Impact of study circles on attitudes toward racial and ethnic equity among adolescent student participants

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Impact of Study Circles on Attitudes toward Racial and Ethnic Equity among Adolescent Student Participants

William J. Anders
May 2014

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Curriculum and Instruction Educational Theory and Practice, School of Education University at Albany, State University of New York

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May 2014
Abstract

The Study Circle Program is an experiential intervention designed to promote understanding of ethnic and racial diversity and positively impact adolescent student attitudes and action toward promoting transformative racial and ethnic equity. This mixed method study examined the program's impact in assisting students with respect to developing attitudes to support racial and ethnic equity. Students offered perspectives through qualitative and quantitative measures to reveal their perception of how racial and ethnic differences affect their daily life as well as their ability to promote equity with respect to racial and ethnic differences. Quantitative data, collected through analysis of attitudinal survey results, is triangulated with qualitative data collected from focus group interviews and observations. Data is analyzed in light of multicultural theory and John Dewey's (1938) theory of experience, using a grounded analysis. Study circles demonstrated an impact on participant attitudes related to race and ethnic equity. This was demonstrated through participant expressions of continuity, with respect to some indicators of multicultural competence, and through participant application of antdiscriminatory behavior in the roles study circle participants took in response to bias. The roles participants demonstrated are situated along a hierarchy of response: the captive role, was identified in the data when participants had no response or reported participating in racial and ethnic episodes of bias; the clarifier role was evident when participants expressed a desire for information to reduce bias; and the facilitator role was identified when participants took specific action to respond to reduce bias in their social contexts.
Acknowledgments

I express gratitude to my committee chair, Dr. Robert Bangert-Drowns. Dr. Bangert-Drowns supported my dissertation journey in countless ways, chief of which was expressed in his generosity of rich feedback and frequent discussions about my research. Without his thoughtful and persistent caring about my research process, this dissertation would not have been possible.

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In addition, I thank the staff, adult volunteers and student members of Study Circles, whose unfettered access to meetings and materials was critical in supporting my analysis of the effectiveness of this multicultural initiative.

Finally, I thank my family for their loving support and understanding when I was away working in an ivory tower (usually a local coffee shop) to complete my dissertation.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

Actual and implicit racial and ethnic bias persists and is demonstrated in social interactions among children in our K-12 schools (Castagno, 2009; Epstein, 2009). As schools operate in a social context, it is important to examine how students respond when learning about issues related to race, ethnicity and other facets of human diversity. Multicultural experiential education, or the use of socially responsive and constructed activities, hold promise as an educational strategy to support student understanding of diverse perspectives (Roaten, 2009). Study circles are experiential programs implemented to support student learning about racial and ethnic diversity and promote student multicultural awareness and support positive attitudes toward equity.

As part of the study circle experience, students learn through activities, reading material, educational videos, and discussion how race and ethnicity (as well as other constructs of human diversity) impact student experience. In study circles, students plan and carry out multicultural awareness action steps in their school community to teach others to be aware and respectful of human diversity. Dewey (1938) states that a theory of experience can determine the value of any given educational experience on participants as it relates to: participant background; what is happening in the learning environment at the time of the experience; what may happen in the future; and what kind of contribution the experience can make to society. As race and ethnicity are central ideas discussed in the study circle program, multicultural frameworks and critical race theory (CRT) are also well suited to support analytic interpretation in this study (Banks, 2009; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Quay, 2003).
The racial and ethnic diversity of the United States is rooted in the existence of an indigenous North American population, immigration, and the history of the propagation of slavery. Historically, U.S. racial and ethnic minorities have experienced barriers to citizenship, societal and educational inequity, and other such prejudices (Banks, 1997). Recent U.S. Census statistics (Table 1), reveal increasing diversification in U.S. society. American Indian, Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Other Race (those who may identify as multi-racial or consider themselves a race other than those formally listed) grew in the number of people; however, White respondents declined as a percentage of the U.S. Population (Humes, 2011). During the 2010 U.S. Census, respondents didn’t have Hispanic or Latino as a racial category of choice. However, people could choose “Hispanic or Latino” as their origin, and this portion of the U.S. population grew at a rate of 3.8% since the 2000 U.S. Census—the fastest growing category in the population (Humes, 2011, p.4). A large part of the growth of the Hispanic and Asian populations is attributed to the increased immigration over the past decade (Humes, 2011, p.22). Hispanic respondents often selected “Other Race” category in the census, with some responding as “White” or “Black,” so growth in all three of those racial categories can also be attributed, in part, to a growing Hispanic population.

Much of the conflict between people based on perceived racial or ethnic differences is rooted in the variance of opportunity as in-groups, those with more authority in society, are at odds with out-groups, or the groups that lack societal power (Erickson, 2001). A hegemony of bias based on race and ethnicity leads to inequity of opportunity in our society and in our schools; this form of oppression is evident in incidents related to the perceived differences of race or ethnicity (Tillotson, 2011).
Table 1

Number and Percentages of U. S. Population Growth with Respect to Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Racial Categories</th>
<th>2000 Census</th>
<th></th>
<th>2010 Census</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of people</td>
<td>% of U. S. Population</td>
<td># of people</td>
<td>% of U. S. Population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>211,460,626</td>
<td>75.1</td>
<td>223,553,265</td>
<td>72.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>34,658,190</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>38,929,319</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>10,242,998</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>14,674,252</td>
<td>4.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native</td>
<td>2,475,956</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>2,932,248</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>398,835</td>
<td>.1</td>
<td>540,013</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Race</td>
<td>22,185,301</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>28,116,441</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. U. S. Census Report C2010BR-02 (Humes, 2011)

According to recent U.S. Department of Justice statistics from 2003 to 2009, an average of 195,000 hate-crimes occurred each year. Of the documented hate crimes (crimes committed with evidence of racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation prejudice), nearly 90% related to perceived racial or ethnic differences (Langton, 2011). In one high profile bias case, two dozen South Philadelphia High School Asian students were beaten, and some hospitalized, because of their ethnicity (Gym, 2009). In another case of bias violence, five teenagers, from western New York, were charged with firing a shotgun and yelling anti-Muslim epithets at people gathered at a mosque (Baker, 2010). These bias-related incidents, unfortunately, are not isolated cases. In a survey of 2400 high school students, the California Safe Schools Coalition found over 20% of Asian, Multiracial and Hispanic high school students reporting bias-motivated harassment in their school environment (Russell, 2009).
The bias evident in violence related to racial or ethnic prejudices is also at work in our schools in subtle ways that Hawley and Nieto (2010, p. 66) refer to as “an inconvenient truth…all of us, regardless of our skin color, are biased against, or at least relatively uncomfortable with, people whose race and ethnicity are different from our own.” Furthermore, this bias has a pervasive influence on limiting school success for most students of color as Black and Hispanic students experience lower overall academic achievement compared to their White peers (Singleton, 2006). Education, through the process of desegregation, immigrant assimilation, and transmission of societal norms, has long been impacted by issues related to race and ethnicity (Apple, 1996).

**Cultural Boundaries**

When differences are perceived as threatening to a particular racial or ethnic group, these perceived differences create “boundaries.” These are revealed when individuals from one cultural group reject individuals from another cultural group based on a perception of cultural differences: language, racial features, religious practices or other perceived differences. These cultural differences are socially constructed (Barth, 1981, p.204). At times, these differences can form multiple boundaries that separate people and are rooted in “implicit and invisible aspects of culture” (Erikson, 2001, p.42). When boundaries exist, meaning is easily misconstrued, as different perspectives lead to different interpretations, and often these boundaries are not implicit and remain unspoken (Barth, 1969). Race and ethnicity represent a facet of diversity among people and create boundaries marked by bias behavior as negative attitudes exhibited toward people with differing racial or ethnic perspectives occur (Applebaum, 2002; Erikson, 2001). Misinterpretation resulting from perceived boundaries is bridged through dialog between
individuals or groups as differences are expressed, understanding is gained, and tolerance is supported. People then navigate the boundaries to contribute to improved understanding between people from different races and ethnicities (Barth, 1969; Erikson, 2001, p. 43-44).

**Multicultural Education and Adolescents**

Recognizing and including multiple ethnic and racial perspectives in educational curriculum is a primary goal of multicultural education (Gorski, 1999). Over the past fifty years, multicultural education has supported educators as they teach about the impact of race and ethnicity in the context of society, represent diverse cultural perspectives in the curriculum, and work to include culturally relevant modes of instruction (Banks, 1997). Multicultural educational theory is also shaped by social context, cultural perspectives, and differences individuals perceive in the societal context (Johnson, 2003). Multicultural education takes a transformative role when it promotes strategies to focus on equity for students through impacting the social and political context of a community. Multicultural activities, in this role, combat racism or other unfair practices related to a student’s racial or ethnic perspectives (Meyer, 2006). The transformative role of multicultural education represents critical thinking about how ethnic and racial perspectives are viewed and demonstrate impact in the world (Meyer, 2006).

Students need to respond to increasingly diverse social constructions, boundaries, and opportunities in which they navigate their current and future adult lives (Banks, 2009). Adolescents, children between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, engage in negotiation of racial and ethnic boundaries as they develop their awareness of the impact of social interaction and reflect on how race and ethnicity impact that socialization (Hawley, 2011;
Ruffin, 2009). Adolescents also develop their concepts of social justice and begin to
demonstrate social advocacy on behalf of that concept; this developmental stage matches
the purpose stated for higher levels of application for multicultural education (Ruffin,
2009; Singleton, 2006). As youth develop ethnic identity about themselves and others,
there are a number of programs supporting this development, yet there is a lack of clarity
on how those school or community programs influence this development (Quintana,
2010).

Banks’ articulated a framework to describe levels of multicultural education
(Howe, 2006). The Banks hierarchy categorizes multicultural applications in an
educational setting and ascribes differential benefits to particular multicultural education
practices (Howe, 2006).

The following levels are represented in the Banks’ model:

- Level 1 (Contributions Approach) is represented by discrete cultural events in
  education (e.g. recognition of diverse ethnic holidays);
- Level 2 (Additive Approach) is represented by the addition of multicultural topics
  and themes to a curriculum;
- Level 3 (Transformation Approach) supports student understanding of subject
  matter or experiences from diverse points of view;
- Level 4 (Social Action Approach) is when students identify social problems and
  develop possible solutions to an inequity they perceive (Banks, 1997).

Banks also offered a six-step typology of ethnic understanding of development to
describe the growth individuals make in their acceptance and understanding of human diversity, and this tool categorizes identity growth that individuals make with respect to understanding and appreciating diverse cultural perspectives (Mushi, 2004).

Critical Race Theory

Singleton (2006, p. 172) defines race as physically identifiable characteristics that distinguish groups of people, such as skin color, and ethnicity as cultural differences represented in language, music, food and customs. Critical race theory (CRT) recognizes race as socially defined through opportunities given based on perceived race and discrimination in how people treat one another based on perceived racial differences; when race is socially defined and negative treatment based on perceived race (racism) exists, people have an opportunity to respond and contribute to defining the impact of race at the individual level in a particular social context (Esposito, 2011; Solorzano, 2000). The CRT framework recognizes that socially defined racial differences can yield benefits to some, such as advanced property rights including access to quality education. In American society, those considered racially white have obvious and subtle advantages over racial minorities, and this has led to inequity of opportunity over time (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ortiz, 2010). As manifestations of this inequity, critical race theorists point to “micro-aggressions,” verbal and nonverbal expressions of discrimination that support a racially biased social structure (Solorzano, 2000, p.62). Legal scholars and educational researchers developed CRT to look at how race and ethnicity impacts the individual and is defined through social construction (Ladson-Billings, 1995). The CRT paradigm supports analyzing racially relevant social experiences (including micro-aggressions) and societal transformation toward equity as revealed through individual
responses in racially relevant social situations (Ortiz, 2010. P. 176).

Despite the contention of CRT theorists that adolescents develop ideas and biases about race and ethnicity, there is a paucity of conversation in our schools about how race and ethnicity impact young people’s attitudes and opportunities (Singleton, 2006). Tatum (2007) expressed this eloquently in a series of questions she asked in her collection of research-based lectures.

Can we talk about race? Do we know how? Does the childhood segregation of our schools and neighborhoods and the silence about race in our culture inhibit our capacity to have meaningful dialogue with others, particularly in the context of cross-racial relationships? Can we get beyond our fear, our sweaty palms, our anxiety about saying the wrong thing, or using the wrong words, and have an honest conversation about racial issues (p.xiii).

**Study Circles**

Some schools employ study circles to promote adolescent student participation in multicultural education and conversation about the impact of race and ethnicity (Roberts, 2003). Study circles have roots in a Swedish democracy initiative that supported equal access to information and discussion related to community improvement, and they have been occurring for over one hundred years. Study circles are comprised of a group of people who volunteer to meet with a purpose of learning about a topic, are guided by a facilitator, and develop action steps as a result of their study (Larsson, 2001). For almost two decades, study circles have been utilized throughout the United States at both K-12
and higher education sites for the expressed purpose of improving relations between people that have diverse cultural and racial perspectives (Roberts, 2003). Study circles offer adolescent students a trained facilitator and regular meetings or activities to build understanding and appreciation of ethnic racial perspectives as they relate to society and individual lives. In short, study circles have the goal to reduce prejudiced attitudes related to race and ethnicity as well as to support student application of multicultural understanding to foster racial and ethnic equity.

The Study Circle program that is the subject of this research began working with high school students in a community in the Northeastern U.S. in 2000 and has averaged 100 students each year. Through this study circles program, student perspectives are discussed in a series of conversations about racial and ethnic identity and equity. Students respond to the constructs of race and ethnicity in a variety of ways including: completing an attitude survey, responding to a video representing the impact of prejudice, participating in conversations related to personal perspectives, collaborating on small group tasks and responding to discrimination case examples. After meeting for two days with a facilitator to discuss how race and ethnicity impact student lives, study circle participants continue to meet over the course of three to six months for further discussion and to develop steps supporting racial and ethnic equity at their school site. In this way, the study circle program offers an experiential intervention to positively impact student attitudes and related behaviors. As a result of this study circle experience, students are expected to strengthen their attitudes related to appreciation of diverse perspectives and develop an action plan to support diversity awareness in their school community. Two examples of former action
projects include planning a “mix it up” day in the cafeteria (inspiring students to sit with different people at lunch and fostering conversation) and organizing a student visitation experience that brought together students from an urban and suburban high school.

Adolescents, children between the ages of thirteen and nineteen, are the focus of this study circle program. At this age, children are engaged in the negotiation of racial and ethnic boundaries as they develop through the stages of defining their own identity, advancing their awareness of the impact of social interaction and reflecting on how race and ethnicity impact socialization (Hawley, 2011; Ruffin, 2009). Furthermore, adolescents begin to develop concepts of social justice and start to take action or demonstrate advocacy on behalf of their concepts of social justice. This developmental stage matches the purpose stated for higher levels of application for multicultural education (Ruffin, 2009; Singleton, 2006).

Theory of Experience

In considering educational effectiveness, Dewey (1938) put forth a theory of experience. According to Dewey (1938), any educational experience combines participant skills, background, and motivation in a present context (interaction) and the potential impact of that educational event on future situations (continuity). In short, this theory offers an overall evaluative framework to, “measure…educative significance and value of an experience” (Dewey, 1938).

Experience arises from the interaction of two principles—continuity and interaction. Continuity is that each experience a person has will influence his/her
future, for better or worse. Interaction refers to the situational influence on one’s experience. The value of the experience is to be judged by the effect that experience has on the individual’s present, their future, and the extent to which the individual is able to contribute to society (Neill, 2005, p.1).

Dewey’s theory of experience framed the analysis of participant responses by supporting the classification of the data as a behavior in a situation (interaction) or as an attitude about using the information gained from the study circle program to be used in future situations (continuity). The impact of this study circle program is then revealed in the attitudinal change expressed by participants as a result of their participation in study circles and in the behaviors (or roles) taken by study circle participants. Dewey’s theory of experience thus offers a paradigm to support understanding how an individual’s attitudes and behaviors impact their “social space” (or social contexts) and to demonstrate an impact of a particular educational experience on an individual (Allen, 1999, p.1).

**Study Design**

Participants in this study came from a study circle program, located in a community in the Northeastern United States, designed to allow students from several high schools to examine and respond to inequities resulting from prejudices regarding race, ethnicity, and other human differences. At the outset of the study circle experience, students completed a researcher-constructed survey, the Student Perceptions and Attitudes on Race and Ethnicity (SPARE) survey (see Appendix A). This instrument measured attitudes related to race and ethnicity by asking subjects to indicate their level of
agreement with specific statements (1=strongly agree, 2= agree, 3=undecided, 4=disagree, and 5=strongly disagree). This same survey was given to some of the study participants four months later to inform interview questions and to compare the participants’ prior attitudes with those after three months of involvement in the program. Content validity of the survey was strengthened by adapting questions from other research-tested multicultural surveys, analyzing the reactions of a pilot focus group to the survey, and having the survey reviewed by trained study circle facilitators (Scriven, 1991). A pilot study was conducted in spring 2011 in order to test focus group protocol and have the survey reviewed by study circle participants. Through this process, the survey instrument was checked for clarity, access to a study group was established, and interview questions were checked for validity (Seidman, 1998). Piloting is a critical step to test whether the structure of the data collection plan matches the goals for the research (Seidman, 1998). The SPARE survey provided quantitative data to examine the effectiveness of the study circle program among a group of participants. Survey responses were then triangulated to support the qualitative data analysis of observational notes from study circle meetings as well as student focus group data from sessions that occurred after four months of study circle involvement. The tandem use of quantitative and qualitative is a “mixed method” research model and is considered by many researchers as a “preferred mode of understanding the world” (Creswell, 2006. P. 10).

