Flandreau Indian Success Academy (FISA), now in its 11th year of implementation, see Lee (2007).

teacher education instructors created a workshop specifically for the College of Education and Human Sciences.

Teacher education faculty recognized that candidates are not immune from believing the stereotypes prevalent in today's society about Native Americans as either desperately poor or newly rich from casino profits (Doble & Yarrow, 2007). To achieve the two project goals of breaking these stereotypes and of replacing them with an asset-based perspective, instructors added lessons on CCW and then assessed the candidates' application of the content during a service-learning experience—hosting an FISA workshop.

During the FISA workshop series, freshmen from a Native American high school came to SDSU seven times to experience higher education opportunities. Each college in the university prepared its own three-hour workshop, with students rotating through in small groups. The workshop experience described in this study was hosted by the College of Education and Human Sciences with candidates leading the following activities: a ten-minute icebreaker in small groups; an introduction to Multiple Intelligences Theory (Gardner, 1999); an online assessment of multiple intelligences (<http://www.bgfl.org/>), followed by a one-to-one discussion of the implications for candidates and students; and a creative project where students decorated quilt squares to reflect their personalities. Each FISA workshop concluded with a dinner, which gave additional time for interaction.

Two research questions guided this study:

1. Do candidates apply their knowledge of CCW in reflecting on their face-to-face interactions as hosts for the FISA students in the FISA workshop?
2. Which types of community cultural wealth (CCW) capital do candidates identify most frequently as they reflect on their FISA experiences with Native American students?

Prior to hosting the FISA workshop, candidates in the education course on Human Relations received the following uniform curricular materials and experiences:

1. A reading and discussion of "Turning the Notion of 'Community' on Its Head: SDSU-Flandreau Indian School Success Academy" (Lee, 2007) as background for serving as hosts in the FISA workshop. This article also briefly explained the CCW concept and challenged the deficit model of using labels to depict diverse students.
2. A presentation on FISA by the SDSU coordinator.
3. Instructions and practice on the FISA Workshop components.
4. A brief lecture on CCW theory introducing the six forms of capital identified by Yosso (2005) along with examples.

A class activity following the lecture served as a formative assessment, indicating to the instructor that the candidates could identify and explain the six categories of capital.

For a summative course assessment, instructors used the following three reflection prompts related to the course content goals of applying their knowledge to the service-learning setting, as suggested by Ash and Clayton (2009).

1. Describe what the FISA experience was like for you. Think of the roles you played in all components of the workshop. Which role felt the most successful from your perspective? Why?
2. What did you discover about yourself as an "intentionally inviting" teacher (Purkey & Novak, 1996)?
3. What did you discover about working with the FISA students?

Thirty-eight candidates constructed their responses during the last week of class to reflect their FISA experiences and, as such, the reflections were identified as data "indicative of the phenomena of interest" (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 170). Candidates in this course signed informed consent statements that indicated their understanding that their written submissions could be used for research and that assured them of confidentiality related to their participation. The responses were collected by a graduate student to ensure anonymity and to encourage the construction of honest responses. Content analysis was selected as the most appropriate method to use because the responses provided insight into candidates' perceptions of Native American students, thus enabling researchers to draw inferences (Krippendorff, 1980).

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Initially, six categories of CCW were used as the basis for coding; however, the two researchers (the diversity course instructor and an English course instructor) decided to collapse the Social Capital and Familial Capital categories because of the difficulty of defining these as mutually exclusive within this population. Research on educational questions are often complex and require interpretation and discovery as methods of inquiry (Cochran-Smith, 2006).

Each constructed response was coded independently by the researchers by identifying themes that matched the CCW capital categories, as defined earlier (Yosso, 2005) and as revised above. The researchers initially coded 27 out of 38 responses (71%) in agreement, with agreement defined as identifying the same CCW categories in each response. Responses with codings outside the range of agreement were re-read, discussed by the two researchers, and, based on their discussion, a consensus was reached for all responses. The coded responses

were tabulated by category, and the category totals were converted to percentages of the total responses.

The first research question asked if candidates applied knowledge of CCW in reflecting on their face-to-face interactions with the students. Twenty-seven candidates' responses (59%) exemplified an ability to apply knowledge of CCW during the service-learning activity; eleven candidates' responses (41%) did not show this ability. Only one candidate specifically mentioned the CCW theory in the response; however, the constructed response prompts intentionally elicited a broad range of ideas to evaluate the transfer of classroom knowledge to experience. Overall, the results indicate that a more intensive focus is needed on CCW theory if it is to be applied successfully in the field.

