Deconstructing Various Multicultural Instructional Approaches

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Abstract

Results of this study show that students want multicultural education that is more sophisticated than the typical "blame-game" and "feel-good" paradigms. They prefer an eclectic instructional approach that has a critical pedagogy piece as its flagship. While six theoretical instructional approaches investigated in this study were accepted by respondents (N=368) as having instructional legitimacy, each met a different need. Two approaches made the most impact. Significant pretest-to-posttest changes in mean score rankings were found for a critical pedagogy style of instruction (t(361)=6.243, p<.0005), as well as an instructional style built upon a belief that the world needs more love and trust (t(361)=-5.732, p<.0005). This research is important because it augments the discourse on multicultural foundations with the introduction of (1) a classification scheme that helps educators better understand why we teach the way we do, and (2) elements that students identify as being important to their lifelong learning process.

Key words: Multicultural instructional approaches, eclectic instruction, multicultural best practices.

1. Introduction

A suburban White student walks into class the first day of a typical college semester and proclaims that twice our nation has elected a Black person to the presidency and uses that as proof that racism is no longer a major issue in America, and that its citizens should concentrate on the things we have in common with each other. An eager Hispanic student of liberal political persuasion encourages that student to not overlook cultural differences, and to celebrate that diversity and not fear it. An irritated African American responds, "Electing Barack Obama is evidence of a positive step, but I still want the 40 acres and a mule my ancestors earned but never received!" A well-meaning conservative and religious student attempts to broker the situation by saying, "I believe that love and forgiveness can bring us together." Several LBGTQ+ students wonder if your worldview includes the topic of intersectionality and will it be an integral part of the curriculum. A radical Native American student wants to know where you stand on Critical Race Theory. The instructor takes a sip of super-charged caffeinated coffee, glances at his/her low paycheck, and cautiously responds, "I, myself, may not have received the type of training that allows me to properly address all of your needs, but I am a resolute practitioner, and I will give all of your requests my best shot."

Welcome to the task of teaching about race, human relations, and diversity education—the trickiest of college courses to navigate. The above scenario plays itself on college campuses every day with alarming regularity, and yet the typical administrative response is a political one: Let the newly hired minority instructor teach the one class that satisfies the state or institutional mandate and magically gives us the feeling that our teacher candidates will graduate with cultural proficiency. Each one of the students mentioned above remained sincere and convinced that their paradigm and set of beliefs is the ultimate prescription for what ails our nation. Question: How does the instructor respond to each of these requests? What foundational principles will the teacher invoke to meet their needs? How will the teacher prioritize those needs? What are his/her instructional tools, and how will the educational process unfold?

If in fact going beyond the "feel-good" and "guilt-and-blame" brands of multicultural education is a worthy goal, educators will have to engage in a great deal of research, wisdom, and focus to pull off this magic act. There are far too many students who view multicultural education a course they can get an easy "A" in. Meanwhile, a few colleagues wonder why you put yourself through this agony each semester. One colleague once chided me for "being too smart of a guy to teach that emotional, unscientific stuff." The need to provide more science to the study of diversity provides a rationale for this study. Another rationale comes from the National Accreditation of Teacher Education (2008) and the Council of Chief State Officers (2011). Both agencies recommend that teacher preparation programs include the instruction of meaningful multicultural training. In addition, most state governments mandate a multicultural requirement for teacher certification.

Before launching into any systematic effort of training teacher candidates on how to be culturally competent, it is a good idea to establish an instructional foundation upon which to build a program of study. "No educational approach is politically neutral . . . all educators make decisions about the goals they are working toward and the type of community they inspire. Recognizing this and arming ourselves with knowledge about competing approaches . . . is a necessary first step towards providing better schooling to our nation's youth," (Castagno, 2010, p 48). The purpose of this research is help educators better understand that important first step.

2. Review of Literature

The literature on multicultural instructional approaches is divided into three different camps: (1) Prominent scholars who specially address a system of instructional classification, (2) well-known writers who don't propose formal classifications per se, but they add to the larger conversation on diversity, and (3) lesser-known writers who make an important contribution via research that utilizes convenience sample populations. I will attempt to examine the best examples of each area.

