THE IMPACT OF AN UNDERGRADUATE DIVERSITY COURSE REQUIREMENT ON STUDENTS' RACIAL VIEWS AND ATTITUDES

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Introduction

The lack of progress in improving race relations in recent years has become a topic of national concern as evidenced by President Clinton's White House Initiative on Race and Racial Reconciliation. Many colleges and universities recognize that they play a pivotal role in addressing these enduring problems. Not only do institutions of higher education provide numerous students with their first opportunity for meaningful cross-racial interaction, but they also strive to increase civic responsibility as well as academic knowledge (Barber, 1992; Lawson, Komar, & Rose, 1998; Smith et al., 1997). For these reasons, a substantial number of colleges and universities employ a wide range of diversity-related initiatives to overcome the reality of the nation's racial divide.

Over the course of three and a half decades, the concept of diversity, and the many initiatives related to it, grew to encompass a broad set of dimensions, issues, and activities (Appel, Cartwright, Smith, & Wolf, 1996; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1999; Smith et al., 1997). One widely addressed concern is what Lawrence Levine (1996) termed the evolution of "a more eclectic, open, culturally diverse, and relevant curriculum" (p. 171). Acknowledging that much had been omitted from traditional academic knowledge and inquiry, many campuses have focused on expanding the curriculum through ethnic studies or a diversity/multicultural course requirement (Bataille, Carranza, & Lisa, 1996; La Belle & Ward, 1996). Conceptually, these curricular changes seek to confront with clarity and knowledge the significant shifts in general society and culture (Levine, 1996) and

to "make education more equitable, diverse, and inclusive" (Hirabayashi, 1997, p. 25). Such efforts, however, typically proceed with intense campus debates which are at times contentious and acrimonious (Altbach, 1991; Butler & Schmitz, 1992; Chang, 1999; Colón, 1991). Subsequently, the actual requirement, its goals, and the success of those efforts vary considerably across institutions (Grant & Secada, 1990; La Belle & Ward, 1996).

Despite their lack of programmatic uniformity, the requirements that specifically address diversity in American society regularly aim, either implicitly or explicitly, to develop students' critical thinking by challenging them to think more deeply about their assumptions concerning race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual orientation, or physical disabilities (Banks, 1991; Lawson et al., 1998; Sleeter & Grant, 1994). It has also been argued that such requirements are compatible with certain aims of liberal education, namely to foster better communication of socio-cultural differences so that students can improve their chances for contributing to communality and for succeeding in an increasingly diverse society (Humphreys, 1997; Martínez Alemán & Salkever, 2001). Largely for these educational reasons, colleges and universities have begun to include the knowledge base related to the concepts of diversity and multiculturalism within general education (Musil et.al., 1999).

As part of the general education curricula, diversity course mandates typically range from requiring a designated course that specifically targets race and ethnicity to offering a wide range of approved courses that fulfill the diversity requirement. Some of these courses may not focus explicitly on race or ethnicity but may address other group differences. The latter curricular strategy assumes that by developing students' ability to think more critically about one significant difference in US society, it will transfer well to thinking about other differences. In other words, enhancing students' ability to think critically about class differences, for example, will also improve one's ability to appreciate cultural pluralism and to analyze inequality that are manifested through racial, gender, or sexual orientation differences. The extent to which undergraduate diversity requirements do this, however, has not received much empirical attention.

Of principal interest to this study is whether or not diversity course requirements reduce racial prejudice and promote intergroup understanding. These educational interests are considered particularly crucial because psychologists have linked internalized views about race and ethnicity, which operate at both the conscious and unconscious level, to discrimination and racism (Dovidio & Gaertner, 1997; Jones, 1997; Katz, 1976; 1983). Since even subtle racial biases can shape social policies and cross-racial interactions, they have the capacity to either widen or close the racial divide. This effect is exacerbated by the fact that stereotypes are ingrained in our institutional structures and personal lives (Feagin, 1989). The focus on racial prejudice in this study does not imply that improving race relations should be the primary or only goal of diversity requirements, but rather that addressing students' assumptions to improve cross-racial understanding and communication is especially crucial given current national concerns.

