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ABSTRACT
ASSESSING STUDENT AND INSTRUCTOR LEARNING IN A CULTURAL DIVERSITY COURSE

By Sherry L. Sutton

This dissertation is presented as a qualitative study in which I utilized interviews to explore with students and instructors how student’s attitudes and behaviors changed during and subsequent to their participation in a multicultural education course, with a particular emphasis on articulating aspects of the course that facilitated these positive changes. Data were collected through instructor interviews and course assignments. The research study is presented in a two-part study. The first part of the study involved reading and coding reflection papers of former students randomly selected. The second part of the study was comprised of doing one-on-one interviews with former and current instructors of the IDS 159 course.

Data was analyzed using a complex coding and re-coded system that entailed analyzing data on to an excel spreadsheet. This process was used to try to ascertain emerging themes and patterns. The study revealed that change, however slow the process, does occur in these classes, especially when commingled with appropriate activities and strategies. The necessary curriculum reform involves making sure that the curriculum for the course is solid, instructors understand the role of the course, and allowing opportunities for instructors to discuss, problem solve, and plan for the course as a group.
Assessing Student and Instructor Learning in a Cultural Diversity Course

A Dissertation

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# Table of Contents

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

1

## Chapter 2: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

5

- The Changing US Population and Education System
  5
- Multicultural Education
  7
  - Educating for Diversity
    7
  - Principles, Definitions and Goals of Multicultural Education
    12
  - Approaches to Educating for Diversity
    16
- Theoretical Underpinnings of My Study of Multicultural Education
  19
  - Social Reconstruction Theory
    20
  - Conflict Theory
    21
  - Transformative Leadership
    22
- Multicultural Education in Colleges and Universities
  24
  - Attitudes of Students Toward Diversity
    24
  - Assessing How Attitudes and Behavior Change
    26
- Building a Conceptual Framework
  32
  - The Goals of Multicultural Education
    32
    - Learning About Oneself
      33
    - Awareness of Difference
      33
    - Adding Non-Dominant Voices
      34
    - Broadening Worldviews
      35
    - Negotiating Difference
      35
    - Encouraging Critical Thinking
      36
    - Social Transformation
      37
  - Facilitating Positive Change in Students
    37
    - Student Diversity
      38
    - Diverse Literature
      38
    - Opportunity to Reflect
      38
    - Instructor Orientation
      39
    - Attend Events and Lectures
      39
- Summary and Purpose of Study
  40

## Chapter 3: Methodology

41

- Analysis of Student Papers
  41
- Instructor Interviews
  42
- Analysis Strategy
  43

## Chapter 4: Understanding the Context of the Study

45

- The Climate at Miami University
  45
- IDS 159: Strength Through Cultural Diversity
  47
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Major stakeholders in the field of education are faced with the enormous challenge of equipping students from different cultural backgrounds with the skills to live in a constantly changing environment. Demographic data on birthrates and immigration demonstrate that there will be an increase in the number of students who are Asian American, Latino, and African American attending public school, as compared to the shrinking number of European American students. By the year 2020, students of color will comprise nearly half of the elementary and grade school population. Currently, less than half of the student population in California and Texas is white. Half of the population in the largest twenty-five cities is made up of students of color (US Department of Education, 1998). In addition, the number of children with physical and emotional disabilities seems to be on a steady increase (Yetman, 1985).

In addition, more than twenty percent of United States children live at or below the poverty level. While poverty levels have been on the decline in recent years, poverty still affects African Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and families headed by single parents at higher levels than expected given their percentage of the total population. This is happening at the same time that the economy has been experiencing tremendous growth. However, this growth is driving home the division between the haves and the have nots (Gollnick et al, 2002). Certainly, ours is a culture wherein some groups have increased benefits that others as a result of race, ethnicity, gender, class, language, religion, ability, or age do not have.

There is hardly a night when you can turn on the television and not see diversity issues put in the forefront. Cities such as Laramie, Wyoming; Jasper, Wyoming, Jasper, Texas, and Littleton, Colorado, will forever remind us that hate still exists in every day communities. However, the hate crimes that happened in these cities are the tip of the iceberg; it is now estimated that there are well over 400 hate organizations that are alive and recruiting here in the U.S. These hate groups would have you believe that the Holocaust never existed, African-
Americans are genetically less intelligent and better suited for manual labor or sports, and that HIV is God’s way of punishing homosexuals (Taylor, 1999, p. 17). Ultimately, the changing demographics of the U.S. and our high rates of poverty and violence have important implications for schooling, given that the “culture and the society of the United States are dynamic. They are in a continuous state of change. Unless teachers are able to understand the diverse needs of their students, it will be difficult if not impossible to teach them effectively” (Gollnick et al, 2002,p. 10).

Educators need to feel comfortable with their own cultural backgrounds in order to work well with the diverse individual and community backgrounds that can be found in schools. They also must understand the context of the environment in which they are contracted to work; this will help them use in effective teaching strategies that can cause positive change for students in terms of learning and achievement. One of the tasks of the educator will be to help students realize the disparities in his/her own community and the world at large. Educators must aid students in a pursuit to understand the differences and similarities between individuals from diverse backgrounds. Educators must also prepare students to live and work effectively in a multicultural world. Multicultural education is essential in fostering these possibilities.

Multicultural education is a strategy used to educate students about themselves and different cultural backgrounds. This strategy is used to develop effective classroom instruction and school environments. Multicultural education is also used to support and extend the idea of culture, differences, equality, and democracy in the classroom (Banks, 1999; Gollnick et al., 1998). Universities across the nation have embraced the goals of multicultural education and have designed a wide variety of programs, courses, and co-curricular activities to prepare students to live and work in a multicultural world.

Indeed, during the past couple of years, at many of the conferences I have attended, there has been a considerable amount of conversation concerning diversity and diversity initiatives. Questions abound, such as, “How do we recruit more minorities?” and “How do we encourage more minorities to stay at our institution?” Someone will mention mentoring programs. Others will say that we have to make everyone feel appreciated and welcomed. Many ideas emerge and small debates ensue. Often times the debates end up simmering around diversity on our college campuses and what we are doing with the students to prepare them for a diverse world in which appreciating difference and welcoming diversity are important values and commitments to
action. Many universities have incorporated cultural diversity training across multiple courses, while others have developed distinct diversity courses.

I have taught several of these diversity courses, including Cultural Diversity in a Democratic Society, The Diverse Student in Early Childhood Classroom and Cultural Diversity in a Democratic Classroom. I have been intrigued by how these courses vary from university to university, in terms of the courses having similar stated goals but different ways of trying to achieve them. I first started teaching this in subject area as a way to get my foot in the door to teaching higher education courses. Ironically, a course as important as one that helps people understand stereotyping, dominant privilege, and ethnocentrism seemed to be the one most available for me to teach as an adjunct instructor. It is difficult for me to tell if this course was most available to me as an adjunct instructor because I am a part of the minority culture, thus those who offered might have thought that I would feel more at home starting with a course like this one. Or, if, professors generally do not like to teach these topics because it tears them away from topics that speak more to them, or maybe even because the demands of higher education continue to position full time instructors in “disciplinary,” “required,” and “traditional” courses. Deep down, I feel that my opportunities to teach cultural diversity were probably a mixture of all the above stated reasons. Regardless of how I ended up becoming acquainted with the topic of cultural diversity, it is a topic that I greatly enjoy and feel well suited to teach. I say well suited to teach this course not because I have all the answers or even the best method, but, because when I teach these subjects, I learn different information, but just as much, if not, even more than my students about culture and people.

There is a wealth of literature on multicultural education and college diversity courses, and in the next chapter I use this literature to build a conceptual model for my study. One overall conclusion that I draw is that college diversity courses do indeed facilitate changes in students’ beliefs, attitudes, and sensitivity toward difference. A second conclusion is that while change has been documented, the processes that help bring such changes about are less well understood. Herein lies the basic purpose and focus of my dissertation. This dissertation study utilized qualitative analysis of several
distinct sets of qualitative data to explore how student’s attitudes and behaviors changed during their participation in a multicultural education course, with a particular emphasis on articulating aspects of the course that facilitated these positive changes.

The remainder of this dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter Two reviews literature and theory on multicultural education, examines what we know to date about the effectiveness of college diversity classes, and builds a conceptual framework for the study. Chapter Three outlines the methodology used in the interviews of instructors and the analysis of student papers from a cultural diversity course, IDS 159, Strength Through Cultural Diversity. Chapter Four provides a context for the study by describing Miami University and the recent Miami Campus Climate Survey, as well as providing detailed information on the course I am examining. Chapter Five presents the results of the analysis of the student papers and instructor interviews. Finally, Chapter Six presents my overall conclusions, along with a discussion of their implications for curriculum development.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter provides the literature and theoretical underpinnings that I used to frame my study of a college cultural diversity course. This chapter is organized as follows. First, I discuss the changing demographics of the United States. During this segment, I will discuss statistics and their effect on education and the teaching force. Second, I discuss the literature on multicultural education; emphasizing different approaches to multicultural education; the principles, definitions, and goals of multicultural education and the theoretical underpinnings of multicultural education. Third, I discuss multicultural education in higher education, highlighting evaluation studies of multicultural education in higher education and the limitations of the evaluation studies. This is followed by the development of my conceptual framework. Finally, I discuss the purpose of the present study, and how it extends work in the field.

The Changing US Population and Educational System

Most multicultural education scholars frame their discussions in the context of our nation’s social and political history. This does seem a useful strategy for understanding the present state of American education, especially when we take into consideration that, as an institution, our educational system is largely engulfed in the social and political activities of the country. La Belle and Ward (1994) offer the argument that the development of the public educational system in the US during the nineteenth century was influenced heavily by the country’s becoming more industrialized, and families (the traditional seat of education and socialization) becoming less central to the economy (p. 10). As a result of this trend, schools became institutionalized for providing the essential knowledge and skills for participation in the increasingly public work force.

As an institution, the school became a major vehicle for relaying the American values of democracy, freedom, and equal access (Nieto, 1996). One of its major functions, then, was to socialize students into the national culture, developing in them the beliefs and values that would earn them success in their society (Gay, 1998). As Nieto puts it, “the subject matter of schooling is society” (p. 314). Every child in school should become imbued with American-ness, adopting
the proper values to belong to, and succeed in, our society. Education was seen as somewhat of a banking transaction, with children as empty receptacles, waiting passively to receive the necessary values and knowledge (Goodman, 2001, p. 21).

The question that needs to be asked is “who determined what knowledge was deemed necessary?” As an institution of our society, education reflected societal values and goals (Nieto, 1996). One value was proclaimed to be “unity in diversity” (Bull et al., 1992, p. 4). Our country was established to honor a variety of beliefs, but in the institutionalizing process, there had to be some common denominator that would signify “American” (Nieto, 1996). Whichever group held political power would naturally establish that common denominator; in this case, the dominant group consisted of Northern European Protestants and so it was their value system that most influenced the country’s belief system (La Belle & Ward, 1994). Similarly, the country’s educational curriculum arose out of their dominant view of what was important to teach our children.

This common denominator of American schooling still thrived even when waves of immigrants came to our shores with the industrialization of the country. Because of the value we placed on diversity, the US welcomed these immigrants, with their differences in experience, language, and values. However, it was expected and promoted that they would assimilate into the “melting pot” of American culture. Educational institutions played a huge role in this assimilation process, teaching immigrant children American values to prepare them for participation in our society. It was a positive goal, imbued with positive purposes of instilling the same civic pride in the new wave of future citizens. Indeed, school was seen as a “site of apprenticeship for democracy” (Nieto, 1996, p. 314).

However, this socializing role of education seemed to negate the value placed on diversity in the US – one of the very values that public schooling was charged with upholding (Nieto, 1996). The major goal of preparing students for American life seemed to inhibit other possibilities, as the majority group’s values encouraged in school commonly contradicted the cultural values being taught in the family homes. Public schools came to be thought of as “an instrument for the dominant group to acculturate and socialize subordinate group’s young” (La Belle & Ward, 1994, p. 12). This became a major American contradiction, a dilemma between ideals and actuality (Banks, 1996, p. 11).
Multicultural Education

Educating for Diversity

A great portion of the discourse about education on the topic of diversity has centered on cultural diversity, largely based on our history of immigration (ethnicity) and race relations (Bennett, 1990). However, most authors now incorporate other aspects of identity in their view of diversity, which can be defined as “the presence and interweaving of all the complex and varied human and institutional resources” (Garg, 1994, p. 6). Indeed, the general tenet of multicultural education is to affirm and support students from all different backgrounds, be they based on culture, ethnicity, race, gender, physical ability, sexual preference, religion, or age.

To make our discussion more easily understood, I will use the concept of culture to include a wide range of group identifications, since culture is broadly used to identify the patterns of understanding shared by a group. In this way, the shared context of religion or disability can be included as equivalent experience to cultural heritage when various “cultures” come into contact in the classroom, which can be seen as a “collection site for cultural diversity” (Erickson, 1999, p. 47).

Paramount to this discussion of education in a diverse setting is the topic of intergroup relations. Wurzel (1988) explains the contact of cultures in terms of identity structures, discussing the internal disequilibrium that occurs when our sense of reality is challenged by confrontation with different systems of knowledge. Indeed, “[u]nderstanding one’s own cultural reality is both an emotional and intellectual experience,” and new realities can seem very threatening to one’s familiar value systems (Wurzel, 1998 p. 9). Indeed, this conflict can often lead to a breakdown of communication and an intensification of ethnocentrism. In addition, we can recover from this disequilibrium with a new understanding of our beliefs in the context of these different realities. In the end, this cross-cultural conflict provides a “medium for cultural learning, including the development of cultural self-understanding and awareness, the expansion of knowledge of other cultural realities in the context of multiculturalism, and the improvement of cross-cultural communication skills” (Wurzel, 1998, p. 2).

This theorizing helps to educate diverse groups of children. However, in reality, the US education system often does not create an environment of engendering the positive outcomes of
cross-cultural contact. Bull et al. (1992) advance a theoretical perspective on political morality in terms of resolving controversies in education due to the presence of multiple cultures and languages. They present four criteria for multicultural adequacy – conception of culture, ethical priority of culture, power to resolve disputes, and acceptability of resolutions – and conclude that our democracy is inadequate for responding to multiculturalism. Our democracy fares only moderately in the four criteria and cannot seem to reconcile the inevitable tension between the ideals of community and cultural coherence (unity) and of autonomy (diversity) (pp. 117-118).

More often, we see artifacts in various areas of our educational system that show a default of positive outcomes in the education of our country’s diverse population. Goodman (2001) suggests that by understanding the forces and structures that create inequality (in schools and society), we might be able to cultivate an anti-discriminatory perspective (p. 4). Nieto (1996) suggests that schools reflect the oppression that is firmly implanted in our society; because schools are societal institutions, they cannot be separated from movements in society. She argues that because of a deep presence of inequality, discrimination against not dominant students must be understood to reach beyond the classroom. It is an institutional phenomenon, and as such it can be more damaging and more far-reaching than individual biases or prejudices because of the role of power (p. 36). She further argues that no decisions made in education can ever be neutral because of the significance attached to the control of knowledge. Indeed, economics plays a part in education, as we witness a general inequity in school funding based on local tax structures, government funding systems, and budgets protecting corporations and wealthy communities (Nieto, 1996, Goodman, 2001).

Banks (1997) is also aware of the role of politics in education as he advances his comprehensive model of the school as a social system with interrelated parts, or variables. These include school policy and politics; the attitudes, perceptions, beliefs, and actions of school staff; teaching styles and strategies; formalized curriculum and course of study; instructional materials; assessment and testing procedures; counseling program; community participation and input; the school’s languages and dialects; school’s learning styles; and the school culture and hidden curriculum (pp. 23-26). I will briefly touch upon several of these variables to demonstrate how they contribute to what is commonly perceived to be an incomplete and inappropriate treatment of diversity in our schools.
One goal of education, according to Nieto (1996), is to broaden students’ worlds outside their own particular experiences. When viewed in the context of cultural diversity, this does not occur, as the chosen curriculum typically presents a limited view of history, chosen by those in power (Nieto 1996). What’s more, students in the dominant group would seem to receive little broadening benefit from their education since the curriculum reflects few variations of experience. Curriculum is most often cited as the central aspect of discrimination in our schools. This is because it is the most tangible evidence of what our children are learning. A typical response to multiculturalism in the schools (in search of that lowest common denominator) is to water down, or “sanitize,” the curriculum (Nieto, 1996, p. 312). Many feel that this “whitewashed” version of history fails to acknowledge the cultural identities of non-dominant children because it does not include active participation of their groups in the making of history (Goodman, 2001). Such omission of their groups’ voices is considered a denial of opportunities for reasoning and construction of knowledge that is “personally distinctive and meaningful” (Erickson, 1999, p. 48). The students become marginalized or alienated and thus tend to resist learning (Erickson, 1999, p.48). Educators often misread this and lower their academic standards for these “disadvantaged” children, which then contributes to a further reduction of educational opportunities (Nieto, 1996).

Some educators have recognized this trend, and have made considerable efforts in recent decades to diversify the curriculum offered to children. However, many efforts fall short of the ideal because of an “overemphasis on visible, or explicit, culture at the expense of the invisible and implicit” (Erickson, 1999, p. 46). The rich diversity of our nation is often ignored in superficial treatments of a multicultural history; for instance, celebrating Black History Month or having a roving multicultural teacher is thought to do the trick, but these efforts fail to get to the essence of multiculturalism. Quite often, by teaching about differences, multicultural lessons essentialize them as aberrations of sorts. This can lead to a heightened awareness of differences and more pronounced stereotypes (Ereickson,1996) What’s more, these lessons fail to provide a critical, strategic view of multiculturalism that many scholars see as crucial to the adequate preparation for negotiating diversity. The essential second-culture skills and knowledge taught in “diversity” lessons are often transmitted as morality rather than as “pragmatic skills for survival and success” (Erickson 1999, p.48).
A related issue is the discriminatory assessment of the assumed knowledge that has been presented in the curriculum (which may or may not speak to the varying experiences of non-dominant students). Because this knowledge base originated from within the power structure, school testing practices reflect the same systemic mono-culturalism that largely ignores differences in learning styles and ways of obtaining knowledge. In addition, results of standardized testing often lead to dangerous tracking mechanisms, which contain the opportunities afforded to “disadvantaged” students (Nieto, 1996, pp. 89).

Demographics also play a large role in determining the educational opportunities for non-dominant students. The trend towards a re-segregation of schools is of major concern as we witness the phenomenon of “white flight,” where families are moving to the suburbs to escape ethnic diversity (Nieto, 1999, p. 38). This reverses the school integration of previous decades and cuts down the interactions that seem to act as a catalyst to the process of multiculturalism. Another trend shows an increase in students of color (accounting for more than half of the student population) while the teaching force is increasingly homogeneous (with upwards of 80% of teachers from European-American middle class backgrounds). This indicates a growing discrepancy between the cultural experiences of students and teachers (Banks, 1999; Cushner et al, 2000). Contributing to this is the fact that the US is experiencing increased immigration from non-European countries, as well as higher birthrates among nonwhite groups; ethnic differences are becoming more evident as these growing groups will not be able to blend into mainstream American culture, and indeed as mainstream American culture represents a smaller and smaller percentage of our society (Cushner et al, 2000). On another note, students with disabilities are increasingly being “mainstreamed” and are sitting in classrooms adjacent to non-disabled students (Cushner et al, 2000, p. 11). These social changes are undoubtedly reflected in the institution of schooling, and are demanding a changing conception of education for diversity.

