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## Effects of Case-Based Learning on Preservice Secondary Teachers' Multicultural Attitudes: A Mixed Methods Study

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# Academic Leadership Journal

As our society changes, so must our teacher education practices. In the past decade, the Southwestern U.S. has been transforming into a majority minority region (U.S. Census Bureau 2005), which must in turn reframe the underpinnings of teacher education in this area of our country. As teacher educators, we have known that many preservice teachers lagged in their preparedness to teach students who are culturally, ethnically, and linguistically different from themselves. Teacher education increasingly is being criticized as having inabilities to instruct teacher candidates in ways that produce greater K-12 student learning; diversity awareness will be a cornerstone if we can change this infamous trend (AACTE 2003).

Attention to socio-cultural shifts gives teacher educators a framework to address demographic changes from a leadership role in teacher education, promoting high standards for all public school educators. Teacher educators must respond to the creation and implementation of state and national standards that require culturally responsive educators who are able to “demonstrate the content, pedagogical, and professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to help all students learn” (NCATE 2006, 12). Many experts concur that U.S. schools have failed in their responsibility of educating students whose cultural background is not European American. For example, statistics show “higher rates of discipline and suspension among children of color, particularly African American boys, and disproportionate numbers of minority and ELL students in special education. At the same time, these students are sharply underrepresented in gifted and advanced placement classes” (Klump and McNeir 2005, 4). Many of these inequities may be contributed to “a wide gap [that] exists between the racial, cultural, and language characteristics of U.S. students and teachers” (Banks and Banks 2007, vi). Multicultural education provides educators with the “concepts, paradigms, and explanations needed to become effective practitioners in culturally, racially, and linguistically diverse classrooms and schools” (Banks and Banks 2007, vi). According to Geneva Gay (2000), preparing teachers for diversity requires a comprehensive approach:

Cultivating the competence and confidence needed to implement culturally responsive teaching should begin in preservice education programs and continue in inservice professional development programs. During preservice it should include acquiring information about culture characteristics and contributions, pedagogical principles, and methods and materials for ethnic and cultural diversity. This knowledge should be complemented with learning experiences for teacher education students to critically examine existing paradigms of educational thought and practice to determine whether they can be modified to accommodate ethnic and cultural diversity, or if they need to be replaced. (210)

This study answered the call to prepare preservice teachers to work in classrooms with diverse students using case-based learning (CBL). The primary investigator and instructor of the course, a White middle class female, chose this methodology as a way to facilitate meaningful dialogue among preservice teachers, challenging their assumptions and beliefs about education. This course is taken early in the teacher education program, prior to working with students in field-based and student teaching internships, which follow later in the teacher education program. Selected cases were used

that were challenging and controversial and related to situations that these future teachers may experience firsthand in their classrooms. The cases were chosen also for their ability to prompt rich discussions that would facilitate multicultural awareness. For the purpose of this study, we adopted Ponterotto et al. (1998) definition of multicultural awareness:

Multicultural awareness...refers to teachers' awareness of, comfort with, and sensitivity to issues of cultural pluralism in the classroom. Furthermore, teachers high in multicultural awareness see cultural diversity as a strength and feel the responsibility to address multicultural issues in the curriculum and in the teaching/learning process (1003).

CBL is "as an active-learning pedagogy designed for problem-solving, stressing a variety of viewpoints and potential outcomes" (Cranston-Gingrass et al. 1996, 158). Cases provide students with real or hypothetical vignettes in which learning is situated in authentic contexts. The analytical process involved in case-based learning provides students a foundation to become thoughtful practitioners (Campoy 2005) by providing a venue for self-reflection "recognized as a central process and benchmark disposition of the teacher as she or he engages in the teaching/learning process" (Reiman 1999, 597). Another reason for choosing CBL to engage students in this adolescent growth and development course is that the instructional strategy itself models the Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence (CREDE) five standards for effective pedagogy: joint productive activity, language and literacy development, making meaning, complex thinking, and instructional conversation (Dalton 1998). The preservice teachers were able to reflect not only on the analysis of the cases but also on the pedagogical basis of a strategy that models "best practice."

