

Universities continue to look at how to address diversity issues in a variety of ways. In the *Modeling Equity, Engaging Difference* conference in October 2012, the Association of American Colleges and Universities focused on the types of educational practices, programs, and pedagogies being implemented in universities across the nation such as faculty conversations about diversity with students, bridging cultures to foster democratic engagement and democratic thinking, and embracing international and domestic diversity. Reports indicate that 63% of higher education institutions require that diversity curriculum be implemented into student's educational program in some way before graduation can be completed (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 1995). Sciame-Giesecke, Roden, and Parkison (2009) suggest that the primary strategies for universities to include are diversity issues that focus on content, teaching methods, teachers, and students. Even more specifically, they note that most address diversity through course content. The main challenge that exists is to help students gain the skill and ability to participate and lead in a diverse community both in and after school (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). The challenge comes because there are many ways to address this issue and in many cases the content only focus may not be meeting the goals of diversity education.

Educators may view college students as young, white, and culturally homogenous. However, in 2008, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that the historically minoritized account for the majority in California, New Mexico, and Texas (*US Census Bureau's 2008 Statistical Abstract* 2008), and as of 2011, they were roughly one-third of the entire U.S. population (Perlich, 2011). By 2042, historically minoritized groups will account for the majority of the U.S. population (Bernstein & Edwards, 2008). Educators – whether they want to or not – must address cultural issues and teach students how to reflect on material, examine that material from

different perspectives, and apply this knowledge to analyzing societal problems consistently to gain a better understanding of themselves and issues related to diversity. (Mayhew & Fernandez, 2007). In fact, Schamber and Mahoney (2008) maintain that the goal of improving students' understanding of cultural difference is vital to the general education of all university students.

The question remains as to the influence of diversity curriculum courses. The goal of this research is to build on the findings of prior studies which have focused primarily on student attitudes towards diversity, by examining lived experiences in such courses to utilize a more process orientation towards these courses. Relevant literature which has already looked at class interactions with diversity will be reviewed. Next, the research method, results, and analysis are outlined for this study. Finally, implications, limitations, and directions for future research are considered.

Literature Review

The majority of research examining classroom interactions with diversity fall into two main camps: race and ethnicity issues and class encounters with diversity through the curriculum.

Interaction with Diverse Peers

One of the earliest studies looking at students' experiences with diversity suggests that when students confront racial and multicultural issues, there are widespread beneficial effects on a student's cognitive and affective development (Astin, 1993). Diversity in informal interactions increases cognitive skills, social cognitive outcomes, and democratic sensibilities (Hurtado, 2005). Interactions in an institution with a diverse population can increase students' complexity of thinking (Pascarella, Palmer, Moye, & Pierson, 2001; Smith, 1997). Gurin, Dey, Hurtado and Gurin (2002) find that new experiences with diversity fosters active thinking and decision

making. Other studies suggest that just having student diversity in a classroom can lead to a tendency to seek out and incorporate a multiplicity of perspectives and connections before forming an opinion as well as attitudes favoring equal opportunity (Gottfredson et al., 2008).

The second benefit of interaction with diverse peers is affective development. Such interactions positively influence openness to diversity and challenge (Pascarella, Edison, Nora, Hagedorn, & Terenzini, 1996). Students increase in willingness to engage in current social problems (Pascarella et al., 2001; Smith, 1997). Additionally, institutions that promote experiences where diverse students can interact show an increase in both openness to diversity and campus connectedness (Summers, Svinicki, & Gorin, 2002)

Jayakumar (2008) suggests that racial/ethnic diversity is especially influential for white students. She also notes that cross-racial interaction during college influences the ability for white students to make integrated lifestyle choices where they feel comfortable interacting with those with backgrounds different from their own, post-college. White students were shown to have fewer interactional diversity experiences, however those experiences positively affected the self-reported gains for both whites and students of color (Hu & Kuh, 2003).

Diversity Courses

Other studies focus on outcomes from specific diversity oriented courses. Diversity courses, as defined here, are those that include content and methods of instruction that incorporate diversity issues found in society. These are courses that are identified as specifically addressing and applying diversity issues rather than just interaction with a diverse population in general.

