

What You Don't Know Can Hurt You: Awareness, Action, and Discourse in Intercultural
Communication

by

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed ways that culture influences our communication and the development of both professional and personal relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds. My goal was to provide the theoretical base and practical application of concepts that will improve overall effectiveness in communicating with members of different cultural groups across the globe. The action research involved in this project will ultimately guide my community of practice toward a critical understanding of the importance of increasing student's social awareness through intercultural communication, awareness, discourse and action. This increased awareness will ultimately guide them to becoming architects of social change. The data analysis assessed the experiences of undergraduates at a major four-year University (ASU). The study also gathered responses to a questionnaire that measure perceptions and experiences of the campus cultural climate. The participants were students of various ages from Arizona State University. Results revealed significant differences between racial and ethnic groups on multiple dimensions of the campus cultural climate.

The outcome was an intercultural communication class that advanced innovative intercultural communication curriculum that also provides students an opportunity to discuss cultural issues related to race, culture and social injustices. The research was aimed at finding ways to encourage student's civic participation, activism, enlightenment, and inspiration to speak out, and be heard. Research Design: Mixed-methods research design involving the following data from one section of quantitative analyses (analysis of covariance) of pre-post surveys, qualitative analyses of semi-structured interviews, and

analysis of student assignments. The innovation, as a whole, focuses on the improvement of diversity, activism, and increasing sociocultural learning and participation, with particular interest in understanding how academic programs are engaged in this activity.

DEDICATION

This body of work is dedicated to my best friend, my father, Samuel Brown, who worked tirelessly all his life to provide for his family. Who took criticism, racism and humiliation and used that resolve to raise his two sons so they wouldn't want for anything. As a provider, dad worked two full time factory jobs for over 20 years. He shared stories of himself, as a young man hustling grocery deliveries, on Chicago's south side in the 40's to make money to help support his family. He would take a red radio-flyer wagon, go stand outside of the market, and offer to help old people and women carry their groceries home. This knack for survival is what made my father so ambitious, and so determined to succeed. And after many years of hard work, sacrifice, blood, sweat and tears; I honor him for the man he has been to me.

To my Mother, who loved me, stuck with me, and never, never, stopped being a mother, a counselor, a friend, and the calm in every storm I ever faced in life; this body of work is dedicated to you also. You were the one that insisted that I pronounce my words right, we stayed up late and you forced me to memorize my Bible verses and encouraged me to tape-record myself to help with memorization. The same tools you taught me, I now share with and encourage my students to use. Your unconditional love and support is the reason I am, who I am today, you truly are a Mother of Magnificence. Brother Kenneth, this work is also dedicated to you. Although you may not have known it, you showed me which path to take. I know that without a doubt you have loved your little brother through all the good times and bad, in both our lives. And for that, your baby Brother will always have your back.

Lastly, this body of work is dedicated to my Pastor who saw something in me that no one else did. While teaching the youth on Sundays you recognized that I had a passion for teaching, that I never knew I had. You were the one that encouraged me to pursue a career as an educator. That was many years, and many classrooms ago, and I am thankful for your guidance, prayers and support. You taught me to be a positive witness to someone, but use words only if I must. I will continue to be a humble and faithful servant in my classroom, my church, and in my home.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Social consciousness, or social awareness, is defined as; consciousness shared by individuals within a society (Questia, 2016). It essentially means to be conscious or aware of the problems within a society or community. Researchers Greene and Kamimura (2003) suggest that social awareness is one of the key components of consciousness-raising, the other being social action. As such, I feel that social awareness is an important facet of student development to understand because of the recognized links between social awareness and social change. Gaining knowledge about the benefits of a heightened sense of social awareness through intercultural communication helps us generate knowledge, creativity and understanding to facilitate participation in a movement toward social change. Healthier relationships, institutions and workplaces, along with more civil and secure communities will be the desired outcome of this social change movement.

I firmly believe the impact of education action research is profound. It has opened my eyes to the need for culturally relevant classroom discourse to facilitate awareness of cultural insensitivity and social injustice. Based on his study of culture and the impact it has on students, Arauz (2012) stated in his web-based discussion,

“In order for students to be prepared for 21st century needs, educators must show students how to use their everyday skills so they can proudly stand up and say I am innovative, culturally resilient, adaptive, collaborative, and cross culturally aware.”

I believe this statement speaks to how this knowledge can affect not just the teacher but also the student and the larger learning community.

Problem of Practice

As I sit here at a small coffee shop in the center of campus life observing students, I am able to reflect on the myriad of ways that students interact with each other, and how I might better serve them in improving those interactions. During my observation, I see students going about their daily routines as they pass by, some on skateboards, some engaged with their cell phones, oblivious to their surroundings, and some engaged in conversations with other students. Arizona State University is like a beautiful mosaic of cultures that blend seamlessly and harmoniously together. The intersection of different cultures, races, and ethnicities that pass through the multiple campuses of my institution make for an ideal setting for a cross-cultural exchange of ideas, values, and beliefs.

That is why I was shocked and appalled when a story surfaced about a fraternity party that reeked of racism. National news media reported that an ASU fraternity was kicked off campus as a result of pictures being leaked from a “black” party held in conjunction with the national holiday honoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. The images were deplorable. The fraternity members encouraged the attendees of the party to dress as or like a Ni*** (Black person), and then act out several stereotypes associated with African Americans. The bitter news spread like wildfire. The images of ASU students in blackface cut to the core. That fraternity’s actions and those images soiled our reputation and earned our institution nationwide shame.

The lack of cultural sensitivity at ASU that many undergraduate and graduate college students face can potentially lead to a negative college experience if change does not happen. Bickford and Reynolds (2002) suggest, “many college students lack the social awareness that can potentially lead to social change”. Although students of the

current generation can recognize powerful social movements of the past such as the civil rights movement, women's rights movement, and more recently the gay rights movement, experts suggest that students seldom recognize the need for a movement, nor are they willing to put in the work that leads to activism to inspire social change. Giroux (1987) suggested that they fail to understand how a democracy works and exhibit little interest in the U.S. political system. Reformers view students who lack this type of knowledge, understanding and interest as lacking sensitivity to the needs of others and a willingness to be active citizens (Swift, 1990). There is a need for educators to provide an environment of respect and safety of ideas. We must learn how to teach students from different backgrounds and understand that, those actions are critical to the success of the educational system.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of my action research is *to guide my community of practice, Arizona State University, toward a critical understanding of the importance of cultural competence in higher education.* My goal was to raise awareness of social injustices through discourse, and inspire action for social change. Throughout this study I will refer to this concept of principles as; *Awareness, Discourse, and Action.* The research in this study sought to provide both a practical and theoretical definition of awareness, discourse, and action, and to contain the requisite knowledge, the appropriate motivations, and the relevant concepts to help practitioners function competently with culturally different others, in and out of the classroom. A set of intervention strategies to facilitate student discussion of important ethical and social issues relating to cultural communication and engagement was designed and implemented in an undergraduate

course on intercultural communication. The innovation sought to apply vivid examples of social injustices related to cultural and communication that would foster a deeper cultural interaction among students in the class. Multiple evaluation tools were used to measure how and to what extent the discussion strategies facilitated student awareness, discourse and action related to cultural and communication along with social injustice. All information contained within this research project was created to support the hypothesis: *social awareness is an important facet of student development to understand because of the recognized links between social awareness and social change.* Gaining knowledge about the validity of the critique of how human beings of different cultures communicate and interact, we generate knowledge, resourcefulness and understanding to facilitate healthy relationships and workplaces, civil and secure communities.

The desired initial outcome of the innovation was to raise awareness and affect attitudes, values and beliefs. Furthermore, the innovation's aim was to encourage student's civic participation, activism, enlightenment, and inspiration to speak out against social injustices. Another goal of the innovation is to have a profound impact on the field of intercultural communication, based on the persuasive power of "stories" or conversations of the students involved in the class and the intervention.

Questions Guiding the Research

1. What is students' perceived value of awareness, discourse, and action in solving complex societal problems that lead to social change? How does the intervention transform students' valuing of awareness, discourse, and action?

2. How and to what extent did the innovation influence students' willingness to engage in interpersonal communication that promotes intercultural sensitivity and leads to social change?
3. How and to what extent did the innovation influence students' willingness to participate in community action programs that promote racial understanding, and to become involved with activities and events that raise their awareness of social injustices?

Larger and Local Context

My positionality is unique, as I am both ASU instructor and ASU student. My community of practice, Arizona State University, downtown campus, is a place that I am very familiar with and very comfortable in. ASU downtown has a unique culture, and this culture is represented in the organizations in which I participate. College of Integrative Sciences and Arts (CISA) is where I call home. The college offers courses in communication studies, sciences, social sciences, humanities, math, and other specialized fields. According to the college website; "The College of Integrative Sciences and Arts has undergone some dynamic changes and recently had to answer the challenge of revamping the curriculum to better fit the needs of an evolving education system (<https://cls.asu.edu>)." I often think of ASU President Dr. Michael Crow's vision of ASU as the "New American University" measured by whom we include and how they succeed. This statement/vision falls directly on my shoulders as an instructor. I take this directive personally and consider it my responsibility to uphold it. As such, my scholarly identity must reflect one of inclusiveness, innovation, and intellect. The courses that I teach for the College of Integrative Sciences and Arts provides students across ASU with the

knowledge and skills to comprehend and effectively engage the changing world of the 21st century at local, national and global levels. Under the leadership of Dr. Duane Roen, the Assistant Vice Provost, Interim Dean of University College, and Dean of the College Integrative Sciences and Arts, we focus on supporting students so they can be successful at ASU and in their careers and personal lives. CISA is an integral part of being successful in a global environment. Therefore, our programs are specifically designed to cross disciplines, preparing students for the real world, teaching them the ability to relate to a multitude of cultures, ideas and situations.

The Communication Studies program within CISA focuses on teaching students how communication processes create, maintain and transform identities, relationships, workplaces and communities. Our mission statement is: “Through the study and critique of human communication, we generate knowledge, creativity and understanding to facilitate healthy relationships and workplaces, civil and secure communities, and constructive intercultural interaction” (cisa.asu.edu). A core course within the Communication studies degree program is Intercultural Communication Studies (COM-263). This course and the students the students that I have taught in the course are the foundation of this research project.

Intercultural Communication Studies

I have been an instructor of Intercultural Communication Studies at local Community Colleges and here at ASU for a combined total of over 12 semesters. This lower division, interdisciplinary, Intercultural Communication Studies class is an elective. Typically, the students that take this course as an elective are undergraduates

pursuing a degree in Communication studies or a related field. Students often tell me they selected this course to raise their own awareness of culture because they understand the importance of embracing the role of communication in establishing and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships, problem solving, critical thinking, and working collaboratively with members of various cultures in a rapidly changing global community.

Cultural and intercultural competence studies provide students with the tools necessary to succeed in today's multicultural world. The major objective of this interdisciplinary course is to provide the student with an overview of the study of communication and culture. Specifically, we look at the ways in which culture influences our communication and the development of both professional and personal relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds. My goal is to provide students with the theoretical base and practical application of concepts that will improve their effectiveness in communicating with members of cultural groups different from their own. The learning outcomes of the course are as follows:

- Raising awareness of the broad definition and varied categories of culture
- Continue to move forward through the ethno-relative stages of intercultural communication competency
- Appreciate both the similarities and differences between different cultures
- Effectively and ethically communicate across cultures both verbally and nonverbally

In this course students critically examine culture from many various aspects such as problem-solving in inner city communities and dialogue involving the topics of race and disenfranchisement. The course is also responsible for expanding the study of culture, communication, and civility beyond the black/white binary, understanding that race and participatory democracy intersect with gender, class, religion, sexuality, and nationality. It is within the context of this course that my innovation for learning will be enacted for this action research project.

Rationale and Objectives for Innovations in Intercultural Communication Studies.

This research offers the requisite knowledge, the appropriate motivations, and the relevant concepts to function competently with culturally different others, in and out of the classroom. The course used discourse, and debate on cutting-edge issues related to culture, gender, class, religion, sexuality, and nationality. It also provided experiential opportunities for students to engage in public service through, for example, local, national, and international programs, internships, and fellowships, such as the Center for the Study of Racism and Democracy. The class required participation in community service projects that serve underrepresented institutions in the greater metropolitan Phoenix area.

When I first started teaching Intercultural Communication, I followed the textbook and prescribed curriculum to guide classroom discussion. I created assignments based on textbook theories and concepts and taught the class based on it. I was not dissatisfied with this approach to teaching the class in this manner, as I felt safe. My department head was on board with me on the broad approach, and it seemed to yield favorable results. As such, the students' participation was average, my teaching

evaluations were average and everything felt fine. The entire course from beginning to end was mundane. At this same time, our Nation was going through a very tumultuous, racially charged time as a result of the George Zimmerman verdict. Reports of civil disobedience and unrest started happening in the community, which to me, suggested that tensions between Black and White or majority and minority were mounting. There were whispers of public dissent and rebellion against law enforcement. Members of the African American community began wearing hoodies and sweatshirts in unification with the Travon Martin cause. The attitude of many in my city was a heightened sense of rebellion that led to a “try me” attitude.

Many Travon Martin supporters and/or anti-stand your ground supporters and citizens started to feel a sense of cultural insensitivity which led to increased tensions. This was seen through marches, rallies, and riots, which began to create a divide in our community. Thus, I decided to take the issue to class for a discussion. During the discussion, a student asked, “What do you guys think about that?” And hands shot up! This began a very heated, passionate, racially charged discussion about race, racism, discrimination and prejudice. Students spoke freely about the current race issue and shared their thoughts on race and diversity. At the end of class, I had a student come up to me and said, “I feel so much better; thank you.” Right then, I knew I was on to something. This was different. This was not safe. This was not mundane.

Around the same time as this in-class discussion, the Center for the Study of Race and Democracy was holding a public dialogue series called “Healing racism” designed to “bring together academic experts, community leaders, and citizens for engaging discussions that encourage critical thinking and positive change.” (csrd.asu.edu). One of

the dialogues the CSRD hosted was on the George Zimmerman verdict. I highly encouraged my class to attend the discussion and participate. I encouraged them to go with me and voice themselves, be heard. The student turnout was enormous, close to 70 of my students attended (of the combined total of students from each class taught that semester). Some of my students got to speak at the forum, while others just sat back and listened, but from this interaction, I could tell that knowledge and an overall heightened sense of awareness was taking place. Students seemed to be impressed that community leaders were there facilitating a discussion of such magnitude and encouraging them to participate and take action. I believe there is a liberating power behind being able to ask the Mayor of a major metropolitan city, a face-to-face question in a racially charged environment.

After attending the community action program, the next day we discussed it in class. The students seemed to be impressed that the mayor of Phoenix attended, the chief of police, several pastors and parishioners from the community, and hundreds of college students were in attendance. The discourse that took place in our class discussion was robust, the students felt comfortable asking and responding to tough questions. This discussion enabled them to come to terms with their own biases. We tossed around open-ended questions such as: How did you feel as a White person at the event? What was the event like for you as a person of color? If you were in Zimmerman's shoes would you have done the same thing? I did not speak for the next 45 minutes because of the eagerness and excitement of the students to speak. The talk went between the students as if they were playing a game of hacky sack with the topic. There was passion driving the discussion. It made them give deep reflection. There were multiple voices in the room

that day; moving, passionate, and powerful voices, and there was also dissent in the room that day. As the class came to a close I asked; would you go again?

Overwhelmingly, the response was yes. I had goosebumps. I sensed healing. I sensed transformation. I sensed a growing awareness and potential for action. I wanted more of it.

Those experiences around the George Zimmerman discussions were my wake-up call. I began to gain confidence in putting the textbook aside and using real-life examples. I started bringing in YouTube videos of local and National social injustices. I made classroom discourse like this a key component of class sessions for the remainder of the semester. I became bold. I cheated. I put aside the course objectives to put front and center, student talk about local and National microaggressions. I made attendance at community events and reflection on those events a mandatory part of the curriculum. I had an epiphany. I felt as though I was on the precipice of a great pedagogical concept. I began to develop my own epistemology about students and how they learn from their own interactions with culture. As such, this research study was born.

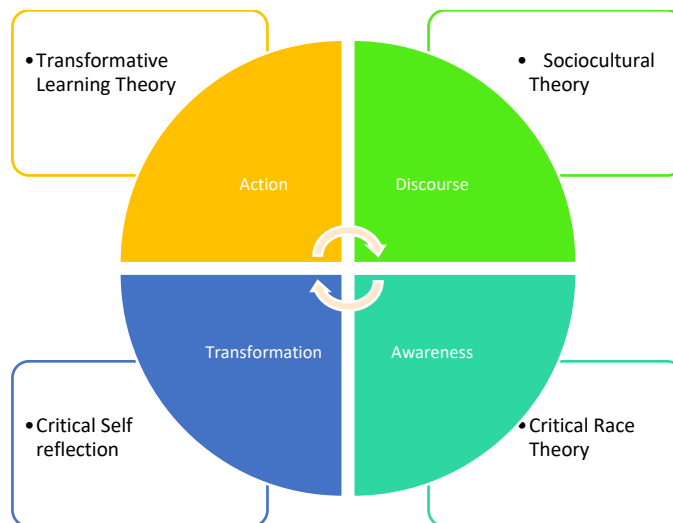
Chapter 2 Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks that guided my action research project are;

- **Critical Race Theory**
- **Transformative Learning Theory**
- **Sociocultural Theory**

These three theoretical perspectives of Critical Race Theory, Transformative Learning Theory, and Sociocultural Theory are intertwined with the three pedagogical strategies of awareness, discourse, and action. Brown (2004) argues that by “weaving a tripartite theoretical framework together in support of an alternative, transformative pedagogy, students learn “to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality” (Freire, 1994, p.17). Figure 1 shows the relationships among the three key theoretical frameworks guiding my study and the three components of my innovation.