The second research question asked which types of capital candidates tended to identify in their reflections. Table 1 illustrates the percent of candidates who identified a certain CCW category in their constructed responses.

CATEGORIES OF CONTENT

Candidates most frequently identified Social/Familial Capital and Aspirational Capital in their responses as they reflected on their FISA experiences. Conversations about family and friends were apparently frequent topics during the workshop, which would account for the high percentage of codes in the Social/Familial category. Evidence of close friendships among the FISA students was noted in this response: "The two girls we had were good friends so that also helped with the awkwardness."

In considering combining the categories of Social Capital and Familial Capital, the instructors noted that Native Americans often have broad definitions of who is considered family, and extended family relationships in vertical and horizontal directions can blur the lines between family circles and social circles (Light & Martin, 1996). The English instructor who had also previously worked with the FISA students noted this in the language they used to describe family members. For example, one student told her, "My mother is my grandmother," and in another instance, a student referred to his friend (who was also in the class) as "Brother" in an essay. When the instructor suggested changing the term so as to not confuse his readers, both students protested. A Lakota saying that illustrates this global perspective of claiming relationship with all people and, in fact, all living things is *Mitakuye Oyasin* or "All My Relatives." The decision to collapse the social and familial capital categories aligned with what the instructors perceived as Native American cultural values and perspectives.

Responses were coded as Aspirational Capital in reference to conversations about future plans, such as: "She was very interested in

Table 1. Candidates' Identification of CCW Resources after Service-Learning Experience

| Participants | Candidates Identifying Social and Familial Capital | Candidates Identifying Aspirational Capital | Candidates Identifying Navigational Capital | Candidates Identifying Linguistic Capital | Candidates Identifying Resistant Capital |
|---------------|--|---|---|---|--|
| <i>n</i> = 38 | 15 39% | 12 32% | 5 13% | 2 5% | 0 |

a science field...and hoped to come back again." In the context of the FISA workshop, it is likely that school and careers were logical topics of conversation between FISA students and candidates, which could explain the higher frequencies of this category.

Navigational Capital was identified when candidates commented that FISA students were able to overcome their initial shyness and became engaged in the workshop activities, for example, "by the time we started working on the crafts,...they felt free and were able to speak their minds."

Linguistic Capital includes abilities in music and visual arts. Several candidates were surprised by displays of FISA artistry during the creative activity, as exemplified by this response: "What she [FISA student] drew in thirty minutes blew me away." However, few responses indicated an awareness of this resource.

Although the instructors did not identify any response as having made thematic connections to Resistant Capital, the instructors noted that responses included references to non-compliant behavior from the FISA students (i.e., "he quickly found other websites and ignored my request to focus;" "she put her head down during the presentation"). However, the candidates did not appear to perceive the negative behavior through the lens of Resistant Capital.

Overall, the results indicate that a more intensive focus is needed on CCW theory if it is to be applied successfully in the field. In addition, other themes that emerged through the researchers' discussions indicated additional pre-workshop interventions might be beneficial.

EMERGENT THEMES IN THE CONSTRUCTED RESPONSES

During the researchers' discussions about the content of the constructed responses, several other themes of interest to teacher educators emerged. The following themes were perceived to be most evident and significant for future study.

EMOTIONAL RESPONSES

More than half of the candidates reported experiencing various levels of anxiety about the FISA workshop as they anticipated their role as hosts and as they engaged with FISA students. Their comments ranged from feeling “out of my element a little bit” to “nervous to the point of jitters.” Howard (1999) points out the significance of these reactions: “Whether we deepen our awareness and continue to grow through such experience or merely shrink back into the safety of isolation, is determined by our reaction to the inevitable fear of stepping outside the boundary of ignorance” (p. 12). Guiding candidates through this emotional transition will most likely require more intensive intervention.

PERCEPTIONS OF SUCCESS

Several candidates reflected upon their perceived success, most notably equating success with interpersonal connections they made with the FISA students. For example, “we feel as though we succeeded when we see a smile or even when we see someone opening up.” Another wrote, “I felt the classroom went very well when the girls were making their postcard things. By that time everyone had opened up to one another and there was a lot of visiting happening as opposed to awkward silence.” A third candidate reported that the “most successful” part was when he was able to “invest and get to know a student.”