**Research Questions and Analysis**

As I investigated youth participation and perceptions related to this multicultural educational initiative (study circles), I asked participants to directly relay their perspective to better understand how participants are affected by this educational intervention as
demonstrated by changes in their perceptions of racial and ethnic differences and in the types of actions taken in response to perceived bias (Hastie, 2006). As the study circle program supported students in developing a plan for a school-based project or action plan to address issues related to racial and ethnic bias, ongoing dialog related to issues of discrimination occurred. Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience offered a framework to examine this multicultural educational program.

Particular attention was paid to how study circle participants took on social roles as they addressed issues of race and ethnicity in a multicultural project context and in the context of their lives. The following research questions guided this inquiry.

1. How does study circle participation impact adolescent participants’ attitudes related to race and ethnicity?

2. What roles do study circle participants demonstrate when faced with bias situations?

Effectiveness of multicultural educational programming is best understood and articulated by those who are actually involved with applying multicultural understanding in their school settings (LeCompte, 2003). As this research focused on understanding how particular students express attitudes related to race and ethnicity as a result of a particular program, this study supports development of substantive theory (Merriam, 1998). Participants revealed particular insights and responses to study circles and represented specific role responses to bias.

A substantive theory consists of categories, properties, and hypotheses. Categories, and the properties that define or illuminate the categories, are conceptual elements of the theory. Hypotheses are the relationships drawn among
categories and properties. These hypotheses are tentative and are derived from the study. They are not set out at the beginning of the study to be tested (Merriam, 1998, p.18).

Information gathered through survey responses, focus groups and observations was interpreted with respect to this specific population of adolescents and their school context. Although critical race theory and the Banks’ multicultural theory informed me as a researcher, I also utilized an open-minded approach through Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience and grounded analysis to identify new descriptors of participant responses. From those descriptors, I built categories to better understand how participants experience study circles and express their attitudes related to race and ethnicity. As a grounded theory analysis, I followed the three main stages of coding:

1. **Open Coding**, all texts (observational notes, memos and focus group transcriptions) were read and reflected upon to develop possible analytic categories.

2. **Axial Coding**, categories are further refined, edited and theoretical connections are expressed

3. **Selective Coding**, a central story or explanation is offered as a substantive theory to relate the previously established codes or categories (Corbin, 2008b; Creswell, 2008; Gibbs, 2010)

The study was designed to reveal how students, in different school settings, responded to study circles and to build theoretical categories that describe how participants in study
circles respond to situations of bias and developed and demonstrate new attitudes related to race and ethnicity (Scriven, 1991).

There was no limit placed on how many subjects were involved in the study as this was dependent upon the network established during the study, gaining subject assent, and the numbers of actual study circle participants at each school site. A snowball approach, through consultation with students, educators, and community members, identified subjects that participated in diversity study circles who had a willingness to participate in the post survey and focus groups. Research approval was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and subjects (and parents/guardians of subjects) completed and signed permission slips.

Study circle participants were surveyed prior to their involvement in this experiential study circle intervention and students who participated in the focus group portion of the research were post-surveyed after four months of involvement with their diversity study circle group. As multiple subjects and data sources were examined, triangulation occurred, thus preventing “the investigator from accepting too readily the validity of initial impressions; it enhances the scope, density and clarity of constructs collected, a “constant comparative” method was also utilized for analyzing descriptors and categories from all data sources and then comparing those with generally accepted multicultural theoretical models (namely Banks’ levels and typology frameworks as well as CRT). This provided a direction for data collection and lenses for analyzing texts (Merriam, 1998, p. 191). This method in conjunction with grounded theory analysis supported the examination of similarities and differences between student responses from different school settings, backgrounds, and perspectives. This flexible comparative
process helped me relate new data to previously coded data and enhanced internal validity as opinions gained from participants informed follow-up questions and thorough examination of areas of agreement or disagreement (LeCompte, 2003).

This research contributes to the limited data in the field with respect to how adolescent students in a school setting respond and are impacted by issues related to race or ethnicity (Meyer, 2006). As this study occurred in natural settings with authentic subjects involved in a community of practice to support racial and ethnic equity, CRT further informed the coding of data and the analysis of statements by adolescents (Herrington, 2000).

This study also offered an opportunity for my own growth in an area of personal and professional concern and commitment. As a public school elementary educator, I encounter situations where students express misunderstanding and experience bullying related to race and ethnicity. This study built on and further extended my knowledge of the effective use of multicultural educational practices. In this way, my research also reflects Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience as I take the context and learning present in my examination of study circles (interaction) and use it to inform my future work as an educator to reduce bias (continuity) in learning communities in which I am involved.

The rationale and process for studying this experiential multicultural educational intervention program was established in Chapter One. Chapter Two describes the scholarship on the purposes of multicultural education, the features of critical race theory, applications of Dewey’s theory of experience, and the possibility of new insights on effective multicultural education.
Chapter 2

Literature Review

A student brings multiple perspectives to the classroom experience. These perspectives relate to a student’s identity and informed by learning style, gender, race, ethnicity, language, religion, abilities, disabilities, sexual orientation, economic status, and other factors that influence an individual’s response in an educational environment (Erickson, 2001). Effective schools are more likely to consider the many perspectives a child brings to the learning environment (Nieto, 2001). Student identity (particularly as related to race and ethnicity), expressed attitudes, and the resulting impact on curriculum, instruction, and the learning environment are the focus of work in the field of multicultural education (Castagno, 2009).

Multicultural education in the United States emerged with the increased immigration during the early part of the twentieth century and as a support for the significant numbers of African Americans that migrated to northern cities during the 1930s and 1940s (Banks, 2002). Early multicultural educational initiatives worked to maintain ethnic identities of immigrants and help reduce racial and ethnic tension. These trends continued into the late 1930s and 1940s as World War II influenced migration patterns in the United States. The early multicultural work was carried out by intercultural educators; these educators responded to the conflict caused by the economic competition for jobs, loss of cultural practices, and discrimination during the early half of the last century (McGee Banks, 2005).

One early intercultural educator, Rachel Davis Dubois, worked to build collaboration between education and community resources through culturally based
assemblies and found this practice effective at building tolerance among students with cultural differences (Davis, 2002). The idea of supporting racial and ethnic understanding through assemblies and other resources characterized this multicultural work during the late 1930s and early 1940s. Dubois also provided direction for research on intercultural education by founding the Service Bureau for Intercultural Education to promote minority viewpoints and focus on efforts to promote ethnic identity (Davis, 2002). In this early work, the foundation and goals of multicultural education began to take form.

The United States’ Civil Rights Movement of the late 1950s and through the 1960s provided further impetus for the development of multicultural education. Equal access to public education, regardless of race, became a fundamental right through a process of political conflict and led to the legally required desegregation of American Schools as Brown v. Board of Education in 1954 struck down the separate but equal doctrine that dominated the early twentieth century school environments and paved the way to desegregation and increased interaction of children from different racial background (Banks, 1997). The Civil Rights Movement became a period of transformational practice and social action; structural change in society and in schools occurred as a result of personal and civic problem solving efforts throughout the movement. Some of those changes included the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, desegregation of schools in the southern United States, passage of the Immigration Reform Act of 1965 (removing expressed quotas for immigration), Title IX of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 1972 (making sex bias in education illegal), and the beginning of research into improving children’s racial attitudes, as well as passage of federal and state laws supporting educational and access equity for all Americans with disabilities (Banks, 2002).
Over the past four decades, multicultural education has grown as a reform and established itself as a fixture on the educational landscape (Applebaum, 2002). The National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME), created in 1991 by the Association of Teacher Educators, defined multicultural education’s fundamental purpose as rooted in the call for equity, to promote human dignity and support fundamental democratic principles (Howe, 2006). Additionally, NAME (2009) supports the following multicultural educational goals:

- Promote a “positive self-concept” for students by acknowledging contributions by diverse groups within society.
- Prepare students to understand and respect multiple perspectives.
- Place student experiences and life history at the center of instruction.
- Support civic education to help students address social inequities.

Expressed in the call for equity and central to the purpose of multicultural education, is the ability to recognize and mitigate conflict when a segment of the population perceives an injustice that is perpetrated consciously or unconsciously by others (Castagno, 2009). The eventual purpose for multicultural education is to provide students with the skills they need to be critical members of society and advocate for social justice through civic action (Howe, 2006, p. 34). This overarching purpose does not preclude educators from practicing other forms of multicultural education including: adding cultural information to the curriculum, providing experiences in understanding cultural commonalities or difference, and educating for understanding about mainstream hegemonic influences (Banks, 2002). Still, multicultural education’s transformative ideal prepares students to participate using their civic skills and take social action in support of social injustice.
The growth of multicultural education also comes during increased enrollment of ethnic minorities in the U.S. public school system; the enrollment of ethnic or cultural minorities is expected to reach 50% of K-12 school-age children by the year 2020 (Education, 2005). Multiculturalists claim a demographic imperative to racially and ethnically diversify staff as well as support effective multicultural program opportunities to support students in their negotiation of increasing cultural understanding (Meyer, 2006).

Multicultural education in the United States has evolved since its inception and is now positioned to increase its transformative role to bridge cultural boundaries, support critical thinking, and lead to positive social change rooted in the acceptance and appreciation of cultural differences (Moses, 2006). Some of those changes are expressed in theory and practice as evident in the current research of specific strategies to support equity in education.

**Theoretical Constructs**

In his multicultural awareness work, Howe (2006) found Banks’ framework of levels multicultural education to be effective in the analysis of multicultural educational strategies. Banks’ also developed an ethnic development hierarchy to measure individual growth in multicultural and competence. Both are widely cited as an analytic tools to measure the effectiveness of multicultural practices (Howe, 2006; Irizarry, 2009). Banks’ levels of multicultural education offers an analytical lens for multicultural educational practice, while his “Six-Step Typology of Ethnic Development” reveals growth individuals make in understanding, respecting and reaching a level of equity by participating in diverse cultural perspectives (Mushi, 2004, p. 184). Equity is an essential
theme of both of Banks’ hierarchies and indeed is represented by other multicultural theorists (Castagno, 2009). The descriptors contained in the Banks’ models contextualize how individuals respond to and apply multicultural educational initiatives. These categorical descriptors assist in defining both the levels of conflict and possible responses that exist in the field of multicultural education. Banks’ models also support an analysis of the continuum of growth toward transformation and/or equity with respect to both to social and individual representations (Ortiz, 2010).

Banks described multicultural initiatives at four, progressively more, transformative levels. Banks’ Level 1, Contribution Approach, involves identifying and incorporating discrete boundary-level cultural elements or information into the life of the school. Level 2, Additive Approach, entails developing more detailed lessons or multicultural units without changing overall curriculum structure. Bank’s Level 3, Transformational Approach, and Level 4, Action Approach, describe practices that make profound curricular changes to incorporate multicultural diversity and those that engage in social action, respectively.

Today, more contribution and additive forms of multicultural education are being applied in K-12 education while a paucity of data on the implementation of transformative or social action multicultural education currently exists (Banks, 2006; Castagno, 2009). This may be that the multicultural education practices currently applied occur at lower levels on the Banks’ hierarchy as these practices are easier to implement in a school setting (Luther, 2009). However, as the levels move from least to most transformative, multicultural practices encourage transformation in thought and may be more likely to have a larger impact on societal change and equity (Howe, 2006).
Multicultural education leads to an inherent political tension or conflict as particular cultural advocacy on the part of individuals or as a result of educational efforts may conflict with societal norms. Erickson (2001) noticed that conflict or tension between minority cultural perspectives and dominant societal norms revealed “boundary” differences; within particular social contexts, boundaries are revealed when an individual demonstrates a perceived or actual cultural difference to another individual (Erickson, 2001, P. 40). Some examples of boundaries include cultural differences in types of food, clothing, language, accents, and child rearing customs. In general, boundaries are represented by behavioral differences rooted in culture. Consideration of boundaries provides understanding of how a learner’s cultural perspectives impact and are impacted by educational settings, curriculum, and instructional decisions; it offers a lens to define conflict between people with racial and ethnic differences (Erickson, 2002). The opportunities for racial and ethnic boundary-crossing exist and increase as the diversity within K-12 American Schools increases; with almost 90% of teachers and administrators coming from a White European cultural perspective, a difference between student and educator ethnicity also leads to increased opportunities for boundary conflicts or crossings in our schools (Erickson, 2001).

Critical race theory (CRT) extends the boundary framework to analyze data on how an individual perceives race or ethnic boundaries and how these boundaries impact their social negotiation. CRT provides a mirror to the level of social equity that may be present in any social milieu or interaction of the boundaries of differences (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Ortiz & Jayshree, 2010). According to CRT, attitudes about race are revealed “through dialogue and social relationships” (Ortiz & Jayshree, 2010, p.177).
Sometimes, boundaries related to race and ethnicities are not explicit in the schooling environment; they manifest in the type of questions used in a classroom. As the following vignette illustrates, a teacher’s bias and a child’s cultural perspective may influence educational opportunity.

“What color is this?” the kindergarten teacher says on the first day of school, holding up a red piece of construction paper in front of an African American child whose mother is on welfare. “Aonh-oh’ (I don’t know),” the child replies, thinking there must be some trick, because anybody can see that the paper is red. “Lacking in reading readiness,” the teacher thinks, writes this in the child’s permanent record, and assigns the child to the bottom-reading group (Erickson, 2002, p. 53).

The above interaction between a teacher and a child makes the point that actual experiences and interactions reveal attitudes and boundaries that exist between individuals, yet the interactions can only be analyzed by taking into account the social context and an individual’s response to that context. Critical race theory is thus revealed in a social space where real people interact in a real experience.

Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience is an analytic frame for considering educational effectiveness for an individual who is situated in a social context. Dewey (1938) stated that interaction occurs as unique individual perspectives interact in a learning context. This then leads to a particular impact or continuity for that individual on
future experiences. Programs, such as study circles, aim to increase multicultural awareness among participants from a given interaction and attempt to support a transformation toward equity for those participants in their continuity of experience. Just as my study is informed by the approaches of Banks, critical race theory, boundary theory and the application of Dewey’s theory of experience, the multicultural research review that follows is viewed through these same theoretical lenses.

**Multicultural Research**

The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) documented a correlation between at-risk factors, student racial identities, and student ethnicity; for example, the Hispanic population has the largest percentage of children who have more than one risk (single parent household, poverty status, immigrant status, etc.) for school failure; these at-risk factors happen in a social context and impact student responses in their learning context (Cohn, 2006). As educators are aware of these statistics, attend to how race or ethnicity impact a student’s attainment of social status, and utilize Banks’ levels of multicultural strategies, they can meet the needs of learners from different perspectives and contribute to creating “school cultures that operate as mutual communities of learners involved jointly in solving problems with all contributing to a process of educating one another” (Bruner, 1996, p. 81). Equity pedagogy, as expressed in Banks’ transformative level and critical race theory, provides a platform for equal educational opportunities and supports students in the successful navigation of socially constructed boundaries. Equity pedagogy “exists when teachers modify their teaching in ways that will facilitate the academic achievement of students from diverse racial, cultural, gender, and social-class groups.” This relies on
educators having a strong cultural knowledge base and adapting strategies to work to
student strengths (Banks, 1997).

Butler (2006) examined how case studies, related to the impact of student cultural
identities, were used for teachers’ reflection on the implications of how their own racial
and ethnic identities construct boundaries with their students. Butler (2006) found that
participants built a greater awareness of their student’s cultural perspectives and utilized
this awareness to address (or bridge) cultural boundaries in curricular topics and
instructional methods. These changes, and subsequent understanding of cultural conflict,
allowed teachers to better accommodate student cultural needs and in turn led to more
student academic success.

In terms of Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience, participants in the Butler (2006)
study brought their own experience to specific and diverse case studies and this led to
supporting participant confidence in handling future topics and experiences among their
diverse students (a positive outcome with respect to continuity). In terms of critical race
theory, race and ethnic identity were shown to influence attitudes of equity and were
critically revealed in the social environment as responses from individuals in that
environment (Delgado, 2012).