Research Background

Although there is a significant body of literature that calls for the inclusion of cultural diversity, it was not until recently that researchers began to systematically examine curricular approaches to include diverse content and perspectives in higher education. Much of this research targets multicultural education components in teacher education programs largely because there is widespread recognition that prospective teachers must be better prepared to teach an increasingly culturally diverse student population (Hodgkinson, 1991; Zeichner & Hoeft, 1996). This body of research, however, is scarce and shows rather inconclusive and mixed results (Artiles & Trent, 1997; Grant & Secada, 1990).

By contrast, those studies that are not limited to teacher education programs but examine curricular diversity initiatives more broadly in undergraduate education have consistently found that such initiatives have positive effects on students' openness to cultural awareness, interest in racial understanding, and greater appreciation of multiple cultures (Astin, 1993; Hurtado, 1996; Institute for the Study of Social Change, 1991; Villalpando, 1994).

Studies regarding women's studies courses have also shown that these courses have positive effects on students' sociopolitical views, feelings about various groups, and new ways of thinking about human differences (Henderson-King & Stewart, 1999; Musil, 1992). More recently, Gurin (1999) found that students, particularly White students, who reported higher levels of exposure to diverse ideas and information were significantly more likely to show growth in their "active thinking processes." While the above findings are compelling, these studies did not specifically examine a diversity course requirement, but their closest approximation of such an educational experience was whether students attended multicultural workshops/seminars or enrolled in ethnic studies courses.

The exception to this research limitation is a recently published study conducted by Henderson-King and Kaleta (2000), which examined the effects of a required "Race and Ethnicity course" at the University of Michigan. They compared changes in the intergroup ratings of those students who had registered for a Race and Ethnicity course and those who were not registered. To assess students' feelings toward various social groups, they asked respondents to indicate on a scale ranging from 0 (cool/negative) to 100 (warm/positive) how they felt about each group. Students were surveyed at the beginning and end of the winter semester of 1995. Although the overall response rate was only about 30 percent, producing 385 respondents, it was still respectable for this repeated measure design. Henderson-King and Kaleta found that over the course of the semester those students who were not registered for a diversity course requirement became significantly less favorable toward Latino(a)s, African Americans, and men. For students who were enrolled in a diversity course, their feelings toward other groups by contrast did not change significantly over time. Among their conclusions was that in the absence of courses that address social diversity, "undergraduate students become less tolerant of others over a semester of undergraduate education" (p. 156). Although they did not find that such courses enhanced positive feelings about social groups, they concluded that being enrolled in one of the courses at least buffered students from the negative effects that appeared to be part of the undergraduate experience.

The present study examined whether a required diversity-related course actually improved students' racial attitudes, and thus builds upon a similar line of inquiry. Unlike King and Kaleta's study, this study employed a between subject research design and was conducted at a public university in the Northeast. The two primary groups of interest were those undergraduate students who had just started a course that fulfilled an undergraduate domestic (US) diversity requirement and those who were about to complete it. Perhaps the most notable difference between the two studies is the dependent measure. Whereas the primary measure employed by King and Kaleta emphasized the *affective* aspects of "intergroup tolerance," this study utilized an eight-item scale and two items from the College Student Experiences Questionnaire (CSEQ) to better capture the *cognitive* aspects of race relations and intergroup understanding. In this way, the measures used in this study allowed for stronger inferences to be made about the educational efficacy of diversity course requirements.

Method

Subjects

Independent samples for the study were drawn from the population of undergraduate students who attended a public university in the Northeast and who were enrolled in a 1999 spring semester course that could be applied toward the fulfillment of the domestic diversity requirement. This university was an ideal site to conduct this study because it has had a diversity requirement for all undergraduate students since the fall of 1992 and had a racially diverse student body (approximately 33 percent were students of color) at that time. The latter ensured that racial issues would not be addressed only in the abstract, but would have some immediate campus relevance.