The goal of this study was to refine our current understanding of the effectiveness of CBL to transform secondary preservice teachers' multicultural attitudes using a mixed methods research design. Ponterotto, Baluch, Greig, & Rivera's (1998) Teacher Multicultural Attitude Survey (TMAS) served as the pretest and posttest to quantify any changes in multicultural attitudes over the completion of the three CBL units. The preservice teachers' multicultural beliefs were also explored by analyzing paper and pencil questionnaires administered after the final CBL unit near the end of the semester. The research questions of the study were—

1. Did CBL transform preservice teachers' multicultural awareness and sensitivity as measured by the TMAS?
2. To what degree were the students invested in their responses as evidenced by the amount of subjectivity in their responses to the cases?

CBL is not new to teacher education. This instructional strategy has historically been supported within a constructivist learning paradigm, providing preservice teachers opportunities to explore various issues within complex student-centered scenarios, moving knowledge from theory into practice (Andrews 2002; Dawson, Mason, and Molebash 2000; Putnam and Borko 2000). It allows a venue to address sensitive issues within multiculturalism by providing rich sociocultural contexts to view diverse classrooms from multiple perspectives (Andrews 1997; Bennett, Harper and Hedberg 2001; Foucar-Szocki 1994; Kleinfeld 1988; Nieto 2004; Shulman 1992; Shulman and Mesa-Bains 1990). Renewed interest in CBL has emerged with the changing demographics of U.S. society and the increased awareness of the importance of "integrating issues of diversity throughout course work and field experiences" (Ladson-Billings 1999, 222). Numerous qualitative studies have explored the benefits of using case-based instruction to enhance the multicultural perspectives of teachers in elementary

education (Butler, Lee, and Tippins 2006; Dana and Floyd 1993; Edwards, McNamara, and Carter 2000) but few studies have explored the effectiveness of CBL with secondary preservice teachers. This study was unique in that it investigated both quantitative and qualitative data and utilized instructional case studies situated within secondary educational contexts.

## Methods

A mixed-methods research design guided the collection and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data over a period of five months. Qualitative analysis expanded on the TMAS by coding data across the three CBL units introduced within a single semester to understand preservice teachers' level of cultural engagement with the provided materials. Emergent categories were established based on participants' free-written responses to the case studies collected after they completed all three CBL units. The first two authors coded responses independently. An inter-rater reliability analysis was conducted before we regrouped to discuss these findings vis-à-vis the quantitative data.

## Participants

Fifty-seven undergraduate preservice secondary education teachers enrolled in an adolescent growth and development course participated in this study. This required course was one of the first Curriculum and Instruction courses for students seeking certification in secondary education in this four-year university. The course is taken prior to the students' field-based experiences in local middle schools or high schools and student teaching requirements. The course is designed to prepare preservice secondary teachers to understand the physical, social, and cognitive development of adolescents in order to facilitate meaningful and relevant instruction. See Table 1 for the demographic information of the 57 participants.

## Quantitative Instrumentation

Due to the complex nature of measuring change in multicultural attitudes and awareness, we utilized a mixed methods design that investigated both quantitative and qualitative measures of change. Ponterotto, Baluch, Greig, & Rivera's (1998) TMAS was administered to participants at the beginning of the semester and at the end of the semester, following a pretest posttest model. The instrument was designed as a "self-report measure of multicultural awareness for teachers working in K-12 settings" (Ponterotto et al.1998, 1003). We used the TMAS, because

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Participants (N = 57)

Characteristics	n	%
Gender		
Male	17	30
Female	40	70
Ethnicity		
Black	1	2
Hispanic	9	16
White	42	74
Mixed	2	3
Other	1	2
Missing	2	3
Age		
19-20	11	20
21-22	32	57
23-24	6	11
25-32	6	12
Missing	2	4

Ponterotto et al. conducted multiple measures to ensure internal consistency, content validity, and score reliability and concluded that the scale could “discriminate between teachers high and low in multicultural awareness” (1015).

### Instructional Cases Used in the Study

Three CBL units were integrated into the course over a fifteen-week period in 5-week intervals. The first case was from *Looking in Classrooms*, Ninth Edition (Good and Brophy 2003, 151). In this case, “Classroom Vignettes—High School” Ms. Burden, an honors English teacher, confronts her student, Allen, regarding his chronic tardiness and absences to her first-period class. Allen is from a White low-SES family who was missing his classes due to managing a late work shift at a local fast-food chain. His family depended on his income to meet their economic needs.