Nieto (1996) argues that school achievement is broader than we might think, combining personal, cultural, familial, interactive, political, and societal issues. She discusses “hidden curricula,” which include subtle and not-so-subtle messages that are not part of the intended curriculum but which have a very real impact on student achievement (1996, p. 40). She explains that many explanations exist for low achievement among non-dominant students – including theories of genetic inferiority and general deficit due to other disadvantages – all of which seem to blame the students. However, she argues that poor achievement stems from a
broad spectrum of elements, including the feeling of alienation that develops in students who perceive no relationship to the subjects of their education. Their resulting resistance to learning (and sometimes, hostility) seems to propagate a vicious cycle of clouded perception, as teachers wonder whether it doesn’t have to do with the cultural differences after all (Nieto, 1996). It is in this way that the culturally different, or poor, students are often treated as the “perpetrators of their own oppression” (Goodman, 2005, p. 5). This cycle can get quite complex, with the power structures and the media playing into a game of misrepresenting blame (Goodman, 2000). In addition, this vicious circle becomes even more detrimental to the students’ achievement because it encompasses not only identity confusion and marginalization, but also some very serious identity choices. Non-dominant students, as Nieto explains, often feel pressure to sacrifice their loyalty to and identification with their family and cultural background (sense of belonging) in order to succeed in the more mainstream school (Nieto, 1996, p. 4). This is how the children’s communities and families can become involved in the complex story of education in our diverse society.

No less important, of course, are the teachers in the classroom with diverse groups of students. As Gay (1997) points out, teachers play a central role in the kinds of educational opportunities offered to students, and the quality of student-teacher interactions in instructional situations is the ultimate test of educational equality. It is because of their double role of teacher and role model that teachers are seen as so crucial to the development of students (whether it be cognitive, social, or multicultural development). We can theorize that because of their intimate contact with, and considerable influence on, students in their classrooms, teachers should be less prejudiced and ethnocentric than average people (Bennett, 1990).

However, scholars find that teachers often blindly propagate societal inequities in the classroom; many teachers have limited experiences and knowledge and know little about their students and operate based on (often unfounded) assumptions and stereotypes (Nieto, 1996). We have already learned that more than 80% of teachers come from presumably homogeneous, European-American, middle-class backgrounds. This begs a consideration of their own cultural awareness levels and, thus, their own levels of multiculturalism. Indeed, Bennett (1990) proposes that teachers often do not fully understand cultural differences themselves, and thus have differential expectations for and different instructional approaches with culturally different students (p. 26).
What’s more, because they lack cultural awareness, teachers tend to avoid discussion of differences, especially racial differences, in the classroom for fear of unearthing controversy or sounding racist (Nieto, 1999). This marks a trend that Schofield (1997) terms the “colorblind” perspective. In several years of research in desegregated schools, Schofield noticed a major trend whereby teachers and students pretend not to notice or speak of race for fear of seeming racist; in other words, they acted “colorblind” (p. 252). This colorblind perspective ignores the advantage of diverse experiences and perspectives that could be a tremendous resource for the educational process (Schonfield, 1997). This minimizes the importance of inter-group processes, both in terms of personal and social development. In one sense, students’ ethnic (or racial) identities are not acknowledged, so they do not feel validated in school. However, they cannot ignore that differences exist, for they see and understand that a major (racial) division exists among students. This transmits an incoherent and defective message about inter-group relations that can become detrimental to their long-term social development (Schonfield, 1997).

Thus, we see that it is more than curriculum or differential achievement that influence the educational opportunities provided to students from non-dominant groups. Multicultural education attempts to resolve the existing inequity by questioning the total context of education, including curriculum, pedagogical strategies, attitudes of faculty and staff, assumptions regarding student ability, student placement, and physical structure of schools (Nieto, 1996, p.88). Banks (1997) highlights some more general dimensions through which multicultural education can address these issues in our educational system, including content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, an equity pedagogy, and an empowering school culture and social structure (pp. 3-31). Let us now focus our attention on some of the underlying principles of multicultural education as a response to our country’s diverse student population.

Principles, Definitions and Goals of Multicultural Education

Multicultural education principles are “translations of general US educational ideals into a pluralistic context,” striving to bring educational processes and practices in line with the US reality of diversity (Gay, 1998, p. 12). Multicultural education is viewed as an “underlying perspective toward learning, teaching, and curriculum” (Goodman, 2001, p. 3). Wurzel (1988)
argues that we must be aware of our ethnocentric conditioning and accept the fact that society is indeed multicultural in order to adopt an educational approach that is based on this fact. Because of the multicultural context in which we live and in which we educate our children, Nieto (1996) sees multicultural education as basic education; multicultural literacy is as fundamental today as reading, writing, arithmetic, and computer literacy.

According to Wurzel (1988), multicultural education is often defined in oversimplified terms; it goes beyond the teaching of cultural differences or historical and geographical facts, artifacts, holidays, and foods. These are seen as superficial cultural symbols that narrow the educational potential of diversity (Wurzel, 1988; Gay, 1998). Rather, multicultural education is infused in all aspects of education, including curriculum, teaching and assessment strategies, and often many intangible aspects such as attitudes and expectations among students, staff, and faculty, and much more. Briefly put, multicultural education is a philosophy, a worldview; it can’t just be introduced through a program, a class, or a teacher, but is very much a part of all knowledge (Nieto, 1996, p. 312)

As a philosophy, multicultural education recognizes the right of different cultures to exist; it promotes reflection on multiple perspectives and critical analysis, rejecting oppression and ethnocentrism and providing for a balanced and accurate rendition of the US story (Nieto, 1996; Gay, 1998). By introducing other cultures into learning, educators can help students develop multicultural awareness and challenge the established attitudes and behaviors of mainstream society (Erickson, 1999). In this framework, schools can be a safe place to examine relationships with new and familiar cultures; students are able to learn about themselves as they attempt to comprehend the realities of others (Erickson, 1999; Wurzel, 1988, pp. 2-3). The goal is to prepare students for life in a diverse society through learning how to accept various cultural realities and avoid cultural conflict. This approach embraces diversity as a “positive element in the process of learning” and allows students to internalize “the multitude of cultural and historical experiences which shape their own and others’ cultural realities” (Wurzel, 1988, pp. 2-3). Through developing a broader multicultural perspective in all students, multicultural education acknowledges and responds to invisible aspects of communicative cultural practices of non-dominant students, putting into action the ideals of cultural equality that students are learning on a cognitive level (Erickson, 1999, p. 53).
Gay (1998) explains that teaching and learning are always cultural processes. Learning is easier when knowledge and skills are filtered through students’ cultural frames of reference. “Endeavoring to respond to various experiences among students rather than assimilate them into one view of reality, multicultural education assumes that students can retain their own culture yet be multicultural at the same time” (Bennett, 1990, p. 18). Through this process of including and affirming a variety of perspectives and experiences, schools have more potential of providing all students an equal opportunity to learn. In light of this, multicultural education is seen as “simply good pedagogy” for a larger sector of students; it takes students seriously, uses their experiences as a basis for further learning, and encourages critical thinking, reflection, and action which enable students to become empowered to take risks, question things, and seek their own answers (Nieto, 1996, p. 317). This becomes more personally relevant than the typical lessons where they hear about their rights and responsibilities in a democracy, the challenges of a democracy, or the central role of citizens in ensuring and maintaining a democracy (Nieto, 1996, p. 314).

Hopefully, we can now more readily grasp what is meant by “multicultural education,” which can be viewed as a philosophical concept and an educational process, as well as a reform movement (Grant et al, 1997). To aid us in consolidating our thinking, Bennett (1990) has highlighted four aspects of multicultural education: a movement to transform the total school environment; a curricular approach for the development of knowledge and understanding of cultural differences, as well as the integration of multiethnic and global perspectives; a process of becoming multicultural (or competent in multiple ways of perceiving, which is a normal human experience) on the way to becoming intercultural; and a commitment to combat discrimination through the development of appropriate attitudes and skills (pp. 11-12).

Sonia Nieto (1996) offers a useful and comprehensive definition of multicultural education that seems to align with other scholars and addresses the conditions that contribute to school achievement:

Multicultural education is a process of school reform and basic education for all students; antiracist and affirming of pluralism, pervasive throughout the educational system, founded on philosophy of critical pedagogy, and focusing on knowledge, reflection, and action as a basis for social change, it promotes democratic principles of social justice (pp. 304-305).
Nieto’s (1996) definition embraces seven characteristics of multicultural education, not the least of which to her is the ultimate goal of social justice. This concept seems to occupy the minds of education scholars when they consider the purposes of multicultural education as a field and philosophy. It is part of a movement to “actualize for all people in the [US] the democratic ideals” that our forefathers set out (Banks & Banks, 1997, p. xiii).

Related to the general goal of education, we learn that multicultural education should help prepare children for future (democratic) participation in a “common, shared civic culture.” Since us culture is widely diverse, students must learn how to “transcend their cultural boundaries and acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to engage in public discourse with people who differ from themselves” (Banks & Banks, 1997, p. xiv). Nieto (1996) explains that multicultural education is a transformative process that moves us beyond an affirmation of cultures and languages, and instead toward confronting issues of power and privilege in society. Goodman (2001) discusses the importance of posing problems to students to help them understand and challenge injustice in our society.

Intertwined in our movement towards a more just society through education is the more local goal of ensuring equal access to educational resources. Here we discuss the goal of school reform. Nieto believes that with a focus on transforming school policies and practices, and teacher attitudes and behaviors, multicultural education offers a way to equalize education (1996). Banks (1997) suggests changing the total educational environment in order for children to have equal opportunities to learn. However, he translates this purpose into the more tangible goal of improving academic achievement among non-dominant students.

We also come across some more specific objectives of multicultural teaching, including helping students develop skills, knowledge, and attitudes to function within and across cultures (Banks, 1999). “Multicultural education seeks to foster cultural pluralism and cross-cultural understanding, so that students can become globally aware… and ultimately, informed and responsible world citizens” (Bennett, 1990, p. 11). Erickson (1997) also includes the importance of teaching about others’ cultural practices without stereotyping, and teaching about one’s own cultural practices without an air of superiority (p. 46). The hope is for students to “develop social and intellectual skills that would help them understand and empathize with a wide diversity of people” (Nieto, 1996, p. 311). Multicultural education aims to help students see that our fates are tied together; to eliminate stereotypes; and to reduce ignorance and develop
understanding in order to strive toward democratic ideals (Banks, 1997; Bennett, 1990). These outcomes would then presumably equip students to improve intercultural relations and avoid conflict (Bennett, 1990; Wurzel, 1988). This goal of improved intercultural relations is not entirely unrelated to the loftier goal of social justice, but seems somehow more primary. In our process of striving for social justice, we need to maintain a focus on the daily chances to implement our multicultural perspective.

**Approaches to Educating for Diversity**

Sonia Nieto (1996) discusses four levels of support for pluralism that will be beneficial to our perspective as we encounter various approaches to educating for diversity. The theoretical levels can be viewed as stages along a developmental path towards pluralism. Before discussing the levels of support for diversity, Nieto asks us to acknowledge monoculturalism, or the lack of support for diversity. The first step from this ground stage is *Tolerance*, which shows an ability to simply endure differences. Schools at this level would not make special efforts to embrace or celebrate cultural differences represented by their populations. The next level is *Acceptance*, where a school might acknowledge differences without denying their importance. Most schools at this level have some sort of special programming to highlight achievements of minority groups or to teach superficial aspects of different cultures (food, clothing, music, etc.). Next we find elements of *Respect* enacted at various schools. At this level, cultural differences are absorbed into a non-dominant student’s educational process and used as a basis for building that student’s learning. Finally, we have *Affirmation, Solidarity*, and *Critique*, a level that embraces cultural differences as valid means for learning throughout the school community and curriculum. Students not only celebrate diversity, but also reflect and challenge it as well. Cultural conflict is assumed as a precondition for development of a multicultural perspective, and as a means for building a common humanity so that students can engage in social critique and action (pp. 339-340).

Geared with a conceptual foundation of the stages of multiculturalism presented by Nieto, let us now explore the range of existing approaches to educating for diversity. Gay (1998) lists several paradigms that have emerged over the past few decades for implementing multicultural education in schools: Comprehensive Multicultural Curriculum Infusion, Culturally
Relevant Teaching, Systemic Infusion, Social Reconstruction and Transformation. Curriculum Infusion seems the most accessible area for advancing the principles of multicultural education, because it considers both the range and scope of groups that are studied, as well as the type of content taught about diverse groups. It also includes the important integration of this content into the routine teaching of subjects and skills, with the final goal of positioning it at the core of the entire school curriculum, which is transmitted to all students in all settings (p. 18).

James A. Banks (1997) proposes a model of four approaches to this content integration aimed at going beyond a “mainstream-centric” curriculum. Again, these approaches build upon each other to establish a hierarchy of sorts, beginning with the Contributions Approach. Often the first step in a system’s “ethnic revival movement,” this least complex approach inserts superficial, discrete elements of culture such as heroes and holidays into the curriculum and thus establishes general cultural awareness. Beyond this is the Additive Approach, which adds cultural content, concepts, themes, and perspectives into the curriculum without changing its basic structure, purposes, or characteristics. Building on this approach, and more sophisticated, is the Transformation Approach, which involves changing the fundamental assumptions, goals, structure, and perspectives of the curriculum. Students are able to adopt diverse perspectives to build their understanding of the “nature, development, and complexity of US society” (p. 237). The final approach is the Social Action Approach, which promotes diverse perspectives but also develops students’ decision-making, analysis, and problem-solving skills to prepare them for social criticism and social change.

Culturally Relevant Teaching is the next paradigm in Gay’s pedagogical framework. Goodman (2001) demonstrates this paradigm in her support of a democratic classroom structure where students take an active part in their own learning. Students’ lives are seen as the originating point for learning, so that all knowledge reinforces and constructs from the experiences that they bring with them to school. This allows students to articulate their issues and lived experiences, think critically, and proceed into action on their own behalf. Teachers are able to learn from the students and become advocates for them in various ways: involving students in a sharing and supportive learning community; incorporating students’ real-life experiences into the formal curriculum (providing identity affirmation and expanding all students’ learning by introducing new perspectives); helping non-dominant students become intellectual leaders in the classroom; adopting a broad conception of literacy (including both
literature and oratory); acknowledging the abilities and strengths of all students (to aid the development of confidence and self-esteem); and engaging students in social action against the status quo (pp. 19-23). Another aspect of Goodman’s approach is a problem-posing curriculum, where teachers and students adopt an inquiry approach, investigating problems in their lives and communities and looking for underlying causes and patterns. This culturally relevant teaching involves teachers as learners with students, working together to discover possible responses and solutions to life’s questions. Culturally Relevant Teaching is also implicitly involved in the last of four types of multicultural teaching outlined by Zahorik and Novack (1996) in their study on teaching in the context of diversity. The four types, again presented in terms of increasing complexity, are: cultural adjustment, cultural embellishment, cultural integration, and cultural analysis. In the most basic type of multicultural teaching, identified as Cultural Adjustment, teachers present the established curriculum but alter their methods by responding to various learning styles and abilities (including reducing expectations of some students) and relating the course content to students’ lives. Cultural Embellishment is the next level, in that the teacher also presents the established curriculum but adds content to relate lessons to specific cultural interests. Next we see Cultural Integration teaching, which has an added goal of stressing pluralism, where teachers infuse multicultural topics into the regular curriculum as integral aspects of the learning unit. Finally, there is Cultural Analysis teaching, which goes beyond the integration of multiculturalism into the regular curriculum. This approach tries to develop in students not only a deeper understanding of multicultural topics, but also the skills and attitudes necessary to act for social justice.

Grant and Sleeter (1988) advocate Gay’s Social Reconstruction and Transformation paradigm. This is actually represented by one of five distinct approaches to diversity that they delineate within the general discipline of “education for pluralism.” The five approaches represent variations on such considerations as educator goals, target student population, vision of society, ideas about how to achieve a better society, and assumptions about learning (Sleeter & Grant, 1988, p. iv). The first approach, Teaching the Exceptional and Culturally Different, prepares all students to fit into and achieve within the school and society. Social Reconstructionism aim to “equip students with the cognitive skills, concepts, information, language, and values traditionally required” by the mainstream American society so that they can function adequately in that society (Grant & Sleeter, 1997). The next approach identified is the
Human Relations Approach, which aims to help students learn to live harmoniously. This approach focuses on attitudes and feelings that students have about themselves and each other, promoting the concepts of unity, respect, tolerance, and acceptance among all people. Single-Group Studies is a very different approach, whereby educators seek to “raise the social status” of a target group (e.g. African Americans, or women) by focusing on the history of oppression against the group and promoting its capabilities and achievements. This is a more political approach, aimed at the empowerment of the target group and a critical consciousness within other groups, with the ultimate goal of social change.

Next we encounter the approach that Grant and Sleeter (1997) actually define as Multicultural Education, which synthesizes some ideas from the previous three approaches.1 This approach represents Gay’s Systemic Infusion paradigm in its attempts to reform the total school environment for all children so that the school reflects diversity (regardless of the actual cultural composition of the student body). The goals of this approach include reducing prejudice and discrimination, effecting an equal distribution of power among various groups, and striving toward greater equal opportunity and social justice. Going beyond this is Grant and Sleeter’s preferred approach, Education that is Multicultural and Social Reconstructionism. This includes the purposes and practices of the previous approach, but with an added goal of reforming society. This is pursued through practicing democracy in the schools; teaching students to analyze institutional inequality within their own life circumstances; and building bridges across various groups and teaching social action skills so students can work together to advance their common interests and stamp out oppression.

Theoretical Underpinnings of My Study of Multicultural Education

As I further understand the field of multicultural education and as it becomes institutionalized and legitimized, it is imperative that I speak on some of the persistent themes that underpin multicultural education. Multicultural education’s goal is to promote knowledge, transformation, empowerment, liberation, and human freedom. With these goals in mind, it is easy to understand why the theory base for my study is of a complex nature. The conceptual
frameworks around which I have grounded my study are Social Reconstruction Theory, Conflict Theory, and Transformative Leadership Theory.

**Social Reconstruction Theory**

Grant and Sleeter (1984) define social reconstruction theory as “directly related with oppression and social structural inequality based on race, social class, gender, and disability” (p. 210). This form of transformation deals with thoughts centered around a perfect society. In this ideal, materials and goods would be distributed on an equal basis, thus ensuring that all groups would have what they need and desire for happiness. Social reconstruction theory advocates that one should abstain from declaring one vision as perfect and without defect. Instead, this theory encourages resources to be divided equitably without one group or another changing its views, ideas, and belief system to receive the goods. This theory encourages the disenfranchised to look at their own circumstances and attempt to demystify their form of oppression and then work on ways to eliminate this from happening to other groups. This would cause the members of the oppressed group to look back at their form of oppression in the past as well as the present and try to brainstorm ways to impact future generations of their race and others for the betterment of mankind.

The proponents of this theory believe that change will ultimately come via “political literacy.” Freire (1985) writes:

A political illiterate – regardless of whether she or he knows how to read and write – is one who has an ingenuous perception of humanity in its relationships with the world. This person has a naïve outlook on social reality, which for this one is given, that is, social reality is a fait accompli rather than something that’s still in the making (p.103). This approach advocates questioning the world, discriminating truth from opinion, challenging the process, and working toward a fairer society. It embraces issues concerned with race, social class, gender, disability, and other forms of discrimination such as homophobia.
Conflict Theory

Conflict theory, which is often called critical theory, is a sociological perspective for understanding social behavior. Three main ideas or assumptions ground this theory. The first one is that everyone has basic wants, regardless of culture or society. The second is that power is at the root of all social relationships. Finally, ideas, values, and religion are used as a tool to advance agendas. These assumptions are basic to all those who claim to be conflict theorists (Otomar et al, 2002). However, other parts of conflict theory are not as easy for all proponents of this theory to agree upon. For example, some conflict theorists believe that conflict can be eased if certain measures are taken. They believe that one cannot divide fact from value. Yet, others with differing views feel that conflict is inevitable, and they disagree with the idea that social sciences results are biased or value-laden.