The university's approach to the US diversity course requirement was campus-wide and multi-disciplinary. To fulfill it, students could choose from approximately 25 courses offered each semester across various departments, which were approved by a

Diversity Course Review Committee comprised of faculty members. Each course dealt in explicit and intellectually rigorous fashion with issues of diversity in US society (defined in terms of race, gender, social class, age, culture, disability, and sexual orientation). The over-riding criterion for approval was that at least one of the domains that defined diversity was a central rather than a peripheral or supplemental theme in the course. Because the original supporters of this requirement held that issues related to the different domains intersected and subsequently, the learned knowledge can be applied across other domains, the requirement was designed so that students were not required to take only courses that specifically addressed the knowledge base of any one diversity domain such as race. Subsequently, the requirement and the corresponding courses were quite broad and varied.

A between subjects design was employed for this study instead of a repeated measure (pre/post) design for several key reasons. First, there were concerns about testing effects as a rival explanation for the findings. Second, even though the measures were disguised so as not to reveal their intent, most students would likely connect enrollment in the course to the study if instruments were administered a second time. A repeated measure design for this context, therefore, would likely increase the risk of revealing the research hypotheses and thus increase the chances that participants may try to shape their responses accordingly. Lastly, after informal conversations with course instructors, it became clear that most of them would feel uncomfortable about participating in a study with a pre/post design because they would feel as if they were being "evaluated." Because the intent of the study must be revealed to instructors in order to obtain their permission to administer the instruments in their classrooms, a repeated measure design would expose the study even more to the instructor's interest in portraying her/himself or the diversity requirement in a positive light. Although a cross-sectional approach compensates for the above concerns, its major drawback however is that it does not allow for a precise examination of actual student change across time, yet inferences can be made about such effects.

Procedure

In the 1999 spring schedule of courses, 25 approved diversity courses were listed. From this pool of approved courses, 13 were randomly assigned to serve as the pretreatment group and 12 were randomly assigned to serve as the treatment group. Even though the unit of analysis was the student and ideally students would be randomly selected then assigned (not possible given the nature of undergraduate education), random selection and assignment at the classroom level ensured that an unbiased range of courses and instructors from different departments would have an equal chance of participating in either of the two groups. However, since selection and assignment were made at the course level instead of the student level and students do not randomly choose their courses, this practice helps to but does not theoretically guarantee two equivalent samples. Therefore, key student background characteristics were statistically controlled, as will be discussed, to reduce experimental error.

Instructors for courses in the pretreatment group were contacted during the third week of December, 1998 and invited to participate in the study. Instructors for courses in the treatment group were contacted during the third week of March, 1999. The initial requests were supplemented with telephone calls and e-mail messages. Details of the study were made available to all instructors, but they were asked not to reveal the intent of the study to students. As expected, some of those contacted decided for various reasons not to participate in the study. Of those instructors contacted in the pretreatment group, 7 (54%) agreed to participate in the study. The pretreatment group thus consisted of students who were enrolled in courses listed under the following departments: Political Science, American Studies, Women's Studies, Anthropology, and Sociology. Comparatively, 8 (67%) of those contacted in the treatment group agreed to participate. Their respective courses were listed under the following departments: American Studies, English, Philosophy, and Sociology.

Those instructors who agreed to participate in the study were provided with detailed instructions and materials at least one week before the Modern Racism Scale was to be administered. There

were two different points of data collection. Data from the pre-treatment group were collected during the first week of the semester. Presumably, students would not have received adequate exposure to course content during only the first week of a sixteen week long course. Data collected from the treatment group occurred during the fourteenth week of instruction in the same semester. By this point, students should have been adequately exposed to course content.