Figure 1: Tripartite theoretical framework guiding an innovative curriculum



My investigation looked at ways that culture influences our communication and the development of both professional and personal relationships with people from different cultural backgrounds. My goal was to provide the theoretical base and practical application of concepts that will improve overall effectiveness in communicating with members of different cultural groups across the globe.

Critical Race Theory

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is the primary theory guiding my research. CRT is an academic discipline focused on revealing the intersectionality of society and culture with the central tenants of race, law, power and privilege. (Yosso, 2005). Critical race theory is often associated with controversial issues involved in the pursuit of equality issues related to race and ethnicity. Critical race theory emerged in the 1970's much like a shot of adrenaline to jump-start a new racial equality movement after the civil rights movement. The theory was needed to help scholars and practitioners come up with ways to combat subtler forms of racism by helping to clarify central issues in race relations, particularly in regards to legal scholarship (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). CRT evolved into a framework to help minorities in the U.S. understand, cope with, and resist racism, oppression, and social injustice (Wing, 2000). There are five key constructs (main tenets) associated with CRT scholarship according Solórzano (1997).

· *The intercentricity of race and racism:* Is the premise that race and racism are endemic to and permanent in U.S. society. The concept suggests that racism intersects on various levels with several in varied forms such as gender, class sexuality and religion.

- *The challenge to dominant ideology*: Experts suggest that CRT challenges claims of objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity, which hides or masks the hate, greed and privilege of the dominant group.
- *The commitment to social justice*. CRT's social justice research examines the importance of cultural movements that lead to social change. Movements such as the civil rights movement and the field worker equal rights act. This commitment also focuses on the elimination of racism, sexism, and poverty as well as the empowerment of People of Color and other subordinated groups.
- *The centrality of experiential knowledge*. CRT recognizes the importance of looking at the experiential knowledge of People of Color as legitimate and appropriate. CRT explicitly listens to the lived experiences of People of Color through counter-storytelling methods such as family histories and parables.
- *The interdisciplinary perspective*. CRT extends beyond disciplinary boundaries to analyze race and racism within both historical and contemporary contexts.

Solórzano (1997) goes on to state that a growing number of scholars apply this dynamic framework to education. Based on Solorzano's study, I have learned that there is one component that is significant to me because it assists me in increasing students' intercultural competence, and it helps me reflect on ways to create a more collaborative environment in Intercultural Communication Studies. It is *the challenge to dominant ideology*. Solorzano (1997) states that "CRT challenges claims of objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, race neutrality, and equal opportunity, which hides or masks the hate, greed and privilege of the dominant group" (p. 7). As such, I felt that CRT

could help me shed light on certain attitudes, values and beliefs that students bring into the classroom. For example; it challenges students' claims of colorblindness, highlight privilege, and shatter any ideas that opportunity is equal and the playing field is level. Through my innovation, I hoped to administer CRT like a drug or a remedy for a virus. Through films, discussions, community action programs, I wanted the students to see, feel, and experience Critical Race Theory at work.

Other ways the theory is significant to my area of study is that it examines how critical teacher involvement is, as it relates to culture and the classroom. According to Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw (1993), CRT offers a framework to help transform traditional cultural frameworks of education that promote biases within the classroom. The theory contains implications that critical reflection and creating culturally inclusive environments is relevant. I personally feel that this theory is a very discerning tool to help scholars examine how students in bad situations show resiliency in their everyday struggle. They show this resiliency through critical analysis, adaptability, cross-cultural and intercultural communication, collaboration and innovation.

CRT helped me understand the cultural climate at ASU. The first thing I understood was that minorities were a marginalized group. Based on classroom discussions, I have come to the realization that some students at ASU are colorblind when it comes to race. CRT helped me understand that many of my students have no knowledge of cultural insensitivity. If you are a White student at a predominantly White institution, you may not have any idea that those around you are being culturally insensitive because you do not have experiences with discrimination. Thus, these students may lack awareness that cultural insensitivity is going on in their world and in our ASU

community. CRT helps me understand that racism is embedded in the fabric of this and every institution. Therefore, CRT helps me show my students that racism is embedded in every institution because CRT is looking at critical reflection by minorities. Thus, it has informed my commitment to incorporating opportunities for students of all ethnicities to share their experiences and their experiential knowledge to help raise all students' awareness in my intercultural communication courses. Furthermore, the discourse that follows these stories continues to drive this raising of awareness of cultural insensitivity through critical discussion between myself and students in the class.

Instead of relying on traditional curriculum, CRT allows me to hear all students' experiences and give them a platform for critical reflection through sharing their experiences with each other. In my innovation, as part of action research action research, I swapped out traditional curriculum for a more shared experiences related to real-world situations. During class discussions, students will often critically reflect on their own and others experiences, which allows them to connect to each other. It is through that discourse that awareness is raised of intercultural insensitivities and social injustice.

Review of Literature Related to Critical Race Theory

The following articles fall under the category of Critical Race theory as they offer a critical examination of society and culture, to the intersection of race, law, and power. These Critical Race Theory articles inform my study in ways that will help expand my knowledge about *social awareness as an important facet of student development and recognize the links between social awareness and social change*. Gaining knowledge about the validity of critical reflection, discourse, and action will help me generate

knowledge, creativity and understanding of the controversial issues going on within college campuses locally and nationally.

Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of African American College Students (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) examined the relationship between campus racial climate and the undergraduate experience. Their purpose for this study was to investigate the link between poor campus racial environments and the failure of students of color at these institutions. The subjects of the study were thirty-four African American students (18 females, 16 males) who participated in 10 focus groups convened on the campuses of three universities in the United States. More specifically, the subjects of the study were attending three elite, predominantly White, Research I universities (two public and one private) in the United States. This information is important to my study, as my study was also conducted at a predominantly White Research I public university. Solórzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) report that African American students experience racial microaggressions and these experiences have a negative impact on the campus racial climate. Using focus group interview data from the African American students in the study, they revealed that racial microaggressions exist in both academic and social spaces in the collegiate environment. Students in the study described a very tense racial climate both inside and around campus. Many students spoke of feeling "invisible" in the classroom. "An African American female student noted that being viewed as a numerical racial minority seemed to translate into being ignored in class". The student stated, "I think that when the professors see that there is fewer of you, they are less likely to address your concerns" (p.65).

Solorzano et al. (2000) show how African American students respond to these experiences. The author stated that ongoing negative interactions with faculty seemed to instill a sense of self-doubt in some of the African American students they interviewed. Many students mentioned the importance of having other African American students in their classes to provide support against stereotype threat (p.66). The study also reports, “a positive collegiate racial climate can facilitate and lead to important, positive academic outcomes for African American students (p.72)”. I feel this is a very important facet of a successful college experience. However, a negative or racially charged campus climate marred in student unrest, campus protests, and civic upheaval like we recently witnessed at the University of Missouri, where students openly protested the actions and inactions of the President of the University. On campus sit-ins, marches, protests, rallies, and even a hunger strike by Graduate student Jonathan Butler that lasted days. Jonathan Butler said in a CNN interview the hunger strike was not a singular effort but a community effort. (<http://www.cnn.com/2015/11/09/us/jonathan-butler-hunger-strike-missouri-profile/>). The impact of these actions certainly lead to a poor academic performance and climate for that institution. I could not imagine the tremendous strain those students were under during that tumultuous time.

As Solórzano et al. (2000) also suggests, I feel that understanding and analyzing the collegiate racial climate is an important part of examining college success or failure. This information is very important to my study as it suggests that African American college students have a diminished chance at being successful in their academic performance and could possibly not even graduate due to the negative racial climate. ASU has for many years been labeled as a predominately-White institution with a poor

racial climate. Almost every year a microaggression happens on campus that gets national media attention leaving an indelible mark on our reputation. In my experience teaching Intercultural Communication studies, I have noticed that many students are unaware that such microaggressions are taking place. As such, I feel that awareness, discourse, and action are needed to raise awareness and spark change on a college campus in order for all students to be successful. According to Solarzano et al. (2000) “ongoing negative interactions with faculty seemed to instill a sense of self-doubt in some of the African American students we interviewed. Many students mentioned the importance of having other African American students in their classes to provide support against stereotype threat. (p. 65)” This study has a direct correlation to my own experiences, as these same sentiments have been shared with me by students of color at the institution where my research will take place. In my opinion, these comments and findings serve as a wake-up call for educators and administrators, in the fact that cultural sensitivity and diversity training programs should be a part of every educational program. As a scholar and practitioner, it is very important for me to understand that collegiate racial climate has a direct effect on a student’s success. I undoubtedly feel that our classroom discussions and our day-to-day discourse on culture along with the central tenets Critical Race Theory helped guide my conceptualization of how to get to a positive collegiate racial climate and how it will affect student success.

As Solorzano et al. (2000) suggests a positive racial climate includes four elements: the inclusion of students, faculty, and administrators of color, a curriculum that reflects the historical and contemporary experiences of people of color, and programs to support the recruitment, retention and graduation of students of color. The article

concluded with reporting that their findings reveal that the overall effects of racial microaggressions can be devastating. The authors also mention, “collectively they would like to see more research into the problem of subtle forms of campus racism.” This really inspired me, as I feel as though my study furthers insights as to the link between campus cultural climates and student’s propensity for discourse and action. The study opened my eyes to the need for awareness, discourse and action not just on my campus, but also on all college campuses. This study reaffirmed that cultural insensitivity is not just happening at ASU but at universities throughout the Country. Going forward, I relied on CRT to help raise awareness, create dialog among our student population, and hopefully inspire them to take action that will lead to change.

Whose Culture Has Capital? A Critical Race Theory Discussion of Community Cultural Wealth (Yosso, 2005). In this article, the author has a three-part purpose. Yosso begins the study by discussing the ways CRT puts into perspective the importance of outsider’s knowledge and experiences. She then goes onto critique the assumption that students of color come to the classroom with cultural deficiencies. Lastly, she introduces an alternative concept called community cultural wealth.

Based on the principles of Critical Race Theory (CRT), Yosso (2005) conceptualizes *community cultural wealth* as a challenge to traditional interpretations of cultural capital (p.69). Instead of a deficit view of communities of color as places full of cultural poverty disadvantages, the article shifts the perspective to focus on a wide variety of cultural knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed by socially marginalized groups that often go unrecognized and unacknowledged. The article mentioned a phrase about the epistemology of students of color first stated by Dolores Delgado Bernal (1998)

that I really connected with. She very simply stated “whose knowledge counts and whose knowledge is discounted” (p.69). The article uses CRT to incorporate the racialized experiences of women, Latinas/os, Native Americans and Asian Americans into the discussion of cultural community wealth and the rich diversity these marginalized groups of people bring to the classroom.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of Yosso’s (2005) analysis of community wealth was the discussion of the six forms of capital which are; Aspirational *capital*: the ability to maintain hopes and dreams for the future, even in the face of real and perceived barriers. *Linguistic capital*: the intellectual and social skills attained through communication experiences in more than one language. *Familial capital*: the cultural knowledge is nurtured among family that carry a sense of community history, memory and cultural intuition. *Social capital*; which can be understood as networks of people and community resources. *Navigational capital* refers to skills of maneuvering through social institutions. In addition, *resistant capital*, which is those knowledge’s and skills fostered through oppositional behavior that challenge inequality (p.77-81).

Yosso (2005) suggests “These various forms of capital are not mutually exclusive or static, but rather are dynamic processes that build on one another as part of community cultural wealth (p.77).” Yosso’s concept of community wealth really resonated with me, as I see my community of practice as this wonderfully diverse institution with people from various backgrounds bringing their experiences into classrooms and campus life. It would be a shame if we did not embrace those experiences. It is much like going to the zoo to see only one species of animal. I cannot understand why someone would not want to see and appreciate the strength of the lion, the enormity of the elephant, and the beauty

of the rare birds. Yosso's (2005) central claim of community cultural wealth reminds me so much of my institution, in that we are very wealthy with cultural capital. Various forms of capital such as social, linguistic, familial and spiritual are all right here on campus. The article suggests "these forms of capital draw on the knowledge's students of color bring with them from their homes and communities into the classroom (p.70)." This is a critical CRT approach to education, and in my opinion it must be done in order to weave the strengths of people of diverse backgrounds into the fabric of our institution, just as decades ago institutional racism was woven into the very same fabric. The authors suggest that there needs to be a commitment to develop schools that acknowledge the multiple strengths of Communities of Color to serve a larger purpose of struggle toward social and racial justice. This statement acted as a personal call to action for me as my research efforts helped me change my thinking, which influenced my teaching to make me even better at raising awareness, discourse, and action related to intercultural communication and racial insensitivity at ASU.

Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate for Latina/o Undergraduates (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solorzano, 2009). Social awareness is an important facet of student development because of the recognized links between social awareness and social change, as well as the development of critical thinking skills (Tsui, 2000). In my experiences, higher education institutions are being called upon to create an informed citizenry capable of understanding and addressing a myriad of social issues. The purpose of Yosso et al.'s (2009) study was to shed light on how racial microaggressions shaped Latina/o students' undergraduate experiences and how these students succeeded in spite of negative campus racial climates. The authors

explore three types of racial microaggressions: interpersonal, racial jokes, and institutional microaggressions. They seek to understand the effects of these racial affronts on Latina/o students (Liou et al, 2009).

Yosso et al (2009) qualitatively analyzed data from focus groups to examine Latina/o students' campus experiences. It was suggested that focus groups generate a wealth of understanding about participants' experiences and beliefs through guided discussions. Per Yosso, the study showed that, racial microaggressions aimed at Latina/o students carry strong accusations about language, immigration status, surname, and socioeconomic status. Yosso focused on Critical Race Theory, to bring Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate for Latina/o Undergraduates into perspective. CRT allowed the study to assess these student's experiences and report their findings, much like my use of CRT is helping me through classroom discussions, and our day-to-day discourse on culture. The central tenets of Critical Race Theory help guide the conceptualization of how to get to a positive collegiate racial climate and how it will affect student success.

These findings shed an increasing amount of light shed on racial microaggressions. This information is important because within my community of practice students face these same direct and indirect forms of racism, from cultural minimization to inside jokes about language and accents. All these issues support the relationship between poor campus racial climate and the need for action, awareness, and discourse to change or eradicate microaggressions and racism.

The results of Yosso et al.'s 2005 (2005) qualitative research substantiate several things pertinent to my study. First is the need for a higher level of awareness. I feel that

this data reported in their study is like a powder keg and can be potentially explosive with devastating residual effects. Example; University of Missouri college President did nothing about reports of a poor campus racial climate, student complaints, and several campus microaggressions. His lack of attention to these issues and the poor cultural climate on the campus cost him his job, millions of dollars in sponsorship money, grants, and endorsements and nearly cost some students their lives after the protests broke out.

All this leads to the second facet of my study, discourse, which is directly related to Yosso et al's (2005) research. Yosso and her colleagues suggest that their findings will touch on helping students and administrators deal with some of the school's most difficult cultural mishaps. One of the anticipated long-term outcomes of my research will be for the students and community members to act as agents of change on issues that affect them directly. These experiences learned through the Yosso study inspire me to share my passion for changing our institution's poor cultural climate. This can only be done by motivating students to make changes in their perspectives on culture. I feel like hearing these results from this study and many others like it will offend students enough to want to make change. Then inspire them to create change in their communities, and perhaps in their Country. Specifically, by naming the problem, and offering students a prescription or recipe that will eventually lead to a solution to the problem and by speaking out, consciousness raising will occur.

Intercultural learning and diversity in higher education (Otten, 2003). In this theoretical treatise, Otten (2003) considered what can be understood by intercultural competence and how it relates to the quality of intercultural contacts rather than the quantity of contacts for students at colleges and universities. Otten (2003) examined the

concept of internationalization as it relates to the diversity of discourse that has shaped the Anglo-American debate in the United States and Canada. The author goes on to discuss the concern for diversity and cultural pluralism in higher education in the United States. The need for curriculum change and teaching the influence of diversity to practitioners as it relates to curriculum matters was the aim of the study.

From Otten's (2003) work, I learned that growth of cultural pedagogy is limited because of the traditional claims of the faculties and academic departments. The author states still, more and more colleges and universities across the United States are transforming their curricula because college leaders increasingly recognize that knowledge about domestic and international diversity is essential for today's students. I feel this is important to my study, as a practitioner I see the need for knowledge about diversity. I feel this knowledge about diversity and diversity programs can be attained through classroom discourse, peer-to-peer discussions, critical reflection, and observation. The author suggests that critical race theory will be the lens they use in which a critical analysis of intercultural communication competence can be offered. They also use CRT to examine international intercultural communication competence. This was a unique way of the examining the concept, as it takes the theory of intercultural communication competence and stretches beyond domestic borders.

Otten's (2003) work was significant to me as an educator and my experiences with Critical Race Theory because of our ever-expanding reach to foreign students. With online education being so popular, educators must know now look toward an international classroom. It is my goal to be at the forefront of academic research on intercultural communication both foreign and domestically. I feel that the article

Intercultural Learning and Diversity in Higher Education has a profound impact on current education action research. The article discusses what can be understood by intercultural competence and how it relates to the quality of intercultural contacts rather than the quantity of such contacts. Otten (2003) goes on to discuss need for diversity and cultural pluralism in higher education in the United States. The article states still, more and more colleges and universities across the United States are transforming their curricula because college leaders increasingly recognize that knowledge about domestic and international diversity is essential for today's students. Otten suggests that the increasing foreign student population college campuses do not guarantee that students are receiving adequate intercultural communication instruction (Otten, 2003). This concept has significant relevance to my study as a scholar and practitioner. As a practitioner with several international students, I must understand the additional hardships that come along with being an international student such as assimilating to a mainstream culture much different from your own. This could certainly cause hardships in the classroom like isolation, feelings of despair, and even trust issues. As a scholar, I must use CRT to help me understand that these students are likely to experience institutional racism just as a minority in-state student would on the same campus. I must then turn to discourse to raise awareness that international students have some of the same campus climate related issues as other marginalized students.

