

Faculty perceptions of multicultural teaching in a large urban university

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Abstract: As college graduates face an increasingly globalized world, it is imperative to consider issues of multicultural instruction in higher education. This study presents qualitative and quantitative findings from a survey of faculty at a large, urban, midwestern university regarding perceptions of multicultural teaching. Faculty were asked how they define multicultural teaching, how they engage in multicultural teaching, what they perceive to be the benefits of multicultural teaching, and what barriers to implementing multicultural teaching they experience. Results indicate faculty members most frequently define multicultural teaching as using diverse teaching pedagogies and materials. In line with their definitions, faculty also report engaging in multicultural teaching through use of inclusive course materials. Faculty identified positive learning outcomes for all students as a primary benefit to engaging in multicultural teaching. The primary barrier reported by faculty is an anticipated resistance from students. Variations in responses based on academic discipline and rank of faculty member are discussed.

Keywords: multicultural teaching, faculty perceptions

I. Introduction.

Multicultural education has its roots in the Civil Rights Movement, yet uncertainty about the nature of multicultural pedagogy and practice persists. Lack of understanding of multicultural teaching is evident in spite of the growing literature on theories of multicultural education and data documenting best practices. In the present research, our goal was to examine faculty perceptions of multicultural teaching, including how faculty define and practice multicultural teaching, what benefits faculty perceive of such practices, and what barriers may prevent faculty from engaging in multicultural teaching.

A. What is multicultural teaching?

Although multicultural scholars vary in their specific definitions of multicultural education, several common themes emerge. First, multicultural teaching is student-centered. In part, this is due to increased recognition of racial and gender inequality in housing, employment, and education during the push for civil rights in the U.S. (Gay, 2004a). Educators consequently promoted practices that ensured equal access and opportunities for *all* students (Banks, 2005) and instilled in teachers a responsibility for student advocacy (Bennett, Cole, & Thompson, 2003). One goal of multicultural teaching, then, is to create a safe and caring classroom

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environment (Gay, 2002), with the underlying belief that students will learn more when they have opportunities to share their own personal experiences and perspectives (Gay, 2004b).

Another theme in theories of multicultural education is the promotion of social justice and democratic principles (Bennett et al., 2003; Nieto, 2004). More specifically, faculty should have the goal of helping students develop into democratic citizens of the world who value diverse perspectives and think critically about solutions to real-world social problems (Kitano, 1997). In the process, teachers and students alike have the opportunity to recognize and combat their own prejudices (Banks, 2005, Gay, 2002).

Finally, multicultural teaching is more than delivering course content about diversity. It involves fostering an inclusive climate in the classroom and a sense of community among students; and facilitating student learning with a variety of instructional techniques and assessments (Gay, 2004b).

Although numerous scholars have discussed what multicultural teaching means and how it is practiced in the classroom, it is unclear whether college faculty members have a good sense of multicultural pedagogy and best practices. Thus, one purpose of the present research was to ask them what they believe multicultural teaching means and what, if any, multicultural teaching practices do they employ.

B. Why engage in multicultural teaching?

Research has documented numerous student benefits to multicultural teaching. First, it prepares students for working and living in an increasingly diverse world (Gaff, 1992; Morey & Kitano, 1997). In addition, the experience of a safe classroom empowers students by giving them an active role in learning and by validating their experiences, and it enhances students' sense of connection with each other (Gay, 2000). Indeed, research increasingly recognizes the importance of a sense of belonging for student success (Hausmann, Schoefield, & Woods, 2007; Walton & Cohen, 2007). Finally, research demonstrates that multicultural teaching practices enhance learning for all students, regardless of what groups they belong to (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999).

For faculty, multicultural teaching provides an opportunity to learn about other cultures, consider diverse perspectives, and improve communication with students from diverse backgrounds (Gay, 2002). Furthermore, it allows faculty to engage in productive self-reflection, whereby they may identify and confront their own biases (Bennett et al., 2003).

A second purpose of the present research was to assess whether faculty members are aware of these and other benefits of multicultural teaching. Given that multicultural pedagogy is often not part of the graduate training experience in many disciplines, we suspected that many may have little insight into the value of multicultural teaching for students or for themselves.