This sampling procedure yielded a total of 340 subjects, but to more accurately assess the diversity course requirement, students who had already completed the requirement in either the pre or treatment sample (n = 147) were not included in the initial analyses. Thus, the final sample consisted of 112 subjects in the pretreatment group and 81 in the treatment group. The overall sample reflected well the composition of students at this university, but because there were slight variations between the two experimental groups, key student background characteristics were used as covariates in the analyses to remove potential sources of bias.

Dependent Measure

An eight-item adaptation of the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, Hardee, & Batts, 1981) was used to assess subjects' level of prejudice toward Blacks. This assessment device was designed to measure more subtle contemporary "anti-Black attitudes" in a nonreactive fashion. These eight items (see Table 1) were embedded in a series of other unrelated social and political questions to mask the intentions of the questionnaire. A Modern Racism Scale score was calculated for each subject by adding the response value for each item (1 item was coded in reverse) and dividing the total by the number of items (8).

The Modern Racism Scale (MRS) has been used widely in psychological studies to assess prejudice (Devine, 1989; Devine & Elliot, 1995; Kawakami, Dion, & Dovidio, 1998) and has proven to be useful in predicting a variety of behaviors including voting patterns and attitudes toward racial integration (Kinder & Sears,

Table 1. Modern Racism Scale (MRS)

Subjects indicated their degree of agreement with each of the following items:

Blacks have more influence upon school desegregation plans than they ought to have.

The streets are not safe these days without a policeman around.

It is easy to understand the anger of Black people in America (coded in reverse)

Blacks are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights.

Over the past few years Blacks have gotten more economically than they deserve.

Over the past few years the government and news media have shown more respect to Blacks than they deserve.

Blacks should not push themselves where theyÕre not wanted.

Discrimination against Blacks is no longer a problem in the United States.

Items were coded as a 5-point scale: 1 = *Agree Strongly* to 5 = *Disagree Strongly.*

1981; Sears & Kinder, 1971; Sears & McConahay, 1973). Moreover, previous research has attested to the reliability and validity of the scale (see McConahay, 1986), and the scale proved reliable in the present study (Cronbach's alpha = .81). Another strength of the MRS was that it distinguished between "old-fashioned" racial beliefs commonly recognized as racism and a new set of beliefs that emerged from the conflicts of the civil rights movement. By drawing this distinction when assessing prejudice, the MRS captured better the contemporary forms of racial antipathy. According to Sears (1988) and McConahay et al. (1981), although the issues have changed, negative racial feelings linger and are now expressed in more subtle ways, for example, by opposing efforts aimed at increasing opportunity and access for African Americans.

Despite these strengths, one of the shortcomings of the MRS is that it only assessed beliefs and attitudes toward African Americans and failed to assess prejudice that reflected the reality of di-

versity on many college campuses. Although previous studies had verified its validity, concerns about the appropriateness of this instrument surfaced after the pretreatment sample was collected. Subsequently, additional data were collected from the treatment group to test whether or not the MRS was related to other broader cross-racial experiences. This sample responded to two additional items on their questionnaire. These items were adapted from the fourth edition of the College Student Experiences Questionnaire and asked students to report (1 = Never to 4 = Very Often) how often in the current school year at the institution, they did the following: (1) became acquainted with students whose race or ethnic background was different from theirs; (2) had serious discussions with students whose race or ethnic background was different from theirs. Correlational analyses were conducted between students' responses on these two items and their MRS scores.

Covariates

Given the interest of removing the effects of uncontrolled sources of variation as discussed earlier, additional variables were included in the analyses to reduce experimental error so that unbiased estimates of treatment effects could be reasonably obtained. The concomitant variables included five student background characteristics: race, gender, age, mother and father's level of education. Race was coded as a dichotomous variable (white/nonwhite) because of the uneven and small sample sizes across racial groupings. Students' degree of exposure to racial diversity was also statistically controlled. Students identified on a 5-point scale (1 = All to 5 = None) the number of people who were of their race/ethnicity in each of the following groups: high school classmates, neighbors where they grew up, current close friends, and current neighbors. An overall cross-racial exposure score was calculated for each student by combining the value of his/her four responses. Larger scores indicated greater exposure to people of a different race or ethnic background. In all, six covariates were used in the analyses to control for potential sources of bias.