Another study of teachers on their attitudes related to race and ethnicity, Lawrence &
Tatum (2002) investigated White teacher racial identity. White teachers in this study did not
overtly think about how racial identity creates boundaries. White teachers “had given little
thought to their racial privilege or how their own complacency in regards to racism could
reinforce and perpetuate racist policies and practices” (Lawrence and Tatum, 2002, p. 48).
This study examined, through interviews and self-reported written ideas, teachers’ thoughts
and the impact these thoughts have on their students in the learning environment. The findings supported the contention of critical race theorists that once race becomes a topic of conversation, inequity is often revealed and work toward a more equitable future or continuity can occur. Tatum (2002) reported that once teachers acknowledged a bias, they also acknowledged a desire to work to reduce that bias for the future. In this way, the conversations and interactions they had in the study impacted their continuity or future actions toward equity.

When teachers use common themes across the literatures of different cultures to demonstrate cultural similarity among a group of diverse students, they aim to build esteem and reduce conflict for ethnic minority students. Wan (2006) found that when teachers utilize similar stories from different cultures, such as the theme of Cinderella, and link the history of different cultural folklore traditions by highlighting similarities, they reduced boundaries by promoting cultural understanding through noticing similarities. This strategy is represented by the Banks’ additive or contributions approach, yet may be effective at overcoming cultural boundaries and be more transformative for students in their continuity as they learn to notice similarities across cultures when they encounter future texts (Wan, 2006, p.140).

Further support for the use of multicultural educational strategies in educational contexts was found when Turner-Vorbeck (2005) asked pre-service teachers to read perspectives about diverse family units in order to heighten cultural sensitivity. The texts that advanced subject understanding of perspectives related to ethnicity, sexual orientation, and economic status. Boundaries were crossed through discussions, construction of anti-bias activities, and opportunities for reflection in a journal during a unit on family
diversity. Seventy-five pre-service teachers expressed more bias, as measured using a researcher-constructed survey, prior to the diversity unit than after, as reflected in analytic journals. This study indicated that multicultural awareness in pre-service programs leads to reduction in expressed cultural boundary differences for teachers as they complete sensitivity training. This study also exemplified how the Banks’ additive approach (as represented by the pre-service teachers reading about diverse families) can work with the more advanced action approach (as represented by the construction of anti-bias lessons) to support cultural understanding (Turner-Vorbeck, 2005; Howe, 2006).

Multicultural education, when it considers variables related to a particular educational context, reduced conflict between a student’s cultural expectations and the cultural perspective of a teacher. Lawrence (2005) examined teacher perceptions about the effectiveness of a program to reduce racism after a semester-long multicultural training. This training supported educators as they worked to “create multicultural, antiracist classrooms in which children of all backgrounds felt affirmed and were able to achieve academic success” (Lawrence, 2005, p. 351). Program participants stated, during a series of interviews, that more effective multicultural practices were correlated with higher perceived support structures for the multicultural program including collegial support, multicultural curricular materials, and support from school administration. Therefore, educators may be better positioned to reduce cultural boundaries when multiple elements in the school community converge to support multicultural education and when those support structures have elements of social interaction. Based on the review of the many multicultural support structures in place in this school community,
Lawrence (2005) concluded that it takes a community of practice, or multiple stakeholders in the community, to support transformative multicultural education.

As educators attempt to practice multicultural educational strategies to promote social justice, reduce prejudice or further understanding of diverse cultural perspectives, they face resistance and lack of support from administration; this lack of support leads to a lower level of perceived effectiveness (Nagel, 1998). When social or political power structures within schools do not support multiculturalism, boundaries are strengthened and multicultural educational effectiveness is reduced. Indeed, most of the transformative or action multicultural educational approaches originate outside of the political power of an organization as the transformative action or effort offers resistance to the status quo (Banks, 2002). However, even when the adoption of multicultural educational initiatives comes with the support of the mainstream or political power structure, multicultural education still experiences challenges with respect to bringing theory into practice. In this way, as contended by critical race theorists, social construction of race extends beyond the walls of a school or organization and is framed by a societal context (Ortiz and Jani, 2010).

The findings of Carr (1999), with respect to a district-wide anti-racist educational program, revealed that even if administration or a school board supports multicultural education, the lack of definition of programming and desired results hampers implementation. This particular district, with a 45% population of racial and ethnic minority students, aimed to correct the political imbalance that was perceived by both the majority, mostly White decision-makers, and minority populations (Carr, 1999, p. 53). Through the qualitative lens of interview data utilized in this study, Carr (1999)
determined that the controversial subject of anti-racism, lack of support of resources, and conflicting agendas of participants contributed to limiting the effectiveness of the multicultural educational initiative as it was ineffective at reducing prejudice or offering any social transformation. Leistyna (2001) also studied a school district-wide adoption of multicultural education and revealed that cultural boundaries negatively impacted a school’s transformative reform. Leistyna (2001) noted the impact of socio-cultural boundaries through researcher reflection on participant interviews. “Throughout the three years, there was no mention of the fact that the affluent white minority in Changeton runs the schools (as it has historically controlled the city), and that many of the faculty and administrators don’t actually live in the predominantly blue-collar community” (p.299). In both cases, larger societal forces of inequity hampered the change sought in both programs. Both studies call to mind the importance of considering Dewey’s (1938) interaction factors (educational setting, participant perspectives, and other variables) when studying how a program or initiative impacts learning continuity.

Successful adoption of educational initiatives, represented by the higher order of Banks’ multicultural levels, positively correlate to the level of diversity represented in the school community. McCray, Wright and Beachum (2004) found that school principals from smaller and less diverse communities were more likely to view the support of multicultural education as divisive, or as a potential boundary, whereas principals from urban schools and those with more diverse student populations were less likely to see multicultural education as divisive (p. 118). Again, the level of commitment or experience with diversity appears to positively impact willingness to adopt transformative multicultural practices.
In addition to understanding curriculum and overall multicultural programming, it is just as important to examine how individuals grow in their multicultural understanding and bridge boundaries. As previously stated, Banks (1984) six-step typology represents phases of development that include: *ethnic psychological captivity* (where an individual expresses shame or self-rejection based on their race or ethnicity); *ethnic encapsulation* (exclusive focus on one’s cultural perspective with no interest in other cultural perspectives); *ethnic identity clarification* (appreciation of one’s own ethnicity and recognition and acceptance of other ethnic perspectives); *bi-ethnicity* (appreciation of one’s ethnic perspective and participation in other ethnic perspectives); *multi-ethnicity* (one participates in multiple ethnic perspectives); and, *global competency* (identification with a global perspective and ethnic perspectives are easily shared and understood).

Unlike Dewey’s theory of experience, Banks’ hierarchical models have been used directly in multicultural research.

Atwater (1992, p.16) used Banks’ six-step typology framework in a study of how pre-service teachers responded to a series of multicultural educational trainings including a video, interviews of culturally diverse students, and participation in discussions related to the concepts of stereo-types and prejudice. Most teachers, at the conclusion of this study, were below the fourth stage as they accepted their own ethnic identity, respected other cultural perspectives yet did not seek participation in diverse ethnic activities (Atwater, 1992). Mushi (2004) also utilized this typology with pre-service teachers; she found it effective to advance teacher awareness of the different phases of understanding with respect to their own and their student ethnic identities. When examining how individual identity development affects students, Quintana (2005) found that ethnic
encapsulation existed as interaction or the negotiation of social boundaries among twenty-four Mexican-American high school students showed “social distance” among youth from different ethnic or racial groups, and evidence of perceived discrimination or segregation existed (p. 25). The subject’s response in this study to align with students with the same racial identity matches what has been found time and again by CRT researchers (Ortiz & Jayshree, 2010; Solorzano, Ceja and Yosso, 2000).

The most effective multicultural programs help educators and students mitigate inherent disconnect with others in the school’s social context by supporting the bridging of boundaries and increasing understanding and appreciation for diverse perspectives (Erickson, 2001). The negative impact that is created by cultural boundary conflict is then minimized with conscious effort to educate teachers and students about cultural differences and by posing authentic opportunities for diverse collaboration while attending to the idea that participants will advance their understanding through the help of others (Wan, 2006; Turner-Vorbeck, 2005; Butler, 2006).

Although limited in the research literature, studies have examined how K-12 students responded to multicultural programs aimed at bridging boundaries. Epstein (2009) studied fourth and fifth grade students who participated in a multicultural awareness program, over the course of one year that aimed to build friendships across boundaries of race and class. Students participated from three different schools that were situated in a de facto segregated city, situated in the northeastern United States. The students were taught about segregation, given multicultural fiction and non-fiction texts, experienced lessons related to social justice, and had informal time to share games and meals. Through analyzing the vignettes of interaction between the participants, Epstein
(2009) noticed a tension; she stated that students usually organized themselves in racially homogenous ways when left without the support of community educators. Epstein (2009) concluded, “teachers who propose complex questions and ask students to think critically about social problems should prepare for a series of complex and challenging student responses” (p.56). Again, although not explicitly stated in the research, the findings of this study align with Dewey’s theory of experience, as the teacher provided complex questions related to discrimination in interactions that led to attention to the continuity of their experience.

Furthering the examination of how interaction in a learning environment and racial boundaries influence college student experiences, critical race theory was applied to identify the impact of racism on focus group participants (Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000). Participant responses to micro-level bias demonstrated different coping strategies in the situations of perceived discrimination, and some of these include: not responding, accepting discrimination, seeking support with others that share racial identity, and feeling a need to speak up against discriminatory remarks. Esposito (2011) also utilized critical race theory to reveal the impact of race on social interactions involving women of color. College women in her study reported that they often felt uncomfortable “because of either gender or race (or both)” (p. 153). Esposito (2011) concluded that racial differences can lead to negative feelings by those in the minority, and schools have a responsibility to support racial boundary crossing by sponsoring social events, supporting explicit curriculum instruction designed to support understanding, and embracing an acceptance of diversity to reduce bias (p. 156). Some criticism exists within the multicultural research field, including critical race theory studies, that data is gathered
from willing participants (or those who seek multicultural experiences), and “selection bias” predisposes participant attitudes toward acceptance of differences (Powers, 1995). If this is true, we do not get a true read on how multicultural initiatives or programs would impact a person who is not predisposed toward awareness of diverse perspectives.

At this time, the multicultural literature has little or no feedback on the multicultural educational effects of study circles on adolescent student attitudes. Also, I found no current application of Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience on the effectiveness of multicultural educational programs. Chapter 3 describes the methodology of this study that contributes to the overall understanding on how multicultural awareness and prejudice reduction educational projects can influence the attitudes and roles taken by their participants.
Chapter 3
Methodology

A mixed methodology was selected for this research. The combination of quantitative data from survey results reflecting participant attitudes and qualitative data in the form of observations and participant feedback best supports the answering of the research questions about participant attitudes and participant roles with respect to bias. Quantitative data from an attitude survey and qualitative data from observational notes and focus group interviews reveal participant attitudes with respect to their interaction in moments of bias and their estimation of the continuity of their learning related to race and ethnicity. The use of both quantitative data and qualitative data support understanding a complex construct as multiple data sources mitigates against the weaknesses that can exist when each form is used alone (Creswell, 2006). The following research questions guide this inquiry:

1. How does study circle participation impact adolescent participant attitudes related to race and ethnicity?
2. What roles do study circle participants demonstrate when faced with bias situations?

Pilot Study

I recognize the importance of having a positive relationship with participants and those organizing study circles to support access to the research sites and support the effective collection of data. As a result, I contacted a representative from the study circle community group, a committee composed of members from various social service organizations (Human Rights Council, YWCA, and others) and I was granted permission
to attend monthly study circle organizational meetings starting in 2010 and concluding in
the fall of 2011. I also introduced myself to study circle school advisors (those organizing
the students at each high school), and conducted a pilot group interview to test interview
questions and have my survey reviewed by actual program participants. Pilot research
reduces mistakes in the study design as, “researchers can step back, reflect on their
experience…and revise their research approach based on what they have learned”
(Seidman, 1998, p. 33). The pilot research assisted me in the refinement of the survey as
well as the formative questions and processes for gathering qualitative data from study
circle participants. As a result of the pilot study, I noticed that the focus group format
necessitated audio recording in order to ensure the collection of the multiple voices and
support complete data collection.

Due to time constraints, I completed the pilot with study circle participants at one
suburban high school. This pilot sanctioned by my Institutional Research Board (IRB) and,
after consent from parents and assent from each student, the pilot was completed in late
May 2011. I recognize that students from the urban and rural sites could have contributed
different perspectives from those I gained from the suburban high school and that I did
not have the benefit of more diverse feedback on the survey instrument or on the
interview process. However, the pilot study did offer critical clarification of details in
method.

**Study Circle Program and Research Participants**

Study participants volunteered from different high schools located in a region of
one state in the northeastern United States. This volunteer program is offered to 5-10
public high schools in this area. This study circle program is offered by a consortium of
community groups to schools that want their students to have educational experiences related to understanding human diversity. Students volunteer for study circles after receiving information, from counselors, or other high school faculty advisors. The program begins with a two-day facilitated training leading students through mediated experiences and discussions focused on understanding the impact of race and ethnicity on students’ experience. The program continues as students return to their schools to support multicultural work in those settings. In addition to their own interest, all participants had parental permission to participate in the study circles and also parental permission to participate in this study. Students who participated in this study represented a sample of racially and ethnically diverse students that ranged in age from 14 to 20. Participants in this study are from three different high schools: an urban, an urban fringe (a district containing both urban and suburban students). Study circle participants completed exercises with student facilitators, following the schedule in Figure 1. Student facilitators who previously attended study circles led the discussions during the two days. All study circle student facilitators were previously trained over a twelve-hour course with experienced adult study circle facilitators to learn study circle discussion techniques and various activities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time Schedule</th>
<th>Day 1 Study Circle activities/brief description</th>
<th>Day 2 Study Circle activities/brief description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9:00-10:00</td>
<td>Arrive, watch video (A Place At The Table)</td>
<td>Arrive, watch video (Bullied)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:00-11:30</td>
<td>Students meet and introduce someone to the group, respond to the video in group discussion moderated by student facilitator, complete perceptions exercise as students respond to case examples, complete discussion exercise, play Level the Playing Field – student diverse experiences</td>
<td>Students discuss video and have a discussion responding to the day 1 home assignment (Ask a parent or grandparent how they would react if you were dating a person from another race or same gender), discussion response to diversity case studies presented by facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45 minute lunch break</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15-1:30</td>
<td>focus group discussion about racism and diversity in high school- students respond to prompts about impact of human diversity</td>
<td>Students meet with students from their high school to plan Action Projects to promote understanding of diversity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The material used in the training comes from Everyday Democracy and The Southern Poverty Law Center. These are two organizations that have historic involvement in issues related to multicultural education. Everyday Democracy was established in 1989 and has produced numerous educational tools related to social justice and multicultural education. The Southern Poverty Law Center has roots in the Civil Rights Movement offering organizational, educational, and legal support for racial and ethnic equity. Student facilitators are trained in all the resources used and are asked to lead practice study circle sessions while being observed by adult study circle trainer facilitators. Each adult study circle trainer has over ten years of experience at running community study circles. After the practice sessions, experienced adult facilitators gave student facilitators feedback and selected teams of two facilitators to lead the sessions with first-time study circle participants. This study predominantly focused on first-time participants; however, study circle facilitators and past participants were not prevented from participating in the study.

After gaining Institutional Research Board (IRB) approval of the research design, process, and forms, permission was granted from school districts, and study circle participants returned permission (parental and student) forms to participate in the survey and interviews. Of the original 106 students who signed up for study circles, 100 participants completed the SPARE survey. Some of the students who signed up didn’t attend the first day of the study circles, didn’t have permission, or didn’t fill out the survey as requested; a 94% return rate on the survey was attained and non-response bias was thus kept to a minimum.
To gain a representative sample of study circle participants, I selected high schools representing three different communities (urban fringe, suburban, and urban) for additional observation and focus group data collection. This purposeful sample, supported a comparison of data from three distinct school cultures that participated in study circles. In looking at three different school study circle groups, the study is enriched by diverse perspectives with respect to student race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and other factors. To support anonymity of the participant schools and ease of expression in the data, the following aliases are used to delineate each of the high schools (Loomis=high school situated in a suburban area that borders an urban center (urban fringe), Trent = suburban high school, Wilson=urban high school). By choosing participants from these three distinct school sites, some subject bias based on school or community culture was mitigated, supporting a “conclusion within the setting ” of the study circle program (Maxwell, 2005, p. 90). The sample group of the three schools represented similar demographics to the whole group of study circle participants.

**Quantitative Research Instrument**

The survey, included as Appendix A, is a researcher-constructed survey. To support content validity, items were adapted from other surveys used in multicultural research, both the Multicultural Attitude Survey (MAS) and the Multicultural Dispositions Index (MDI) were used as key references in building my survey (Miller-Whitehead, 2005 and Thompson, 2009). Items on the survey were reviewed during pilot group interviews. As multicultural research has been predominantly conducted on pre-service teachers and college students and the multicultural field instruments were found to not consistently mention both race and ethnicity, I developed a survey related to race and
ethnicity that contained wording more relevant to high school student participants in this program. The pilot study group reviewed survey items for understandability. Revisions to the survey, made on the basis of the pilot study feedback, included:

- Survey participants are asked to list urban, suburban, or rural as their school site and denote if they have participated in past study circles.
- Negative words were underlined (“not” in item #10 and “never” in item #15).
- The open-ended responses #16 and #17 were changed to ask if respondents have noticed the impact of race or ethnicity in the school site and life in general.