The primary proponents of conflict theory are Karl Marx, Max Weber, and Ralf Darendorf. I will attempt to briefly sum up their contributions to the theory. Marx believed that individuals have desires and clear wants. He and his followers would argue that if people do not act in conjunction with their wants and desires, it only means that they have been misguided or deceived. The deceivers would be those who would stand to gain from this deception. He felt that investigating conflict in historical and contemporary societies with different social groups and interests was important. Marx was convinced that the ideas presented at that time were in direct correlation with the interests of the ruling class. Marx believed that the use of technology and property ownership changed people’s lives and was a primary source of conflict. Other theorists, such as Max Weber, believed this to be true as well. However, he and his followers did not see the use of technology and property ownership as a primary source of conflict, only as a partial contributor to conflict (Boyd, 1927).

Max Weber’s contributions to the field of conflict theory were enormous. Much of Weber’s work involves a discussion with the analysis of Marxism. In both Marx and Weber, we see a unifying thread of social positions offering more or less power to the subservient of a social position. They both believed that economic opportunity often underlay people’s actions, even if not verbalized. However, Weber thought that Marx was incorrect in naming economic characteristics as the primary indicator of social structure and people’s future. In other words, he
maintained that other characteristics such as a person’s religion, education, or political party might also be an important factor to success and power as class (Boyd, 1927).

Ralph Dahrendorf argued that there is a natural pull toward conflict in society. There will always be two groups, one with power and one without power. These groups will simultaneously walk the earth in search of happiness. This pursuit will inevitably cause the two groups’ interests to collide. Because these pursuits will be different - one wants to gain power, the other wants to retain or protect what little power it has - a change will occur in the world (Boyd, 1927).

Dahrendorf describes power as “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests” (p. 120). He believed that those in power were not given this power from a vote of the people, for the good of the masses; instead they obtained and used it for their own good (Boyd, 1927).

Transformative Leadership

Banks (1996) said that multicultural education is a type of transformative knowledge. Transformative knowledge, which challenges institutionalized mainstream knowledge, makes explicit its value premises and its connection to action to improve society. Thus in order to have transformative leadership, one must first acquire transformative knowledge. One author sees transformative leadership as being able “to communicate [a] vision to the administrators, teachers, and community members and inspire them to transform themselves” (Lindsey et al. 2003, p. 61).

Webster’s Third New International Dictionary (1981) defines ‘transform’ as “to change completely or essentially in composition or structure” (p. 427) Synonyms for transform include words like metamorphose, transmit, and convert. Thus the word transformative could be stated as the power or tendency to significantly change. Keeping this definition in mind, we will now focus our attention on two other definitions given by the same source. The first one is the word “lead.” This is defined as “to guide on a way; to serve as passage for; to bring by reason to some conclusion or condition” (p. 1283). Webster’s then defines leadership as the “capacity to lead” (p. 1283). Taking into account these four definitions we can better generate and understand what
transformative leadership means: the capacity to lead toward complete change in composition or structure. Said another way, it is to guide on a way to change.

Heifetz (1999) provides a model of leadership by unraveling two critical areas of leadership: leading with authority and leading without authority. He proclaims that both can work. He suggests that “authority is a resource because it can provide the instruments and power to hold together and harness the distressing process of doing adaptive work” (p. 88). However, because people become so dependent on authority figures, sustaining such authority is dependent upon delivering and meeting the often-unrealistic demands of people.

Heifetz lays out challenges to transformative work but frames them in five easy principles of leadership:

- Identify the challenge
- Control the level of distress and ensure it is optimal to do work
- Focus attention on critical issues, not distractions that reduce stress
- Give the work back to the people, let them make their own decisions
- Encourage people who lead without authority, especially those who ask hard questions (Heifetz, 1994).

Heifetz felt that these are the guiding principals for organizational and transformative leadership.

Randall B. Lindsey, Kwanza Nuri Robins and Raymond D. Terrell (2003) articulate transformative leadership in their book entitled Cultural Proficiency. In terms of multicultural education, they feel that a transformative leader must be culturally proficient. But what does that mean? Lindsey et al. use this definition:

A culturally proficient environment acknowledges and responds to both individual and group differences . . . . The culturally proficiency model uses an inside-out approach that focuses first on those of us who are insiders, encouraging us to reflect on our own individual understanding and value.(p. 25)

Lindsey et al. (2003) feel that there is a continuum on which people become or are culturally proficient. This continuum includes six level

- Cultural destructiveness: The elimination of other people’s cultures
- Cultural incapacity: Belief in the superiority of one’s own culture and behavior that disempowers another’s culture;
• **Cultural blindness**: Acting as if the cultural differences one sees do not matter or not recognizing that there are differences among and between cultures

• **Cultural precompetence**: Awareness of the limitations of one’s skills or an organization’s practices when interacting with other cultural groups

• **Cultural competence**: Interacting with other cultural groups using the five essential elements of cultural proficiency as the standard for individual behavior and school practices; and

• **Cultural proficiency**: Esteeming culture; knowing how to learn about individual and organizational culture; interacting effectively in a variety of cultural environments (p. 37)

Lindsey et al. (2003) go on to discuss formal leadership. It is their assertion that the members of dominant male groups have traditionally handled schools. Thus the views, opinions, and values of the dominant class of males are the ones accepted. The views, opinions, and values of the dominant class have a great impact on organizational structures, standardized tests and ability grouping.

Lindsey et al. (2003) further describe formal and non-formal leaders. Generally speaking, the formal leaders are the ones who interviewed for a position and were selected. The non-formal leaders are the ones who gain power and leadership ability based on their valued insight, helpfulness, reliability, and ability to get a job done. “Culturally proficient principals exercise leadership by using the talents of other leaders in the school community. They fully appreciate and know how to involve widely diverse constituencies in making their school work for children” (p. 60).

Lindsey et al. (2003) advocate making those in formal leadership roles as diverse as possible thereby increasing the “widest spectrum of views” (p. 37). They note that “typically, leadership either reinforces the existing structures or promotes change through dialogue and collaboration” (p. 62). Transformative and culturally proficient leaders help teachers, students, parents, and the community better understand the culture of the climate. They create ways to analyze and attack would-be conflicts. They include formal and informal leaders as well as beliefs of the community.

Aspects of social reconstruction, conflict theory, and transformative leadership are threaded throughout the literature on multicultural education. Certainly, one institution most in
need of transformative leadership and cultural proficiency is higher education. I now will look at
multicultural programs and diversity courses in universities, addressing both their content and
their assessment.

**Multicultural Education in Colleges and Universities**

Multicultural education and education for diversity have become buzzwords in higher
education. Many colleges and universities are becoming more deliberate about preparing
students to live and work in a multicultural and global world, and have incorporated diversity
into their mission statements and into their curricula.

Such changes in curricula immediately lead to the critical question “are cultural diversity
classes really making a difference?” In the following section, I summarize some recent research
done in assessing the impact of university multicultural education on students. There is a wide
variety of studies that examines both attitudes and behavior change of students who engage in
diversity activities, workshops, lectures, and courses. I have divided this literature roughly into
two sections: 1) studies that assess college student attitudes towards diversity in general; and 2)
studies that attempt to evaluate the impact of participation in a particular diversity
course/activity.

**Attitudes of College Students Toward Diversity**

An important question is whether students’ pre-college experiences affect their college
behavior and attitudes with regards to diversity. Hurtado, Engberg, Ponjuan and Landreman
(2002) did a study in which they examined students’ pre-college experience and how it
predisposed them to three democratic outcomes: (a) the ability to see the world from someone
else’s perspective; (b) beliefs that conflict enhances democracy; and (c) views about the
importance of engaging in social action activities. During this study three flagship universities
were studied. The research rendered interesting results; namely that first year female students are
more likely than their male counterparts to report values and beliefs in line with democratic
outcomes. Those participating in race/ethnic discussions, student clubs, and volunteer work, as
well as preparing for class with students of varying groups and engaging in controversial
dialogue were also more likely to report values and beliefs in line with democratic outcomes. In addition, the study indicates that students could possibly be ill equipped to negotiate conflict in a diverse democracy. Their findings suggest that colleges should promote and foster the creation of democratic citizens. On a final note, the study delivered new measures of democratic outcomes to uncover the impact of diversity and service learning initiatives (Hurtado et al., 2002).

Rowland, Harland, and Arnold (1999) did a study examining pre-service teachers’ responses to a survey that assessed their tolerance of difference in race, gender, religion, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, and sexual preference. The survey also investigated student perspectives concerning welfare recipients and non-English speaking people. During the fall 1998 semester, 117 pre-service teachers enrolled in the required two semester Development and Diversity classes at the University of Mississippi completed a 21-item instrument that measured tolerance of difference. The instrument was administered at the beginning of the semester, prior to any instruction. The results concluded that overall, respondents were consistently accepting of ethnic, racial, and gender differences; children with behavior disorders; and people from different socioeconomic backgrounds. They were inconsistent in their acceptance of people with disabilities, issues related to the welfare system, issues related to declaring English as the United States’ primary language, admission of non-English speaking immigrants to the United States, religious differences, and sexual preference differences.

Dee and Henkin (2002) assessed pre-service teachers’ attitudes toward cultural diversity before entering into multicultural education courses at an urban university. The participants indicated strong support for implementing diversity issues in the classroom and high levels of agreement with equity beliefs and the social value of diversity. However, the respondents did not agree that assimilation to the dominant culture was a requisite for student success.

Taken together, these studies demonstrate that these students entered into diversity courses and activities with generally positive attitudes toward diversity, particularly along lines of race and gender. They also indicate that these students have room for growth. Students appeared less accepting toward differences in ability level, sexual preference sexuality, economic success, and immigration status.
Assessing How Attitudes and Behavior Change

There are a number of studies that use quasi-experimental methods to look at how attitudes and behaviors change as a result of taking a diversity course or participating in diversity activities. Villalpando (2002) takes a very broad view in his evaluation research. He emphasizes that three areas must be assessed when evaluating student satisfaction with college diversity initiatives: individual diversity involvement measures, faculty diversity orientation, and institutional diversity emphasis. Villalpando (2002) asserts that attending racial/cultural awareness workshops and socializing with someone of a different race/ethnic group are the two principal diversity involvement measures found to have an effect on overall satisfaction with college life among students of color and white students. He concluded that most groups, particularly African American and white students, appeared to have an enhanced sense of satisfaction by attending cultural awareness sessions. The study seemed to confirm the notion that all groups benefited from the interactions in the cultural awareness sessions. Thus, an obvious conclusion would be to encourage students to participate in these kinds of sessions. This information helps to refute the popular belief that participation in diversity awareness activities promotes greater strife among students by encouraging ethnic/racial division. According to Villalpando’s (2002) study, the opposite occurs. Each group that participated in the study appears to have gained from attending a cultural awareness session.

Villalpando (2002) used a second diversity measure in his study, socializing with someone of a different race/ethnic group. This measure showed a positive effect on satisfaction with college for the majority of students. This was especially true in the case of white and Asian American students. Of all the groups in the study, African Americans were the only group whose reported overall level of satisfaction with college was not positively associated with socializing with someone of a different race/ethnic group.

Faculty diversity orientation was the third area assessed by Villalpando (2002). This construct measured the faculty’s use of instructional methodology that incorporates content on ethnic and racial issues and research or writing addressing women, ethnicity, or race. All of the students (especially African American and white students) reported an increased level of satisfaction when faculty incorporated diversity into the curriculum.
Institutional diversity emphasis refers to institutions that support and are “committed to increasing the number of women, faculty and students of color, creating a diverse multicultural environment and an appreciation for multiculturalism” (Villalpando, 2001, p. 45). Villalpando asserts that such universities have a much better chance of increasing student satisfaction.

The major implications of this study suggest that colleges and universities can indeed enhance the educational experience of all students by implementing an environment that encourages and fosters a more enhanced understanding of diversity and multiculturalism. This is obtainable by most, if not all universities. The findings from this study also support the inclusion of diversity content in courses (Vallalpando, 2002). Greater resources should be granted to areas or academic departments of the college that support this kind of instruction, generally humanities, education and social and behavioral sciences (Villalpando, 2002).

Mitchell J. Chang (2002) used a quasi-experimental design to study students who were about to complete their undergraduate diversity requirements. He compared these students to students who were just beginning the undergraduate course in diversity. What he discovered was that students who had completed the study showed far more favorable judgments about African Americans than did the students who had not yet taken the course. The group that was completing the course seemed to exhibit significantly less prejudice than the other group. The author attributed most of this change to be related to the opportunity for students to become acquainted or have serious discussions with students of another race or ethnic background.

Bakari (2000) did a pilot study on the influence that multicultural infusion had on pre-service teachers in an educational psychology course. This study looked at eight educational psychology classes at a particular university to assess students’ attitudes toward teaching African American students. All of the classes were taught by teaching assistants and not regular core faculty members of the university. One of the eight classes taught had a multicultural infusion piece to it. Five of the other classes participated in a collaborative project to support student-centered teaching. The other two classes followed the general educational psychology course guidelines with no additional focus. The course instructors administered a survey, which centered on teaching African American students during the last two weeks of the semester. Students in the class with the multicultural infusion obtained the highest scores on the Teaching African American Students Survey.
Rodriguez and Sjostrom (1997) looked at pre-service teachers at Rowan College in New Jersey. The pre-service teachers were predominately white and had little prior experience with minority communities. The authors of the study used reflective classroom activities to develop and facilitate critical reflection on teaching for diversity and to raise consciousness regarding educational equity. Observations were done while students were student teaching in both urban and rural settings using the Praxis III: Performance Assessment for Beginning Teachers and a pre- and post-observation interview. The education students were found to have experienced many cross-cultural situations in their own lives. Drawing on these, the cultural moments teaching strategy provided a common base for classroom discussion and facilitated the teacher candidates to recognize and accept individual and group differences.

Taylor (1999) did research to assess pre-service teachers' and teacher educators’ knowledge regarding issues related to multicultural education. She chose 78 pre-service teachers who completed the Multicultural Knowledge Test during the first class period of the Social Foundations of Education Course. There were also 45 teacher educators at the same institution that completed the test. Researchers collected data on demographics, major and class rank for the pre-service group and for education and professional experience for the teacher educators. Data analysis involved statistically comparing results on the Multicultural Knowledge test to the average knowledge level score. Results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between pre-service teachers’ and teacher educators’ multicultural knowledge levels. The pre-service teachers knowledge was significantly lower than average. The knowledge levels of the teacher educators were almost average. This indicates that both teacher educators and pre-service teachers’ should increase their multicultural knowledge levels.

Taylor (2001) conducted a similar study to examine teacher educators’ and student teachers’ beliefs about, attitudes toward, and sensitivity regarding cultural diversity and other diversity issues. The Beliefs about Diversity Scale was used to assess respondents’ beliefs about race, gender, social class, ability, language/immigration, sexual orientation, and multicultural education. Study participants were comprised of 45 teacher and 78 pre-service teachers at Mississippi State University. The pre-service teachers were all enrolled in the Social Foundations of Education course. Data analysis indicated that the pre-service teachers scored at culturally sensitive levels for all subgroup areas except sexual orientation. Teacher educators scored at
culturally sensitive levels for all subgroup areas, with language/immigration being the lowest. However, for both groups the highest sensitivity level surrounded areas of race.

Wolford and Clemo (1997) did a series of collaborative and experiential activities designed to provide learning opportunities for students enrolled in an interdisciplinary human diversity course. As a requirement, students participated in a group project and were given class time to work with the group creating the presentation. Students were also asked to participate in ongoing research on multicultural experiences. Pretest and posttest measures of the impact of this method of instruction on attitudinal and behavior change related to a student’s openness to exploring diversity activities were administered as a measure of the effectiveness of the type of instruction. The data collected were from 66 students from 1993, when the course was offered as an elective and from 75 students in 1997, when the course was a requirement. Their hypothesis was that positive contact with others who are different would reduce prejudice. Results indicated that the 1993 sample experienced a significant increase in the number of times they participated in multicultural activities.

Ambrosio (2001) did a study of Emporia State University’s Multicultural/Diversity Project; he developed a set of assessment instruments and a model evaluation plan to assess multicultural/diversity (MCD) outcomes in teacher education and general education programs. Assessment instruments and techniques were constructed to evaluate the impact of coursework on student attitudes, knowledge, and performance skills. Participants were incoming freshmen, beginning teacher education majors, non-education seniors, and teacher education seniors. Surveys examined four basic issues: 1) the effect of the teacher education program on student attitudes about MCD issues, 2) whether graduating students have the required knowledge to function in a diverse classroom/society, 3) whether student teachers are obtaining the required skills to function in a diverse classroom/society, and 4) gauging the effect of general education programs on students’ attitudes and knowledge regarding MCD outcomes. According to this study students did appear to develop slightly more positive attitudes as they progressed though their academic program. Why the difference was not more significant could be attributed to several factors. First, attitudes typically remain stable unless there is a lengthy, positive experience between the respondent and the target groups. Second, there are other influences outside the classroom that are occurring at the same time of the classroom experience. Finally,
the halo effect can happen. The halo effect, in this instance, occurs when students respond the way they think they should respond, rather than how they actually feel.

Ambrosio (2001) identified many important implications from this study. He suggested that mechanisms for change based on faculty discussion of essential knowledge skills must be identified and pursued. Also, the inclusion of a battery of assessments rather than a single assessment when evaluating a program or a student should be considered. Involvement of teachers, principals and other educators in assessment, development and program changes were identified as essential. And finally, students should be held accountable for minimum acceptable performance levels.

Weiner et al. (2000) investigated whether data collected from coursework and instructor’s evaluations of student teacher attitude change were adequate measures of change over a semester. Data analysis involved students enrolled in courses taught in the fall of 2000 at New Jersey City University. Teachers collected biographical data and written responses to a case study from the participants. These responses were centered on a situation where a student teacher was having difficulty in handling the isolation of three Latino students in her classroom. Participants in the study were given the opportunity to respond to the case study at the beginning of the semester and at the end. Metacognitive change was measured by the researchers based on the students writing their second response and then having an opportunity to look back at their first response and commenting on it. Instructors of the course also collected information from participants’ journals, papers, written assignments, and class discussions regarding students’ attitudes and ideas about culture and race in schooling. In this particular study very few students demonstrated much change over the course of the semester.

Pedras (1996), in conjunction with The University of Idaho faculty and Lapwai School District personnel, assessed the awareness of current teacher education students of diverse cultures. A questionnaire was used to assess the attitudes of 26 teacher education students toward other cultures. The results of the study concluded that many students entering the teacher education program of the University of Idaho had little or no awareness of the needs of the modern multicultural classroom. Pedras (1996) concluded that some stereotypical opinions might impede the understanding of diversity and how it can be used to improve teaching and learning. The data also suggested that education students do change their opinions after working
with minorities, especially Native American students. Attitudes were much more positive after students completed student teaching.

All of these studies are critical in helping build a framework for understanding what has been done in the area of multicultural education for undergraduate students. In most studies some form of change was noted. Some of the studies documented a positive change in beliefs, attitudes, and sensitivity toward difference, while others stressed a change in knowledge, enhanced tolerance, and increased awareness regarding multicultural education. Still other studies stressed the impact of the diversity class, student reflections, and behavioral changes.

**Building a Conceptual Framework**

One critical step in the development of this dissertation project is the building of my own conceptual framework for multicultural education. This next section articulates my framework, which I have developed both from my personal experience and from my synthesis of the literature and theory. I see my conceptual framework being synthesized across the frameworks offered by Grant, Sleeter, and Banks and it is broken into two major sections: first, I articulate what I see as the primary goals of multicultural education, and second, I articulate what I believe facilitates the achievement of these goals in college diversity courses.

**The Goals of Multicultural Education**

For several years now, I have had the honor of being able to teach diversity classes at a couple of area universities. At times, I have been at mega universities with a dash of every kind of diversity, while at other times, I have been teaching a class where I, as an African-American woman, have constituted or embodied the only hint that racial diversity exists. Each time I was always hopeful of the opportunity to enlighten my students and to enlighten myself. I have never been disappointed, primarily because so few of my students in either setting have even thought about the many aspects of cultural diversity, thus, the opportunity for growth in that area is immense. Generally, during the first class, I try to give the students an overview of multicultural education and the goals of the course. These goals are generally derived from my syllabus that I generated from the department chosen text. However, the further that I immerse myself in the
study of multicultural education, the more able I am to frame what I think the goals of multicultural education are, regardless of the text chosen or syllabus designed. My conceptual framework for the goals of multicultural education centers around the themes of: learning about oneself, becoming aware of difference, listening to the non-dominant voice, broadening world views, negotiating difference, encouraging critical thinking, bringing about social transformation. This framework flows both from my experience of teaching university students, and from the literature. The authors who are authorities in the field repeatedly describe these same seven themes as they describe the purposes and goals of multicultural education. These seven themes form the core of my conceptual framework; in the remainder of this section, I elaborate on each one of the themes by using both personal experience and professional literature.