Results

For those students (treatment group) who responded to the two additional items from the College Student Experiences Questionnaire, administered in the second stage of data collection, correlational analyses were conducted on their responses to investigate the relationship between their Modern Racism Scale scores and cross-racial experiences. As noted earlier, because concerns about the MRS surfaced after pretreatment data were already collected, students in the pretreatment group did not respond to the two additional items. However, since the variation of MRS scores for each of the two groups, Levene Statistic $(1, 334) = 2.825$, $p = .094$, and their distributions as determined by graphs were homogeneous, it is highly likely that the inclusion of data from the pretreatment group would not significantly alter the results. The findings from Pearson Correlational analyses $(n = 141)$ suggest that those who have stronger negative attitudes toward African Americans (lower MRS scores) tend to also report a lower likelihood $(p < .01$; 2-tailed) of becoming acquainted $(r = .23)$ or having serious discussions $(r = .21)$ with students of another race or ethnic background. Although these correlational findings do not necessarily make for a strong case for the validity of the instrument, they at least suggest that the widely used MRS is statistically related in the expected direction to these two cross-racial experiences.

The equality of mean scores on the Modern Racism Scale for those students who had nearly completed their diversity requirement (treatment group; $n = 76$) and for those who had just started their requirement (pretreatment group; $n = 109$) was tested using analysis of covariance (ANCOVA). Due to incomplete responses on some of the survey items, eight students (4.1 %) were not included in these analyses. Before conducting the analyses, several critical assumptions regarding the validity of ANCOVA were investigated. Particularly noteworthy are the findings related to the homogeneity of variance and the homogeneity of slope. First, there was no significant difference between the variance of MRS scores for the pretreatment group $(s^2 = .590)$ and that for the treatment group $(s^2 = .463)$, Levene Statistic $(1, 185) = 3.180$, $p = .076$. Sec-

ond, there was also no interaction effect between the treatment and the six covariates, $F(43, 141) = 1.335$, $p = .137$. This suggests that the regression slope for the pretreatment group was similar to the slope for the treatment group. In short, these critical ANCOVA assumptions were satisfied.

Table 2 reports the results from the analysis of covariance, controlling for students' race, gender, age, mother and father's level of education, and degree of exposure to racial diversity. The table reveals that completing a diversity requirement differentiated students' level of prejudice toward Blacks ($p = .014$). Since lower scores indicated more negative racial attitudes, the results show that students who had just begun their diversity requirement (adjusted mean = 3.487) were more prejudiced and judged Blacks more harshly than those who had nearly completed their requirement (adjusted mean = 3.749). Thus on average, those who had nearly completed the requirement had more favorable views in general about Blacks.

Table 2. ANCOVA Results for MRS Scores Grouped by Whether Students Were Either Nearly Completed (n = 76) or Just Started Their Diversity Requirement (n = 109)

Source	Adjusted SS	Adjusted df	Adjusted MS	F	Level of Sig.
Between Groups:	2.763	1	2.763	6.126	.014
Within:	79.828	177	.451		
Total:	2487.000	185			

Although the differences were statistically significant, it is difficult to judge from the above results whether they are actually substantive. To establish a better sense of the substantive significance of the findings, a 95% confidence interval of the adjusted mean MRS scores was conducted for each of the two groups. For those who had just started their requirement, the lower and upper bound of the interval were 3.357 and 3.617 respectively, whereas for the other group it was 3.592 and 3.906. These findings show that there is very little overlap between the 95% confidence inter-

vals of the two groups. Where the upper bound point ends for those who had just started their requirement, the lower bound point begins for those who were about to complete their requirement. These results suggest that the differences on the average MRS scores between the two groups are not only statistically significant but are also substantive.