A framework of multicultural instructional approaches was first offered by Margaret Gibson (1976). She describes a pre-stage where proponents of a deficit model (i.e., various ethnic cultures lack certain cultural staples) push for early intervention programs such as the Head Start. She admonishes that approach as incomplete and describes a healthier first stage referred to as Benevolent Multi-Culturalism. In this approach educators seek to decrease the amount of incompatibility between the culture of our schools and that of disadvantaged children's homes. If minority students see more positive representations of themselves in the curriculum, the theory goes, they will be more apt to buy into the educational experience. Gibson's second category—Education about Cultural Difference—is different in that it doesn't target just minority students, but rather it seeks to educate all students about the contributions of all ethnic groups. The knock against the approach is that it relies on the dominant power structure to define the problem, as well as reform itself. What often results with this paradigm is forced assimilation and token representation of minority students.

A third option, Cultural Pluralism, is different from the first two approaches in that it rejects both assimilation and separatism as acceptable goals, but rather it seeks to educate learners about an important overlooked truth: Our nation is greatly strengthened when everyone embraces and celebrates cultural differences. A fourth approach, Bi-Cultural Education, emphasizes the need to train students how to successfully operate in two cultures. All students need this, but it is especially important for race minorities who face social ostracism if they become too assimilated towards the dominate culture, and yet they are seen as forgetting the ethnic roots from which they came.

A fifth approach, Multi-Cultural Education as the Normal Human Experience, relies on a broader anthropological definition of education – one that acknowledges that the total community impacts the worldview of young people. This approach is not a big proponent of separate ethnic schools (although it acknowledges that good can come from them), but rather integration is seen as a key variable. It also rejects the belief that culture, ethnicity, and race are static entities. There are people of different races, for example, who embrace Muslim culture. It also down-plays binary dichotomies that say, "all Whites must act one way, and all Blacks must speak a certain way." The Human Experience approach promotes a wholesome and fluid definition of multiculturalism. With the Gibson (1976) treatise serving as the initial foundational impetus, other writers proceeded to weigh in on the matter.

One of the more popular and influential models in the field of education is a typology offered by James Banks (2009; 2020). He views most teaching efforts by multicultural instructors as emanating from one of four levels: (a) The contributions approach were the curriculum focus is on heroes, holidays and discrete cultural elements; (b) The additive approach where cultural concepts, themes, and perspectives are added to the curriculum without making any significant change to the dominant-group literary canon; (c) The transformative approach where the core structure of the curriculum is changed to view both history and current events from multiple perspectives, and; (d) The social action approach where students make decisions on important social issues and problems, and then follow up with action to help solve them. The Banks model is often quoted in the literature.

Another popular classification of instructional approaches is provided by Grant and Sleeter (2009). The authors summarize how instructional programs fall into one of 5 categories. First is the Teaching the Culturally Different paradigm. With this approach well-meaning educators take on the task of improving learning for disadvantaged students, but they do so from a cultural deficit framework. Minority students are viewed as lacking the values, abilities, and cultural skills to function in mainstream society. The school's job is to correct perceived deficiencies through forced assimilation, albeit it is often viewed as an act of benevolence by insiders. While the approach has the potential to produce positive results, it fails on measures of addressing cultural exchange, cultural pride, self-esteem, and closing inequity gaps.

Next is the Human Relations approach. Borrowing heavily from the fields of counseling and social psychology, instructors of this persuasion attempt to expose conscious and unconscious motivators behind acts of hatred and discrimination. Motivators can be triggered from a variety of sources such as dysfunctional childhood rearing, sensationalized media, shaky reference others, poor self-concept, faulty learning, and cognitive underdevelopment at both the individual and group level. Much like how a medical doctor utilizes a prescription, reeducation and skill-building become the cures for social dysfunction. In particular, the rooting out of self-defeating ego defense mechanisms and the promotion of better communication skills is heavily relied upon with this paradigm to fix a struggling nation and its people.

