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## "SHARED JOURNALING: A METHODOLOGY FOR ENGAGING WHITE STUDENTS IN MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION"

Cornel Pewewardy D.Ed.

*Assistant Professor, Department of Teaching and Leadership, School of Education, University of Kansas*

Nocona Pewewardy MSW

*Doctoral Student, School of Social Welfare, University of Kansas*

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## **"SHARED JOURNALING: A METHODOLOGY FOR ENGAGING WHITE STUDENTS IN MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION"**

**Cornel Pewewardy, D.Ed.**

Assistant Professor, Department of Teaching and Leadership, School of Education,  
University of Kansas

**Nocona Pewewardy, MSW**

Doctoral Student, School of Social Welfare  
University of Kansas

**"The multicultural education thrust should be implemented so that teachers can learn to utilize the unique cultural assets of their students in creating a learning environment that will be beneficial to all students, regardless of diverse backgrounds."**

The multicultural education movement is the result of the national awareness-of the academic needs of all learners in this culturally diverse society. During the past three decades, there has been much discussion in reference to an effective teacher education curriculum that prepares teachers to do more than tolerate the cultural differences among their learners. Multicultural education is an education for freedom that is essential in to day's ethnically polarized and troubled world and is at least one way to promote equity for all, regardless of culture, ethnicity, race, language, age, gender, sexual orientation, or exceptionality.

The multicultural education thrust should be implemented so that teachers can learn to utilize the unique cultural assets of their students in creating a learning environment that will be beneficial to all students, regardless of diverse backgrounds. Developing a sense of oneself as a cultural being is the first step towards developing the competencies of a culturally responsible educator. However, white education students are frequently unaware of their own cultural identity and approach multicultural education courses as an opportunity to learn about the cultures of people that they see as being different from themselves without any critical reflection of their own standpoint. For example, on the first day an undergraduate foundations course on multicultural education, a predominantly white group of students was asked to list two goals for the semester. The response given with the most frequency was "to learn about different cultures."

Based on the presenters' experiences of teaching content related to cultural diversity at a predominantly white public-state university, it appears that white students understand culture as belonging primarily to racially identifiable groups. Most white students appear to retreat from the notion that their racial identity is a source of privilege, and challenging white students to examine their cultural identification, which includes the condition of race-based privilege, often results in blatant resistance, non-engagement, and sometimes retaliation through end-of-semester course evaluations.

In as much as teaching continues to be a predominantly white profession, developing

strategies to facilitate a greater understanding of white cultural values and characteristics among white education students is fundamental to the effort of deconstructing hegemonic teaching practices. Therefore, strategies for promoting reflective teaching practice are essential for achieving the goals of the multicultural education movement.

This presentation will discuss the development and implementation of a shared journaling out-of-classroom assignment, which has proven to be a successful methodology for allowing students to explore their own cultural identity and how it influences their approach to teaching. This assignment provides students with an opportunity to explore their perceptions and values related to their own culture and that of a partner at three inter-related levels: the personal, the interpersonal, and the sociopolitical. Students' response to the assignment has been overwhelmingly positive, and the content of the journal entries reveals a more in-depth critical reflection of issues related to race and class than is typically achieved in open-ended classroom discussions.

The context and ideas that generated this project and the methodology will be described, and excerpts will be provided to illustrate the processes of transformational change. Presenters will conclude with critique and suggestions for use of this model assignment for similar implementation by faculty, agency staff.

### **Presenters:**

**Dr. Cornel Pewewardy** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Teaching and Leadership, School of Education, University of Kansas where he teaches graduate and undergraduate courses in Multicultural Education and Culture and Education of Indigenous Peoples. Cornel is particularly interested in how ethnic-centered schools can function productively within larger public school systems. Cornel has served as consultant to numerous School districts on the education of ethnic minority youth, curriculum development, and why educational institutions use Indigenous Peoples as sport mascots in school-related activities.

**Nocona Pewewardy** earned a Bachelors and Masters of Social Work at the University of Oklahoma. She is currently a Ph.D. student in the School of Social Welfare at the University of Kansas where she works as a research assistant in the Office of Social Policy Analysis.