Research on intergroup interactions indicates that educators cannot just rely on interactions in the hallway and general exposure to other cultures, they must be provided with

specific tools to engage and collaborate with people who are different than them (Sorensen, Nagda, Gurin, & Maxwell, 2009). These tools are typically taught through diversity based curriculum specifically focused on issues of race, gender, power, whiteness and white privilege as well as racism (Harris, 2003) .

Universities extend diversity topics to either specific diversity credit courses such as gender studies, or across many subjects, which apply diversity to that subject such as a humanities course with diversity infused throughout the regular humanities curriculum. Taking diversity courses while attending college can help improve racial attitudes (Radloff, 2010) reduce racism and classism in students (Aosved & Long, 2006) and reduce prejudice (Hussey, Fleck, & Warner, 2010). In a course entitled *Interracial Communication*, Miller and Harris (2005) found that communicative practices of openness to bring about mutual understanding is vital; when this occurs students develop new knowledge of race, social constructs, and critical thinking about interracial issues. Students also began to examine their feelings towards other groups of people and their own beliefs about racism and gained a “better understanding of themselves and issues related to diversity, regardless of course content” (Mayhew & Fernandez, 2007, p. 75). Chang (2002) found diversity course requirements reduce racial prejudice and promote intergroup understanding suggesting that learning about one area of diversity may influence attitudes toward other areas of diversity and ultimately reduce multiple types of prejudice. Enrollment in diversity courses can increase complex thinking in students (Antonio et al., 2004) (Pascarella et al., 2001; Smith, 1997). Significant positive effects from enrolling in a diversity course were also found for interactions with diverse peers and social action engagement (Engberg & Hurtado, 2005).

Numerous studies have examined the diversity of classroom student populations or structural diversity. However, classroom diversity seems to be not nearly as much a predictor of student learning outcomes as course characteristics. Terenzini and colleagues (2001) found that medium classroom racial and ethnic diversity in the classroom (30-40%) is positively related to learning gains, but low or high levels of classroom diversity may be negatively related to learning gains. They suggest that learning activities and interactions with the instructor and peers are much more influential than the classroom's structural diversity. Henderson-King and Kaleta (1999) found diversity course enrollment, while not increasing intergroup tolerance did act as a buffer against diminishing intergroup tolerance. Those enrolled in such courses maintained their attitudes towards those of other groups while those not enrolled in courses actually decreased in their tolerance towards others. Brooks and Ward (2007) found that students were able to connect different aspects of diversity such as race and gender but tended to focus on each issue individually and had a disconnect between classroom discussion and applying it to their lives.

Few if any of these studies have addressed the actual experience, or process, of being an instructor or student in a diversity focused class. Most previous research focused on one time data collection, mainly to examine attitudes of students involved in diversity experiences whether through general interaction or through specific courses. The goal of this study is to extend previous research and examine instructor and students' actual experiences and connections made by those enrolled in semester-long diversity related courses. Both pre and post course attitudes are examined as well as lived experiences throughout the semester.

Context

Data were gathered from courses designated as Global/Intercultural (GI) (diversity related) at a large public university in the western United States. The GI credit is a graduation

requirement for all students. The primary goal of such courses is to “foster greater understanding of, interaction with, and appreciation for, cultures that reflect the diversity present within the local and campus communities, up to the larger state and global context” (university website). Any university course can be designated as a GI course as long as the course is submitted through university curriculum and describes how the course achieves outcomes related to global and multicultural issues. Also required is an explanation as to how global intercultural issues are central to the course and not just one element among several to be explored as well as texts and teaching materials outlined. After a course is submitted and approved, a GI designation is added to the course and students may take one of any of such designated courses as their GI course graduation requirement.

Methods

After obtaining Institutional Review Board approval, data collection started in August 2012 and continued throughout fall semester until December 2012. Students enrolled in a Communication Research Methods course aided in collection of data. Participation was solicited from instructors of 143 sections with a GI designation that semester. Mixed methods data collection took place in two ways: a pre/post test survey was administered and interviews were conducted with faculty and students.