**Learning about oneself.** First, my conceptual framework for multicultural education centers around the theme of learning about oneself. “But, I am not anything. I am just white!” is the comment I so often get from my students on the first night of class when we talk about who we are. White students typically do not see their diversity. This may be because they do not understand the many facets of that “diversity” and because they do not understand the depth at that diversity covers. They have had little opportunity or need to really examine what makes them who they are and how they fit in the world. Both Wurse (1988) and Erickson (1999) say that students should be able to comprehend who they are as they attempt to comprehend others. This means that in order for students to understand people from other cultures, races, gender, disabilities or sexual orientation they must first know who they are and draw from that knowledge. Goodman (2001) says that students’ lives should be seen as the originating point for learning. With this in mind, then all knowledge is reinforced and constructed from experiences that students bring with them to school, regardless of whether they represented the mainstream or dominant population. I can see how using work from Grant and Sleeter’s (1989) characteristics of single-group studies could inform my students more of who they are. The single group study “takes a group’s perspective about itself” (pg 144). The students should understand their history, cultural contributions and current social agenda.

**Awareness of difference.** Next, my conceptual framework for multicultural education centers around the theme of awareness of difference. The converse to the students who claim they are “just white,” are the students who feel as though they are very different from everyone else and see little similarity between them and the dominant culture. They make comments such
as, “You just do not understand. There is no way that I can explain me. I constantly live in two different worlds.” Bennet (1990) said it is good that students see themselves as different rather than merely trying to assimilate. Students should be able to retain their own culture yet be multicultural at the same time. And it is through this struggle that Nieto (1996) encourages students to use their background as a base for learning. Schonfield (1997) takes exception to individuals who tout that they have a “colorblind” perspective. He asserts that this perspective ignores the advantages of diverse experiences and perspectives that could be a tremendous resource for the educational process. Goodman (2001) says that helping non-dominant students to become intellectual leaders in the classroom can help everyone involved to be able to learn and grow. Using work from Grant and Sleeter’s (1989) Human Relations approach could bridge the gap with students who feel that they are too different from everyone else by promoting respect for others, creating positive student-student relationships, reducing stereotypes, improving self concepts, and providing positive cross-group communication. This approach helps students realize the commonality they share with people from other races and groups.

**Adding non-dominant voices.** My conceptual framework for multicultural education also includes the concept of adding non-dominant voices. During my fourth quarter teaching a diversity class, I decided to supplement the text that was picked by the department with one of my own. This particular text presented opposing viewpoints on various social issues. One example of an opposing set of viewpoints is focused on the achievement gap between white and black children. One article contended that this gap is the result of the way society has limited opportunities for African Americans to learn, while other articles contended it is primarily the different expectations that the parents have for their children. Another debate centered on whether individuals with severe disabilities should be allowed to have children and care for their children themselves. Heated discussions emerged and at the end of the quarter I wondered, had this class caused real change to happen, or had I in fact merely allowed a forum for prejudiced behaviors to be brought out? Several months later, I ran into one of my former students. The student started making small talk and it took me a second to remember what class and what quarter I had taught him. While I was trying to figure this out, the student said, “I really appreciated your diversity class, especially the debates. When I had to debate a viewpoint for a view that was not my own, I got a chance to see how mine really did not make as much sense as it used to. Thanks.”
This blew me away, that a student would actually say this. I mean, I would have expected it if grades were still due, or if it was in an anonymous reflection piece, but not in the hallway in front of an elevator. This theme of adding the non-dominant voice most closely aligns to Grant and Sleeter’s (1986) Multicultural Education Approach in which students are encouraged to use curriculum to portray the contributions and perspective of a variety of American cultural groups, sexes, religions, and abilities.

**Broadening worldviews.** My conceptual framework for multicultural education also includes the concept of broadening worldviews. My dream one day is to travel abroad. I have a brother who flies out of the country to a far away land at least twice a year. He always comes back with fabulous stories. I have asked him on several different occasions about life in other countries, of particular interest is the amount of prejudice that he encounters. He tells me repeatedly that, at least in places he has been, and he has been to many places, that an American overseas is an American overseas. You are not considered an African American from America, you are just an American. Banks (1999) says that is one of the aims of multicultural education, to help students see that our fates are tied together; to eliminate stereotypes; and to reduce ignorance and develop understanding in order to strive toward democratic ideals. He further contends that multicultural education should help students develop skills, knowledge, and attitudes to function within and across cultures. This connects quite appropriately with Grant and Sleeter’s approach of Multicultural and Social Reconstruction. I say this because this approach teaches that “egalitarian ideology is the cornerstone of our democracy” (Banks, 1999,p.212) and fosters an appreciation of the world’s diverse population.

**Negotiating difference.** Another crucial component of my conceptual framework for multicultural education is negotiating difference. Most of the cultural diversity classes that I have taught have some kind of field experience attached to them. I always like to spend a few minutes of my class talking with student about their experiences in the field, especially when they are doing observations in urban settings. I say “especially” because for one, that is where I have had most of my experience and two, because urban districts are often robust, problem-rich environments that take extra time to process. One quarter I had a student who was very upset with a parent for not combing her daughter’s hair, not bringing her to school in clean clothes, and not making her finish homework assignments. The student wondered if Children’s Services should be notified to take the little girl away from her mother and whether or not she could  bring
clothes for the child to wear. She wanted to comb the child’s hair as well. The student went on to say that she felt a moral obligation to help.

I used this opportunity to talk a little about perceptions of morality and tools for survival and success in schools. I asked the class if anyone was a licensed foster care parent. No hands went up. I asked the class if their parents were licensed foster care parents? Again, no hands went up. With that information I began to illustrate the need for more foster care parents and say in a perfect world, Children’s Services might be able to step in and say to the parent, “Are you overwhelmed? Can we offer you a respite from your children why you get you life in order? Can we offer you parenting classes?” However, there are so few homes available that Children’s Services can only handle the most severe cases of neglect. As far as combing the child’s hair, clothing her, and feeling a moral obligation to help, I advised the student to let her cooperating teacher take the lead on assisting the child. The most she could do as a student observer is be a sounding board for the little girl. The teacher may ask the parent if she/he could get the child’s hair done or set up a tutor to help her with her homework. In most instances, the parent may be doing the best he/she can, given a particular situation, which may include unemployment, minimum wage paying jobs, no family or social support system, etc. Erickson (1999) talks about this when he speaks on negotiating diversity. He says that diversity lessons are often treated as moral issues and not so much as tools for survival and success.

**Encouraging critical thinking.** Next, my conceptual framework for multicultural education centers on the theme of encouraging critical thinking. In this awareness, it is not that you notice different shades of skin, but that you realize a difference in ways that people are treated. Every quarter in my cultural diversity class, I share several videos that speak to diversity issues. One video that I enjoy particularly is Blue Eyed by Jane Elliot. In this video, the author, a blue-eyed, blond-haired woman takes on the role of being the ultimate racist. She hounds, belittles, and embarrasses participants in her mock classroom. What is so ironic about her very diverse classroom is she is discriminating against those who look like her the most, the blue eyed people. I enjoy showing this video not because I like to see discrimination practiced, but because, I can quietly hear “ah ha” moments that seem to resonate through the room. In reflection statements after the viewing of the tape, many of my students speak of an awareness they have never known before. As if the proverbial wool was pulled off their eyes, they see how others may be discriminated against in subtle and not so subtle ways. This sentiment is echoed
in Nieto’s work in which she champions her students to “develop social and intellectual skills that would help them understand and empathize with a wide diversity of people” (Nieto, 1996, 311). Nieto (1996) also says that multicultural education should encourage critical thinking, reflection, and steps to enable students to be risk takers, question things, and try to find their own answers.

**Transforming society.** Finally, my conceptual framework for multicultural education centers on the theme of transforming society. I know that since I have begun this journey of studying cultural diversity, I am much more sensitive and observant of the world around me. I am much more of a champion for justice and an agent for change. I constantly try to find small ways to challenge the status quo, so much so that I have devoted a dissertation to the topic and I eagerly look for ways in which I can incorporate this knowledge gained into university and classroom settings. Nieto (1996) says “multicultural education is a transformative process that moves us beyond an affirmation of cultures and languages, instead confronting issues of power and privilege in society” (p. 18).

In summary, my conceptual framework for the goals of multicultural education centers around the themes of learning about oneself, becoming aware of difference, listening to the non-dominant voice, broadening world views, negotiating difference, encouraging critical thinking, and, finally, bringing about social transformation. Yet, my framework cannot stop with just articulating these goals. I must also move on to conceptualizing what helps bring about the achievement of these goals. In other words, what facilitates positive change in students in college diversity courses?

**Facilitating Positive Change in Students**

Every quarter that I had an opportunity to teach another group of students I wanted to make the class more interesting, more engaging, and have more “ah-ha” moments than the class before. This was difficult to do because the only notes on how each particular class went were haphazardly written on the back of the daily agendas that I routinely passed out. Thus, I decided that the only way that I could make the class more interesting, more engaging, and have more “ah-ha” moments than the class before was to journal highlights of each class and put down suggestions for making it better. From those notes, personal experiences, and the research
literature, I have identified what I think matters most in facilitating positive change in students taking a class in diversity. Goodman (2001) says “there is no one right way to engage people in social change effort. We need to know our audience and our context” (p. 167). With this thought in mind, I have identified five key themes: 1) cultural diversity courses that facilitate change have a diverse group of people in the class; 2) an opportunity to engage with different voices in text; 3) provide an opportunity to reflect; 4) employ diverse instructors that have been properly oriented to diversity, and 5) require attendance of events and lectures concerning diversity topics.

**Student diversity.** First, I believe that having a diverse group of people in the class facilitates positive change in students enrolled in a cultural diversity course. “LaTiffa, Matthew, Chi Ming and Pria, will you four get in a group to discuss the effect of affirmative action on the United States according to your reading and personal feelings?” In this mock classroom situation, our instructor is able to combine students with very different backgrounds, views, and experiences in order to extend an opportunity for make an engaging dialogue about controversial issues. Sylvia Hurtado (2002) asserts that studying with students of different groups and discussing controversial issues are significant predictors of more democratic outcomes once completing a precollege preparation course. If we use this same formula for cultural diversity classes, it would stand to reason that we would see outcomes that are more democratic in diversity classes as well.

**Diverse literature.** Next, I believe that having an opportunity to read diverse literature is a factor in facilitating change. *Cultural Diversity: Building Skills for Awareness, Understanding and Application* written by Barbara Heuberger, *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook* edited by Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell, and Pat Griffin, and *Promoting Diversity and Social Justice: Educating People from Privileged Groups* by Diane J. Goodman are all great examples of literature that speaks with different voices in text. Vallapando (2002) advocated that instructors incorporate content on ethnic and racial issues and research on writing addressing women, ethnicity, or race. He contended that all students, especially African American students, reported an increased level of satisfaction when faculty incorporated diversity into the curriculum.

**Opportunity to reflect.** Third, cultural diversity courses that facilitate change provide an opportunity to reflect. As the semester ended, I had students in my cultural diversity class
voluntarily reflect and share parts of their journals. I was surprised at the number of students whose thoughts had changed since the start of the semester. I was even more surprised when I got to read all of the reflections. Most were not major, large changes, but subtle changes in words, phrases, and thinking. In most cases, I was pleased to see that change was happening. Heuberger (2003) asserts that “thinking critically and understanding contexts for knowledge in an engaging learning situation lead to reflection and informed action. Making thoughtful decisions and examining their consequences enhance personal moral commitment, enrich ethical understanding, and strengthen civic participation” (p. 4).

**Instructor orientation.** Fourth, cultural diversity courses that facilitate change employ diverse instructors who have been properly oriented to diversity. When I first start teaching a diversity class, I begin with students reflecting on who they are in the class. I get them to talk about their race and culture. By starting this way, I get the students to recognize who they are and that we are all different. I learned this method through trial and error. If more instructors had an orientation to ways to teach cultural diversity, more change in students might happen. Villapando (2002) asserts a similar belief or position; he contends that faculty orientation to diversity is one of the main ways to change attitudes and behaviors through a cultural diversity class. In the book *To Improve the Academy*, Lieberman and Wehlburg (2002) say that “teachers undergo a metamorphosis of sorts, and that over time, they evolve through a process of change, from novice, inexperienced teaches into expert/master teachers” (p. 197). Proper orientation could help this process.

**Attend events and lectures.** Finally, cultural diversity courses that facilitate change provide an opportunity to attend events and lectures concerning diversity topics. When instructing a class on cultural diversity I typically required that students attend a culturally diverse function. Some students complained and tried to think of ways to not have to attend. However, many students wholeheartedly embraced the idea. Villapando (2002) asserts that attending racial/cultural awareness events appears to strengthen the overall satisfaction with college life among students.

In summary, Goodman (2001) says that “learning about diversity and social justice presents tremendous emotional and cognitive challenges for our students. The process of growth and change in these areas is especially profound. For educators, managing not only individual but inter-group dynamics is a formidable task” (p. 59). I believe that positive student change in
cultural diversity courses is facilitated by recognizing the diversity of the people in the class, extending an opportunity to engage with different voices in text, providing an opportunity to reflect, training diverse instructorst who have been properly oriented to diversity, and requiring attendance at events and lectures concerning diversity topics. These themes of facilitating change, taken together with the goals of multicultural education, form the conceptual framework that I used to frame the methodology, interview questions, and analysis of data in my qualitative study of students who had completed a diversity course.

**Summary and Purpose of Study**

Thus far, this chapter has reviewed the changing demographics of the U.S., the need for and theory behind multicultural education, how multicultural education has been implemented in higher education, the impact of university diversity courses on student attitudes and behavior, and the development of a conceptual model. Taken together, this body of literature provides evidence of the myriad responses of colleges and universities to the need to prepare students for diversity. This literature provides the underpinnings for the fundamental supposition upon which the present study is predicated: given the right conditions and commitment in the curriculum and pedagogy of a course on diversity, positive changes for professional development and future best practice will occur. While previous studies have documented that student attitudes do become more tolerant and understanding as a result of taking a diversity course, they have not really explained how these changes come about. Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore how student attitudes and behaviors changed during their participation in a multicultural education course, with a particular emphasis on identifying which aspects of the course facilitated these positive changes.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The study is a qualitative examination of how student attitudes and behaviors changed as a result of taking a diversity course, and the factors that facilitated that change. This study is built on the concept that multicultural education classes and diversity experiences can foster more positive attitudes toward diversity, and better prepare students to live and work in a multicultural world. In order to assess these objectives, the course IDS 159: Strength Through Cultural Diversity, was analyzed in depth. The study relied on two sources of data; first, an analysis of students’ final synthesis papers; and second, interviews with veteran instructors of the course. Originally, it had been proposed that students who had taken the course be interviewed as well; however, due to difficulties encountered in locating and reaching students, this portion of the study was dropped.

Analysis of Student Papers

Students in IDS 159 complete a final synthesis paper at the end of the course. Three instructors of IDS 159 had retained copies of these papers from previous semesters. In order to maintain the confidentiality of the students, the name of the student was eliminated from the paper before the papers were forwarded for analysis.

A total of 150 papers from four sections of the course were forwarded for potential analysis. It was decided that the initial sample would consist of 50 of these papers. Papers were first shuffled, and then numbered from one to 150. A table of random numbers was used to select 50 papers from this assortment. Since saturation of themes was reached with the sample of 50 papers, it was decided that no additional papers would be analyzed.


**Instructor Interviews**

All instructors of IDS 159 who taught during 2003-2004 (a pool of 12 potential interviewees) were recruited for interviews about student change in a multicultural class. Instructors first received a letter asking for their voluntary participation (see Appendix A); this letter was followed up by a telephone call requesting participation. Four instructors agreed to be interviewed. Two of the interviews were done over the phone and two of them were done in person. All four of the instructor’s interviews were audio-taped to make sure that all concepts were captured in the original language used. All interviews were audio-taped with the instructor’s permission, and subsequently transcribed.

Instructors were informed of their rights as research participants both in the letter of invitation to participate, and in a written consent form that they signed at the time of the interview (see Appendix A). Every effort was made to protect student confidentiality. Each instructor who participated in the interview was assigned a number, and the transcript did not list the instructor’s name, only the number assigned. The number and names were kept in a locked file cabinet, in a separate location from the actual transcripts.

Interview questions were designed to assess what the instructors believed changed in their students’ thinking and behavior as a result of taking the course, as well as what facilitated such changes. Interview questions and probes included the following:

1. Tell me about your experiences in IDS 159. What do you think facilitated change in your students in this course?
   Probes: What really stuck with your students from the course?
   What do you think your students would say most stands out from the course, after the class has ended?

2. How did your students’ thinking about diversity change while they were taking IDS 159?
   Probes: What ideas about race, or gender, or social class did they have at the start of the class?
   Did their awareness of racism, sexism, homophobia, classism change? If yes, how?
   Did their understanding of race, class, gender, and change?
   Did their understanding of oppression change?
   What about privilege?
   What else changed for them?

3. What things in the course facilitated, or helped bring about these changes?
Probes: For example, what was it that got your students thinking in a new way? What helped raise their awareness? What was it that made them decide to change their behavior?

4. Did the class give your students an opportunity to talk with students who are different from them? What kinds of differences did you observe and talk about in the course? How did the opportunity to interact with students who are different affect their learning about diversity?
   Probes: Think about race and gender, but also think about social class, family background, rural/urban differences, political differences, ability, religion, etc.

5. Did some of the course readings stand out to them? What course readings really “got them thinking” in a new way, or about something they had never considered before.

6. Did the written assignments help your students think about or understand diversity in new ways? What impact did the written assignments have on their thinking about diversity? On their behavior?

7. While taking IDS 159, did your students have an opportunity to attend lectures or events related to multicultural education? If yes, what did they attend? What impact did your students say these cultural events had?

8. We’ve talked quite a bit about the IDS 159 course. Reflecting back on our conversation, what would you say is the most important thing your students gained from the IDS 159 experience?

**Analysis Strategy**

I used an iterative coding scheme as a technique to uncover the emerging themes in both the student papers and instructor interviews, emphasizing the constant comparative methodology outlined by Glaser and Straus (1967). First, I read the papers/transcripts thoroughly, noting in the margins the different and similar ideas students/instructors gave about what facilitates change. I then discussed these initial ideas with my dissertation director. I then went back through the papers/transcripts, coding specific passages into categories. I checked my coding of approximately 10% of the student papers, and one of the instructor interviews with my dissertation director as a “validity” check – that is, to see if she and I were gathering similar meanings from the transcripts. Based on her feedback, I refined the coding scheme, and re-read and re-analyzed the papers/transcripts. The coding was done at two levels, starting with specific
codes and moving to broader ones. Throughout the process, I continued to draw on previous
literature and theory, and my own experience, to assist me in interpreting what I was discovering.
CHAPTER 4

UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

Before I present the findings from the study, I feel it essential to lay out the context of this study. In the proceeding paragraphs I will discuss the climate of Miami University. This task will mainly be accomplished from a survey that was done by an independent company. I will then discuss the course, IDS 159: Strength Through Cultural Diversity: Functioning Effectively In a Global Society.

The Climate at Miami University

Miami University (MU) is an institution becoming more deliberate about preparing prospective educators to teach diverse students. MU is located in Oxford, Ohio, approximately 35 miles north of Cincinnati, Ohio. The university is approximately 1,900 acres and has a total student population of more than 19,000. MU has a college of Arts and Sciences, Applied Sciences, Business Administration, Education and Allied Profession, and the Interdisciplinary Studies. Under the umbrella of Education and Allied Professions are more than twenty-eight different majors (www.ucm.muohio.edu).