C. What are the challenges in multicultural teaching?

There are, of course, challenges in multicultural teaching. For example, it may require instructors to reinvent syllabi, assessments, and general classroom delivery. As such, it can be time consuming and effortful. In addition, some faculty may be uncomfortable with the necessary self-reflection and the possibility of uncovering personal biases. Finally, recent research provides reason to anticipate backlash to multiculturalism from some students. Specifically, Whites are more likely than racial minorities to associate multiculturalism with exclusion, and, to the extent

that they do, they are less likely to support programs and organizations that emphasize diversity (Plaut, Garnett, Buffardi, & Sanchez-Burks, 2011). Furthermore, many White Americans see racism as a “zero-sum game” in which progress toward equality for minorities must mean increased prejudice toward Whites (Norton & Sommers, 2011). Together, these findings suggest that faculty must find ways to emphasize the inclusion of *all* groups when teaching about multiculturalism.

One last purpose of the present research was to examine the barriers to multicultural teaching as they are perceived by college faculty. Some common perceived obstacles include lack of knowledge of multicultural content and lack of formal training in multicultural pedagogy. If we are to encourage instructors to engage in multicultural teaching practices, it is imperative to understand the perceived obstacles.

II. Method.

A. Participants.

All teaching, non-medical school faculty members at a large Midwestern urban university were invited to participate in the study through e-mail invitations. A total of 464 initiated the online survey and signed the informed consent statement. Assuming that all of the 1064 eligible faculty received and read the e-mail invitation, we had a 43.6% response rate. Of the 464 who signed the consent, 340 (73.27%) completed the survey. While demographic information on university faculty and the schools or colleges representative of the survey respondents was collected, as shown in Table 1, no personal demographic information was collected from the survey participants. Since some departments and schools had only one or two individuals fitting certain demographics (e.g., gender, ethnicity, or age), we intentionally did not collect this information in order to increase the likelihood of anonymity and therefore participation.

B. Procedures.

Multicultural Teaching Community of Practice (MTCoP). MTCoP, who initiated this study, is a collective of scholars from various disciplines and with broad background and interest in diversity education at a large, Midwestern urban university.

In October 2007, MTCoP sent two e-mails to a total of 1064 faculty throughout the university, with the exception of Medical School faculty. The intent of the study as articulated in the invitation to participate was broadly stated: “to understand the teaching practices and attitudes of faculty.” Interested faculty members were then directed to a link to SurveyMonkey.com where participants were provided an informed consent statement which discussed the voluntary nature of participation and anonymity of participants. The potential participants were told that the survey would take approximately 10-20 minutes to complete. The site was then closed one month after the initial e-mail was sent and the data was downloaded from the site.

C. Measures.

We obtained information about school, rank, number of students and hours taught from each respondent. Four open ended questions that assessed attitudes and knowledge about multicultural

teaching were asked: please tell us your current understanding of the concept of multicultural teaching (definitions); if you do engage in multicultural teaching, how do you do it (practice); please explain what you perceive as the benefits of multicultural teaching (benefits); please explain what barriers you have encountered to multicultural teaching (barriers).

Table 1. Frequency of Open-ended Question Codes by School (n = 245).

	Liberal Arts	Sciences	Nursing	Education	Others
	%	%	%	%	%
Definitions of MT: Teaching that					
Acknowledges cultural lens of research	7.9	8.3	0	17.4	7.1
Encourages students to share experiences**	46.1	20.8	52.2	34.8	52.1
Teaches about different cultures and lifestyles	19.1	14.6	17.4	17.4	14.1
Uses diverse pedagogies and materials*	36.0	56.3	39.1	65.2	43.7
Benefits of MT: Helps students in					
Preparation for the World**	17.9	5.1	47.6	16.7	29.4
Development of cultural sensitivity	46.4	33.3	42.9	50.0	42.6
Learning/beneficial to the classroom**	48.8	71.8	19.0	37.5	35.3
Barriers to MT:					
Students do not want it**	6.7	37.1	33.3	21.7	30.0
There is no help for this work**	32.0	28.6	38.9	21.7	23.3
Instructors do not know how to do it	8.0	25.0	0.0	4.3	9.9
Instructors do not want to do it*	49.3	53.3	62.5	62.5	59.3
How do you do MT:					
Exposure students to culture and enhance classroom environment	30.1	26.7	25.0	50.0	25.9
Use diverse pedagogical techniques	6.9	10.0	6.3	4.2	3.7
I work on my own awareness of MT	67.6	50.0	52.9	54.2	63.0
I use select materials purposefully					

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

III. Results.

A. Descriptive Statistics.

School. Most respondents came from the Schools of Liberal Arts (n = 105; 30.9% of sample), Science (n = 66, 19.4%), Nursing (n = 29, 8.5%), and Education (n = 26, 7.6%). The rest were combined into an “Other” group and included the Schools of Dentistry, Law, University College, Business, Informatics, Music, Health (e.g. radiological Sciences), Engineering and Technology, Public Affairs and Environmental Sciences, and Art.

