

I AM AWARE, I VIEW MYSELF DIFFERENTLY, I CAN CREATE CHANGE: THE EXPERIENCE
OF BLACK STUDENTS IN AN INTERGROUP DIALOGUE COURSE

BY

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THESIS

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Abstract

Intergroup dialogue is a multicultural education strategy aimed at promoting conflict resolution and enhancing the understanding of differences (Zuniga et al., 2002). An intergroup dialogue course involves gathering individuals from differing social identity groups to have honest, open and respectful conversations around different identities. Literature around intergroup dialogue has offered conflicting findings for students of color, with some suggesting positive growth(Gurin et al, 2004; Hurtado, 2005; Ford & Malaney, 2012) and others suggesting negative outcomes (Miller & Donner, 2001.) Because of similar inconsistencies in the literature involving black students experiences with multicultural education courses (Ervin, 2001), and the lack of investigation in the experiences of black students specifically, in intergroup dialogue courses, the present study will focus on the experience of black students in an undergraduate intergroup dialogue course at a Predominantly White Institution. Students within the course completed a cultural assessment at the beginning and end of the semester. The assessment required students to reflect on changes in their social identities, experiences involving these social identities, and feelings toward taking the course. A qualitative, thematic analysis was performed on these cultural assessment papers and themes/subthemes were derived. Implications for the intergroup dialogue literature are discussed along with suggestions about the black student experience in an intergroup dialogue course at a predominantly white university.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Since its inception, the United States of America has been plagued by destructive interracial interactions. This history continues to haunt the nation. Complicated with this history, is a changing national demographic: a demographic that no longer contains such a lopsided racial make up of white as the majority and communities of color in the minority. In recent years institutions of higher education have offered the concept of multicultural education to address this historical moment when a legacy of intolerance meets this changing demographic. In the spirit of conflict resolution and racial healing, Intergroup Dialogue (IGD) has been proposed as a multicultural education course that will work to combat this problematic legacy.

Intergroup dialogue is described as a process designed to engage individuals and groups in the processes of exploration of divisive social issues, conflict resolution, decision making, and collaborative action (National Coalition for Dialogue and Deliberation, 2011). More specifics of the course will follow in chapter two but fundamental to the current investigation is that the process of IGD involves participation of individuals from differing social identities (race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.).

The framework of Critical Race Theory (CRT) guides this study. Critical race theory posits that we exist within a society that is shaped by a racial code that has been molded by history yet, is alive in the present. This code calls for a racial stratification in society in which communities of color are denied privileges designated for white citizens and consistently denied voice in the dominant historical, social and cultural narrative (Delgado & Stefanic, 2001). Racism is alive and well in the United States and pervades the country on many levels, personal, community, and institution (Ladson- Billings, 2007). While IGD attempts to intervene in the persistence of

racism, it is not an instant panacea for the troubled legacy spoken of above. IGD courses often exist on campuses where racism is apparent and the expectation that the course will offer as safe, enlightening process for all is premature. Many of these universities are considered PWI's (Predominantly White Institution) where white students exist as the overwhelming majority, especially when compared to black students. Black students experiences (often in the minority numerically) participating in dialogue about race relations and racism with white students must be explicitly addressed.

Because IGD does focus on conflict resolution and attitude change there have been many study's focusing on the white student experience that have found positive results (Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Hurtado, 2005 , Nagda & Zuniga, 2003). The literature presents contradictions around the experiences of students of color in these courses. Some offer that students of color are gaining many of the positive effects as that of Whitestudents (Ford & Malaney, 2012) others offer that students of color are leaving the course with less hope and disappointment (Mille & Donner, 2001).

The experience of black students, specifically, in a College IGD course has yet to be explored (Dessel & Rogge, 2008). It has been found that black students experience racism on college campuses and can have negative views of multicultural education in general (Ervin, 2001). IGD courses exist on these racist college campuses and are considered a form of multicultural education. So much of American racism is central to the black/white relationship that, to not explore the black experience in a process that highlights racial reconciliation is unjust. CRT also calls for an inclusion of all voices in any academic effort. The current investigation strives to meet this appeal by offering a foundation for the voices of black students to be considered in the evaluation and improvement of IGD Courses.

The purpose of this project is to explore the perspectives of black students participating in an intergroup dialogue course at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). It must be acknowledged that each racial group that make up the student of color population in the larger body of literature is worthy of specific study, the scope of this investigation focuses on black students because of the contradictory evidence about the effects of multicultural education in black students. This exploratory investigation, will hopefully, encourage further, specific study into the other racial groups experiences with multicultural education and intergroup dialogue.

This contribution of this investigation is valuable because it will add to the body of work highlighting intergroup dialogue as an intervention against racism by beginning to explore the experience of specific groups of color in these courses. It will also add to the investigation into the effectiveness of multicultural education for black students in general. Further, this study will also serve as a baseline for future researchers that want to investigate the experiences of black students in intergroup dialogue courses.

The central research question, guided by CRT, holds racism in view, attunes to voices historically and currently silenced and asks: What are the experiences of black students in an Intergroup Dialogue course at a Predominantly White Institution? A qualitative methodology was selected because of the exploratory nature of this investigation. There is little known about the experiences of black students specifically in IGD courses. Qualitative methods also fit well with the CRT tenets of giving voice and counter story telling.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Intergroup dialogue (IGD) courses are a pedagogical technique used in multicultural education. These dialogues are taking place in colleges across the United States. One of the main goals of intergroup dialogue is to encourage individuals from differing social backgrounds to communicate about major social differences. A difference often dialogued about is race. While the experience of white students in these dialogues has been explored without contradiction, when looking at students of color we see some conflicting findings (Dessel & Rogge, 2008).

Further, upon careful review of the literature, the experiences of students of color in intergroup dialogues have been explored, while the experience of black students, specifically, has yet, to be explored. Given research that states that black students are having negative reactions toward multicultural education (Ervin, 2001), it is important to consider the experiences of black students in IGD courses. It is also important to note that these courses, that tote improved race relations as a goal, are often held on Predominantly White Institutions (PWI). black students are in the minority on these college campuses and in the dialogue courses as well.