Proponents of the Single Studies approach believe that academic fairness and neutrality of education is a myth. Rather, the ruling class uses education to promote a dominant set of values and norms which in turn benefit the ruling class socially and monetarily. Counter truths, ethnic histories, and personal perspectives must be told in order to build a more balanced picture of reality. It is especially important to let underrepresented groups tell their own story. Truth is viewed as colorless, and it is OK for many different truths to simultaneously exist. Oppressed groups do not lack culture or capability, rather those in power define what counts as good and often cast marginal groups in a negative light. The single studies approach does an excellent job of explanting why things such as achievement gaps and wage inequality continue to exist.

Proponents of the Multicultural Education approach push for a pluralistic world where many cultures are blended and appreciated. If left to operate properly, the approach has the potential to result in "modified cultural pluralism" where each group is unique and distinctive from one another, while at the same time displaying a clear and obvious collective identity. With this approach, difference is not feared but celebrated within the confines of a shared national identity. While the dominant canon is not discarded, alternative paradigms are allowed to co-exist equally as a way of describing a more accurate and balanced picture of history. Critique on how minorities are misrepresented in the media and the unfairness of the status quo are exposed.   Expanding the literary canon is a central theme with this paradigm.

Finally, proponents of the Social Justice approach believe that it is not enough to just teach students how to be more humane, civil, and literate. Learners must take the next step and use action to change society. The struggle for such things as power, privilege, land, goods, and resources are seen as the root of social dysfunction.

The scarcer the resources, the more intense the struggle. Establishing collective goals and practicing collaborative decision making are the building blocks of producing a better world. Participatory education is a key correlate. Collective resistance is a liberating agent. Social rebels are not viewed as angry or damaged individuals, but rather as persons who possess the courage to seek self-actualization and better mental health, albeit their choices may not always be peaceful. If students are provided an opportunity to challenge dysfunctional norms, a society free of oppression can be realized.

Angelina Castagno (2010) provides one of the better meta-analyses of multicultural curriculum approaches. Although the paper deserves its own dedicated read, a quick summary of her findings is presented here. Castagno posits that there are six broad multicultural instructional approaches offered in the literature (pp. 47-48). The reader will easily note overlapping similarities between various classifications found in the literature:

1. Educating for Assimilation – A perspective that helps poor and minority children gain the necessary knowledge, skills, and mindset to successfully navigate a white, middle-class existence. Helping disadvantaged kids join the dominant culture [i.e., a cultural deficit model] is seen by proponents as good social policy and a great investment of time and money.
2. Educating for Amalgamation – A school of thought that promotes national unity by emphasizing the things we share in common. This broad approach highlights areas in which the various ethnic groups have the potential to "melt" their culture and join a greater cause.
3. Educating for Pluralism – An approach where cultural differences are not feared, but rather they are celebrated. All cultures, including eurocentrism, equally acknowledged and celebrated is viewed as historically accurate and socio-emotionally balanced and healthy for children.
4. Educating for Cross-Cultural Competence – A pragmatic type of education that emphasizes the need for individuals to become bi-cultural. Whites in America can go through a lifetime of having to only know the norms of their dominant group. Race and ethnic minorities, however, have no choice but to become bi-cultural by successfully navigate their world, plus that of the dominant group.
5. Educating for Critical Awareness – An approach that questions the status quo, investigates the relation of power between groups, and highlights a need to think in new ways that may go against the norms of the dominant group.
6. Educating for Social Action – An approach that highlights the need to go beyond the cognitive awareness stage and delve into getting involved in making structural changes that make society more equitable.

While specific research about instructional approaches is not as abundant as it could be, there does exist related literature that addresses important advice and strategies for educators. For example, Geneva Gay (2004) states that the best multicultural instruction teaches about the atrocities that minorities endured, and the strength and dignified ways in which those groups managed their oppression. In addition, she sates that, "Multicultural education is much more than a few lessons about ethnically diverse individuals and events or a component that operates on the periphery of the education enterprise," (Gay, 2004, p.33). Rather, it must become an articulated and integrated part of the total curriculum throughout the whole school year.