Rank. We grouped rank by Full (n = 79, 23.2%), Associate (n = 84, 24.7%), and Assistant (n = 58, 17.1%) tenure-track faculty, Lecturers (n = 79, 23.2%; Senior and Junior), and Others (n = 40, 11.8%; Clinical, Research, Visiting, Part-Time, Adjunct, and Librarians).

Response Rate. Of the 340 faculty who participated in the survey, 77% responded to at least one of the open-ended questions. If examined by rank, participation in open-ended questions ranged from a high of 83.5% for lecturers to a low of 72.5% for Other ranks. Examined by school, Education faculty responded to the open-ended questions at a rate of 88.5%, followed by Liberal Arts at 84.8%, Nursing at 79.3%, Science at 72.7% and Other at 70.3%.

B. What is Multicultural Teaching?

A total of 262 participants (77% of sample) responded to this item. The vast majority of the responses to the qualitative survey question asking for a definition of multicultural teaching discussed inclusive learning. Responses ranged in regard to the sophistication of the definition and the focus of what constitutes “inclusion.” Four specific themes of how to achieve inclusion emerged from the data. A large number of responses focused on multicultural teaching as constituting the use of diverse pedagogies and curriculum materials. Several also discussed developing ways to value all the voices of diverse students in a classroom. Fewer of the responses defined multicultural teaching as meaning to teach about a variety of cultures and lifestyles. Finally, a few mentioned discussing empirical literature from an understanding that all science is interpreted through the cultural lens of the researcher.

Respondents who defined multicultural teaching as using inclusive pedagogies and course materials explained that multicultural teaching requires instructors to find ways to engage students regardless of their background. As one respondent explained, multicultural teaching is “formulating the course material, activities and delivery so as to reach each member of the class independent of her or his social, economic or ethnic background.”

Others defined multicultural teaching as finding ways to encourage students in the classroom to share their own experiences. As one respondent stated, “I must make an effort to understand the cultural perspectives of my students and make sure the classroom is a welcoming place for all students' full participation.”

Another common definition of multicultural teaching was teaching about different cultures, and encouraging students to consider subjects from multiple angles. For example, one respondent said, “I understand [multicultural teaching] to mean that both the content and theoretical underpinnings of teaching strive to incorporate diverse perspectives--perspectives that look beyond European and Euro-American models.” Others discussed teaching about all the diverse voices that have shaped a discipline, and the need to examine how multiculturalism will impact students' future careers.

A smaller number of definitions included “being aware of how diversity influences the research we are discussing, [and] how cultural differences may impact how material is interpreted.”

C. How is Multicultural Teaching Practiced?

A total of 205 participants (60% of sample) responded to this item. Four primary themes emerged from faculty responses regarding how they engage in multicultural teaching. The most common method expressed was by incorporating multicultural teaching materials into the course. Many faculty members also reported enhancing students' learning experiences and exposure to culture. Others use diverse pedagogies, and a few reported developing their own professional knowledge of multicultural issues and pedagogy.

The practice most used by respondents was the integration of multicultural teaching materials into their course. One faculty member explained, “I choose texts that include other viewpoints; I use examples in class that draw from other cultures.” Another discussed several opportunities for integrating multicultural materials in case vignettes, by “discussing research studies with similar problems addressed in other parts of the world...[and] news that addresses issues discussed in class with an international/diverse element.”

The second most frequently reported way of engaging in multicultural teaching was to enhance student learning experience and exposure to culture. These responses involved inclusion of experiential learning components. For example, one respondent discussed the opportunities in her course: “We go into many different service components of dentistry: clinics, homeless shelters, abuse shelters. We incorporate live clinical experience, check for prior knowledge of culture and have a reflective component afterwards.”

Fewer respondents expressed multicultural teaching through using diverse pedagogical theories or techniques, and the smallest number discussed professional development of the instructor. One faculty member said, “I make time to read journals and attend conferences and symposia addressing multicultural teaching strategies.”