Cumulative Effects

Do students who had already fulfilled their diversity requirement make similar gains? In other words, does taking additional diversity-related courses further reduce one's level of prejudice? To examine this, only the MRS scores of those students who had already fulfilled their diversity requirement and were therefore excluded from initial analyses, were analyzed. Similar to previous analyses, the sample was divided into two groups - those who had just started their diversity-related course (n = 73) and those who were about to complete their course (n = 74). Likewise, students' gender, age, mother and father's education, and degree of exposure to racial diversity served as covariates.

Assumptions regarding the validity of ANCOVA were first tested. Unlike the previous analyses, one of the critical ANCOVA assumptions was not satisfied. There was an interaction effect between the treatment and the six covariates, $F(25, 109) = 2.016$, $p = .023$. However, there was no significant difference between the variance of MRS scores for the pretreatment ($s^2 = .564$) and the treatment group ($s^2 = .575$), Levene Statistic $(1, 136) = .028$, $p = .868$. Given that the homogeneity of slopes was violated but the homogeneity of variance was not, a T-test of independent samples was conducted to assess mean differences.

The analysis (see Table 3) revealed no average difference ($p = .837$) on the MRS between those who had just begun their course ($\mu = 3.902$) and those who were about to complete it ($\mu = 3.877$). Since a T-test does not control for confounding variables, these results should be interpreted cautiously. Nevertheless, the group means are nearly identical (difference of .025), which suggests that taking additional diversity-related courses do not seem to dif-

ferentiate students' level of prejudice toward Blacks. This may be due largely to self-selection. Students who are less prejudiced may be more open to and interested in learning more about diversity. Indeed, the starting point for those who enrolled in additional courses, whether for individual interest or for other degree requirements, is different from those who have yet to fulfill their diversity requirement. Those who had already fulfilled their requirement began the course with much lower levels of racial prejudice than their counterparts ($\mu = 3.475$), which was also lower than those who had not yet fulfilled the requirement but were nearly finished with their course ($\mu = 3.724$). This starting point for students who had already fulfilled their requirement suggests that they might be either reinforcing their racial views and beliefs during the course or expanding their learning beyond what is assessed by the Modern Racism Scale.

The above findings also further help to alleviate concerns about equivalency of samples. If the two different points of data collection inadvertently sampled two different groups of students with significantly different MRS scores prior to treatment, then one would expect these differences to also show up for those students who had already fulfilled their diversity requirement. After all, those students enrolled in identical classes as those in the primary analysis. However, the findings show that there were no differences between the two groups of students who had already fulfilled their requirement.

Table 3. T-Test Results for MRS Scores of Students Who Had Already Fulfilled Their Requirement; Grouped by Whether Students Were Either Nearly Completed (n = 74) or Just Started Their Course (n = 73)

Students' status regarding diversity course	Mean MRS score	Std.Deviation	Std.Error	Mean t
Nearly completed (n = 74)	3.877	.758	.088	.206*
Just started (n = 73)	3.902	.751	.088	

*p = .837 (2-tailed), df = 145

Discussion

The present research examined whether a diversity requirement diminishes racial prejudice particularly toward African Americans. Although the importance of such curricular initiatives is well established in the education literature, empirical evidence regarding their impact on student's racial attitudes and views is severely limited. An adaptation of a widely used and statistically sound measure, the Modern Racism Scale, was employed to assess students' level of prejudice toward Blacks, and any between group differences regarding students' race, gender, age, mother and father's education, and degree of exposure to racial diversity were statistically corrected. Consistent with prior findings affirming the benefits of related curricular efforts (Astin, 1993; Hurtado, 1996; Institute for the Study of Social Change, 1991; Villalpando, 1994), those students who had nearly completed their requirement made significantly more favorable judgments of Blacks than those who had just started their requirement.

