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Perspectives of two ethnically different pre-service teacher populations as they learn about folk literature

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The purpose of this study was to investigate pre-service teachers' knowledge of folk literature in general and that of a selected country or culture in particular before and after studying it in a college children's literature course and completing an assignment. We specifically compared two sample populations: those of primarily European American descent at a research university and those of Native American ethnicity at an Inter-tribal Native American university to see if there were similarities or differences in their knowledge about and value of folk literature. Participants from each university were selected to complete a pre-post questionnaire and a post-interview about what they learned about folk literature in general and a particular country or culture's stories as well. Analysis of the data showed similarity between the two sample populations on their knowledge of folk literature and understanding of other countries/cultures. There were differences in their projected application of the learned information.

Implications for teacher educators are discussed.

For centuries, the folklore of a culture - its poetry, stories, riddles and songs were passed from one generation to the next through the oral tradition. Fables, one form of folk story, are the first known written versions of tales. Dating back to the sixth century BC, these fables of the Greek tradition, known as Aesop's fables (Saltman, 1985), are enjoyed by children today. However, the stories more commonly known to American children, folktales, have their roots in Europe. The first written versions of European folktales occurred in Italy in 1550 (Hurlimann, 1968) by Straparola. His approach of collecting tales told in the homes of everyday people, commonly the tales women told to their children, was repeated in other countries. By the 1800s, collections of folktales told by everyday people and sometimes enhanced for the enjoyment of royalty, were published in several countries most dominantly France, Germany, Norway and England (Hurlimann, 1968:

Lynch-Brown, Tomlinson, & Short, 2011). Preserving the oral stories of a country on paper was considered an important way to preserve national identity, but also provided written entertainment, which differed from oral entertainment. Today, young and old have access to a wealth of printed stories from countries and cultures worldwide. They enjoy these tales for various reasons: the humor, cleverness in the choice of words, rewards for good and misfortune for bad, and the emotional connection (Young, Bruchac, Livingston, & Kurkjian, 2004).

We advocate that pre-service teachers become familiar with folk literature and its potential value in the elementary classroom. As teacher educators, we incorporate learning about folk literature and exposure to a wide-range of tales from around the world in the pre-service teachers' undergraduate children's literature course. We teach in two different college settings within the same town: a research university and an Inter-tribal Native American university. As we began collaboration, we asked questions that led to this study:

1. What do pre-service teachers know about folk literature prior to course reading/lecture and an assignment of study? What do they learn as a result of these experiences? Do the two groups of participants differ in their knowledge?
2. What do pre-service teachers know about their assigned country or culture prior to completion of the assignment on the folk literature of one country or culture? What do they learn as a result of the assignment? Do the two groups of

participants differ in their knowledge?

3. What do the pre-service teachers value about folk literature from their study of it as they prepare for their future classrooms? Are there differences between the two groups of participants?

Literature Review

Folk literature

Folk literature, also often referred to as traditional literature, includes the subcategories of folk rhymes, ballads and epics, myths, fables, legends and tall tales, and folk tales (Lynch-Brown, Tomlinson, & Short, 2011). Folktales are a broad subcategory of traditional literature. Every culture has most if not all of the following types of folktales: cumulative, humorous or "noodlehead," beast, pourquoi, realistic, and magic tales often referred to as fairy tales. Each type of story (fable, myth, folktale, etc.) has its own characteristics in terms of setting, plot, characters and theme. For example, fables are commonly short, the characters are usually animals and a moral is explicitly stated. On the other hand, myths "originate in the beliefs of nations and races and present episodes in which supernatural forces operate" (Lukins, 2007, p. 26). Across cultures, myths generally explain natural phenomena such as the wind or the seasons and characters may be human or supernatural. Within the broad subcategory of folktales, settings are a simple backdrop to the plot (e.g. a castle, a forest), characters are not well developed and often stock (e.g. the wicked witch, the kindly grandmother), and plots quickly build to a climax and quickly end (e.g. and they lived happily

ever after). The themes in folktales are particularly similar across cultures: good triumphs over evil, appearances can be deceiving, hard work and patience pays off. In addition to similarities in the literary elements of setting, character, plot and theme, folktales have another stylistic feature that would have helped a storyteller remember a story: motifs. Motifs are common patterns found in folktales around the world and include repetition in language patterns (e.g. “Run, run as fast as you can, you can’t catch me, I’m the gingerbread man”), the use of a number (often three in many European stories: 3 sisters, 3 tricks, 3 trials, etc.), trickery, magical transformations, magical powers, and magical objects (Kiefer, Hepler, & Hickman, 2007). While there are many commonalities in the folktales across cultures, the characters and settings of stories typically reflect the people, animals, geography, flora and fauna of a country.

