



# Influential Diversity Course Content: Implications for Early Childhood Professionals

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## Introduction

Meaningful and purposeful learning opportunities regarding diversity are especially vital for pre-service teachers, as these students are preparing to enter early childhood classrooms.

It is critical that teacher education programs support their students' professional growth and development, while simultaneously, providing them with content to support diversity within their future classrooms and advocacy for equitable practices and policies in the field.

This poster describes pre-service teachers' reactions and responses to course content that provides recommendations to early childhood professionals.

## Study Methods

- Data analysis was completed in Fall 2015
- Consisted of analyzing course content from a co-taught, interdisciplinary early childhood diversity course
- A subset of students enrolled in the course in spring 2014 provided permission
- Participants: Degree-seeking early childhood undergraduates; Ages 21-55 years; 5 African American & 4 European American
- Goals of analysis include determining and describing course content that elicited reactions from students and therefore, met the course objectives.

## Course Content

- Consideration of the variability in human condition as related to early childhood
  - race/ethnicity,
  - socioeconomic status,
  - family configuration (two-parents, single parents, and same sex couples),
  - disability,
  - sexual orientation, and
  - men in early childhood.
- Each of the six units included two to three lessons focused on various aspects of **diversity, equity, young children, and families.**
- Within weekly and unit reflection papers, students shared their reactions to content
- Based on all course content provided, students most often mentioned learning area content, then media (videos and documentaries) in their weekly journals.
- Recommendations for what students feel would enable them to be successful in the field were identified and coded

## Examples of Students' Reflections: Implications for Practice

Subtheme	Student	Excerpt
Understanding students & self	102	When looking through this lesson, the information I found to be the most useful was the list in lesson two under the label "Our Multicultural List." This list really helped me define myself beyond the basics. Yes I am a white female but I never really thought about including my economic status, my education level, my family structure, my region of where I live, and my political ideology in my cultural definition of myself. This was the most useful because when I think of a child's culture, I will think beyond the look of the child like I have thought about myself.
Collaborating with families	104	First I would like to say that I found unit 2 to very interesting and informational. Some key points of this unit that I thought were informational was about the "3rd Space" way of thinking that was discussed in the learning area. I feel that it is important to always consider the parents view on situations dealing with their children. Even though sometimes it may be difficult to get pass you(r) own personal views, sometimes it is best to listen to see the parent(s) point of view as well. A teacher need(s) to take in consideration that everyone was not raise(d) or share the same views as he/she did.
Teaching	101	I like that there were suggestions on how to reduce gender bias in the classroom. Things that seem to do no harm, for example "good morning boys and girls", really seem to segregate the classroom into those two different groups. Reading through the information in this lesson really made me think about things I might say or do or how I react to girls and boys differently in the classroom.
Field of EI/early childhood/ECSE	102	I think having men in the field of early education and education in general is so important! Some of these children will go their whole life without a good male role model for them. Men in our field are rare but hopefully are going to continue to grow.

