

Multicultural Education  
To Improve Cultural Awareness and Academic Performance  
For Ninth Grade World History Students

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A Special Project  
Presented to  
Dr. Jack McPherson  
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FACULTY APPROVAL

Multicultural Education

To Improve Cultural Awareness and Academic Performance

for Ninth Grade World History Students

Approved for the Faculty

\_\_\_\_\_, Faculty Advisor

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine the extent to which students who received daily instruction in Multicultural Education improved their cultural awareness and academic performance in their 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History class, as assessed by teacher designed pre and post survey instruments and course grades earned. To accomplish this purpose a review of selected research was conducted. Additionally, baseline data from pre and post surveys and student grades earned were obtained and analyzed, from which related inferences, conclusions and recommendations were formulated. Major findings supported the hypothesis that students who received daily instruction in Multicultural Education improved their cultural awareness and academic awareness in 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History as evidenced by pre and post survey instruments and course grades earned.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Introduction

#### Background from the Project

Effective multicultural education is crucial in an era of changing demographics. About 40 percent of the U.S. public school population is non-European American. As of 2003, minority students made up 42 percent of the public school population, and 54 of the 100 largest school districts in the United States have a majority of minority students. One in five students has a parent born outside the United States, and one in 20 students was born outside the United States (Meyer & Rhoades 2006).

As emphasized in the above statement by Meyers and Rhoades, United States public school's demographics are undergoing dramatic change. These authorities have strongly indicated that Multicultural Education is a topic essential for understanding the diverse nature of our evolving society and global community.

The historically Caucasian majority in the United States has been rapidly changing. The shift in demographics has also become apparent within the classroom setting. As a result, the shift in demographics has generated the need for instruction in Multicultural Education.

Research conducted by Howard (1999) also addressed the issue of diversity. As suggested by this authority, the continued growth of diversity in the U.S. and worldwide has called for an educational system that recognizes these changes and makes provisions for Multicultural studies. Said Howard:

Diversity is not a choice, but our responses to it certainly are. And to date, all indications point to the fact that our responses have not been adequate to deal with the full range of issues presented by the complexities of teaching in a multicultural nation (p.2).

The educational system needed to change the curriculum to be more inclusive and representative of multicultural demographics. This was especially necessary because as the nation's high schools continued to become more diverse, so did post-secondary institutions. Growth in diversity at both secondary and post-secondary education institutions has become a significant issue that needed to be addressed. This was especially true because the nation's workforce was in serious trouble due to globalization. U.S. Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings (2005) addressed both concerns of education and globalization when she announced the formation of a new U.S. office and education commission charged with developing a comprehensive national strategy for postsecondary education. Said Spellings: "The department will meet the needs of America's diverse population and also address the economic workforce needs for the country's future" (p.1).

#### Statement of the Problem

The researcher (Benjamin-Jose Garza) discovered that lack of cultural awareness and students' poor academic performance were major concerns for a society that has continued to become more diverse. Lack of cultural awareness and poor academic performance were especially significant in a world that has become more global and less local. The increasingly complex issue of

globalization has witnessed the development of cultural awareness and academic ability in other nations to the point that they are today out-competing students in the United States of America, both educationally and economically.

To help solve this problem of a lack of cultural awareness and poor academic performance, the researcher decided the educational system needed to adopt multicultural education as a major curriculum component. Multicultural education was designed to change teacher expectations of all students and to adopt a more culturally responsive teaching strategy. All students needed to be challenged and encouraged despite their ethnic background. When a student was encouraged and challenged to perform at a higher level they met those expectations. Multicultural education also allowed students to become more culturally aware, and has allowed students to be introduced to various cultures and customs.

Phrased as a question, the problem which represented the focus of the present study may be stated as follows: To what extent did students who received daily instruction in Multicultural Education improve their cultural awareness and academic performance in their 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History class as assessed by pre and post survey instruments and course grades earned?

#### Purpose of the Project

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine the extent to which students who received daily instruction in Multicultural Education improved their cultural awareness and academic performance in their 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History class, as assessed by teacher designed pre and post survey instruments and course

grades earned. To accomplish this purpose a review of selected research was conducted. Additionally, baseline data from pre and post surveys and student grades earned were obtained and analyzed, from which related inferences, conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

### Delimitations

The project took place during the 2005 – 2006 school year. The project was conducted in the Granger School District (GSD). The schools' total student body consisted of 365 students including a freshman class of 100.

The study took place in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History classes. Demographically, World History classes at GHS included Hispanic (90%), Caucasian (8%) and Native-American (2%). Students' reading levels ranged from 4th grade to post high school. Freshman World History classes also included English Language Learners and Special Education students.

The writer (Benjamin-Jose Garza) utilized a variety of teaching methods and strategies including: Constructivism, multiple intelligences, higher order thinking, understanding by design, and units designed around concepts. The writer also received specific training in multicultural education and held collegiate minors in both ethnic studies and sociology. The writer has been employed by the GSD for four years, since 2002.

### Assumptions

The researcher assumed all students who participated in the project possessed the same knowledge and attitudes about cultures that were different than their own. Participants generally lacked understanding of different cultures,

and did not understand similarities they shared with those cultures. Further, participants did not understand that their academic ability and self-awareness were tied together. Students tended to view academic ability as something separate from their own cultural awareness.

The students were willing participants in the project, were open-minded to different cultures, and answered all survey instruments honestly. The researcher understood what Multicultural Education was and how it can be used to improve student academic ability. A veteran teacher with collegiate background in sociology and ethnic studies, the writer made the assumption he was well qualified to teach Multicultural Education and to use a variety of instructional strategies. The researcher was willing to modify instruction when necessary to make sure appropriate teaching strategies were used and that a Multicultural Education curriculum was implemented.