The candidates also reported success when the FISA students were fully engaged with the workshop activities and reported a corresponding lack of success when the FISA students “didn’t seem to want to be involved.” One candidate, for example, reported a lack of success when she “didn’t feel [her] student was doing what she should have been doing.”

Pratt (2008) argued, however, that such self-reports of success within what she calls “a contact zone” should be questioned. She defined contact zone as “social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power” (p. 501)—which arguably was the case with the FISA, where mostly White candidates met (on their turf) with Native American high school students.

PERCEPTIONS OF LACK OF SUCCESS

Several responders noted other instances in which the FISA students did not respond as expected or desired. For example, they reported instances of FISA students “joking around,” “going on Facebook during computer time,” and “having a bit of an attitude.” Pratt (2008), however, noted that when social situations are “described in terms of

orderliness, games, moves, or scripts, usually only legitimate moves are named as part of the system, where legitimacy is defined from the point of view of the party in authority” (p. 508). In other words, when the FISA students did not do what was expected, when they did not follow the game or script, the candidates did not count it towards success.

In discussing the responses, however, the instructors wondered if some of the “illegitimate” moves on the part of FISA students might, in fact, be unrecognized Resistant Capital. For example, one candidate reported that a FISA student called a drawing activity “stupid,” then proceeded to write the word *DEATH* on his paper. Another FISA student drew an elaborate dragon which was swearing. Several candidates reported other behavior on the part of FISA students, behavior which the candidates considered rude and troubling. Might these behaviors, in fact, have been evidence of Resistant Capital? Pratt (2008) asked, “What is the place of unsolicited oppositional discourse...? Are teachers supposed to feel that their teaching has been most successful when they have eliminated such things and unified the social world, probably in their own image?” (p. 509)

Another example of possible misinterpretation is the number of candidates who expressed frustration at perceived lack of attention. For example, several responses noted that FISA students put their heads on their desks. The researchers wondered, however, if such action, which again does not fall within the imagined ideal classroom behavior, might indicate close and attentive listening—the opposite of how candidates perceived it. Might not cultures with strong oral traditions also foster strong listening skills, and might that listening be perceived differently by those from a culturally distinct background?

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES

Finally, several responses indicated disconfirmed expectations about the FISA students and the experience in general, demonstrating a changed perception in the candidate. One respondent wrote, “I misjudged them all. My thoughts were that these students are mean, students who do drugs, and that they never listen. That was me being ignorance [sic] because what I came to find out is that they are just students who need a little help or push to get along.” Another particularly self-aware candidate wrote, “I learned...that I am not as openly inviting as I wish I could be.”

LIMITATIONS

The use of content analysis as a research methodology limits the findings from this study in several ways. The researchers made inferences based on their interpretations of candidate responses to determine

perceptions and attitudes towards FISA students; however, “inferences never yield absolute certainties” (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 99).

The researchers used an established theory, Yosso’s (2005) community cultural wealth (CCW) theory, as the basis for coding categories, and “established theories relating data to their context are the most unequivocal sources of certainty for content analysis” (Krippendorff, 1980, p. 103). However, CCW was developed in the context of Hispanic experiences (Yosso, 2006); although there may be similarities between the Hispanic and Native American cultures, the validity of CCW has not yet been tested in a Native American content.

Although the constructed responses that served as the data for this study were collected in an anonymous way, one of the researchers was also a course instructor. Her knowledge and personal observations of the candidates may have introduced some evaluator bias into the findings. The second researcher had no knowledge of the candidates.

Although candidates were assured that their responses would not be graded for content, some responses may have been written with the instructor as an audience in mind. This may have influenced the perspectives the candidates presented.

The scope of the three-hour FISA workshop limited the ability of candidates to more completely know the FISA students, and thus limited the candidates’ amount of information on which they based their responses.

Finally, the assessment of the integration of CCW into the teacher education program relied heavily on candidate self-reporting, which “also invites systematic bias” (Schwartzman & Henry, 2009, p. 10). Because candidates likely know what answers the instructors want, and because the candidates’ positive reports will also affirm their personal growth as future teachers, exaggerated responses were possible.

IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Yosso (2006, p. 89) concludes her book *Critical Race Counterstories along the Chicano/Chicana Educational Pipeline* with this haunting question: “Can education—rooted in a sense of community responsibility and with a goal of racial and social justice—transform society?” This study explored the use of an intervention to shape candidates’ perceptions and attitudes by including Critical Race Theory and community cultural wealth (CCW) theory in a required diversity course. Yosso’s categories appeared appropriate for use with Native American students with the possible exception of two forms of capital. The researchers found that distinguishing between Social Capital and Familial Capital in candidates’ responses was difficult because some

Native American cultures, such as Lakota, embrace a global perspective of relationship.

Formative assessments indicated that candidates were able to identify different cultural capitals. However, in the summative assessment of this knowledge as applied in the FISA, 59% of the candidates included elements of CCW capital in their reflective responses describing the students while 41% of the candidates did not. The results indicate that a more intensive classroom and field focus on CCW theory is required. Some candidates’ responses also suggested that more pre-workshop activities to acquaint the two populations with each other might be beneficial. Several candidates noted that both they and the FISA students felt “uneasy” or “awkward” and needed time to “warm-up” to each other.

In addition to Yosso’s categories of CCW, the instructors are interested in the way she distinguishes between “majoritarian” and “counter-stories.” Both recount the experiences and perspectives of individuals. Majoritarian stories are told by those with racial and social privilege, but counterstories are told by socially marginalized people. Pratt (2008) also defined “auto-ethnographic texts” as those which “people undertake to describe themselves in ways that engage with representations others have made of them” (p. 501).

Perhaps one pre-workshop activity might be for all members of the two populations to create and share narratives about their own lives, so that the “warm-up” period of the workshop might be more quickly navigated. Digital Storytelling³ might be one form of narrative that the students could use to become more familiar with each other before meeting. *Wiconi Waste: Education*, an existing social networking site, could provide the platform for sharing the stories. This private social networking site was developed as a communication link between the two service-learning partners, FISA and SDSU teacher education students.

Another useful addition to the applied learning experience might be to develop Pratt’s (2008) suggestion for “ground rules for communication across lines of difference and hierarchy that go beyond politeness but maintain mutual respect” (p. 511) as a way to enhance cross-cultural communication skills.

³ One instructor has been trained by the Center for Digital Storytelling (CDS; www.storycenter.org) to help students create these short first-person mixed-media narratives. CDS encourages the use of these stories as ways to “enable learning, build community, and inspire justice,” goals shared by the collaboration between FISA and SDSU.

CONCLUSION

Teacher educators know that candidates need significant experiences to learn about and to interact with diverse students, especially in light of current demographic trends with the school-age population. However, experiences have the potential to move people in different directions; this means that each classroom experience must be evaluated on “the ground of what it moves toward and into” (Dewey, 1938, p. 38). Instructors should look for evidence that their course curriculum provides valuable learning opportunities that enhance and broaden candidates’ perspectives and that such learning connects classroom theory with field experiences (Ash & Clayton, 2009). If candidates can be taught to view their future students through the lens of an asset-based perspective such as CCW, candidates might reject the stereotypical views about diverse students.

This study showed that over half of the candidates were able to access their knowledge of CCW capital as they reflected on their interactions with Native American students, but some forms of capital were apparently more identifiable than others within the context of this study. Further investigation is needed to determine what potential exists for shaping future teachers’ attitudes and perceptions of Native American students through the integration of CCW theory into the teacher education curriculum.

Utilizing a curriculum that enables candidates to identify the strengths of diverse cultures might also enable future teachers to create more culturally relevant lessons. Identifying and valuing cultural capital might allow candidates to gain insight into their own students, which also allows pre-service teachers to make more meaningful connections. By learning “important community strengths” (Noel, 2010) or identifying “a community’s funds of knowledge” (Ladson-Billings, 2006), candidates develop an especially vital cultural competency: the ability to view their future students in a positive light, as described in this response: “I saw that many of them wanted to achieve more than just the simplicity of life; they wanted to become something more. The passion for education.” Indeed, for any service in which the recipient is lower in the power hierarchy than the provider, a clearer understanding of the strengths of the recipient’s community network will serve to balance the relationship and enhance the significance of the learning experience.

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