Gloria Ladson-Billings (2005; 2021) highlights three important gaps in our teaching efforts: (a) We do a decent job of recruiting white women into the field of education, but that effort is not matched when it comes to recruiting candidates of color, (b) Too many educators use rhetoric to require multicultural skills and dispositions of students that they themselves don't possess – in some cases their instructional practices have become a politically correct word game, and (c) We unwittingly adopt too much of a 1960's cultural deficit paradigm [i.e., we highlight students' tough environmental backgrounds and the academic and career tools they supposedly lack]. Not enough attention, however, is given to the inner strength of students and their adaptability to be resilient. Multicultural teacher disposition has as much to do with student success and failure as does, knowledge, skills, and environmental impacts (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2011).

2.1 Augmenting the Current Discourse

Diversity instructors clamor for greater clarity. It is the purpose of this research to fill the gap in the literature by introducing a new model that will help augment the current discourse. I agree with Paulo Freire (2005) that (a) researchers, authorities, and pundits don't possess 100% of the knowledge that exists in the world, and that (b) engaging in a process known as "Praxis" – the synchronization of knowledge from both the street and the academy levels – is the best way to uncover knowledge and address social problems. Freire notes that one of the biggest areas of improvement for schools is to allow students to have more input in the learning they will be engaged in. This is the original definition of critical pedagogy. The proposed model is unique in that it employs a bottom-up design that takes into account the goals and desires of students identified in a pilot study (N=443) before they engage in a state mandated multicultural class for teacher certification. Rather than take a traditional approach of consulting the literature and then designing a course around those findings only, I decided to use a reverse-action approach by asking students to identify multicultural concerns and gaps in students' prior education, and goals and aspirations they had for the semester. Listed below are examples of student comments gathered during the pilot study phase—they include:

1. "I grew up in an all-white school and didn't have much interaction with colored people. I have a willingness to learn, but my past teachers didn't know much."
2. "Nobody ever explains to me why minorities are so angry."
3. "It seems like we make race relations more complicated than it really is. Why can't we just all get along?"
4. "We always get this politically correct stuff from teachers, but not the everyday, living-on-the-street, real stuff. I prefer keeping it real."
5. "Why don't teachers ever talk about reverse-racism?"
6. "How come Black people get to say the N-word, but Whites can't? If it's all in the music we buy. Why can't we at least sing along with the lyrics?"
7. "Why are White people so resistant to the concept of White privilege? Do they seriously read their history books?"
8. "Is the teaching of Critical Race Theory an example of reverse racism?"

Again, I strongly believe in Paulo Freire's (2005) concept that our problems are best solved when we combine formal knowledge with the wisdom of everyday people.

Listed below is a new authentic way of classifying multicultural approaches. It is the result of a review of the literature, as well as listening to students and local citizens who may not have been involved in formal research. I believe this classification serves as an important to augment the literature. The classification titles used to describe the categories are offered as a solid starting point only, and could easily be amended:

1. Reparations Approach: A philosophical foundation that highlights wrongs that have been done to certain groups and the natural consequences of that wrong. It introduces what needs to happen to fix hurting people and the broken system they live in. Money is not the only form of reparations that can be utilized.
2. Cultural Similarities Approach: A philosophical foundation that highlights all the things that make us similar, while deemphasizing (or ignoring) those things that make us uniquely different. An instructor of this persuasion will probably not put much stock in studying the past or going into much detail about psychological consequences of poverty and racism. Rather, more attention is paid to creating harmony, patriotism, and the potential for new opportunities.
3. Cultural Differences Approach: This is a philosophical perspective that highlights the need to accept and celebrate our differences instead of fearing them. *Difference is not seen as good or bad, but rather only as different.* Pluralism and inclusion are held in high esteem. Color-blind philosophies are viewed as a politically correct roadblock to a better understanding the real world.
4. The Golden Rule, Love, and Trust-Building Approach: A philosophical foundation that says if left uncheck, the dark side of humans will prevail no matter what cultural group you represent. Hatred is a force to be reckoned with, but it is not as strong as the power of love, light, truth, and forgiveness. Education, integration, collaboration, and religion are seen as key mediators. Heroes such as MLK Jr. are key role models to emulate. Music, art, sports, interactive workshops, and retreats are conduits for social change.