#### Hypothesis or Research Question

Students who received daily instruction in Multicultural Education improved their cultural awareness and academic awareness in 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History as evidenced by pre and post survey instruments and course grades earned.

#### Significance of the Project

The relationship between Multicultural Education, student awareness and academic ability was important to GHS because students in that school lacked understanding of different cultures, and their academic performance was below average. Students that attended GHS were isolated from cultures other than their

own and due to this isolation, students had developed negative stereotypes of different cultures. For example, a most significant incident occurred when a Hispanic and Korean student became involved in a fight. The fight occurred because the Hispanic student directed racist comments at the Korean. The Hispanic student's intentions were not to offend the Korean student, but the Hispanic student was not culturally sensitive or understanding of the Korean student.

The project also was significant because the academic performance of the students was also below average. The students' ability to become academic proficient was important because the schools duty was to provide an environment where all students prospered. As GHS strived for academic excellence, the project would help to achieve that goal. Students realized that their academic performance was tied to their own self-awareness. The better the student understood themselves, the better they were able to perform, or believed they could perform.

### Procedure

The first part of the project involved preparing and administering an initial survey instrument to the participants at the beginning of the second semester, February, 2006. The survey recorded students' initial perceptions about cultural awareness and attitudes towards different cultures. The researcher administered a second survey instrument during March, 2006 to record any initial changes in students' perceptions about cultural awareness and attitudes towards different cultures. A third survey instrument administered, in May, 2006 recorded how

students perceived the connection between their academic ability and their cultural self-awareness.

The researcher then embarked on a journey to improve student cultural awareness and academic performance, and to change academic expectations and the way students were taught in World History classes. The researcher incorporated Multicultural Education and culturally responsive teaching strategies into the regular instructional program. Both of these models were adopted at the beginning of the second of semester and continued for the duration of the project. The researcher also began the process of teaching students about cultural identity.

Throughout the project, the researcher continued to use instructional models of constructivism, multiple intelligences, and understanding by design, all of which were in use prior to the project. As the study progressed, the researcher also discovered that the use of these strategies was intrinsically connected with multicultural education and the students' cultural awareness. Students were given extensive latitude to research various cultures and customs, and were then able to share the experiences and knowledge gained with a higher purpose in mind.

The researcher also engaged the students in a more in-depth discussion about their cultural identity. At the mid-point of the project (March, 2006), when the researcher issued the second survey instrument, students' cultural awareness scores and their perception towards cultural self-awareness and academic ability were recorded.

After the students had researched different cultures, discussed the unit on globalization, and discussed various controversial issues, the researcher

administered the third and final survey instrument. The final survey instrument measured students' attitudes and beliefs towards different cultures along with beliefs about their cultural awareness and academic ability. The final survey provided necessary information about student cultural awareness and academic ability needed to support the researcher's hypothesis.

### Definition of Terms

Significant terms used in the context of the present study have been defined as follows:

constructivism. A teaching strategy that encourages students to use active techniques to create more knowledge and then reflect on and talk about what they are doing and how their understanding is changing. The teacher makes sure they understand the student's preexisting conceptions and experiences.

descriptive statistics. Data analysis techniques enabling the researcher to meaningfully describe many scores with a small number of numerical indices.

english language learner. Students whose primary first language is something other than English and are in the process of acquiring the skills necessary to speak and understand English.

higher order thinking. Developed from Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning, in which he developed six levels within the cognitive domain from simple recall or recognition of facts, as the lowest level, through increasingly more complex and abstract mental levels, to the highest order which is classified as evaluation.

multicultural education. Helps students develop a positive self-concept by providing knowledge about the histories, cultures, and contributions of diverse



groups. It advocates the belief that students and their life histories and experiences should be placed at the center of the teaching and learning process and that pedagogy should occur in a context that is familiar to students and that addresses multiple ways of thinking.

multiple intelligences. Gardener's theory of intelligence states that there are seven forms of intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, and intrapersonal.

special education. Education that is modified or particularized for those having singular needs or disabilities, as handicapped or maladjusted people, slow learners, or gifted children.

student identity. Set of behaviors, and characteristics that make each student unique.

understanding by design. Teaching strategy that starts with identifying desired results, then determines acceptable evidence and finally the teacher plans learning experiences and instruction.

voice. Sense of identity that is developed once and individual feels they are truly part of the larger community.

### Acronyms

GHS. Granger High School

GSD. Granger School District

ME. Multicultural Education

## CHAPTER 2

### Review of Selected Literature

#### Introduction

The review of literature and research summarized in Chapter 2 has been organized to address the following topics:

- Importance of Multicultural Education
- Goals of Multicultural Education and Social

#### Studies

- Student Identity
- Importance of Teaching Strategies
- Summary

Data currently primarily within the last five (5) years were identified through an on-line computerized literature search of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC), the Internet and Proquest. A hand-search of related, supplemental materials was also conducted.

#### Importance of Multicultural Education

Recent adoption of Multicultural Education curricula has increased student cultural awareness. Multicultural Education has specifically established the framework where all students from both genders and from diverse cultural, language, and ethnic groups will have an equal chance to experience school success (Meyer & Rhoades, 2006). The framework of success that Multicultural Education has established has not been limited to local classrooms, but in fact has incorporated learning standards on the state level. Research conducted by The

EMPIRE Consortium of Multicultural Education (1998) revealed that Washington State Essential Learning Goals are intended for all students without regard to race, creed, color, gender, or culture. This research confirmed it was the duty of Multicultural Education to guarantee that all students were educated.