D. Benefits of Multicultural Teaching.

A total of 245 participants (72.1% of sample) responded to this item. The most common benefit of multicultural teaching as reported by faculty was that it is beneficial to student learning in the classroom. Many responses also cited a benefit of increased cultural sensitivity among students. A smaller number of faculty mentioned the benefits multicultural teaching can have on preparing students for work in an increasingly global society upon graduation.

Faculty most frequently reported that multicultural teaching benefits student learning because it created a more inclusive and safe climate in the classroom. Multicultural pedagogies were said to allow discussion of bias and prejudice, which led to broadened learning perspectives of students and better buy-in and engagement of diverse perspectives of students. One respondent said, “multicultural teaching helps make everyone feel comfortable learning.” Another stated that multicultural teaching leads to students having more “awareness that a student’s background impacts their perspective, and that integrating their background into the teaching experience creates engagement.” Multicultural teaching was described as essential for teaching students the importance of “open-mindedness, tolerance, patience” and their development of non-judgmental communication skills.

Respondents also reported that multicultural teaching assists in developing cultural sensitivity skills in students because it ensures that students appreciate, recognize, value, and respect perspectives of others. One respondent said, “students will hopefully learn not to be judgmental of other people’s practices and beliefs.” Another explained that multicultural teaching is “inclusive and respectful and provides students with a balanced view.”

Fewer faculty responded that multicultural teaching prepares students for working in our global world. It was reported as beneficial in teaching students to understand the value of global citizenship and giving students better life preparation for working with diverse communities. As one respondent explained, multicultural teaching “helps students understand and appreciate different perspectives and prepares students for the real world.” Another reported that “it helps students to become better citizens of this society and this world, it is more interesting and it is ethically right.” One respondent warned of the dangers of not using multicultural teachings

strategies: “students who do not learn to work well with those of other backgrounds will not succeed in the world of work, furthermore multiculturalism introduces new ways of thinking of various issues and prevents group think.”

E. Barriers to Multicultural Teaching.

A total of 217 participants (63.8% of sample) responded to this item. The most commonly expressed barrier to multicultural teaching as perceived by faculty is student resistance. Many faculty also cite their own lack of preparation in using multicultural teaching strategies; however, almost as many faculty also acknowledge frustration at the lack of institutional support or guidance to assist them in engaging in multicultural teaching.

The most frequent response from faculty regarding barriers to multicultural teaching was their anticipation of student resistance. The reality of this resistance was felt most acutely by faculty who had attempted to incorporate multicultural teaching in the past and witnessed a backlash expressed through student evaluations. This is a real concern for those faculty who are tenure-track and thus dependent upon these evaluations for successful promotion and tenure at an institution. Other faculty reported that they were hesitant to introduce multicultural content for fear of majority students taking a defensive stance or simply “shutting down” when challenged with issues of social justice and inequality. One respondent identified student resistance as manifested in a lack of appreciation for cultural differences, thus defining the barrier as “primarily the difficulty in appreciating the fact that other people do legitimately see things in a different way than we do -- due to experience, culture, and other background.”

Many faculty identified a general lack of knowledge of multicultural teaching pedagogies as a significant barrier. For example, one faculty respondent defined the barrier as a “lack of my understanding all other cultures related to perspective, behaviors, and environment.” The majority of faculty simultaneously expressed a desire to engage in multicultural teaching but did not know where to begin in terms of acquiring the necessary knowledge and skills to do so.

In congruence with unpreparedness for multicultural teaching, another common theme emerging from the data was a frustration over the lack of training, support and resources available. Many cited the absence of such training made available to them during their graduate training. Others expressed continuing lack of training in their current roles. They placed responsibility on the institution to provide faculty with the training, time and resources necessary to create an inclusive learning environment. One respondent stated “Good exercises that are non-trivial are hard to come by.” Other faculty reported that the institution provided no real incentive to engage in multicultural teaching, which was perceived as an additional exercise of time and energy that would go unrewarded. Resources needed to engage in multicultural teaching were also reported to be scarce. For example, one respondent stated, “Being a chemist, many textbooks are somewhat limited in including multicultural material pertaining to the historical and current trends in this particular field.” Another identified “the lack of cultural diversity among students in the class” at a predominantly white institution as a lack of multicultural “human” resources, which could be tapped into as a means of creating a more conducive learning environment.

Table 2. Frequency of Open-ended Question Codes by Rank (n = 245).