Research suggests that despite the rise in internationalization, many institutions possess an achievement ethos that requires a commitment to excellence. Otten's (2003) article illuminates and supports my topic of reforming pedagogy to be culturally relevant, as it directly and indirectly touches on the need for curriculum change and teaching the

influence of diversity in curriculum matters. Enhancing my curriculum to make it even better at raising awareness, discourse, and action related to intercultural communication and racial insensitivity is one important thing I can do to help the growth of a more inclusive campus.

Nine Themes in Campus Racial Climates and Implications for Institutional Transformation. (Harper, S. & Hurtado, S.) I found this article to be interesting as it highlighted trends that persist on many college campuses. I also found it interesting to know how campus racial climates have evolved since 1992. Their research consistently shows that racial/ethnic minority students and their White peers who attend the same institution often view the campus racial climate in different ways (p. 12). I thought this was noteworthy, and made me reflect on the campus racial climate on my massive, coed, multicultural campus. My view of the cultural climate as an African American practitioner is much different from my White colleagues. They see the same racial incident but do not share in the experience of the racial microaggression as I do. Much of the article revolves around that state's history of racism and racial injustices. The article states, "the classroom is a microcosm of the town" which is why the discussion of sensitive racial issues are not discussed in the classroom. I never thought about race related conversations in the classroom having an effect on the larger local context.

However, because of understanding this study, I can now remove the blinders and begin to see that this issue did not start at ASU. If race and racism is a problem at ASU, then we have to look toward the communities these students are coming from. In conclusion, I am in steadfast agreement with the implications of this study. The need for more transparency regarding student-learning outcomes on college campuses. Better and

more inclusive climates for learning. In addition, the need for greater transparency regarding racial realities in learning environments at PWIs. As the article suggests, it should not take an embarrassing photo or newspaper article for the institution to step up its transparency on racial issues.

Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning involves “a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of conscious that dramatically and permanently alters our way of being in the world” (Morrell & O’Connor, 2002, p. xvii). Our subconscious feeds the conscious messages that influence our actions. In order to transform, a learner must start by becoming aware of unconscious beliefs and attitudes so that the message is received by the conscious. Transformative learning raises a learner’s consciousness by changing their attitudes, values, and beliefs (i.e. their worldview) and their personal capabilities. Such transformation is facilitated through critical reflection on one’s unconscious and thinking about the root structure of one’s idea (i.e., reading between the lines of one’s own actions and beliefs) (Elias, 1997). Transformative Learning theory says that the process of "perspective transformation" has three dimensions or key constructs: psychological (changes in understanding of the self), convictional (revision of belief systems), and behavioral (changes in lifestyle) (Clark, 1991). Kitchenham suggests that Transformative learning theory describes how adult learners make sense or meaning of their experiences, “the nature of the structures that influence the way they construe experience, the dynamics involved in modifying

meanings, and the way the structures of meanings themselves undergo changes when learners find them to be dysfunctional” (Kitchenham, 2008, p. xii).

Review of Literature Related to Transformative Learning Theory

The genesis of transformative learning theory begins in 1978. The early development of this theory came from John Mezirow’s use of the term *transformation* in his study of U.S. women returning to postsecondary study or the workplace after an extended time out. Kitchenham, (2008) conducted a qualitative study to “identify factors that characteristically impede or facilitate” (p. 6), women’s progress in the re-entry programs. The results of the study showed that the respondents had undergone a “personal transformation” and identified 10 phases that they could experience:

- A disorienting dilemma
- A self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame
- A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions
- Recognition that one’s discontent and the process of transformation are shared and
- That others have negotiated a similar change
- Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions
- Planning of a course of action
- Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one’s plans
- Provisional trying of new roles
- Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships
- A reintegration into one’s life on the basis of conditions dictated by one’s perspective

In 1985, Mezirow Revised Transformative Learning Theory was based on the central tenants of a newly evolving theory called the Adult Learning Theory. According to Brown (2004), “transformative learning changes the way people see themselves and their world. It attempts to explain how their expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions, directly influence the meaning they derive from their experiences (p. 84).” Like many other theories, critical reflection is key to transformation. I like to refer to this as “know better-do better”. The reason transformative learning theory is relevant to my study is the concept of critical self-reflection and perspective transformation. These two central tenets to Transformative Learning theory are exactly what I anticipated my study doing. It is critical for students at my institution to reflect on themselves and their attitudes, values and beliefs in order for them to change their perceptions. If a student does not see a need for a healthier cultural climate, a need for a heightened state of cultural sensitivity, or a need to be involved in social action programs then this theory will help them see that need. Thus, leading to perception transformation, which will ultimately lead to change.

In order to test out the validity and viability of the theory to my study, I used some of the principles of the theory during in-class discussions. According to Brown (2014), three common themes of Mezirow’s theory are the centrality of experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse (see also Boyd, 1991; Cranton, 1994; Kegan, 1994). I used critical reflection and rational discourse as key elements in classroom discussion. Students were asked to think about a time when they felt as if they were being racist and then think about a time they felt like they were being a victim of racism. Almost every student raised their hand when asked was there a time they felt like they

were being a racist. However, when asked to raise your hand if you ever felt like you were a victim of racism, every student of color raised their hand and every White student except one had their hands down. The students were shocked to see this, which led to a very passionate conversation with several of the White students admitting that they had no idea that overt racism still exists. The rational discourse and critical reflection we did in class substantiated my use of Transformative Learning theory in my study.

One article I found particularly useful for understanding the application of transformative learning theory to my study was Brown (2004)'s *Leadership for Social Change and Equity: Weaving a transformative framework and pedagogy*. This article offers much insight and a deeper more fundamental understanding of not only transformative learning theory but also the tripartite approach to theoretical approach. This tripartite approach will benefit me greatly in my research, as it will offer insight to pragmatic approaches to developing truly transformative leaders. The first question the article must address for me is; what is a transformative leader? The article offers several examples of what a transformative leader looks like. Brown (2004) suggests, "A critical stance frames this discussion by outlining clearly the need for professors to retool their teaching and courses to address issues of power and privilege to weave social justice into the fabric of educational leadership curriculum, pedagogy, programs, and policies. It recognizes and advocates for the social change role and responsibility of educational leaders." This statement cannot be more precise as it relates to the fundamental goal of my action research project. As stated previously, Brown (2004), the three common themes of Mezirow's theory; centrality of experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse are an integral part of my study.

Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory is an additional theoretical framework that will be used to inform my action research. The fundamental claim of the theory is that the sociocultural approach concerns the ways in which human action, including mental action (e.g., reasoning, remembering), is inherently linked to the cultural, institutional, and historical settings in which it occurs (Wertsch, 1994). To understand the basis of a sociocultural perspective is, I first had to understand the characteristics of cooperative learning, which is thought to occur through interaction, negotiation, and collaboration. The difference between “cooperative learning” and sociocultural theory is the attention to the discourse, norms, and practices associated with particular discourse and the environments in which discourse is practiced (Mercer & Howe, 2012).

Sociocultural theory has its roots in Vygotsky’s sociohistorical theory. In its early days the theory emphasized the importance of a cultural-historical context in which learning takes place and how that context has impact on what is learned. The theory has since evolved and transitioned. Vygotsky’s and his colleagues suggested that “sociocultural” is a better term when it comes to dealing with education, culture, and instructional approaches. The goal of instruction, from a sociocultural perspective, is to support students to engage in the activities, talk, and use of tools in a manner that is consistent with the practices of the community to which students are being introduced. Supporters of Vygotsky’s theory argue that the acquisition and use of language transforms the thinking of adolescents. He described language as both a cultural tool for the development and sharing of knowledge amongst members of a community, and also a tool to individual’s thinking and perspectives (Mercer & Howe, 2012).

Sociocultural theory will enable me to critically analyze a student's discourse, norms, and practices outside the institution (i.e. their home life and past experiences, to better understand a student's discourse, norms, and practices inside the institution.

Review of Literature Related to Sociocultural Theory

Explaining the dialogic processes of teaching and learning: The value and potential of sociocultural theory (Mercer & Howe, 2012). Given the broad scope of research on learning, culture and social interaction, sociocultural theory is considered very important to student development. Authors Boyd & Maloof suggest "Students learn through talking" (Boyd & Maloof, 2000, p. 163), so it is only adequate that discourse be a central principle to motivate a heightened sense of awareness and a cultivate a propensity for change. I believe students must take advantage of every opportunity for self-expression both in class and around campus. Moreover, teachers should give students every opportunity possible to speak in class. Daily dialog and discourse must be emphasized and encouraged frequently to facilitate great conversations that create learning opportunities. (Lee & Ng, 2010).

In this article, Mercer and Howe (2012) attempt to understand the educational functions of classroom talk. In doing so, the authors discussed some key concepts generated by the theory. These key concepts informed the research that I conducted in numerous ways. They report that their intention in doing so is, in part, to illustrate how the pursuit of applied educational research, concerned with improving the quality of the processes of teaching and learning, can interact with the development of theory. The article did not offer any empirical data however; it did offer a very broad assessment of experimental studies on students' collaborative activity and studies of collaborative

activity in school. The authors state that “much early collaborative learning research consisted of experimental studies of peer interaction, designed to establish whether solving problems collaboratively was more effective than working alone” (p. 15). The findings discussed from the studies assessed seem to not have much impact on education policy and practice. However, the practical implications are very direct and also very insightful, as part of understanding traditional classroom activity and for changing status quo to achieve better educational outcomes (Mercer & Howe, 2012).

The authors suggest that sociocultural theory has very influential within developmental psychology and educational research as a whole. Therefore, this was the primary framework they used to study individual processes of thinking and learning. The authors feel that the relationship between social activity and individual thinking is a vital, distinctive characteristic of human cognition, and one, which supports cognitive development (Mercer & Howe, 2012). The study of the educational value of talk in the classroom is vital to my study. The scope of my research focuses on discourse and dialog to facilitate action that leads to social change. According to the article, early research on sociocultural studies done on communication in classrooms suggests that if we want to improve students' engagement and learning outcomes, the role of talk in classrooms needs to be better understood and reappraised (Barnes,1976). The article goes on to report that students do better with the right quality of teacher/student interaction and teacher/student discourse, and it can be a powerful tool for the development of reasoning and the improvement of academic performance (p.13).

These findings substantiated my choice to include a heavy portion of discourse and teacher interaction into my daily classroom routine. I also believe that role of

classroom dialog and discussion facilitate a deep level of learning. An example of this would be lecture and textbook assignment about the state of race and democracy in the South. Or, an open discussion about the state of race and democracy in the South with authentic, shared, stories about growing up in the south and what it has become today. I do not believe you can place a value to the depth of the quality of an experience such as that.

Searching for learner-centered, constructivist, and sociocultural components of collaborative educational learning tools (Bonk & Cunningham, 1998). In chapter two of this book, the authors suggest that; a primary tenet of Vygotskian psychology is that individual mental functioning is inherently situated in social interactional, cultural, institutional, and historical contexts. Therefore, to understand human thinking and learning, one must examine the context and setting in which that thinking and learning occurs. The book further suggests that learner-centered, constructivist, and sociocultural models have arisen to place emphasis on guiding and supporting students as they construct their understanding of the cultures and communities of which they are a part. As I study and understand knowledge-building and social negotiation activities of a learner in classroom setting, the authors recognize the need to anchor learning in real world or authentic contexts that give it meaning and purpose (Bonk & Cunningham, 1998). This article is beneficial in assessing the significance of collaboration in learning. My innovation provides opportunities for students to receive a numerous amount of alternative perspectives, and participate in dialog along with sharing ideas, and collecting new data.

In summation, sociocultural theory is a valuable tool in my research on students' awareness, discourse, and action when it comes to inter-campus issues of cultural insensitivity. Sociocultural theory is informing and transforming my perspectives on how to improve discourse in the classroom. Experts suggest that learning is primarily a social process and it is derived from authentic engagement with others in a community of practice (Kahn, 1993; Mercer & Howe, 2012). This concept applies directly to my research as it suggests that classroom discourse between students is a valuable tool for learning. It helps us understand that in a social capacity a student's perspective can be influenced by not only the instructor, but also by other students through classroom discourse. It is my hope that the result of this shift in a student's perspective will result in a positive way, causing the student to act. It is this discourse that leads to perspective transformation, which leads to action (activism), which will then lead to social change.

O'Connor, M., & Michaels, S. (1996). Shifting Participant Frameworks: Orchestrating thinking practices in group discussion. Discourse, Learning, and Schooling. O'Connor and Michael's (1996) study on classroom discourse and learning really resonated with me. It speaks to the core of my epistemological beliefs of awareness, discourse, and action to raise awareness and spark social change. The authors suggest that re-voicing is a very viable tool to allow teachers the ability to scaffold class discussion, essentially positioning students in relation to each other and aligning them with the academic content at hand (O'Conner & Michaels, 1996). Re-voicing gives the teacher the flexibility to; give a student credit for contributing to class participation, share ideas, make a mundane or underdeveloped comment robust and exciting. This is a useful tool in my innovation, as it allows me to elicit deeper responses from students.

Furthermore, through Interaction Response Evaluation (IRE), I can evaluate student contribution for numerous purposes. These IRE's seem to allow for more meaningful teacher/student exchange. The authors also suggest that IRE and Re-voicing gives students a voice in class, which helps foster respect and develops active learners, listeners and critical thinking, which experts would argue is a strong intrinsic motivation for students to continue in such roles.

Chapter 3

Method

In this chapter, I first describe my innovation. I then explain the data collected in order to address my research questions. Finally, I discuss my data analysis.

The Innovation

As members of a rapidly evolving, innovative, scholarly-society, students at ASU often do not have a place or platform to discuss issues that affect them the most. Facilitating dialog on issues involving culture, gender, class, religion, sexuality, and nationality could be critical to the student's overall awareness of self and others. Traditionally, discourse about such issues was initiated at the dinner table or perhaps within close social circles. However, these discussions do not involve the attitudes, values and beliefs of culturally different others. Yet, such discussions are important for avoiding a one-sided perspective. Discussions among diverse individuals can lead to deep dialogue and robust discourse that help participants take on multiple perspectives leading to perspective transformation and change in perception of intercultural insensitivity and social injustice.

One of the outcomes of this action research project was an intercultural communication class that advances innovative, intercultural communication curriculum that provides students an opportunity to discuss cultural issues related to race, culture and social injustices. My study first assessed the need for pedagogy that intersects with culture, gender, class, religion, sexuality, and nationality. The goal of the innovation was to find ways to encourage student's enlightenment, civic participation, activism, and inspiration to speak out against social injustices. The increased awareness guided my

students toward becoming architects of social change. The vision or goal of the innovation was to embody the principles and the mission and offer that to students in the form of a course. Blending both the practical and theoretical, this class would offer students the requisite knowledge, the appropriate motivations, and the relevant skills to function competently with culturally-different others. The course provided a discussion of important ethical and social issues relating to intercultural communication and encouraged students to apply vivid examples that will prepare them to interact better in intercultural relationships.

The three major goals of the innovation were to raise awareness among students, create dialog to facilitate learning, and evoke action. This research offers the requisite knowledge, the appropriate motivations, and the relevant concepts to function competently with culturally-different others, in and out of the classroom. The innovation is comprised of a suite of culturally responsive discourse, activities and curriculum aimed at raising awareness, discourse and action. Throughout this report, this suite of discourse, activities and curriculum is referred to as the “*Sweet Suite*”, a play on words that suggests the outcome of the innovation will be sweet. The Sweet Suite of activities is aimed at breaking the traditional mold of classroom curriculum, in an attempt to establish a deeper connection with the students and offer them some real life shared experiences to draw on. The innovation is influenced by transformative learning theory, critical race theory, and sociocultural theory as shown in Figure 2.

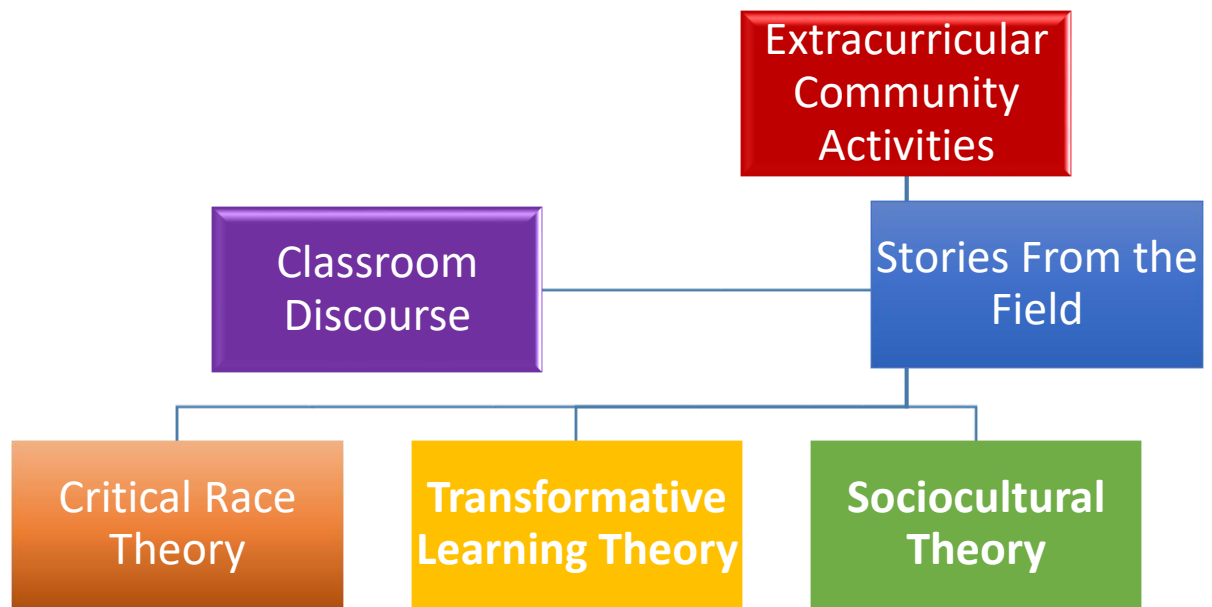


Figure 2

Sweet Suite of activities

Data Collection Instruments: A Summary of the Suite

The Sweet Suite of activities can be defined as the summation of the course curriculum combined with discourse, student reflection, personal reflection and an overall assessment of course activities as reported in this study. More specifically, the suite is comprised of student assignments, film studies, student’s extracurricular activities, classroom discourse, and stories from the field.