According to Howard (1999) Multicultural Education has allowed instruction to be more culturally responsive; as a result Multicultural Education offered a way for students' respect and willingness to perform to be gained. To accomplish this, Multicultural Education has utilized four fundamental principles. These principles included the belief that "growth in multicultural awareness is possible, growth in multicultural awareness is desirable, multicultural growth can be observed and assessed, and multicultural growth can be stimulated and promoted" (p.98).

Research conducted by Shevin (1999) focused on Multicultural Education within the classroom, how to help students feel accepted, how to showcase their abilities, and how to give students a "voice" for sharing their opinions and ideas. To gain this "voice", the researcher modified expectations and fostered an environment that allowed students to share the following:

- The things you are good at--your strengths and talents.
- The things you are not so good at—the areas in which you require help and support.
- The things you are afraid of—your areas of concern or worry.
- Your goals for your future—what you hope to accomplish both today and in the future.

- The things that make you happy—your passions and joys.
- The things that make you unhappy—everything from pet peeves to deeper sources of sorrow (Shevin, p. 35).

When a student was challenged, he/she was required to think and to apply what they had learned. When any student was challenged they believed they were part of the system and that the teacher truly cared for them and their cultural identity. When Multicultural Education was incorporated into the class, educators were more likely to have an understanding and appreciation for the diversity of students in their classroom (EMPIRE Consortium for Multicultural Education). According to Ryan & Cooper (2000), Multicultural Education allowed for the student be understood because time was taken to get to know the individual. This was also done to gain the students' trust. As stated by Ryan & Cooper:

Each child has different needs, and the best way to address these needs equitably is to address them uniquely, including taking into account such factors as race, ethnicity and gender (pp. 188-189).

When Multicultural Education was used, the students' backgrounds were understood and the opportunity was provided to look at the complexities of life and society. Multicultural Education did not hide the fact there was controversy in the world, but rather encouraged the deliberate discussion of controversial issues, which lead to resolution of those issues. Shevin (1999) stated the following:

Students can explore the things that divide people, the ways people are kept from seeing one another as full human beings, including racism,

sexism, and discrimination based on age or physical condition . . . throughout the course of history, have worked together to resolve problems . . . and negotiate a whole series of tasks and challenges (p. 116).

Multicultural Education offered a curriculum that challenged students through understanding the unique backgrounds of others. Further, when the classroom did not possess a culturally diverse group, Multicultural Education brought in diversity. Diversity became an essential part of the class. This was because Multicultural Education fostered learning through conflict. The discussion of conflict, as it arose, provided a safe environment to discuss other issues. As stated by Alverman & Phelps (2002):

Creating safe environments that foster classroom appreciation of diversity does not mean engaging in “neutral” discussions in which feelings of conflict or issues of power are submerged in teachers and students’ making nice-talk. On the contrary, such issues can (and should) be raised (p. 58).

Multicultural Education has helped to provide solutions to issues of conflict. Said Meyer & Rhoades:

Discussions of ethnicity, race, racism, and cultural values are not safe topics, and interpersonal change requires the individual to examine assumptions that never before may have been challenged (p. 30).

An environment was deemed safe when discussion and resolution of issues of conflict were provided for. Multicultural Education has fostered an

environment where all students spoke freely and respected the opinions of others (Meyer & Rhoades).

Multicultural Education has recognized that the world in which the education system was a part did not consist of a single ethnic group. Rather the world was very diverse and has continued to become more diverse. As observed by Alverman & Phelps:

Teacher education professionals must hastily respond to this problem of the growing, at-risk, minority student population, decreasing minority teacher pools, and increasing numbers of majority teacher education students. The profession must respond with the expectation that, at least in the near future, the majority of minority students' teachers will be white females who are unfamiliar with minority students' language, lifestyle, culture, family, and community (p. 58).

Multicultural Education has become essential to the educational system as a whole and has helped create an environment that fostered and accepted all students. The battle to promote Multicultural Education began in the classroom with the work that current teacher-advocates have performed. Authorities like Alverman & Phelps have recognized the fact that culture was everywhere. These researchers stated: "It is foolhardy for any group to believe that culture is what other people have; what we have is just truth" (p. 58).

### Goals of Multicultural Education and Social Studies

Multicultural Education has focused on “increasing achievement and promoting greater sensitivity to cultural differences . . . ” (Dunn, 1997, p. 74). By comparison, the instructional goals of Social Studies have become dedicated to:

. . . Students’ need to comprehend perspectives that emerge from within their own culture and from the vantage points of the diverse cultural groups within that society and with whom the society may interact (National Social Studies Standards, 1997, p 2).

Multicultural Education has become concerned with those principles that related to all students and encouraged the development of cultural awareness. Multicultural Education has grown from simply reflecting diversity to “curricular revisions that specifically address the academic needs of students” (Dunn, 1997, p.74). When multicultural Education addressed curricular revisions it was with diversity in mind. This was because “school curriculum must directly address issues of racism, sexism, classism, linguicism, abilism, ageism, heterosexism, religious intolerance, and xenophobia” (National Association for Multicultural Education, 2003, p 4).

The content area of Social Studies has typically addressed issues of diversity in relation to how they “...contribute to developing responsible citizens in a culturally diverse, democratic society within and interdependent world”(Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, 2006, p 3).

Participation within a diverse society has required that Social Studies instruction be provided to encourage students to understand that all cultures have

value. “All cultures, for example, have systems of knowledge, values, traditions, and beliefs although the specifics of each may vary widely” (National Social Studies Standards, 1997, p 2).