To add to the body of knowledge around the effectiveness of IGD courses (Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Hurtado, 2005; Nagda & Zuniga, 2003) and to start to understand the experience of black students, specifically, in these courses, this chapter reviews the concept of intergroup dialogue and the body of literature that speaks to its effectiveness for students, in general and the contradictions that surround the outcomes for students of color. In addition, this chapter will also review works that speak to black students experience with multicultural education, in general, and make suggestions about how the PWI experience can influence a black student's participation in an intergroup dialogue course.

Intergroup Dialogue: a form of multicultural education

Colleges and Universities in the United States have historically and presently been charged with educating and preparing the student for function in American Society. It is estimated that people of color, now 37 percent of the U.S. population, are projected to comprise 57 percent of the population by 2060 (US Census). As the face of American society changes, institutions of higher education attempt to launch programming that validates this changing face. Out of this necessity grew concepts of diversity education and training. According to a survey in 2000, 58% of colleges and universities were requiring students to take a diversity requirement (Humphreys, 2000). Many universities are now requiring students to complete some form of diversity course that both exposes and analyzes concepts of race, gender, and other forms of social inequality.

Intergroup dialogue is one type of diversity course being offered. Schoem and Hurtado (2001) defined Intergroup Dialogue as, “ a form of democratic practice, engagement, and education involving face-to-face, focused, facilitated, confidential discussions occurring over time between two or more groups of people defined by their different social identities.” (Schoem and Hurtado, p.7) IGD takes on many forms. It can exist in community centers, workplaces or universities. This project focuses on dialogues that involve students attending an American, predominantly white university.

At PWI's, IGD courses are often small group, discussion based. Many have a lecture component that accompanies the small group discussion; in which course material around racism, societal privilege, and other social identities (gender, religion etc.) are provided. Schoem and Hurtado (2001) describe the process as facilitated and democratic. Trained and supervised

faculty and graduate students often facilitate IGD courses. This facilitation provides for mature communication where students share in an equal, democratic fashion.

The goals of intergroup dialogue vary as the topics of intergroup dialogue can differ, but there are many common goals that each dialogue aspires to. Zuniga et.al (2002) identified six goals that guide many intergroup dialogues despite the topic; develop self awareness around one's social group memberships, explore similarities and differences between differing social groups, examine causes and effects of group differences and impact on lived experience, practice dialogue skills as a method to work for social justice, foster alliances and collaboration, and identify actions that contribute a more just society. The attainment of these goals is the focus of many research questions and studies that evaluate IGD courses.

Research has indicated that university students that participate in intergroup dialogues have experienced important effects such as increased perspective taking, increased problem-solving skills, and increased racial identity development. These effects have also been examined across racial group differences. white students were found to experience increased perspective taking, and a sense of shared common values with students from backgrounds different from their own (Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004), increased racial/cultural engagement (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002), development of analytical problem-solving skills, increased cultural awareness (Hurtado, 2005), and increased racial identity awareness (Nagda & Zuniga, 2003).

Effects for students of color, as a general group include perceiving less intergroup divisiveness, holding more positive attitudes toward conflict, perception of greater commonality with white students (Gurin, Peng, Lopez, & Nagda, 1999), increased racial identity awareness

(Nagda & Zuniga, 2003). The longitudinal design of Gurin et al, (1999), also offers that students of color had more positive relationships with white students four years later.

When comparing the findings between students of color and white students some differences emerge. Miller and Donner (2000) found that only 72.8% of students of color as compared with 97.6% of white students came away with increased hope that people from different backgrounds could listen to each other. Another finding stated that only 54.6% of students of color as compared to 100% of white students thought people of different backgrounds could learn from each other. These findings suggest students of color are drawing very different conclusions than white students around intergroup relations after participation in dialogue. It seems students of color are less hopeful and have less faith that interracial relations will improve.

Interestingly, Nagda, Kim, and Truelove (2004) found that students of color rated their involvement in intergroup dialogue as more important than did the white students. It is offered that perhaps students of color feel more positively about intergroup dialogue experiences because it gives them an opportunity to give voice to racial issues that have gone unexpressed (Nagda & Zuniga, 2003).

Using qualitative methods, Ford and Malaney (2012) explored the benefits of intergroup dialogue on students of color specifically at a Predominantly white institution. This study affirms that students of color are utilizing both content and affective engagement to grow personally. Students cited both lecture /reading material and interpersonal communications with classmates as avenues of learning. Ford and Malaney (2012) also find that students of color seem to be “breaking silences” around their own personal views and the overarching realities in society.

When looking at the entirety of this body of work it seems that conflicting reports of students of color in IGD courses exist. On one hand students of color seem to value the IGD experience, gain knowledge about their own racial identity, and give voice to their own experiences with an imperfect society. Conversely, it has been reported that students of color exit the course feeling disappointed and hopeless that real interracial change can occur.

Unfortunately, black students make up a very small portion of Ford and Malaney's sample size. Black students are also not referenced, explicitly in the findings that include results for students of color. However, black students experience at PWI's and with multicultural education have been explicitly explored and will be discussed below.

Black Student Experiences

PWI Experiences

The American University experience changes as society changes. Historically woman and Americans of color were barred from university. Only through battles of these groups own initiative and resolve were American institutions opened to all Americans. Even with university doors opened, a safe, enriching, and successful college experience is not the experience of many underrepresented group members. 85% of black college students are attending PWI's (Hoston et al., 2010). Black students find themselves inhabiting spaces where they are in the minority physically, and culturally.

At a PWI, black students are exposed to stereotyping and white resentment (Lewis , Chesler & Forman, 2000) racial microaggressions (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000) academic stereotype threat (Steele & Aronson, 1995) hegemonic college curriculum (Lewis et al., 2000) and insensitive attitudes and lower expectations of faculty (Neville, Heppner, Ji & Thye, 2004).

These findings suggest that black students face numerous obstacles when attending a PWI that are related to racism.

Physical safety is also an issue for black students at PWI's. Race related hate crimes make up 72% of all hate crimes in the United States. Further, 10% of all hate crimes happen on college campuses (FBI National Hate Crime Report, 2011). The literature also speaks to high occurrences of race related crime (physical attacks, verbal abuse, and harassment) on college campuses (Ervin, 2001; Downey & Stage, 1999; Wallace & Bell, 1999).

Having stated that multicultural education courses work to remedy the attitudes that lead to hate crimes and the negative racial experiences of black students at PWI's, what would be the role of black students, the victims of these offenses and flawed social outlook in multicultural education?