The second case was from Pai, Adler, & Shadiow’s *Cultural Foundations of Education* (2006). In this case, *About John*, originally written by Leung (1998), a well-intentioned classroom teacher facilitating a world history month to explore customs in various countries, asked five “Oriental” students, to work together on a project about Oriental customs in their homes. John, one of the students placed in the group, was embarrassed and felt out of place. John reported his unease to his parents, who then requested a conference with the principal of the school.

The third case was also from Pai, Adler, & Shadiow’s (2006) text. In this case, *Jennifer in La Victoria*” originally written by Delgado-Galton (1988), Jennifer, a self-identified Chicana student living in a poor community in the Southwest, decided to leave high school when she could not keep up with her classes. “Her boredom in school and new interest in boys led Jennifer to become pregnant” (190). Jennifer felt uneasy continuing in high school since there was not a program for pregnant girls and teenage mothers. Jennifer’s mother told her that if she chose not to attend school, she would be expected to get a job to support her child.

### Case-based Instruction Questionnaire

After the final CBL unit a paper and pencil questionnaire was administered to the participants that asked, “What in the three CBL units challenged your thinking and/or brought about issues that you had not considered previously?” Space was provided to respond to each of the cases analyzed over the semester: Allen, John, and Jennifer.

### Procedures

At the beginning of the semester, all participants completed the TMAS to assess their “cultural awareness and sensitivity” (Ponterotto et al. 1998). The survey served as the pretest for this study, and it provided students the opportunity to become aware of their multicultural beliefs. Three CBL units were taught in class and discussed by the preservice teachers via small group discussions over the course of the semester. The selected cases focused on various diversity issues as previously described.

Prior to the first CBL unit the participants were instructed in cognitive analytic processes (CAP) using McNergney’s research-based framework (1994, 1984), which included the following steps: (a) identify educational issues, problems, or opportunities as they present themselves in the case; (b) recognize

different perspectives or values that drive people's actions in the case; (c) call up personal, theoretical, and empirical knowledge relevant to the issues identified; (d) propose possible actions for handling the issues identified; and (e) forecast the likely consequences of such actions (Gartland and Field 2004, 33). The preservice teachers were provided a visual diagram of McNergney's model to scaffold their cognitive processes each time they analyzed a case.

At the beginning of each class designated for CBL, the preservice teachers were divided into groups of four for small group discussions. Participants received a copy of the case and a visual diagram designating the procedures for discussion of the CBLs. After the small group discussions of the cases, the instructor facilitated a whole class discussion, gathering input and perspectives from each of the student groups. For homework, the preservice teachers constructed a reflective essay on the case, emphasizing what they learned from the CBL that would help them as a future teacher. The class following the third case analysis, participants completed the TMAS (which served as a posttest for the study) and a paper and pencil questionnaire that asked, "What in the three CBL units challenged your thinking and/or brought about issues that you had not considered previously?"

### Results

Using qualitative findings to assist dialogically in explaining and interpreting the results of a primarily quantitative study in this mixed methods approach was a strength of this study. The multiple methods of data collection inherent in the design provided both depth and triangulation across data. (Denzin 1970; Creswell 2003).

### Quantitative Data

The Mann-Whitney U nonparametric test of change was used to measure the change in TMAS pretest to posttest scores based on a 5-point Likert scale. We found no significant difference between the mean scores from pretest to posttest ( $p < .05$ ). The pretest had a mean score of 71.22 with a standard deviation of 8.96 and the posttest had a mean score of 71.83 with a standard deviation of 11.12. Results are reported in Table 2.

To further analyze the participant responses, we conducted a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test on the 20 test items. We used a 2-tailed test because we wanted to look at changes in responses to individual test items in either direction.

An increase in multicultural sensitivity would be indicated if positive ranks were higher than negative ranks. Since this was an exploratory study we wanted to look at those test items approaching statistical significance, so we analyzed the items according to two probability levels. Items 3, 6, 12, 15, 16, 19, and 20 were reverse-scored items as coded by the letter d in Table 3. Please see Table 3 to review the results of the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test.