Through all the Sweet Suite activities, students are exposed to diversity, culture, discourse and real life experiences. Listening to, discussing, and taking action in experiences related to this innovation will prove to be valuable to the student’s overall college experience. Storytelling methods such as family histories and parables is a powerful tool for raising awareness that leads to social change. As such, I have numerous examples of students sharing personal stories about their lives, their journeys, and their

struggles with culture, race and racism. There have been several instances where I have been reduced to tears as I sat and listened to a student share with the class their real-life struggles with racism, discrimination and marginalization. It is the strength of these stories and shared experiences that break down barriers and shatter misconceptions about racism and culturally insensitive acts. From a CRT perspective, this activity is very important because it allows for critical reflection of not only the individual's life and experiences but also the lives and experiences of their listeners.

My intention in sharing this suite of extracurricular activities with my students is to work collaboratively with students, and guide them towards a core understanding of the society and culture and their most fundamental principles by appealing to their emotions and what motivates them (Heath & Heath, 2011), and empowers them to become agents of change. The goal of the activities is to teach the students to embrace the role of communication in establishing and maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships, problem solving with people different from themselves, critical and creative thinking when it comes to diversity issues. I feel that the mission of all colleges and universities should be a well-rounded pedagogy that offers students opportunities to get involved in off campus activities that foster diversity and inclusion. These activities provide an opportunity for continual learning and growth, to instill a love of learning about others in the student population, and that each member of the system take ownership of that mission. Everyone in the institution should share their own passion for learning with the culturally different others.

Extracurricular Participation Activities

As part of the Sweet Suite, I have incorporated into our classroom curriculum, extracurricular participation activities aimed at exposing students to diverse perspectives on social justice issues by immersing them in culturally diverse environments. These extracurricular activities include, but are not limited to taking part in campus events such as various public discussions, and cultural symposiums (such as those offered by the Center for the Study of Race and Democracy on the ASU downtown campus), and community events such as rallies, marches, and culture festivals. Although students may choose to attend events on campus, these extracurricular activities are aimed at getting students involved in the community. Activities that promote community engagement like volunteering at shelters, and participating in mentorship programs, are ideal for this particular assignment. The students are required to attend at least two events during the semester.

Before the students attend the event, I provide a list of questions to focus their attention on aspects of the activity that I hope will help them critically reflect on their experience and increase their awareness of diversity. To help raise their level of critical reflection or know better-do better, and becoming more aware of the intersection of race and culture, I ask them to reflect on the activity. Some of the questions that I suggest guide their reflections are:

What is the tone of the event? (Inspirational, spiritual, heated)

Does being in a culturally diverse environment make you feel a certain way?

Does this event influence your overall awareness of diversity?

After the student attends an event, he or she must write a reflection paper describing the experience. I intentionally keep the format for this assignment unstructured to allow the students to discuss what they each thought was significant. Sometimes, when I put too many rules and structures around an assignment, it becomes about me and answering my questions. I want it to be about them. I believe that if students are allowed to reflect on an experience at will, their perspective is more likely to be transformed. By keeping this written reflection less structured, I believe the students will write more and that they are more likely to reflect more critically and deeply.

After an event, we have a reflective follow up discussion. Classroom discussion of the event is vital as it allows the students to share their experiences with other students. This exchange is golden because students appreciate and place a higher value on peer-to-peer exchange. In essence, the experience, be it participation in an MLK march or a symposium at the CSRD, is a tool, along with discourse about the experience that will help them critically reflect on their own discourses, norms, and practices inside and beyond the institution. From a CRT perspective, these extracurricular activities are important because they allow the students to be immersed in the lives of culturally different others, thus gaining a better understanding and perhaps a respect for what their life is like. I feel that a student volunteering at a homeless children's school will quickly understand the core concepts of CRT associated with controversial issues involved in the pursuit of equality.

During the semester in which the Suite Sweet of activities was implemented for this action research project, students in COM 263 were invited to attend several outside of class activities. The following is a descriptive list of those activities.

1. Muslim Myth Busters; a roundtable symposium. Muslim Myth Busters focused on students engaging with members of the Muslim community and local experts and officials on Muslim affairs. The students were able to examine common myths and explore truths through dialogue and interactive discussions.
2. The Anatomy of the N-Word; round table symposium. The CSRD Healing Racism Committee facilitated a public dialogue concerning this in-depth examination of the "N-word". The "Anatomy of the N-Word" is an opportunity for students, parents, practitioners, and professionals to examine this single word described as “the most inflammatory, shocking and historic word in the English language.”
3. Race and Sports; town hall discussion. The CSRD and the Ross Initiative in Sports for Equality sponsored the discussion, which drew nearly 200 people. The goal of the town hall and panel discussion was to bring together ASU students, sports figures, and community leaders to have a dialogue about racism through the lens of sports and encourage critical thinking and positive change. This discussion gave students a better understanding of the history between race and sports. The conversation also touched on some very hot current events that were centered on Race and sports. For example, San Francisco 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick’s refusal to stand for the national anthem as a protest to police shootings of unarmed black men, and Carolina Panthers quarterback Cam Newton pushing for the Confederate flag to be lowered in South Carolina.

Film Study

Another component of the Sweet Suite is film study. I have selected a handful of films that are very impactful. They discuss and portray issue related to social injustices, cultural and intercultural communication, and social reform movements that lead to social change. We then analyze and reflect on the film in regards to social injustices and cultural insensitivities. Although film study and classroom discussion is not a new or innovative idea, it is still a very effective method of keeping students engaged and informed. The films I select for this activity are films that are culturally significant, edgy, and vivid. The films I used during the semester in which data were collected for this action research project include; *The Interrupters*, *Fruitvale Station*, and *Crash*. These are films that get at the heart of culture and community, discourse and transformation. Before each of these films, I gave a brief background and made suggestions for themes to pay attention to in the film. We watched each of the films, and afterwards we discussed them. The discussions started out with very broad and general questions to get the discussion going such as: Did you like the film? What in the film resonated with you? Once the conversation got started, I let the students take over, respond to, and reflect on each other's comments. I then raised questions about the film to further the discussion such as; what would you do in that situation? And, how does culture and communication play a significant role in your life?

This discourse is important to my study for several reasons; these films and discussions elicit a reaction and a response. These reactions and responses start the momentum that leads to raising awareness that leads to change. Transformative Learning theory influences the film discussion by addressing the student's perspective. Perspective

transformation is a central tenet of transformative learning theory (Meizrow, 2000). Critical Race Theory influences the film discussion by challenging claims of objectivity, meritocracy, colorblindness, and race neutrality. Sociocultural Theory also influences the film study experience because the goal of instruction, from a sociocultural perspective, is to support students to engage in the activities, talk, and use of tools (including language, and the film) in a manner that is consistent with the practices of the community to which students are being introduced. In this instance, I hope the students will engage in discourse of people who are well informed and willing to take action to create social change.

Stories from the Field

The final activity in the suite is stories from the field. In stories from the field, we discuss the current community, cultural climate, including everything from local political events such as the Donald Trump election, and the North Dakota access pipeline issue; to locally in our city such as the Desert Vista 6 racial slur tee shirt incident and the ASU, MLK fraternity party incident. During the semester associated with this action research project, I showed students online news articles related to the Colin Kappernick protest and The Black Lives Matter movement. We also examined news artifacts related to a local incident in which several white students who had attended the ASU Blackout football game (an annual tradition where the ASU football team's uniforms transform to all black) in Blackface. This action was perceived as a racial microaggression, highly offensive to many people in the community and around the country. Next to the news story, I posted two questions:

- Do you think this image would be offensive to people of color? Why or why not?
- Do you think the students that painted themselves black were purposely trying to be offensive? Why or why not?

Our Stories from the field particularly focused on ASU events as portrayed in local and national media. Our campus is in the epicenter for all things media; news, culture, and community events are literally all around us. Our classroom is located in The Walter Cronkite school for Journalism, as such, the students walk into the classroom and we talk about these news events, and when they walk out of the classroom and they are immersed in it.

Setting and Participants

The participants of this study were within the population of undergraduate students at the ASU downtown campus, which is also the setting that the research took place. Specifically, the sample was students enrolled in my Intercultural Communication course (COM 263) Fall 2016 semester. The class met bi-weekly and was a 16-week course. Out of a class of 24, 20 agreed to participate in the study. The participant demographic included White (Anglo), Latino students, African-American students, Asian and a Middle Eastern student as well as two Native American students. The participant group's racial make-up was 14 white and 6 non-whites. The students were both male and female, between the ages of 18-24. Sixteen of these students took the pre-innovation survey and 14 took the post innovation survey. Of these two groups, only 10 of those students took both the pre and post survey. Eight students participated in interviews near the end of the semester.

Research Design

I used a mixed-methods research design that focuses on combining both quantitative and qualitative research and methods (Creswell, 2009). The research study will involve quantitative analyses (analysis of covariance) of pre-post surveys and qualitative analyses of semi-structured interviews, instructor field notes, and students' written reflection assignments. The purpose of using a mixed methods approach to gathering data for my study is to create greater validity. The various methods of data collection addressed my research questions from a number of perspectives. A mixed methods study also ensures that there is symmetry and a continuous, smooth flow between the data collected. The variations in the data collected see to it that researcher biases and pre-existing assumptions from the researcher are less likely.

Measuring Effectiveness

Multiple evaluation tools were used to measure how and to what extent the innovation strategies facilitated students' awareness, discourse, and action. The objective of the pre and post survey was to measure students' willingness to participate in community action programs and activities and events that raise awareness of social injustices, and the extent to which their stance toward communicating with diverse people is one of acceptance, inclusion, and tolerance. This method of data collection helped me to address two research questions:

- RQ2: How and to what extent did the innovation influence students' willingness to engage in interpersonal communication that promotes intercultural sensitivity and leads to social change?

- RQ3. How and to what extent did the innovation influence students' willingness to participate in community action programs that promote racial understanding, and to become involved with activities and events that raise their awareness of social injustices?

The interview questions were aimed at examining the participant's sociocultural identity, and addressing the two research questions above, and a third research question:

- RQ1. What is students' perceived value of awareness, discourse, and action in solving complex societal problems that lead to social change? How does the intervention transform students' valuing of awareness, discourse, and action?

The interviews also addressed important ethical and social issues relating to intercultural communication and engagement to facilitate learning. Finally, the collection of students' written reflection assignments, along with my observational notes further informed my understandings related to the research questions.

Planning for a successful intercultural communication course and/or degree program necessitates identifying those things that students expect to find in these programs and their perceptions about them. The discussion of important ethical and social issues relating to intercultural communication and engagement to facilitate learning should prove to be of great value to the entire community of practice. In the remainder of this chapter I first describe my quantitative data sources, collection, and analysis. I then describe my qualitative data sources, collection procedures, and analysis.

Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

Developing a Survey of Diversity at ASU

My study's aim was to evaluate students' cultural experiences and try to learn more about student's willingness to get involved in sociocultural activities. Thus, in an effort to gain more knowledge about students' perceived need for a higher degree of cultural communication competence and changes in such perception brought about through the innovation. Initially I designed and field tested a survey to measure students' awareness, discourse, and action related to intercultural communication. The scale was developed based on analysis of items that were piloted previously. After modification of the original instrument and after talking with participants, some of the items were dropped from the scale, some were reworded for greater clarity, and new items were added for breadth.

For the current study, I administered the revised survey, which included 15 Likert-scale items. The items can be clustered into two conceptual categories or constructs: *Community Action* and *Interpersonal Communication*. Construct One, (*Community Action*) included items that related to having a willingness to participate in community action programs and become involved in activities and events that raise awareness of social injustices (e.g., I would like to participate in activities that feature people from other countries; I attend events where I might get to know people from different racial backgrounds). Construct Two (*Interpersonal Communication*), included items related to having a stance of acceptance, inclusion and tolerance of the diversity of people. All 15 items can be found in Appendix A.

How the Survey was Administered

A written copy of the survey was administered in person during regularly scheduled class periods by dissertation chairperson, Dr. Michelle E. Jordan. She also collected the consent forms (See Appendices B and C). At that point, she advised students that their responses would be stored in a locked office until the end of the semester. She did not tell me who agreed to be in the study until the end of the semester. The only exception was she did share with me who agreed to participate in an interview so that I could coordinate the logistics of the interview. I made the decision to have an outsider administer the surveys in order to avoid the Hawthorne Effect.

The Hawthorne Effect (also referred to as the observer effect) is a type of reactivity in which individuals modify or improve an aspect of their behavior in response to their awareness of being observed. This type of reactivity is of particular interest to me, as I have been in situations where if I knew I was being watched, or studied, I would do a much better job than if not. As for the relation to my action research, I do see a potential threat. As mentioned previously, working with my own students in this project, I could certainly see them want to report as positively as possible. As such, it would raise accuracy issues, and genuine feelings about the innovation may not be reported. To thwart this reaction, I would consider having another instructor conduct the survey or do the interview.

The survey was administered twice within the semester. The first survey served as the pre-test and was administered at the beginning of the semester within the first two weeks of class (following the consent process). The second survey served as the post-test and was administered at the end of the semester within the final two weeks of class.

Participants were encouraged to take their time to complete the survey and to ask any questions they needed to about the items. I was present, but not in the room at the time the survey is taken by the participants. A total of 16 responses were received for the pre-survey and 14 responses were received for the post-survey. Only 10 respondents participated in both survey administrations. All survey responses were used for data analysis. Although the number of survey participants was low, it was determined to be acceptable for the exploratory nature of the study.

Quantitative Data Analysis

I used SPSS to calculate means and standard deviation for each subscale and for the total scale, pre-and post, including all respondents for each administration. I also conducted a paired samples t-test.

Plano, Clark and Creswell (2010) assert that scores from a data collection instrument need to be reliable (scores are consistent), and valid (scores are meaningful). One way to test internal consistency, or the relatedness of multiple questions in a group, is to measure Cronbach's alpha. Thus, as a reliability measure, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for the entire survey. I anticipate the analysis revealing a wide range of scores per each construct, just as the pilot survey did (see Table 1).

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

I collected multiple sources of data for qualitative analysis. In the sections below, I describe each data source and the procedures for collecting that data source, starting with semi-structured interviews, moving to observational field notes, and ending with student written assignments. I then describe methods of analysis for all three data sources.

Semi-Structured Interviews

According to Creswell (2013), a semi-structured interview is used to collect qualitative data by setting up a situation (the interview) that allows a respondent the opportunity to openly discuss their opinions on the subject. The objective of the interview is to understand the respondent's point of view rather than make generalizations about behavior. The interviewer uses open-ended questions, and tries to build a rapport with the interviewee. The interview questions I have developed for this study examined the participant's sociocultural identity, willingness to participate in community action programs that raise awareness of social injustices, and propensity for community activism. The questions addressed important ethical and social issues relating to intercultural communication and the student's willingness to be engaged to facilitate learning. The goal of the interview was to elicit candid feedback for the purpose of the study. As a researcher, I lead the participant into storying by asking for examples. The intercultural communication at ASU interview questions are provided in Appendix E.

Field Notes from Participant Observation

I assume a leadership role in the classroom, and part of my leadership role is to study my class. As such, observational data and analysis is important to my study. Observational data was collected in the form of my personal reflective field notes. I took

field notes following class sessions in which the class engaged in Sweet Suite activities and following community events to which I had invited the students. An example of field notations; *“the class seemed jovial and excited to be headed outside on a beautiful day. They were all-unaware of the activity and had never done it before. I was excited to begin the drill and capture their reactions as the activity went on.”* I made it a point to write field notes within one to two hours following each event so that I would not forget important information and impressions. In my field notes, I tried to capture everything I saw and heard during the event. I paid attention to taking information about the environment such as room temperature, setup of desks, makeup of audience at a community event and physical body language such as gestures and expressions. An example; *“At that time I noticed some of their expressions change, especially the students who were more forward in the activity. Midway through the activity, it was stone silent. It seemed almost like they were anticipating the next question to be a major step in their life.”* I stored the field notes in a separate Word document in a field notes folder.

Keeping field notes provided me with ways to check for nonverbal expression of feelings, determine who interacts with whom, grasp how participants communicate with each other, and check for how much time is spent on various activities (Schmuck, 1997). The observation method allowed me to reflect on student behavior related to students’ perceived value of awareness, discourse and action in solving complex societal problems that lead to social change. It also allowed me to compare the quality of student class participation to that demonstrated at the beginning of the semester. This observational data allowed me to assess several of my survey constructs. For example, construct two: willingness to participate in discourse and dialog. At the beginning of the semester

student behaviors were slightly different from end of semester behaviors. Participant observation also allowed me to check definitions of terms that participants use in interviews, observe events that informants may be unable or unwilling to share when doing so would be impolitic, impolite, or insensitive, and observe situations informants have described in interviews, (Marshall & Rossman, 1995).

Student Written Assignments

Another source of data for qualitative analysis was students' assignments as data. With prior permission from the student, various assignments were collected and examined as an additional data set. Several new and innovative assignments have been introduced into the curriculum such as a cultural ethnography, a cultural observation assignment, a microaggressions discussion and a White Privilege and Black Lives Matter discussion and reflection questions.

Throughout the semester, I collected students' written reflections and assignments as artifacts that reveal their willingness (or lack of) to become involved with programs that prepare them to take action and raise their awareness of social injustices. I collected and organize the artifacts by event and date and stored them in folders in a locked file cabinet, in a locked office. Ensuring that each of the participant's artifacts were de-identified with pseudonyms.

Qualitative Data Analysis Methods: Creating a Coding Scheme

At the beginning of qualitative analysis, before turning to any data sources, I first reviewed my theoretical frameworks and all three of my research questions. Based on this review, I created a list of coding concepts. These are listed and defined in Table 1. The

purpose was to pull my analysis close to my research questions, saturating analysis with the key ideas related to the study.