Participants

Thirty instructors allowed their students to be surveyed. A voluntary pre-test was given the first two weeks of class to 421 students. The post-test was administered to 75 students (a number of instructors would not allow time for post-test administration during the last two weeks of class and of those who did allow it, some students who took the pre-test declined to take the post-test). Sixty-three of those were able to be paired with the pre-test with 12 students taking

the post-test who did not take the pre-test ($\chi^2(36)=2423.807, p=.0001$). Those who agreed to participate signed an informed consent form and also had the opportunity to volunteer for an interview.

Survey

The Openness to Diversity Survey piloted and tested by the Teagle Planning Group and Ursinus College in 2008 was used. The 16 question survey is divided into two sections – openness to diversity and diversity experiences. The factorability of the 16 items was examined. Questions 1-7 correlated with openness to diversity.

1. I enjoy having discussions with people whose ideas and values are different from my own
2. The real value of a college education lies in being introduced to different values
3. I enjoy talking with people who have values different from mine because it helps me better understand myself and my values
4. Learning about people from different cultures is a very important part of my college education
5. I enjoy taking courses that challenge my beliefs and values
6. The courses I enjoy most are those that make me think about things from a different perspective
7. Contact with individuals whose backgrounds are different from my own is an essential part of my college education

Questions 8-16 deal with diversity experiences.

8. How often have you attended a debate or lecture on a current political/social issue during this academic year?

9. How frequently have you had serious discussions with student affairs staff whose political, social, or religious opinions were different from your own?
10. To what extent does [this university] emphasize encouraging contact among students from different economic, social, and racial or ethnic backgrounds?
11. In your experience at [this university] during the current school year, about how often have you had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own?
12. In your experience at [this university] during the current school year, about how often have you had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values?
13. How often have you participated in a racial or cultural awareness workshop during this academic year?
14. How often have you had discussions regarding inter-group relations with diverse students while attending this university?
15. How often have you had meaningful and honest discussions about issues related to social justice with diverse students while attending [this university]?
16. How often have you shared personal feelings and problems with diverse students while attending this university?

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was above the commonly recommended value of .6, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(21)=1969.138, p=.0001$).

Interviews

Research assistants solicited interviews from all faculty and students currently teaching or attending a GI course and conducted interviews with four instructors and 17 students.

Interviews ranged from 10-35 minutes, with the majority lasting 15 to 20 minutes. Questions were chosen to increase understanding about GI and overall experiences in GI courses.

1. Have you learned about GI or diversity issues prior to this class?
2. Were you aware that this was a GI designated course before teaching/taking this specific course?
3. Has your class related course material to diversity issues?
4. (Instructor only) Do you feel that you were adequately trained for teaching a GI course?
5. Do you feel students come with a knowledge about diversity and intercultural issues or that you're introducing (being introduced to) these concepts for the first time in your class?
6. Has your class influenced your own opinions about diversity?
7. Is there anything you would change about how these issues have been addressed in your class?
8. Can you think of an example of how GI issues are addressed in your class and responses to it?
9. Are you aware of other intercultural/diversity events?
10. Is there anything else you would like to say about your experience teaching a global/intercultural designated course?

Analysis

Using a grounded theory approach (Glaser, 1978; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), themes emerged from the data in response to the constituent group's perceived needs rather than preconceptions or frameworks from the researchers (Smythe & Nicolai, 2002). By using such a

qualitative approach, the focus was on lived experiences of instructors and students and how they used a set of discursive practices to locate themselves within the GI classroom.

Coding took place in various stages. All 21 interview transcripts were blind-coded, removing identifying information. Using NVivo, each interview was coded for themes and dimensions. As activities and interactions were observed, raw data was examined using a thought analysis, and categories were labeled with properties and dimensions (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Next, patterns were noted. Finally, categories were developed after review of the data, and integration between the categories with the aim of finding overall themes and discovering the relationship between them. Using a grounded theory approach allowed discrepancies to be uncovered, patterns identified, and theoretical concepts built, rather than examining the data with a particular theoretical perspective.