To better understand the context of the study, I examined the 2001 Miami University Climate Survey of undergraduate students. In 1995 and 2001, the university contracted with Eric Dey of the University of Michigan’s Center for the Study of Higher Education and Postsecondary Education (CSHPE) to conduct a climate survey (the following descriptions of the survey are taken from the document Facts and Figures, which can be downloaded from the web at www.uwlax.edu). The most important part of the project was to gather data that would better inform faculty, students and staff of the campus climate at Miami University. The survey was designed to gauge student, staff, and faculty viewpoints. This questionnaire was partly based on the UCLA Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) and other campus surveys and addressed the following issues:

1. Student, faculty, and staff experiences.
2. Perceptions of the general campus climate, with an emphasis on the climate for diversity.

3. Institutional values, institutional press, and student outcomes.

4. Participation in the campus community: Expectations, preference and satisfaction.

5. Relevant background and demographic characteristics.

Three thousand undergraduate students were mailed the survey; this sampling frame included all students of color. Five hundred forty five surveys were returned which gives a response rate of 18.2 percent.

Several points emerge from the results of the survey. The majority of the people who live, work or study at MU feel that diversity is good for the university; they also feel that too much emphasis has been placed on diversity initiatives. Many feel that this emphasis is sometimes at the expense of enhancing the prestige of the university or letting in unqualified students, staff, and faculty. This study also indicated that students more than any other group feel the most amount of discrimination, generally by their peers.

Homophobia is common on the campus and more than half of the students say they have heard disparaging comments made about gay or lesbian individuals. Only 16.7% of gay and lesbian students at Miami feel accepted and respected, while 38.3% of the heterosexual population feels that gays and lesbians are accepted.

There are also many interesting gender and race differences. Almost half of the white male population (49.6%) felt that emphasizing diversity leads to campus disunity, while only 27.5% of the minority females felt this way. More than half of the white female population felt that the university was spending too much time on diversity at the expense of enhancing its prestige. Minority males felt this way at a rate of 49.6%.

On a more positive note, undergraduates, more so than any other group, feel that Miami has achieved a positive climate for diversity. Participation in organized activities for diversity is on the rise. The number of times someone hears or reads disparaging comments about race, physical ability and sexual orientation is on the decline. Finally, a greater number of people surveyed reported being positively affected by discussion about racism and sexism.

In the survey, 30% of white students frequently socialized with someone from a different race compared with 61.2% of minorities of the same group. Forty one point one percent of
males frequently socialized with someone of a different group while 36.4% of females said that they socialized frequently with someone of a different racial/ethnic group. The majority of undergraduate students (86.7%) felt that diversity is good for Miami and should be actively promoted by students, staff, faculty and administrators. This notion is even more favorable among minority women with 96.7% and white females with an agreement rate of 88.4%. Their male counterparts are not far behind with minority males agreeing at a rate of 88.1% and white males at 74.3%. Only 15% of students felt discriminated against, the majority being minority females at 33.3%.

**IDS 159: Strength Through Cultural Diversity**

Before the above-mentioned survey was administered, Miami University created a multicultural education course, Strength through Cultural Diversity (Heuberger et al., 1999). The course is still in effect and its objectives emphasize students recognizing others as culturally diverse and applying concepts such as ethnocentrism, stereotyping, and dominant and privilege. This course encourages students to understand the difference between their culture and other cultures as well as being able to identify and understand the impact of systems of culture. According to course objectives, after taking the course, students should be able to understand how conflict results when individuals and cultures interact. Students have an opportunity to develop skills and strategies for successful communication and negotiation. Finally, students will evaluate their personal values and beliefs about diversity, and develop strategies for increasing diversity awareness and understanding beyond the timeline of the course (IDS 159 Syllabus; see Appendix B).

This course meets a liberal education requirement in the social sciences. Concrete activities such as reflection papers, attendance at multicultural events, and final course synthesis paper are used. However, as the course progresses, more focus is placed on critical thinking. Students are grouped in large and small groups throughout the semester. Readings are integrated throughout the course. Dr. Heuberger’s Fall 2003 syllabus describes the pedagogy of the course as follows:

Course requirements reflect a variety of teaching and learning techniques. We do not give examinations in the course. Instead, there are several written assignments, as well as
evaluation of verbal activities such as team presentations and in-class participations. Required readings include material in packets developed by instructors and/or one or more textbooks. The percentage breakdown for grading includes attendance and participation and in class writing (10 %), critical reflection paper (15%), current event/multiple perspectives (20%), identity paper (20%), book response (15%), multiple events attendance (5%), and a final course synthesis paper (15%).

Like many colleges and universities, MU is making great strides to meet the demands of changing demographics and cultures. In order to further meet these demands they have created unique and time-consuming ways to answer the need for educating their student population to work and live in a diverse setting. However, time and uniqueness alone do not render changes in students’ attitude awareness and behavior.
CHAPTER 5
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

My analysis of both the student papers and the instructor interviews was guided by the conceptual framework presented in chapter Two. My conceptual framework for the goals of multicultural education centers around the themes of learning about oneself, becoming aware of difference, listening to the non-dominant voice, broadening world views, negotiating difference, encouraging critical thinking, and bringing about social transformation. I believe that these goals are accomplished by emphasizing the diversity of the students present in the classroom, presenting diverse texts, providing an opportunity to reflect, having an instructor who is oriented to diversity, and attending multicultural events and lectures. This framework flows both from my experience of teaching university students and from the literature. The authors who are authorities in the field, such as Grant, Sleeter, Nieto, and Hurtado, repeatedly describe these same themes as they describe the purposes and goals of multicultural education. These themes formed the core of my data analysis.

Results of the Analysis of Student Papers

In this section of the dissertation, I summarize my analyses of the student papers. I utilized my conceptual model to begin the analysis of the papers, looking for the six goals of multicultural education (learning about oneself, awareness of difference, adding non-dominant voices, broadening world views, negotiating difference, encouraging critical thinking), and for the five ways to facilitate change (diverse students, diverse literature, opportunity to reflect, diverse instructors, and attending lectures/events).

As is often the case with a qualitative study, the conceptual model that I outlined did not map onto the content presented in the student papers as well as I had anticipated. Instead, I found that these papers could be described better by using two broad categories. First, the student papers described what changed for students as a result of taking the course. The majority of the student papers addressed the goals of awareness of difference and learning about oneself as a single category; in particular, the students described an increased awareness of self and others in terms of race, gender, class, sexual orientation, religion, ability and age (and note – within these categories, students repeatedly talked about privilege, specifically race privilege,
and gender privilege). The student papers did not really speak directly in terms of broadening world views, learning to negotiate difference, or increased critical thinking (although in the overall discussion I will argue that taken collectively these papers do represent several of these themes). Instead, the student papers concentrated on specific examples of types of diversity.

Second, the student papers described the different ways that students’ new-found awareness of self and difference was facilitated. Here, student papers emphasized learning from reading books/articles, watching films, class discussions, their own experience, and attending events. In essence, while the students emphasized particular texts or films, they were speaking to the goal of adding non-dominant voices, in that these texts presented different viewpoints, and different voices.

Rather than treating these two broad categories of what changed and what facilitated change separately, I have chosen to combine them in the following pages. Table 1 presents a count of the number of examples of each category. I illustrate each of these categories with portions of the text from the student papers. After presenting the analysis, I will then summarize each area of awareness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Diversity</th>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Films</th>
<th>Own Experience</th>
<th>Class Discussion</th>
<th>Total</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 Categories of Diversity and Method of Delivery
Awareness of Race and Racism

It will probably come as little surprise to most that this section, awareness of race, was by far the most mentioned topic in this section of papers. Students wrote that their awareness was raised in the area of race by watching films, reading books, discussing in class, and experiencing and attending cultural diversity events. I will describe each of these in detail using quotes from student papers that were collected during the IDS 159 course. I will then summarize each theme and, ultimately, I will summarize all the themes collectively.

First, students reported change in the awareness area from discussions in class 21 times. One of the students proclaimed:

“When Kevin started talking about his feelings toward police officers, I saw how much race effects everything. I did not think that people might still be treated differently because of their race. Especially when you think about police officers, because, I have a cousin that is a police officer and I would never think of him treating people differently because of the color of their skin. But that is why it is a good idea to hear other people’s experiences” (paper 107, page 3).

What a powerful statement. This student is mentioning that he/she discovered something while having a discussion in class. These are small gradual steps of awareness. Another student writes:

“I have always said that I am color blind. I just see people. What I was trying to say is color does not make a difference to me. But in our small group discussions, I realized how terrible that is to say. Now I have just canceled that phrase”(paper 87, Page 2).

Next, in the theme of race, students made comments that their racial awareness changed from reading books twelve times. One particular book that was mentioned several times during the papers was the book called It’s the Little Things, by Lena Williams:

“In this book Williams takes a in-depth look at the “little things” that Blacks and whites do to make each other mad. In the end minorities have more trouble finding jobs and being accepted into white neighborhoods”. (paper 11, page 1).

Students also mentioned the classic article by McIntosh on white privilege:

“One privilege from the article from Peggy McIntosh that I agreed with was, “I can criticize our government and talk about how much I fear its policies and behavior without being seen as a cultural outsider.” When I first read this I took “fear” as meaning not
being able to work, not as being scared of the policy itself. I feel that being white I can share my feelings or opinions about how our government works even if they are negative without being judged. However, I believe that since September 11 this has changed. People of Middle Eastern background have been given a negative connotation by the media in many ways that is unfair” (paper 128, page 4).

Student reported that they got a better understanding of how thoughts, views, and comments about race can seem harmless, but in reality, it can adversely affect someone’s income and ultimately their livelihood. Students as a whole mentioned change often when describing the impact of reading books.

Personal experiences that facilitated a greater understanding of race were mentioned ten times in the student papers analyzed. For example, a student noted:

“"I have found that by talking to my friends who are from different places around the world, I have grown tremendously”(page 34, page 3).

Just the fact that this student had an opportunity to talk with someone made her understanding of racism increase. Other students wrote;

“I wish there was more diversity in the living quarters. I feel like I learn the most from just hanging out and talking to different groups of people” (paper 57, page 6).

“I have found that by talking to my friends who are from different places around the world I have grown tremendously (paper 34, page 3). These students identified a key component when thinking about diversity, the need to have diversity in natural, everyday settings in order to better understand cultural and racial differences.

For several students, watching a film had a very powerful impact in increasing their awareness of race (mentioned in papers five times). For example, one student wrote:

“The best eye opening experience I had was when we watched the film where the little kid is white and everyone who is successful in his world is African-American. Everyone one television is African American. All the business owners downtown are African-American. The only time that you see white people is when you looked for custodians, housekeepers, and gas station workers. In this film the majority of the people that worked for minimum wage were the white people. The little boy took this very hard. I started thinking about how life is viewed from the eyes of the minority” (paper 34, page 3).
This student goes on to say how watching this film made him realize how separate our society is.
In this example, this was probably one of the first times that this particular student noticed much
difference in how different people of different races are treated and represented.

Another student, after watching a film during IDS 159, wrote:
“ But it never did occur to me to think that I was always at an advantage and treated
differently even though I might not deserve it. I think it is hard to come to grips with the
idea that as a white male in today’s society I am inherently given privileges over other
people” (Paper 21, page 3).

This seemed like an eye-opening experience for this student because this student is realizing how
he may be more privileged than another student of another race simply based on color.

Yet, another student commented:
“ This movie showed those struggles and helped us to start to understand what diversity
and the struggle is all about” (paper 136, page 3).

When students comment they “start to understand, you know that they are in the awareness
realm of understanding of cultural diversity. The Awareness phase is intended to help students
realize the commonality shared by races and groups by first emphasizing the difference between
the groups.

The final experience that raised students’ awareness of race was attending events.

Students mentioned change by attending events four times in the student papers.

Several examples follow:

“The next event that took place that had an impact on me was when we got a chance to
attend the function put on by the predominantly Black Greek Fraternities.” (Paper 132,
page 2).

“Until this point in my academic career, the only campus entertainment that I enjoyed
involved sports” (paper 67, page 4).

“The diversity events I attended did exactly this and I am grateful. I went to them
because it opened my eyes to a lot of new things I was very ignorant about. I wish I had
of known right from the beginning about all of the wonderful opportunities made
available on the campus” (paper 10, page 2).
Attending an event where most of the students were a minority, when they are use to being a majority, probably had a profound effect on the students who took the course. The students felt both that they were missing something important by not knowing about other opportunities, and that they had become more aware of other events to join as a result of their experiences in the course.

Awareness of Gender and Sexism

Students reported in their 159 papers that their awareness was raised in the area of sexism by watching films, reading books/articles, discussing in class, through their own experiences and attending cultural diversity events. I will describe each of these in detail using student student papers that were collected during the IDS 159 course.

The most common way that a student’s awareness of sexism was raised was through assignments (mentioned 22 times in the student papers analyzed). The following quotes from student papers illustrate this theme:

“ I have read the statistics about the difference in salaries between women and men at comparable jobs, and I think that is the main aspects of discrimination that I will deal with. It makes me feel bad when I think about it but I think that there has been times when I failed to noticed my privileged existence.” (paper 42, page 2)

“Some of the statistics shown in class show that there are more women in the world than men, however, for as long as anyone can remember, it has been the men who have received all kinds of preferential treatment and have had opportunities that women have not had” (paper 54, page 1).

“ According to our readings, at a professional level, where men dominate jobs, women have a hard time breaking into a position. Once there, it is often times hard for them to move up the proverbial corporate ladder. In regards to women in the workforce, females tend to get paid less than males for providing equal work results” (paper 67, page 2).

It is clear that the assigned books and readings provided students with an opportunity to think about sexism in the workplace, and to become more aware of how sexism influences their lives.

In their papers, students mentioned how class discussions changed their awareness of sexism thirteen times. One student wrote:
“We were discussing in class that, recently, in Georgia, there was controversy surrounding The Masters golf tournament in Augusta, Georgia. The private club that hosts the tournament does not have and refuses to admit a female member. It is comforting to see that there is controversy surrounding this issue, because it shows that there is inequality due to dominant privilege and it will not be overlooked” (paper 84, page 3).

Another student said:

“I was surprised to hear in class how several male students had gotten summer jobs paying $13 an hour because they said they could lift 30 pounds, while there were female applicants, who said that they could lift the same amount as well but they did not get the job. That seems unfair. Especially since no one was required to take a strength test. If it had not been for our conversation in class I would have just assumed that most girls would not want to pick up heavy stuff, even for $13 dollars an hour” (97, page 3)

These two quote show how much of an impact class room discussion has had on students taking the IDS 159 course, particularly when the topic is gender.

In the theme of sexism, students made a comment that they changed in the awareness area from watching a film three times:

“I have come to the conclusion that these feelings of animosity are quite ignorant and selfish. I realize that this doesn’t even compare to the multiple situations where other races, sexes, or sexualities deal with day to day in society today, such as “glass ceilings” for women in business. I just did not realize before how much women face prejudices as well. I guess I thought as long as you work hard, you would be treated fairly and given a good wage. This movie made me think differently about being treated equal” (paper 126, page 2).

“ In general, women are portrayed by the media and viewed by the general public as dramatic and emotional, less likely to make decisions and hold as much responsibility as their male counterparts” (paper 67, page 2).

For these students, seeing examples of women facing a glass ceiling in the workplace and other examples of media stereotypes made them more aware of the disparities between the genders.

The real life experiences that students bring to the classroom also helped facilitate discussions and change around the issue of sexism. Examples include:
“First, in Youngstown, my family and I belong to a country club which has strict regulations about women. For example, women are not allowed to play golf in the mornings except on Wednesday. To me this is a perfect example of how the male has a dominant privilege” (paper 61, page 2).

“During my internship two summers ago, I noticed that about 75% of my co-workers were male. I questioned myself on why it was this way, and I realized that they had males interviewing the applicants for the open positions, and that the males that were doing the interviewing would rather work side by side with another male rather than a female” (Paper 71, page 2).

These experiences made this student think more about sexism in the workplace:

“By seeing this example, maybe fewer students will make this unconscious or conscious decision to be sexist. I am a white, heterosexual female, and I have several characteristics of the dominant group. However, at times, being a female can place a burden or disadvantage upon me. For example, as a female, I am afraid to walk the streets at night, fearing I will be raped or robbed. Over the summer, I worked downtown Chicago at my internship, and even if I wanted to stay at work later and get tasks finished, I still knew that I could not walk home alone once it was dark. This makes me angry that a woman should be afraid to exercise her freedom. A man can walk anytime, anywhere he wants, and still not feel the disadvantage” (Paper 131, page 3).

Overall then, students wrote in their papers very eloquently about how their awareness had been raised and their personal understanding of the differential treatment of men and women, and of sexism, stereotypes and gender discrimination had increased.

**Awareness of Class and Classism**

Awareness of class and classism was another area mentioned in student papers. Students wrote that their awareness was raised in the area of classism by watching films, reading books, discussions in class, their own experiences.

First, students made comments eight times that they changed in the awareness of class and classism from reading books:
“Ronald Takaki’s *A Different Mirror* describes many incidents of the oppression and discrimination in America based on classism. This history is shocking because these are the stories that one does not learn about in grade school. Although shocking, it is important to learn about these issues because they have shaped American culture into what it is today” (Paper 28, page 2).

Another particular book that was mentioned several times in the papers was the book *Nickel and Dimed*. During the book the author attempts to live with poverty wages and talks about the struggle:

“I guess I never realize how really tough it could be to work a minimum wage job is, especially if you have to support a family on it.” (Paper 10, page 2).

Students reported changing their views of classism and class in many ways. Their personal experience also played a role, and was reported eight times. For example:

"Often times they look down on the middle and lower class and say things like they are lazy and don’t work here, which is an awful thing to say” (Paper 38, page 1).

“People who come from a wealthy economic background have obvious advantage because they are able to afford more luxuries that people of lower social status. This type of advantage can include anything from the quality of education to the life experiences they were able to enjoy, such as traveling. Many times it is difficult to look at a person and determine what type of social background they come from. In our discussion group we decided that there was no way you could tell who had money or not. I use to think that you could tell by the way people dressed. But some of the richest kids on campus, dress the tackiest and some of the kids with little money dress pretty cool. Many times it is difficult to look at a person and determine what type of social background they come from” (Paper 53, page 2).

According to the student papers, class discussion also facilitated a greater understanding of classism. Students mentioned this six times, for example:

“Through class discussions, many people stated it’s all about having an education and self-motivation. However, sometimes to even get that the odds are against you. I mean, in order to become motivated you have to believe you can reach a goal, such as getting a better paying job. When people are born and spend their entire childhood living as a part of the lower class, that is all they know” (Paper 126, page 3).
Overall, students who took the IDS 159 course overall reported that their awareness level of class and classism increased. They attributed the majority of this change to reading books about classism and their own experiences. In addition, class discussion was also reported as another method of instruction that made them think differently about classism.

**Awareness of Sexuality and Homophobia**

The topic of homophobia ranks fourth of all categories in the comments from students concerning their awareness level changing. Students reported that their awareness was raised in the area of sexuality and homophobia by watching films, reading books, discussions in class, their own experiences, and attending cultural diversity events. Most commonly, students reported that they changed in their awareness of sexuality and homophobia through their own experiences. The results of the papers analyzed show that students mentioned this type of change in awareness pertaining to homophobia six times:

“A friend of mine had an uncle who everyone thought was just a happy bachelor. He would often be seen with women and men alike. Everyone just thought he had not found the right women yet. But then he sent the family and email basically saying that he was gay and that he knew he would no longer be accepted by the family so he and his “significant other” were moving. I thought it so sad that this guy had to move in order to live his life. That just does not seem fair. He had to choose between family and sexual preference” (paper 37, page 2).

“There was a guy in my home room in high school who everyone thought was gay. He used to get cracked on quite a bit. I never really thought much about how he must feel as a person. I kinda just thought that he should not act feminine. I can not say that I have all the way changed how I feel about homosexuals, but I can say I think a little differently about it now” (paper 125, page 2).