Folk literature is a useful resource for teachers (Perez-Sable, 2005; Virtue, 2007; Young, 2004). It promotes students’ imaginations and fosters a love for reading. The stories offer opportunities for deep interpretations (Bowman, 2004), provide opportunities to discuss the underlying message or theme, and explain history and natural phenomena (Smolen & Ortiz-Castro, 2000). Perez-Sable (2005) suggested teachers use folk literature published in picture-book format to make the study of the United States come alive. Such stories may help children learn about history, geography and ecology (Smolen & Ortiz-Castro, 2000). They provide multicultural awareness (Norton, 2009; Virtue, 2007) and understanding of

beliefs, values and lifestyles of cultural groups (Young, 2004). Amongst all the positives about teaching with folk literature, one concern arises. It is the misconception of cultures that may be presented in the text through words or pictures. Prior to teaching, teachers should give careful consideration when choosing books to prevent erroneous stereotypes and information (Smolen & Ortiz-Castro, 2000; Virtue, 2007).

Multicultural education

Understanding cultures is one factor that can affect teachers’ ability to succeed (Chizhik, 2003). It is typical for colleges of education to require pre-service teachers to enroll in a multicultural or diversity course. One of the many purposes for such a class is to build awareness and understanding of diversity and foster respect for cultures different than one’s own. As undergraduate students enroll and take the required diversity class, they tend to become more accepting and understanding (He & Cooper, 2009; Trent & Dixon, 2004). Cho and DeCastro-Ambrosetti (2005-2006) stated that one multicultural class is essential, but not sufficient to prepare future teachers and to impact their beliefs. The authors believe that diversity should be infused throughout the teacher education program and not contained in one semester’s class.

One way to incorporate diversity in elementary and secondary classrooms, as well as in teacher preparation programs, is through books that represent the diversity of society. Folk literature is the ideal genre for introducing students to cultures other than their own. Norton (2009) suggests a five-phase approach beginning with

the study of folk literature broadly (e.g. the difference between myths and folktales) followed by the study of the traditional tales from one area. The final three phases are historical nonfiction (e.g. biographies), historical fiction, ending with contemporary literature. Finding books about a culture written by an author of that culture makes them more appropriate and meaningful (White-Kaulaity, 2007). Multicultural books should be included as an integral part of the curriculum rather than an extraneous activity (Mathis, 2001; Norton, 2009). Teachers need to be familiar with multicultural text and able to present the text in insightful ways to elementary and secondary students rather than simply as a quick read-aloud. Elementary and secondary students should be encouraged to personally reflect, respond, and make connections between and across text and participate in questioning and discussions.

Rosenblatt (1969) developed reader response theory, which focuses on the relationship students have with a text rather than emphasizing the text as authority. Rosenblatt explained different stances (i.e. efferent and aesthetic) a person may have when reading. There are times when students need to focus instruction on literary elements and factual recall (efferent), but students also need reading opportunities for lived-in experiences and rich engagement with the text (aesthetic). The folk literature of different cultures, such as those included in this assignment, provides students an opportunity to move across the efferent-aesthetic continuum.

In sum, we believe that pre-service teachers may increase their cultural awareness and understanding through a diversity class taken in their undergraduate program. However, respect for and understanding of other cultures can also be promoted through children's literature. To our knowledge, no studies have been published comparing the perspectives of pre-service teachers' who are enrolled in a predominantly European-American research university to those of Native American pre-service teachers attending a tribal university through the use of multicultural literature. For the present study we specifically investigated the *knowledge about* and *value of* folk literature of these two groups of pre-service teachers before and following the study of folk literature in general and a selected country or culture in particular in a university children's literature course.

Methodology

Participants

There were two different groups of college participants: pre-service teachers from a research university (hereafter referred to as RU) and pre-service teachers from an Inter-tribal Native American university (hereafter INAU). Because they were simultaneously pre-service teachers and undergraduate students, we will use both terms interchangeably.

The RU group was obtained from a pool of 52 junior-level students who were majoring in elementary education at a large mid-western research university. There were 49 females and three males enrolled in "Children's Literature" during their junior year. All

but seven participants were European American; the seven individuals each represented a different minority. Forty-six participants were 20-22 years of age and six pre-service teachers were 23 years of age or older. Twelve students were randomly selected from the pool of 52 to participate in the study. Of the 12, three were from minority groups: Taiwanese American, Laotian, and Mexican. All 12 were females; 11 were of traditional college age.

The INAU group of participants studied at a Native American university located in the same town as the research university. There are 562 federally recognized American Indian tribes and Alaskan Natives. To serve this population there are 32 tribal colleges, 2 intertribal institutes of higher education and 1 institute of American Indian Arts. The Inter-tribal Native American University referenced in this study is 1 of 2 intertribal institutes of higher education. To enroll in this university, students must show proof of Indian blood or lineage of a federally recognized tribe. There is variation among tribes in the amount, or percent, of Native American blood they require in order to issue a certificate of Indian blood (CIB). Approximately 800 students attend this university; they represent 154 different tribes and nations from more than 35 states.