Experiences with Multicultural Education

It must be acknowledged that multicultural education does not just focus on race relations, it touches on issues around many social crises involving gender, class, religion and more. From this perspective, black students can be seen in the same light as non-black students. This investigation, guided by CRT, contends that race and racism (especially black/white relations) are not only extremely prevalent and powerful in American society but also heated, contentious issues that are debated and discussed in many college courses. Given this focus, the perspective of black students in multicultural education is imperative.

As mentioned above students of color have reported mixed feelings about intergroup dialogue experiences. While the experiences of black students, specifically, in an intergroup dialogue have yet to be examined, their attitudes toward multicultural education, generally, have.

Kelly S. Ervin Ph.D completed most of the work done in this area. Ervin (2001) reports that while black students enjoy challenging and stimulating courses, they find diversity courses ineffective in meeting goals of improving race relations. Ervin reminds us that with the backdrop of campus hate crimes, stereotyping, and microaggressions black students have a difficult time believing the diversity initiatives will have any real effect.

Considering Ervin's findings about black students attitudes, specifically, toward multicultural education and the literature that suggests that students of color in IGD courses have reported negative feelings toward race relations after completing an IGD course (Miller & Donner, 2000), it would be appropriate to investigate the experiences of black students, specifically, who have had IGD course experience.

Chapter 3: Method

This study utilizes a critical theories approach based on a qualitative thematic analysis (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This thesis will explore the experience of black students in an intergroup dialogue class at a predominantly white university. It is imperative that attention be given to these student voices. They represent a group of individuals that is underrepresented generally (societal) and specifically (PWI). Following the tenets of CRT , to further equitable pedagogy and just experiences in higher education, the counter narratives offered by students of color on PWI campuses must be documented and explored. CRT values breadth of experience, especially those experiences that are socially silenced. Working through a lens guided by CRT allows for a consideration of the voices that speak through the data.

CRT calls for storytelling as a mode for the transmission of knowledge (Ladson-Billings, 2007). The voices of student writers will be highlighted at every stage of the research and their stories will frame the results. CRT values nuance and complexity as reality is considered subjective and tainted by social circumstance (K. Crenshaw , N. Gotanda, G. Peller & K. Thomas (Eds.), 1995). Since the experience of black Americans has always been tainted by institutionalized systems of oppression, this investigation attempts to present the experiences of black students in all their depths and variety.

It is also important to realize that my role as an investigator is not one of distance and detachment. Given my deep immersion in the data that qualitative method calls for I have formed a relationship with my data and the voices of the participants. CRT mandates that I consider my social context as a white woman when placing meaning on the data of black individuals. The following section will provide details on the context, data source, data collection and data analysis.

Context

This project was completed at a predominately white university in the Midwest. The university has made a public commitment to diversity and offers courses, like intergroup dialogue, to support its goals of producing a more diverse student body. No matter the commitment of the university, white students vastly outnumber black students. This is also reflected within the classrooms and dialogue sections across campus. This context was extremely important for me to note as I read the experiences of the student writers.

While intergroup dialogue courses strive for bridge building between those from differing social identities, at a PWI, students of color are often one of few non white-students in the course. When considering the experience of black students it is important to note the immediate social context, especially one in which these students exist as the minority: physically and culturally. It is also worth noting that while all semesters had the same professor reside over their lecture, each had differing TA's.

Writing Assignments and Data Collection

I obtained cultural assessment (CA) assignments from an intergroup dialogue course from the above-mentioned context. The assignment was designed and administered by the course professor. The students submitted the papers for a course credit and were graded with a letter grade by course TA's. The assignments had been previously de-identified by a research assistant not affiliated with myself. I applied pseudonyms to the data in order to make results easier to follow and present breadth of experience. The assignment asks students to provide their social group memberships in list format and answer several open-ended essay response questions. The group memberships specifically asked about is race, gender, social class, sexual orientation,

religion, physical/ cognitive/ emotional ability, language, regional identity, and nationality. The open-ended questions ask students to reflect on your life experiences as they relate to these social identities. This includes discussing how these identities reflect how you see yourself, others, and also how others see you. Students were also asked to reflect the advantages/benefits and disadvantages/costs of belonging to these identity groups. Finally students were asked to reflect on their feelings around what they wrote about

These reflection assignments were given twice during the semester, once at the beginning and once again at the conclusion of the semester. The second assignment, given at the conclusion of semester mirrored the first exactly with one caveat; it asked the student to also reflect on differences between the two papers. Both, the first and second assignment were analyzed for each student writer.

Student writers and Investigator as participant

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2007) offered that the relationship between the knower (the researcher) and the known (the subject, participant, informant) must always be examined and considered. Attention to this relationship becomes critical when the knower and the known identify from different cultures, communities, or social distinctions. The black student writers function as the known. I, the researcher, take on the role of the knower. This is a role I take very seriously and apply the utmost social reasonability toward.

These students were chosen by their self-identified social membership being black. This identification was a requirement of the assignment. The sample is comprised of 39 black students across 3 years and 5 semesters. 5 semesters needed to be considered in order to obtain a sufficient amount of material. Of the 39 students 12 =Men and 27= Women, 38 =Christian and

1= Agnostic, 9 = low income class, 2 = working class, 24 = middle class and 3 = upper middle class, 38 = Heterosexual ,1= Lesbian.

I identify as a white woman. I began work in black studies as an undergraduate and continue to make it the backbone of my worldview. Growing up in Detroit Michigan, a majority black city, has allowed for my development of a unique perspective on race. I view the world through a racially critical lens. What often bears the brunt of my critique is whiteness, particularly my own personal whiteness.

Critical race theory allows for my work to be guided by scholars, students, and community members of color. This guidance is necessary because I have found that within racialized American society, communities of color have a wider, deeper, and oftentimes more accurate assessment of the racial climate in our country. This is the perspective I approach my data with, one of humility and reverence. I am a listener, recorder, and a witness. I have taken every measure possible to ensure that the results of this project present an authentic story. These stories are invaluable to the development and advancement of just and equitable pedagogy.