Table 1

Core Coding Concepts for Qualitative Data Analysis

1. Awareness	Awareness refers to <i>social awareness</i> or <i>social consciousness</i>, and is defined as consciousness shared by individuals within a society (Questia, 2016). It essentially means to be conscious or aware of the problems within a society or community.
2. Discourse	The student’s dialog on cutting-edge issues related to culture, gender, class, religion, race, and social injustices.
3. Action	The student’s propensity to get involved in outside of class activities and striving to create lively communities through service learning projects, interpersonal communication, volunteering, and mentorship. This code was broader than and overlapped with codes 8 and 9.
4. Know Better/Do Better	Is an important facet of student development that recognizes the links between social awareness and social change. Gaining knowledge about the validity of critical reflection, and action will help students

understanding the controversial issues going on within the community.

5. Social Change

According to Britannica, Social change refers to any significant alteration over time in behavior patterns and cultural values and norms. By “significant” alteration, sociologists mean changes yielding profound social consequences.

6. Transformation

According to Brown (2004), “transformative learning changes the way people see themselves and their world. It attempts to explain how their expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions, directly influence the meaning they derive from their experiences” (p. 84).

7. Intercultural Sensitivity

The framework describes the different ways in which people can react to cultural differences. Includes exhibiting tolerance, acceptance, and inclusion in intercultural communication, as well as embracing diversity through social inclusion programs (e.g., Women’s history month, Black history month, Hispanic heritage month).

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>8. Participation in programs that raise awareness of social injustices</p> | <p>These include: marches, rallies, and protests. They also include symposiums, round-table discussions, and lecture series on race and culture.</p> |
| <p>9. Willingness to participate in community action programs</p> | <p>Community Action Programs provide a variety of assistance services such as emergency assistance, food boxes, advocacy, and homeless services</p> |
-

This list of codes guided my interpretation of all subsequent analysis of each data source. At every step, I constantly reminded myself of the nine key concepts, looking for data that could be tagged as exemplifying each concept. I also purposefully looked for lack of evidence and minimum evidence for each code, as well as evidence that participants were actively seeking to engage in opportunities related to each code. I tried to note whether a concept was missing because of something lacking in the data source or because of something missing in the innovation. In the next sections, I describe more specifically how I analyzed each data source.

Qualitative Analysis of Interviews, Observation Notes, and Notes from the Field

According to Creswell (2013), there are three core characteristics of a mixed methods study; a closed ended quantitative database, an open-ended qualitative database, and a plan to bring the two databases together when one form is not sufficient enough to fully understand the problem. As my study relates to qualitative data, I have collected and processed data from three various sources. Theses qualitative sources are interviews,

observation notes, and artifacts. According to Saldana (2009), there are three qualitative coding levels. These levels are descriptive and meant to broadly represent core procedures used by the major qualitative research methods.

Analysis began with data collection and was ongoing. As I took field notes, I added interpretive memos that help me understand and process what I was seeing at the moment. Immediately following interviews, I jotted down notes about each interviewee that gave background information and my interpretations of their emotional. Later, as I transcribed each interview, I added notes that described my initial interpretations of their responses, adding these to the transcripts in a different color of font.

The first level is open coding. In my initial analysis of these qualitative data sources. I looked for keywords and phrases that relate to students' awareness of social injustices, preparedness to engage in discourse, and propensity to take action related to those social injustices and intercultural sensitivity. I particularly looked for words that expressed students' experiences, reactions, and emotions related to class discussions and events they attended outside of class. I looked for words and phrases that suggested awareness of sociocultural barriers and social injustices as described in CRT (Solorzano et al., 2000). Several of the interviewees gave blanket statements that did not really pertain to nor support the research questions for my study. However, many of the statements made by the interviewees suggested that they had awareness of the cultural issues at ASU.

The second level of coding was focused coding or category development. In my second reading, I used the core coding concepts in Table 1 to organize categories that signal awareness, discourse, and action as well as transformation of awareness (e.g., I

learned so much... I never knew...), discourse, and the propensity to take action that was attributable to the innovation I began this process by creating bins of open coded interview data that were related to my research questions. I cut the statements from the interview transcripts, and placed them into the nine broad categories that I labeled as core coding concepts (See Table 1). I also placed the coded statements in their respective categories that showed lack of the coding concept. In hindsight, a better idea would have been to copy the original transcript data, which contained my coding notes and analysis. Instead, a clean copy of interview data was used to cut and place in the bins. I noticed statements that indicated students had changed, and there were also statements that indicated students did not change at all as a result of the innovation.

Finally, the third level of coding is axial or thematic coding. My last objective was to look across the three types of data sources to identify overarching themes related to the research questions. These are the themes that keep coming up over and over again in the data.

Having available three sources of qualitative data allowed me to do triangulation. A triangulated model allows me to gather data from various sources simultaneously. As such, my obligation will be to integrate all data in order to clarify or better understand the problem. In the sections below, I describe more specifically how I approached analysis of each type of qualitative data.

Punctuating the Sweet Suite events through analysis of field notes

In order to understand how course activities had influenced students' awareness, discourse, and action, I first compiled a list of Sweet Suite activities that together comprised the innovation. I went back to my field notes for each of these activities and

expanded on them, developing each one into a written reflection. I reflected on every event in the Sweet Suite, expanding my field notes into a written reflection. Original field notes were expanded in several ways. Whereas in my original field notes I had primarily concentrated on capturing my direct observations and initial impressions, during analysis. I made more theoretical memos, interpreting my original notes using theoretical frameworks related to the study (Sociocultural theory, Transformative Learning Theory, and Critical Race Theory) and developing implications from them. I also reflected on the success of the activity; to what extent did I think it was valuable. One such example of my reflections,

“Most students hadn’t even heard of the “Blackout-game” incident and several students commented on how the news of the MLK fraternity party spread like wild fire throughout the campus and actually caused waves within their inner circles. I believe that these two incidents were a wake-up call to not only my students but the entire ASU community. The message was clear; this sort of thing still happens, and it is not OK.”

I also expanded on writing around my own feelings and responses to the event;

“The Black Lives Matter discussion” started with hostility. The hostility came from a White student that stated her dad is a cop, and his life matters. I knew right away the conversation was going to be complicated. I felt compelled to help students understand both sides of the debate (Black lives matter Vs. All/Blue lives matter), especially since the class had very few Black faces.”

This step of the research informed my analysis of the students’ written assignments related to each sweet suite activity. In analyzing students’ written assignments, I first

returned to my expanded field notes, adding memos related to my interpretation of students' assignments to that ongoing document.

Analyzing student assignments. As an additional source of data for the purposes of my study, I used student assignments as a tool to measure their propensity for awareness, discourse, and action. Initially, I went through each assignment, looking for any mention of awareness, discourse, or action.

Analyzing interview data. I wrote methodological and interpretive memos during and immediately following interviews and during transcription of interviews e.g., *towards the end of the interview, the interviewee began to ramble a bit*. It almost felt like the tone of the interview was shifting towards a therapy session for the interviewee. I was afraid of the interview drifting way off track and losing sight of the purpose of the research questions. Although I did feel a sense of all information gained from the interviewee would be purposeful for something.

Once transcription was complete, I began analyzing interview data with the list of eight key concepts in hand. I first read each interview using an open coding process. I began tagging, looking for hints of where the student hit on any of the nine concepts, where they were affirmative and where they were negative or absent. However, I tried to stay open to other interesting ideas beyond the nine concepts but that might still be related to the project. I made short memos throughout. I also made methodological memos, trying to be particularly aware of threats to validity. For instance, I noted when I response gave me the impression that a student was simply trying to appease me, when they were uncomfortable and “sugar-coating” their responses. An example of these notes;

“Towards the end of the interview, the interviewee began to ramble a bit. It almost felt like the tone of the interview was shifting towards a therapy session for the interviewee. I was afraid of the interview drifting way off track and losing sight of the purpose of the research questions. Although I did feel a sense of all information gained from the interviewee would be purposeful for something.”

Chapter 4

Results

Chapter four describes the results of qualitative and quantitative data analysis. The results of the analysis are arranged into two sections. Results of quantitative analysis based on the pre and post survey administration are presented first, followed by results of qualitative analysis of semi-structured interviews, field notes of classroom observations, and assignments. Analysis of these data sources provided insight in addressing my research questions:

1. What is students' perceived value of awareness, discourse, and action in solving complex societal problems that lead to social change? How does the intervention transform students' valuing of awareness, discourse, and action?
2. How and to what extent did the innovation influence students' willingness to engage in interpersonal communication that promotes intercultural sensitivity and leads to social change?
3. How and to what extent did the innovation influence students' willingness to participate in community action programs that promote racial understanding, and to become involved with activities and events that raise their awareness of social injustices?

Quantitative Results

The quantitative data was analyzed to determine the effect of the innovation on each of the constructs measured by the Diversity at ASU survey. These included (a) *community action*, having a willingness to participate in community action programs and

become involved in activities and events that raise awareness of social injustices, and (b) *interpersonal communication*, having a stance of acceptance, inclusion, and tolerance of the diversity of people. The purpose of this analysis is to report the quantitative results related to how the intervention influenced whether students feel prepared to engage in interpersonal communication that promotes intercultural sensitivity and leads to social change. Furthermore, the purpose of this analysis is to report the quantitative results related to how and to what extent did the innovation influence students' willingness to participate in community action programs that promote racial understanding and become involved with programs that raise their awareness of social injustices. Before reporting the results related to the research questions, I first present the steps I took to check the validity of the survey.

Survey Analysis

After de-identifying the student survey data, input it in an excel file. I then uploaded that data to SPSS. I reverse-coded the items that were negatively worded e.g. *I often feel irritated by persons of a different race*. I next used the SPSS statistical software to conduct analysis of the items, checking descriptive statistics for each item, including frequency, range, mean and standard deviation for pre and post administrations (see Table 2) for the purposes of ensuring that all items were consistent, e.g. no outliers, and sufficient variance. Item analysis revealed that all items had sufficient variance, so they were all retained at this step. Finally, I looked across the mean pre and post scores for each item. Seven showed a positive trend in the mean following the innovation, four showed a negative trend in the mean, and four showed little to no difference between pre and post. Although most pre to post positive changes were minimal, it is encouraging that

Item 1, *I would like to get more involved in my community by attending events such as rallies, symposiums, and marches*, showed the largest positive change (.51). This increase suggests, perhaps, a change in valuing of taking action to participate in community programs.

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics for Survey Responses Pre-Innovation*

	<u>PRE (N=16)</u>		<u>POST (N=14)</u>	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Q1:	2.63	.96	3.14	.77
Q2:	3.38	.72	3.57	.76
Q3:	3.43	.73	3.64	.50
Q4:	3.31	.48	3.21	.58
Q5:	3.56	.51	3.50	.65
Q6:	3.88	.89	3.71	.47
Q7:	3.18	.66	3.36	.63
Q8:	3.0	.82	2.93	.47
Q9:	3.0	.73	3.07	1.07
Q10:	3.62	.50	3.50	.85
Q11:	3.81	.40	3.50	.52
Q12:	2.38	.72	2.43	.85
Q13:	2.88	.96	2.57	.76
Q14:	3.69	.48	3.64	.50
Q15:	3.57	.63	3.79	.43

* Note: All items scored on a 4-point scale.

I then examined the relationships among the items, using SPSS statistical software to examine their inter-correlations. I examined the correlation matrix, which lists the

strength of the correlation, r , between each item and indicates whether that correlation is statistically significant. Most items were moderately correlated (.3 or above) with at least two other items (though four were not). However, there were no discernable clustering of inter-correlations that distinguished between items associated with the two constructs.

One way to test internal consistency, or the relatedness of multiple questions in a group, is to measure Cronbach's alpha. Thus, I used SPSS to conduct a Cronbach alpha analysis for the entire survey as a reliability measure. Further analysis reveals that alpha scores would be increased if certain items were removed from the survey. Cronbach's alpha was .68 with 15 items for the pre-survey. Cronbach's alpha was .36 with 15 items for the post-survey. There were four items that performed poorly in terms of their inter-correlations with the other items (two correlated with only one other survey item, two were simply found to be difficult to interpret), which contributed to a low alpha post survey alpha score of .36. After re-running the test without the 4-poor performing items, the alpha score for the 11-item total scale increased to .46 with 11 items. In turn, the pre-survey alpha score changed as well, increasing to .72 with 11 items. After arriving at the 11-item total scale, I also conducted Cronbach's alphas for the two sub-scales. The five-item *community action* sub-scale yielded Cronbach's alphas of .61 for pre and .56 for post administrations; the 6-item *interpersonal communication* sub-scale yielded an alpha of .67 for both pre and post administrations.

I created three new variables. One by summing and averaging across the six items representing the construct community action, one by summing and averaging across the six items representing the construct *interpersonal communication*, and one by summing and averaging across all 15 items for a total Diversity at ASU scale score. I then

calculated the total mean score for the community action scale (pre-Mean=3.20; post-Mean=3.30), the interpersonal communication scale (pre-Mean=3.27; post-Mean=3.22), and 15-item Diversity at ASU scale (pre-Mean=3.24; post-Mean=3.25) at pre and at post administration.

Paired Samples T-test

A paired-samples t-test was conducted using responses to the 11-item Diversity at ASU scale to compare pre-innovation survey responses to my post innovation responses. The results indicated that there was no significant difference in scores from pre-innovation survey (M=3.24, SD=.22) to post innovation survey scores (M=3.25, SD=.30); $t(9) = -.31, p=.76$. These results indicated that there was no discernable increase from pre to post intervention.

Based on these quantitative results, the innovation did little to influence the students' willingness to participate in community action programs that promote racial understanding. Moreover, the innovation did little to influence students to become involved with activities and events that raise their awareness of social injustices (Research Question 2), or to influence their willingness to engage in interpersonal communication that promotes intercultural sensitivity and leads to social change (Research Question 3). However, these results may not be an accurate reflection of the true effect of the innovation, given that the sample size was small, limited to 10 students.

Qualitative Data Results

The section is organized around the three research questions. For each research question, I present qualitative findings below integrating them in an interpretive fashion. I explored eight themes that were the foundation of the innovation, as well as the constructs of the study, and pertained directly to my research questions. Those eight themes are; Awareness, discourse, action, propensity for community activism, know better/do better, social change, transformation, cultural sensitivity and, willingness to participate in community action programs that raise awareness of social injustices. In the following sections, I examine the results of qualitative analysis as they pertain to each of my three research questions in turn.

Transformation of Awareness, Discourse, and Action

RQ1: What is students' perceived value of awareness, discourse, and action in solving complex societal problems that lead to social change? How and to what extent does the intervention influence transformation of students' valuing of awareness, discourse, and action?

RQ1 Coding themes: Perceived Value of Awareness, Discourse, and Action

Research Question 1 investigated students' perceived value of awareness, discourse and action. Using evidence collected across the semester, I tried to assess each student's awareness of the cultural climate at ASU and in the local community. Some of the things I was looking for were, in general, how aware students were of on and off campus cultural activities, or programs that raise awareness about race, culture, gender,

and communication. Additionally, I tried to gauge the degree to which students' perceived value of awareness, discourse, and action were influenced by the innovation.

In short, I found the most evidence to suggest that students valued awareness, less evidence that students valued discourse, and evidence that they lacked the motivation to take action. Further, analysis of data suggested that there was some change across the semester, particularly an increase of awareness, but little evidence suggested substantial change in discourse or action. Different data sources yielded different insights about initial perceived value and transformation.

In the sections below, I first offer insights related to students' perceived value of awareness based on analysis of all available data sources before discussing evidence of positive increase in awareness brought about by the innovation. I then do the same for perceived value of discourse, followed by perceived value of action. Finally, I discuss evidence of transformation brought about through participation in the Sweet Suite of activities.

Perceived Value of Awareness

Overall, my analysis suggested that students had a burgeoning perception of awareness however; their value of this awareness could not initially be seen. Although each of the students was likely had a different level of perceived value of awareness, as a group their perceived value of awareness was minimal at the beginning of the semester. This lack of value of awareness was seen and noted in field notes related to classroom activities, students' assignments, and interviews.

One clear example of a student's lack of awareness in my COM 263 class during the innovation came from the analysis of an in-class discussion on the Trump presidential

campaign. During the discussion, one student suggested that America does not have a problem with race. They suggested that America is a melting pot, and accepting of all cultures and ethnicities and we have been doing so for nearly 100 years. This, to me, suggests that the student's perception of race and discrimination was skewed. This is problematic because it suggests colorblindness. The student mentioned above does not see the struggles in the Latino community, the African American community or LGBTQ community.

Another example of lack of awareness was from a discussion about the blackface incident at an ASU football game. When asked: Do you think the students that painted themselves black were purposely trying to be offensive? Why or Why not? The majority of the class stated that they felt the students who painted themselves did not know that that gesture was offensive. This raised a huge red flag for me. I then asked how many of you know the meaning behind black face paint and the stereotype, not a single student raised their hand. This is a significant example of lack of awareness that I identified through my analysis of the qualitative data.

Another example of lack of awareness comes from a student assignment on the topic of Transgender bathrooms. This assignment asked students to research various current event topics then reflect on and discuss that topic. In responding to the assignments, one student claimed that society caters to special interest groups and how everyone on the planet has their own agenda. The student seemed angry from the tone of their writing. This perceived anger came from their statements regarding the LGBTQ community. Where I saw lack of awareness was, this student referring to members of the LGBTQ community as a special interest group or persons with their own agenda. It was

clear to me that this individual did not see them as human beings having the same right to privacy as he. I truly feel that this student lacked awareness that the LGBTQ community was worthy of the same rights and privileges.

In addition to these examples, I offer one further example from the analysis of student interview data.