The INAU pool for participation in the study consisted of the twelve sophomores majoring in elementary education at this university at the time of the study. They were enrolled in the class, "Children's Literature" when they participated in this study. All twelve gave written permission to participate in the study, thus were participants, but

only 11 of the 12 pre-service teachers completed the information sheet which provided facts about their age, gender and tribal affiliation. Of these 11 students, seven were female and four male. Their ages ranged from 19 to 26. Their tribal affiliations also varied greatly, with three Cherokee Indians, two Sioux, one Omaha, two Navajo, one Creek, one Oglala-Lakota Sioux and one Kiowa/Choctaw.

Both universities require pre-service teachers to take a multicultural course. At the time of this assignment, none of the participants had enrolled or completed this required class.

Class study of folk literature and the assignment

Folk literature in general was studied in these classes through reading the textbook and class lecture and discussion. The assignment allowed students to apply their general understanding about folk literature to the stories of a particular country or culture. The textbook used at both universities for the course was *Children's Books in Children's Hands: An Introduction to Their Literature* (Temple, Martinez & Yokota. 2005) and the pre-service teachers were assigned to read about folk literature in chapter 5. Each instructor presented information about folk literature through lecture and discussion. Both instructors of the children's literature course elected to have students complete the same assignment for research purposes. The students were directed to read no fewer than 20 pages of stories from anthologies/collections and a minimum of three tales published in picture-book format from their selected country or culture. The written assignment

required them to compose a bibliography of the stories they read (See Appendix B for a sampling of the stories read for the assignment). In addition, the students were to provide specific examples from the stories to support the following aspects of folk literature: common types of tales, characters, themes, motifs, clues and other comments. The final portion of the assignment was to find additional information about the folk literature of their culture such as storytelling traditions, lesson plans, professional articles with teaching suggestions related to this culture and supply the source, such as a website or article. In-class sharing time was given to promote the learning of all participants about the folk literature of the cultures studied.

Data collection

Prior to the reading and lecture, a list of countries or cultures was given to the 52 RU students for individual selection. This meant that the first student to pick a country had considerable choice, but the last student to select had limited choice. Following the RU students' selection of a country/culture, the first author randomly selected twelve countries or cultures from the total. They included India, Australia, Native Americans of the Plains, Native Americans of the Southwest focused on the Navajo, Italy, Poland, Mexico, Ireland, Japan, South Africa, African American, and China. The names of the 12 countries/cultures were then given to the INAU instructor. Her students then randomly selected one country or culture to read folk literature for the assignment. The RU students with these 12 countries/cultures became the RU

participants for the study so that there was one student at each university focusing on the same culture or country's folk literature.

The data used to investigate the research questions of this study was qualitative and obtained from pre-post questionnaires (open-ended questions) and interview (See Appendix A). During the class period prior to the commencement of the folk literature unit, the instructor gave the assignment to students, followed by their selection of a country and completion of the pre-questionnaire. Next, the students completed the assigned reading and listened to the lectures on the topic. After the assignment was submitted and in-class sharing had occurred, the post-questionnaire was given to the students. Several weeks later the first author interviewed the students.

Data analysis

The pre-post questionnaire responses were typed into a table for each question. Each row in the table listed the country or culture name in the left column, the response from the INAU student in the middle column and from the RU pre-service teacher in the right column. In this manner we could look down the columns to see responses by university and across the row for each country/culture. This format allowed us to make comparisons between the RU and the INAU participants. Traditional techniques by Merriam (2009) were employed to analyze the qualitative data obtained from the questionnaires. The data were read several times, notes were taken, patterns were identified and categories of response were established.

Table 1
Categories of participant responses following the assignment

Category	RU	INAU	Total
Types of folk literature	4	8	12
Lessons/moral	4	4	8
Similar themes	3	5	8
Miscellaneous	5	3	8
Cultural traditions	2	5	7
Creation/why things happened	3	4	7
Oral tradition	3	3	6
Animals	3	1	4
Imagery/creative	3	1	4
Cleverness/trickery	1	2	3
Death/eerie	3	0	3
Heroes	1	1	2

Since the questions were open-ended, responses varied based on each question and the participants' responses could fit more than one category. For example, to answer the statement, "Please tell me what you learned about folk literature," one participant wrote, "1) 'folk' as of people – folk tales are tales of people, 2) tales, stories, etc. that are told and added to, 3) there are different types of stories: tall tales, creation stories, fables." This response was coded into three categories: folk definition (part of miscellaneous), oral tradition, and types of folk tales. Once the responses were categorized, we tallied results where possible and attempted to describe the likeness and difference between and among the responses of the two populations.

The interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed. Similar qualitative data analysis techniques were employed: the data were read several times, notes were taken, patterns were identified and categories of response were

established. Again, we analyzed the data by university and then across universities for similarities and differences in what they knew about folk literature in general and the country/culture in particular. Due to the fact that the students said more in the interviews than they wrote in response to the questions on the questionnaires, oftentimes, the interviews provided similar, but richer data than the questionnaires.

Results

The results are presented following each research question.

What do pre-service teachers know about folk literature prior to course reading/lecture and an assignment of study? What do they learn as a result of these experiences? Do the two groups of participants differ in their knowledge?

To answer this question we used data from the first item on the pre- and post-questionnaire ("Tell me what you know/learned about folk literature") as

well as from interview questions #2 (“Tell me what you learned about folk literature in general”) and #4 (“As you listened to peer presentations on different countries, what did you learn about folk literature in a broad sense?”).

On the open-ended pre-questionnaire students at the RU clearly self-reported they knew less about folk literature in general than their Inter-tribal Native American University peers. Eleven of the twelve RU students said they didn’t know much, if anything, compared to five of the eleven INAU pre-service teachers who reported some knowledge. For example, the Ireland and African American RU students wrote “Nothing” or “Not sure” in their answer. In comparison, the INAU pre-service teacher who studied Ireland wrote, “Stories that have been around for a long time. Usually myths or fairy tales that children love to read.” The INAU pre-service teacher who studied African American wrote, “Folk literature is compiled up of fairytales, tall tales, riddles and many more.”

After completing their assignment, twelve categories emerged from the written responses on the post questionnaire and the oral responses from the interview, documenting what they learned. Of these responses, eleven were noted by both groups of participants: cultural traditions (i.e. mentioned traditions of the culture), oral traditions (i.e. told orally from generation to generation), cleverness/trickery, lessons/morals, types of folk literature, role of animals, focus on creation or why things came to be, similar themes among and between cultures, heroes, imaginary/creative and miscellaneous. Table 1 shows the

twelve prominent categories across the two groups and per university. We agreed that the pre-service teachers grew in their knowledge of folk literature in general from studying it in their children’s literature classes and particularly expressed an understanding that there are different types of folk literature (e.g. fables, myths, legends, fairy tales, tall tales, and pourquoi tales).

What do pre-service teachers know about their assigned country or culture prior to completion of the assignment on the folk literature of one country or culture? What do they learn as a result of the assignment? Do the two groups of participants differ in their knowledge?

Data sources used to answer this question included item #2 from the pre- and post-questionnaire (“Tell me what you know/learned about your selected country”) and interview question #3 (“Tell me what you learned about your selected country”).

Similar to the findings regarding the pre-service teachers’ prior knowledge of folk literature in general, they had little prior knowledge of their country or culture. We categorized eight of the eleven participants from INAU and seven of the twelve from RU as having minimal knowledge about the folk literature of their country or culture before completing the assignment. The exception to this was three students who were categorized as having “some knowledge”: two RU students who selected countries or cultures where they had traveled or lived, and one Native American student, by chance, drew his own tribe from the selection.

On the post-questionnaire, the students responded to the question,

“Tell me what you learned about your assigned country.” As we read each participant’s response to this question we noted six at each university (approximately one-half) were similar. This means that both the pre-service teacher from INAU and the RU pre-service teacher mentioned a common, important aspect to their country or culture. For example, both the INAU and RU pre-service teachers who read Australia talked about the Aborigines. Those who read Navajo folk tales spoke of the importance they place on the physical environment and Navajo’s emphasis on traditions. Both participants who focused on Japan mentioned the role of the emperor. The two students who read South African tales focused on animals and slavery, and the two pre-service teachers who read folk tales of China said their writings included origins and dragons. The responses related to the remaining half of the countries/cultures studied were not similar. For example, the two students who studied the folk literature of Italy had no commonalities in their responses. The INAU pre-service teacher mentioned the Roman Church for her entire answer. The RU participant never mentioned the Roman Church, rather noted that there was great diversity in the folk literature of Italy, the number 3 is a common motif, often objects becomes human, perseverance is a common theme, and crabs are frequently found in their stories,. As one can see, there was no similar content in these two students’ responses. One possible consideration for the differences is the students’ access to materials. For example, RU students were able to read anthologies

and obtain books on campus as well as access the public library, whereas the INAU students relied solely on the public library. It is possible that when more than one student is reading about a culture/country that books may have been checked out and unavailable at the time the assignment was given and completed.