Students reported three times about changing their awareness of sexuality and homophobia as a result of reading books one example follows:

“I never realized how offensive some of the words that I use can be so offensive until I start to read some of the passages from the book. It made me think differently about the whole term gay and what it means.” (paper 109, page 30)
If students are given the opportunity to talk and share ideas, they often feel like they have learned a great deal. Thus, it is not surprising that students reported a change in awareness from discussions in class three times; for example:

“The third activity that could be very helpful is to talk more in class. It usually takes me a while to start doing that. But by everyone, including myself, communicating aloud and discussing everyday things and their opinions of them, I can learn more about the diversity of people who are different than me. I felt like I understood homosexuality more when the group that represented gays and lesbians came in to talk to the class” (Paper 94, page 5).

“I really appreciated the group called SPECTRUM coming in and talking to our class. I do not have any close friends that are gay and so it was good to talk to someone who was gay and confident. That was very interesting (Paper 27, page 3).

Awareness of Religion and Religious Prejudice

The topic of awareness of religion will be discussed next. Some of the same methods of instruction appear in this section as well. These methods include watching films, reading books, discussion in class, students own experiences, and attending cultural diversity events. Here I will describe the two most common class discussion and own experiences using student quotes from student papers that were collected during the IDS 159 course.

Several factors were mentioned as causing change in the awareness level of students. One of those factors was having an opportunity for discussion in class, which was mentioned nine times. An example of this can be found in this student’s comment:

“For so long I have just taken for granted that most people are Christians and believe in Christian values. The class discussion helped me to see that my traditions are closely in line with my religion. I think I will be more sensitive to simple phrases like, “Merry Christmas” since I listened to people in class who were not Christians and I heard how it affects them. I could say instead, Seasons Greetings” (Paper 17, page 2).

Other students mentioned that one of the main components attributing to changing their awareness was their own experience. This was mentioned eight times.
“Around the country there are an abundant number of Christian churches, while it is harder to find places for worshipping other religions such as Judaism and Islam. For example, my neighborhood is primarily Christian and there are churches everywhere, so it is very convenient to go to church. My friend that is Jewish on the other hand, has to drive an hour just to go to the nearest temple.” (page 27, page 3). In sum, students wrote that they learned more about and now better understand and do not take for granted any religion and the opportunity to be able to worship with those who share your same faith.

**Awareness of Ability and Ableism**

Students responded in their IDS 159 papers that their awareness was increased in the area of ability by watching films, reading books/articles, discussing in class, through their own experiences and attending cultural diversity events. The most commonly mentioned was discussion in class. For example, a student paper commented:

“When I listened to Kim in class as she talked about the difficulty she has had in growing up with a sister who had Down’s syndrome, I now have such a greater appreciation for the disabled. As Kim talked, in class she talked about how much she cares for her sister and how her sister has such bright personality. I guess I never really thought about people with Down’s syndrome having a personality. I know that sounds weird, but listening to Kim helped me to think about things I had not thought about before.” (paper 47, page 3).

Students also reported a change in their awareness area from their own experience. This occurred one time as well.

“I think as a teacher this is one dominant group that I would like to help the most. Those students that walk in and out of class each morning without disabilities are immediately at an advantage over their disabled classmates” (paper 57, page 1).

In the theme of ability, one student comment on how he/she changed in the awareness area from reading a book:

“Our book talked about how sometimes the disabled feel like an invisible group of people. This was explained by people in wheelchairs often are not spoken to when people get on elevators or at shopping malls. I will have to sadly agree with this.
Although I hate to admit it, I usually do not go out of my way to speak. I usually try to avoid disabled people. I guess that is why the book referred to them as ‘invisible.’” (paper 17, page 2)

According to the students’ papers, the methods used to increase their awareness of ability helped them to understand some of the challenges that the disabled must face on a daily basis as well as seeing inequities between the able and disabled.

**Awareness of Age and Ageism**

The final “ism” described in the student papers was ageism. Students mentioned the importance of discussion, and their own experiences. For example, one student wrote about how her experience with a nursing home changed her awareness:

“When I was in high school my grandmother was put in a nursing home because she needed around the clock care. I would go by the hospital often to check on her. I was surprised by the amount of people that did not have anyone to visit them. But I was more surprised that the residents there had their friends and people that they liked to hang out with as well. They had parties and looked forward to special events as well. I guess before this experience I thought older people just sat and watched TV” (Paper 7, page 2). This student had an experience that changed the way that she thought about the older people. Now, she realizes that older people have very interesting and enjoying lives.

Another student commented on a different personal experience:

“I remember one of my neighbor’s grandfather needed a kidney transplant and people were saying that he was too old to get the transplant because he might not live but another two years. I wonder if they would have been so negative or had they had the same thoughts if it was a child. I mean, who knows how long anyone will live” (Paper 87, page 2).

Through their own experiences, students expressed learning a great deal about ageism. The IDS 159 class helped to give these students a forum to express and reflect on their new-found knowledge and experiences.
Awareness of Privilege and Diversity

Some of the IDS 159 papers revealed another interesting category that I have broadly described as “privilege.” This category was used to code those passages of the papers where the students talked about how their awareness was raised, but did not make a specific reference to an “ism” such as racism, sexism, ageism. For example, a student said:

“I feel bad when I think about it, but I think that there have been times when I failed to notice my privileged assistance. This book helped me realize that” (Paper 42, page 2).

This quote illustrates how students might begin to not take their status as a right that they had earned but realize that there are inherent privilege within the system. Another student mentioned,

”I feel like I am receiving a good education, yet I am only getting half of the college experience. I feel the University needs to work harder to provide its students with more diversity” (Paper 107, page 6).

This is an important component in student’s growth in this class, the fact that she/he realized the need for diversity in class, on campus, and in life to become a better person. Another student felt that he/she,

“was aware of diversity before reading some of the books about diversity. But now, I feel like I only know a little and I want to know so much more” (Paper 98, page 3).

The books that students read during the IDS 159 course made many of them think differently about the world. One such book mentioned several times in the student reflection papers was an article, *White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack* by Peggy McIntosh. In this article, McIntosh talks about how whites have many advantages over other groups. A student who was affected by this article wrote:

“I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets which I can count on cashing in on each day, but about which I was “meant” to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions. I thought these statements were so powerful” (Paper 69, page 69).

This student paper suggest that students now have a better understanding of white privilege and realize a need and value for diversity on the college campus,

Finally, a student’s comment that:
“Until I took this class I guess I had not really thought about cultural diversity” (paper 22, page 2),
is a prime example of why this class is so necessary.

Conclusions on the Analysis of Student Papers

The papers that students wrote for the IDS 159 course provided many interesting findings about the impact of the course on the students who were enrolled. First and foremost, the student papers demonstrate that student awareness about this topic of cultural diversity was raised. Thus, the first conclusion that I draw from my analysis of these papers is that, for most of the papers analyzed, students demonstrated changes in both attitude and knowledge. These changes were primarily in the area of race/racism, gender/sexism, and class/classism; students did also speak to awareness of religious difference, homophobia, ageism, and ableism as well. In addition, students’ awareness of key concepts, such as privilege and dominance, was raised.

I return to the literature in order to talk about how deeply attitudes and knowledge changed, as demonstrated in the student papers. In my conceptual framework, the students taking the IDS 159 course would fall into the “becoming aware of difference” level. Most of the students are beginning to realize what they share in common with other races, cultures and groups of people. Through this course, they are now also beginning to become aware of how they are different from others as well.

Lindsey et al. (2003) feel that there is a continuum on which people become or are culturally proficient. This continuum includes six levels: destructiveness, incapacity, blindness, precompetence, competence, and proficiency. My assessment is that at the end of this class, as demonstrated in the papers they wrote, most of the students were in the stage of cultural precompetence (that is, aware of the limitations of their own skills and knowledge, and of organizational practices, when interacting with others). At this level, students do not understand the many facets of “diversity” nor the depths at which diversity covers.

The second major conclusion from my analysis is that change in students’ behaviors was not a strong theme in the student papers. This should actually not be extremely surprising for three main reasons. First, as noted by Adams (2004) on his website on student learning,
“Learning theories emphasize that learning new, complex patterns of behavior, normally requires modifying many of the small behaviors that compose an overall complex behavior. Behaviors that are steps toward a final goal need to be reinforced and established first, with rewards given for partial accomplishments if necessary. Incremental increases are then made as the complex pattern of behavior is “shaped” toward the targeted goal. A further complication to the change process is that new patterns of physical behavior must replace or compete with former patterns of behaviors that are often satisfying or behaviors cued by the environment.”

What does this mean? This means that the students who have taken the IDS 159 course are beginning a process to change a particular behavior or thought process by first taking small steps at becoming aware of cultural diversity beginning at the cultural precompetence level. The importance of this first step should not be underestimated. Although the student papers for the IDS 159 course stopped short of describing behavior change, they did describe many moments of deepening awareness and understanding that can serve as the push toward behavior change. As noted by Adams,

“You will never forcefully change someone else, but by liking that person as he or she is and helping them to like themselves even more, you will have given them the most amazing power to change themselves” (2004, page 2).

Second, when we look at the syllabus for the course, the authors are very clear about what kind of results they want. It is the nature of the writing assignment that students would talk about attitudes and knowledge more than behavior. This again goes hand in hand with Reason #1, as it talks about the initial steps that students must take to begin the process of change. Finally, the fact that the students emphasize attitudes in these papers more than behavior change is probably due to the course only lasting 15 weeks. If the course was longer or had a second part to it, real behavior changes could begin to take place. If there was a second part it would need to be designed more for causing change and some of the models employed for behavioral change might be considered.

The third major conclusion from the analysis of the student papers is that, overall, students put their learning into a context of their own experience. Many students report learning much from their own experiences. Indeed, with the power of personal experiences was mentioned in reference to all sorts of diversity, from sexuality to race to gender and class. The
unique part was the class gave them a forum to reconnect with those experiences and express how they felt about them and prepare to respond the next time a similar situation arose.

Fourth, it is very important to understand these findings as they connect with the context of Miami University and the students who attend Miami University. As discussed earlier in this dissertation, most of the students who attend Miami University at the main campus are part of the majority culture in many ways. They are predominantly heterosexual, Christian, European-American, middle to upper class, with little instance of disabilities. This point is made strikingly clear by one of the students taking the IDS 159 course when she said:

“I realized my dominant privilege when we did the activity that required everyone to put a check in the box indicating that they were representative of that group. I put a check in each box. My chart was almost completely filled and mostly everyone in the class’s chart looked like mine. There was only one person in the class who did not have almost all of the boxes checked. Now I see the push for diversity at Miami” (Paper 87, page 3).

As shown in this study, this course is offering many students a first glimpse at how diverse this world really is. IDS 159 also makes students realize that they have an unearned privilege just by being born into the system that embraces and celebrates predefined characteristics. The students who took the course started to become aware that there are inequities in treatment of people based race, religion, ability, income and sexuality.

The fifth major conclusion is that multiple modes of instruction were very important in disseminating information. Students reported class discussion most often as causing change in awareness, however, they also consistently mentioned watching films, reading books, and own experiences as being integral to their growth.

Why are these different modes of instruction so important? Well, I think that there are different reasons but one that is very important is the fact that students receive information in different ways, depending greatly on their learning styles. Mills (2002) said, “We know that people are not all alike. We each see the world in a way that makes the most sense to each of us as individuals. This is called perception. Our perceptions shape what we think, how we make decisions, and how we define what is important. Our individual perception also determines our natural learning strengths or learning style.” (page 8). According to Mumford (1986) there are three different learning style modalities. They are visual, auditory and kinesthetic. The IDS 159 course provides students with the opportunity to experience learning in all three of these
modalities. Clearly, depending on the student’s learning style, a particular film, reading, discussion or activity connected in unique ways with particular students. One of the strengths of the IDS 159 course is of course, this emphasis on a wide variety of learning modalities and styles.

Results of the Analysis of Instructor Interviews

Coding Strategies

All of the information obtained for this portion of the study came from one-on-one interviews with four IDS 159 instructors. The interview questions primarily dealt with the instructor’s experiences teaching the course, what changes, if any, they noticed in students’ behaviors and/or attitudes concerning varies topics of diversity. Instructors were asked about what helped them deliver the instruction, what were some of the pitfalls, and what were their goals as instructors of the class. In addition, instructors were asked to comment on what they felt the most important aspects of the course were and what role this particular course played in educating students about diversity.

The interviews were transcribed sentence-by-sentence, interview-by-interview. Each thematic unit on the transcribed interview was then loosely coded to identify broad themes. A thematic unit indicates the sentence or set of sentences that describe a single theme; there were 294 thematic units identified. During this initial coding three very broad themes were identified: teaching strategies, learning styles, and frustrations in teaching IDS 159. To facilitate deeper coding, all of the pertinent instructor comments that comprised each thematic unit were entered into an excel spreadsheet, along with the initial broad coding of teaching strategy, learning style, or frustration. A second layer of coding was then done, in order to discover new and different emerging themes. During this process, my dissertation advisor and I read over the comments made and began to refine the original three themes into a model detailed schema. We then checked and redefined our coding. Because of this redefining technique, more themes than originally thought emerged. After several days of reviewing, sorting, and refining this information we came up with several major themes.
Ultimately, this coding procedure yielded five broad themes: learning from own experience, student learning, course structure, teaching strategies, and frustrations. Of course, there were some comments that stood alone and did not fit into any category. We coded these statements as “other”. Some of these five themes had more than 25 comments, and as a result we refined them even more by breaking them down into smaller sub-themes.

Table 2: Coding of Instructor Interviews

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<tr>
<th>Main Topic</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Subtopic</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Strategies</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>In Class Activities</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>30</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Stimulating Thinking</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Materials Used</td>
<td>19</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Content Covered</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Activities Outside of Class</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Guest Speakers</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Experience</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Student</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Instructor</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>36</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Learning</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Positive Change</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Difficulty</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Other</td>
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Teaching Strategies

The most common topic discussed by the IDS 159 instructors was the teaching strategies that they employed while instructing the class. This topic yielded 140 responses; warranting it to be divided into several smaller sections. The section was divided into the sub categories of in-class activities, discussion, stimulating thinking, materials used, content covered, activities outside of class, and guest speakers.

In-class activities. The instructors who were interviewed tried to use activities in class that would cause students to think in different ways. In order to get his point across, one instructor said,

“I have a picture of the Pope blown up and laminated. I actually put this picture on the floor and I tell students when you leave wipe your feet on the Pope’s face” (Interview 2, page 2).

This teacher remarked that students are often offended by this activity at first, until they understand the purpose of this example. Wiping your feet on the Pope, a sacred figure for Catholics, brings the whole concept of using Native American icons as mascots home. According to the instructor, this inside the classroom activity, made students more aware of others’ values:

“It is just a picture, just a symbol but that often means so much more to {Catholics} and they get that. I mean, it really sends the meaning home to them” (Interview 2, page 2).

The instructors that were interviewed tried to use activities in class that would cause students to think in different ways. In order to get his point across, one instructor said,

“I asked my students about something as simple as band-aides. How easy was it for them to find band-aides that represented their color. I brought in several different kinds of band-aides and I asked them to imagine if they were different skin tones, which would match them best. As you can imagine, there were not easy answers because none of the choices were even close” (Interview 1, page 6).

This teacher remarked that students realized how difficult it would be disguise a blemish, cut, or bruise if you did not share the majority race’s skin tone:

“We take a lot of things for granted, including everyday things like bandages. Sometimes it takes simple things like this to bring out a much
bigger point (Interview 1, page 6). Discussion. Instructors commented 30 times that they used discussion as a major teaching strategy. For example, when speaking of how she conducts her discussion in class, one instructor said:

“I did not put them on the spot but they just talked about their life, background and culture” (Interview 3, page 1).

This is an example of how many of the instructors got a chance to better know their students through discussion as an effort to understand the students they were teaching. Other instructors used such phrases as:

“{I} held back my opinion” (Interview 1, page 2), “you don’t want to come down on or shut up {students}”, and “first off, I tried not to present it as a how are we different class, but more or less how are we alike. Because I think this is the essence of the class” (Interview 3, page 1).

These remarks show how much of a major portion of the class was dedicated to planning the discussion and encouraging students to talk about cultural diversity.

There is no question that an instructor’s style and way of teaching affects the class. This continues to hold true with instructors teaching the IDS159 course. Many said they used the technique of classroom discussion to help students better understand the concept of cultural diversity:

“One student was asking why don’t you think it weird about seeing an Asian female and a white male. And the class pretty much seemed to think that that was because the two did not seem like complete opposites like a black and white couple would” (Paper 2, page 8).

This is an illustration of how discussion in class helped students to have a place to express their thoughts about race. This gave the students an opportunity to engage in dialogue about controversial racial issues in a classroom discussion, which provided a safe and controlled atmosphere. Another comment that was made by one of the instructors interviewed concerning discussion was:

“We try to talk about the schools people come from and how they prepare people” (Paper 2, page 5).
In this example, by discussing a relatively sage topic such as the elementary and secondary schools they had attended, students could get comfortable before they moved to dialogues about such hot topics as race, socio-economic status, power, and privilege.

**Stimulating thinking.** Most of the instructors commented that they put a lot of energy into helping the students think in new ways about cultural diversity. All of the instructors were very thoughtful about why they included certain materials, their pedagogy, and what they were trying to accomplish:

> “I think just opening their eyes to what it is like for other people and walking in their shoes is the key.” (Interview 1, page 12)

Most of the instructors interviewed felt this way. They felt that by causing students to take time and think about this issue of diversity was making a difference.

> “I think it is the first time many of them have had to think about {diversity},” (Interview 2, page 3) and “I think with this class you have to put {unequal treatment} in their perspective” (Interview 2, page 5).

These statements illustrate one of the key ways that the instructors of the IDS 159 course hoped to bring about change in the students they were teaching. One of the ways that change was happening was by instructors encouraging students to think in different ways:

> “The students would say how they felt about a situation, but I would try to get them to think how others would feel” (Interview 1, page 12)

Instructors commented that by allowing students to put themselves inside scenarios then the students thinking changed:

> “I think {change} is a combination of using a process approach where the students, themselves are a part of the equation.” (Interview 4, page 6)

One instructor felt that, at times, her syllabus and its scheduled daily topics hindered her from getting students thinking in new ways. As a solution, she said:

> “I would rather have really powerful, thought provoking classes than just coverage, so I opted to alter the syllabus to fit the class that I was teaching.” (Interview 3, page 6)
Materials used. The next area in teaching strategies that warrants discussion is in the area of materials that the instructor uses to improve instruction. Many of the instructors commented that readings played an integral part in their instruction:

“For a long time we used a book by Ron Takaki called, A Different Mirror. We struggled with the book because it was real dense and not easily assessable reading. Then we worked with it. That reading proved to be very successful reading.” (Interview 4, page 8)

This is an example of how the readings may at first seem not to be beneficial but after working with the information for periods of time a deeper understanding came shining through. Another instructor had this to say about the book that was selected for her class:

“The book helped students come to terms with things not always being as they see it or have known it.” (Interview 3, page 3)

Not all instructors mentioned books as an important material used. One instructor felt that the use of videos was important to his group:

“I showed them a movie called White Man’s Burdan that was made in 1996 by HBO. At the end of the movie students are like this is the first time I have ever thought about what it is like to be another race. The movie is really telling.”(Interview 2, page 1).

This instructor felt that this particular video, in combination with the classroom discussion, did wonders in bridging the gap in understanding racial injustices and white privilege.

While the use of materials can be a valuable piece in helping students understand diversity issues, one instructor made a special point when considering when using extra material for a class. She said,

“I would have like to have brought in more readings like this but I did not want to get into perpetuating stereotypes of illegitimate children and poverty and the like, which a lot of writings do” (Interview 3, page 1).
Content covered. The next section to be discussed is content. After interviewing many instructors, they all seemed to want to emphasize the content that is covered in the class and how it was different from most university classes. One instructor said:

“It is not that we spend a week on race, we spend a week on gender, and a week on sexual orientation. It is more integrated and flexible” (Interview 4, page 4).