“I think that for me diversity is something I’ve never paid attention to and one thing I always point to in my life is, I went to an all Jewish school. My mom went when she was a kid. And I was convinced. So, I went and I loved it. The part where I loved it was because there’s this huge sentiment the entire time you’re there that we’re all together and nobody’s different. This was just my experience growing up so when I came to ASU I was a bit culture shocked.”

My interpretation of this data certainly suggests lack of awareness, as the student grew up in a very sheltered, homogenized environment.

What this means in relation to my study is; this data suggests that, although much data shows that many students in the course lacked awareness of these complex societal issues, there was variation among students. One student shared in an assignment:

“I moved to the United States from my home country, Egypt, about four years ago. As an Egyptian Muslim, I have experienced quite a few dehumanizing forces, and have had to witness some frustrating occurrences of racism against my mom who chooses to wear the hijab. Moments of discrimination used to be so humiliating, and sometimes personally devastating. I used to just pretend like I did not realize what the perpetrator was saying or doing.”

This was a very powerful statement; this student's assignment grabbed me and shook me up. This statement suggests that the immigrant student who gave this statement has a very clear awareness of discrimination, and dehumanizing behaviors, whereas data analysis suggested that other students had very little awareness of these issues. For example, another student suggested America is a melting pot, and they do not see discrimination. The concept of the US being a "post racial" society amazes me, but it does not surprise me. Many people are quick to sweep racism under the rug, for instance, using President Obama as proof that racism no longer exists. This student's assignment went on to describe the racism, hate, and discrimination she faced as an immigrant from a Muslim country. The assignment also solidified the fact that there needs to be more awareness that we are not living in a "post-racist" society and these culturally cruel incidents still happen.

Impact of the Innovation on Lack of Awareness

Even though students started with a lack of awareness, analysis suggests that the innovation positively influenced their level of awareness about intercultural communication, cultural sensitivity, and social injustices. One example comes from my Field Notes on October 9th 2016, following the Desert Vista 6 class discussion.

"The Desert Vista 6 discussion felt like the students were not really bothered by the incident. I asked why was this not a big deal to some. One response was "I'm over it", "they say it all the time" (referring to Black people). Then an African American student spoke of a time when she was called a Nigger at her school, and how it made her feel."

This was a very polarizing moment in class discussion, as most students did not believe that overt racism still exists. At that moment, the conversation gained momentum and students started to join the discussion to share personal stories of how they were discriminated against. How this discussion relates to the concept of value of awareness; some students seem to believe that we are living in a post-racism society and words like *Nigger*, and *Wetback* and *Fag* are no longer used to hurt people.

This discussion was clearly an eye-opening experience for students, based on their reaction, the sudden shift of emotion, and the sudden inclination to share a personal story. The discussion really helped me gain an understanding of the Critical race theorist perspective on color-blind racism (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). This information is important because it helps us understand issues of race and racism in non-traditional forms. The goal of this study and many others like it should be for students and community members to act as agents of change on issues that affect them directly. I feel that this information will touch on helping students and administrators deal with some of the school's, communities, and Country's toughest race issues. It will also encourage students to be aware of the broad definition and varied categories of racism.

As additional evidence that the innovation had a positive influence on students' awareness, I close this section with several quotes from interviews in which students' explicitly stated the impact of the course on their awareness of campus and community race, diversity and inclusion programs. In the interview, a student stated, *"It's crazy how far we've come and how different things are from 50 years ago till now. This class helps me wake up and realize we still have a long way to go."*

As additional evidence that the innovation had a positive influence on students' awareness, another student stated,

This class made me realize that I'd like to see more Latinos at ASU. Just because that's Arizona; we border Mexico and I know there's so much potential for that community to thrive within Arizona State University. And I mean I have nothing against other races, they're just not in this area like uh, you don't see a lot of Mexicans here at ASU, but we are almost the majority in Arizona.

Perceived Value of Discourse

Discourse was an integral part of the classroom experience. However, it should be noted that for the purposes of this report, the term *discourse* refers to that critical communication about matters of culture, race, discrimination, social injustices and other themes related to my study. Overall, there was much evidence that students began the course with minimal willingness to engage in discourse or value it. This lack of valuing of discourse was largely exemplified in their reluctance to participate in classroom discourse related to topics of social justice and intercultural insensitivity.

I insisted that students participate in dialog as part of their overall course grade. Throughout the duration of the study, there were times where students were willing to participate in discourse, there were times where students were reluctant to participate in discussion but after the ice was broken and the conversation got started, more students participated. In addition, there were times when getting students to talk felt like pulling teeth, from my perspective as an instructor. An example of this can be seen in one of my post classroom discussion reflections [dictated in the field notes from this study]:

“As I think back on today’s activity, I find myself underwhelmed. My high expectations had not been met. I was hoping for a groundbreaking, earthshaking revelation conversation. Tears, indications of sorrow, or guilt, or shame. Perhaps some sentiments of pride or some kind of new found self-fulfilling purpose for themselves. But none of that. I think at most we had a decent discussion.”

The quote above was not an uncommon response by me as the instructor across the semester. Additional examples of student’s lack of value for discourse can be found across my observational field notes. On another occasion, in my post class reflection notes on my observational data following the colorblind racism discussion I wrote, *“there were a handful of students that consistently raise their hands to offer insight or answer questions but the core of the class seems to care less about the material. I have always been suspicious that that my millennial students perpetuated this idea of color-blind racism.”* I soon came to the realization that this class is NOT the sharing type. Time after, time after, time I asked open ended, thought provoking questions and get no one to respond. I thought that by showing short videos and films they would be more eager to respond. Therefore, I showed controversial topic films and no one responded. They were often on their phones and computers or actively involved in something other than discussion. That troubled me, as it signaled that they were not at all interested.

Influence of the Innovation on Discourse

During the innovation this semester, the film discussions became very involved. For example, one student said of the film Fruitvale Station that the kid that was shot would not have been shot if he simply did not resist arrest. This comment seemed to ruffle a few feathers in the classroom, which led to a heated Black Lives Matter

discussion and the mistrust of officials by the African American community. Students seemed to really enjoy debating and questioning each other during these film discussions. This example suggests that the innovation is working. As it relates to the research questions, this suggestion is evidence that students feel prepared to engage in interpersonal communication that promotes intercultural sensitivity and leads to social change.

The qualitative data gathered from the analysis of my notes on in class discussions and interactions suggested that students had a reluctance to open discussions. My job here was to determine why. This perceived lack of value of discourse was seen and noted in classroom activities, discussions, and assignments. Across the semester, I continued trying to foster the students' valuing of discourse, with some success. As an illustration of my pedagogical attempts to engage students in sociocultural discourse and to showcase the small, but potentially important successes, I offer an extended example of this can be seen in one of my post discussion reflections.

“Our discussion today started with white privilege. I stated: To truly understand White privilege you must take yourself out of the discussion. Take your ego and pride out. This understanding can't be reached if you are hiding feelings of guilt or hostility. You must have an “out-of-body experience”. Most of the time it's hard to have this conversation because white people feel guilty. You have to lose that guilt, to gain a better understanding. I stated; “A good way to help you begin to understand white privilege is to think about Gender inequality. The argument that women get paid less is real. The anger and frustration is real. Women do

have to work harder and be more visible and assertive to get the better jobs and higher pay. That's a privilege of being a male."

After about 30 minutes of discussion, the class and I headed outside to a park across the street to do the privilege walk activity. The instructions on the lesson plan that I used for this activity suggested that I warn the students about the sensitive nature of the exercise. Nevertheless, the class seemed jovial and excited to be headed outside on a beautiful day. They were all-unaware of the activity and had never done it before. I was excited to begin the drill and capture their reactions as the activity went on. I began by asking them a series of questions; they would either take a step forward or backwards depending on their answer. I quickly began seeing students move forward, creating a gap between the other students. At that time, I noticed some of their expressions change. Especially the student who were more forward in the activity. Midway through the activity, it was stone silent. It seemed almost like they were anticipating the next question to be a major step in their life. I even saw a student take baby steps forward to make it appear as if they had not moved much. As I read the last question, I felt like I wanted to keep going because with each step the students took (whether forward or back) they realized something about themselves. After the last question was read I stood there in silence for a brief moment, I then asked them to look around, and then look at their position.

The students took a minute to take it all in. It was silent but I could see surprise, and shame among other things in their body language. I think I expected more of a reaction. I directed them to go back to the classroom so we could discuss the activity. I was so excited to get back to the classroom to discuss what had just happened. I had no

formal questions prepared for them and the reason is that I wanted them to freely express themselves about the activity. Therefore, I began the conversation by stating:

“So, what did you learn?” I expected there to be a rush of hands in the air and students eager to discuss their experience. However, to my surprise there was only one student that raised their hand to share.

I was crushed! That student stated: “*Yeah that was cool, I was surprised at where I ended up. Being a white male I thought I would be further ahead*”. Then another student responded with “*Yeah I thought I’d be further behind*”. Then more students raised their hands to comment and I began to feel a sense of relief. After about 10 minutes of students sharing their reactions and commenting on other student’s reaction I decided to regain control of the discussion. I recognized all the students who were standing farther ahead and all of them that were in the way back. I wanted to narrow the discussion and focus on them. Therefore, I asked one of the students (a White female) that was the furthest ahead in the activity if she noticed that she was furthest ahead. And somewhat reluctantly she replied: “*Yes, I grew up pretty privileged. I went to private school all my life and we lived in a pretty exclusive neighborhood so I figured we were well off. The results didn’t surprise me*” I then asked that student how did it make her feel that she was all the way in the front and she replied: “*A little embarrassed and ashamed.*” I replied; don’t be. I then asked one of the students that was all the way in the rear of the formation did he realize his position and how did it make him feel. He jokingly replied: “*Yeah I’m used to being in the back*”. He then said: “*we didn’t have much growing up; I think that’s why I’m here in college today. So I can provide for my family. I wanna buy my mom a big Ol’ house*”. The class all said aww...and that made it a nice moment. It is important to note that the

student/s in the front of the formation were all white and mostly female, and the students in the rear of the formation were Hispanic males.

Another noteworthy comment a student made was that she was surprised at how much privilege she had. She stated she grew up poor, never had much until she got out and got it on her own, but just growing up in a safe environment made her privileged. She had not realized that, so it meant that she learned something about her own privilege through this activity, which pleased me. The students that volunteered to discuss the nature of these questions shared stories about the disadvantages of growing up in a single parent home and the pain that went with not having a father. Another student talked about always going to their aunt's house to eat. The student said: *"I thought that it was normal to go to my aunt's house for food, I thought that's where mom kept our food. We all ate together anyway, me and my cousins, it was all family, so it was all good"*.

As the class ended, I gave the students some final remarks about understanding privilege and informed them that we will revisit the topic again later in the semester.

As I think back to that day's discussion, I find myself underwhelmed. My high expectations had not been met. I was hoping for a groundbreaking, earthshaking revelation. Tears of sorrow and shame. Some kind of new found self-fulfilling purpose for the students. But none of that. I think at most we had a decent discussion.

In juxtaposition to the limited success of the classroom discourse that occurred during the classroom of white privilege described above, I offer one example of a class activity that was more effective in transforming one student's willingness to participate in discourse as a result of the innovation. That student stated:

“after I saw that event “Speed Killed my Cousin” and we talked about it in class, I reached out to my cousin whose father is a veteran - I think he did like 3 tours in Iraq - and my cousin and his dad have a bad relationship. I encouraged him to try make things right. It’s not really his fault, the war messed him up.”

However, for the innovation, this students’ discourse with his cousin would likely not have happened.

Perceived Value of Action

Students’ propensity to take action is where I saw the least amount of positive change as a result for the innovation. Results from the data and my initial assessment of the class overall, suggest that students are not likely to participate in action related to the core concepts of the innovation. For the purposes of this report, action refers to: students wanting to get involved in outside of class activities related to matters of culture, race, discrimination, social injustices and other themes related to my study. Some example of such activities are; public discussions like Black Lives Matter, the Trump and Clinton rallies and cultural symposiums (such as those offered by the Center for the Study of Race and Democracy on the ASU downtown campus), and community events such as; marches, and culture festivals.

An example of student’s lack of valuing of action, I offer one students’ statement from his interview,

“yeah, I think, to be honest I don’t really think about that. Of course, I see those programs, and things, but who has time? I work, I go to school, I take care of my little sister. Those other things just aren’t a priority. Um but you know obviously I see tons of people of different ethnicities, you know, guys, girls just you know,

something I maybe wasn't used to in high school, I never thought about those programs, but yeah it's definitely there."

One additional example from a student interview serves as evidence of students' generally low level of value for taking action.

"At school [ASU] we have a lot of different kinds of people that go here, you know, but I'm one of the kids that don't walk around to all the different groups of people and didn't care to. My friends would go and eat with the frat kids or the Mexican guys or the Black football players. But the only time that I would see those people was either in class or around campus. I also had teammates from all different backgrounds. And that's really where I learned much about culture. Had it not been for sports I don't think I would have initiated the contact."

Even despite the fact that his friends engage with different kinds of people on campus, this student failed to show initiative or even expressed desire to take such actions.

As it relates to students' propensity to take action; at times, I felt discouraged and even defeated. Other times, I felt encouraged, proud and even inspired to hear stories of students' engagement in off campus activities that were related to matters of culture, race, discrimination, social injustices and other themes related to my study.

Influence of the Innovation on Valuing of Action

Throughout the duration of the innovation, I often had discouraging moments. I knew the students would enjoy getting involved (take action) but none seemed motivated to do so. At times, I felt as if I had to perform magic tricks just to keep their attention. I knew that the innovation would touch them, if I could just get them to listen and reflect. There were, however, some rays of hope. One such example was a student's in-class

testimony of her experience at a Bernie Sanders rally. The student discussed how transformative the event was and how she would have never thought about attending the event had it not been for in-class discussions about the importance of community involvement. This student's revelation was one of several bright spots within the scope of the intervention. It served as small yet significant confirmation that; through this class (and the intervention) a student can be enlightened (awareness raise) and then transformed (know better-do better).

This comment suggests that the student may not think of themselves as wanting to get involved in outside of class activities related to matters of culture, race, discrimination, and social injustices however, to them it, they equate taking action with leadership. Moreover, the primary place they see leadership is in their workplaces. Leaders take action, leaders take charge and do what is right and good for their followers, leaders understand their own values, and place followers needs above their own. Northouse (2012) suggests that Transformational Leadership is a process that involves emotions, values, ethics, standards and long-term goals. Those very same traits are very closely intertwined with the concepts of my study, which are matters of culture, race, discrimination, and social injustices. So, it is my belief, based on the data, that student's that are taking leadership actions and roles in their work places will also take action in the community.

Transformation Prompted by the Innovation: Awareness, Discourse, and Action

Overall, looking across my qualitative analysis for the three study constructs of awareness, discourse, and action suggests that:

1. Students had several “ah-ha” moments; this suggests that awareness was being raised by most activities.
2. Course activities varied in their potential to facilitate student change in their valuing of discourse.
3. Students’ did not increase their valuing of action as a result of the innovation.

Awareness and discourse result in transformation only if there is action. As such, it is imperative that the students receive encouragement and empowerment to take action. If instructors and leaders only present the problem through discussion, then we cannot expect students to be sufficiently motivated to act. Transformative Learning Theory says (Mezirow, 2000) that the process of "perspective transformation" has three dimensions: psychological (changes in understanding of the self), convictional (revision of belief systems), and behavioral (changes in lifestyle). An important part of transformative learning is for individuals to change their frames of reference by critically reflecting on their assumptions and beliefs and consciously making and implementing plans that bring about new ways of defining their worlds. This perspective change can be seen in our classroom discussions, and also in students’ assignments. The perspective changing process is fundamentally rational and analytical.

In my investigation of other scholars’ work, I have found that many people lack the proper social awareness that can potentially lead to social change. Although they can easily identify the icons of social movements, such as the civil rights movement, they seldom appreciate the needs, impetus, and historical specificity that drive social change movements (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002). Furthermore, they fail to understand how a

democracy works and exhibit little interest in the U.S. political system. Reformers view students who lack this type of knowledge, understanding and interest as lacking sensitivity to the needs of others and a willingness to be active citizens (Swift, 1990). As I reflect on the data ascertained, I think about the immortal words of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr who stated: “I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become reality.”

I agree, there is something that is gratifying about seeing individual’s perspectives transform, and that transformation leading to social change. I like to think of that as “know better-do better”. One thing a student said that really resonated with me was “members of dominant culture don’t understand that much of what they have is because of their privilege”. Examples like the child from the minority single parent home that cannot afford the internet. Alternatively, the child has to rely on public transportation or does not have equal access to certain things that will help them succeed. Some parents and administrators just do not understand that privilege is not accessible to everyone. In summation, I really enjoyed the student’s insight. It helped me recognize areas where transformation was taking place. In the next section, I investigate deeper into how the innovation influenced students’ willingness to engage in participate in community action programs, become involved with activities and events that address social injustice.

Seeking Transformation through Innovation

In the next sections, I delve deeper into results of analysis that sought to identify transformation as a result of students’ engagement in the Sweet Suite of activities that

comprised the innovation. I first discuss results of analysis related to Research Question 1, and then results of analysis related to Research Question 2.

RQ2: How and to what extent did the innovation influence students' willingness to participate in community action programs that promote racial understanding, and to become involved with activities and events that raise their awareness of social injustices?

RQ2 Coding Themes: Willingness to participate, community action programs that promote racial understanding, raised awareness.