Table 2

Time	M	SD
Pre-test	71.22	8.96
Post test	71.83	11.12

\* $p < .05$

It is interesting to note that

survey items 5, 7, and 9 reflected significant change from pretest to posttest. In addition to performing the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test, we conducted a qualitative analysis of the questionnaire responses to further illuminate our quantitative findings. Specifically, we investigated the participants' level of self-reflection—the degree to which their responses demonstrated a personal investment of their own cultural awareness as evidenced by the level of subjectivity in their responses.

### Qualitative Data Analysis

Participants' responses to the CBL questionnaire were recorded verbatim for each of the three CBL units presented in the class. The qualitative analysis centered on the participants' written reflective responses to "What in these cases challenged your thinking and/or brought about issues that you had not considered previously?" After examining the responses for the three CBL prompts, we determined that the themes within the

participants' responses should be analyzed across all three CBL inputs, not individually within just one CBL unit. We analyzed the data first by meaning field analysis to discern emergent categories. Open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Gee 1999) were utilized to arrive at the participant response codes. The final step in the qualitative analyses was interpreting the data and determining the

Table 3  
Results of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

Test Item	Negative Ranks <sup>a</sup>	Positive Ranks <sup>b</sup>	Ties <sup>c</sup>	Wilcoxon T
1. I will find teaching a culturally diverse student group rewarding.	13	7	33	.054
2. Teaching methods need to be adapted to meet the needs of a culturally diverse student group.	8	17	28	.128
3. Sometimes I think there is too much emphasis placed on multicultural awareness and training for teachers. <sup>d</sup>	16	17	20	.884
4. Teachers have the responsibility to be aware of their students' cultural backgrounds.	8	15	30	.362
5. I will frequently invite extended family members (e.g., cousins, grandparents, godparents, etc.) to attend parent-teacher conferences.	6	20	27	.019*
6. It is not the teacher's responsibility to encourage pride in one's culture. <sup>d</sup>	18	15	20	.280
7. As classrooms become more culturally diverse, the teacher's job becomes increasingly challenging.	5	20	28	.001**
8. I believe the teacher's role needs to be redefined to address the needs of students from culturally diverse backgrounds.	11	18	24	.228
9. When dealing with bilingual students, some teachers may misinterpret different communication styles as behavioral problems.	8	18	27	.021*
10. As classrooms become more culturally diverse, the teacher's job becomes increasingly rewarding.	12	14	27	.934
11. I can learn a great deal from students with culturally different backgrounds.	9	12	32	.941
12. Multicultural training for teachers is not necessary. <sup>d</sup>	7	12	34	.587
13. In order to be an effective teacher, one needs to be aware of cultural differences present in the classroom.	9	13	31	.622
14. Multicultural awareness training can help me work more effectively with a diverse student population.	13	10	30	.348
15. Students should learn to communicate in English only. <sup>d</sup>	15	12	26	.363
16. Today's curriculum gives undue importance to multiculturalism and diversity. <sup>d</sup>	8	12	32	.283

17. I will be aware of the diversity of cultural backgrounds in my classroom.	8	9	36	.817
18. Regardless of racial and ethnic makeup of my class, it will be important for all students to be aware of multicultural diversity.	7	8	38	.766
19. Being multiculturally aware is not relevant for the subject I teach. <sup>d</sup>	14	10	29	.242
20. Teaching students about cultural diversity will only create conflict in the classroom. <sup>d</sup>	10	9	34	.831

\* $p < .05$  \*\* $p < .01$  a. post < pre b. post > pre c. post = pre d. indicates reverse scored

applicability of the findings (Lincoln and Guba 1985). See Table 4 for the participant response codes.

Our analysis revealed that the codes situated on a continuum reflecting the subjectivity of the participants' responses. This mattered because it indicated how much the preservice teachers personally invested in their own cultural self within their responses. A more objective response—located toward the left end of the continuum—indicated that participants distanced themselves from their responses. Data coded toward the right end of the continuum centered the actual participants within the context(s) of the case study. To clarify further, more objective responses utilized a third person framework, indicating identifications such as “it” as the centered focus points of articulation. Responses coded as more subjective—located toward the right end of the continuum—featured first person responses utilizing “I” (subjective) or “we” (normative) centered articulations. We defaulted to classifying these responses all as subjective rather than delineating coding between both subjective and normative articulations, because first person singular (I) perspectives were inherently included in and overlapped with first person plural (we) responses.