Multicultural Education has also addressed the question of acquired knowledge. That is, how to “allow students to acquire knowledge, attitudes, and skills they need to succeed in an ethnically and racially diverse nation and world” (Garderen & Whittaker, 2006, p. 14). Further, Multicultural Education has offered suggestions as to how a student and school were able to become culturally aware. “To accomplish these goals, multicultural education demands a school staff that is culturally competent, and to the greatest extent possible racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse” (National Association for Multicultural Education, p.3). When a school was unable to be culturally diverse, the school had to rely on the material that was brought into classrooms by individual teachers. Even when the school was not diverse, Multicultural Education was still possible and necessary. Said Garderen & Whittaker:

Regardless of the degree of heterogeneity of a district or classroom, all students should learn about the history and experiences of diverse groups so that they can function in a global society (p.14).

The goals of both Multicultural Education and Social Studies emphasized the creation of a citizen who functioned in a diverse democratic society. This was accomplished in Social Studies instruction because this subject “provides a remarkable opportunity to engage students in the enduring dilemmas embedded in the study of community, family, and society” (Office of Superintendent of Public



Instruction Social Studies, p.1). When the student was able to engage in controversial topics that involved society they were able to discuss necessary cultural issues. These discussions allowed students to:

. . . work actively toward structural equality in organizations and institutions by providing the knowledge, dispositions, and skills for the redistribution of power and income among diverse groups, which resulted in the student fully engaged in society(National Association for Multicultural Education, p. 4).

The goals of Multicultural Education and Social Studies were both concerned with how the student operated within the larger democratic society. Social Studies teachers at all school levels should provide developmentally appropriate experiences as they guide learners in the study of culture and cultural diversity (National Social Studies Standards). Similarly Multicultural Education was concerned with how teachers “inside the classroom, can promote principles of shared decision making and democratic citizenship” (Garderen & Whittaker, p. 15).

The content areas of Multicultural Education and Social Studies have shared the belief that “an empowering school culture is one in which all students experience educational equity and choice in all aspects of schooling” (Garderen & Whittaker, p.15). These authorities concluded that when the school fostered positive student learning, it created an environment where students created positive and powerful self-images.

### Student Identity

Identity has been viewed differently for every student because “every student comes to the classroom with a set of behaviors and characteristics that makes him/her unique and that will effect his or her academic achievement” (Jones, 2005, p.150).

Student identity has typically been associated with the students’ ability to understand their own personal culture. For success in life it was considered essential that the student possess a strong identity. When the student had a strong identity then they were clearly able to cope and adjust. This was because “advanced levels of ethnic identity development were a significant predictor of social adaptation and emotional adjustment” (Holcomb-McCoy, 2005, p. 122).

Student identity tied into the emotional stability of the student because “a stronger sense of ethnic identity is associated with higher self-esteem and self-confidence” (Holcomb-McCoy, p. 122). Strong self-esteem and self-confidence were important to the student because these two factors allowed the student to persevere through anything they encountered. When the student was academically successful they were also emotionally secure (Holcomb-McCoy).

According to Jackson (2003) academic ability and student identity have been directly linked together. Said Jackson:

Academic identity, in turn, has empowered individual students to change how they respond to the still-powerful outside social pressures, to develop reactions of resilience or immunity” (p.582).

According to Holcomb-McCoy a strong identity also allowed the student to persevere through the daily work of school. This authority found that “high school students reporting average grades of A or B had more developed levels of ethnic identity than those reporting C or D” (p. 123). Strong student identity was essential when the student achieved above average grades.

The school created an environment where student identity was recognized, sustained, and constructed. Educators were concerned that “students come to believe deeply in their own capacity to master difficult academic material through sustained, thoughtful effort” (Jackson, p. 582). Therefore, the school recognized that student identity established a solid academic ground, which in turn meant that student identity needed to be fully incorporated into regular school procedures (Jackson).

According to Jones, student identity was not an easy concept to understand. The thing that needed to happen was that “teachers must be aware of how much cultural identity influences the education of students” (p. 151). This was because there was a direct similarity between student identity, culture, and academic performance. When this correlation was understood, steps could be taken to foster and construct identity.

If student identity was unfamiliar or lacking in the classroom, certain steps could be taken. One step, for example, was to “develop authentic identities based on personal abilities and interests, family history and culture” (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, 2005, p. 22). This resulted in the identity of the student being incorporated into the classroom on a personal level. When identity was most

effective it took a personal nature and related to the student and their background (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey).

Student identity was seen as diverse and needed to be instructed in a diverse manner. For example, student identity could be constructed through “encouraging children to appreciate their multiple identities and skills and interests” (Derman-Sparks & Ramsey, p. 22). The more diverse the instruction the better the students were able to develop a strong identity. Said Jones:

Teachers can help students feel comfortable with their cultural identity and assist them in their learning by using a multicultural teaching approach that embraces diversity in the classroom (p.151).

Jones found that students built a stronger sense of identity when different teaching strategies which embraced diversity were used to develop the students’ self-image.

#### Importance of Teaching Strategies

Research conducted by Perkins (1999) confirmed that active engagement in a variety of learning activities may lead to better retention, understanding, and active use of knowledge. The purpose of teaching was to engage students in actively using their knowledge.

Understanding by Design allowed for a clear and purposeful style of instruction. This instructional strategy started with the end in mind and worked the students toward that end. Everything that was part of the lesson was done purposefully with the end in mind. “To develop fluency and flexibility in perspective taking a student needs to have a clear performance goal and to keep

that goal in constant view” (Wiggins & McTighe, 1998, p. 54). All academic material needed to be counted because the process required the student to develop a clear understanding. Understanding was significant because it allowed the student to venture deeply into each topic of study. “Understanding is thus not mere knowledge of facts but knowledge of why and how” (Wiggins & McTighe, p. 46). Essential learning took place when the student realized they could truly explore a topic or issue for deeper meaning. Understanding by Design provided a framework for developing student understanding, but when applied to practical setting, the instruction using Understanding by Design relied on other instructional strategies (Wiggins & McTighe).