As reported in the section above, the data suggests that, before and during the intervention, the students did show interest in willingness to participate. According to interview data, when asked, *what kind of leadership efforts would you make to ensure a commitment to a diversity initiative?* All of the interviewees returned a favorable answer. An example of this would be: Interviewee: *"I would start a program, like maybe on social media, like start getting people together online with the same interest as mine and just start making events and stuff like that so we can get more accomplished, and then eventually start something on campus."*

Another interviewee stated: *"OK, I'm not super educated on this process, but I would say, I think maybe inner city kids have the toughest possible time getting in, so anything that ASU could do, any programs, anything that I could help with getting them into college; I think is a big deal because it's not handed out to them. And it's very difficult."*

These statements, and others like them, suggest that, students are willing to participate. However, the extent to which they are willing to participate is inconclusive based on the analysis of the interview data. Sociocultural theory says that we learn or can

stand to gain from learning from society (Mercer & Howe, 2012). By opening our eyes and ears to the world around us, there is a lot we can learn, especially about race. How sociocultural theory relates to the analysis of data gathered and my research questions is; the greater exposure the students have to issues and events in society, the greater possibility their awareness will raise. An example of these events include racial symposiums, community discussions, and even marches and rallies. This exposure should heighten their awareness and become a sociocultural learning opportunity. An example can be seen in this interviewee statement: *“I think it just started off with taking these courses. And, I think just really to be honest, just thinking about it, and just analyzing and doing the research and just you know getting those experiences has raised my awareness.”*

The innovation had various other influential properties. For example, I play a short video of the incident that happened in South Carolina where 50-year-old Walter Scott, A black man, breaks away from a white police officer, and was shot in the back eight times. Walter Scott, who was unarmed, drops to the ground dead. After the video, I asked for a show of hands of the students had heard of the incident before. Nearly everyone had heard of the story, which I expected. The first question I asked was; “what do you think about this” no one raised their hand to speak. So, I rephrased the question and asked, “how does this make you feel”? One student said she was upset by it. Another student said, *“I thought it was messed up, especially the way he had his back to him, he was running away. How could he have been a threat to the officer?”*

I read the class a series of statements from the incidents that happened that day; it got students to speak up more. For example, the person that caught the shooting on his cell phone camera said he heard one shot, then a pause, then several more.

After hearing that statement, one of my students spoke up and said that's bullshit! He then said, "Those cops could have shot him with a Taser, or shot him just once, they didn't have to kill him." Another student remarked that his sister was from South Carolina, and that kind of thing always happens. But, because it was caught on tape, the officers are now being held accountable. When asked whether they think Walter Scott's punishment fit the crime, everyone said no. Based on the analysis of student's comments and reactions in this discussion, I could tell that the topic and discussion (the innovation) influenced students.

RQ:3 How and to what extent did the innovation influence students' whether students feel prepared to engage in interpersonal communication that promotes intercultural sensitivity and leads to social change?

RQ3 Coding themes: evidence of transformation, actively seeking opportunities to transform others.

An example of evidence of transformation can be seen in my analysis of observational data that was collected from a very heated classroom discussion. This analysis helped me ascertain evidence that transformation was taking place. The Black Lives Matter classroom discussion started with hostility. The hostility came from a White student that stated her dad is a cop, and his life matters. I knew right away that the conversation was going to be complicated. I felt compelled to help students understand both sides of the debate (Black lives matter Vs. All/Blue lives matter), especially since

the class had very few Black faces. I was however, very surprised to hear students say after the discussion that they understand why and how that community feels about racial profiling, stop and frisk, and the increase of unarmed suspect shootings in the recent years. I felt a sense of empathy rather than hostility come over the class. This, to me, represents transformation. It also can be connected to Sociocultural Learning Theory, which states that people learn from the experiences of people around them (Mercer & Howe, 2012). Moreover, Boyd & Maloof suggest “Students learn through talking” (Boyd & Maloof, 2000, p. 163), so it is only adequate that discourse be a central principle to motivate a heightened sense of awareness and a cultivate a propensity for change. I believe students must take advantage of every opportunity for self-expression both in class and around campus.

An example of the coding theme, *actively seeking opportunities to transform others*, can be seen in my analysis of observational data that was collected from another very passionate classroom discussion. This analysis helped me ascertain evidence that students were actively seeking opportunities to transform others. Much like the Black Lives Matter discussion, the conversation started off hostile. The majority of the student who initially choose to speak talked about their disgust with the athlete and his actions. Comments were made (in class) about the person being mixed black and white and why is not he protesting when white drivers are pulled over and abused. I heard the word shameful, communist, needs to be thankful for his position, anti-patriotism etc. This discussion went on like this for a good portion of the class. After the discussion, I showed a short film that spoke about the history of the National Anthem and the last verse. Students were floored. Not a single student in the class knew about the history of the

third verse of the Anthem. I then went on to show them several clips of unarmed Black men being shoot in the back or with their hands high in the air.

Afterwards, I asked do these images and this new information change your perception of the protest. There was a resounding positive response, indicating that there was a change of perception. I do not believe that after that discussion students felt that Kappernick was right, or that they would now support him; however, I do feel that their perception of the protest changed. Which indicates perception transformation. Moreover, several students indicated that they were sure their friends didn't know about the third verse of the national anthem, and that after hearing it, their perspectives would also be changed. One student stated, "Mr. Brown, more people should know about this information" I stated, "Yes, I agree." Then I suggested that, now that you know the truth about the anthem and how it is falsely perceived as patriotic, spread the word, change people's perceptions about the protest. In addition, students agreed that by sharing the truth they could influence their peer's thoughts and values. This, to me, represents actively seeking opportunities to transform others.

Transformative learning theory is about critical reflection and perspective transformation. I like to think of this as *know better do better*. The reason transformative learning theory is relevant to my study is the concept of critical self-reflection and perspective transformation. These two central tenets to Transformative Learning theory are exactly what I anticipated my study to do. Based on the analysis of the qualitative data, I saw very little transformation. That is, I was not able to definitively assert that because of the innovation, students were transformed. In the beginning of this report, I stated that it is critical for students at ASU to reflect on themselves and their attitudes,

values and beliefs in order for them to change their perceptions. As such, I do firmly believe that during the course of the intervention, students did critically reflect on themselves. This reflection came during various sweet suite activities that required them to critically reflect. However, there seems to be a disconnect. The student's awareness was raised, they were willing to participate in discourse about sociocultural issues, but when it came to action, based on interview responses, students were not yet ready to act. Alternatively, they did not see a strong enough need to take action. If a student does not see a need for a healthier cultural climate, a need for a heightened state of cultural sensitivity, or a need to be involved in social action programs, then they will not be willing to participate in them.

The microaggressions assignment and discussion was transformative in several ways. I strongly believe that this curriculum was a real revelation for students in the COM 263 class. Throughout the discussions, which spread over three class, periods students were shown images that have gained national attention as being racist and controversial. The students were then able to reflect on the images and the stories associated with them. This also allowed for sharing of personal stories. Another example from the Desert Vista 6 discussion data analysis left me feeling like the students were not really bothered by the incident. I asked why this was not a big deal to some. One response was "I'm over it" "they say it all the time" (referring to Black people). In addition, there was mention of how mainstream the word is (referring to music and movies). One student suggested that if Black or Mexican girls did the same stunt the reaction would be much less severe. Then an African American student spoke of a time when she was called a Ni**** at her school, and how it made her feel. This was a very

polarizing moment in class discussion, as most students did not believe that overt racism still exists. At that moment, the conversation gained momentum and students started to join the discussion to share personal stories of how they were discriminated against. How this discussion relates to the concept of know better-do better; students seem to believe that we are living in a post-racism society and words like *Nigger*, and *Wetback* and *Fag* are no longer used to hurt people.

Transformative Learning Theory, according to Brown (2014), suggests, “transformative learning changes the way people see themselves and their world. It attempts to explain how their expectations, framed within cultural assumptions and presuppositions, directly influence the meaning they derive from their experiences (p. 84).” Like many other theories, critical reflection is key to transformation. Subsequent discussions on ASU’s “Blackout-Game incident” and the fraternity MLK day party incident produced the same reactions. Most students had not even heard of the “Blackout-game” incident and several students commented on how the news of the MLK fraternity party spread like wild fire throughout the campus and actually caused waves within their inner circles. I believe that these two incidents were a wakeup call to not only my students but also the entire ASU community. The message was clear; this sort of thing still happens, and it is not OK. This wakeup call could be described as transformation based on Brown’s (2014) three common themes of Mezirow’s Transformative Learning Theory. They are; the centrality of experience, critical reflection, and rational discourse (see also Boyd, 1991; Cranton, 1994; Kegan, 1994).

Chapter 5

Discussion

The desired initial outcome of the innovation was to raise awareness and affect perception. The goal was to encourage student's civic participation, activism, enlightenment, inspiration to speak out against social injustices. Another goal of the intervention was to have a profound impact on the field of intercultural communication, based on the persuasive power of "stories" or conversations of the students involved in the class and the intervention. It was anticipated that there will be significant changes in participants' behavior that result from their new knowledge, attitudes, or skills. The desired intermediate outcomes were to raise awareness among students, create dialog to facilitate learning, and evoke action and behavior changes. A raised level of awareness and willingness to get involved in the activism and society is another desired outcome.

A highly anticipated long-term outcome of this intervention was for the students and community members to act as agents of change on issues that influence them directly. This innovation was designed to touch on helping students and administrators deal with some of the school's, Communities, and Country's toughest inequity issues. With this knowledge, participants could appreciate both the similarities and differences between different cultures, and effectively and ethically communicate across cultures both verbally and nonverbally. Student's perception transformation was brought about by participation in the Sweet Suite of activities that encompassed my innovation. It was my initial thought that this would ultimately lead to the propensity to go out and create change. The Sweet Suite attempted to offer students a set of strategies that support them in acquiring the requisite knowledge, the appropriate motivations, and the relevant

concepts to function competently with culturally-different others, in and out of the classroom.

As a result of conducting this study, I learned that change comes in many forms. At times, I felt the innovation did not come close to meeting the anticipated result. In addition, at times, I saw conformation that the innovation was contributing to the advancement of student awareness. This was seen in classroom discussion, student assignments, and survey and interview data analysis. This quandary was much like reading a good book and being satisfied by that book, but once the book is finished, the reader puts the book down without reflection, never to pick it up again, never to think about it again, and never letting the writer's words resonate with them. It felt as if students genuinely enjoyed, learned, and were inspired by the suite of activities, but willingness to take action was not evident. In regard to transformation, I do believe students' perspectives were influenced; however, I cannot ascertain that perspectives were transformed. In other words, what was conferred at the beginning of this report as "know better-do better" does not hold true for this study. The perspicacious phrase would be more fitting to this study if it were "know better-no difference."

The research project as a whole focused on the improvement of diversity, activism, and increasing sociocultural learning and participation, with particular interest in understanding how academic programs are engaged in such improvement. The purpose of the qualitative as well as the quantitative data analyses was to assess student learning, and to evaluate the student's experiences and try to learn more about student's willingness to get involved in sociocultural activities. Although a mixed methods approach can be labor intensive, it was crucial for my study as this method of data

collection and analysis provided me with a greater breadth of perspectives on the issue I am researching. Furthermore, this approach helped me overcome deficiencies that I would have encounter by using only one method.

As stated in the introduction in Chapter 1, the overarching purpose of this study was to guide my community of practice toward a critical understanding of the importance of increasing students' social awareness through intercultural communication, awareness, discourse and action. All information contained within this research project was created to support the hypothesis: *social awareness is an important facet of student development to understand because of the recognized links between social awareness and social change*. Gaining knowledge about the validity of the critique of intercultural communication, we generate knowledge, creativity and understanding to facilitate healthy relationships and workplaces, civil and secure communities, and constructive intercultural interaction. Results of the study show the extent to which there is a need for intercultural communication competence among students in my community of practice. This research project suggests that the development and promotion of cultural programs, classes and discussion forums should continue. Further effort is needed to improve overall student social awareness especially in the area of social injustices. This will require identifying and implementing new communication strategies to facilitate student engagement to raise awareness. Furthermore, Dr. Michael Crow's vision of ASU as the "New American University" measured by whom we include and how they succeed is an additional reason why a multicultural approach to pedagogy, communication and action is important. It is my hope that this study will help students as well as educators and

employers make more informed decisions about the viability and potency of intercultural communication competence.

Summary of Findings

In summary, I utilized three qualitative and one quantitative data collection tools in this mixed method research design. Qualitative means of transcribing interview data, observational data, and field notes data with an open coding and axial coding processes were utilized to analyze the student assignments, semi-structured interviews and classroom discussions. I reviewed and interpreted the student assignment data from pre-innovation to post innovation in order to identify information that would help me ascertain any significant gains that have been made. The results of the qualitative data collected also show that there is a significant need for greater cross-cultural communication to enhance competence in university settings as well as in the business/corporate sector. The purpose of innovation was to assist students as well as practitioners in being more informed on culturally sensitive decisions. As the qualitative data suggested, the innovation offered students a set of strategies that supports them in acquiring the requisite knowledge, the appropriate motivations, and the relevant concepts to function competently with culturally different others, in and out of the classroom however, the propensity to take action was minimal.

Overall, the intervention did not seem to have the effect I had hoped for. My findings indicate that, although I offered these sweet suite of activities, events, and discussions, students were not more willing post intervention to get involved in social change movements than prior to taking the class.

Study Limitations

Several limitations must be considered when interpreting the results presented in this study. First, the sample size is relatively small and consists of data collected from just one class, at only one four-year public institution. Given this limited number, it is very difficult to generalize the results to reflect the entire student body at this four-year institution. Additionally, according to Smith and Glass (1987), several factors can threaten the validity of a study. There were four perceivable threats to the validity of my study. I briefly describe those possible threats and how they might affect my study, and what I did to maximize validity.

One threat to validity that was experienced was an effect known as regression toward the mean. Regression is the result of a tendency for subjects selected on the bases of extreme scores to regress towards the mean on subsequent tests. When measurement of the dependent variable is not perfectly reliable, there is a tendency for extreme scores to regress or move toward the mean. As it relates to my study, regression could be factor in as a threat to validity. I surveyed and interviewed students enrolled in my class. Because of the nature or the dynamics of the student teacher relationships, I feel as though it may have skewed the answers the students gave. There are most certainly people pleasers in the group who only reported what they thought the instructor wanted to hear. That could be a potential problem and threat to validity. I can also see some similarities of this effect with the Hawthorne effect, or the observer effect. Ways to overcome this threat in the future include, having another instructor conduct the interview, and distribute the survey. Although this approach was taken for the survey administration, it was not taken for the interviews.

Mortality, also known as attrition was another perceived limitation of the study that threatened validity. This error occurs if inferences are made based on only those participants that have participated from the start to the end. As for my study, this occurred when only 16 filled participants filled out the pre-survey and 14 filled out the post-survey. Meaning that the total number of participants that took both pre and post surveys was 10.

According to the Smith and Glass (1987) maturation as a threat to validity comes about when certain events internal to the research subjects may be responsible for the differences on the dependent variable. This natural process can most certainly be a threat to my study. An example that is closely related to my research would be; freshmen come to my class with very little knowledge or awareness of social issues, but over the duration of their college career they mature and grow to learn the world around them. In addition, as seniors they are very well informed of social issues, not just from taking my class but also by maturing and experiencing life. Examples of these occurrences would be the election of current Arizona Governor Doug Ducey, who within months of his election cut education funding. This action sent shockwaves throughout the entire education system and could possibly; ultimately lead to our students dropping out.

Learning to be an Action Researcher

In my research, I have learned many things. There are things that I have done that made my research difficult and things that I have done that I would certainly do again. Observational data proved to be very valuable to my study. Recording student's nonverbal communication such as body language during difficult discussion. I was very proud that I could see when students were visibly shaken or affected by an event, activity,

or discussion. I have many, many examples of both positive and negative student reactions to the events, activities, and discussions. Like that look a student gives me at almost every major event I invite them to attend. The look says a thousand words, and I interpret them as gratification, astonishment, and delight. Alternatively, the looks (non-verbal communication) can reverberate angry and upset emotions as well. Like the look a student gave me during a Black Lives Matter discussion as she fought back tears when she said her dad was a cop and his life mattered too. All these are examples of rich information (data) that can be used for analysis for the purposes of my study and in my ongoing efforts to increase the transformative potential of my courses.

Some things I would certainly do differently were I to conduct this study again would be to conduct more clear and concise semi-structured interviews for my qualitative data. Each interview was haphazard and felt rushed and disorganized. I believe the teacher in me wanted to run the interview as opposed to letting the interview take place. For example, I could not withdraw from leading the interviewee by talking and filling in moments of silence. If I had the interviews to do over again, I would certainly ask more focused and specific questions like; Do you value diversity and why? Are you willing to be an advocate for social change? Why or why not?

As an action researcher, I am constantly trying to reach for new ideas. It never stops, it is a process. I want the research to continue to evolve. Planning for a successful intercultural communication course and/or degree program necessitates identifying those things that students expect to find in these programs and their perceptions about them. I feel that it is critical to reflect upon my scholar identity as a means to assess the pedagogy within the communities I engage my participants. I embrace my culturally

diverse students and their vast ranges of experiences. I feel that my positionality is aligned with the best interests of my students, which creates a deeper level of interaction and pedagogy that is more meaningful. I feel that organizing a plan will help me achieve balance, while knowing how to cope with life's unexpected obstacles will help me to get back on track if the weight of my responsibilities becomes unbalanced.

Implications for Future Research

The findings suggest that social awareness development may be moderated to some extent by pre-college social awareness and race/ethnicity. Based on these findings, future research may be conducted to further understand the impediments to social awareness development among undergraduate students. Additional research might be done identify pre-college activities/programs that contribute to social awareness development prior to entering college. The findings of this study also draw attention to the attitudinal and cognitive development of students. The findings relating students' attitudinal and cognitive development to social awareness development suggest that development in this area may vary consistently with attitudinal and cognitive growth. Social awareness development may be moderated to some extent by these types of attitudinal and cognitive factors. Given these findings, future research should examine the relative influence of these types of factors on the variance in social awareness development.

The findings of the study also suggest that there is a need for a problem-solving venture committed to engaged scholarship, and informed dialogue involving the topics of race and intercultural communication. The University serves as a hub of scholarly activity at a source of expert opinion and professional support on matters of race, social

action, and discourse. Researchers and practitioners affiliated with the University are tasked with expanding the study of intercultural communication beyond the black student/white student binary, understanding that race and participatory action intersect with gender, class, religion, sexuality, and nationality.