	Full Professor	Associate Professor	Assistant Professor	Lecturer	Others
	%	%	%	%	%
Definitions of MT: <i>Teaching that</i>					
Acknowledges cultural lens of research	5.2	8.1	4.3	9.1	10.3
Encourages students to share experiences	34.5	53.2	46.8	36.4	44.8
Teaches about different cultures and lifestyles	20.7	12.9	19.1	16.7	17.2
Uses diverse pedagogies and materials	37.9	45.2	40.4	53.0	44.8
Benefits of MT: <i>Helps students in</i>					
Preparation for the World	27.8	18.2	23.8	12.9	31.3
Development of cultural sensitivity	42.6	49.1	47.6	41.9	25.0
Learning/beneficial to the classroom	40.7	40.0	50.0	48.4	50.0
Barriers to MT:					
Students do not want it	20.8	30.2	13.5	21.2	22.2
There is no help for this work	29.2	20.8	29.7	26.9	37.0
Instructors do not know how to do it	10.2	11.3	7.9	13.5	0.0
Instructors do not want to do it	62.5	47.9	59.5	48.1	69.2
How do you do MT:					
Exposure students to culture and enhance classroom environment	22.5	29.8	24.3	31.5	42.3
Use diverse pedagogical techniques	0.0	12.5	2.7	9.4	3.8
I work on my own awareness of MT	57.5	70.2	60.5	62.3	42.3
I use select materials purposefully					

Note: no differences among groups for any of the open-ended question codes.

F. Negative Responses to the Survey.

While the majority of responses demonstrated at least a minimal understanding of and appreciation for multicultural teaching, approximately 5% of respondents responded negatively to the survey. Most of these responses related multicultural teaching either to politics or lowering standards in the classroom. For example, one participant said it was “an utter waste of time and a duplicitous means of dumbing down the college curriculum” and another wrote “I believe this is an unclear concept based in political ideology.” Others did not see the value of multicultural teaching in their specific subject matter; one respondent explained, “Presenting material from differing points of view is very often not desirable when teaching a hard science - the facts are the facts and not open to interpretation based on your cultural group.”

G. Differences by Rank and School.

We conducted chi square analyses to examine whether the responses to the open ended questions differed by rank or school. Specifically, we created codes for the open-ended responses, and coded each individual according to whether s/he had produced that response or not. We found

differences by school, but not by rank, in the categories of definitions, benefits and barriers (see Tables 1 and 2). Specifically, faculty in different schools differed in the percentage that offered *encourages students to share experiences* ($\chi^2(4) = 13.81, p = .008$) and *use diverse pedagogies and materials* ($\chi^2(4) = 9.57, p = .048$) among the definitions codes. In the benefits codes, they differed in the percentage that offered *preparation for the world* ($\chi^2(4) = 18.13, p = .001$) and *learning that is beneficial to the classroom* ($\chi^2(4) = 20.66, p < .001$). Faculty from different schools differed in three barriers, specifically, the percentage that offered responses within the codes of *students do not want it* ($\chi^2(4) = 23.85, p < .001$), *there is no help for this work* ($\chi^2(4) = 18.37, p = .001$), and *instructors do not want to do it* ($\chi^2(4) = 12.60, p = .013$). In terms of practice (Table 1), Liberal Arts made the most use of the method of *incorporating multicultural teaching materials* with 67.8 % of their respondents answering in the affirmative. The next most frequently used practice was *enhancing the student learning experience and exposure to culture*. Both Nursing and Education reported a use of 62.5% in this category. Education reported the largest *use of diverse pedagogical techniques* with 50% indicating using this practice. Ten percent of Science faculty indicated that they *worked on their own professional development* in multicultural teaching practices with Liberal Arts faculty following at 7%. Associate Faculty had the highest use of any practice with 70% of them responding that they *used diverse materials* (Table 2). The lowest usage of practice was by Full Professors, none of whom indicated that they *worked on their own professional development in multicultural teaching*. They preferred the practice of enhancing classroom environment at 62.5%. Assistant Professors also preferred the *use of diverse materials* at 60.5% as did Lecturers at 62.3%.

IV. Discussion.

Multicultural teaching as a pedagogical approach is needed given the global shifts and demands present in 21st century education. Previous studies have focused more on students and their interactions in the classroom, in terms of classroom climate and access to multicultural content. We wanted to focus on assessing faculty, in order to examine faculty perceptions of their understandings of multicultural teaching and their current teaching practice.