Unlike many other courses, the topics in IDS 159 can be interwoven into each other because the central themes of the class are oppression and privilege. Another instructor describe the course content as:

“Oppression and privilege is a dominant theme in the course and is presented as an umbrella of everything else” (Interview 4, page 5).

Everything else, in this case, includes disabilities, race, socio-economic status, religion, sexual orientation, ageism, and gender. However, one instructor was very truthful when she said:

“Clearly there are components of homophobia that may not enter in with other kinds of diversity” (Interview 4, page 4).

This instructor went on to say that she had to set aside a specific class to talk about gender issues because, in her opinion, it was a big issue but it could easily get less attention than it actually deserved.

Activities outside of class. In addition to in-class activities, many instructors said that outside activities, such as minority-sponsored campus events, religious ceremonies, and minority sponsored conferences, were a big part of the learning component for the students taking the class:

“I think that was one of the powerful things that I did. I had people go to things that they would have not normally gone to” (Interview 1, page 11).

The sentiments of this instructor are echoed by others who teach the class:

“Now we have started this thing where they have to go to a multicultural event 10 times. Now they look forward to events to attend” (Interview 4, page 7).

These instructors felt that attending outside events helped with the overall effectiveness of the class, including the classroom discussions and readings. However, if students attended these sessions in isolation, then the experience may not have been as great. Thus, in an effort to make students feel more comfortable in settings where they would be a minority, some instructors set up rules:
“I requested that they sit in the same area, for moral support” (Interview 3, page 6).

Some other instructors said that they had to implement ideas for accountability purposes, such as this instructor who said that she likes her students to sit together

“For accountability, so that no one would just not show up”(Interview 3, page 6).

One instructor said that she:

“had questions from the event to make sure that {her students} were paying attention”

(Interview 3, page 6).

**Guest speakers.** There is no doubt, at least in the eyes of the instructors of the IDS 159 course, that having activities inside and outside of the classroom setting has enriched the classroom experience. Several of the instructors said that having a guest speaker also enriched the class:

“It does help to see a real person that is gay and they can talk. Then the person becomes more real when we talk about gay people. In addition, it helps {the students} to see someone who is OK with being gay (Interview 2, page 5).

During the interviews, instructors noted that they had guest speakers speak on religion, sexual orientation, and disabilities. According to the instructors, all of the guests provided a valuable piece to the learning experience of the IDS 159 course.

**Summary of teaching strategies.** In summary of the teaching strategies used in the IDS 159 course, it seems apparent that each instructor goes about teaching his/her class in the manner that best fits the instructor’s personality as well as the class’s personality. However, there are some teaching strategies that most of the instructors used, namely activities, guest speakers, classroom discussions, stimulating thinking, materials, and content of the course. Overall, the instructors were very thoughtful in describing how they used a wide variety of teaching strategies to bring about change in the students in the IDS 159 course.

**Personal Experience**

There is no doubt that the IDS 159 course is a powerful course packed with lots of information concerning cultural diversity. The instructors have utilized various teaching strategies to help students understand the goals of the class including books, videos, activities, and classroom discussion. However, a second major theme that emerged from the transcripts
was the role of personal experience. Here the instructors talked about both the personal experiences of the students, and their own personal experiences, and how both affected the course.

**Students’ personal experiences.** Several instructors said many students entered the class with many experiences outside of the classroom that helped or hindered the learning process. For example:

“Personally, I find that students have difficulty understanding issues of sexism. And I think, in part, that has to do with where they are mentally. I think it is age related. They don’t think of it as a serious kind of issue” (Interview 4, page 4).

This comment seems to blame some of the students’ lack of understanding on their lack of outside experiences:

“They believed what their parents said which was that they like the isolation. They did not feel that they needed diversity and {their parents} were trying to get away from diversity” (Interview 2, page 4).

“People were talking about they wanted to go to prom with a person of a different race and their parents would not let them. Some said that they could go but they could not take any pictures or {the child of the minority race} would not be able to meet the father or the mother {of the dominant race}. Students were saying that they often locked the doors if they see someone coming of another race (Interview 2, page 7).

Students’ limited outside experience with people of lower social economic status caused them to have blurred versions of the lives of people in lower socio economic strata:

“Students’ just automatically assumed that if you were poor it was because you wanted to be and that you did not work hard” (Interview 3, page 3).

Thus, the instructors reported that the experiences that students had on their own, outside of class, hindered the learning process for some.

On the other hand, sometimes the instructors noted that the experiences that students brought to class acted as a catalyzed to help them want to bring about change. For example:

“One of my students, who was white, said that she had a very close friend who was Hispanic and when we discussed topics about diversity that dealt with Hispanic students she provided valuable conversation to our discussion” (Interview 3, page 5).
By “valuable” the instructor in this case was saying that the student’s experience of being friends with a person who was a member of a minority group, gave the student an opportunity to see the world from a minority standpoint as a majority individual and wanted to change the status quo:

“The two black students in the classroom added diversity to the class. I did not want them to feel like a cultural informant, but I thought the class benefited from their views” (Interview 3, 5).

According to the instructor of this class, the two minority students mentioned made students aware of how it feels as minority students at Miami University. Often times, when the students think of racism or any kind of discrimination, they usually think of it as in the past. But, by having minority students in the class willing to talk about issues that they are facing now, it caused those in that class to want to help to bring about change.

**Instructors’ personal experiences.** All of the instructors said that they utilized their own outside experiences to help make sense of the discourse presented in the IDS 159 course. Some of the remarks from the instructors were:

“I am white and my wife is black, so I see things differently. Maybe that is why this class gets to me so” (Interview 2, page 5).

This was definitely a unique experience for this instructor because when we look at race, sexual orientation, religion, ability, gender, he is a member of the dominant culture. However, when looking deeper, we realize that he is married to a minority, specifically in the area of race and gender. Knowing his wife’s struggle and his struggle as her partner, he taught the class from a different vantage point.

Another instructor that also had a different vantage point made these comments:

“I am Jewish and I shared with the class my experience of being Jewish in a Christian world. In fact, I use to work at a Bible College. I did not find {working at a Bible College} necessarily hard because I have primarily done this all of my life. Now, if I was teaching former Nazi’s then I might feel different. But then again I probably would not because I would be the instructor (Interview 3, page 4).
The instructor shares that with her class, when it comes to race, she would be part of the majority culture. However, when it comes to religion, she is a minority. Thus, she understands some of the challenges that minorities must contend with on a daily basis. By her latter statement, regarding the Nazi’s, she distances herself from minimizing the plight of the minority by saying that in her teaching experience, she has not taught anyone who openly tried to do her harm based on her religion alone. She then brings in the concept of power. In a classroom situation, as an instructor, she would have the power, thus minimizing the chance that she would be subjected to some of the negative backlash that being a minority often carries.

Some instructors realized on their way to causing student learning that they learned things themselves, as is the case in this example:

“When I first started doing this class, they said on my evaluations that I compared too much black and white. So, then I started adding more kinds of diversity into the study. I found myself purposely trying to add others kinds of diversity. One student asked why don’t you see it as weird to see Asian ladies and white men {together}”  (Interview 4, page 9).

In this example, the instructor learned something as well as the students, that it is important to talk about and embrace all kinds of diversity, not just a select group.

**Course Structure**

The course structure theme specifically has to do with how the class was actually taught, according to the instructors. In this theme instructors recounted issues that related primarily to the structure of the class and possibly how they had to alter the structure of the class to better meet the needs of the students. For example, an instructor noted:

“I never had any heated debates but I did have to change my syllabus several times to deal with the altered paths that the conversations seem to have taken” (Interview 3, page 6).

This statement shows that many of the instructors are interested in student learning and do not mind deviating from the original path as long as learning about cultural diversity is taking place. Another example of this would be in the following statement in which the instructor noticed gaps in instruction and as a result wanted to add another component to the diversity landscape.
“If I were going to teach the course this year I would let them read a book about obesity and people’s prejudices against it” (Interview 1, page 12).

Most of the instructors would agree that this class in the past has been seen as an easy “A” class. So much so that until a couple of semesters ago, instructors were not required to give a midterm. Instructors, rising to the charge from the Provost, started requiring mid terms but still held true to the belief that:

“The framework of the course is that for any given topic any part of diversity can be explored” (Interview 3, page 1).

Regardless of how the structure or content of the course was changed, all of the instructors interviewed believed that diversity represented in the teaching staff was an important component of structure:

“I think that it is important that minorities are teaching the class {as well} because when the instructors get together and work together {on the planning of the course} it is important to have a variety of perspectives represented” (Interview 4, page 8).

On a larger scale, diversity in the classroom from the student body was also needed and well appreciated:

“When I taught last fall, I think there were seven students of color out of 21, so that was good and that was a good critical mass” (Interview 4, page 6).

Other comments by instructors echoed that same sentiment:

“When I taught courses at the Middletown branch, I had the best discussions and debates. Most of the students were older, with more experiences to bring to the class and a lot more diversity. That made for very engaging classes” (Interview 2, page 10).

The course structure for the class never gave the impression of being extremely rigid, overly controlled nor totally instructor driven. Instead, from the interviews, it seemed more of a partnership of discussion, activities, readings, and events tightly framed around issues of diversity.

**Student Learning**

In this section, the dialogue will focus attention on areas of student learning. Instructors talked about the highs of teaching IDS 159 which usually means positive change in student
learning. Most every teacher wants to hear that his/her students “got it”. Several instructors made mention that their students were beginning to think differently about cultural diversity issues and they shared remarks that indicated that change. However, there were some difficulties in the area of student learning, particularly when it came to students’ attitudes about diversity remaining the same.

Positive change. The following quote aptly illustrates the hopes that the instructors had for student learning by the conclusion of the course:

“Understanding that things are complex and are a part of the equation in whatever you are thinking. That nothing is absolute or dicodomist. That things are related. That they have a stake and influence on everything that they think and that there are many perspectives on everything” (Interview 4, page 9).

All of the instructors mentioned some form of “epiphany moments” that marked the crystallization of student learning:

“Students realized that {a classmate} saw things through white girl eyes” (Interview 1, page 4).

Instructors mentioned really feeling progress in the class when students in the class became aware of biased behavior:

“Occasionally students will comment on epiphany moments when they will say going into this project I suddenly realized that there were others ways of thinking of things” (Interview 1, page 4).

The following thoughts are examples of positive change that the student is undertaking in the class:

”What {the student} ended up discovering is that we are so much more alike than different.”(Interview 3, page 1).

The idea of having diverse students in the class seemed, in the opinion of the instructors interviewed, to speed up the process of positive change. One instructor expressed this thought this way:

“The discussion with Miami Oxford students and Miami main campus students, were probably the best that I ever had” (Interview 2, page 6).

This instructor later qualified “best” by saying that students in this particular class had a chance to hear other students, who, in some instances, appeared to be much like them, respond to
situations from extremely different backgrounds and experiences. This created a lot of positive change.

The final quote sums up the student learning section best by saying:

“They come in knowing something, they leave knowing a lot more about aspects of gender, race and class. But they also know that each type of diversity is really, really complex and that they just started the work” (Interview 4, page 2).

**Difficulty.** All of the instructors made mention of enjoying the moments when it was apparent that students were learning. Some said that it made them feel good and like there was a reason for teaching the class when they received instant feedback that their instruction was working. With that in mind, several instructors mentioned that sometimes those “ah-ha” moments that students experienced did not always come as often or as soon as they would have liked to have seen. Two examples follow:

“They wanted to get away from people who were different from them”

(Interview 2, page 4),

In this instance, the student defined “different” as not being the same race as his parents. The same instructor said:

“Some students come back just as shallow as before they went {to a cultural} (Interview 2, page 4),

This implies that this could make it very difficult for student learning to occur.

**Frustrations with Teaching**

No matter how much an instructor enjoys a particular subject matter, course description, educational level, or the students they are instructing, there comes a time when all instructors feel some form of frustration. The same holds true with the instructor who taught IDS 159. Some of the frustrations stemmed from relying on outside sources to help facilitate the learning on a particular topic, especially if that “outside source” does a great job, but the instructor does not want to feel like a nuisance:

“I teach three sections {of IDS 159} so sometimes I feel bad about having {Spectrum} come so often.” {Spectrum} come so often” (Interview 2, page 5).
This statement shows how the instructor definitely values what the outside group has to offer but there is some amount of stress and frustration involved with actually having them come so often.

Scheduling class session time with informative outside sources can cause some degree of stress and frustration just as misinterpreting how students would react to a given situation could cause stress as well. Take for instance one of the instructors stories in which he said that the class was having a discussion on affirmative action and students were shouting out what they thought about it. Before all the students had processed their thoughts, the instructor chimed in his thoughts that happened to be contrary to one of the more vocal students in the class. This student began to rant and rave about how family members of his had lost opportunities because of affirmative action. The threatening tone of the student shut down the conversation. The instructor noted:

“I know that some people are always going to rebut things, {but} I kind of put it on me in a way, because I should have known that the student would act that way” (Interview 2, page 20).

This situation caused the instructor to feel frustrated and powerless to have open discussions, but it also caused him to think differently about putting out his thoughts until the class members had an opportunity to share their thoughts on the topic.

When talking about frustrations with the IDS 159 course, one instructor said that she did not feel like the course was long enough. Specifically, she felt that she did not get a chance to cover all of the topics in the allotted time:

“ I did not get to cover age discrimination, disabilities or really a lot about religion”

(Interview 3, page 5).

This particular instructor found herself spending the majority of her time on race issues with sexuality and gender issues tying for the second hottest topics.

Quite possibly, the reason the above mentioned instructor spent so much time on race issues could stem from a frustration with teaching the IDS 159 course that bothered this instructor:

“There is a lot of racism in the classes. It is not overt but you know it its there” (Interview 2, page 5).

One would like to think that all forms of “isms” mentioned in this discourse would stem from ignorance and could quickly be stamped out by one semester long cultural diversity course.
However, many of the instructors discovered that it is not just one source like parents or peers feeding misinformation to students but it is more like a consortium of hate steadily pumping into the airwaves:

“I tell students all the time that they must examine the news, the radio, magazines, everything. {Because} they have very few filters” (Interview 2, page 5).

Frustrations with teaching the IDS 159 class stemmed from various areas including needing to rely on outside resources, misinterpreting how students would react to in certain topics, the feeling that there is not enough time to cover the material, students having limited filters to process information and the amount of racism that still is prevalent today and that is evident in student responses and actions.

**Summary of Findings from the Instructor Interviews**

All of the instructors seemed eager to do the interviews when it came to talking about teaching the IDS 159 course. They all seemed like this had been the moment that they had been waiting for to “toot their horn” with some of their success stories. Their dialogue encompassed such engaging topics as teaching strategies, student learning, and the experiences they and their students brought to the class.

As a whole, I would summarize these findings in terms of two sets of conclusions. The first set of conclusions center on the positive changes that resulted from the course, and the second set of conclusions center on the frustrations and difficulties encountered.

**Positive changes resulting from the course.** Here, I summarize the results in terms of three conclusions. First, students did have significant “ah-ha” moments during the IDS 159 course. Secondly, instructors embraced a variety of teaching strategies to deliver their instruction and the variety of teaching strategies were critical to the course. A third positive change as result of the course was that the students and the instructors learned important things about diversity and themselves.

Students did have significant “ah-ha” moments during the IDS 159 course. During this course, their understanding of concepts seem to crystallize. The moments of understanding occurred at different times for different students on different topics. One instructor reported having a student who was very challenging during the first couple of class sessions. He always
argued the other side, and usually had somewhat strong opinions but presented them as fact. During the last couple of class sessions, this young man began to ask more questions than blurt out opinions. The instructor realized by the student’s reflection papers that a change has taken place, and that the student recognized how he had grown as well.

All of the instructors seemed eager to do the interview when it came to talking about teaching the IDS 159 course. They all seemed like this had been the moment that they had been waiting for to “toot their horn” with some of their success stories. Their dialogue encompassed such engaging topics as teaching strategy, student learning, and the experiences they and their students brought to the class. As a whole, the instructors interviewed for this project advocated that there were three main positive changes as a result of this class. First, students did have significant “ah-ha” moments during the IDS 159 course. Secondly, instructors embraced a variety of teaching strategies to deliver their instruction and the variety of teaching strategies were critical to the course. The final positive change as result of the course was that the students and the instructors learned important things about diversity and themselves. Although there were varied reasons why the “ah-ha” moments occurred, most of the instructors attributed these “ah-ha” moments to the use of varied teaching strategies. Instructors embraced a variety of teaching strategies to deliver their instruction and the variety of teaching strategies were critical to the course. In class activities gave instructors the opportunity to introduce a concept or way of thinking that may have been different than the class originally thought. By having in-class activities the instructors were able to carefully monitor student learning. The discussion activities allowed students to process their thoughts within a safe environment. This type of activity also gave the instructor the opportunity to monitor, guide and facilitate the conversation. By utilizing some of these teaching strategies along with outside materials, some of the students thinking changed. Examples of this can be seen in comments such as

“I used the book *Nickel and Dimed* and it definitely got students thinking about class and class issues. They really need {this kind of exposure} here at Miami” (Interview 2, page 3).

The content of the IDS 159 course also was vital in producing the powerful impact of the course on students. The coverage of diversity issues was intense and varied. Topics such as race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, social economic status, oppression, and privilege were all dominant topics in the themes in the course. This diversity course was made stronger by adding
outside activities, such as attending religious services and campus activities. Some of these activities, that students attended as a group and individually, helped to make students more aware. Bringing guests into the classroom to speak on a particular issues concerning diversity brought an increase in students’ awareness levels.

Finally, the students and the instructors learned important things about diversity and themselves as a result of taking/teaching this course. Each instructor interviewed for this project believed, in some way, that this particular class resulted in students learning something different and important about cultural diversity. One instructor commented that,

“I think they understood others in a better way.” (Interview 3, page 6).

As evidence of this, students often discussed, argued, and defended certain positions during the class. According to instructors, this course:

“helped students to realize their reactions affect others” (Interview 1, page 2).

**Difficulties and frustrations.** Although the instructors did talk about success, they were equally eager to vent their frustrations with some of their not so successful stories. As they expressed their thoughts about the course, it became clear that the previously mentioned topics all converged to make three overarching summations of the difficulties associated with teaching the course. The three themes that seemed to summarize the instructor’s thoughts about teaching the IDS 159 course were: some times they were faced with tough crowds to teach, they had very high expectations for the course and students and as a result perceived poor results from the students, and they often evaluated themselves harshly.

First, every instructor who has taught a class has probably had the unfortunate opportunity to have a student who does not particularly agree with what is being expressed. This affects instructors in different ways. One of the instructors of the IDS 159 course spoke of his experience this way:

“That one time it did not go well. I had a particular student that rebutted everything I said. It was a very interesting class. Because that one time did not go well it has always stuck with me” (Interview 2, page 2).

Sometimes when this happens to an instructor it can become extremely stressful. Instructors tried to rely on different teaching strategies to offset this occurrence, but often times it could be several people in the class who seemed to feed off each other, making each class seem much longer than the allotted time. Other times, a “tough crowd” could be loosely defined as one
particular student who alienated and irritated everyone in the class with their closed minded views, dominating personality and perfect attendance.

“I use to stay up nights trying to figure out what to do because I could not stand him”
(Interview 2, page 2).

A second frustration was the perception of poor results from the students, despite having high expectations for the students. There is a quote “the higher the expectation the lower the peace”. This phrase could be no further from the truth than when summarizing the thoughts of the instructors who taught the IDS 159 course. Their expectations for this course and student performance were at a high level. When the word “high” is used, I do not mean in quantity of work or grades on papers. However, the instructors of this particular class did not rely upon the traditional methods of a weighted scale to evaluate performance. It seems, at least in the minds of the instructors, that there was little correlation between how the students performed on the outcome based assessments set for class, such as final synthesis papers, and how the teachers felt about their students’ true learning:

“I do not think anyone had an ah-ha moment. I do not think it happened in the course synthesis papers because at that point {students were} just looking to get out. So, the course synthesis papers were often shallow.”