Results

Surveys

Four hundred twenty one pre-test surveys from 30 classes were collected. Because two constructs were identified, results are grouped based on constructs rather than each of the 16 questions. Table 1 shows the mean for the two constructs: Questions 1-7 ($n=3.85$), openness to diversity and Questions 8-16 ($n=2.15$), diversity experiences.

Table 1 Comparison of Constructs (pre-test)

Pre-Test	Openness to Diversity Scale	Diversity Experiences
Sampling Mean	3.85	2.15
Range	3.0-4.9 or range of 1.9	1.6-3.3 or range of 1.6
N (number of classes)	30	30
n (number of students)	421	421

The post-test was administered to 75 students. Sixty-three of those were able to be paired with the pre-test with 12 students taking the post-test who did not take the pre-test. Table 2

shows the mean for the two constructs: Questions 1-7 ($n=3.67$), openness to diversity and Questions 8-16 ($n=2.45$), diversity experiences.

Table 2 Comparison of Constructs (post-test)

Post-Test	Openness to Diversity Scale	Diversity Experiences
Sampling Mean	3.67	2.45
Range	3.5-5.0 or range of 1.5	2.0-3.9 or range of 1.9
<i>N</i> (number of classes)	14	14
<i>n</i> (number of students)	62	62

In comparing the pre and post-tests, the lowest and highest average questions remained the same. Question 3 ($n=4.10$ pre and $n=4.06$ post) asks respondents to rate whether they enjoy talking with people who have values different from their own. Question 13 ($n=1.38$ pre and $n=1.61$ post) asks them to rate how often they have participated in a racial or cultural awareness workshop during the current academic year. In an independent sample *t*-test, no significant differences were found between pre and post-test other than Question 13. This indicates that a GI course increases the likelihood that students will report more frequent participation in racial or cultural awareness workshops during the time that they are enrolled in a GI course.

To compare specific pre and post-tests, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was calculated. Questions 1-7 (openness to diversity construct) and question 10 were not found to be significant. Question 10 (diversity experiences construct) which asked to what extent the university encourages contact with people from other backgrounds, was not found to be significant. The remainder of the questions making up the diversity experiences construct were found to be significant as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 ANOVA results

Question	<i>N</i>	Pre-test		Post-test		<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		

8 Attended a debate on a current political/social issue	62	1.79	1.01	2.05	1.11	93	0.036*
9 Serious discussions where opinions differed from your own	62	2.21	1.18	2.77	1.31	92	0.001*
11 Serious conversations with students of different ethnicity	62	2	0.89	2.24	0.92	93	0.043*
12 Serious conversations with students of different religious belief, political opinion, or personal value	62	2.11	0.81	2.56	0.92	93	0*
13 Participated in a racial or cultural awareness workshop	62	1.42	0.93	1.68	1	93	0.01*
14 Discussions regarding inter-group relations	62	2.1	1.18	2.68	1.1	93	0*
15 Meaningful discussions about social justice issues	62	2.26	1.13	2.89	1.11	92	0*

In general, results show that students' attitudes towards openness were unchanged by a semester of involvement in a GI course. However, the number of diversity experiences had by a student was changed significantly.

Interviews

Findings indicate five themes derived from 340 coded units (see Table 4). These themes include Teaching Issues ($n=143$), GI influences ($n=73$), Awareness of GI ($n=47$), Diversity outside of GI ($n=45$), and Concerns about GI ($n=32$).

Table 4 Interview Themes

Theme	Faculty	Student	Overall
Teaching Issues	$n=55$	$n=151$	$n=206$
Concerns of GI	$n=14$	$n=58$	$n=72$
Diversity outside GI	$n=27$	$n=31$	$n=58$
Awareness of GI	$n=9$	$n=19$	$n=28$
Totals	$N=105$	$N=259$	$N=364$

Teaching Issues. Participants expressed 206 comments about teaching issues. Fifty-five came from faculty and 151 from students. Of these 206 comments, four subthemes emerged:

activities and discussion ($n=84$), diversity issues being related to the course ($n=63$), sharing/openness about diversity ($n=51$), and emotion about teaching/taking a GI course ($n=8$).