As we analyzed the interview transcriptions, we noted that 5 out of 8 Native American pre-service teachers connected their assigned country or culture’s readings to their own culture. For example, one participant said, “Here [in the US] there are different [Native American] tribes and there [Australia], there are different [Aborigines] tribes too and languages, subcultures.” Later the same person said, “As a Native American I was interested in learning about their creation stories.” Another example of this unique cultural perspective is illustrated in the following words, “I was able to relate to the fact Japan has animals and animals talking in their stories and it is the same in the Native American stories.” This tendency to relate new to known was more commonly evidenced in the Native American population. The predominantly European-American students did not make these connections; the exception being the native Mexican participant at the research university who studied Mexico. She wrote,

I was born in Mexico City. I was amazed to have found books that I have never heard about in my childhood. Like those about coyote stories, which are mainly trickery. Also, books about poems from many

Mexican poets because I was raised learning and reading about Spanish poetry and tales from Spain and native Maya & Aztec. It was rewarding to read variations of those old cultures.

What do the pre-service teachers value about folk literature from their study of it as they prepare for their future classrooms? Are there differences between the two groups of participants?

Sources of data used to address this final research question came from post-questionnaire #3 (“What can you take from this assignment into your future classroom?”) and interview questions #5 (“What did you learn from this assignment and in-class sharing that you can take with you into your future classroom?”) and #6 (“How can you use your new knowledge of folk literature to enhance multicultural awareness?”).

As we examined the data for emerging themes within the questionnaire and interview responses, we saw only two common ideas between the two populations. One common theme was that the pre-service teachers at both universities valued simply learning about folk literature in general such as the fact that there are many different types of folk literature: fables, myths, legends, etc. They also appreciated learning about the unique stories of the various countries and cultures that they and their classmates studied. The remaining responses did not fit into themes, rather included a variety of specific things they valued such as having future students conduct research or completing an assignment similar to the one they just completed (on an elementary level),

having folk literature in their classroom library, and implementing storytelling. It was difficult to identify themes across responses because of the individuality of responses. Instead the pre-service teachers reported a variety of future goals and intentions not dependent on the college setting or participants’ ethnicity. For example the RU student who studied the folk literature of the Navajo wrote, “I can include traditional literature books in my classroom library.” The pre-service teacher at INAU who also studied the stories of the Navajo people and was Navajo himself wrote, “I can take many things from this assignment such as that I can influence my children to remember their culture and also their ethnic background.” Another example of differences between students was found in the students who studied Japan. The RU student wrote, “I would talk about different kinds of folk literature. I would also compare different stories from the same culture as well as different cultures.” The INAU student wrote,

Have books in class and introduce it to students so they are aware that there are other people in other countries that are like us in many ways. Many stories tell about the same morals as ours and that they are not that different.

Since we wanted to know if the pre-service teachers would make the connection between their experience learning about folk literature and the development of their future students’ multicultural awareness, all participants were asked, “How can you use your new knowledge of folk literature to enhance

multicultural awareness?" It is interesting to note the differences between the two populations regarding classroom use and awareness. Seven of the twelve RU participants stated they plan to use multicultural folk literature in their classroom read alouds, libraries and assignments, while only one INAU mentioned application to future classrooms. In contrast, the INAU population seemed to focus less on common teaching techniques such as reading aloud and more about the awareness, and exposing students to the beauty and uniqueness of other cultures. In discussing why differences may have occurred we thought that possibly the two different instructors of the children's literature classes may have emphasized different things when they taught about folk literature. Another possible reason for differences could be due to experiences in other college classes. Certainly a possibility for differences may be due to the background of the students. As one INAU student said,

I've been more interested in listening to stories rather than reading stories you know. I have most all of mine [from my tribe] memorized.

The Native American population emphasizes pride in their culture in perhaps significant ways.

Discussion

This study attempted to investigate the learning that occurred in pre-service teachers as they read their textbook, learned from class lectures, participated in class discussion, and were required to

complete a folk literature assignment on their selected country or culture. We also were interested in comparing the responses of the two populations that differed primarily in ethnicity to see if there were similarities and differences

The pre-service teachers at the RU self-reported slightly less knowledge about folk literature prior to the study than their INAU peers. We speculate this may be because of the oral traditions of the Indigenous peoples that were more readily known by the INAU students. When asked about their country or cultural prior knowledge, both samples were similar. What seemed to make a difference in prior knowledge for both RU and INAU students occurred when a participant was from the same ethnic group of the assigned culture or had lived in or traveled to a certain country. This suggests that being from a minority group in the United States does not guarantee a greater awareness of other cultures or ethnic groups. However, being part of an ethnic group did allow many of the Native American students to make connections from their readings of a different culture (e.g. Australia) to their own tribal traditions as evidenced through the interviews.

When asked how the pre-service teachers can take their learning from this assignment and apply it to their future classrooms we received a variety of responses indicating that teaching is a personal endeavor, ownership is individual and application is not based on ethnicity. But when we asked them directly about multicultural awareness, we did note differences between the two populations. The primarily European-American population at the

RU focused on incorporating multicultural books in literal hands-on ways such as through assignments and reading stories aloud. In contrast, the Indigenous people emphasized the aesthetic, expressive beauty of cultures. This suggested to us that the Native American students have a deep emotional connection and pride that reflects their enjoyment of different cultures, perhaps through hearing or reading about them. The European-American students may not possess the inner depth of personal multicultural understanding. However, after course learning and the assignment, they reported that they plan to instill a greater awareness and knowledge of other cultures in their future students through activities with folk literature. The Native American students' responses focused on emotional contemplation and the European-American students focused on concrete samples of books and learning.