As a white researcher, I hope to learn from this project in many ways. My growth as a white researcher during this project can be considered a result within itself. What I learn about society and my own whiteness from these student writers I anticipate being powerful on many levels.. I hope to encourage other white researchers working cross-culturally to consider what they personally learn from those culturally different from themselves as an important contribution. This effort to acknowledge that Americans of color have much to contribute to white folks perception of whiteness is essential in creating equitable research climates.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis is a descriptive design that plans for results that characterize patterns in the data and offer connections between these patterns. The goal of thematic analysis is not to generate new theory; it is an exploratory, descriptive process that works to shed light on experiential patterns (L. Given (Ed.), 2008) Many thematic studies work to provide a foundation for future research into interest areas. It is my hope that this study will begin to provide a foundation for understanding the experience of black students in intergroup dialogue courses, given there is no current work that looks at black students specifically.

The assignments collected as data had been previously de-identified by a research assistant not affiliated with myself. I obtained the data with permission from the course professor and separated out the black students from white and other students of color. This is was a simple process because students stated their racial identity in the data.

Following Miles and Huberman's (1994), framework for coding my process of analysis can be broken down into 5 steps: creating, revising, defining, naming, and checking. The creating phase involves complete immersion in the data via multiple readings, underlining, analytical memos (Morrow, 2005), and labeling with sticky notes. This phase allowed for rough themes to emerge. The revision stage involves everything mentioned in creation but with a deeper perspective of the data given the previous immersion that creation calls for. The revision stage allows for themes to be solidified and supported by quotations. This phase also allows for the varying nature of the data to be noted in that instances of differing experience are also included in the conceptualization of the theme. The defining stage requires a synthesis of meaning behind the themes and ascribing a concise definition of the experience behind each theme. The naming

phase is the final nuance applied to each theme. Each theme is given a representative name that captures the main idea of the experience conveyed. Finally the checking phase is enacted. For my project the checking phase utilizes auditors.

Morrow (2005) described auditors as indispensable to many qualitative research designs. An auditor is an individual who is charged with examining, in my case, the compiled themes, and reviewing for comprehension, clarity, and cohesion. My project calls for an explicit use of the auditor in that there is a racial difference between the knower and the known. The final important function of the auditor was to engage with me in my critical examination of the possible affects of my whiteness on interpretations of the data. For this reason many of my auditors identified as black. The criteria for being an auditor was an individual that has had experience with college experience and understands my premise that racism exists in society and societies institutions.

The five stage coding process is flexible in that stages can be revisited when necessary and repeated multiple times. I created general themes with definitions then revised those themes 3 times. In the last revision I was able to compile themes into 3 general domains. The defining and naming of themes and domains followed the revision process. I also kept a personal journal of my own reactions through the process. This helped me to contextualize my own reactions to the emerging themes. This fine attention to the data is what I consider ethical and responsible. If I am to provide results of any nature on the experience of another it is my commitment to be as thorough and comprehensive as possible.

Chapter 4: Results

Black student writer's identified a number of ways they grew due to their participation in the intergroup dialogue course. This growth can be described according to three main themes and their associated subthemes or processes: I Am Aware (PWI experiences, black spaces), I View Myself Differently (I have a new vocab, I have social privileges and biases, I have many social identities that intersect), and I Can Create Change (I have empathy, I can communicate effectively, I see other perspectives). The main and sub themes are depicted graphically in an attached figure A.

I am more aware of racism/discrimination. Many of the students reported gaining a more critical awareness around racism. This critical awareness involved not only seeing racism at the institutional level but, also day-to-day experiences that can be attributed to subtle racism. Two processes buttressed the process of gaining this critical awareness: the PWI (Predominantly white Institution) experience and the creation of black spaces. The figure in Appendix A shows that PWI Experience was a process that supported the acquisition of the critical awareness, while the creation of black spaces was a process that students engaged in as a result of the new awareness. These processes will be explored in more detail to come. Below, I first define and discuss the theme and then I outline the two processes that buttress this change.

Students indicated they learned that racism exists in different forms and infiltrates many public and private domains. Students in essence reported increased awareness of the persistence of racism as exemplified by Faith's experience:

I feel very disappointed about what I discussed in this paper because African Americans have overcome a lot but there is still so much to overcome. Till this very day we are still dealing with racism and I thought we overcame that a long time ago. The difference in this cultural assessment than the first one is that I actually felt what it feels like to have

someone look at you differently because of your race. In the first one I never experience how it feels to be a member of my social identity until I join this class. *Faith CA2*

In CA1 Faith did not write about the role of racism in these experiences. Instead, she wrote about her childhood experience in a predominantly black neighborhood. She discussed the struggles of the neighborhood. She mentioned violence and drug traffic. She also highlighted the value of education and the community's successful effort to "look out for one another". In CA2 Faith discussed her disappointment in realizing that racism still exists. Considering Faith grew up in a predominantly black community, her experience at the PWI could be her first immersion into white dominated spaces. This paired with the information presented in lecture appeared to contribute to her sense of disappointment.

PWI Experience and Racism. The PWI experience highlighted the new racial awareness many students gleaned from lecture and dialogue. Being a black student at a PWI can, itself, provide experiential awareness around racism. These incidents enhanced the awareness around racism that the dialogue and lecture provided. Figure A indicates this enhancement with an arrow that connects the process to the main theme. This arrow is bidirectional, indicating that the students are also bringing into dialogue their own experiences with racism at the PWI that ultimately enhances group conversation and understanding. Many students write about feeling like the token/spokesperson for the entire black community or, as Faith expressed, being judged for their backgrounds. Others recounted experiences with administration, peers, or campus police that reflect their more attuned awareness of racism. Vanessa writes,

A coordinator of a group I am involved in on campus offended me this semester when she singled me out because of my race. She is Caucasian. She wanted to address the board members of CBSU (a black organization on campus). When she approached me she simply said, "I want you to go with me to address CBSU because they need to see

some color when I stand up there and speak, but you don't have to say anything. I was completely astonished and upset at the same time. She was so blunt with her statement as if you were buddies, and we are not. Her statement definitely took me by surprise.

Vanessa CA2

In this quote Vanessa recounts that she was solicited to be included in a project because of her race and then told her input was not needed, just her color. Vanessa was also “astonished” at the brazen nature of this offense. In CA1 Vanessa wrote about experiences of blatant racism in her childhood, in which, she was called racist names. Her accounts in CA2 are of recent and more nuanced forms of racism. Her new awareness of racism was defined by her experiences at the PWI. Many students are describing situations like these that take place on the PWI campus to exemplify their new understanding of racism in America.