Activities and Discussion. Most of these 84 comments focused on what actually happens in the classroom. These included such things as feeling that the instructor was having open discussions about diversity issues in class. “I think my professor’s been very good at how she goes over touchy subjects . . . I don’t think any people leave my class offended because we can ask questions and she’ll explain it, and we’ll talk about the subject until no one has any questions” (Interview 15). Other students felt that it was important to have an instructor who brought in real-life experience to the topic and classroom discussion. “It’s always useful to have someone who has a lot of experience outside of the United States” (Interview 7).

However, several noted that when instructors do not address issues in a discussion format that they did not learn as much. “I think there is more focus on the technical things you have to do. I’d rather have it be an open discussion. I feel like people would get more out of it if it was more like that” (Interview 9). Students wanted someone with diversity experience and an ability to engage in discussions in the classroom.

Diversity issues being related to course content. Sixty-three comments focused around this theme. All four faculty members indicated that they were relating diversity issues to course content. “We do it in a variety of ways” (Faculty interview 3). However, students did not all agree. Twenty one students said “yes, diversity issues were being related” while 14 said “no”. Students who said yes explained how this relation occurred: “I don’t know about issues but maybe just more of a perspective of different cultures and a better understanding of cultures” (Interview 13).

Students who said course content was not being related to diversity issues noted that they did not see a difference between a GI and non-GI course saying such things as: “The class is mostly just a lecture, so other than the material and showing the cultural diversity of different countries and what we study, then I would say there are no examples other than the material we study” (Interview 8). In general, faculty felt they were relating diversity issues to course content while students had mixed opinions about whether or not that was happening.

Sharing openness about diversity. Most of the 51 comments in this subtheme focused on positive class activities. One faculty member noted: “We establish the class as a safe place to share; I share with my class as much as they share with me. . . . We keep the class civil with respect to all questions and cultures. It doesn't become a conflict base discussion it becomes communitarian” (Faculty interview 3). Students also agreed. “Yeah I [feel comfortable sharing opinions], because our teacher, she's really good at relating it to us” (Interview 15). Another student noted:

We kind of bring them up and then people get kind of nervous or they're uncomfortable with it a little bit. He's really open about saying “I'm not trying to push this religion on you,” or “I'm not trying to push this belief on you. This is just how THEY see it,” and I think this calms everybody down a little bit. It makes it easier and a little more comfortable to talk about it. (Interview 5)

A few stated they were not getting the kind of discussion about diversity that should be happening in a GI course.

Emotion. Though there were only eight comments in this subtheme, those who voiced emotion felt strongly about their GI course experience. One instructor noted that “It's the highlight of my semesters” (Faculty interview 1). One student said, “Within the first week that's

how I knew I was going to love that class” (Interview 15). Students who felt strongly about their class either liked the class or the instructor or a combination of both.

Concerns. There were 72 comments about concerns that instructors or students had that related to their GI course or diversity experiences in general. Subthemes include teaching concerns ($n=35$), need for faculty training ($n=30$), and general diversity concerns ($n=7$).

Teaching Concerns. Out of 35 comments, several came from faculty noting that teaching a GI course presents a curriculum challenge. “I came into the course that already had its own curriculum this is my first term teaching it and it doesn't have a text book” (Faculty interview 3). Students also felt that the main challenges were for the instructor. Some felt the challenge was in finding an instructor who could help students understand the issues. “I think the right instructor...that’s huge. They have to have the experience. They have to have the cultural background. Otherwise its just one more filter on the information, which I think the less filtered, the more personal experience you get, the better” (Interview 1).

Some felt the challenge for instructors was in keeping the classroom focused and in control. “The teacher can have their own agenda when it comes to diversity and if they are not neutral . . . it can get heated and out of control” (Interview 7). Others felt the challenge was for an instructor to keep their attention. One student noted, “I tuned out after the first couple of classes because it didn’t matter” (Interview 14).

Overall, challenges for instructors include curriculum, application to personal experience, keeping what might sometimes be controversial issues in control, as well as keeping students’ attention.