Table 4: Participant Response Codes

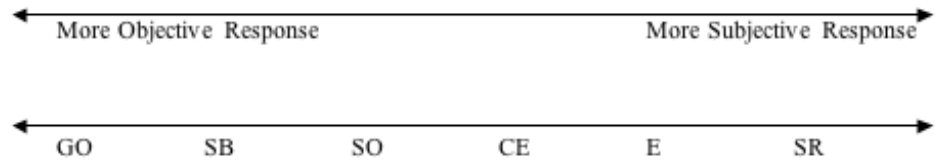
Participant Response Codes	Description Student responses centered on:	Examples from data
CE: Cause-effect	Understanding or isolating the root cause(s) and the resulting effect(s) of primary problem(s) they identified within the case studies.	“Some students have to help provide for their families and teachers should be aware of that and be more sensitive to that fact.” “I realized how careful I have to be when teaching multiculturalism.” “How do you go about helping those who have grown up in poverty break that cycle?”
E: Epiphany	Processing “a-ha moments” from reading the case study, especially focused on things they did not conceptualize as associated with teaching prior to this instructional activity.	“Since I didn’t work in HS, I forgot that some students do. I have never considered students who were working full-time while in school.” “I had not fully realized the vast diversity of the Asian culture.” “This case study opened my eyes to the fact that I should not always jump to conclusions.” “I didn’t realize cities could be so impoverished.”
GO: General Observations and/or Information	Recounting or facts or basic information learned.	“That students may have other responsibilities besides school, like a job to help provide for their family. It’s challenging trying to decide what’s more important, his education or food on the table.” “Lots of teachers group together students for projects, not because of race just because of social class.” “Dealing with pregnant students”

SB: Shifting Blame	Identifying where blame should be placed, especially by placing blame away from self-identified associations, such as teachers not being at fault.	“I couldn’t see why the parents weren’t involved.” “How upset parents can get when their children are put on the spot about their culture or racial background.” “How to deal with pregnant female students whose mother does not value school as much.”
SR: Subjective Response	Centered on their own personal association(s) with the case study or how the instructional activity affected them.	“I would have just assumed that Allen didn’t like my class and that’s why he was always absent. I might not have thought that it could be because of his personal life.” “I was in a similar position in college so I had thought about different solutions.” “This made me think about ways to motivate uninspired students.”
SO: Solution Oriented Response	Identified how the information could be applied within classroom contexts.	“This study was very realistic in the fact that this is an issue that will definitely come about especially if you are teaching in a low-income area. It was good to hear some of the things you can do as a teacher to combat such problems.” “People should be aware of diversity.” “That there should be programs or alternatives and more options for girls that are pregnant.”

first person singular (I) perspectives were inherently included in and overlapped with first person plural (we) responses.



The preservice teachers' abilities to identify subjectively with the featured student in each CBL unit translated into the degree of progress to the right of the multicultural



response continuum. The coding categories were placed on a continuum instead of a hierarchy, because the idea was to learn about where the participants were—not to judge or rank them. In other words, the right end of the continuum did not indicate that a response is “better”, but instead showed the preservice teachers’ level of personal engagement within their teaching pedagogy. Due to the lack of triangulating qualitative data we calculated interrater reliability to assess the quality of the findings. We utilized Cohen’s kappa coefficient to measure interrater reliability between the two raters’ scores. Cohen’s kappa is considered a more robust test than measuring for percentage of agreement, because the test takes agreement occurring by chance into account (Cohen 1960). The Kappa measure of agreement was .81 indicating strong interrater reliability. See Table 5.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Our study provided evidence that case-based instruction is an effective instructional strategy to effect change in preservice teachers’ multicultural awareness based on growth within particular TMAS items and in the qualitative data analysis. The