This effect occurred even though the content of the courses that were randomly selected for the study varied, and some of them did not specifically focus on Black issues but primarily examined either other racial groups or other high stake categories such as gender or class. Moreover, the courses in the sample were not limited to only one disciplinary perspective but addressed their primary topics from the vantage point of different academic disciplines (i.e., English, Philosophy, Sociology, etc.). On one hand, given the course variability in the sample, the findings most likely underestimate the potential of diversity requirements for reducing racial prejudice. The effects are probably much stronger for courses that specifically address issues of race or ethnicity, and even stronger for those that focus on African American experiences. On the other hand, given the course variability, the findings also suggest that learning about one significant difference in US society (i.e., gender or class differences) might also transfer well to thinking about other differences and subsequently reduce multiple types of prejudice. Perhaps in these courses, students learn what Musil calls "an analysis of larger systems in which differences [are] embedded, reinforced, and defined and from which

unequal power was allocated and perpetuated" (cited in Henderson-King & Kaleta, 2000, p. 159). Learning to think more broadly about human differences through diversity-related courses, whether it be through Asian American studies, women's studies, sociology, urban studies, etc., may thus broaden students' understanding in ways that extend beyond the particular focus of the course.

The above educational potential, however, was not determined conclusively here. Because this study was essentially exploratory and the unit of analysis were students, more detailed information about each course was not collected. Moreover, even if more course-related details such as whether courses specifically addressed Black issues were examined, the number of courses in the sample would have been too small to rule out idiosyncrasies that may have had more to do with the instructor or specific course than with the general content. A closer investigation of the curricula and the classroom components that affect attitude change, by targeting individual courses as the unit of analysis, deserve more empirical attention.

The key findings of this study differ slightly from those of Henderson-King and Kaleta (2000). They found that students enrolled in a university's diversity requirement did not show enhanced intergroup tolerance at the end of a semester as compared to the beginning of it. However, those who were not enrolled in these courses had significantly more negative feelings at the end of the semester about Latino(a)s, African Americans, and men, and to some extent toward women and Asian Americans. Although the requirement did not improve tolerance, they concluded that it acted as a buffer against diminishing intergroup tolerance. The discrepancy between the findings of Henderson-King and Kaleta (no course effect) and this study (a significant course effect) may be attributed to a number of differences between the two studies, such as the measures (affective vs. cognitive), analyses (ANOVA vs. ANCOVA), locations (Mid-West vs. East Coast), methods (repeated vs. cross-sectional), and status (non-required course vs. required).

Another important difference is that in the present study, the responses of those students who had already fulfilled their diver-

sity requirement and were taking additional diversity-related courses were analyzed separately from the responses of those who had not fulfilled their requirement. This procedure turned out to be an important distinction because the results show that those students who had already fulfilled their diversity requirement generally started their diversity-related courses with a lower level of prejudice than those who were just about to complete their requirement. Perhaps for this reason, those students who took additional diversity-related courses showed sustained rather than improved racial attitudes and views. Had Henderson-King and Kaleta (2000) accounted for whether students had already fulfilled their diversity course requirement, they may have found a significant positive effect. Whatever the case, future research in this area can help to clarify the long-term effects of a diversity course requirement.