The survey is designed as a pre- and post-treatment attitude survey, using a Likert scale (1-5 response scale, with 1 indicating “strongly agree” and 5 “strongly disagree”). Figure 2 presents how the MAS relates to items on the SPARE survey.

The survey was also constructed with the benefit of attending study circle meetings, reviewing study circle materials, and conducting the pilot study. Study circle organizers reviewed items to support content validity. Survey data was analyzed using SPSS software with attention to differences in mean scores on items between the pre- and post-survey of the twenty-nine of the participants engaged in all aspects of this research. A paired samples t-test reviewed statistical differences in the means between participant pre-program survey results and the results from the post-survey. In addition to statistical tests, the data was also analyzed for patterns of responses based on race, gender, and school site. The results from the survey are discussed in the findings of this paper.
### Figure 2. Comparison T-Chart: Items from MAS and SPARE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MAS Items</th>
<th>SPARE related Items</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• In this school, students mix easily with students who have different cultural backgrounds.</td>
<td>• I believe racial and ethnic relations among students at my school need to improve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• In the past 12 months, have you had friends of a different culture in your home?</td>
<td>• I feel accepted by students from other racial or ethnic backgrounds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sometimes I like to be with people who have a different cultural background from mine.</td>
<td>• I believe it is important to understand different racial and ethnic perspectives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Students in this school respect cultural differences of other students.</td>
<td>• I feel there is not enough emphasis placed on awareness of human diversity in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Teachers in this school respect the cultural differences among students.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Observations

I recorded participant responses during the two-day study circle intervention and at study circle meetings, over the course of four months, at each school site. Aliases are used to protect participant identity. Merriam (1998) notes that observations should be guided by research purpose as “the conceptual framework, the problem, or the questions of interest determine what is to be observed” (p.96). While collecting field notes, I employed a constant comparative analysis by writing brief responses to support my thinking about how observations relate to the overall data stream. Brief memos, provided an opportunity to focus data analysis and supported validity by articulating possible biases that emerged.
Memos supported my exploration of concepts and ideas pertaining to the data and assisted in the process of comparison (Corbin, 2008a).

A sample student response vignette illustrates my process of field note collection. This sample includes data drawn from day 1 of the study circle training, as students discussed their perspective. In my memo, as part of an early open coding process, I applied the Banks typology framework to the data as it provided a glimpse into student motivation and participant roles taken to bridge racial and ethnic boundaries. The student facilitator (Ryan) asked the group: “What is racism?” as a follow-up from the movie A Place At The Table – on the history of racism in America and providing information on the Native American, African American, immigrant, and Japanese American experiences of racism.

Participant response:

Phillip: “Racism is more or less not knowing a person, we can’t get rid of it, but we should try to get to know them.” – This comment fits into “Ethnic Identity Clarification” as respect of other ethnicities is evident in the response.

Kara: “People sometimes just feel that people don’t like them for who they are.” – This represents a student feeling racism is linked to ethnic separation, although she is not expressing that she feels this way; however, her understanding is that “ethnic encapsulation” is linked to racism. (Day 1 observational field notes)

Prior to beginning the observations, I introduced myself to students and advisors to establish my purpose with study participants and ease possible concerns about my presence during the student study circle sessions. I stated my intent as an observer and not
a participant in the dialog that occurred during study circle training and meetings. I explained to participants that the notes I take help me to better understand this multicultural educational initiative as it is naturally occurring in the study circle training and follow up school meetings. Observations were recorded in a note pad to limit any distraction typing on a keyboard may pose to participants and later typed as memos for coding and to inform future observations and focus group discussions. The validity of the school site observations were supported by “respondent validation,” as high school club advisors provided clarification and checked key observations from each meeting (Maxwell, 2005, p.111). This is an important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstandings of what you observed (Maxwell, 2005).

**Focus Groups**

I revised the IRB protocol to include audio taping the small group interview (focus groups) and, through this process, I gained more details on what was said during the focus groups. As I transcribed the focus group discussions, I enhanced my ability to reliably analyze this data; the focus group recordings were put to print and coding was refined over multiple passes or reviews of the data. I was able to pay additional attention to the conversation as note taking was reduced; this further facilitated group discussion. Recording the interviews also supported a richer collection of data in that topics were further explored with each successive focus group and thus treated more thoroughly (Kitzinger, 1994). The revised guiding questions for focus group discussions are presented with the original pilot questions as Figure 3.
Figure 3. Original interview questions and revised focus group questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions used in the pilot study</th>
<th>Revised focus group guiding questions</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Does race or ethnicity have an impact on student interaction at school?</td>
<td>1. How do you see daily life at your high school since participating in study circles?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Does race or ethnicity impact school success?</td>
<td>2. What impact has your involvement in study circles and the follow-up work at your school had on your attitudes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Has your participation in study circles impacted your daily life at school?</td>
<td>3. Does your participation in study circles help you act differently or think in new ways? If so, how?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What projects have you or your group of study circle participants completed or plan to complete?</td>
<td>4. What multicultural action project has or will your group complete; and, what has been helpful or difficult about participating in the project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. What makes it difficult to work on issues related to racial or ethnic diversity?</td>
<td>5. Does your study circle involvement have an impact on your interactions with people that may be different from you racially or ethnically?</td>
</tr>
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</table>
I developed a focus group interview guide to support the capturing of social construction of how study circles impacted participant attitudes related to racial and ethnic perspectives as they impacted participant competence to bridge racial and ethnic boundaries. Attending to social construction aligned with a theory of experience perspective as meaning of a given learning experience is best revealed in social interaction during that learning (Berding, 1997, p.26). Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience informed the analysis of participant responses; data was coded with respect to interaction (a combination of a study circle participant’s past learning experiences and attitude expressions as well as the study circle learning context) and continuity (potential future influence). “Continuity and interaction in their active union with each other provide the measure of the educative significance and value of an experience” (Dewey, 1938, p. 44). This focus group interview design supported participant involvement in the discussion and differed from a group interview because focus group participants were encouraged to respond to each other’s comments and not necessarily directly to the interviewer (Gibbs, 1997). Information gained from each focus group was compared and contrasted to address the research questions using three distinct samples of participants that experienced the same study circle program. As part of an overall grounded theory analysis of qualitative data in this study, the use of constant comparative during the coding of focus group data was followed by first coding the data from each group (open coding), then comparing the data from the different sources and deciding on relevance or emerging common themes (axial) followed by (selective coding) when a major theme emerged related to how participants respond to instances of bias in their lives (Corbin, 2008b; Creswell, 2008; Merriam, 1998). In this way, the focus group data was
inductively coded with particular themes that emerged linking Banks’ typologies, Critical Race Theory, and Dewey’s Theory of Experience. Merriam (1998), states that inductive theory development relies on a researcher’s continual analysis to find meaning in the data.

Tentative categories, properties, and hypotheses continually emerge and must be tested against the data—that is, the researcher asks if there are sufficient data to support a certain category or hypothesis. If so, the element is retained; if not, it is discarded (p.192).

As categories and descriptors were used and discarded in the open coding process, an axial code emerged, related to how students take roles when they experience perceived discrimination or bias. Through a heuristic coding paradigm, themes informed the selective coding process (Creswell, 2008). These elements formed the foundation of the findings of this study. In this way, the focus group data worked with the survey data to build substantive theory about how students, in these study circle groups, expressed their attitudes and took particular roles when faced with incidents of bias.

Data Collection/Analysis

Data collection and analysis benefitted from a mixed-method approach. Applying mixed methods in data collection and analysis addresses weaknesses that can exist by using only quantitative or qualitative methods; mixed methods provide rich data and interpretation for addressing complex research questions (Creswell, 2006). In addition to using mixed methods to support validity, a number of strategies, suggested by Maxwell (2005, p.110) were used to reduce researcher bias. These strategies included:
• Triangulation, through the use of multiple data sources.

• Respondent validation, as notes were checked for accuracy with study circle advisors.

• Comparison, as three different study circle schools were included in data collection.

• Memos, as I responded with brief notes throughout the data collection process.

All participants completed a survey (SPARE) to assess students’ multicultural attitudes. Mean responses from survey questions described student attitudes related to race and ethnicity and informed focus group discussions. This quantitative data also informed the analysis of qualitative data from field notes and focus group responses. In addition, the survey was given to a purposeful sample (N=29) following four months of work with study circles; results were analyzed using a two-tailed paired samples t-test as a test of attitude change between the pre- and post-survey responses. A critical value of 1.701 was established (alpha=.05) for this analysis. Participant attitudes were further examined through the analysis of focus group data.

I recognized that attitudes are not created in a vacuum but rather result from the interaction of a person in a social context and that those attitudes affect an individual’s future response. Dewey (1938, p. 44) summed up how interaction and continuity work to reveal the quality of an experience.

They are, so to speak, the longitudinal and lateral aspects of experience.

Different situations succeed one another. But because of the principal of
continuity something is carried over from the earlier to the later
ones...knowledge and skill in one situation becomes an instrument of
understanding and dealing effectively with the situations that follow.

Banks’ six-level typology framed the initial coding of student participant
responses during the observation, of open-ended responses on the survey, and of the
recorded focus group interviews. The analysis yielded a typology that combined Banks’
multicultural theory, CRT, and Dewey’s theory of experience. The theoretical frameworks
“provide insight, direction, and a useful list of initial concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.
40)” and later developed into analytic frames and eventual findings in the context of this
study circle study research.

A paradigm emerged to support understanding subject interactions evident in the
focus group data and the continuity or outcome of those interactions (Corbin & Strauss,
2008, p. 89). This analytical tool was derived from Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience
to understand a participant’s response to an educational experience in terms of the present
conditions for both the individual and experience (interaction), and how a subject
responds to the interactions or estimates the impact on future experiences (continuity).
Analysis further placed data, as part of the axial and selective coding process, in a
“Conditional/Consequential Matrix” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p.90). In this study, the
matrix consisted of macro ideas of racial and ethnic discrimination or bias, basic school
context influences on participants, study circle levels of participation, and the individual
reactions to racial and ethnic diversity (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 94).

The conceptions of situation and of interaction are inseparable from each
other. An experience is always what it is because of a transaction taking
place between an individual and what, at the time, constitutes his environment, whether the latter consists of persons with whom he is talking about some topic or event, the subject talked…the two principles of continuity and interaction are not separate from each other. They intercept and unite (p. 43-44).

The coding steps for the analysis of data is represented by interplay between the principles of interaction and continuity (depicted as intersecting circles in Figure 4), which led to the resulting findings from this analysis that are discussed in chapter 4.

Figure 4. Process of Data Analysis

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<th>Findings</th>
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<td>Participant Attitudes &amp; Roles revealed</td>
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Chapter 4

Findings

Study circles aim to advance participant understanding of diverse racial and ethnic perspectives, improve relations among diverse people in a given school community and help high school students respond to incidents of discrimination or bias. This inquiry addresses the following research questions:

1. How does study circle participation impact adolescent participant’s attitudes related to race and ethnicity?
2. What roles do study circle participants demonstrate when faced with bias situations?

The findings are presented from focus group data, field notes and supporting quantitative survey analysis. For this study, twenty-nine students completed attitudinal surveys, were observed in study circle meetings, and took part in a focus group related to their experience in study circles. The twenty-nine student participants represented three distinct school sites: Loomis (urban-fringe), Trent (suburban) and Wilson (urban) and completed the necessary permission protocol to participate in focus groups, meetings that were observed and completed post surveys. Diverse racial identities, were present in the study participants and were representative of the population of all study circle students.

Participant attitudes and reactions, related to bias, are viewed through Dewey’s (1938) principles of interaction and continuity. Interaction reflects how participants in the study bring their unique characteristics and perspectives to the ongoing moments of an
educational experience while continuity represents how interactions impact (or are perceived to impact) future experiences (Neill, 2005). As participants recalled experiences of bias, they demonstrated interaction in those situations and offered a glimpse into the impact on their future or continuity. Participants also expressed continuity through expectations for their future understanding and a desire for continuing their diversity awareness work.

Participant roles or attitudes emerged from a grounded review of the data as units of analysis to address the research questions. The data sources for this study included: study circle observations, focus group comments and survey results. The data addressed the research questions and are led by the qualitative data from observations and focus group interviews. Student comments during the study circle meetings and focus groups revealed participant attitudes related to motivation in joining study circles, how participants reacted to race, ethnicity and how they responded to bias. Through the voices of participants, the research questions are best addressed as the qualitative data provided nuances that are not contained in the quantitative survey data. However, the quantitative survey data is presented at the conclusion of my findings and confirms and extends the insights from the qualitative data.

Participant attitudes and roles, were predominantly revealed through recalled experiences of bias in the raw data that is included as the matrix in Appendix D. The situations of bias in this study mirror constructs reported by critical race theorists; bias is reported as part of a social milieu, has elements of embedded societal racial identity constructs, and includes micro-aggression (Ortiz, 2010).
Attitudes about Joining Study Circles

In order to understand what attitudinal changes and continuity occurred among participants as a result of their involvement in study circles, participant thoughts on why they participated in study circles was first explored. Pam, an African American female participant from Wilson, observed a bias event, that impacted her interaction and motivation to enroll in the study circle experience. “I’ve seen someone spit in a kid’s Yarmulke, just because he was the only Jewish kid in our school.” She stated this incident as an example that more work had to be done at her school to support acceptance of diverse perspectives. Maggie, a white female student from Trent, demonstrated her need to get involved with study circles in part as a response to her racial identity, as she stated:

Personally, I feel that white people either have or assume dominance over people of other races. In my school it’s monochromatic – we’re all white, teachers and all. When someone isn’t white it stands out and it’s noticeable.

Both Pam and Maggie’s statements demonstrate responses to elements of interaction within their school settings. Their statements provide evidence that ethnicity and race are defining characteristics at school and implies a dynamic of interaction that motivated them to raise their level of awareness and address racial and ethnic bias. Based on field notes, other participants also expressed this same desired continuity that more learning emphasis was needed at the school with respect to human diversity. For example, at Trent’s study circle meeting, they wanted to know how their racially homogenous culture would benefit from more experiences with diverse students. As participants state a motivation to better understand diverse racial and ethnic perspectives, they impact their continuity through being open to new learning about responding to bias.
Attitudes about teacher and student interaction were mostly stated as positive and stable across the three different school settings. However, some students of color expressed that their teachers didn’t understand their racial or ethnic perspective and this became another motivator to join the work of study circles. True to critical race theory experience, white students typically didn’t see the bias. One Trent student expressed, “In my class, I have at least one person that is black, but I don’t feel it affects the way teachers interact with him.” However, as the teaching staff members of all study circle schools are predominantly white, student of color provided another perspective. Tanya, a multi-racial female from Loomis, stated, “I did study circles because I wanted to make a difference because our school is mostly white and we can do something about racism.” Her comments reflected the opportunity she saw to play a role in addressing her understanding of the current state of racism. Her expression reveals a continuity of willingness to learn how to combat racism in the future. Noreen, an African American student from Loomis, recognized study circles as an opportunity to discuss racism as evident in her statement, “the school is primarily white and I wanted to see if people would change when racism is brought up.” She was responding to the lack of discussion of racism that occurred in her classes, primarily taught by white teachers.

**Attitudes of Awareness and Response to Bias**

Once participating in study circles, students felt they could reduce the negative effect of bias by improving understanding of diverse racial and ethnic perspectives at their school in the future (a continuity principle). Focus group comments suggested an attitudinal shift of increased confidence of working toward racial or ethnic equity and a
rejection of racial or ethnic bias. Students demonstrated a confidence to reduce or respond to bias as they reflected on particular interactions in situations of racial and ethnic bias.

Attitudinal change was captured in how students responded during the focus group and observed meeting discussions. Participants shared how they will continue diversity awareness work in the future, supporting continuity in the learning they completed with study circles. Some participants provided specific evidence about how they would apply this continuity. Noreen, a student from Loomis stated, “I am moving soon, so if there isn’t a group like this at my new school, I would try to start one.” Alex, a male student from Loomis, also expressed his confidence in being able to transfer study circle skills to new situations, “I want to be an LGBTQ [Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning (Queer)] counselor and help kids that have a problem with discrimination.” Laura, a student from Trent, mentioned that due to her study circle involvement, “I am more aware. If I do see things happening because of cultural differences, I think of ways I can help and bring that together.” Each of these statements represented participant continuity related to supporting multicultural understanding in their school communities. Conversely, there were no comments that indicated students felt less likely, less willing, or less competent to address multicultural issues in the future.