We have learned several things that are helpful to us as teacher educators. First, we realize the importance of teaching about cultures. Teaching about cultures through children's literature is a very valuable method as suggested in this study and reported in previous research (Perez-Sable, 2005; Virtue, 2007; Young, 2004). It opens college students' minds to the importance of diversity through a common means of learning: reading stories. Traditional literature, with its universal themes, exist in every culture and have attracted the attention of people of all ages including storytellers, anthropologists, psychologists, theologians, choreographers, filmmakers, and musicians. The stories

are engaging and often have clear plot structures, characters, settings, and motifs that make them easy to remember. Because traditional literature is such a rich source of multicultural literature, the assignment is an excellent way to introduce and engage pre-service teachers in the wide variety of literature associated with a particular country or culture (Norton, 2009). It also infuses diversity in another of the required classes and does not place all responsibility on the multicultural course (Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005-06). Pre-service teachers often expressed their opinion that this assignment was a great deal of work but the most interesting and meaningful assignment they do for the class because it gives them a deeper understanding of the studied country or culture and traditional literature as a genre.

The second point we learned is that there are many commonalities between both populations of students. They had little prior knowledge of folk literature in general or their country or culture in particular, and they responded in similar ways to the majority of the questions. While we noted some differences, they were less common than we originally anticipated. One notable distinction was the way the Native American pre-service teachers connected the assigned reading to their own culture and focused on aesthetic, emotional responses. One possible reason may be that Native Americans focus on oral literacy and the art of fine speech (Ambler, 2000; Cleary & Peacock, 1998; White-Kaulaity, 2007). The Native American students in this study were raised hearing stories of their culture, so

when they were presented the opportunity to read of a new culture, although they had little prior knowledge, they were able to make more connections and speak aesthetically about the culture. Even though the RU pre-service teachers, with the exception of the student of Mexican heritage, did not display the ability to connect on a personal level, the power of story should not be underestimated (Mathis, 2001). Personal responses, connections and reflections should be encouraged of students from all cultures.

The third point is the need for greater collaboration between our universities. We realize there are variations in class size, the schools these pre-service teachers may teach in the future (e.g. tribal schools or traditional public school), as well as cultural differences, yet we still have parallel goals – to prepare future teachers to make a contribution to our educational society. Greater partnership to revisit the similar challenges we face and evaluate our teacher education programs may be a possible means to strengthen multicultural awareness of our pre-service teachers. A purposeful partnership can bridge divides, build acceptance and understanding, and support learning that goes beyond coursework (Cho & DeCastro-Ambrosetti, 2005-2006; He & Cooper, 2009; Trent & Dixon 2004).

We recognize limitations of this study. First, this study included a small sample size, which limits the ability to generalize to other populations. Second, we recognize that the questionnaires were researcher-created and do not tap into depth of cultural

knowledge that could be obtained through more in-depth study. Third, self-reported data is one method of gathering information, but may not be as accurate as unbiased sources. Fourth, we realize the measures reflect students' thinking during one semester of their college career. We do not document if this learning will translate into future teaching lessons and practices.

There are several possibilities for future research. It would be worthwhile to conduct a future study taking the knowledge we have learned and probing more in-depth for multicultural awareness as one aspect of understanding and promoting diversity. Another study could investigate if other assessments and activities would also serve a role in providing data, such as the privilege walk (Cooper, Miller & Rohr, 2006; Sassi & Thomas, 2008). This activity uses space to visually represent racial, socioeconomic status, gender, and sexual differences among students and helps students understand the nature of privilege. We may also tap into student learning during a multicultural or diversity class to determine more about their ever-broadening beliefs. As noted previously, neither sample population had taken the required multicultural class prior to this research. Third, we could track these teachers into their first years of teaching to determine the extent of their use of multicultural children's books, beginning with folk literature, as a means to support the development of multicultural understanding. Ideally, conducting a long-term study, following the pre-service teachers would provide

information about the effects on their future students.

In sum, it was the goal of this study to collaborate on discovering the value to pre-service teachers of studying folk literature and completing an assignment focused on the folk literature of one culture or country. We discovered many commonalities among the two sample populations. The results of this study have shown us that learning about cultures through folk literature has potential to enhance future teachers' developing understanding of and appreciation for other cultures.

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Appendix A: Research Instruments

Pre-Questionnaire

1. Please tell me what you know about folk literature (Be specific about qualities, features, prior experiences and knowledge, etc.)
2. Please tell me what you know about your selected country. (Again be specific as possible).
3. What do you hope to learn from this assignment?