5. Human Relations Approach: A philosophical foundation that highlights three main tenets: (a) We must become more aware of unconscious motives and drives that cause us to be separated from one another, (b) The way to create a better nation is to encourage citizens to become better people, and (c) Head knowledge is not enough. We must help people gain skills to navigate social barriers and tricky psychological terrain. The goal of this approach is to create role models who adopt a Michael Jackson "Man in the mirror" style of social change.

6. The Critical Multicultural Imperative (CMI): This is a philosophy that borrows pieces from all five of the above approaches. It embraces an "eat the meat and spit out the bone" focus. In addition, it relies heavily on the following four tenets: (a) An interdisciplinary approach must be taken. The investigation of psychology and ego defense mechanisms, for example, is just as important as the study of history; (b) Finger pointing, blaming, and the usage of guilt are counterproductive. Partisan politics and grenade throwing are crippling. Collaboration and finding a critical middle are doable goals; (c) Lessons that highlight language policing at the exclusion of more rigorous investigation of disadvantage often fail to provide meaningful long-term social change. Controversy should be embraced as a desired teaching skill; and (d) Of particular interest is the need to investigate power and privilege issues that seem to get overshadowed by well-meaning but nonetheless inept "feel-good" multicultural strategies.

3. Method

3.1 Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study attempts to compare a student-inspired multicultural classification system with the traditional findings that are already captured in the literature. Specifically, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. How will respondents rank an experimental set of instructional approaches that make up an authentic classification scheme for training teacher candidates?
2. How will teacher candidates respond to various curriculum approaches that urge students to probe and go beyond typical "feel good" and "guilt" paradigms?
3. After receiving the treatment, will there be meaningful pretest-to-posttest gains in mean rankings of those scores?
4. Given a chance to eliminate a curriculum approach based on an argument that it has no educational value, which ones (if any) would be identified?

I hypothesize that the treatment plan (i.e., eclectic multicultural instruction) would help students gain a greater appreciation for a curriculum paradigm that require deeper levels of investigation and understanding. Secondly, I hypothesize that despite final rankings – students will find educational value in all six of the proposed curriculum paradigms. Thirdly, I hypothesize that there will be significant pretest-to-posttest growth in appreciation for at least some of the proposed curriculum approaches.

3.2 Participants

Participants who comprised a convenience sample for this study were education majors who attended a Midwestern metropolitan university situated in an urban setting of 800,000 people. Survey respondents (*N*=368) represent a subset drawn from a larger data set *(N=1335)* aimed at identifying various correlates of effective multicultural instruction. One hundred eight students (31%) said that they had received no prior multicultural education. Seventy eight respondents (22.5%) had taken 1 prior class, while 161 persons (43.5%) had taken three or more classes.

Eighty (23%) of the individuals surveyed were male and 267 (77%) were female. Three hundred and three persons (87%) were Caucasian, while 44 (13%) were students of color. Of those forty-four students, 16 were Hispanic, 14 were African American, 12 were Asian, and 2 were of Middle Eastern descent. A low percentage of race minority students applying to become an educator is a long-standing issue for this and many other urban communities. Two hundred eighty persons (76%) possessed only a high school degree, while 80 persons (22%) had obtained an associate's or a bachelor's degree, and 7 individuals (2%) had a post-bachelor's degree. Two hundred sixty-four respondents (76%) voiced a desire to become a classroom teacher, while 13 (4%) saw themselves going into the counseling field. Forty three persons (12%) were non-education majors who took the class as an elective.

3.3 Study Design

The design of the study utilized a survey of the perceptions of education majors. Respondents were asked to rank the viability and overall impact of the multicultural curriculum designs previously outlined. The treatment plan was the instruction of multicultural education utilizing a mixture of all the curriculum approaches over a 16-week course.

The survey consisted of a pre and a post semester student ranking of 6 selected multicultural paradigms from which the class was taught. Students were made aware that there is a measure of overlap between the instructional approaches, and yet each paradigm has its own unique characteristics. A thorough description of each was provided at the beginning of the semester. The survey also includes two questions measuring student personal and professional growth, a question gauging whether the instructor encouraged independent thinking, and an additional question judging the efficacy of learning how to disagree without being disagreeable. The additional questions were included to help control for social desirability bias.