The teaching strategy of Constructivism was especially important because it used the students’ prior knowledge and engaged the students into the lessons. The students’ engagement in the lesson drove and motivated students to learn more about a topic or concept. Said Brooks & Brooks (1999):

When students want to know more about an idea, a topic, or an entire discipline, they put more cognitive energy into the classroom investigations and discussions and study more on their own (p. 20).

This was important to note because the students were driven by their own ideas. Constructivism allowed students to be in the drivers seat of their education and therefore students did not rely on the teacher for self-motivation (Brooks & Brooks).

Constructivism required a hands-on, cooperative approach to learning in which the teacher was the facilitator of the information and the student actively

inquired into their education. According to Perkins, “Constructivism generally casts learners in an active role” (p. 7). Constructivism required the student to apply previous knowledge or background information, which furthered the learning of a new concept (Perkins).

Constructivism was used efficiently when time was taken to learn about the students and the experiences they had to share. Although Constructivist teaching was not multicultural by nature, it became multicultural by default because the classroom settings were not isolated to one ethnic group. As stated by Vermette et al (2001), “Students are different in their social, cultural, and linguistic heritage. Learning is most active when teachers consider these differences” (p. 90). Therefore, constructivism helped to foster multicultural education within the classroom because it already housed a diverse student body population (Vermette et al.).

Multiple Intelligences directly correlated to constructivism because this strategy required the class to be designed around the student. Multiple Intelligences drove student learning and inquiry because it used the different learning styles of the students. Gardner’s Theory of Multiple Intelligences provided a theoretical foundation for recognizing the different abilities and talents of students, which allowed the student to become engaged in the learning process (Scholastic Early Childhood Today, 2005). The connection to learning made possible by the Multiple Intelligence approach allowed the student to use all areas of intelligence. “Everyone is born possessing seven intelligences. Nevertheless, all students will come into the classroom with a different set of developed

intelligences” (Scholastic Early Childhood Today, p. 14). Multiple intelligences used the areas of intelligence that students were strong in, but fostered the development of all other areas of intelligence (Gray & Waggoner, 2002).

The Multiple Intelligence approach allowed the student to develop other areas of intelligences in a meaningful way because not all students brought the same experiences to the class. The students’ variety of experiences allowed for a variety of intelligences to be considered in the class. “Gardner argued that culture also plays a large role in the development of the intelligences” (Scholastic Early Childhood Today, p. 14). Since this was true, instruction needed to be altered so that all students were culturally appreciated (Scholastic Early Childhood Today).

The altered instruction strategy allowed for students to be truly appreciated for who they were and what they knew. Altered instruction was necessary because “the teacher must recognize, appreciate, and attend to the academic, social, and emotional diversity within a classroom” (Gray & Waggoner, p.184).

Multiple Intelligences also fostered life long learners because it encouraged students to use all varieties of intelligence, while also focused on the students’ strengths. When the student was able to use their strengths they became more willing to perform because the learning was natural to them. Said Gray & Waggoner: “to promote lifelong learning, students must be taught to think in ways that are natural and meaningful to them” (p. 186).

Constructivism, Multiple Intelligences and Understanding by Design have all helped to foster a multicultural classroom environment. According to Brooks

& Brooks: “Students must be permitted the freedom to think, to question, to reflect, and to interact with ideas, objects, and others-in other words, to construct meaning” (p. 18). When the student was able to interact with other people or ideas that were different than their own, he/she was able to analyze the differences while learning about others who were different from themselves (Brooks & Brooks).

### Summary

The review of selected literature presented in Chapter 2 supported the following research themes:

1. Multicultural Education has allowed instruction to be more culturally responsive and, as a result, has affected a way for students’ respect and willingness to perform to be advanced.
2. Multicultural and Social Studies goals help students to comprehend perspectives that emerge from within their own culture and from the vantage points of the diverse cultural groups within the greater society in which they interact.
3. Every student comes to the classroom with a set of behaviors and characteristics that makes them unique and that will affect his/her academic achievement.
4. Research confirmed that actively engaging students in a variety of teaching strategies and methodologies may lead to better retention, understanding, and active use of knowledge.



## CHAPTER 3

### Methodology and Treatment of Data

#### Introduction

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine the extent to which students who received daily instruction in Multicultural Education improved their cultural awareness and academic performance in their 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History class, as assessed by teacher designed pre and post survey instruments and course grades earned. To accomplish this purpose a review of selected research was conducted. Additionally, baseline data from pre and post surveys and student grades earned were obtained and analyzed, from which related inferences, conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

Chapter 3 provides an overview of the methodology, participants, instruments, design, procedure, and treatment of data utilized in the present study.

#### Methodology

The researcher (Benjamin-Jose Garza) used a descriptive research methodology to obtain necessary data for the study. This method was used to describe the attitudes and values of the students involved in the project. The researcher used a combination of pre and post surveys to determine the extent to which students who received daily instruction in Multicultural Education improved their cultural awareness and academic performance in their 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History Class at Granger High School (GHS).

### Participants

The project was conducted at GHS located in the lower Yakima valley in Eastern Washington. Participants in the project were selected from all four 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History classes. A total number of 105 students were involved in the study.