Post-Questionnaire

1. Please tell me what you learned about folk literature from this assignment (Be specific! List 5 points as a minimum.)

2. Please tell me what you learned about your selected country. (Again be specific as possible and list 5 points).
3. What can you take from this assignment into your future classroom?

Interview

1. Tell me why you selected (country) to study.
2. Tell me what you learned about folk literature in general. (The interviewer had their pre-post questionnaires and asked them to explain and/or expand on information they included regarding characters, themes, motifs, and additional information).
3. Tell me what you learned about your selected country. (Again the pre-post questionnaires were used to probe if necessary).
 - a. In class you shared your newly acquired knowledge with peers. As you listened to peer presentations on different countries, what did you learn about folk literature in a broad sense?
 - b. What did you learn from this assignment and in/class sharing that you can take with you into your future classroom?
 - c. How can you use your new knowledge of folk literature to enhance multicultural awareness?

Appendix B: Titles of Folk Tales Read in the Assignment

- Bang, B. (reteller). (1975). *The old woman and the red pumpkin*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Co. (India)
- Bang, B. (reteller). (1978). *The old woman and the rice thief*. New York: Greenwillow Books. (India)
- Bengay, S. (reteller). (1992). *Ma'ii and cousin horned toad*. Illustrated by S. Bengay. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc. (Navajo)
- Bierhorts, J. (editor) (1984). *Myths and legends of the Aztecs*. New York: William Morrow and Company. (Mexico)
- Bodkin, O. (reteller). (1998). *Crane wife*. Illustrated by G. Spirin. Orlando: Harcourt Brace & Company. (Japan)
- Browne, V. (reteller) (1993). *Monster birds*. Illustrated by B. Whitehorne. Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Publishing Company. (Navajo)
- Browne, V. (reteller) (1991). *Monster slayer*. Illustrated by B. Whitehorne. Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Publishing Company. (Navajo)
- Chin, C. (reteller). (1993). *China's bravest girl*. Illustrated by T. Arai. California: Children's Book Press. (China)
- Cohlene, T. (reteller). (1990). *Turquoise boy: A Navajo legend*. Illustrated by C. Reasoner. Vero Beach, FL: Rourke Corp. (Navajo)
- de Paola T. (reteller). (2002). *Adelita*. New York: G.P. Puntam's Sons. (Mexico)
- de Paola, T. (reteller). (1988). *Fin M'Coul: The giant of Knockmany Hill*. New York: Holiday House. (Ireland)
- de Paola, T. (reteller). (1980). *The legend of old Befana*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. (Italy)
- Demi. (reteller). (1990). *The empty pot*. New York: Henry Holt and Company. (China)
- Demi. (reteller). (2004). *The greatest power*. New York: Simon & Schuster. (China)
- Demi. (reteller). (1988). *The hallowed horse*. New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company. (India)
- Domanska, J. (reteller). (1968). *Look, there is a turtle flying*. Toronto: The Macmillian Company. (Poland)
- Duncan, L. (reteller). (1996). *The magic of spider woman*. Illustrated by S. Bengay. New York, NY: Scholastic Inc. (Navajo)
- Globe, P. (reteller). (1988). *The legend of the white buffalo woman*. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic Society. (Native Americans of the Plains)
- Globe, P.. (reteller). (2001). *Storm maker's tipi*. New York: Atheneum Books for Young Readers (Native Americans of the Plains)
- Hand, S. S. (reteller). (1990). *The dwarf wizard of Uxmal*. New York: Athena (Mexico)
- Harper, J. (reteller). (1998). *Legends of Mexicatl*. New York: Turtle books (Mexico)
- Hausman, G. (reteller). (1993). *Coyote walks on two legs: A book of Navajo myths and legends*. Illustrated by F. Cooper. New York, NY: Philomel Books. (Navajo)