Need for faculty training. All 30 of these comments came from the instructors themselves. Instructors felt that they needed extra help in preparation. “I would like to get some

more tips or hints on it. . . There is a lot of ways to approach this and I have only had written material to look at, and I have to discern what this means and what I should apply to my class”

(Faculty interview 2).

Another instructor felt that it would be helpful to interact with other faculty members and share information. “I think it would be nice to have an opportunity to sit down with other instructors in this area and do best practices” (Faculty interview 3). Three of the four instructors felt that some sort of training would help them to do a better job teaching their GI course.

General diversity concerns. These seven comments focused on concerns about how people spoke about diversity or interacted with others. This student said “I think a lot of times we kind of shy away from talking about diversity for fear of offending people or whatever”

(Interview 1).

Some felt their biggest concern was just that there are not enough diversity experiences available. One student felt that just having more opportunities to connect with others on campus would be helpful. “I would probably give more opportunity for students to be able to join clubs that were culturally centered and things like that” (Interview 6). Diversity concerns tended to focus around wanting to interact with others and not having the opportunity or just concern about actually interacting with others.

Diversity outside GI. This theme focused on awareness of diversity issues and intercultural or multicultural encounters outside of their GI course. There were 58 comments under this theme with three subthemes: diversity encounters ($n=32$), knowledge of GI issues before class ($n=13$) and cultural events ($n=13$).

Diversity encounters. In these 32 comments, students focused on meeting students of other races and ethnicities as having diversity encounters:

I think it's great. Like in the [building] on the second floor I've had a bunch of classes. I think that's where like the ESL offices are? . . . But you see tons of students, you know, speaking Spanish. You see a lot of students speaking, I don't know if it's Arabic. I don't speak the language, but you know. (Interview 1)

These sorts of observations were seen as having diversity encounters rather than such things as having in depth conversations or participating in cultural events. In fact, one instructor noted the confusion of students at times about what diversity means.

I had a woman who had the multi cultural part but not the diversity part. She applied for an internship and got it but when she got it she turned it down. And I asked her why she turned it down and she said I didn't want to be driving them around town. They're from different cultures, they might have raped me. (Faculty interview 1)

While this quote brings in stereotypes and prejudices, it also demonstrates a lack of understanding of diversity beyond what can be observed.

Learned about GI issues before class. Thirteen participants specifically mentioned whether or not they had learned about GI issues before class. One student said this, "I have not specifically had a class in college yet that covers on this. In Humanities, we covered the basics but in International Marketing, we look at other countries and culture and I feel like I am learning more about diversity in the world" (Interview 13).

Six participants had not had any exposure to (in their opinion) diversity issues before class. ". . . not very much. I'm from [small town]. I guess I've been very protected as a child. I've learned things from my parents, but it's just their opinions . . . their side. I guess I haven't had very much education on those issues I guess" (Interview 17).

Nearly half of these students who commented about learning about GI issues felt they had not had any exposure to GI issues before the class. These may have occurred but were not made explicit.

Cultural events. Instructors and students were asked about their awareness of and attendance of cultural events both in the community and at the university. Thirteen comments were made about cultural events. Instructors indicated some require attendance at events and other do not require outside activities. In addition, students commented on the lack of outside of class cultural events. One instructor indicated that he did not want to focus on things outside of class. “I try not to offer extra credit for these events because I feel that my students grades need to reflect their course work and not their extracurricular participation” (Faculty interview 4).

Students felt like they were not really getting exposure to experience or events outside of their classroom. One said, “Here at [university], we have a large Caucasian population so I feel like it maybe does not give you as good as a cultural experience as another school” (Interview 13).

In general, instructors felt extracurricular events drew their students’ time and attention away from class and students felt that there were not many experiences available beyond meeting students occasionally in the halls at school.

Awareness of GI. Awareness of GI ($n=28$) concerned student and faculty knowledge about whether or not the course was specifically a GI course. This theme broke down into two subthemes: awareness class was GI designated ($n=19$), not aware of what GI means ($n=9$). In general about two thirds of the comments in this theme came from instructors and students who were aware of the meaning of GI and understood that they were taking a class with that designation. However, about one third of the students did not.