Demographically, participants included Hispanic (90%), Caucasian (8%), and Native American (2%) student participants. Students reading levels ranged from 4<sup>th</sup> grade to post high school. Specifically, 90 Hispanic students, 9 Native American students, and 5 Caucasian students participated. Five monolingual, Spanish-speaking students, eight other English Language Learners, and eight students who met qualifications for special education accommodations were included. Socio-economically, 70 participating students qualified for the federal free and reduced lunch program.

### Instruments

The researcher used a combination of likert scale surveys for data-gathering purposes. The likert surveys provided a self-report system for data collection. Students were able to indicate their personal attitudes and values about specific questions on a scale that ranged from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”, with no provision for middle or moderate choice.

The likert scale survey provided an attitude scale and was designed to determine the students’ attitudes and values about Multicultural Education, the students’ identities, and academic performance. The surveys allowed students to respond to each question at three different points in time.

### Design

The researcher used a self-report design to gather essential baseline data. One likert scale survey was developed, which allowed students to indicate their attitudes and values about multicultural education, their identity, and their academic performance. Students' attitudes and values were recorded on a scale indicating "strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree" (APPENDIX).

### Procedure

Procedures employed in the present study evolved in several stages, as follows:

1. The project first involved preparing and administering an initial survey instrument for the participants at the beginning of the second semester, January, 2006. The survey recorded students' initial perceptions about cultural awareness and attitudes towards different cultures.
2. The researcher administered a second survey instrument during March, 2006, to record the opinions of participants regarding cultural awareness and academic performance at the mid-point of the project.
3. A third survey instrument administered in May, 2006, recorded how students perceived the connection between their academic ability and their cultural self-awareness.
4. The researcher then embarked on a journey to improve student cultural awareness and academic performance, and to change academic expectations and the way students were taught in World History classes. The researcher incorporated Multicultural Education and

culturally responsive teaching strategies into the regular instructional program. Both of these models were adopted at the beginning of the second semester and continued for the duration of the project. The researcher also began the process of teaching students about cultural identity.

5. Throughout the project, the researcher continued to use instructional models of constructivism, multiple intelligences, and understanding by design, all of which were in use prior to the project.
6. As the study progressed, the researcher also discovered that the use of these strategies was intrinsically connected with multicultural education and the students' cultural awareness. Students were given extensive latitude to research various cultures and customs, and were then able to share the experiences and knowledge gained with a higher purpose in mind.
7. The researcher also engaged students in a more in-depth discussion about their cultural identity. At the mid-point of the project (March, 2006), when the researcher issued the second survey instrument, students' cultural awareness scores and their perception towards cultural self-awareness and academic ability were recorded.
8. After the students had researched different cultures, discussed the unit on globalization, and discussed various controversial issues, the researcher administered the third and final survey instrument. The final survey instrument measured students' attitudes and beliefs

concerning different cultures along with beliefs about their cultural awareness and academic ability. The final survey provided necessary information about student cultural awareness and academic ability needed to support the researcher's hypothesis.

9. During spring semester 2008, the researcher completed an analysis of data obtained, and formulated related inferences, conclusions, and recommendations.

#### Treatment of Data

The researcher tabulated results from all three survey instruments to determine the growth of the students' cultural awareness and academic performance. Results of each survey were then presented graphically in tabular form.

#### Summary

Chapter 3 provided a description of the research methodology employed in the study, participants, instruments used, research design, and procedure utilized. Details concerning treatment of the data obtained and analyzed were also presented.

## CHAPTER 4

### Analysis of the Data

#### Introduction

The present study sought to determine the extent to which students who received daily instruction in Multicultural Education improved their cultural awareness and academic performance in their 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History class as assessed by pre and post survey instruments and course grades earned.

Chapter 4 provides a description of the environment, an overview of the hypothesis, results of the study, major findings, a discussion of the data, and summary.

#### Description of the Environment

The project was conducted at Granger High School located in the lower Yakima valley in Eastern Washington. The participants in the project were selected from all four 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History classes. A total of 105 students were involved in the study.

Demographically, participating students included Hispanic (90%), Caucasian (8%), and Native American (2%). Students reading levels ranged from 4<sup>th</sup> grade to post high school. Specifically, 90 Hispanic students, 9 Native American students and 5 Caucasian students participated. Five monolingual, Spanish-speaking students, eight other English Language Learners, and eight students who met qualifications for special education accommodations participated. Socio-economically, 70 participating students qualified for the federal free and reduced lunch program.

### Hypothesis or Research Question

Students who received daily instruction in Multicultural Education improved their cultural awareness and academic awareness in 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History as evidenced by pre and post survey instruments and course grades earned.

### Results of the Study

Tables 1-3 have provided a summary of student responses to three questionnaire surveys conducted from January-May 2006 (APPENDIX).

Table 1 has detailed participant responses to survey #1, administered on January 2006. This survey displayed initial perceptions of students regarding cultural awareness and attitudes concerning different cultures. As indicated: 45% of respondents disagreed it was important to understand other student's cultures; 30% agreed it was important to understand other students' cultures; 20% strongly disagreed, and 5% strongly agreed it was important to understand students' cultures.

Table 2 has detailed participant responses to survey #2, administered on March 2006. This survey displayed perceptions of students regarding cultural awareness and attitudes concerning different cultures. As indicated: 40% of respondents disagreed it was important to understand other student's cultures; 30% agreed it was important to understand other students' cultures; 10% strongly disagreed, and 20% strongly agreed it was important to understand students' cultures.

Table 3 has detailed participant responses to survey #3, administered on May 2006. This survey displayed perceptions about connection between their academic ability and their cultural self-awareness. As indicated: 10% of respondents disagreed it was important to understand other student's cultures; 70% agreed it was important to understand other students' cultures; 0% strongly disagreed, and 20% strongly agreed it was important to understand students' cultures.