3.4 Data Analysis

Utilizing the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) computer program, the following statistical analyses were conducted:

1. A summarization of descriptive findings; and
2. A paired-sample t-test to determine pre-test-to-post-test mean score differences.

Cohen's *d* (population mean divided by the standard deviation) will be utilized to report effect size for paired-sample t-test results.

4. Results

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 provides descriptive results for the "quality control" variables in my study. On a nine-point scale (with 9 being exceptionally high and 1 being a very low rating) students rated their professional growth an 8.20 score and their personal growth a 7.96. These are high scores considering the course is state mandated, and the racial make-up is 87% Caucasian from a part of the country that is heavily conservative. Students gave a strong rating [8.19] to the instructional effort that encourages them to become independent thinkers, and not become just a clone of the instructor. Respondents also gave strong backing [8.64] for a concept that says education majors must know more than multicultural content; they must also master the skill of knowing how to disagree without being disagreeable. Respondents also appreciated the idea of an instructor teaching many truths, even when those views are opposite, and then having faith in students that they will arrive at a well-informed conclusion of their own [score of 8.44]. Finally, regarding the issue of the legitimacy of teaching about white privilege, respondents gave a score of 7.20.

Table 2 provides descriptive results of how students ranked the six instructional approaches. During the pre-test phase, respondents ranked the curriculum paradigms from most-to-least impactful in the following order: Teach Human Relations Skills (*M*=2.67, *SD*=1.46); Promote More Love and Build Trust (*M*=3.02, *SD*=1.63); the Critical Multicultural Imperative (*M*=3.12, *SD*=1.66); Highlight Cultural Similarities (*M*=3.45, *SD*=1.50); Highlight Cultural Differences (*M*=3.61, *SD*=1.48), and; Don't Ignore Reparations (*M*=5.11, *SD*=1.37).

Post-treatment rankings from most-to-least impactful are as follows (see Table 3): Critical Multicultural Imperative (*M*=2.48, *SD*=1.58); Human Relations (*M*=2.51, *SD*=1.51); Cultural Similarities (*M*=3.62, *SD*=1.35); Love and Build Trust (*M*=3.67, *SD*=1.62); Cultural Differences (*M*=3.78, *SD*=1.41), and; Reparations (*M*=4.93, *SD*=1.45). The hypothesis that an eclectic multicultural instructional approach would be impactful on students proved to be true.

The results of which curriculum paradigm students would eliminate if given a chance are found in Table 3. My hypothesis that students would find educational value in all 6 of the curriculum paradigms proved to be true. When given a chance to eliminate one of the approaches due to potential lack of impact on learning, respondents (N=369) chose unanimously to keep the four highest ranked paradigms. Only 4 respondents (1%) said to eliminate the Cultural Differences approach, and only 15 (4%) did not care for a Reparations style of instruction.

4.2 Paired-Sample t-test Analysis

The results of the paired-sample T-test can be found in Table 4. Results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in scores when comparing the rankings of the pre-test scores for the CMI approach (mean=3.12, standard deviation=1.66) with those of the post-test (mean=2.45, standard deviation=1.60) phase of the study (t(361)=6.243, p<.0005). In addition, there was a statistically significant difference when looking at pre-test Trust Building Approach scores (mean=3.02, standard deviation=1.63) compared to the results of the post-test (mean=3.67, standard deviation=1.63) phase (t(361)=-5.732, p<.0005). The effect size statistic for both variables is .40, which is considered small, but still statistically significant.

5. Discussion

The overall goals of this research are threefold. First, the review of literature is included to help the reader better understand the various multicultural instructional approaches that are popular with most educators. Second, an experimental, bottom-up, student-influenced classification scheme is offered as an alternative to help instructors better manage authentic questions such as "Can't we just all do what Martin Luther King Jr. instructed us to do?" This type of questioning is often voiced by students, but not necessarily addressed by traditional research. Thirdly, this study investigates the wisdom of utilizing an eclectic instructional approach. No one curriculum approach can satisfy the needs of today's inquiring student. Borrowing the best elements from the existing paradigms, and then synthesizing that product with a critical, cross-discipline approach seemed to work best for this convenience sample of education majors.