Limitations of the present study should also be addressed in future research. There are four that are particularly promising for further inquiry. First, this study only examined prejudicial attitudes toward Blacks, but because diversity requirements are rarely limited in this way, prejudice toward other groups should also be assessed. The measure, however, was shown to be significantly related to whether students would become acquainted or have serious discussions with other students whose race or ethnic background was different from theirs. Such behaviors and experiences, if reliably and validly measured, can be useful in examining the broader scope of diversity requirements. Second, the data were collected at only one institution, which has a unique and carefully crafted diversity course requirement. As a result, the generalizability of the findings may be somewhat limited. An examination of multiple institutional requirements and their effects would generate more practical information for those colleges and universities that are interested in institutionalizing a requirement. Third, what students learn in these courses may be mediated by other factors such as the racial composition of the students enrolled in the class, the instructor's race, the disciplinary approach, etc. Investigation of these factors can potentially provide important curricular insights. Lastly, other educational effects should be examined with instruments that assess concrete cognitive gains

and broader based learning, which might be associated with reducing prejudice or fulfilling a diversity requirement. In short, although the findings here support the implementation of a diversity requirement, they only begin to uncover the educational potential of these efforts.

Conclusion

This study's findings suggest that the general education curricula can play a meaningful role in improving our society's racial dynamics. Although more recent national surveys show that most Americans overwhelmingly endorse the principles of racial equality and integration (Schuman et al., 1985), there is clearly more room for improvement when it comes to racial attitudes and views. The findings lend support to the necessity of providing undergraduates with opportunities to critically examine cultural and social groups previously marginalized or ignored in the curriculum so that students can challenge their prejudicial views and assumptions. This, however, does not imply that such requirements should be implemented haphazardly. Courses in this study were reviewed by a group of faculty members, which helps to ensure that the courses were well planned and well conceptualized. Generally, institutions have taken different approaches toward making this type of curricular revision an integral part of the general education program.

By surveying ninety-two institutions about their diversity-related curriculum, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) identified several popular curricular approaches for examining stereotypes, belief systems, the nature of prejudice, and the advantages and challenges of a multicultural society (Humphreys, 1997). More than half the institutions surveyed had implemented a diversity requirement. According to the report, most requirements were broadly defined and included both world and U.S. diversity within one requirement. Those that focused exclusively on domestic diversity typically used a comparative approach. Only a small percentage of institutions required all students to take the same course, and most allowed students to

choose from many different courses from different departments to fulfil the requirement. Another popular approach identified by the report was to infuse diversity-related scholarship and discussion into existing curricula rather than creating a separate requirement. While this approach might ideally allow students to systematically analyze injustice, intolerance, inequality, and discrimination in nearly every course, it requires a significant investment in faculty development.

Whatever the approach taken, AAC&U (Musil et al., 1999) suggests that institutions must extend beyond exposing students to this type of curriculum only in their freshman year or through a single course, and "provide many different places and levels where students can revisit earlier understandings, explore new areas of inquiry, and connect knowledge about diversity to their majors" (p. 27). Perhaps a key to preparing students to thrive in a multicultural and diverse society may not only be to reach the greatest number of students, which is an integral part of general education programs, but also to extend into other areas of students' academic and co-curricular experiences. Another factor that may help to advance students' personal and intellectual encounters with difference through learning relationships, is to link these interests with the institution's mission by articulating them as a *means* for inquiry rather than as an *object* of inquiry (Martínez Alemán & Salkever, 2001).

Although this study's findings do not inform the structuring or redesigning of the general education experience, they do however dispute claims that diversity course requirements lack "academic integrity" and "educational value" (Bloom, 1987; D'Souza, 1991), and support arguments that such course requirements are critical for achieving both the immediate and broader goals of higher education. This is especially true if colleges and universities embrace a broader educational mission that extends beyond campus walls and addresses divisive racial perceptions and assumptions, which are believed to be at the core of America's racial discord. Even if campuses were less ambitious in their mission, current research has linked these curricular efforts to widely cherished educational interests and goals. Chang (2001), for example, found that reducing students' levels of racial prejudice were asso-

ciated both with enhancing students' ability to adapt successfully to demographic and cultural change and with developing students' values and ethical standards through thoughtful reflection of arguments and facts. Future research in this area will not only help to underscore the pivotal role of higher education in improving racial dynamics, but it will also provide valuable curricular insights into how institutions can effectively reduce prejudice and improve communication across racial and ethnic lines.

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