Table 1

Survey #1: Student Perceptions About Cultural Awareness and Attitudes

Concerning Different Cultures, January, 2006.

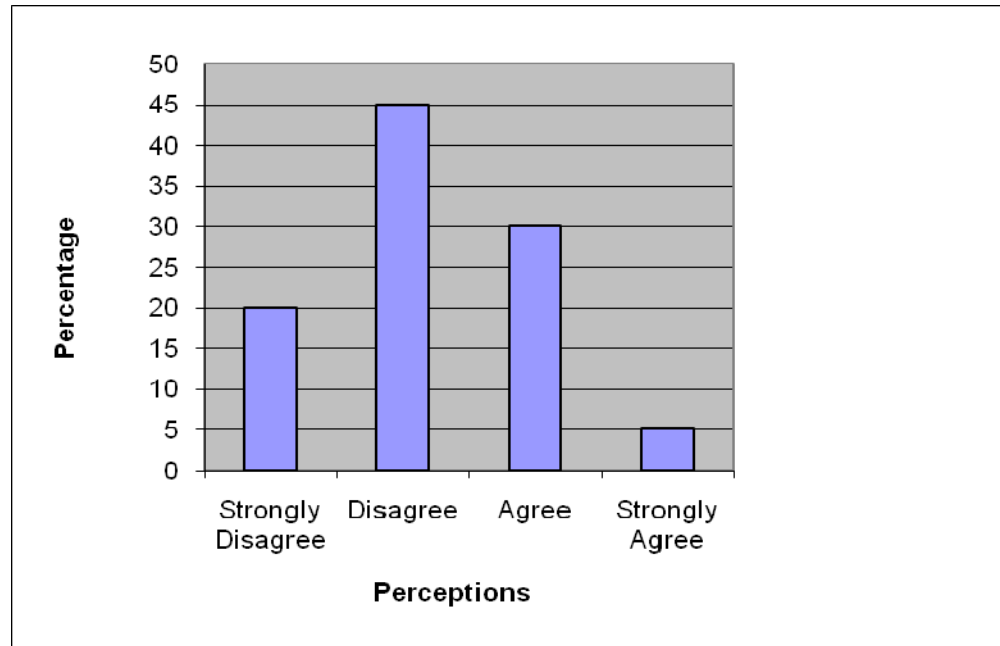


Table 2

Survey #2: Student Perceptions About Cultural Awareness and Attitudes

Concerning Different Cultures, March, 2006.

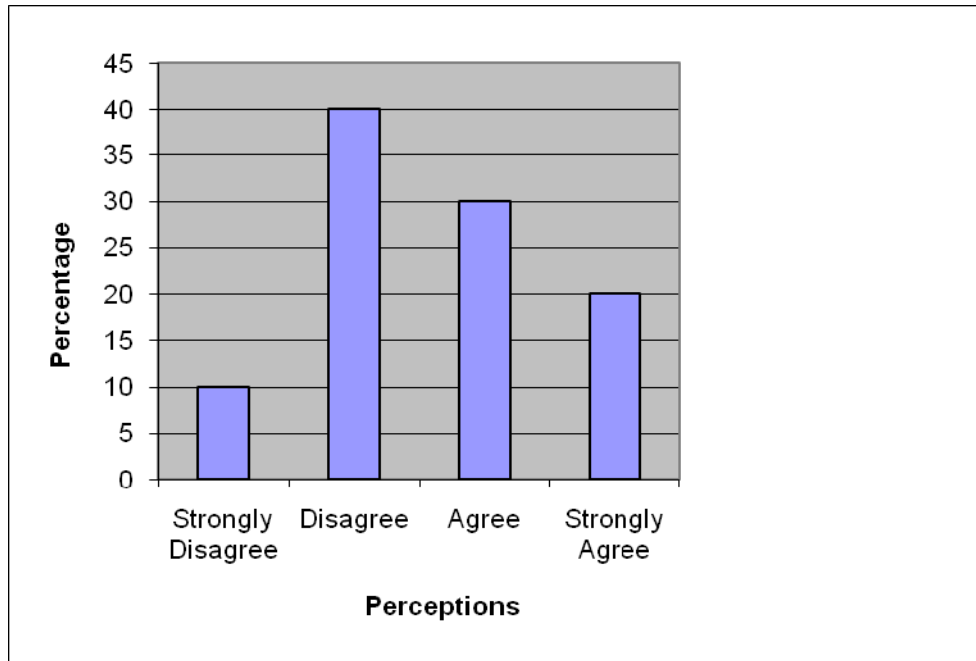
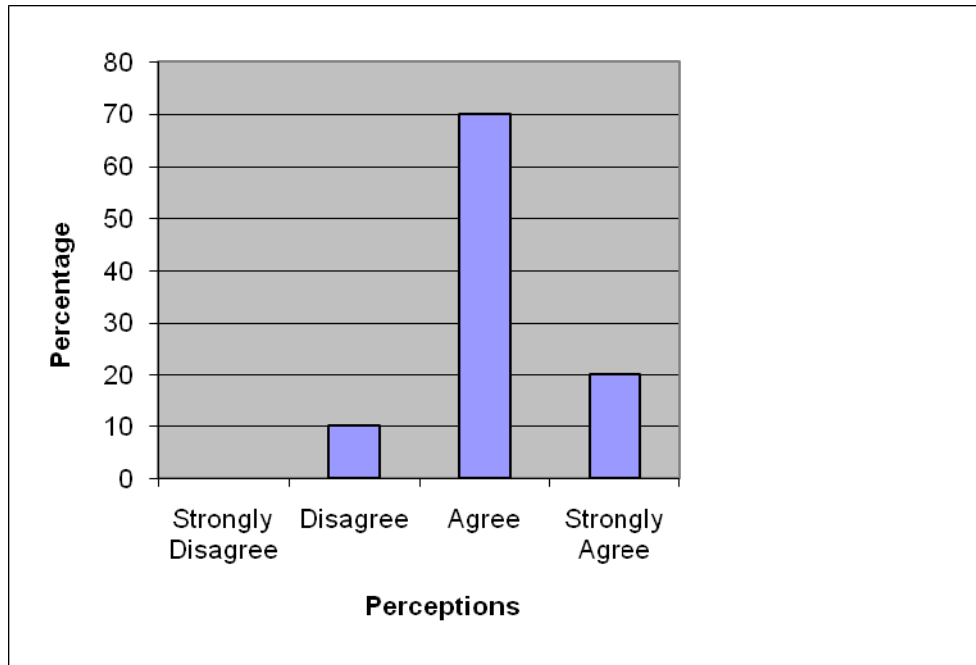