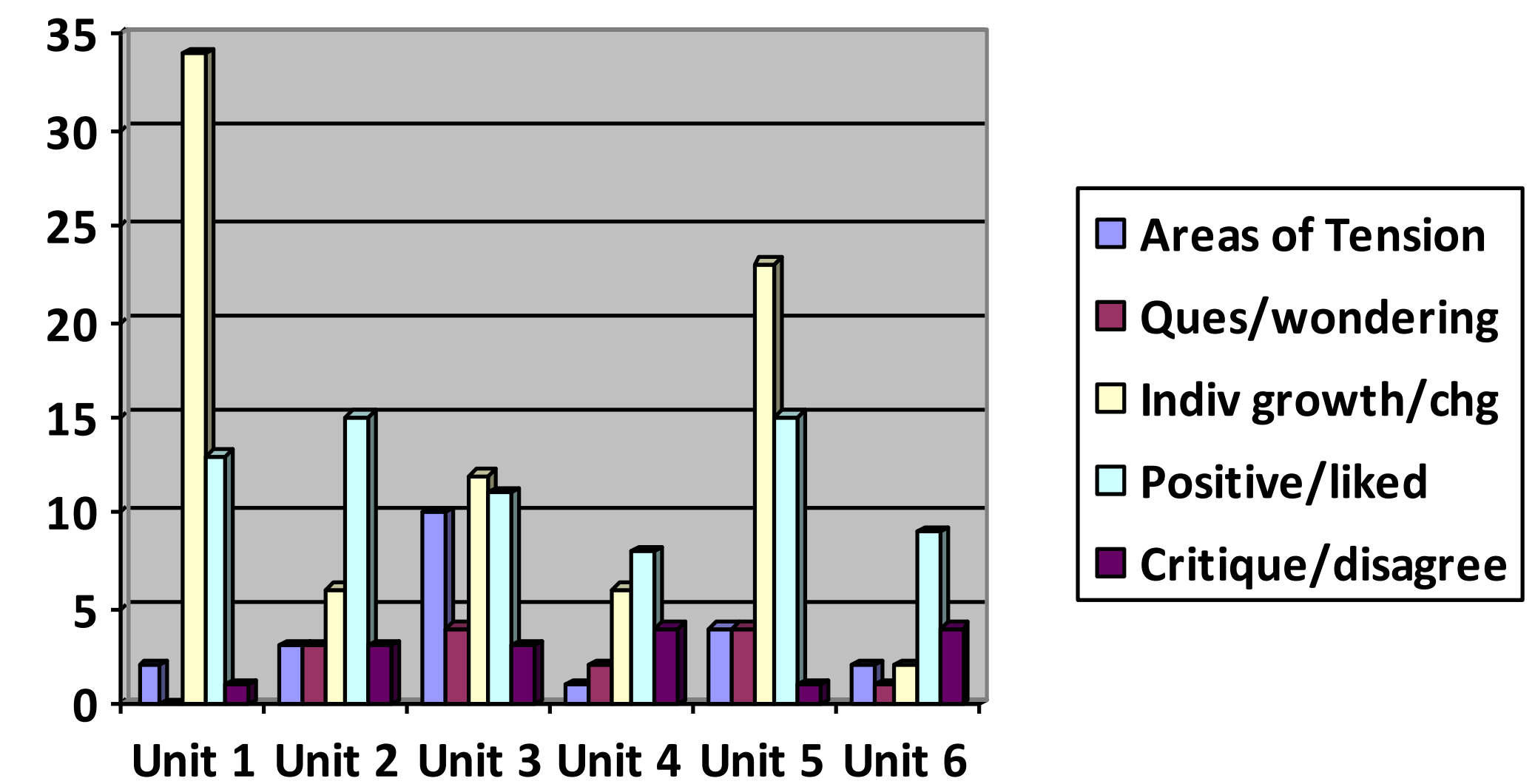
## Implications

The most important implication of this study is the need to have these courses offered within teacher preparation programs, and this type of content integrated throughout the teacher preparation program curricula.

Across the findings of this study, it is clear that self-reflection is a key component to students' understanding of complex issues, a result that is consistent with similar research (Bentley-Williams & Morgan, 2013; Brown, 1998; Kyles & Olafson, 2008; Mills and Ballantyne, 2010). This self-reflective process helped to identify several practices, and skills students felt were necessary to be successful within the field of early childhood.

Listening to the "voices" of pre-service teachers will help to tailor teacher education curricula and professional development trainings to meet these identified success markers for the field.

## Highlights students' references and reactions by unit



Unit	Session	Topic Covered
Unit 1	Lesson 1	- Course overview - Defining culture and recognizing diversity in inclusive ECE settings
	Lesson 2	- Culture, development, and identity formation - Self-awareness and the impact of culture on teaching
Unit 2	Lesson 3	- Culturally-based views of early development, care and education - Culturally responsive pedagogy and practice in ECE settings
	Lesson 4	- Sources and consequences of bias and exclusion - Media effects on adult and child perceptions of diversity
	Lesson 5	- Rights and responsibilities related to serving young children and their families in the context of diversity
Unit 3	Lesson 6	- Strategies for understanding and incorporating diverse perspectives
	Lesson 7	- Development of gender roles and identity - Reducing gender bias and promoting equity in ECE settings
	Lesson 8	- Diversity in family structure and organization - Supporting young children in LGBT families
Unit 4	Lesson 9	- Socioeconomic diversity - Supporting young children in low-income families
	Lesson 10	- Young children in immigrant and refugee families
Unit 5	Lesson 11	- Supporting young dual language learners
	Lesson 12	- Cultural perspectives on exceptional needs and inclusive ECE - Intersections of cultural, language, & ability diversity
Unit 6	Lesson 13	- Practices that promote inclusive learning environments - Promoting classroom community and fostering social justice
	Lesson 14	- Issues of diversity in K-12 system, school readiness & transition

## References

Bentley-Williams, R. & Morgan, J. (2013). Inclusive education: pre-service teachers' reflexive learning on diversity and their challenging role. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 41*, 173-185.

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