preservice teachers’ responses to

TMAS items 5, 7, and 9 showed significant growth from pretest to posttest. Item 5—“I will frequently invite extended family members to attend parent-teacher conferences”—may be attributed to the familial element found in all of the cases. Item 7—“As classrooms become more culturally diverse, the teacher’s job becomes increasingly challenging”—may be interpreted as an increase in the preservice teachers’ awareness of the complexities involved in becoming a culturally responsive teacher. Item 9 —“When dealing with bilingual students, some teachers may misinterpret different communication styles as behavioral problems”—may be interpreted as growth in the preservice teachers’ ability to view student behavior through a multicultural lens. Since the TMAS may be more sensitive to change in attitudes over a longer period of time than a single course semester, administering the test at the beginning and at the end of the teacher education program may be more effective in quantifying change in preservice teachers’ multicultural attitudes over time.

The participants’ responses to the CBL questionnaire demonstrated that they thought about the cases in complex ways—identifying the most salient issues in the case; identifying the various constituents affected by the case; considering their own knowledge and experience they bring to the case; proposing various actions; and considering the consequences of those actions. The analysis of the questionnaire responses demonstrated that the preservice teachers personally invested themselves in the cases to varying degrees along a continuum, from objective general observations to more personal and subjective perspectives. Reporting these findings back to participants for reflection would be a strategy suggested for further qualitative exploration. This approach would allow for diversity growth to

Table 5: Cohen’s kappa

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error(a)	Approx. T(b)	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement	Kappa	.810	.066	11.407	.000
N of Valid Cases		46			

a Not assuming the null hypothesis.

b Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

be framed as an individual process, not a comparison between participants, and would provide an additional non-threatening way to further the classroom discussion of diversity.

Although this study does not establish a cause-effect relationship between case-based learning and change in pre-service teachers' multicultural awareness, our findings support CBL as an effective instructional strategy and an incremental step (Gay 2000) to address culturally responsive pedagogy in teacher education. Continued development and refinement of instruments sensitive to changes in multicultural attitudes is needed.

In summary, as they progress in our teacher education program, these future teachers will be immersed in multicultural education through culturally relevant pedagogy, culturally rich experiences in their coursework, and in their field and student teaching internships. Examination and ongoing discussion of diversity, in combination with continued training and direct field experience, will encourage development and refinement of knowledge, skills, and disposition of preservice teachers to regard their students as rich cultural resources. Learning to view instruction in the context of a diverse student population should carry forward the necessity to infuse multicultural content into their own instructional design, thereby contributing to multicultural insight and academic success for all of their students.

CBL provided a non-threatening instructional strategy for preservice teachers to discuss difficult issues and gain insight into their attitudes and biases that could influence the way they teach in their future classrooms. The preservice teachers were provided a framework in which to think about multicultural dilemmas, scaffolding them with the necessary support to guide them through the cognitive processes involved in decision-making and problem-solving. As stated, our findings support CBL as an effective instructional strategy and an incremental step (Gay 2000) to address culturally responsive pedagogy by promoting multicultural awareness.

Out of these processes of self-awareness and self-renewal, reflection and introspection, deconstruction and reconstruction should emerge teachers with expectations and interactions, knowledge and skills, values and ethics that exhibit the power of caring... They will be more inclined toward and effective in implementing culturally responsive teaching because they now know that this is an unavoidable moral mandate for educating ethnically diverse students (Gay 2000, 75).

In our consideration of CBL, derived from these findings as well as from the experience of its use, it is the conclusion of the examiners of the present study that case-based learning is a valuable strategy that should be an integral part of culturally responsive pedagogy within the teacher training program.

In light of our findings, we suggest that future studies track participants by gender, ethnicity, and diversity experiences, in order to determine how specific factors influence where individual preservice teachers fall on the subjective response continuum. This will provide information regarding the preservice teacher's personal investment in understanding and promoting growth of multicultural awareness in herself and her students. Ongoing investigation would also be beneficial in discovering the impact of multicultural education on preservice teachers future teaching practices, and perhaps even of greater importance, to investigate the success of such practices in fostering multicultural insight and understanding in their future students.

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#### Endnote

See Carspecken's 1995. *Four Scenes for Posing the Question of Meaning and Other Essays in Critical Philosophy and Critical Methodology* for a more in-depth explanation of understanding qualitative data via these lenses.

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