In the present study, we assessed multicultural teaching beliefs and behaviors among faculty in an urban, Midwestern university. We obtained responses from 340 faculty from a variety of schools who completed both quantitative and qualitative assessments. Most of the quantitative assessments were reported elsewhere (Khaja et al., 2010). In the present study, faculty were asked open ended questions to assess how they define multicultural teaching, if and how they engaged in multicultural teaching, and what they perceived to be the benefits and barriers to multicultural teaching.

Over 70% of the faculty completed at least one of the open ended questions, suggesting at the least good will, and to some degree probably interest in the topic among the faculty. While a small proportion responded very negatively, most provided very appropriate responses. In these responses, they showed knowledge of what it was, its benefits and how to do it. They also identified some interesting barriers that may be helpful to those attempting to increase this approach to teaching. Our findings are similar to those of Johnson and Inoue (2003) who conducted a similar study with faculty from the University of Guam. In both cases, interest in multicultural teaching as a best practice was hampered by barriers that impacted faculty behavior.

After coding the responses to each open-ended question, we examined them across ranks and schools. Interestingly, we found no differences by rank; we did, however, find some very interesting differences by school. These differences may be informative for schools that are interested in increasing this type of teaching.

Regarding the question “what is multicultural teaching,” Sciences and Education faculty were more likely to define it as *using diverse pedagogies and materials* such as textbooks, whereas Liberal Arts and Nursing faculty were more likely to define it as *encouraging students to share experiences in the classroom*. Interestingly, faculty in the “Other” programs defined multicultural teaching in both of these ways in similar percentages, probably because the Other category contains faculty from very diverse schools. In fact, multicultural teaching was well-defined by the faculty as a whole, and both of these responses reflect multicultural teaching. The preference for one or the other by faculty in different schools may be more reflective of the teaching style or disciplinary content of coursework in different schools. Science faculty, for example, may have little opportunity to open the classroom for discussion of experiences, and therefore may see the possibility of materials and ways of teaching as more viable in their courses than contributions by students. Regardless, the inclusion of diverse perspectives and the incorporation of curricular materials in the classroom are essential to the creation of learning environments in which all students are able to flourish.

There was general agreement among faculty in all schools that multicultural teaching is done by exposing students to other cultures, enhancing the classroom by creating culturally safe learning environments, establishing individual relationships with students, selecting materials purposefully to bring diversity into the classroom, and using diverse pedagogical techniques. The lowest chosen manner to do multicultural teaching was improving one’s own multicultural awareness. The latter finding is particularly interesting since most of the literature in multicultural teaching indicate the need for faculty to engage in critical self-evaluation before attempting to engage in multicultural course transformation (Hyde & Ruth, 2002; Sheets, 2005). The challenge of engaging in critical self-reflection can serve as an obstacle in engaging in multicultural teaching. Anyone who takes the approach in which issues of social justice are introduced and discussed in the classroom must engage in critical self-reflection, to uncover their own experiences with social justice issues. For example, faculty cannot critically engage literature and topics of privilege and oppression with students unless they have first reflected upon their own positionality and experiences related to these concepts. This type of self-reflection, this close-to-homework, like the acquisition of new knowledge bases to incorporate appropriate content is an investment of time. The challenge that advocates for multicultural teaching have is convincing resistant or reluctant faculty that this type of investment will ultimately pay off for themselves and all of their students.

Faculty who do engage in multicultural teaching employ a number of strategies where content is concerned. There may be a selection of critical readings that are inclusive of various perspectives. The content of one’s lectures may also feature examples from people of diverse backgrounds. Content, however, cannot be introduced nor implemented without a strong pedagogical approach. The main element of implementation of multicultural content is the infusion of the content throughout the course of the semester. If marginalized by devoting one or two class periods to multicultural content, the project of multicultural teaching falls flat and is rendered ineffective. This is often when faculty members actually witness the most amount of resistance; multicultural content that is simply additive makes students feel that they are being forced to cover such material. An infusion of multicultural content by the faculty member signals

to the students that the content is important enough to be covered over an extensive period of time. Moreover, the faculty member devoting a significant amount of time to multicultural content also illustrates for students that the content is valued. The faculty member also serves as a model for instilling the value of diversity in their students.