A number of participants recalled during focus group discussions prior incidents of bias. An attitude of confidence among study circle participants to respond, reduce, or not accept bias during specific interactions was also noted. The bias incidents that were recalled were both from within and outside the school setting. Danielle, a Trent student recalled:
My dad talks about my grandpa as being racist, to some groups. So, when my dad would say those same types of comments and I say, “dad,” he knows I can’t stand those comments. He says, “you’re such a good girl,” and he says he is sorry when he says something.

Keri, also from Trent, recalled how study circles increased her confidence to respond to bias.

After this, I found it easier because I was more educated. Even with my family, if someone makes a side comment [referring to bias], I actually say something now. Before, I wouldn’t because I really didn’t understand or think it was okay for me to say anything. I remember I was with my older sister, there was a family and they were black. They had their whole family: grandparents, aunts, uncles…and my sister said, “What are they doing?” I said, “Are you saying that because they are black?” And, she said, “Maybe that’s why.” I said, “You are definitely saying something because they are black,” and, if they were a white family, she wouldn’t have said anything. It was interesting because I caught it and she wouldn’t have said anything if they were white.

Study circle participants expressed that some incidents or sources of bias were easier to handle than others. This is evident in Danielle’s statement: “I think it is easier to say things to your friends when something disrespectful is said than to strangers, like at a supermarket because you don’t know what they will do or how they will react.” Her statement supports consideration of social context on each situation as specific interaction
details (type of bias, social context of bias, and person demonstrating the bias) impact the attitude expressed or reaction to the bias.

Study circle conversations also included matters of sexual orientation, so it is not surprising that, after their involvement, study circle participants commented about incidents and their responses to incidents of sexual orientation bias. Alex (who is openly gay) mentioned that when he noticed bias from a classmate, he felt compelled to take action.

There is this homophobic kid and he throws “faggot and gay” around. I told the teacher, but the teacher didn’t hear it and I said, “Who heard him say those words?” Everyone raised their hand and the teacher disciplined the kid but the kid didn’t stop. So, I told the principal and the principal had a meeting with him and made him stop. It’s extremely offensive, and spreading hate is not necessary. I am the only one that takes real offense to it. So, I stood up.

Noted in the vignette is an attitude that bias (in the form of the use of slang words related to homosexuality) happened in a culture of ambivalence as others heard the bias statements, yet they didn’t respond; he stated that he was the only one offended. Jay, a student from Loomis, recounted another situation of sexual orientation bias and his response. “My friend, every time I say something, he goes, ‘that’s gay’ I always say…don’t say that.” Another student from Loomis, Steve, expressed his attitude as he responded to a classmate’s bias.

I remember this one time when this kid was talking about homophobia, and I was stating why homophobia is not acceptable and he immediately turned
around and accused me of being gay. I said, “Are you serious? I have to be gay to stand up for the homosexual community?” The ignorance, you know!

Overall, study circle students conveyed an attitude of desiring more awareness at their schools about human diversity, including sexual orientation. The presence of bias in participating schools acted as a strong element of interaction in the learning environment as evidenced in the previously presented open-ended participant survey responses and the participants’ ability to readily recall incidents and responses to bias.

**Multicultural Competence and Acceptance**

Tanya, a multi-racial student from Loomis, shared her thoughts on how interaction principles (such as bias or a person’s openness to learning) impact continuity and her feeling of competence with respect to diversity educational projects (such as study circles).

“It is easier to work on diversity issues when people see a need for it and want to make a difference; they want to try to fix it. Some people in the school are just ignorant and don’t see it. But, with the day of silence, some people said, “I’m not doing it; it’s for gay people.”

An attitude of an increased level of awareness of bias was present in study circle participants. Keri, from Trent, expressed that study circles raised her competence of awareness. “I notice people making fun of people because of looks, the way they act or what they are interested in … I feel I notice it more now.” Dee, a Hispanic student from Wilson, also saw study circles as a support for her continuity, as she desired to avoid bias in future situations. “I feel that I can still learn. I am very curious but I don’t want to do something that will offend. I don’t want to disrespect someone; this is the way I was
raised.” Dee didn’t feel there had been enough emphasis on issues related to diversity at her school and expressed a desire to continue her work in study circles. She also recognized that her upbringing (an element she brings as part of her interaction) also played a role in her attitude.

Other students also saw study circles as impacting their future response to situations of racial and ethnic diversity. Keri, from Trent, expressed that work related to diversity or developing anti-bias roles benefits from multiple experiences. As her plan was to continue to learn in study circles, she expressed the impact of her study circle experience on continuity of her learning.

We plan on being facilitators and doing this more than one year in a row; we will have more impact. Later in life, when we go off to college and experience more diversity, it won’t be a shock. I think we will treat people better.

Study circle students, in general, expressed an attitude of acceptance toward students of other racial or ethnic backgrounds. However, students from Trent and Wilson demonstrated a stronger attitude, based on evidence from their responses in study circle focus groups, of acceptance after their study circle involvement than Loomis. This stronger attitude of acceptance shown among Wilson and Trent students was demonstrated after the study circle experience and is further examined in the following focus group conversations. In many cases, the attitudinal shift appears to be supported by the visitation action projects both schools completed.

Karen, a Wilson student, summed up her view of an increased attitude of acceptance as a result of study circles: “Yeah, more people interact now; they are
accepting of differences.” All students participated in the two-day training but Trent and Wilson also created an action project where the students visited each other’s school (student exchange). The urban students from Wilson spent one day at the suburban Trent School, and then the transfer was reversed on another day. This allowed participants to experience speaking and working with students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds and to visit a socially different school setting. Dee, a Hispanic student from Wilson, spoke about the impact of these opportunities.

Because, we have different races, I believe that being diverse is not a bad thing. It’s a beautiful thing. You make friends with people from different cultures and races. It is really cool for them to see our world; it opens their eyes.

Laura, from Trent, who experienced the student exchange, noted, “It gave us more empathy.” Maggie, also from Trent, expressed, “they are not much different than us, but more diverse. They didn’t think they were, but compared to us they are.”

As part of study circles, participants recalled specific vignettes of their own interactions to demonstrate an attitude of acceptance by students from other racial or ethnic perspectives. These experiences expressed respect for students from other races or ethnicities. Karen, a student from Wilson, characterized how study circles affected her attitudes that impact both her interaction in learning situations and continuity in what she can bring to future situations.

This year, I met a girl and absolutely love her. She is part of a group of friends, and she is from Afghanistan. We are so intrigued about her culture, and we sit and ask her questions. We are so excited to go to her graduation
party, and her whole family is going to be dressed the way they dress. Some of our friends are asking if they can buy those dresses and dress like that too. She tells us that she is restricted from going out with us and that it is only schoolwork and home. We try to include her, and I love listening to her stories. It is really interesting, and I think my mindset is changed now because I like meeting new people and finding out about their culture. Next year, I am going to college, and I have to be ready to meet different people.

Karen also noticed that her newfound understanding of the value of diversity and acceptance of differences was not evident in her circle of friends that didn’t participate in study circles. She noted the bias present in others as she recalled her involvement with the school basketball team social dynamics as well as in her circle of friends.

I saw it a lot on our basketball team this year. We had issues with how the girls interacted with each other based on race. Our coach said in real life, you have to interact with different people; you have to know the basic skills. One of the best things we have at our school is the diversity. The minute you do something wrong, out of your friends’ group, like to welcome somebody with a different race, you get that attitude. Like, what are you doing?

At the outset of the study circle program, participants generally agreed that racial and ethnic relations among students need to improve at their school sites, as evident in the statements participants offered that were previously depicted in Table 5. However, after four months of study circle program work, participants in study circles represented
acceptance as they noticed positive relations among students representing diverse racial or ethnic perspectives. Some respondents provided insight into this attitudinal shift.

Claire felt her involvement in study circles gave her a different insight into the racial and ethnic diversity opportunity at her school. “I heard that they didn’t have much diversity at their school and that when they came here, they freaked out.” In reflecting on her past experience at Wilson, Marisa commented. “Like, my freshman year, we definitely had a Puerto Rican hallway [after the meeting, she stated this was no longer the case]… I think that people are just more accepting now.” Marisa was reflecting on the different school hallways that were racially or ethnically claimed territories (student self-segregated hallways); this phenomenon was only noticed at Wilson.

Study circle students expressed the importance of responding to attitudes of ignorance in the moment they occur. Karen recalled how her interaction with one student supported that student’s continuity as she responded to a moment of ethnic ignorance and helped educate that student for future interactions.

The girl we had in our study circle group, when we were talking about Guyanese, she said, “What’s a Guyanese?” We had to explain it to her.

Some kids from Trent said, we don’t have any black kids at our school, and it is completely different. They look at our school as the ghetto.

An attitude of anti-bias continuity, expressed in how past bias events inspired a commitment of purpose to work toward societal equity in present interactions, was also present in the data. During one of the study circle meetings, an African American student recalled being asked to leave a convenience store, and he felt that the clerk thought he was going to steal an item. He felt this request was related to his race, and other students of
color in the group nodded their heads in agreement. The study circle group discussed this example of bias as an event that sticks with a person and impacts them long after the event. Maggie expressed that the work she did with study circles in her school community held value, and she also supported a larger societal focus to both improve relations among diverse people and support her own continuity to contribute to diversity awareness as it may impact her professional life.

I think we need to focus on outside of the U.S. too. I am going to be an exchange student this summer; I am going to Oman to study Arabic. I am doing it because most jobs in the future and things you do in the future. I think it is important to be aware of how people live, in their home countries. I think we need to understand more about different world cultures. Maybe focusing outside of the school, we could change the community too.

Many participants linked societal bias to the racial or ethnic bias they experienced in their schools. In general, participants expressed that an individual’s race and ethnicity is socially defined and a key factor impacting interaction in their learning environment. There were a number of incidents and impacts of bias reported by study circle participants in both the open-ended portion of the survey and in focus group discussions. Participants expressed different ways in which they responded to these incidents. Sometimes students did not report any reaction to the bias that was witnessed but they expressed an awareness of the bias and a desire to know more about how to foster multicultural understanding.

Claire, a Hispanic female student from Wilson, expressed “a lot of kids make fun of whites, that they are very smart.” This statement implies that the respondent possibly
thinks that other races are not as intelligent as whites. If so, it demonstrates that study circle participants are aware of how other students may exhibit bias based on race, if even it is one student of color’s opinion. Steve, a white male student from Loomis stated: “I feel that children of different racial backgrounds grow complacent with discrimination; they accept being made fun of for their race and laugh along with it.” This also demonstrates evidence of awareness that participants notice elements of bias that relate to racial identity. As study circle participants reported different scenarios of bias, they also represented their reaction to instances of bias in the roles they took.

Roles Related to Bias

Different kinds of roles were evident in participant responses to acts of bias, typically in student interactions with others in their school or home environment that impacted a student’s continuity. Participant bias response roles emerged as key findings related to attitudes and the level of action expressed by study participants when recalling situations of bias in their lives. Represented by the lower end of the previously stated Banks’ multicultural typology, participants sometimes demonstrated encapsulation or resistance (a captive role) to knowing or understanding other racial or ethnic perspectives. The upper end of this hierarchical coding system revealed students who demonstrated limited boundary concerns and embraced other racial/ethnic perspectives (clarifier role). Finally, as some of the participant responses revealed specific actions or transformative roles they expressed when confronted with situations of bias (facilitator), it was germane to combine elements of Banks’ Six-Step Typology, constructs in CRT and Dewey’s theory of experience, to better describe the participant roles that were being expressed (Banks, 1997; Delgado, 2012; Dewey, 1938). The emergent roles—captive, clarifier and
facilitator—are hierarchical, with facilitator representing the higher order or transformative multicultural practice envisioned by multicultural theorists, such as Banks, as well as anti-bias strategies contained in CRT. The following represent three salient bias response roles demonstrated by participants in the focus group data:

- Participants expressed being a victim of bias or not responding (Captive).
- Participants expressed value in finding out more about diverse perspectives and being bothered by the bias, but no action was taken to reduce the bias (Clarifier).
- Participants took action to reduce the bias in the situation (Facilitator).

Figure 5 offers a crosswalk on how the hierarchical roles of captive, clarifier and facilitator relate to Banks’ multicultural frameworks and critical race theory and how the roles are situated in Dewey’s theory of experience. As a general overview of the presence of these roles in the focus group or observational data, Figure 6 provides a frequency of coded roles at each of the study school sites. Examples of the roles are provided as findings about how the roles are similar and differ depending on the participant’s school. Some of the roles are coded with multiple dimensions and therefore each coded role may have more than one theory of experience dimension indicated as sometimes both words and actions were expressed in a given moment of interaction or participants stated an impact on their understanding that might extend to the future or support their continuity. In general, Loomis had more incidents coded, as there were two focus groups held at that school with one each at Wilson and Trent. All the coded data referenced are available in Appendix C.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bias Response Roles of Study Participants</th>
<th>Banks Multicultural Theory</th>
<th>Critical Race Theory</th>
<th>Dewey’s Theory of Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Captive: expressed being a victim of bias or not responding</td>
<td>Level 2-Additive (experiences added – just receiver of bias) Ethnic Encapsulation</td>
<td>Micro aggressions recalled, racism is evident in social interactions and racism is normalized in everyday situations.</td>
<td>Interaction – student prior experiences recalled in focus groups Continuity- Bias reinforces future stratified race relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifier: valued knowing more diverse perspectives</td>
<td>Level 3-Transformation (information sought and shared) Ethnic Identity and understanding</td>
<td>People learn about and define race in socially constructed situations</td>
<td>Interaction- The context and situation of the bias Continuity- Participants plan to use information in future situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facilitator: took action to reduce the bias in a situation</td>
<td>Level 4 – Social Action (equity) Multi-ethnicity and Global Competency</td>
<td>Active responses to reverse micro aggressions, social justice strategies or actions</td>
<td>Interaction- Words or actions aimed to reduce bias Continuity – Desire to reduce bias in future</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 6. Role Frequency Code Report

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School/Role</th>
<th>Interaction</th>
<th>Continuity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loomis Captive</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loomis Clarifier</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loomis Facilitator</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson Captive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson Clarifier</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wilson Facilitator</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trent Captive</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trent Clarifier</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trent Facilitator</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Captive Role

Participants describing a captive role often recounted observing or experiencing biased attitudes from others through social interactions recounted. Bias is a discriminatory attitude, as expressed through verbal or non-verbal actions related to race or ethnicity. In all three schools, participants expressed either being a victim or not responding to situations of bias. During the study circle meetings, conversations often centered on how racial and ethnic bias permeates the school culture. One Hispanic male student stated, “I hate when they call me spic,” in response to a conversation about bias at the school. A White female student was talking about how race and ethnicity impact students at school and other societal settings, “it is a complex issue, but racial profiling, entrapment, bullying at school, and job discrimination are very present in society.” Student expressions were coded as “captive”, when they revealed disagreement with particular bias observed, but no response to reduce the bias was evident. Noreen, a student at Loomis, expressed being captive related to a situation she observed.

I wish I had said something two days ago. At lunch, there was this incident when I was walking by this guy and he said, “nigger.” My first instinct was to slap him, but then one of his friends came up and said it wasn’t directed toward me but someone else.

In this case, Noreen demonstrated an attitude of rejection of the bias, but no specific effort was made to respond to the bias. Celia, also from Loomis, provided her rationale on why people may not stand up to bias situations. She said, “People don’t want their image to be
ruined. People will say, ‘why do you care about that?’ People are just ignorant about it and they don’t want to bother helping out.”

Study participants offered other reasons why they were held captive or did not respond to incidents of bias. Joe, from Loomis, stated: “It is kind of difficult when you don’t know someone to talk about stuff [relating to racial/ethnic discrimination], but when it is a friend, you can go into more depth about it.” Keri, a Trent student, noted a bias situation that held her captive during her visit to Loomis: “In study hall, there was a really negative comment about her [talking about the student she was visiting] race; she didn’t get any of that here [at Trent when the student visited Keri]. It was only one kid and it seemed like she was used to it.” She also noted that in her mostly white school, she felt at a disadvantage to noticing bias or being able to respond to it; she stated, “It is hard to see any impact of race or ethnicity at our school on interactions because 90% of us are white.” Maggie, previously quoted, related to her majority white school and mentioned that students of color “stand out;” she recognized this race bias in how teachers and students in the school community view a student. The captive role expressed by Trent students is supported by their own racial bias or lack of diverse racial understanding. In critical race theory, a community’s “whiteness” masks issues related to racism or bias, a white privilege exists for individuals in that community (Gleason, p.51, 2009). When asked about how teachers interact with students that may not share the teacher’s racial or ethnic perspectives, Laura summed up the consensus from the Trent focus group. She said, “In my class, I have at least one person that is black, but I don’t feel it affects the way teachers interact with them.”
Based on previous expressions by African American study circle students, they may not agree with Laura’s attitude as other references were made with respect to the presence of racism in the school culture. Some Trent participants also noted times when they observed the captive role in others. The school partner visits afforded Trent students an opportunity to interact with students of color from Loomis and observe their experience in the mostly white culture of Trent. Laura, while reflecting on the reaction of a female African American student during the school visitation, noted the following.