Significant pretest-to-posttest changes in mean score rankings were found for two of the new proposed paradigms: A critical pedagogy style of instruction referred to here as CMI instruction, and a style built upon a belief that the world needs more love and trust. Although both approaches were deemed important in the overall instruction of teacher candidates, students initially preferred the latter paradigm over the former. During the post-test period, however, those preferences were reversed.

All of the curriculum approaches proved to be valuable; this was corroborated by respondents who said to retain all six approaches. They don't all meet the same need. Some approaches have more of an introductory value, while some are designed to enhance a feeling of community. Other approaches have the potential to help learners solve difficult social problems at a deeper level. The CMI approach does an outstanding job of helping students understand power and privilege issues at a level that often escapes our conscious awareness. Likewise, Human Relations training can help us better understand how poor communication skills can negatively impact cross-cultural communication. It also highlights the subtle games people play with themselves and others that block advancement. The underappreciated concept of learning how to disagree without being disagreeable is a skill that can be taught with skillful classroom preparation. Showing how the various groups are similar is smart; it focuses everyone on a collective national identity. Conversely, showing how we are different keeps citizens grounded in how the world works beyond the theoretical. It also encourages us to celebrate, and not fear our differences.

Although the Reparations approach was ranked last during both the pre and post stages of the study, respondents were still able to see a need for a paradigm that helps make people whole before we demand greater production and patriotism out of certain groups. Reparations is often misunderstood. It is not always about demanding a check from the government. Tiptoeing around the damage lead poisoning can do to the minds of young learners is one example of how the lack of attention to reparations can further cloud our progress.

One of the limitations of this study that it describes a big picture without providing instructional detail. Unfortunately, the nuances of effective multicultural instruction cannot be fully captured in a space-limited publication. Ultimately, a textbook on the subject will need to be written. At the very least, I plan to write follow-up articles detailing teaching strategies that explain high learner and teacher ratings. Another limitation is that pretest-posttest differences in mean scores only had a small effect size. One might also argue that until this study is replicated that the magnitude and transferability of the findings are limited.

Despite these limitations, the results are important. First and foremost, proposed classification scheme helps to fill a gap in the literature. Traditional classifications do an excellent job of providing direction, but more is always better. This study also shows that a multi-discipline approach provides the best opportunity for multicultural education to have a lasting impact on students. The integration of inputs from the fields of psychology, sociology, communications, music, religion, critical pedagogy, polemics, etc. can enhance the multicultural learning experience of teacher candidates.

This study demonstrates that the axiom that says "know thyself" must be applied not only to students, but also to instructors. Having greater awareness of what you do, why you do it, and how do it will make you a better educator. It is also important to know how and why other colleagues approach multicultural education differently than you do. It is hoped that the new classification offered here will help generate healthy debate, with the goal of establishing better articulation of multicultural goals and aims.

Most people make decisions about race and human relations not only by what scholars say, but also by the home training they receive and by what they feel is common sense thinking. The new scheme proposed in this study takes more of that reality into consideration. The goal is not to replace, but rather to augment that which is already established. The proposed scheme is not 100% original, but rather an amalgam of old and new knowledge.

5.1 Implications for Educators

When designing multicultural curriculum at the teacher preparation level, we must be careful not to trivialize our efforts with "kumbaya" and "feel-good" approaches. This study shows that teacher candidates are not fragile, and that they have a desire to engage in dialogue that is at a deeper level. Conversely, it is OK to talk about controversial topics without digressing into a guilt and blame mode. Meaningful discussions on topics such as White privilege and how a portion of today's youth embrace the N-Word are just a few examples of subject matter that many instructors avoid addressing. Young people today want to keep it real. The embracement of controversy can be a valuable teaching tool when managed properly.