One of the many things that resonated with me from participating in this research process is a new appreciation for the need to study also the perceptions of faculty who may be called on to teach these courses need to be identified and addressed. Based on my personal experiences as a faculty member at a major University, there seems to be a low level of skepticism among college faculty regarding the quality and integrity of intercultural communication courses and degree programs. My intercultural communication colleagues often discuss ways in which to enrich the coursework and curriculum. The discussion of important ethical and social issues relating to intercultural communication and engagement to facilitate learning should prove to be of great value to the entire community of practice.

The one thing that will remain consistent in future practice would be the use of a mixed methods approach to data collection. This method seemed to be effective however; data collection methods may vary in future practice. A data collection method I did not use in my innovation that would be interesting to consider would be *focus groups* or small group discussion method of gathering data. It would be interesting to see how the respondents would react to questions if they were grouped by their ethnicity, or their socioeconomic status, or gender.

Conclusions

My research project highlights the importance of social awareness to being successful in today's society. That is, success in terms of the student being able to speak up against social injustice, create awareness of how people affect the environment, promoting racial tolerance and respect, and make consumer decisions based on a company's ethics. These dimensions constitute the type of social awareness that students need to develop during their college years, in order to function well in a complex and diverse society.

In the book, *Change Wars* (Hargreaves, Darling-Hammond & Fullan-2008) Linda Darling-Hammond's offers a recipe for creating a successful impact in our school system that consists of five key elements: Meaningful learning goals, intelligent and reciprocal accountability systems, equitable and adequate resources, and lastly, strong professional standards and supports. According to Darling-Hammond, schools organized for student and teacher learning with these in place, along with a supportive environment of secure housing will be successful. Just as Darling-Hammond's wants to see an education system that educates every young person to be successful in an information-based global society, I too, want to prepare students to be prepared, informed, and successful in a rapidly evolving society.

She also highlights the importance of teacher preparation and development. Teachers are essential to this work and must be prepared and supported. This relates to my community of practice in that, as a faculty member have to answer the challenge of revamping our curriculum to better fit the needs of an evolving education system. As it relates to support, I often think of Dr. Michael Crow's vision of ASU as the "New

American University” measured by whom we include and how they succeed. This statement/vision falls directly on my shoulders as an instructor. I take this directive personally and consider it my responsibility to uphold it. As such, my scholar identity must reflect one of inclusiveness, innovation, and intellect, which can only be obtained through preparation and support.

According to Mezirow, “A defining condition of being human is our urgent need to understand and order the meaning of experience, to integrate it with what we know and to avoid the threat of chaos” (Mezirow, 2000). Mezirow could well be discussing the sensation of my experiences as a researcher this year. The rich experiences I have had as a researcher have lead me to what he calls “perspective transformation”. Mezirow defines this as the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand and feel about the world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon this new understanding. The following inputs describe my intervention’s resources. I have to begin with my amazing cohort, a group of education professional that is like a band of brothers to me. Their ability to help me gain a more grounded understanding of the gathering, analyzing and interpreting of the data was certainly beneficial.

The Center for the Study of Racism and Democracy at ASU was an enormous resource. All the members of the CSRD have offered tremendous support to my efforts as a researcher in support of my innovation. Lastly, my LSC, colleagues within my community of practice are a wonderful resource. The educators and administrators at ASU’s College of Integrative Sciences and Arts assist me in facilitating scholarly

research and interpreting publications focused on interdisciplinary study, discourse, and debate over cutting-edge issues related to race and democracy, broadly construed. My colleagues also provide experiential opportunities for faculty and students to engage in public service through local, national, and international programs, internships, and fellowships.

Implications for Future Practice: Reflections as a Teacher

As I reflected on my interactions with my students during the course of the innovation, I began to think about how I could better serve them. This reflection made me relate to the article; *Culturally Relevant Pedagogy: Ingredients for Critical Teacher Reflection* (Howard, 2003). In the article the author made reference to the work of Gore (Gore, 1987), by stating “*reflection gives attention to one’s experiences and behaviors, and meanings are made and interpreted from them to inform future decision making.*” I believe that this type of reflection gives me the opportunity to pause, and assess. The author also cited Dewey (Dewey, 1933), as stating “*reflection as a special scaffolding of experiences and events that should be viewed as an active and deliberate cognitive process.*” Both Gore’s and Dewey’s concepts were especially important to my experiences as a faculty member. I am learning what to do differently in this semester’s class, and how turn last semester’s struggles into this semester’s stepping-stones. I realized that as a scholar and educator, my work must continually evolve. This critical teacher reflection is the great value that was referred to above.

In reflecting on implications for future practice, it is important to note that the Sweet Suite of activities is an integral part of the innovation and based on the results of this study, it must be revamped. The Sweet Suite can be defined as the summation of the

course curriculum combined with discourse, student reflection, personal reflection and an overall assessment of course activities as reported in this study.

Further iterations of the innovation must seek to offer inspiration that will assist in a deeper intercultural interaction. As well as a set of intervention strategies such as sub-group discussions to facilitate student discussion of important, ethical and social issues relating to intercultural communication. Another anticipated output will be fresh curriculum. Various new and innovative assignments, extracurricular activities, community service projects, and symposia will ultimately be the desired output. Improving storytelling methods such as family histories, and parables that will allow students to make a deeper connection. According to Barnes (1976), early research on sociocultural studies done on communication in classrooms suggests that if we want to improve students' engagement and learning outcomes, the role of talk in classrooms needs to be better understood and reappraised. The article goes on to report that students do better with the right quality of teacher/student interaction and teacher/student discourse, and it can be a powerful tool for the development of reasoning and the improvement of academic performance (p.13).

In all of these Sweet Suite activities, students are exposed to diversity, culture, discourse and real life experiences. In the future, one might concentrate on listening (critical listening) better to discussions. As initially stated, I feel that social awareness is a critical component of student development. The benefits of a heightened sense of social awareness through intercourse helps us generate knowledge, creativity and understanding that all lead toward social change.

In future practice, as an instructor, I know I must challenge myself to be better at raising student awareness of the fundamental need for change makers, doers, and thinkers committed to engaged scholarship, and informed dialogue involving the topics of race and intercultural communication. The university serves as a hub of scholarly activity and I must be a source of expert opinion and professional support on matters of race, social action, and discourse to help promote awareness. In future practice, this study will seek to increase our understanding of factors that influence students' level of social awareness during their collegial experience. Furthermore, with online classes surging in popularity, this study will be more distinct for those who teach face-to-face classes than those who have responsibility for delivery of online programs.

For instructors like myself, there are several things I can do to get the students to engage in more discourse. Classroom set up is important for student engagement, and unfortunately, our classroom was not organized in such a way to facilitate good student interaction. Most class set-ups are "U" shaped, as such, I believe that pods or tables grouped together, facing each other would be healthier for student engagement, interaction and discussion.

In conclusion, it is my sincerest that, in the future, the innovation will produce dialog on important ethical and social issues relating to cultural communication. The innovation will promote engagement to facilitate learning. The innovation will also seek to offer inspiration that will assist in a deeper cultural interaction. As well as a set of strategies to facilitate student discussion of important ethical and social issues, relating to cross-cultural communication and engagement will be designed and implemented in an undergraduate course on intercultural communication. Another anticipated outcome will

be fresh curriculum. Various new and innovative assignments, extracurricular activities, community service projects, and symposia will ultimately be the desired outcome.

Given the overwhelming amount of research of the role of action, discourse, and awareness on students and cross cultural communication, I began to notice some symmetry between my action research study and the ideas and concepts behind Berliner and Glass' work, *50 Myths and Lies* (2014). As Berliner and Glass explain in *Myth 14* (Subject matter knowledge is the most important asset a teacher can possess) that an effective program must replicate the perspective transformation that can happen organically in ALL schools. Moreover, Berliner and Glass assert that

“Educators are asked by many in the business community to develop in our students the skills deemed important for the 21st century: independent thinking, debate, working in groups, participating in projects of depth and duration, developing creative solutions to common problems, and so forth. So, the best teacher of the coming age will need to know their content, of course, as they always needed to. But if that is their only asset, they will fail as teachers and fail the country.” (p. 78)

As an undergraduate instructor, I deal with students from a wide range of backgrounds and experiences. Some from rich and powerful families and affluent high schools and neighborhoods. In addition, students with humble backgrounds, in meager living conditions that were educated in schools where the majority of the students qualified for free or reduced lunch. One thing I have come to understand in facing these varied student experiences is that they all have a propensity to learn. As such, I believe in order to do a better job at encouraging the students to take action, I must continue examining what impedes their propensity to take action. My study explores the possibility of creating an

effective classroom based multicultural educational program that develops Intercultural communication among students in US higher education.

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APPENDIX A
DIVERSITY, ACTIVISM, AND SOCIOCULTURAL ACTION RESEARCH SURVEY
AND CONSENT FORM

Diversity, Activism, And Sociocultural Action Research Survey Consent Form

You are invited to take part in an action research survey about diversity, activism, and the sociocultural climate at Arizona State University. Your participation will require approximately 60 minutes. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this survey. Additionally there are no benefits to participating in this survey. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to be in the study you can withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with anyone at Arizona State University.

Your responses will be kept strictly confidential, and digital data will be stored in secure computer files after it is entered. Any report of this research that is made available to the public will not include your name or any other individual information by which you could be identified. If you have questions or want a copy or summary of this study's results, you can contact the researcher at the email address above. If you have any questions about whether you have been treated in an illegal or unethical way, contact the Arizona State University Institutional Research Board chair, Heather Griller-Clark, at hgriller@asu.edu. Completing this survey indicates that you are 18 years of age or older and indicates your consent to participate in the research.

Thank you for your consideration,
Principal Investigator
Kermit A. Brown, M.Ed.
Honors Faculty, Barrett Honors College
Affiliate Faculty, Center for the Study of Race and Democracy
College of Integrative Sciences and Arts
Arizona State University
Tel: 602-496-0601
Kermit.brown@asu.edu

By signing below you are agreeing to be part of the study.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Diversity, Activism, and Sociocultural Action Research Survey

First two letters of mother's name: _____

Last 3 digits of your cell phone number: _____

Definition of terms:

The following items are statements using several terms that are defined below for you. Please refer to these definitions throughout the rest of the questionnaire.

Culture refers to the beliefs, values, traditions, ways of behaving, and language of any social group.

A **social group** may be racial, ethnic, religious, etc.

Race or **racial background** refers to a sub-group of people possessing common physical or genetic characteristics.

Indicate how descriptive each statement is of you by circling the number corresponding to your response.

(1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree

Survey Questions

(Please circle your response)

1. I would like to get more involved in my community by attending events such as rallies, symposiums, and marches.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

2. Intercultural communication plays a role in my daily activities.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

3. Getting to know someone of another race is generally an uncomfortable experience for me.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

4. I would like to participate in activities that feature people from other countries.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

5. I can best understand someone after I get to know them and understand our differences.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

*Indicate how descriptive each statement is of you by circling the number corresponding to your response. (1) Strongly Disagree, (2) Disagree, (3) Agree (4) Strongly Agree

6. I am NOT at ease with people of all races

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

7. I often associate with people of other cultures.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

8. Embracing a person's differences is not necessary to enhance a friendship.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

9. It is really hard for me to reject a person from another race.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

10. I am interested in learning about other cultures that have existed in this world.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

11. In getting to know someone, I like knowing both how he/she differs from me.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

12. It is very important that someone I trust agree with me on most issues.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

13. I attend events where I might get to know people from different racial backgrounds.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

14. Knowing about the different experiences of other people helps me understand my own culture better.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

15. I often feel irritated by persons of a different race.

1 – 2 – 3 – 4

APPENDIX B
SURVEY QUESTIONS AND CONSTRUCTS

Construct One, (Community action): having a willingness to participate in community action programs and become involved in activities and events that raise awareness of social injustices.

Construct Two (Interpersonal Communication): having a stance of acceptance, Inclusion and Tolerance of the Diversity of People

Survey Questions (per each construct)

Construct One (Community action): having a willingness to participate in community action programs and become involved in activities and events that raise awareness of social injustices.

1. I attend events where I might get to know people from different racial backgrounds.
2. Knowing about the different experiences of other people helps me understand my own culture better.
3. I would like to get more involved in my community by attending events such as rallies, symposiums, and marches.
4. I would like to participate in activities that feature people from other countries.
5. I am interested in learning about other cultures that have existed in this world.

Construct Two (Interpersonal Communication): having a stance of acceptance,

Inclusion and Tolerance of the Diversity of People

6. I often associate with people of other cultures.
7. Intercultural communication plays a role in my daily activities
8. I often feel irritated by persons of a different race.
9. Getting to know someone of another race is generally an uncomfortable experience for me.
10. I can best understand someone after I get to know them and understand our differences.
11. I am NOT at ease with people of all races
12. Embracing a person's differences is not necessary to enhance a friendship
13. It is really hard for me to reject a person from another race.
14. In getting to know someone, I like knowing both how he/she differs from me.
15. It is very important that someone I trust agrees with me on most issues.

APPENDIX C

RECRUITMENT SCRIPT

I am a professor and a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Ray Buss in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College Doctor of Education in Leadership and Innovation program at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study to look at ways to improve diversity, activism, and increase sociocultural learning and participation, activities on and off campus. I am recruiting individuals to evaluate your or experiences and try to learn more about students' willingness to get involved in sociocultural activities which will take approximately 30 minutes or your time.

Your agreement allows me to retain your assignments related to the design projects you complete in this class across the semester. These include written and oral reflections, reflective surveys or questionnaires and artifacts associated with the following:

- Extracurricular participation activities and assignments
- Guest speaker reflections
- Classroom observations in the classroom

These assignments will be kept until after the end of semester and grades are posted to analyze your responses for themes, insights, and opinions of selected course concepts. I am also requesting your permission to use audio-video recorded data from your participation during whole-class and small-group discussions.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to allow your assignments to be retained and analyzed. You may also decline to allow your audio-video recorded participation to be transcribed and analyzed. If you choose not to participate or choose to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be NO penalty, or effect on your grade(s). You may also be asked to participate in an individual 20-minute interview about your learning experiences in the class. Interviews will be audio-recorded with your permission. The interview portion of the study is voluntary; not all students participating in the study will be interviewed. Interviews will be coordinated and conducted by Michelle Jordan. They will be scheduled at a time and place of our mutual agreement. Students who agree to be interviewed will be given credit for one (1) extracurricular participation assignment. Although there is no benefit to you, possible benefits of your participation include the opportunity to enhance the learning experience of future students enrolled in this and other courses. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation. Confidentiality will be maintained by the removal of all identifying information from your assignments and prior to any analysis of the data set. Transcripts will be made of audio-video recordings, and all names will be replaced with pseudonym immediately. Only participation of students who have given permission to have their recorded data used in the study will be transcribed. Your responses will be kept confidential and only pseudonyms will be associated with participants. Study results may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be known or used or connected to the assignments because identification will have been removed.

A research assistant will be removing your name and any identification from any and all assignments and organize and store the recorded data. Her role is to maintain students' anonymity and provide a data set where all names and identifications are removed from the assignments. Once she collects your permission forms, she will be the only one to know who has agreed to allow their assignments to be used and those who didn't allow their assignments to be used for this research. Using these forms, she will then be able to identify the set of assignments that will be used in the research. If the assignments are available on Blackboard, the research assistant will download, remove all forms of identification, and place in a folder, which will host the identification-free data set of course assignments. If the assignments are handed in, she will copy and remove identification from those students' assignments that are part of the study. Once this is completed, she will hand back the whole set of papers to me for distribution back to students. She will make sure to mix the papers so that I cannot determine who is or isn't participating in the study. The research assistant will not share with me who is part of the study and who is not until the end of the semester after grades have been posted.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the researcher at 602-496-0601

Alternatively, email him at kermit.brown@asu.edu. If you have any questions concerning your consent form or identification removal of your assignments, please email Michelle Jordan at michelle.e.jordan@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Research Compliance Office, at (480) 965-6788.

Thank you for your consideration,
Principal Investigator
Kermit A. Brown, M.Ed.
Honors Faculty, Barrett Honors College
Affiliate Faculty, Center for the Study of Race and Democracy
College of Integrative Sciences and Arts
Arizona State University

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND QUESTIONS

Distribute materials and Consent form

Moderator Introduction (thank you and purpose, 1 minute)

Hello. I would like to start off by thanking you for taking time to come today. We will be here for about an hour. My name is [name of facilitator]

You have been selected to speak with me today because you have been identified as someone who has a great deal to share about the cultural climate here at ASU. As a student currently enrolled in COM 263, we feel you are perfect for this learning assessment, on this campus. Our research project as a whole focus on the improvement of diversity, activism, and increasing sociocultural learning and participation, with particular interest in understanding how academic programs are engaged in this activity.

Furthermore, how they assess student learning, and whether we can begin to share what we know about making a difference in undergraduate education. Our study's aim is to evaluate your experiences and try to learn more about students' willingness to get involved in sociocultural activities.

I'm going to lead our discussion today and my job is just to ask you questions then facilitate and moderate our discussion. Your responses will not affect your grade in this course. You will not be receiving points for your participation. Your comments will help to improve this course. You have the right to not answer any question and to stop participating at any time.

1. If there was one thing you could change about ASU what would it be?
2. What do you see as the most challenging aspect of a diverse working environment?
3. How important is diversity to you?
4. What kind of leadership efforts would you make to ensure a commitment to a diversity initiative or value
5. What are some of the cultures you belong to?
6. How would you define culture?
7. Discuss some of the traditions and practices of the cultures you belong to.

8. How is your life influenced by other cultures?
9. What have you done to further your knowledge about diversity?
10. What efforts have you made, or been involved with, to foster diversity competence and understanding?
11. What kinds of experiences have you had working with others with different backgrounds than your own?

Closing (2 minutes)

Thanks for coming today and sharing information regarding the improvement of diversity, activism, and increasing sociocultural learning and participation. Your comments will help your instructor find different ways to assist you with your learning. Thank you for your time.