Somebody said something to the kid that I was walking with; they said a derogatory term for black people. And, I don’t know; I wasn’t sure if she heard it. But, then she said, “I don’t like black people.” And, she was black.

Study circle students expressed that incidents of bias can be reduced with an increase in diversity among students. Maria, a student from Loomis, provided her rationale as to how peer pressure or the interaction of being with friends from the same racial or ethnic group can impact what bias is expressed. She sees racial ethnic homogeneity as supporting a captive role.

Some people just say stuff because they are with their friends and they want to act big or cool to make people laugh. But, they know if they were in a room alone with the person they are talking about, they wouldn’t say half the stuff they say.

Maria expressed that diversity in a student environment is a deterrent to bias. Later when Maria was responding to comments about Trent students who recently visited, she stated:
“they felt our school was more diverse than their school, but we don’t think that we are that diverse.” This further revealed that each school setting (a function of interaction) viewed itself in a different diversity light than someone from outside that community.

**Clarifier Role**

Students demonstrated a clarifier role by an interaction (an action taken) or in as an expression of continuity (or future impact). Therefore, they were more likely act in the clarifier role in taking a direct action to find out more about concepts related to diversity or for a future purpose. More students from Wilson and Trent stated a desire to have the knowledge gained from study circles impact their continuity. Eight focus group incidents of this role were reported from students from both schools; students reported none from Loomis. The school site coordinator of each study circle group was often a key element in the interaction within the clarifier role. They often co-created the agenda with students and provided organizational help during the meetings. Noreen, a student from Loomis, represented the clarifier role for many students in study circles as she recalled her experience.

I was invited by Mrs. B. (a teacher coordinator). I thought it would be cool to go to college during study circle meetings and meet different kids from different schools and see how situations happen in their environment. I wanted to see how diversity and stereotypes happen in their schools. It met my expectations because you got to know different schools; I didn’t know that Trent didn’t have many African Americans. They had stereotypes about our school but, at the end, when we had our meeting, they said it wasn’t like they expected.
Steve, from Loomis, further supported a rational for all students to understand more about diverse perspectives.

It is not what we talk about; it is how we talk about it. Normally, we are facing a defensive front because when somebody is talking about racism or ethnic diversity, they have a preconceived notion of militant left-wing perspective. We need to put more thought and feeling into why racial discrimination is wrong.

A participant in the clarifier role seeks information or experiences to better understand diverse perspectives. The clarifier role also was revealed in how participants held different views of their school culture compared to what participants from other schools expressed. Maria, from Loomis, recounted how she understood her school to be more diverse than she previously thought. After discussions with a student from Trent, she stated: “they felt our school was more diverse than their school, but we don’t think that we are that diverse.” In speaking about Loomis, the most racially diverse group in this cadre of study circles, a student stated her reason for being involved with study circles. Hailee said, “I got involved to be in a group where everyone is interested in diversity issues. There is not a lot of segregation, like we heard about in other schools.”

In clarifier role expressions, the idea that study circles prepares students for future experiences with diverse people was evident. This is representative of the continuity principle as participants anticipate their present learning will help in a future situation. Keri, from Trent, stated that she wanted to be involved, and one of her reasons related to the growth in diversity in her community. “Everyone experiences things differently, some people are exposed to diversity and others don’t, it depends on where you live. I feel that
more diverse families are moving in [to her community] because of jobs.” Another student, Karen from Wilson, demonstrated evidence of the clarifier role as she related her study circle experience as a chance to build her knowledge base for continuity. Her expression of confidence in knowing that she can apply some of what she learned about racial and ethnic diversity and that she can contribute to supporting the learning in others demonstrated an attitude of increased confidence to know how to contribute to the improvement of racial and ethnic understanding in others. The following statement links Karen’s involvement in study circles to her perceived future value (continuity) of this educational experience.

It (study circles) opened my eyes more to encourage learning about diversity and to know about different cultures. I wished I’d got involved earlier, diversity is going to help me as I go and I think more people should understand that. It’s a big time thing to have under your belt if you are going out into the real world and getting a job working with other people. I am going to a smaller college next year; I am excited to get the word out about my line of thinking.

Participants demonstrating a clarifier role influenced and were influenced by their environment (interaction). Sometimes, participants in the clarifier role noted other biases (beyond racial and ethnic) and responded in their environment. Keri, from Trent, revealed that her study circle experience supported her development of noticing bias, “I notice people making fun of people because of looks, the way they act or what they are interested in, I feel like I see it more now.” Emma, from Loomis, worked with her group
in a clarifier role to provide information to her school community through an anti-bullying awareness program that asked student to demonstrate awareness of the bias against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered students. “We did a day of silence to call attention to homophobia and the bullying of gay and lesbian students. It makes it easier when people are accepting and willing to help.” This exemplifies how study circle participants engaged in general diversity educational experiences within a clarifier role in their school community.

The clarifier role was also evident through examination of participant interactions beyond the school to personal experiences, family, and community influences. As evident of how participants demonstrated the clarifier role outside of school, Claire candidly admitted that she confronted her own bias through reflection on interaction principles evident from her family perspective, as she stated:

I feel like saying the “R” word (referring to ‘retard’), but I don’t say it because I have family that do need special help because they are not mentally able. I don’t use it; it’s not in my vocabulary. I don’t use words that offend other people, like calling someone a “faggot,” saying “that’s gay,” or using the “n-word.” I don’t think that should be in the English vocabulary.

Students also supported one another, another feature of the interaction principle, with respect to serving in clarifier roles. Through conversation, they share different bias experiences. The following conversation vignette from a Trent study circle meeting illustrates this point.
Danielle: I have a cousin that is half black and I have been with her and her friends and they sometimes call each other that [speaking of the word “nigger”] all the time. But, if a white person said that…

Keri: It’s kind of like the b-word [bitch]. You say it joking around to your friends but it is different if you say it seriously to someone else, not as offensive but kind of like that.

Laura: It [study circles] gave us more empathy.

Danielle: I think it is easier to say things to your friends when they say something disrespectful than to strangers, like at the supermarket, because you don’t know how they will react.

In this case, students discussed how bias language has a context that may not be offensive to those participating and that, if bias exists in social situations, it is easier to intervene to reduce the bias when it occurs among friends. This same attitude was also expressed with respect to the final role that is discussed, the role of facilitator.

**Facilitator Role**

When participants demonstrated the facilitator role, they expressed how they took or planned to take action to reduce bias. This role has some overlap with the clarifier role. However, the facilitator role was identified when participants mentioned situations of bias or racism and then an action or desire to reduce particular or general issues related to bias. Just as the other roles, the role of facilitator is situated in specific recalled interactions or as a role that students plan to take in the future (or continuity). For example, Maria, a
Hispanic female from Loomis, stated:

I thought it would be a good experience to see other schools that are involved in study circles that are predominantly white and how racism is handled at other schools but it is not brought up a lot.

In this example, Maria expressed her facilitator role in a context of continuity; she hopes to develop strategies to handle future issues related to racism in her own school. Other facilitator comments also reflect the looking ahead and building skills to address future bias. Two Loomis students, Alex and Noreen, stated their desire to start an anti-bias group at their future schools. Often, the captive and facilitator roles were present when a student recalled a situation of bias or their multicultural work. Jay, a student from Loomis, best exemplified this phenomenon. As he explained his experience with the study circle anti-bias and awareness action projects, the “Day of Silence” and the “Day of HUGS,” he expressed the captive nature of his teachers and some students, while stating his role in crossing the boundaries of bias as a facilitator.

Most teachers didn’t participate in the day of silence, as they had to teach classes. Sometimes people don’t take you seriously or they find the situation awkward, but on HUGS (Harmony Understanding Day), with t-shirts and candy, people loosened up and were more understanding. They were cool with it and they asked questions. It was nice to tell them about understanding differences.
Students reported that interaction with students from diverse races and ethnicities during study circles supported their understanding of diversity and facilitator role development. Steve, a White male student from Loomis, linked his reduced acceptance of racially or ethnically charged humor with his diverse friendships. Other Loomis students, Hailee, a white female, and Moniq, a Hispanic female also commented during a focus group discussion and revealed specific ways they are facilitators among their friends. All three participants demonstrated facilitator responses as they state specific actions they take to respond to bias situations in the following focus group dialog.

Steve: We hear black jokes here (Loomis). That sense of humor bolsters political incorrectness, and when I became friends with people with different races or ethnicities, I veered away from that sense of humor. It started to string an emotional chord for me.

Hailee: It [study circles] made me open up my eyes a little bit more, the black jokes or saying: “it’s so gay.” I know I used to say that but after study circles, I realized it is not correct to say that stuff. When one of my friends says it [bias words], I speak up. “Can you not say that?” It made me open my eyes that what I say can hurt someone even if I don’t mean to.

Moniq: When my friends are using those words [nigger or gay], I am just like “Stop. You don’t know who is around you and you could hurt someone’s feelings and not even know it.
Similar responses were made by participants in the other schools related to how they actively responded to bias statements or actions among their friends during and after their involvement with study circles. Danielle, a Trent student, demonstrated both interaction and continuity as she recalled being in a facilitator role among her friends. She also included her thoughts on why stepping into the role of facilitator with friends may depend on other interaction principles, such as status in a group of friends.

In a situation where I used to just sit there, I am more likely to say something like, “don’t do that.” Acceptance is the hardest thing, like if your friends are making fun of someone else, if you go against them, they might look at you. In my group of friends, I am like the mom of the group; what I say goes. So, when I say knock it off, they usually stop.

Claire, a student from Wilson, demonstrated risks students take when stepping into the role of facilitator against bias. She recalled a situation where she engaged a recent immigrant student despite bias that was exhibited by her friends. She began by excusing her friends’ bias reaction toward a new student and she demonstrated some of her own personal struggle as she assumed the facilitator role. She also sought another student as a resource to support bridging ethnic differences, in this case a language barrier. In the end, she revealed that her risk-taking was worth it to have a new friend.

It is not like we are racist against newer people coming; it’s just that you don’t know about where they come from, what their religion is. Like, there is this boy in my class and I want to speak to him so bad but he doesn’t speak English. I try to talk to him, but everybody is laughing at me
because he has no idea what I am saying. So, there is this boy on the track team that’s friends with him and he speaks the same language. I ask him to ask the boy if I could hug him, he said yes and now he is my friend.

Just as Claire took a risk in seeking friendship with someone who did not speak her language, other participants demonstrated attitudes of risk-taking or confidence to assume a facilitator role as a result of their involvement in study circles. In the next section, we will see that this finding from the focus group data found some confirmation in participants’ survey. Respondents increased their agreement with the statement that they could improve racial and ethnic understanding at their schools. Focus group data that revealed a confidence among study participants to address situations of bias as they arose among friends or family matched quantitative data related to participant attitude change on this variable.

Survey Results

All study circle research participants, many of those previously referenced in the focus group data, took a survey related to their attitudes on race and ethnicity prior to their study circle participation. A smaller group, those who participated in focus group interviews, was interviewed again after four months of participation in study circles. A paired samples t-test was conducted to determine if any of the variables surveyed revealed a significant difference in attitude of participants. Pre- and post-survey statistics are reported in the findings and are included as Appendix D. With a t-value of 1.992, a significant difference in means was evident between the pre- and post-survey item that tested the variable of confidence in knowing how to improve racial and ethnic
understanding at school. Loomis students represented the largest percentage change in attitude on this variable, as eight out of nine students changed from an “undecided” response on the pre survey to agree or strongly agree on the post survey. Of the twenty-nine study participants, (who completed pre- and post-surveys and engaged in focus group interviews), nine participants moved from undecided or disagree to agree or strongly agree on the post survey. This finding mirrored the focus-group data that students were able to step into facilitator roles and the expressed confidence in continuity to work on issues related to racial and ethnic diversity as a result of their participation in the study circle program.

Although other changes in attitude, revealed by the pre- and post-survey comparison, did not reach a conventional level of statistical significance, trends of attitude change were noted. For example, when participants were asked if they “believe there is too much emphasis on awareness of human diversity in school,” they were more likely to disagree after their involvement with study circles; seventy-six percent disagreed or strongly disagreed compared to thirty-eight percent prior to study circles. This aligned with the qualitative data previously presented as participants stated they were more apt to notice incidents of bias at their schools and expressed a desire to continue working on future study circle efforts to raise awareness in the school culture related to racial and ethnic bias. According to study circle participants, more work related to human diversity is necessary and many of the participants stated they would be willing to continue working to support racial and ethnic equity.

So, both the qualitative and quantitative data express attitudinal change among study circle participants as a result of their participation in the program. This attitudinal
change related to participant confidence to work on multicultural issues and in taking
roles related to reducing bias or supporting a better understanding of diverse racial and
ethnic perspectives. The data demonstrated how study circles supported participant
confidence in working on human equity through multicultural education. As we have
highlighted some of the relevant findings of this study, we will turn now to the
significance of the findings and how these findings both add to the field of multicultural
research and point the way to further research and analysis.
Chapter 5
Discussion

Multicultural education aspires to reduce bias based on constructed or perceived racial and ethnic identities; it aims to transform individual as well as societal responses to promote racial and ethnic equity. If it is effective, it is best situated in our K-12 schools to prepare younger members of society for present and future societal interactions (Banks, 2002; Constagno, 2009). Multicultural student experiential learning is rooted in the ideal of respect for human diversity and the mitigation of racial or ethnic social inequalities. Theorists contend that students can be taught to recognize and reject racial and ethnic bias (Howe 2006). Often, this bias stems from a misunderstanding of particular racial and ethnic boundary differences among people. Education and experience with constructs contained in those boundaries support an attitude of acceptance or equity (Barth, 1981; Erickson, 2001).

Previously, multicultural research examined individual attitudes and organizational responses; researchers typically found that multicultural educational efforts have not yielded transformative change toward societal equity (Castagno, 2009). There is no evident research, prior to this study, that combines Dewey’s Theory of Experience, Banks levels of multiculturalism and critical race theory to view attitudinal change related to study circles or other multicultural awareness programs. However, multicultural research literature offers more information related to the lower levels of multicultural application and less on how social inequity is being addressed (Castagno, 2009). Much of the research into multicultural educational effectiveness has been anchored in observing attitudinal expressions or actions of participants during a program, such as, Epstein’s
(2009) conclusion that grade 4 and 5 students will still organize themselves in racially homogenous ways despite engaging in a year-long multicultural program designed to support racial integration. Or, that college women of color demonstrate different coping strategies when faced with incidents of perceived racial bias (Esposito, 2011). The present study examined participant attitudinal responses to a multicultural educational initiative (study circles) and analyzed how participants then took roles to respond to incidents of bias while engaged in study circles and when they spoke about the impact of race and ethnicity.

Study circles have been used over recent decades as a mechanism for groups of people to discuss and create action projects based around a community or societal concept or need (Larsson, 2001; Roberts, 2003). The study circles in the present study asked high school students to participate in a racially and ethnically diverse multicultural awareness-training, meet over the course of four to six months, and develop school-based awareness projects to share with the whole school community. A study of the impact of this type of educational opportunity on adolescents on their attitudes and behavior related to racial and ethnic equity was not previously reported in the literature. As study circles involved the interaction of participants around a topic, in this case racial and ethnic diversity, with a goal to support future application of multicultural understanding, the use of John Dewey’s theory of experience was selected to inform the data analysis. According to Dewey (1938), learners bring their own perspectives to a situation and, through their interaction with the elements of that situation, a resulting continuity of learning and future application results. Participant attitudes were revealed in both how they interacted in situations of bias
and multicultural learning as well as through predicted impact on their continuity of understanding or attitude toward issues related to racial and ethnic diversity.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) also informed the analysis as I examined how individuals expressed attitude and action in social situations related to racial discrimination or bias. Particular bias and societal inequity is clarified and described in terms of the key elements contained in CRT; some of the same attitudes and responses reported by study circle participants, mirrored those previously reported by CRT researchers (Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000; Esposito, 2011; Ortiz, 2010). Through combining elements of the Banks hierarchy and CRT within the framework of Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience, particular roles were identified among study circle participants to best answer the research questions:

1. How does study circle participation impact adolescent participant attitudes related to race and ethnicity?

2. What roles do study circle participants demonstrate when faced with bias situations?

The roles of captive, clarifier, and facilitator inductively emerged through grounded theory analysis to represent the major themes expressed in the data and as modes to express levels of multicultural awareness among study participants (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Creswell, 2008). These categories describe roles participants took as they recalled situations of racial or ethnic bias at their school or in their social experience. In the expression of these roles, participants often attributed study circles as key to their confidence in supporting their knowledge on racial and ethnic diversity and supporting their attitude of confidence in responding to bias. Participants who recalled a bias
situation with limited or no response were considered captive. Participants who expressed a desire to build an understanding of diverse racial and ethnic perspectives or to educate others to reduce bias were considered clarifiers. Those participants that acted to reduce bias in a situation by speaking out against the observed bias or demonstrated some other action to reject or reduce bias were considered facilitators. All three roles were evident in each study circle population examined.