In terms of benefits, Liberal Arts, Sciences, and Education faculty reported to a similar degree both *student development of cultural sensitivity* and *an environment of learning in the class that is beneficial to students*. These responses suggest that faculty in these schools see multicultural teaching as having immediate beneficial effects inside the classroom. This is appropriate, as research has shown that classrooms where instructors engage in multicultural teaching witness such benefits as “greater student motivation and self-confidence, stronger critical thinking skills, increased cultural awareness, and a higher level of civic involvement” for all students (Wentzell, Richlin, & Cox, 2010, 1-2).

Nursing faculty reported *development of sensitivity* as did the others, but mostly reported *preparation for the world upon graduation* as a benefit. In the other three schools this benefit was the least offered. It is not surprising that Nursing would offer this benefit, given that Nursing is a professional school and that nurses work in environments that are very culturally diverse, and their ability to do this well determines the quality of care they provide (Saha, Beach & Cooper, 2008). It was surprising to us that it would be the benefit least offered by all other schools, as it is a clear and important benefit of multicultural teaching recognized and highlighted by many in the literature (Banks, 1994; Gay 2004; Morey & Kitano 1997; Peters-Davis & Shultz 2005). These findings may suggest the following: a) that faculty in academic programs may not think of the future professional success of their students in a broader sense; b) that they may not think multicultural teaching prepares them for their future careers; or c) that they may not think students need what multicultural teaching offers to succeed upon graduation. This finding suggests that increased awareness of the benefits of multicultural teaching is needed.

Multicultural teaching is a critical strategy with which to prepare students for an increasingly globalized world. The main objective often assumed through such a strategy is the acquisition of cultural competency skill. Cultural competency allows individuals to effectively communicate cross-culturally because of an awareness of and sensitivity toward difference, which increases their ability to empathize with and respect those that are different (Grote, 2008). It has been defined at the systems level as “congruent behaviors, attitudes, and policies that come together in a system, agency, or among professionals and enable that system, agency, or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations” (Cross, Bazron, Dennis & Isaacs, 1989 as cited in Grote, 2008). Cultural competency is a skill that is highly sought out in the workforce, particularly in light of increased global processes that would make it crucial to conduct business internationally. Calls to increase cultural competency of professionals are being made for business (Rawson, 2010), law (Perlin & Clain, 2009), and even culinary arts (Edelstein, 2010). Cultural competency also refers to the ability of individuals to broaden their perspectives, to be open to learning about new worldviews. Ultimately, cultural competency is a skill with which people can gain perspective on their own position vis-à-vis the rest of the world. While it is incorrect to assume that every course taught from a multicultural perspective would lead to such valuable and useful outcomes, there is something to be said about initiating multicultural teaching as a vehicle through which this skill can be introduced, cultivated, and incremented.

Multicultural teaching as a strategy preparing students for the world and enables them to grasp the value of cultural pluralism (Grote, 2008). Indeed, it validates cultural pluralism as a

characteristic of our society. It also functions as an approach through which to safely discuss issues of social inequality in the classroom. Students are more apt to critically evaluate current events in society as involving social inequities, to the point where they are able to recognize and acknowledge such phenomena. Ultimately, courses that take a multicultural approach to teaching and learning are best equipped to give students a broader, more complex understanding of the world into which they will enter after they exit the academy (Johnson & Inoue, 2003). Utilizing multicultural pedagogies enables students to engage in active learning, where they take ownership of their education, and leave the class with a deeper sense of themselves, their connections to others, and their placement in the world.

For barriers, some of the challenges faced by faculty in engaging in multicultural teaching include their relative ability to adapt the existing curriculum to include multicultural content. There were reservations expressed on a number of levels, including not knowing where to start in terms of incorporating such content, not having enough time built in to the semester to add such content, or not having mastery in the content areas needed to teach the course from a multicultural perspective. The notion that *students do not want multicultural teaching in the classroom* was the most reported among Liberal Arts, Education, and Other faculty. Science faculty were least likely to report this as a barrier. Instead, they reported *lack of support from administration and others* and the fact that instructors may not know how to do it. In third place, Science faculty reported as a barrier that *faculty do not want to do multicultural teaching*, at a rate of 25%. This is in contrast to all other schools where faculty offered this barrier at a rate in the single digits, or not at all (Nursing). This may relate back to the overall perception by Science faculty that multicultural teaching is a practice best suited for the social sciences, where the development of students' "soft" skills such as cultural competency and collaboration is best accomplished (Usher 2002). While acquiring new knowledge of a subject matter is indeed a task that requires an investment of time, other ways in which to transform one's course can include rethinking the disciplinary content or applying a more interdisciplinary approach to the existing content areas (Nelson, 1996). Ultimately, however, the courses that are most successful in adopting a multicultural teaching pedagogy are those that are intentional in design. This type of intentionality where course design or redesign is concerned also appeared to be a challenge for the faculty.