Creation of Black Spaces Students realized that they have a tendency to create black dominated spaces to feel more comfortable amidst predominantly white populations. This tendency is a direct result of the hostile, racist environment that can exist at a PWI. The intergroup dialogue course seemed to be awakening black students to nuanced, complex forms of racism. This awareness seems to make the creation of black spaces more conscious and frequent. Figure A shows an arrow from the theme “I Am Aware” to the process of “Creating black Spaces” to depict the relationship between the information gathered in the course to the behavioral tendency outside of class.

Students are coming to class with varying experiences with mixed raced spaces. For both those coming from predominantly black spaces, more racial mixed spaces or predominantly Whitespaces, the PWI experience and the knowledge in class provides reflection on their

behavioral reactions to navigating predominantly Whitespaces. As students learn about the prevalence of racism, they understand the benefit of creating black spaces. Jasmine writes,

On campus I have seen separation between the races and ethnicities. I have always been around predominantly white people until I came to this university. Now it seems as though I am almost forced to be around my own group to feel comfortable and accepted. I have not yet figured out why things are like this on campus, but they are carried out very obviously through campus life and activities. I go to events like black Greek Week and African-American Homecoming. I enjoy them, but I know that the white friends that I have are interested in coming along but are uneasy because of the name of the events.
Jasmine CA2

In CA1 Jasmine speaks about her racial awareness given her experiences in predominantly Whitespaces. In CA2, Jasmine expands on this awareness as she reflects on her behavioral reactions to being in at a predominantly white university. She realizes that she feels more comfortable and accepted around those of her own group. She also wonders about the function of black events on campus. She enjoys these events and realizes that her white friends are unsure of how to navigate them.

I view myself differently. This theme reflects the student's new way of thinking about themselves and their interactions with the world around them. Subthemes include: I have many intersecting social identities, I have social privilege and biases, and I have a new vocabulary.

Many students enter the class and view themselves specifically from a racial or gendered perspective. They do not consider how class, religion, sexual orientation, or ability affects their experiences. Further, very few students mention the impact of the intersections between these multiple identities have on their view of self and societal experiences. Students learn of the social privilege and biases they exhibit and gain a new vocabulary to speak about these experiences.

Students seem to feel grateful for this insight, the realization they are complex beings that can create change. Venetta writes,

This class has helped me become a new person. I have recently asked that all my friends and associates not refer to me as Vee, but as Venetta. This class had a lot to do with this because it has allowed me to become one with myself and accept everything that I have done and recognize it as my character. The good I have done and the bad I have done makes me an individual and I use that to better myself by thinking about what my future holds. My social identifies allows society to see who I really am, what I value, and how I am similar or different in relations to the ideal society. *Venetta, CA2*

Venetta was deeply transformed by the class as represented by her decision to be called a different name. She mentions the course allowed her to become a “new person”. She mentions the course has allowed her to explore her social identities; which she recognizes, now, reflect who she really is and what she values. She also mentions the good and bad she has done. This is a reference to bias she realizes she holds. She is able to use the awareness of this bias to “better” herself.

I have many social identities that interact with each other. This subtheme references the student’s awareness around their multiple social identities and the intersections between these. As black students discovered their multiple and intersecting social identities, many began to view themselves in a different way. Many students come to the course with awareness around their racial identity. They leave the course thinking deeper about the other social experiences and identities they carry with them. Examples of these new found identities are gender, class, and religion. A subtheme around each of these identities follows. Eric writes about interacting identities broadly,

My membership to the various social identity groups have influenced my experiences because they create the lens through which I see and interpret things. They have influenced who I am because they make up how not only I identify myself, but how other people see me and categorize whom I am. I think one of the things that are really interesting is the interaction between my social identity groups. Because a person is so dynamic, I think it is important to acknowledge this interaction. *Eric, CA 2*

Eric writes about how all of his social identity memberships influence his experiences. He mentions the interactions between identities make a person dynamic. He also mentions that his membership to various groups forms his “lens thorough which I see and interpret things”. Students are realizing that all the social categories they identify with influence how they see and interact with the world and society around them.

As mentioned above many social identities were examined during the course but, gender was an identity that most students referenced in their writing. Gender is an identity group that both woman and men students are thinking more complexly about. Exploration of gender provided many students, especially women with an opportunity to think differently about themselves.

black woman are thinking about the intersections between race and gender. Shay writes,

People view the world through different lenses. As the semester progressed, I realized that my race and gender lenses have been the biggest in my life. I also learned that in being a black woman, sometimes, my gender and my race cannot be separated. The United States is a white patriarchal society, and in the US, I am dually oppressed in being a black female. I now recognize, that the reason I have surrounded myself with people whose lives are very similar to mine is that they understand my experiences. I often do not have to explain to them how discrimination exists. However, if my friends were white males, they may not understand the experiences that I may have or how I feel, because their experiences are not the same as mine. *Shay CA2*

Shay has awareness of her racial and gender identity as separate entities in CA1. In CA2, she speaks explicitly about the intersection of race and gender. She mentions how she is “dually

oppressed” and exists in a white patriarchal society. While Shay is using new vocabulary she is also thinking more complexly about her place in society. She also mentions that she surrounds herself with others that understand her experience. Shay recognizes that others that have differing social identities will not understand her unique experience.

It is important to note that while black women were attuned to the specific intersection between race and gender, black men did not process this intersection in their writing. black men were attuned to these identities as separate entities but did not speak of the intersection.

Many men made explicit references to sexism, all the while still considering how they are stereotyped because of their Blackness. The men keep race and gender separate and did not mention what the role of being a Blackman means for their gender identity. They mentioned how they might use their positions as men to negate sexism in the workplace. Men are thinking more complexly about what it means to be a man and how to can change behavior to be fairer toward woman. While this is an instance of viewing oneself differently, this thinking fits, more appropriately, into a later theme that references acknowledgment of societal privilege.