Table 3

Survey #3: Student Perceptions About Connection Between Their Academic Ability and Their Cultural Self-Awareness, May, 2006.



## Findings

An analysis of data shown in Table 1 indicated a majority of the participants in the 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History class disagreed that cultural awareness and attitudes concerning different cultures was important.

As indicated in Table 2 participants' perceptions concerning the importance of cultural awareness and attitudes concerning different cultures has improved. This could be attributed to the implementation of Multicultural Education teaching strategies in everyday lessons.

The percentage of students who now perceived cultural awareness and attitudes concerning different cultures had improved from 35% to 90%. Additionally participants had now been exposed to the benefits of three months classroom instruction focused on Multicultural Education.

## Discussion

Based on the analysis of data cited above the researcher concluded there was significant evidence to support the hypothesis (i.e., Students who received daily instruction in Multicultural Education improved their cultural awareness and academic awareness in 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History as evidenced by pre and post survey instruments and course grades earned).

The researcher believed this was a significant research project and participants benefited as noted by their expanded understanding of cultural awareness and attitudes concerning different cultures. It is important that people become more aware of other cultures because today's world is continually getting smaller and people of other cultures are constantly in contact with one another.

The researcher further believed it was important for students to understand that the ability to connect education with culture is important. This is because identity and self-worth go together, and if an individual has a strong sense of identity they will also have high self-worth, which will make them work towards high levels of academic achievement.

### Summary

The analysis of data presented in Chapter 4 supported the hypothesis that students who received daily instruction in Multicultural Education improved their cultural awareness and academic awareness in 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History as evidenced by pre and post survey instruments and course grades earned. Additionally, Chapter 4 provided an overview of the environment, hypothesis, results, findings, discussion and a summary.

## CHAPTER 5

### Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

#### Summary

The purpose of this descriptive study was to determine the extent to which students who received daily instruction in Multicultural Education improved their cultural awareness and academic performance in their 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History class, as assessed by teacher designed pre and post survey instruments and course grades earned. To accomplish this purpose a review of selected research was conducted. Additionally, baseline data from pre and post surveys and student grades earned were obtained and analyzed, from which related inferences, conclusions and recommendations were formulated.

#### Conclusions

From the review of selected literature presented in Chapter 2 and the analysis of data in Chapter 4, the following, conclusions were reached:

1. Multicultural Education has allowed instruction to be more culturally responsive and, as a result, has affected a way for students' respect and willingness to perform to be advanced.
2. Multicultural and Social Studies goals help students to comprehend perspectives that emerge from within their own culture and from the vantage points of the diverse cultural groups within the greater society in which they interact.

3. Every student comes to the classroom with a set of behaviors and characteristics that makes them unique and that will affect his/her academic achievement.
4. Research confirmed that actively engaging students in a variety of teaching strategies and methodologies may lead to better retention, understanding, and active use of knowledge.
5. Students who received daily instruction in Multicultural Education improved their cultural awareness and academic awareness in 9<sup>th</sup> grade World History as evidenced by pre and post survey instruments and course grades earned.

#### Recommendations

Based on the conclusions cited above, the following recommendations have been suggested:

1. To improve students cultural awareness, classroom instruction in Multicultural Education has been strongly recommended.
2. To improve understanding and appreciation for diverse cultural groups, the goals of Multicultural Education should be addressed in Social Studies classes.
3. To improve classroom instruction understanding the students' personal background and experiences has been strongly recommended.
4. For better retention, understanding, and active use of knowledge engaging students in a variety of teaching strategies and methodologies has been strongly recommended.

5. To measure student perceptions of cultural awareness and academic awareness pre and post survey instruments has been recommended
6. School district personnel seeking information related to Multicultural Education and the improvement of student cultural awareness may wish to utilize information contained in this study or, they may wish to undertake further study suited to their unique needs.



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## APPENDIX

## Student Questionnaire Survey

1. To better keep your interest, classroom activities should relate to your culture/background experiences.

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

2. Your culture/background is important to you.

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

3. Your culture/background is made a part of regular class instruction.

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

4. Incorporating your cultural/background experiences into the classroom will help you be academically successful.

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

5. You have knowledge about cultures other than your own.

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

6. It is necessary to learn about other people's cultures/background.

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

7. Lessons and activities should relate and reflect your culture

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

8. Lesson/activities within the classroom relate to your culture/background experiences.

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

9. When a lesson/activity relates to your culture/background experiences you perform better.

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

10. You are culturally aware and understand how other cultures relate to you.

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

11. You do well on activities that relate to you.

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>

12. You have a strong sense of cultural identity and understand how this will help you be successful academically.

<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly Agree</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>