- Hausman, G. (reteller). (1993). *Eagle boy*. Illustrated by F. Cooper. New York, NY: HarperCollins. (Navajo)
- Hoges, M. (reteller). (1993). *Saint Patrick and the peddler*. New York: Orchard Books. (Ireland)
- Jackson, E. (reteller). (1996). *The precious gift*. Illustrated by W. Hubbard. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. (Navajo)
- Kajikawa, K. (reteller). (2000). *Yoshi's feast*. Illustrated by Y. Heo. New York: Dorling Kindersley Publishing, Inc. (Japan)
- Lester, J. (reteller). (1972) *The knee-high man and other tales*. Illustrated by Ralph Pinto. Stories from an anthology: Why Dogs hate cats (9-11)/ Why the waves have whitecaps (21-24)/ The farmer and the snake (24-26)/ Mr. Rabbit and Mr. Bear (12-20). New York: The Dial Press. (African American)
- Long, J. K. (reteller). (1996). *The bee and the dream*. Illustrated by K. Ono. New York: Dutton Children's Books. (Japan)
- Madden, E. (reteller). (2003). *Rainbow bird*. London: Frances Lincoln. (Australia)
- Manson, C. (reteller). (1991). *The crab prince*. New York: Henry Holt & Company. (Italy)
- McDermott, G. (reteller). (1986). *Daniel O'Rourke: an Irish tale*. New York: Viking Penguin Inc. (Ireland)
- McDermott, G. (reteller). (1986). *Tim outsole and the wee folk*. New York: Viking Penguin Inc. (Ireland)
- Morgan, W. (collector and reteller). (1997). *Coyote tales*. Illustrated by A. Tsihnahjinnie. Lawrence, KS: Haskell Indian Nations University Press. (Navajo)
- Mosel, A. (reteller). (1968). *Tikki tikki tembo*. Illustrated by B. Lent. New York: Henry Holt and Company (China)
- Myers, W. D. (reteller). (1995). *The story of the three kingdoms*. Illustrated by Ashley Bryan. New York: Harper Collins Publishers. (African American)
- Oughton, J. (reteller). (1994). *The magic weaver of rugs: a tale of the Navajo*. Illustrated by L. Desimini. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin. (Navajo)
- Pellowski, A. (reteller). (1980). *The nine crying dolls*. New York: The Putnam Publishing Group. (Poland)
- Peterson, J. (reteller). (1996). *Catherina, the clever farm girl*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers. (Italy)
- Poole, A.L. (reteller). (1999). *How the rooster got his crown*. New York: Holiday House. (China)
- Poranzinska, J. (reteller). (1987). *The enchanted book*. Florida: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers. (Poland)
- Powell, P. (reteller). (2003). *Zinnia: How the corn was saved*. Illustrated by K. Benally. Flagstaff, AZ.: Salina Bookshelf Inc. (Navajo)
- Rosales, M. B. (reteller). (1999). *Leola and the honeybears*. Illustrated by M. Rosales. New York: Scholastic Inc. (African American)
- Rayevsky, I. (reteller) (1990). *The talking tree*. New York: G. P. Putman's Sons. (Italy)
- Sanderson, R. (reteller). (1995). *Papa Gatto*. New York: Little, Brown and Company. (Italy)
- Schroeder, A. (reteller). (1994). *Lily and the wooden bowl*. Illustrated by Y.

- Ito. New York: Delacorte Press
Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc. (Japan)
- Seeger, P. (reteller). (1963). *Abiyoyo*. New York: Macmillan Publishing Company. (South Africa)
- Shute, L. (reteller). (1988). *Clever Tom and the leprechaun*. New York: Lothrop, Lee & Shepard Books. (Ireland)
- Sierra, J. (reteller). (1999). *Tasty baby belly buttons*. Illustrated by M. So. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc. (Japan)
- Smith, R. (reteller). (1977). *Manachar and Munachar: Two Celtic tales*. New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc. (Ireland)
- So, M. (reteller). (2004). *Gobble, gobble, slip, slop: A tale of a very greedy cat*. New York: Random House Children's Books. (India)
- Storm D. (reteller). (1995). *Pictures tales from Mexico*. Houston Texas: Gulf Publishing Co. (Mexico)
- Troughton, J. (1993). *What made Tiddalik laugh*. New York, NY: The Wright Group. (Australia)
- Turska, K. (reteller). (1975). *Magician of Cracow*, The. Great Britain: Hamish Hamilton Children's Books Ltd. (Poland)
- Want, R. (reteller). (1995). *The treasure chest: A Chinese tale*. Illustrated by W. Hillenbrand. New York: Holiday House. (China)
- Wells, R. (1996). *The farmer and the poor god*. Illustrated by Yoshi. New York: Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing Division. (Japan)
- Whitethorne, B. (reteller). (1994). *Sunpainters: Eclipse of the Navajo sun*. Illustrated by B. Whitethorne. Flagstaff, AZ: Northland Publishing Company. (Navajo)
- Williams, L. (reteller). (1995). *The long silk strand*. Illustrated by G. Bochak. Honesdale: Bell Books Boyds Mills Press A Highlights Company. (Japan)
- Wolkstein, D. (reteller). (2004). *Sun mother wakes the world: An Australian creation story*. Illustrated by B. Bancroft. New York, NY: Harper Collins. (Australia)
- Yep, L. (reteller). (1997). *The dragon prince: A Chinese Beauty and the Beast tale*. Illustrated by K. Mak. United States: Harper Collins Publishers. (China)
- Young, E. (reteller). (1989). *Lon pop o: a Red-Riding Hood story from China*. New York: Philomel Books. (China)
- Young, Ed. (reteller). (1992). *Seven blind mice*. New York: Philomel Books. (India)