Just as Gender was an identity that spurred students to view themselves differently, class was also a social category that, upon reflection, allowed students to build on their understanding of self . Many students stated they had never considered the many variables that define class status. Students also reflected on the unique circumstances that the intersections between identities (class/race, class/gender) would have on an individual. Jessica writes,

At first, I was unaware of how much a divorce can affect ones class status, especially a woman’s class status. Even though I witnessed my mother’s quick decline in income, I never even made the connection to my dad and their divorce. I think most of the decrease in social class was due to psychological and emotional toil that my mother experienced as a result of the divorce. She went on Public Assistance after the divorce and stayed on it

for a while. When I got older, I despised the fact that she was on welfare, but after reading one of the assigned readings for this class, I realized that welfare should not be viewed as a bad thing. People on welfare are not all necessarily moochers, or lazy, but sometimes it is just hard to do things on your own. *Jessica CA2*

In CA1 Jessica thinks of class as a demarcation between rich and poor. In CA2 Jessica is thinking about the intersection between class and gender. She gives a thoughtful account of her parent's divorce and how this affected her mother in particular. She speaks about her mother being severely, negatively affected financially and psychologically by the divorce. In CA2 Jessica also mentions her view of people on welfare has changed. She realizes that many people are on public assistance temporarily because of unforeseen situations like divorce.

Along with gender and class, students were thinking about religion as a significant part of their identity. Many did not realize how salient religion was to them. Students also realize how their religious identity plays into how they view other groups. Kenda writes,

I have really enjoyed this class and it widens all of the social identity lenses that one has but there was one in particular that is more salient since I started this class, which is religion. It was during discussion that I realized that religion played a role in my life everyday whether it was minor or major. *Kenda CA2*

In CA1, Kenda had no awareness of the saliency of her religious identity. In CA2, she speaks about the everyday influence of religion on her experiences. She reflects on a situation where she realizes her boyfriend does not want to attend church with her. She mentions how she was offended that he did not want to go to church. Kenda's self-growth seems to be influencing how she is viewing her relationships with others.

Many students are reflecting on their religious identities. This makes thinking about the experiences of those with different sexual identities difficult. This conflict can be seen as Mariah writes,

An additional experience that I recently encountered was that I found out that three of my female friends from high school identify as homosexual. Because I am heterosexual I was shocked and somewhat appalled by this discovery. I thought about what I would do if I came in contact with them now and I honestly would probably be weary and nervous. To be truthful, during this class, this topic has been the hardest for me to deal with. I believe I am very open-minded about all of the topics, but for some reason I cannot shake my uncomfortable feelings about homosexuals. I have more empathy for them, but I feel as if I cannot understand them. I believe these feelings arise in part because of my religious beliefs, which denounces homosexuality. *Mariah CA2*

Mariah is reflecting on how her religious identity is influencing her ability to understand those with different sexual orientations. She mentions having more empathy toward these individuals but this topic remains very difficult for her to deal with. Mariah's honesty is reflective of the deep thinking she is doing around how she views others. Her religious membership is making it difficult for her to understand the experiences of LGBT individuals. Mariah's situation is an example of how membership in certain social identity groups can complicate how one views others.

I have social privileges and also stereotype others. This subtheme describes the awareness students are gaining around the social privileges they possess. This theme also includes the awareness gained around the biases and stereotypes they hold against other groups. Matthew writes,

This course has also forced me to examine my actions, ideas and beliefs. I have become fully aware of my class privileges, male privileges, ability privileges, etc., and concluded that though I may not be homophobic, I am a heterosexist, in that I have been socialized

to many heterosexist ideas and beliefs, such as the idea that my sexual orientation is the normal and natural orientation. Hearing the experiences and beliefs of others, outside of my race, in my discussions section has helped me to make sense of previous experiences and better understand why people of other races think the way they think (but not generalizing a whole race based on the beliefs and experiences of certain individuals).

Matthew CA2

In CA1 Matthew mentions all of the societal experiences that make him who he is. In CA2 Matthew is explicit about his societal privileges and his realization he is a heterosexist. These concepts are important to realize when considering how one interacts in society. Along with owning that he is heterosexist, Matthew is also able to explain how society has socialized him to be such. Matthew seems to be gaining a more complex view of society. He is also thinking more complexly about himself. He is integrating not only all of the experiences that shape his identity but those that shape how he views others as well.

I have a new vocabulary to describe my experiences. This subtheme describes the new vocabulary and conceptual knowledge the students are gaining and using to talk about their social experiences. This new way vocabulary has helped students explain to others how they see the world and interpret their experiences. This subtheme also has implications for the student's awareness of racism. The new vocabulary helps students communicate about their experiences with racism with confidence and certainty. It has also helps students to conceptualize how they might work for societal change. Tyrone writes,

... through this class I was given the vocabulary and terminology to help explain phenomena and things that I have witnessed all my life. For example, I have been trying to explain what a lens is and worldview to people to explain differences since I can remember but I had never had a word or phrase to help explain it. This idea of different lenses has really helped me to spread consciousness to the people around me. *Tyrone CA2*

In CA1 Tyrone describes his experiences with his gender. He mentions, “how many things in our lives have been impacted by gender”. In CA2 Tyrone writes he uses vocabulary he has learned in class to explain things he has been witnessing all his life. He offers the concept of social lenses as a phrase that helps him communicate his ideas to others. Tyrone is thinking of how use of this vocabulary helps him “spread consciousness”. He says he hopes to reach individuals on a small scale with this vocabulary and eventually these individuals will create large-scale change. Tyrone seems to be prepared to utilize the conceptual knowledge gained to work for social change. This new vocabulary has prepared him to pass on the “consciousness” to others he feels is so crucial to remedying the problems and disagreements in society.

I can make a change. This theme speaks to the alliance and bridge building skills that students are acquiring as a result of the intergroup dialogue course. Subthemes include: I see the perspectives of others, I have empathy for others, and I can communicate effectively. Many students are only recounting their own experiences when they enter the course. They give little attention to the experiences of others and further, how their life experiences can relate to others. At courses end, many students use the ally/agent vocabulary to discuss how they have started to view and advocate for social identity groups they do not belong to but realize are oppressed.

Mariah states,

... because of some of the things we have done in this class I have come to realize that I do these things and consequently now I am more emphatic. I understand that these people [that I make judgments about] are people too and do not deserve being stereotyped and/or judged. I would not like someone doing this to me so I try my hardest to rid myself of this habit... I understand that I should also try to be an ally for change in order help decrease the amount of oppression that some people experience because of these social identity characteristics. *Mariah CA2*

Mariah speaks about her feelings that change can occur and how her own new awareness makes her confident in this change. She writes about having empathy for others based on the realization that she unjustly stereotypes and would not like others stereotyping her. She has a new understanding that being an ally for change will reduce oppression and help bring about this change.