Within this category of the perception of poor results, I observed within the interviews what I call a “Low Levels of Peace.” Many of the instructors that I interviewed felt a low level of peace because their personal definition of how much students should learn in the course may not have matched the natural progression in which learning about diversity occurs:

“This paper and the paper before were very hard for me to read” (Interview 2, page 3). This comment seems to echo the inner struggle that this instructor was having in regards to reading student’s work that might not live up to his expectations of growth in the class. When the instructors were asked about issues that disappointed them in the course, one instructor said,

“to have people at a different place than where you hoped they would be.” (Interview 4, page 2). Other instructors seemed to be most frustrated at what they considered to be the total lack of progress. The following instructor felt that his students’ mind-set changed very little as a result of the IDS 159 course.
“I would say closed at the beginning and for the most part still closed at the end (Interview 2, page 5).

One instructor said,

“These courses are easy to get burned out as an instructor because some of the stuff that you hear each semester that trivializes the racism or the kind of things that students say, tend to be repeated every semester. That takes it’s toll emotionally.” (Interview 4, page 10).

The third area of difficulty/frustration for the instructors is encompassed in the category of perceptions of poor results as an instructor. In addition to a tough crowd or the instructor’s perception of poor results in the class, many instructors who were interviewed for this project felt that poor performance on their part as the instructor caused them the most amount of stress in teaching the IDS 159 course:

“I would have to say that I really get nervous about it because I want it to go well and I think there is a lot they can take away from the class” (Interview 2, page 2).

This nervousness mentioned earlier can later turn into slight depression if the instructor does feel that he or she conducted the class well:

“I mean I wanted to see big change and when I did not I thought it was my fault.
Sometimes this class can be depressing because you want to make so much change in behavior and that does not always happen” (Interview 2, page 9).

One instructor seemed to blame herself for the lack of student learning in a particular area.

“Ageism, I don’t think I opened many eyes” (Interview 1, page 5).

As she said this, she seemed momentarily sad, as if the whole issue of discriminating against the aged rested upon her shoulders.

At times it seemed that many of the instructors wanted significant behavior changes to happen as a result of this semester long course and the true growth that a student may have accomplished as a result of taking this class may not have truly been recognized. One instructor summed up her experience and quite possibly most of the instructors teaching this course as,

“So it seems like that is all I have been able to do in my class is to make people aware of diversity. I feel kinda sad that I have not been able to do more. (Interview 2, paper 3).
CHAPTER 5
CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE CHANGE

This is a qualitative study of how students and teachers changed as a result of taking a diversity course, specifically, IDS 159: Strength Through Cultural Diversity: Functioning Effectively In a Global Society, at Miami University. In this chapter, I will share my “grand conclusions,” how my conclusions relate to my conceptual model, curriculum implications, limitations of the study, and a final reflection on my project.

Conclusions

What changed as a result of taking the IDS 159 course? There are several conclusions that can be reached as we consider this study. One conclusion is that the course does help to create an awareness of diversity, particularly in the area of race. When we consider the population of students taking the course, we are struck by the commonality that most of the students share. Many are young, middle to upper class, white, Christians. They are overwhelmingly heterosexual, with few visible disabilities, and have limited experience with race. By not interacting with “others,” oftentimes one’s concepts of a particular group can be skewed and perceptions of what different people are like could be relegated to what the media or other inaccurate sources promote.

This course expanded student understanding of things beyond race. The course made students begin to question things that they had heard about “others.” The IDS 159 course caused some students to begin to question messages that they had heard since they were young and for the first time realize the privilege and oppression that is inherent in our system.

Unfortunately, the results of the present study could not document that the IDS 159 course caused behavior to change all that much. For the most part, students became aware of an unequal system. They realized that there could be falsehood lying within some of their beliefs and maybe began to look more critically at their sources of information and the ends the reporting of distorted information might gain, but they have not yet began to change their everyday behavior.
What helped this change in awareness come about? First, the variety of teaching strategies that the instructors used does make a difference. Each instructor of the IDS 159 course said that he/she used several different methods to facilitate learning. The students’ papers reflected these many strategies, and reinforced the importance of coming at the topic of cultural diversity from a variety of methods. The strategies varied from in-class activities, classroom discussion, enhancing student thinking, providing materials, covering many topics of diversity, providing the class with and informing them of outside class activities, and inviting guest speakers to the class. With all of these different ways of receiving the information, the class was a much richer atmosphere for learning.

The opportunity to have discussions with both instructors and other students who are different than oneself was important as well. During this IDS 159 course, many of the students had an opportunity, often for the first time, to think about and discuss diversity. The conversation was made richer by the amount of diversity in the classroom adding different perspectives to the topic of discussion. Having an instructor present in the conversation, helped to guide and realign the discussion with goals of the course.

The course structure also helped change to come about. The IDS 159 course dealt with different forms of diversity, including ageism, racism, gender, religion, class, and sexual orientation. The format and syllabus for the course were always fluid; they could be altered depending on the needs of the students and instructor. Although each class and session primarily covered the same topics, class sessions could be very different than all other class sessions depending on the dynamics and need of each group.

Emphasis on varied learning styles was also an important component that helped change to come about. Instruction in the class was not limited to lecture as many college level classes are. The instruction in the IDS 159 course attempted to increase the learning by using varied methods and modes to deliver instruction. Students obtained knowledge for the course kinesthetically, (through movement), visually, (through sight), and auditorally, (through hearing), on a routine basis throughout this course.

Connecting student learning to the context of the students’ own experiences helped change to come about. The IDS 159 course encouraged students to bring in and share their own experiences with diversity and built upon those experiences that the students brought into the classroom. Students were encouraged and required to continuously gain experience throughout
the course including, but not limited to, attending different diversity programs on and off campus.

In addition to my original questions about what changed, and what brought change about, the study also highlighted important facets of what the instructors experience when they teach the course. All of the instructors interviewed expressed both joys and frustrations with teaching the IDS 159 course. Some of the joys expressed stemmed from students reaching “ah-ha” moments, trying something different, hearing thought-provoking comments during discussion and running out of class time because students in the class were so engaged in the concepts being presented. Some of the frustrations with teaching the IDS 159 course were rooted in having a tough crowd to teach, such as students who were routinely disagreeable and had very strong personalities. Other frustrations stemmed from perceptions of poor results from the students. This most often happened when the instructor had higher expectations or wanted to see a greater amount of change in the students than what was actually occurring. A perception of poor results as an instructor was also a point of frustration with teaching the IDS 159 course. Often times, instructors felt that they should have done things differently, should have planned differently, or should have anticipated something a little faster. Overall then, this course is a very “emotional” experience for the instructors who teach it; in this way, it is unlike other courses, where one might be able to remain rather aloof from the course content, and from the students. In this class, instructors bring their whole selves into the classroom, including their passion, biases, and personal experiences.

Another important facet of what the instructors experience when they teach the course is how their own personal experiences play into the course. All of the instructors mentioned elements of their background that they use, directly or indirectly, in the class to help enrich the class. By using their own background and experience in the class, the instructors have reported that students begin to see things in a different light and often times the students’ understanding and awareness are broadened. However, with the IDS 159 course, in contrast to many other university courses, learning can be a two-way street, where both instructor and student are learning and benefiting from the class. By talking about diversity in a group setting, even instructors are noticing their own biases. The instructors then take that new-found knowledge, learn from it, grow as a result of it and then try to teach the next class in a different, more enlightened way next time around or even for the next class meeting.
Experiencing the joys, frustrations, sharing personal experiences, learning new ways of thinking, and teaching can create a great deal of stress on any instructor. Thus, the need for a support system for instructors is imperative. Instructors need a place where they can feel safe. Instructors need to feel safe and supported in sharing some of their emotions, concerns, and insecurities about teaching the course. Instructors need an opportunity to hear new ideas, share teaching strategies, find out tips to handle a “tough crowd” and to vent about the nuances of teaching IDS 159.

In conclusion, there are two very broad conclusions to draw here. First, contextualized learning was important for both student and the instructor. Both used their prior experiences in life to help them better understand and explain diversity. The students and the instructors talked about times that they witnessed or were a part of positive and negative situations dealing with diversity and used the class as a sounding board. They let the class help them filter through the process of becoming accepting and understanding of diversity. But in order to become accepting and understanding of diversity there is a need to talk, discuss, share thoughts. IDS 159 allowed that to happen.

Second, of course, change is a process. It happens gradually and with time. Change does not happen in one night, nor in this case, even a semester-long course. However, this course offers one step toward the cultural competence level that Lindsey et al. (2004) mentioned in the intricate process toward change. The IDS 159 course dealt with beliefs of being greater than other races and culture. It also dealt with pretending that all races and cultures are the same. Finally, the IDS 159 course dealt with making students aware of “the limitations of one’s skills or and organization’s practices when interacting with other cultural groups” (p. 25). Although, the instructors always hoped for more change at a faster pace, this is still an important step, and one that hopefully leads to greater learning at a later time, as the students gain more experience in the world with diversity. The IDS 159 course “sets the stage” for change.

Relationship to My Conceptual Model

In this section of the dissertation, I will address how the findings discussed in the analysis of student findings and instructor interviews link to my conceptual framework. In my conceptual framework, the major goals multicultural education are learning about oneself, awareness of difference, adding non-dominant voices, broadening worldviews, negotiating difference, encouraging critical thinking and social transformation.
What do my results show relative to this model? They show that the IDS 159 course is working. Why do I say this? Primarily because students are reporting change in the way that they are thinking about cultural diversity, as a result of taking this course. Almost all of the students in each category reported changing based on their own experiences in conjunction with taking the IDS 159 course. All of the students reported having experiences dealing with diversity. However, it is through the class that they have a forum for better understanding and processing the world around them. It would be my recommendation to begin the class with personal experiences within the context of diversity, since this is one of the key elements that all students can respond to, which is a critical piece in building a foundation for change in a discussion based course.

When I look at the overall results of the study in relation to my conceptual framework, and in relation to my own teaching experience, some interesting information becomes more apparent. The first goal is learning about oneself. This course helped students learn more about who they are as individuals and how they fit in the world. “I am white and I am Appalachian. In my family we value relationship and family over everything else.” This was a quote taken from one of my students when I had them write an assignment based on who they are. It is true that everyone must first discover who they are before they can move to any other level of becoming aware of diversity.

The second goal is awareness of difference. This course helped students become more aware of difference. One of my students once said, “I use to tell people that I was colorblind, meaning people were just people to me. I did not think of them as being black, white, red or yellow. I thought of them as just being people. Now, I see how important it is to see colors, because that difference in people adds so much more to our shared experiences.” Perhaps one of the most important things that the IDS 159 course achieves is helping students to get beyond such viewpoints, and to both become more aware of difference and engage with difference.

The third goal is adding non-dominant voices. The IDS 159 course also helped students become more aware of the non-dominant voice. It is very important for students and instructors alike to listen to and read from authors who represent the non-dominant voice; this is achieved in IDS 159 through the readings, through discussion, and through attending multicultural events. It is equally important to have students in the classroom who are minorities who choose to speak
on the minority experience. This kind of information brings a different perspective to any classroom.

The fourth goal is broadening worldviews. It is not clear that the course particularly helped students to broaden their world views. Many of the instructors reported that their students primarily used their own personal experience to gain a better understanding of the course content. They did not use world-views and world knowledge as a basis for trying to understand the new subject matter. This may simply reflect the students’ need to start with themselves; as well as the course’s structure that emphasized self awareness, awareness of difference (with a particular emphasis on US cultures), followed by application.

The final goals in my framework are negotiating difference, encouraging critical thinking, and social transformation. Of these three, I think that IDS 159 addresses critical thinking to the greatest extent. The course provides an excellent starting point for students to begin to think critically about race, religion, sexual orientation, ability, and gender issues. By helping students question their own assumptions, experiences, stereotypes, and views of others, the course provides an important platform for critical analysis. By emphasizing the ways that dominant privilege, and racism, sexism, homophobia, classis, ageism, etc. operate in our culture, instructors in IDS 159 are providing students with a new critical framework for examining the world.

The goals of negotiating difference and social transformation were not heavily emphasized in the student papers or in the instructor interviews. I think this is primarily because of the short length of the class – both of these two goals require a long-term effort and emphasis. I believe, however, that every one of the instructors of IDS 159 held social transformation as a personal goal – this is the very reason why these instructors were so devoted to the course, so involved in the teaching of it, and so invested in making sure that significant student learning occurred. And it is why these instructors felt the challenges of the course so deeply. Quite simply, to them, there was a lot at stake in each and every class meeting.
Curriculum Implications

There are four major implications that this research has for future teachings of the IDS 159 course and other cultural diversity courses. They are: know the role of the course, have subsequent diversity courses, continue to use elements of success from the current IDS 159 courses and be aware of pitfalls associated with teaching the course.

Initially, instructors must know the role of the course. This is a beginning, entry-level course in diversity. Students should be primarily finding out about themselves and how they are different or alike from others. Instructors need to be aware that change is happening even if is not evident in discussion and reflection papers. Change, initially, in becoming aware that there are people different than them and that these “different people” are neither superior nor inferior to any other group is a first step at becoming culturally competent. This process is usually slow and change is gradual, the more exposure students get to thinking about diversity, the more change will happen. In the IDS 159 course, students are primarily becoming aware of diversity. Thus diversity in this can be a gradual process but instructors should know and understand how slow and important the role of the course is.

After establishing that the IDS 159 course is a beginning level course, there should be subsequent diversity courses that deal with Lindsay et al’s (2003) other levels of competency. These courses should be more advanced than the cultural pre-competence level because they will obtain this level of understanding from the IDS 159 course. One course could be titled “Cultural Competence” and the next “Cultural Proficiency.” These courses would most likely center around moving students toward what Lindsey et al (2003) coin “cultural proficiency,” where other cultures are valued and students begin to learn about others cultures. The courses could encompass trips to foreign lands for extended periods of time, possibly for as long as a semester or part of a semester. In this way students would be fully submerge into another culture.

However, if the thought of traveling abroad to experience a heightened since of diversity does not seem interesting then possibly another way that changed could be facilitated in these new courses would be to have a foreign language and total emersion component with in the United States, where students would have to study a particular group for an extended period of time. They might have to live with a person with disabilities or volunteer at an agency that
caters to the marginalized population. Other options could be working in a soup kitchen for a semester as part of the course content as part of the course content.

Instructors should continue to use elements of success from the current IDS 159 courses such as varied teaching strategies, experiences of both instructor and students, and a solid course structure that embraces many different learning styles so that student learning can be achieved. The varied teaching strategies seem to be causing an awareness in students about diversity. I would continue this effort, however, in future courses, I think it would be good if instructors got a chance to share some of the strategies that they are using. Some instructors relied heavily on videos, while others mostly relied on in class activities. I think more discussion on what teaching strategies each instructor is using will greatly increase awareness.

I think the experiences of both the instructors and students enhanced the class greatly. In order to enhance this aspect of the course, I would strongly recruit for diversity in both areas, students and faculty. Because, if is true that having diverse experiences and sharing those experiences is a key element in making students aware of diversity, I would advocate for diverse staff and students.

Finally, instructors should be aware of frustrations associated with teaching the class. These frustrations include, but are not limited to, teaching a tough crowd, perceptions of poor results from the students and perceptions of poor results as an instructor. By naming these frustrations upfront, instructors can anticipate these challenges and not take their occurrence personal or as a reflection of their own teaching style. Instead, they could spend their time on trying to figure out what are some of the best ways to handle these situations, which might arise from talking to other instructors that have taught the class.

Talking to others who have taught the class leads me to another area that can be improved, an opportunity for the instructors to share, vent, listen, and console each other as they teach the IDS 159 course. As I have mentioned before, most of the instructors seemed open to the interview, almost eager to have the interview. Many expressed feelings of being burned out, frustrated and isolated as they shared their experience teaching the class. I listened, but like a researcher, not like a person experiencing the same or similar experiences. At points during the interview, it was evident that a bit of dialogue on the subject or even my sharing of teaching diversity would have helped. I did as best I could, while still trying to remain in the researcher role. Thus, I definitely think a support group for the instructors of IDS 159 would be warranted.
Limitations of the Study

As with any study, there are things that could have been done differently. For example, if this study was to be replicated, the new researcher could get students who took the course longer than a semester or two ago, interview more instructors, interview students personally, and possibly even sit in on the IDS 159 course. By interviewing students who have taken the course longer than a semester or two ago, the researcher might be able to better ascertain how much knowledge students actually kept and personalize, thereby possibly increasing or decreasing the actual level of change that the course caused.

Another step that the new researcher could do if replicating this study would be to interview students personally as well as read the reflection papers. By talking to the students personally, other themes might emerge. It is one thing to read students responses meant for an instructor who will ultimately evaluate them verses talking to a non non-evaluative person after a course is completed.

Finally, sitting in on several of the IDS 159 sessions may also be beneficial to a researcher looking to replicate this study. There may be themes that arise during natural conversation and daily interaction of the students and instructor that miss being mentioned during subsequent interviews or written assignments.

Final Reflection

The most important things that I have learned from doing this study are that change is slow, there is a great need for diversity, the content of the cultural diversity course must be solid, instructors should anticipate a tough crowd, and know the role of the course, and finally as an instructor, give yourself a break.

I use to love to teach mathematics in elementary school. I did not particularly love to teach the subject matter, what I enjoyed most was the immediate feedback on my instruction. It would only take a second to pull out a written exam, pop quiz, homework assignment or a brief discussion to know if students understood the information. The IDS 159 course is not like
teaching elementary math. In a course that deals with changing value systems, ways of thinking, and belief systems, change is often slow.

My daughters are young and just now beginning to enter into a formalized education system. As I check around to see what environment will best suite them and the way they learn best, there are several criteria that I look for. One criterion is that the school be close to me so I can easily visit them on a regular basis. Another criterion is that the school have better than average to great scores. I also, if possible, love to listen to people who have had the teachers that my daughters will be having, to see how people describe them. All though all of these factors are important, I very strongly want to know how much diversity is present in the school. I look at the staff, students, and support services. I do not advocate this merely because I am minority with minority daughters, I say this because it enriches the environment and I think it is crucial. I think college level students should be afforded the same standards because there is a great need for diversity.

There was a course that I took in undergraduate school that was named “Logical Reasoning.” The semester long course had some great information but it seemed like it could have been summed up in three hours instead of in a semester long course. Who knows why exactly the course was designed as it was, but I do know if the content was stronger and more solid, that class would have been a more interesting and beneficial class. The content of the cultural diversity course must be solid as well.

Since doing this study and understanding the implications of this research, I have changed several of my practices. Before each quarter, I use to look forward to another session of somewhat eager minds waiting for information to be presented to them. Now, one of the changes I have made as I reflect on this research is that I anticipate a tough crowd. I anticipate one, two, or several challenging students. This way it is much easier to adjust to either extreme or remain some where in the middle when managing the class.

I remember a friend of mine wanted to start a summer camp that focused on reading and writing. She had almost all of her staff but she needed one more teacher. When she could not find another teacher, she hired a close friend who was not in the field of education, but in need of a job. She surmised that her friend could act as an aid rather than an instructor. Well, enrollment was very high and every staff member was needed to cover classes. My friend had the most amount of frustration from hiring her friend because of the lack of educational knowledge that
this person had. However, honestly, I think her frustration came more from not knowing or
forgetting the role that this person was originally hired to play. I think it is important to know
the role of an entry-level cultural diversity course. It is to create awareness.
On a much-anticipated final note, I think it important that all instructors of the IDS 159 give
themselves a break. By taking a break, I do not mean that each instructor of the class should not
take the class seriously, or overplan for the course, or become somewhat nervous at the
beginning of each new semester. By giving themselves a break, I mean, do not hold yourself
solely accountable for changing the way people believe, act, and respond when dealing with
diversity. The task, after all, is to create an awareness of diversity.
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