The notion that students react negatively to multicultural teaching is very interesting and does not match findings of studies that assess students themselves. For example, on a recent Spring 2009 Student Pulse survey conducted at our institution, students indicated the issue of "inter-cultural communication and diversity on campus" as the most "extremely important" issue for them (IUPUI for the IUPUI Office of Planning and Institutional Improvement, 2009). These findings in Liberal Arts and Education should be pursued further to better understand faculty perceptions and how these can be better matched with student expectations. If faculty believe students do not want this, they will be less likely to embrace this teaching even when presented with all its benefits. Science faculty responses also have implications for change. Their responses suggest that they may be more likely to engage in multicultural teaching if they have help from administration in the form of tangible support for efforts, and specifically if that help came in the form of teaching them how to do it. This type of support may be a matter of a simple fix, if such faculty are provided with cross-disciplinary examples of how to go about executing multicultural course transformation (Clark 2002).

A. Conclusions.

Multicultural teaching is not a strategy solely targeted toward students of color, nor is it the sole responsibility of faculty of color to deliver. Indeed, given the historic and current underrepresentation of faculty of color among the professoriate, multicultural teaching cannot be relegated solely to those individuals. It is the responsibility of all faculty, regardless of background, to engage in multicultural teaching. It is incumbent upon all faculty who express an interest in engaging in multicultural teaching to become conversant in matters of social justice. Multicultural teaching is a strategy that should be pursued by any faculty interested in developing critical thinking skills among all of their students, interested in fostering student academic success by making learning more relevant to everyday lived experiences, and interested in adequately preparing students to encountered a complex, 21st century, globalized world.

Multicultural teaching involves the infusion of multicultural content and pedagogy within the curriculum. The expressed goal of such an endeavor relies upon an emphasis on creating a diverse learning environment conducive to academic achievement for all students. The success of such course transformation must be measured through systematic planning and assessment. However, it is not enough for a faculty member engaged in such teaching, often described in the academy as “experimental,” to bear the weight of the responsibility of this type of rigorous assessment. We contend that there must be institutional commitment shown to such projects. Institutions of higher learning must demonstrate a full commitment to this type of curricular transformation, particularly those who state the importance and value of diversity in their mission statements.

Most institutions of higher learning in the U.S. nowadays have a statement on the value of diversity and its relationship to the overall mission of the campus. This valuation of diversity may find itself squarely in the institutional mission, or in other statements, such as strategic plans, vision statements and value statements. For some institutions, the valuation of multicultural teaching is cited as a vehicle through which the goals of diversity for a campus can be achieved. Students may encounter diversity in a variety of venues, from their dorm rooms to their organizations. The classroom is another site through which diversity is encountered, particularly at urban and commuter campuses, such as ours. Students in the classroom may encounter diversity in the form of their interactions with peers from various cultural backgrounds; unlike their chosen affiliations, in the classroom, students may have access to students from different racial/ethnic, religious, national, sexual orientation, age and class backgrounds. The classroom, then, as opposed to one’s social networks, may be the most diverse arena encountered by students on a daily basis. This is perhaps the primary foundation upon which multicultural teaching can flourish.

It is imperative that faculty tap into the advantages of such an environment in order to allow for a space and time in which students may explore other cultural perspectives in a safe environment, and thereby facilitate both academic and personal growth. In creating safe classroom environments for learning through multicultural teaching, faculty members also effectively create a sense of community among students. In such environments, students not only interact cross-culturally but also have the ability to engage in learning in which mutual accountability and success is fostered. Research has also indicated the ability for multicultural teaching to promote democratic ideals in the classroom, which may then be mirrored in society long after a course is completed. Ultimately, the content and approach of multicultural teaching

prepares students to live and interact effectively in a democratic society. The benefits of multicultural teaching far outweigh the costs of time and effort. It has the potential to educate students to be 21st century global citizens with the requisite skills to understand and interface with the complexity of cultural differences, experiences, and perspectives.

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