I have a different perspective on the differing social identities of others. This sub theme depicts the more sophisticated perspectives students are gaining of others from differing social identity groups. Students are thinking deeper about the many different factors that affect individuals based on their life situations. Many come to class with a general knowledge or even incorrect assumptions about others. The class seems to spur students to think deeper about the situation of others and how this relates to their personal social reality. Mariah continues,

I started to wonder what a person in a wheel chair would do during a fire drill or during a fire. I wondered how they would get down the stairs since the elevators would not be in use. Now that I think about it, I guess every experience that I have had in my life, minus the time I broke my foot in fourth grade, and thus since this class has started has been an experience that was affected by my ability to get around freely and easily. *Mariah CA2*

In CA1 Mariah has some surface knowledge about individuals with disabilities being subjected to negative comments or stares. She also asserts she has limited awareness of her own able-bodied identification. In CA2, Mariah, begins to explore the perspective of an individual using a wheel chair. She begins to think specifically about the activities she participates in that would look different for a person in a wheel chair. She is expanding her conceptualization of the wheel chair experience from stares and negative comments to daily activities and survival implications (fire drill).

I have empathy for other groups based on my experiences. This sub theme speaks to the increased levels of empathy that students are acquiring as a result of the intergroup dialogue course. This empathy is spoken about in different ways. While Mariah states she feels empathy for others based on her realization that she is a perpetrator of stereotypes, Andre identifies with the experiences of Native Americans and relates this to his own experiences as a Blackman.

I think my social group memberships have influenced some of my experiences since the start of class. Being African-American, I feel very empathetic towards Native Americans and their issues because I can relate to how they would be seen negatively and I know I would want support if I were in their shoes. I think that being a part of an oppressed group is one of the main reasons I can find tolerance and acceptance for other oppressed groups. *Andre CA2*

In CA1 Andre recounts his experiences with racism as a Blackman. He brings an awareness of “institutional and social barriers to his progress” to the course with him. He states in CA2 that he is able to map his own experience on to those of Native Americans. This identification with individuals of other oppressed groups allows for his feelings of “empathy, tolerance, and acceptance”. Andre is an example of a student that came to class with knowledge of his personal experience with societal racism. His growth comes when he learns of the experiences of others and connects this with his own. This connection can be seen as an act of alliance. If Andre leaves class and attempts to connect with other folks from oppressed groups he could work toward change at a campus level and community level.

I can communicate more effectively with others. This sub theme highlights the communication and dialogue skills students are gaining, especially communicating around controversial issues such as race, gender, and sexual orientation. The dialogue sections provide a chance for students to integrate what they have learned in lecture into conversations with fellow students. Through this process many students gain confidence in their communication skills, both

as a sender and receiver. John's story highlights this theme. He asks the course to enhance his communication skills in CA1. In CA2 he reports he has reached his goal.

Contrary to myself at the time of writing the first cultural assessment, I feel I can have a dialogue with someone of a different social identity and keep biases and judgments to a minimum. I don't have to listen to a Whiteperson speak while thinking racist, or a Christian and think homophobic. I have learned to dialogue with different types of people and actually listen. *John CA2*

John comes to class with a history of exploring his behaviors. He mentions in CA1 how he has noticed he "can talk to people but he does it with biases on how they will talk or communicate. In CA2, John states, "he has gained the ability to talk with and listen to those of differing social groups". Part of talking effectively with those that are different from him is to learn to check personal biases and stereotypes. John explains that what helps him communicate with others is to actually listen to what that person is saying and not how he initially perceives them.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter will discuss the implications of the results presented in chapter 3. First, each finding derived from the presented results will be discussed in reference to their possible explanations in accordance or divergence from previous literature. Next limitations of the study will be appraised. Finally research and applied implications will be discussed along with suggestions for future directions.

The main purpose of this investigation was to explore the experiences of black students in an intergroup dialogue course at a predominantly white university (PWI). Thematic analysis was used to look at student responses to cultural assessment papers written in the beginning of the year and the end of the year. Student growth was classified by 3 main themes and subthemes (see Appendix A).

The results of this study confirm many of the effects of IGD for students generally (Dessel & Rouge, 2008) and students of color specifically (Ford & Maleney, 2012). First, these results suggest that black students in this study obtained greater awareness of racism from a general societal lens and also a personal specific lens. This growth provided students with insights into the behaviors of others along with insight into their own behaviors as well. This is congruent with the qualitative findings of Ford and Maleney, 2012 that indicate students of color

One of the main goals of intergroup dialogue is to educate students about the current state of social inequity, specifically racism (Zuniga et al., 2002). Many of the black students in this study gained a more nuanced awareness around racism, as indicated in the theme "I am more aware". This nuanced awareness included realizing the subtle effects of racism and that racism exists at different social levels. An example of this would be Faith, who wrote in her first paper

about experiencing blatant racial slurs on the play ground as a child to writing about the effects of institutional racism in her second paper.

Furthermore, a process that both influenced and was influenced by (bi-directionality is indicated by two-way arrow in the figure in Appendix A) this growing awareness was the experience of being at a PWI. It is well documented that black students enrolled at PWI's have negative experiences related to their race (Cureton, 2003; Ervin, 2001; Neville et al, 2004)). These range from racist language in dorms to race related violence on campus. Many of the black students included in this investigation reported negative racial experiences on campus in paper two. These experiences seemed to be illuminated or enhanced due to the information that student's received in class around racism.

The course, however, did more than provide students with information around their experiences, it also seemed to offer a safe space where these experiences could be dialogued about and explored. Thus the course influenced the way the students experienced the PWI (providing awareness) and the PWI experience influenced the course (providing material for discussion and exploration). Both of these processes seemed very important for the students. Many students appreciated the gained awareness around their racial experiences on campus. Equally important, students were grateful for the safe space in which their experiences were validated.