Furthermore, Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience situated attitudinal data in the interaction subjects demonstrated when bias occurred and in the continuity of learning expressed by participants in the study-circle group. To assess attitudinal change, I used study circle participant voices as they recalled situations and attitudes they faced in their social contexts and attitudinal survey results. Each of the three school sites—Wilson (an urban high school), Loomis (an urban-fringe high school), and Trent (a suburban high school)—demonstrated similarities and differences in attitudes expressed and the roles participants played.

**Implications of Attitudinal Impact**

The major attitudinal impacts reported by study circle participants during and as a result of their participation in study circles are as follows:

- Participants expressed an attitude of increasing awareness of issues related to racial and ethnic bias and were willing to take a role to reject bias when they detected bias expressed by family members or friends.
- Participants expressed an attitude to engage in future work related to increasing multicultural knowledge for themselves and others.
• Participants expressed an attitude of acceptance of others who represent diverse racial/ethnic perspectives after participation in study circles.

Students from Trent, a suburban high school with limited racial and ethnic diversity, experienced the strongest opportunity for attitudinal transformation as they interacted in more diverse school settings and with more diverse students as part of the study circle program than during their usual school experience. Trent students, as previously expressed in my findings, that they were at a disadvantage coming from a homogenous and white school culture; the world outside of their community is more diverse and they sought understanding and participation in that diversity. They saw study circles as an opportunity expand their knowledge of the impact of race and ethnicity on individuals. Keri, from Trent, summed up this perspective when she said; “it is hard to see any impact of race or ethnicity at our school on interactions because 90% of us are white.” This aligns with critical race theory that suggests racial discussions and work toward equity do not typically exist for school communities that lack a level of racial or ethnic diversity. Students at Trent reported that issues related to racial and ethnic bias do not happen or are not discussed outside of study circles, and therefore, the study circle opportunity provided a channel for multicultural work that did not previously exist (Solorzano, 2000; McCray, Wright and Beachum, 2004). Trent students referenced study circles as key to increasing their attitude of awareness and willingness to work toward racial and ethnic equity. Trent participants also noted that they benefitted from being with students from different school sites (representing diverse racial and ethnic groups) to engage in collaborative discussion and projects that supported knowledge about diverse perspectives previously not experienced in their homogenous culture.
Overall, study circle participants at Loomis and Wilson also expressed an attitude of increased confidence that they could improve racial and ethnic understanding at their school. This attitudinal change was supported in both the attitudinal survey results and the qualitative focus group data. In fact, this one variable demonstrated the only statistically significant change in attitude, represented in the survey data, as students grew in their confidence to improve racial and ethnic understanding at their schools. Students were more likely to say that they felt they could improve racial and ethnic understanding at their school after four months of involvement in study circles. This was evident in the significant t-test results as well as in the qualitative data. Focus group comments expressed an appreciation of the opportunity study circles provided to openly discuss and understand how racism relates to their lives. As a comment from Steve, a white male from Loomis, previously stated that, “we need to put more thought and feeling into why racial discrimination is wrong.” Steve, along with other study circle participants from Loomis, saw study circles as an opportunity to better examine their attitudes on racism. An attitude of confidence to continue supporting future multicultural work was also evident in the data as viewed through Dewey’s (1938) principle of continuity. Participants stated they felt more confident in their understanding of different racial and ethnic perspectives and that they would be willing to start or join this work in their future when they go to college or another school. As participants stated they knew how to improve racial and ethnic understanding, they also revealed this attitudinal shift as facilitators responding to perceived bias.

Most participants felt more comfortable in confronting bias situations that arose among friends and family. Very few students related taking a facilitator role when bias
situations arose from strangers. The bias vignette related by study circle participant about a convenience store owner asking black students to leave the store and Keri’s statement that she noticed bias of other students at her school but she didn’t intervene unless she knew the person is evidence of this differentiated application of the facilitator role among study circle participants. Overall, participants stated the willingness to stand up to bias resulted from their experiences and information they received in study circles.

The clarifier and captive roles revealed in this research are important to consider for future multicultural educational initiatives. As participants state a desire to learn more about diverse perspectives (clarifier role), they are more open to that learning. Trying to understand what makes one student want to step out of their own racial and ethnic boundaries and learn more about other perspectives can help study circles organizers identify students that may lead a multicultural awareness effort. Just as identifying students demonstrating a clarifier role supports identification of willing participants, captive role expressions determine a need for multicultural work in a given school community. If the captive role is evident among students at a given school, there is also evidence of bias and the need to educate to reduce that bias is present.

Another implication of this study relates to the use of Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience in conjunction with critical race theory to reveal two levels of impact on the attitude and the role a person expresses when faced with bias. The first role is expressed in the interaction of a bias situation, and the second role is revealed over time with continuity. This theoretical model of analysis demonstrated the influence study circles had on how students faced situations of bias in the moment and how they also saw an impact as expressed in preparing them better for later diverse social experiences. Students related
incidents where they now felt confident to respond as a result of study circles, they also expressed that their initial experience with study circles will inform their future work.

**Study Analysis**

This study examined, with the benefit of multiple data streams (triangulation), attitudes among study circle participants. Validity of findings was supported by these multiple points of view, and the different data streams revealed participants had an increased confidence in taking a stance against bias once they had the information that different racial and ethnic perspectives exist and that race or ethnicity contribute to situations of bias. Participants also stated a desire to continue working on issues related to advancing multicultural knowledge for themselves and others, and there was an increase in an attitude of acceptance of diverse racial and ethnic perspectives noted among participants in study circles. As I reviewed how participants responded to situations of bias, this study aligned with the higher order practice of multicultural theory. Namely, transformative elements of Banks’ multicultural theoretical work and critical race theory both supported the data analysis and informed the definition of the three bias roles (captiv, clarifier and facilitator) that emerged in this study. However, at the same time participants were being examined through multiple lenses with respect to their attitude, this study didn’t ask participants to consider how family structure, school culture, teacher influence and participant motivation impacted their attitudes.

As Tatum (2007) asked questions about how students examine issues related to race and its social construction, this study examined how study circle participants viewed their own knowledge about race and represented responses to racial bias in how they took different roles in a social situation. Evidence in this research showed that study circles
supported participant confidence in multicultural knowledge and taking action to support equity. The voices of participants speak to an attitude of being motivated to engage in future work related to increasing societal acceptance of racial and ethnic differences. The overall analysis, using Dewey’s theory of experience, found participants speaking similar messages in both their social interactions as well as in statements of continuity about future endeavors.

Although transformative (equity-based) multicultural attitudes were present among study circle participants, this study did not have a control group and therefore it is not known if some of the same attitudes and experiences expressed would be the same as those who did not participate in study circles; I cannot generalize beyond the current study circle participants. Even though there is no certain causal link between the study circle experience and positive attitudes toward equity among participants, in a number of instances, participants mentioned that they had gained confidence to assert an anti-bias stance in part due to the information and experience they gained from their time in study circles. As participants were volunteers in the study circle program and most sought that involvement, an element of participant “selection bias” predisposed students to work on racial and ethnic equity; this same criticism exists in the multicultural literature as a general limitation (Powers, 1995, p. 207). However, until multicultural programs, such as study circles, become part of the mandated curriculum and not just an add-on, this threat to internal validity will persist.

Some limitations also are noted with respect to the quantitative aspect of this study. The survey related to constructs within the field of multicultural education and was informed by other surveys in the field of multicultural research. However, due to the
small sample that completed both phases of the survey process (twenty-nine took the pre and post while seventy-one participants responded to the just the pre-program survey), there is no quantitative mean comparison of attitudinal impact on the majority of study circle participants. This limitation was due to the fact that three school sites were selected, and this limited the number of participants that took part in all phases of the research. Furthermore, as the survey was conducted using a five-point scale and the sample size was twenty-nine, large changes in values or means between the pre and post survey were typically not evident. If a participant selected strongly agree instead of agree, the difference in mean score was 1.0, and this had an impact demonstrating statistically significant attitudinal change. Despite these limitations, the survey informed focus group conversations, and a significant mean difference indicated that participants expressed a stronger agreement with a statement of their confidence in improving racial and ethnic understanding at their school as a result of their participation in study circles. This attitudinal change was also reflected in the focus group data as participants frequently commented about responding to bias when expressed by friends and family.

Finally, this study focused on diversity related to race and ethnicity, and, when participants brought up other facets of diversity (namely sexual orientation or gender), these were not fully analyzed as they were not part of the scope this research. There were opportunities to discuss other forms of bias including: gender, sexual orientation and disability. However, as I focused on racial and ethnic bias and understanding, other paths representing spheres of bias were not fully examined; a loss of an opportunity to view the response to these other types of bias is noted.
Further Study Implications

As bias related to sexual orientation was a theme of concern to students but not fully analyzed, more information could be gathered about how study circles impact participant attitudes and bias roles related to sexual orientation. The roles of captive, clarifier, and facilitator could inform analysis in future studies related to other bias, including bias related to sexual orientation.

As this study did not have a comparison group of non-study circle students, future study circle research could compare attitudes expressed by study circle participants with students that do not participate in study circles. A comparison of responses and attitudes could reveal if study circle participants represent the same or different responses to multicultural awareness and issues related to human equity. In addition to looking at a comparison between study circle participants and non-participants, more information should be obtained about the longitudinal impact of study circles by interviewing study circle participants some time after their participation to reveal if any effect still exists related to attitudes or responses to bias. The use of Dewey’s (1938) theory of experience supports situating longitudinal data in the interaction of a learning situation and in measuring whether a person’s predicted future impact (they note through continuity) comes to fruition. For example, if a participant stated they hope to join a college diversity group and continue working on multicultural concepts, how do they demonstrate that continuity?

Conclusion

Just as a person’s racial and ethnic identity are socially constructed, so is the work of multicultural researchers. Participants represented that racial and ethnic identities
matter to adolescents and that unless they feel educated about diverse perspectives, they are less likely to stand up against bias. Participants in these study circles expressed attitudes of increased knowledge of diverse racial and ethnic perspectives and a willingness to take on roles to promote equity and reject racial or ethnic bias. Results from this study reveal that students feel they can and will respond to bias in a situation when they first have an opportunity to learn about the impact of racial and ethnic bias. Participants demonstrated different roles depending on their familiarity with others in a social situation. There was a stated correlation between how well a participant knew the person demonstrating bias and the demonstration of an attitude of willingness to confront that bias. Furthermore, this study provided evidence that bias and the need for multicultural education continues to exist in our schools and supports the need for a continued striving toward equity.
References


*Educational Leadership* (November), 66-72.


*Teachers College Record, 97*(1), 47-70.


http://www.wilderom.com/experiential/summary/JohnDeweyExperienceEducation.html


*Multicultural Education 13*(2), 2-10.

Appendix A

Student Perceptions and Attitudes on Race and Ethnicity

Your answers on the following survey are important, please take a few minutes to respond to the following statements. Your survey responses will be kept anonymous. My gender/racial and ethnic background is as follows: (please check all that apply)

**Gender**

- ____ Male
- ____ Female

**Race/Ethnicity**

- ____ African American
- ____ Asian American
- ____ Asian/Pacific Islander
- ____ Hispanic
- ____ Native American
- ____ White (Non-Hispanic)
- ____ Multi-racial

**Age:**

- ____ 10-12
- ____ 13-15
- ____ 15-17
- ____ 18-20

Please carefully read each statement and circle the number that best fits your level of agreement with each statement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I believe it is important to understand different racial and ethnic perspectives.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I believe there is too much emphasis on awareness of human diversity in school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I feel accepted by students from other racial or ethnic backgrounds</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I believe racial and ethnic relations among students at my school need to improve.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I think racial and ethnic relations in society needs to improve.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I know how to improve racial and ethnic understanding at my school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Sometimes, I feel it is okay to dislike someone based on their race or ethnicity.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I have been discriminated against based on my race or ethnicity.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Please carefully read each statement and circle the number that best fits your level of agreement with each statement:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Undecided</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. I believe it is important to have friends with different racial and ethnic backgrounds.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I feel there is not enough emphasis placed on awareness of human diversity in school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I think it is okay for a friend to tell a racial or ethnic joke.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. I feel racial and ethnic relations among students do not need to improve.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I feel proud of my racial or ethnic background.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I can do little to improve diversity understanding at my school.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I feel it is never okay to dislike someone based on their race or ethnicity.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16. What other impact have you seen at school that relate to a person’s race or ethnicity?

17. Do you have other thoughts about how a person’s race or ethnicity impacts their life?

Questions about the survey can be directed to William Anders at wanders67@gmail.com

Anders - 2011
Appendix B

IRB Permission Forms  Informed Consent For

Parents of Student Participants for a Research Study on
“Diversity Study Circles”
Conducted by
William J. Anders, M.A.Ed., NBCT, CAS, State University of New York At Albany
Doctoral Student, Department of Educational Theory and Practice

Study Description – Your child is participating in the 2011 Diversity Study Circles. This research study will survey your child about their opinions related to race and ethnicity prior to their participation in the study circles and following their participation in the study circles, I will also interview groups of students that participated in this program to determine how they perceive the impact of race and ethnicity at their school.

What your consent means - Your signature on this letter acknowledges you have been informed and approve of the research involving the survey and/or follow-up group interviews. Students will be asked to respond to statements or questions related to their attitudes on issues related to race and ethnicity.

Who is being asked to participate - Participants will only be students that completed Schenectady County Embraces Diversity Study Circles. No identifiable information will be used to identify your child in any report of the research data.

Time commitment - Students will participate in a survey that is expected to take a total of fifteen minutes to complete. Students will also participate in a conversational interview with the researcher and other study circle participants; this should take approximately 30-45 minutes. The group interviews will be audio recorded to insure accuracy of interview notes. The researcher will also observe student groups as they meet to discuss and participate in a diversity action project; this will not involve an additional time commitment for your child.

Risk - I do not anticipate any risk in your child’s participation other than he/she may not be able to answer a question or may not understand a question. Your child’s grades will not be affected by his/her participation, or nonparticipation.

Benefits - Although your child may not receive direct benefit from his/her participation, others may ultimately benefit from the knowledge obtained from this research. Your child may also benefit from understanding something about his/her attitudes and those of others when learning about racial and ethnic diversity.

Confidentiality - No real names (only aliases) will be used in the study or collection of data. All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In addition, the Institutional Review Board and the University or government officials responsible for monitoring this study may inspect these records.

Contact information:
William Anders, principal investigator, doctoral student, 518-577-0156
Copies of consent—One copy of this document will be kept together with the research records of this study. Also, you will be given a copy to keep.

IRB Contact Information and Human Rights Statement—If you have any questions concerning your rights as a parent of a research participant or if you wish to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University at Albany Office of Regulatory Research Compliance at 518-442-9050 (or toll free at 800-365-9139) or orrc@uamail.albany.edu

Voluntary Nature of Participation—Your participation and your child’s participation in this project is voluntary. Even after you agree or your child agrees to participate in the research or sign the informed consent document, you or your child may decide to leave the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise have been entitled.

Compensation—There is no compensation for participation in the project, however; research findings will be shared with Schenectady County Embraces Diversity and all public schools that participate.

How To Withdraw or Not Participate—Your child may choose not to answer any questions and may refuse to complete any portions of the research he/she does not wish for any reason.

I have read, or been informed of, the information about this study. I hereby consent to allow my child to participate in the following parts of this study:

Please check all that apply.

__________Survey

__________Audio-taped group interview

________________________________________(name of parent/guardian- printed)

________________________________________(name of parent/guardian- signed)

________________________________________(child’s name)

________________________________________(date)

Research Study  Student Assent Form  Research Study – “Diversity Study Circles”

Dear Student,

My name is William Anders. I am student at the University at Albany. I am interested in learning about how high school students respond to the Diversity Study Circle Project. If you agree, your ideas can be part of this research study on how your involvement with diversity study circles has impacted your understanding of issues related to human diversity.

Study Description – You plan to participate in study circles. This research study plans to survey and interview groups of students that participate in this program to determine how they perceive the impact of race and ethnicity at their school.
Information from the survey and interviews will be shared with those involved in the organizing of the Study Circle Project including: Schenectady County Embraces Diversity, participating faculty advisors, those attending my doctoral defense and possibly a research journal that accepts the study for publication.

If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to participate in a brief survey during the study circle program and a survey at the conclusion of the study circle program. Each survey session will take 15 minutes for a total of 30 minutes. I will also have one or two group interviews at your school site that should take between 30-45 minutes. You will be part of a small group of students during the group interview and you will be asked to respond to questions related to your participation in the study circles and how you feel race and ethnicity impact your school environment. The interviews will be audio taped in order to better record the conversation, however; names will be deleted from the transcription and the audiotape will be destroyed after the transcription.

Your participation in the study may help advance knowledge of how students respond to programs that aim at supporting student understanding of diverse racial and ethnic perspectives. Your grades will not be affected by your decision to participate or not participate in this study.