Teacher preparation programs must make a concerted effort to include instructional strategies and activities that highlight the layered effect of race and human relations. If we truly aim to make a qualitative difference, we might need more than "can't we just all get along?" rhetoric. While it is true that promoting more love, building trust, and providing safe places for children provides us with an admirable target to shoot for, those paradigms in and of themselves do not solve problems – they only provide hope. This study shows that in addition to love, trust, and celebrating similarities, teacher candidates want to learn more about perspectives and skills that are rooted in the CMI, Human Relations, and Reparations approaches.

Of course, we must be age appropriate in our remediation efforts. Because this study suggests that the CMI approach is better understood and received by an older crowd (see Table 5), it might be wise for teachers at the secondary level to lead off with the Human Relations and Cultural Differences approaches and conclude with elements of CMI. At the elementary school level, however, it is probably smart to lead off with the Love/Trust Building and the Cultural Similarities approaches to help build a foundation for more advanced subject matter to be added later. In-service training for educators should incorporate all the approaches.

It is understood that permeating instruction makes a difference in student learning. Curriculum approaches that were formulated during the 1960s, 70s, and 80s provide a solid foundation for multicultural education, but changing times dictate that methods of teaching be adapted to reflect a changing world. Since that era, a true global society has emerged, and the definition of multicultural education has broadened.

On-going, lifelong multicultural learning is best encouraged by using an eclectic instructional approach. Today's students prefer that we give them truth from multiple angles, and then trust them to make an informed decision. Multicultural education should do more of this and less of the older-school proselytizing approach. It is also appropriate to let teacher candidates know whether they are a good fit to work with other people's children. We cannot legally force students to change their college major, but we can counsel those who are not a good fit to pursue other career goals.

The art of managing social polemics is never an easy road to traverse. The critical middle is a hard place to find, but it can be done. An eclectic instructional approach that reaches across multiple academic disciplines is one of the better weapons we have in our toolbox. The results of this study demonstrate that meaningful human relations do not occur by happenstance, but rather by the purposeful, critical, and creative efforts of educators to properly instruct and inform students.

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Table 1

Post-survey descriptive results of "quality control" questions.

Dispositional Question (1-9 Likert scale)	Mean	*SD*	*N*
How I rate my professional growth as a result of this class	8.20	1.20	369
How I rate my personal growth as a result of this class	7.96	1.39	369
The instructor encouraged me to be an independent thinker and not just a clone of himself.	8.19	1.36	368
I must learn how to disagree without being disagreeable	8.64	0.81	304
It is good for multicultural instructors to teach about many truths, and then have faith in their students to make an informed decision about what to believe.	8.44	0.96	304

Table 2
Pre-test ranking of the most-to-least impactful multicultural curriculum approaches that make an impact on multicultural learning.

Disposition	Pre-Ranking	Mean	SD	N
Critical Multicultural Imperative	3rd	3.12	1.58	367
Human Relations Approach	1st	2.67	1.46	367
Cultural Similarities Approach	4th	3.45	1.50	367
Trust Building Approach	2nd	3.02	1.63	368
Cultural Differences Approach	5th	3.61	1.48	367
Reparations Approach	6th	5.11	1.37	368

Table 3
Post-test ranking of: (a) Most-to-least impactful multicultural curriculum approaches that make an impact on multicultural learning, and (b) Curriculum approaches that should be discarded.

Disposition	Post Ranking	Mean	SD	Ranking N	Retain N	Discard N
Critical Multicultural Imperative	1st	2.47	1.58	369	369	0
Human Relations Approach	2nd	2.51	1.51	369	369	0
Cultural Similarities Approach	3rd	3.62	1.35	369	369	0
Trust Building Approach	4th	3.67	1.62	369	369	0
Cultural Differences Approach	5th	3.78	1.41	369	365	4
Reparations Approach	6th	4.94	1.45	369	354	15

Table 4
Paired-Sample t-test Results: Statistically meaningful pretest-to-posttest differences in mean scores for the rankings of curriculum preferences.

Disposition	Pre M	SD	Post M	SD	df	t-score	p	d
Critical Multicultural Imperative	3.12	1.66	2.48	1.58	361	6.243	>.0005	0.4
More Love & Build Trust Approach	3.02	1.63	3.67	1.62	361	5.732	>.0005	0.4