Another process that was influenced by gaining awareness around racism was the creation of black spaces. It has been suggested that black students that face racism will create black dominated spaces for physical and emotional safety (Tatum, 2003). The intergroup dialogue lecture material referenced, normalized and validated this behavior. Many of the students

realized they already, intuitively, created black spaces. Other students, paired with their new awareness of negative racial experiences, realized that black dominated spaces would provide them a refuge of understanding and acceptance they might not get from the PWI's many white dominated spaces. The knowledge around the protective and healthy process of creating these black dominated safe spaces seemed to be especially helpful to students because the white majority often sees this behavior as separatist and hostile (Tatum,2003).

A second finding is that students learned about themselves in ways that confirm the body of literature that supports intergroup dialogue as a mechanism of growth for students of color. These results also speak to the complexities of this growth, especially in the area of intersecting social identities. Previous qualitative findings suggest that students of color in intergroup dialogue courses increase their awareness around their own racial identity and individual biases (Ford & Malaney, 2012). Theme two, "I view myself differently" suggested that black students, specifically, are seeing themselves differently as a result of participation in an intergroup dialogue course. Venetta even changes her name as a result of taking the course. Vee, as she calls herself in paper two, is a different person. Vee states she sees herself as an amazing person that is aware of her many parts, even the parts that are imperfect (a reference to social biases she has).

Students learned that they have many social identities that intersect with one another. They began to view themselves as complex, multifaceted beings. While Ford and Malaney's findings did suggest students thought of themselves as complex racial beings, no mention was made of intersecting social identities. This study's result suggest that students seem to be excited and proud to learn about new aspects of themselves. Social identities often commented on in paper two are gender, class, and religion. Exploration of these intersecting identities, however, is complicated. While thinking about intersections between class/race and class/gender seemed to

bring copasetic awakenings, exploration of LGBT issues often brought forth a conflicted intersection with religion. Also, black women were also more inclined to investigate their intersecting identities of gender and race. Black men have much insight into the role of gender and race separately in paper two; however, they do not extend this insight to the intersection of race and gender. This could be because the topic of double oppression specifically referenced in course material, used black woman as an example. This broach of topic might have given black woman more information to ground their experiences with intersecting identities of race and gender.

Lastly, these results suggest that black students felt empowered to make changes in society after taking an intergroup dialogue course. A goal of intergroup dialogue is to inspire participants to think differently and be open to creating change (Zuniga et.al, 2002). Previous research has offered mixed results about black student's attitudes about change after an intergroup dialogue experience (Ervin, 2001). The results of this investigation as indicated by theme three, "I can create a change", suggest that black students are focused on their own commitment to change and are inspired by the information offered in class. Andre states in paper two that what he has learned about society and his own social make-up paired with the communication skills he practiced in dialogue will provide a solid foundation for talking with others about society and creating change.

Related to this commitment to creating change, students realized that they hold biases and social privileges. Much like the results found by Ford and Malaney, 2012, students seemed grateful to have these concepts revealed so that they can work to change them (biases) or counteract them (privilege). Many students used this knowledge as the basis of their attitudes about change, referring to working on changing themselves in order to create change on a bigger

scale. This realization of bias also allowed some students to develop empathy for those that they are biased against. Others developed empathy for others by relating their own experiences with racism or discrimination with another's experience. Students also saw differing perspectives and improved communication skills. Students saw themselves as agents of change. They viewed the knowledge and skills they gained from the course as very important tools to use in changing themselves, others, and even society.

Limitations

Although these results offer insight into the experiences of black students, it is necessary to mention the limitations of the current investigation. First, this investigation was conducted with data from one university and a small sample size (N=39). These results only represent a small portion of black university students. Furthermore, the sample contained almost all Christian students (C=38) and almost all straight students (S=38). The absence of non-Christian and LGBT students warrant caution toward generalization of results to all black students. Another limitation is the potential for researcher bias during data analysis. Although attempts to control this bias were implemented, my own biases, assumptions, and perceptions might have influenced the identification of themes and subthemes.

Implications

These results seem to indicate that black students are growing positively from the intergroup dialogue experience. The goals of intergroup dialogue are to encourage self-reflection, increase knowledge about society, improve communication skills, and broadly improve relationships between social groups (Zuniga et al., 2002). These results indicate that many of these goals were

met for black students and that Intergroup Dialogue is a pedagogical technique that can be effective for the individual growth of the black university student.

These students learned more about themselves, society and are excited about change. This growth was evidenced by increased awareness of social racism, personal bias and privilege, and the intersection of social identities. While reflection around intersecting identities proved complex, students were still able to gain insights from these personal examinations. Because of this personal growth students displayed confidence in making changes in society. Students also expressed desire to talk with others about the changes they envisioned.

This excitement about creating change can be invaluable to any student but, specifically a student that might be outnumbered racially or experiencing the negative effects of racism. A course like intergroup dialogue could provide students with the personal confidence to work for the change they want not only for themselves but also for other students like them. This sense of agency could be a beneficial asset to students as they navigate four years of college and beyond.

These results also suggest that intergroup dialogue courses might serve a specific function for black students at a PWI. The PWI experience can be very distressing for students of color. These results suggest that an intergroup dialogue course could provide a safe space for black students to explore their unique racial experience at a PWI. The course also provides valuable insight to black students about the dynamics and nuances of race and racism at a PWI. This information and a safe space to dialogue about it can be very beneficial to black students as they navigate a PWI.

This investigation was meant to spur an exploration into black students experiences in an intergroup dialogue course in hopes of continuing to shed light on the effectiveness of

multicultural education for black students. These results are based on a small sample at one university. More work, both qualitatively and quantitatively is needed to fully understand the experiences of black students in multicultural education, Intergroup Dialogue specifically. It will also be beneficial if the experiences of other student groups of color are explicitly explored. This would provide a more full picture of how the intergroup dialogue experience is perceived and processed. Finally, further research might explicitly look at the link between intergroup dialogue courses and black student adjustment to a PWI. Another research avenue could investigate, explicitly, participation in intergroup dialogue courses and black students levels of agency to create change.

Despite the limitations of this investigation, the results did provide insight into the experiences of black students in an intergroup dialogue course. These results could assist in further research in the area of multicultural education and also advise instructors and facilitators of intergroup dialogue courses, especially those at PWI's. As universities in the United States continue to mandate diversity requirements for their students, the experiences of those vulnerable to societal discrimination must be voiced. In order for multicultural education to meet equitable ends, a healthy, productive experience should be provided for all students.

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APPENDIX A