Aware of GI designation. All students should have been aware of the fact that they had registered for a course with a GI designation (non GI would be 3190 while GI would show 319G). Fifteen made specific mention of the fact that they were aware their course was a GI course – “Yes. . . It had G on the end of it! And I knew what that meant. Plus I was told I needed a global class when doing registration” (Interview 5). However, four indicated they were not aware of the GI designation. “No. . . I learned it from doing this interview” (Interview 14).

Does not know what GI means. Some did not know that they were taking a class that was GI designated, and they were not even aware what GI means. “Maybe they had talked about it during class and I wasn’t there or wasn’t paying attention” (Interview 14). “Yeah, I knew it had a G at the end of the course number, but I didn’t know what that meant” (Interview 6).

While everyone should have known about the GI designation, not everyone, including faculty, did.

Discussion

Findings from this research demonstrate that if universities and colleges want to have the benefits of diversity curriculum requirements then just instituting a class is not enough. Almost one-third of the students in this study were either unaware that they were taking a diversity class or if they were aware, did not fully understand what that meant. Students even considered observing someone from another culture as making a diversity connection. As Sorenson, Nagda, Gurin, & Maxwell (2009) indicate, this is not enough – students need tools to think critically about diversity issues. This emphasizes an important need for faculty teaching these courses to have adequate training not only in understanding diversity issues but also in conveying them appropriately in a classroom in such a way that the groundwork for critical learning is laid (Tummala-Narra, 2009).

The openness to diversity pre and post-surveys results demonstrate that there was no significant change in openness to diversity over the course of a semester. This finding may support the idea that such courses do not increase however do buffer against decreasing tolerance (Henderson-King & Kaleta, 2000) or that multiple classes/contacts are more beneficial than just one (Chang, 2002). The lack of change on openness to diversity may be explained by other research, which shows a curvilinear relationship between diversity encounters and tolerance where stereotypes are reinforced through initial contact. Bowman (2012) suggests that college diversity interactions only lead to educational benefits when these experiences occur frequently.

In the diversity experiences section of the survey, students did show a significant increase in the way they answered questions about diversity experiences showing that they are in fact having discussions about diversity in class, sharing personal opinions in those discussions and making connections with others different than themselves suggesting such discussions positively influence openness to diversity.

Similar to what Terenzini et al., (2001) found, interviews with students indicate that neither the course topic itself nor diversity of the students in the classroom influence attitudes as much as the instructor for the course. This was emphasized when students emphasized concerns about teachers in GI courses. Teachers, who have experience, are prepared to discuss diversity issues, and who are able to handle such discussions in the classroom in a positive manner impact student feelings about the class more than anything else. For those who had good instructors, students indicate that the GI course has influenced them not only for the duration of the course itself but will impact future decisions about diversity issues.

While previous research emphasizes the need for interaction beyond the classroom both for faculty (Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006) and students (Astin, 1993), this research shows that

faculty are not frequently providing opportunities for extracurricular activities and may in fact be discouraging it. This alone may discourage students from making connections with diverse others beyond the classroom.

Limitations and Future Research

The large decrease in sample size from the pretest to the posttest in this study represents a major limitation. Another limitation is the small number of faculty interviews that were conducted. Both the decreased sample size and small numbers of interviews could be improved through faculty commitment to the research project. Future research could extend this research by comparing a pretest to beyond the single semester class to determine if activities and other classes build upon students' experiences in a diversity class. An extended study could also determine if opinions that were changed in the classroom do have a future impact on relationships and interactions with others. Future research could also expand understanding about how instructors view extracurricular events and incorporate (or not) such events into their courses.

This research study suggests that universities need to be involved in the process of diversity education from the top down. The attitudes of campus administrators influence the incorporation of diversity related materials by instructors in classrooms (Mayhew & Grunwald, 2007). Thus, in order to provide the maximum benefit, diversity courses need to have a symbiotic relationship with the campus as a whole with campus administrators, campus, climate, co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, and training all working together to enhance the campus diversity experience.

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