All information obtained in this study is strictly confidential unless disclosure is required by law. In addition, the Institutional Review Board and University or government officials responsible for monitoring this study may inspect these records.

If you or your parents have any questions concerning your rights as a research participant or if you wish to report any concerns about the study, you may contact the University at Albany Office of Regulatory Research Compliance at 518- 442-9050 (or toll free at 800-365-9139)or orrc@uamail.albany.edu

Your parent or guardian must sign the parent consent form and check the type of research for you to be in the study. After they decide, you also can decide if you wish to participate. If you don’t, it is ok and will not effect your participation in future diversity study circles work. You can also decide to participate and later change your mind and stop your participation at any time.

My telephone number is 518-577-0156. You can call me if you have questions about the study or if you decide you don’t want to be in the study anymore. You will get a copy of this completed form for your records.

My faculty advisor’s name is Dr. Robert Bangert-Drowns and he can be reached at 518-442-4988 or at rbangert@uamail.albany.edu if you have any questions or concerns about this research study.

**Agreement**

I have decided to take part in the following portions of the study:

Please check all that apply

___________Survey

___________Audio-taped interview

Printed Name of Study Participant
## Appendix C

Focus Group Code Matrix

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Key: AA=African American  H=Hispanic  AsA=Asian American</th>
<th>Dimension TOE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>expressed MR=Multiracial  W=White  F=Female  M=Male expressed</td>
<td>1=Interaction-attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2=interaction-action taken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3=continuity-future impact</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### PARTICIPA NT (Loomis) ROLE Data-quotes from participant Dimension

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Noreen (AAF) Facilitator</th>
<th>The school is primarily white and I wanted to see if people would change when racism was brought up. 1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maria (HF) Facilitator</td>
<td>I thought it would be a good experience to see other schools that are involved in study circles that are predominantly white and how racism is handled at other schools but it is not brought up a lot. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanya MRF Facilitator</td>
<td>I did study circles because I wanted to make a difference because our school is mostly white and we can do something about racism. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jay (AAM) Facilitator</td>
<td>My friend, every time I say something, he goes, &quot;that's gay,&quot; I always say, don't say that because it's not what it means. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex (WM) Facilitator</td>
<td>I took administrative action, because in on of my classes there is this homophobic kid and he throws, &quot;faggot and gay&quot; around. I told the teacher, but the teacher didn't hear it and I said, &quot;who heard him say those words?&quot; Everyone raised their hand and the teacher disciplined the kid but the kid didn't stop, so I told the principal and the principal had a meeting with him and made him stop. It's extremely offensive and spreading hate is not necessary. I am the only one that takes real offense to it, so I stood up. 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex (WM) Facilitator</td>
<td>I want to be a LGBTQ counselor and help kids that have a problem with discrimination 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noreen (AAF) Facilitator</td>
<td>I am going to be moving soon, so if there isn't a group like this at my new school, I would want to try to start one. 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noreen (AAF) Captive</td>
<td>I wish I had said something two days ago. At lunch, there was this incident when I was walking by this guy and he said, &quot;nigger.&quot; My first instinct was to slap him, but then one of his friends came up and said it wasn't directed toward me but someone else. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria (HF) Captive</td>
<td>Some people just say stuff because they are with their friends and they want to act big or cool to make people laugh. But, they know if they were in a room alone with the person they are talking about, they would say half the stuff they say. 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPANT (Loomis)</td>
<td>ROLE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanya (MRF)</td>
<td>Captive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alex (WM)</td>
<td>Captive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noreen (AAF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noreen (AAF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noreen (AAF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria (HF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noreen (AAF)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanya (MRF)</td>
<td>Captive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jay (AAM)</td>
<td>Captive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jay (AAM)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jay (AAM)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hailee (WF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPA NT (Loomis)</th>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>Data- quotes from participants</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Steve (WM)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>The way I see it, racial discrimination is just accepted very much so that it seeps into the minorities in our school. If they get called the “N” word, or if they get put in the brunt of a black joke, they just laugh along, that is the case with our school.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celia (WF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>I have friends of different races and ethnicities, I don't see cliques.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moniq (HF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>My best friend is Asian, so I don't have any prejudices.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve (WM)</td>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>I thought of our school as homogenous as they came and said our school is diverse, I said, &quot;are you kidding me?&quot;</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve (WM)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>We hear black jokes here, that sense of humor bolsters political incorrectness, and really when I became friends with people with different races or ethnicities, I veered away from that sense of humor. It started to string an emotional chord for me.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hailee (WF)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>It made me open up my eyes a little bit more, the black jokes or saying &quot;it's so gay,&quot; I know I used to say that but after study circles, I realized it is not correct to say that stuff. When one of my friends say it, I speak up. &quot;Can you not say that.&quot; It made me open my eyes that what I say can hurt someone even if I don't mean to.</td>
<td>1,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moniq (WHF)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>When my friends are using those words (meaning nigger or gay) I am just like &quot;stop you don't know who is around you and you could hurt someone's feelings and not even know it.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve (WM)</td>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>It is a very defensive thing, I remember this one time when this kid was talking about homophobia, and I was stating why homophobia was not acceptable and he immediately turned around and accused me of being gay. I said, &quot;are you serious? I have to be gay to stand up for the homosexual community?&quot; The ignorance, you know.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emma (WF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>We did the day of silence to call attention to homophobia and the bullying of gay or lesbian students, it makes it easy when people are accepting and willing to help.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve (WM)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>It is not what we talk about, it is how we talk about it. Normally, we are facing a defensive front because when somebody is talking about racism or ethnic diversity, they have a preconceived notion or militant left-wing perspective…PIC,PIC,PIC - politically incorrect. We need to put more thought and feeling into why racial discrimination is wrong. I think that it becomes almost counter to fighting racism because of the, judgment of someone who is saying something. In that way, we become as judgmental, we need to not be as judgmental. We need to find a compassionate way to accept everybody, you know.</td>
<td>1,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celia (WF)</td>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>People don't want their image to be ruined, people will say, &quot;why do you care about that?&quot; People are just ignorant about it and they don't want to bother helping out.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PARTICIPANT</td>
<td>ROLE</td>
<td>Data-quotes from participants</td>
<td>Dimension</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steve (WM)</td>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>I plan on living up to my philosophy, there are people who try preach, but that is counter to what we want. It doesn't just apply to minorities, it applies to the whole. Someone who is racist, I may question their philosophy but I am not going to explicitly state they are wrong.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe (WM)</td>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>It is kind of difficult when you don't know someone to talk about stuff, but when it is a friend, you can go into more depth about it.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celia (WF)</td>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>People don't want their image to be ruined, people will say, why do you care about that? People are just ignorant about it and they don't want to</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
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<td>Joe (WM)</td>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>People don't want their image to be ruined, people will say, why do you care about that? People are just ignorant about it and they don't want to</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keri (WF)</td>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>It is hard to see any impact of race or ethnicity at our school on interactions because 90% of us are white.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle (WF)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>There is an exchange student from Vietnam and we try to get her to talk more. We try to get her to read aloud and we say it will be fun. She says, &quot;no, it's bad.&quot; We try to get her to laugh a bit and talk a bit more. She sat next to me and asked for help.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura (WF)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>I am more aware (as a result of study circles), if I see things happening because of cultural differences, I think of ways I can help.</td>
<td>2,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keri (WF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>I notice people making fun of people because of looks, the way they act or what they are interested in, I feel like I see it more now.</td>
<td>1,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura (WF)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>I am more aware, if I do see things happening because of cultural differences, I think of ways I can help and bring that together</td>
<td>2,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keri (WF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>Everyone experiences things differently, some people are exposed to diversity and others don't - it depends on where you live, I feel that more diverse families are moving in because of jobs</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle (WF)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>In a situation where I used to just sit there, I am more likely to say something like, &quot;don't do that.&quot; Acceptance is the hardest thing, like if your friends are making fun of someone else, if you go against them, they might look at you. In my group of friends, I am like the Mom of the group, what I say goes. So, when I say knock it off, they usually just stop.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura (WF)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>If feel like it is how you approach it, if you don't approach it in a good way, they will just blow you off. If you approach it in a strong way, they will realize.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie (WF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>We shadowed with Loomis, it was cool. They are not much different than us, but more diverse. They didn't think they were, but compared to us they are. I thought the teaching style was different, the kids were more rowdy and the teacher didn't seem to have much control.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle (WF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>Yah, the kid I was with said they didn't have many black kids are their</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
school, and I was like…yah you do. We have less than 10 at our school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT (Trent)</th>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>Data-quotes from participants</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Danielle (WF)</td>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>They (talking about Loomis students) were all talking and not paying attention, and the teacher asked if this happens at Trent. The teacher said, &quot;see guys this doesn't happen at Trent.&quot; Like how the teacher talked to the kids was different, it wasn't like with authority, it was more laid back.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keri (WF)</td>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>I would agree with that (discussing different teaching styles), actually in study hall there was a really negative comment about her race, she didn't get any of that at here (at Trent). It was only one kid and it seemed like she was used to it.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura (WF)</td>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>Somebody said something to the kid that I was walking with, they said a derogatory term for black people and I don't know, I wasn’t sure if she heard it, but then she said, &quot;I don't like black people.&quot; And, she was black.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle (WF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>I have a cousin that is half black and I have been with her and her friends and they call each other that (nigger) all the time, but if a white person ever said that…</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura (WF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>Yah, it was a white person that said it. I don't understand cause if back people call each other that…</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Keri (WF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>It's kind of like the &quot;B&quot; word, you say it joking around to your friends but it is different if you say it seriously to someone else, not as offensive but kind of like that.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura (WF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>It (speaking of study circles) gave us more empathy.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle (WF)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>I think it is easier to say things to your friends when something disrespectful is said than to strangers, like at a super market because you don't know what they will do or react.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laura (WF)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>After this (speaking of study circles) I found it easier because I was more educated, even with my family…if someone makes a side comment, I actually say something now, before I wouldn't because I really didn't understand or think it was okay for me to say anything. I remember I was with my older sister, there was a family and they were black, they had their whole family, grandparents, aunts, uncles and my sister said &quot;what are they doing?&quot; And, I said are you saying something because they are black? And, she said &quot;maybe that's why.&quot; I said, you are definitely saying something because they are black and if they were a white family she wouldn't have said anything. It was interesting because I caught it and she would not have said anything if they were white.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Danielle (WF)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>My dad talks about my grandpa as being racist to some groups. So, when my Dad would say the same type of comments, I say, “Dad”</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
He knows that I can’t stand those comments. He says, "you're such a good girl," and he says he is sorry when he says something.

Keri (WF) Facilitator
We plan on being facilitators and doing this more than one year in a row 3 will have more impact. Even later in life, when we go off to college and experience more diversity, it won't be a shock. I think we will treat people better.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PARTICIPANT</th>
<th>ROLE</th>
<th>Data-quotes from participants</th>
<th>Dimension</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Trent)</td>
<td></td>
<td>I think we need to focus outside of the US too. I am an exchange student 2,3 this summer, I am going to Oman to study Arabic. I am doing because most jobs in the future and things you do in the future, I think it is important to be aware of how people live, in their home countries. I think we need to understand more about different world</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie (WF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>I think you have to direct them (referring to other students) to different points of view, to help them see that there are different people that have different ethnicities.</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maggie (WF)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>Maybe, focusing on outside of school, we could change the community 2,3 too. Getting people to volunteer or organize a separate thing. Like my Mom and I are going to do something next year with a refugee center.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dee (HF)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>I think you need to focus outside of the US too. I am an exchange student 2,3 this summer, I am going to Oman to study Arabic. I am doing because most jobs in the future and things you do in the future, I think it is important to be aware of how people live, in their home countries. I think we need to understand more about different world</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen (WF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>We have some people who are racist, but I don't see as many racial slurs 2 as before.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dee (HF)</td>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>It is not like we are racist against newer people coming, it's just that you don't know about where they come from, what their religion is, like there is this boy in my class and I want to speak to him so bad but he doesn't speak English. I try to talk to him, but everybody is laughing at me because he has no idea what I am saying. So, there is this boy on the track team that's friends with him and he speaks the same language. I ask him to ask the boy if I could hug him, he said yes and now he is my friend.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claire (HF)</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
<td>This year, I met a girl and absolutely love her. She is part of a group of 2,3 friends and she is from Afghanistan. We are so intrigued about her culture and we sit and ask her questions. We are so excited to go to her graduation party and her whole family is going to be dressed the way they dress. Some of our friends are asking if they can buy those dresses dress like that too. She tells us that she is restricted from going out with us and that it is only schoolwork and home. We try to include her and I love listening to her stories. It is really interesting and I think my mindset is changed now because I like meeting new people and finding out about their culture. Next year, I am going to college and I have to be ready to meet different people.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karen (WF)</td>
<td>Clarifier</td>
<td>We have some people who are racist, but I don't see as many racial slurs 2 as before.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dee (HF)</td>
<td>Captive</td>
<td>I feel that I can still learn, I am very curious but I don't want to say 1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
something that will offend. I don't want to disrespect someone, this is the way I was raised.

Claire (HF) Clarifier I feel like saying the "R" word (referring to retard), but I don't say it because I have family that do need special help because they are not mentally able. I don't use it, it's not in my vocabulary. I don't use words that offend other people, like calling someone a "faggot," saying "that's gay," or using the "N" word. I don't think that should be in the English vocabulary.

Karen (WF) Captive When we put all the schools on the board (during the study circle program), I learned what other students thought of our school. They thought we were "ghetto, trashy and violent.

Claire (HF) Clarifier I heard (talking about Trent) that they didn't have much diversity at their school and that when they came here (talking about study circles) they freaked out.

Karen (WF) Captive The girl we had in our study circle group, when we were talking about Guyanese she said. "What's a Guyanese?" We had to explain it to her. Some kids from Trent said, we don't have any black kids at our school and it is completely different. They look at our school as the ghetto.

Dee (HF) Clarifier Because we have different races, I believe that being diverse is not a bad thing. It's a beautiful thing; you make friends with people from different cultures and races. It is really cool for them to see our world; it opens their eyes.

Karen (WF) Clarifier I saw it a lot on our basketball team this year. We had issues with how the girls interacted with each other based on race. Our coach said in real life, you have to interact with different people, you have to know the basic skills. One of the best things we have at our school is the diversity.

Karen (WF) Captive The minute you do something wrong out of your friends' group, like to welcome somebody with a different race, you get that attitude like, "What are you doing?"

Karen (WF) Clarifier Last year, our basketball coach told us about study circles and I like seeing the different things people said about us, it opened my eyes more to encourage learning about diversity and to know about different cultures. I wished I had got involved earlier, diversity is going to help me as I go and I think more people should understand that. It's a big time thing to have under your belt if you are going out into the real world and getting a job working with other people. I am going to a smaller college next year, I am excited to get the word out about my line of thinking.

Claire (HF) Clarifier We are not like we seem, people hear stuff on the news and people make mistakes, like I'm Puerto Rican and people think they have knives on them and we are all Latin Kings(referring to a gang) and I am like no, it is the way you are raised and if you want to think that way about people, I am just going to prove you wrong in the end.
Appendix D

Paired Samples t Test Results (degrees of freedom = 28, Alpha .05, critical t value = 1.701)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item #</th>
<th>Mean Differences</th>
<th>Std. Deviations</th>
<th>T values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1: Important to understand different perspectives</td>
<td>.13793</td>
<td>.91512</td>
<td>.812</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2: Too much emphasis on diversity awareness</td>
<td>-.37931</td>
<td>1.2653</td>
<td>-1.614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3: Feel accepted by students from other backgrounds</td>
<td>.17241</td>
<td>1.3905</td>
<td>.668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4: Relations at my school need to improve</td>
<td>-.03448</td>
<td>1.70048</td>
<td>-.109</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Societal racial attitudes need to improve</td>
<td>.17241</td>
<td>1.03748</td>
<td>.895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I know how to improve racial understanding at my school</td>
<td>.41379</td>
<td>1.11858</td>
<td>1.992</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Okay to dislike based on race/ethnicity</td>
<td>-.17241</td>
<td>.60172</td>
<td>-1.543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I experienced bias</td>
<td>.10345</td>
<td>1.65497</td>
<td>.337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Important to have diversity among friends</td>
<td>.20690</td>
<td>.90156</td>
<td>1.236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Not enough diversity awareness at school</td>
<td>.27586</td>
<td>1.5788</td>
<td>.941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Teachers understand racial background</td>
<td>-.13793</td>
<td>1.5749</td>
<td>-.472</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Relations among students do not need to improve</td>
<td>-.10345</td>
<td>1.17549</td>
<td>-.474</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Racial/ethnic pride</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.10195</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. I can do little to improve understanding at my school</td>
<td>-.34483</td>
<td>1.63174</td>
<td>-1.138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Never okay to dislike based on race/ethnicity</td>
<td>.13793</td>
<td>1.12517</td>
<td>.660</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>