1-1-2015

Knowing Me, Knowing You: The Dilemma of Diversity Courses In Higher Education

Marian Derlet

George Fox University, mderlet11@georgefox.edu

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KNOWING ME, KNOWING YOU:

THE DILEMMA OF DIVERSITY COURSES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

By

MARIAN DERLET

FACULTY RESEARCH COMMITTEE:

Chair: Ken Badley, Ph.D.

Members: Gary Tiffin, Ph.D.

Patrick Allen, Ph.D.

Presented to Educational Foundations and Leadership Department

and the School of Education, George Fox University

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Education

February 15, 2015
George Fox University  
School of Education  
Newberg, Oregon  

"KNOWING ME, KNOWING YOU: THE DILEMMA OF DIVERSITY COURSES IN HIGHER EDUCATION," a Doctoral research project prepared by MARIAN DERLET in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Education degree in the Educational Foundations and Leadership Department.

This dissertation has been approved and accepted by:

April 6, 2015  Ken Badley, PhD  
Date  Committee Chair  
Professor of Education

April 6, 2015  Gary Tiffin, PhD  
Date  Associate Professor of Education

April 6, 2015  Patrick Allen, PhD  
Date  Professor of Education
Abstract

American institutions of higher education are increasingly addressing the issue of diversity. Many colleges list diversity as one of their institutional values, while others not only name diversity as a value, but also require diversity courses. This paper examines the difficulty posed by these objectives due to a lack of agreement and/or understanding of the term diversity. Traditional notions of diversity include differences of race, religion, and ethnicity. However in the 21st century, the term diversity now includes such categories as age, socio-economic status, and disability. This paper argues that as college students seek to define diversity for themselves, they also need to develop a framework as a guide to dealing with diversity. Negotiating conflicts rooted in difference also requires a knowledge of self. This essay proposes that diversity curricula should consist of three elements. First, students need to explore their own viewpoints and the source of those beliefs. In addition, they must be aware of the biases that they hold toward others. Finally, for colleges to promote diversity as a campus value, students need to have the opportunity across the curriculum to develop a framework that they can apply in college and beyond.
Acknowledgements

This dissertation could not have taken shape without the assistance and guidance of a number of people. I am deeply indebted to my chair, Ken Badley, who despite his own overwhelming schedule was willing to participate in the development of this dissertation. Similarly, I greatly appreciate the time invested by both Gary Tiffin and Patrick Allen and their extremely helpful suggestions for revision.

In addition, special thanks to my cohort roommate of three summers, Andrea Nelson, who modelled a greater balance of scholarship and living life than I can ever hope to achieve.

I appreciate the support of my family: Andy, Oliver, Carmen and Skeeks who were required to ignore me for the long periods I spent at my desk.

Finally, my deep appreciation goes to Tom Gill, Dean of Transfer Education at Clatsop Community College, a most brilliant and unrecognized scholar who possesses the rare combination of integrity, wisdom, humor, and kindness.

Thank you all for your contributions and your patience.
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“In theory, we invoke diversity and tolerance. But in real life, we raise our hackles and withdraw into ourselves.” (Tariq Ramadan)

In 1964, at age 11, I stood looking through the barbed wire fence of the Bonegilla Migrant camp in Australia, realizing I was in an internment camp for the purpose of separation from others. I was in a pathological environment of white blindness in which those of color were not allowed to exist. Although my family did not live out our migrant experience, we continued traveling west, eventually returning to Los Angeles after circling the globe. My father’s references to Jews, Asians, Blacks and Hispanics were the same degrading ones as before the journey. Exposure was definitely not the key to change for some people. Look at conquering nations; they rarely view the vanquished as equal to themselves. As I grew up, I watched on television as Watts burned in both 1965 and 1992. The public demanded solutions to the racial conflicts and one of those suggested responses was through advocating more diverse environments in schools, businesses and communities.

In the 60’s and 70’s, schools and non-profits in the U.S. began to advocate multiculturalism and diversity in school enrollments. For example, students were bussed across many cities in order create a greater mix of races or ethnicities. Later the emphasis changed from multicultural awareness to celebrating or honoring diversity. Diversity became one of the elements measured by accrediting institutions of higher education.
Accordingly, many colleges have instituted a mandatory diversity course or curriculum although consistency is lacking as to content and course outcomes.

Yet despite the good intentions of many, I propose that the current structure and implementation of diversity courses at most institutions are unlikely to be the answer to social upheaval and violence. Two major issues arise with the current configuration of many higher education courses that purport to meet a diversity requirement. The first is the lack of a consistent and/or agreed upon definition of diversity. I will examine diversity as a contested concept using Gallie’s theory in Chapter 2. However, at the least, institutions of higher educations, perhaps in conjunction with accrediting bodies that look for a commitment to diversity, should work together to establish that a diversity course will meet a certain number of objectives. Perhaps just as a person does not have to manifest all symptoms to be labeled as having a syndrome, courses that meet a certain number of criteria could be accepted as diversity courses.

The second key point I argue in this paper is that people need to reframe their outlook from one of seeking solutions to developing more positive processes. People often regard arguments rooted in difference as a problem that requires one or more permanent solutions. Yet with the passage of time and the introduction of additional considerations, what was once a solution to a problem is no longer viable. Another option is to avoid classifying conflicts and tensions over diverse beliefs as problems that must be solved. Dorothy Sayers (1941) argues that in framing constructs such as homelessness, poverty, and unemployment as problems, the expectation is that there is a finite solution, such as we find in solving an arithmetic problem. If we follow the steps, we arrive at a solution and
solve the problem. Therefore, in dealing with consequences of social conditions such as poverty or undocumented immigration, people and institutions are frustrated when they do not find a definitive solution (Sayers, 1941). An alternate approach is to frame the conflicts of diversity as a fluid process that negotiates tensions between different and/or conflicting beliefs. In this paper, I not only propose that institutions consider Sayers’ model for approaching diversity conflicts, but also suggest curricular changes that include a study of self as well as others. If students are unaware of their own values and the sources of them, one diversity course about someone else’s customs is unlikely to help them successfully navigate intercultural challenges. In addition, a diversity curriculum needs to assist students in the development of a framework that they can apply in situations of diversity that they encounter now or in the future.

In this essay, I contend that an introduction to a single diversity course or an outward focus in itself is insufficient to help students develop a framework for dealing with conflicts of differentness. Students today not only have to face the challenges of dealing with persons of different cultures or ethnicities, but also the challenge of figuring out their own values. While many racial injustices persist, other diversity challenges of today did not exist 50 years ago. On my campus at Clatsop Community College, a heated discourse took place as to whether the Gideons group Bible distribution could be considered a form of diversity or whether it was reinforcement of the dominant white culture. In addition, some of the campus community viewed the use of the word coon in the college newspaper as a racial slur by some and simply an alternative name for a raccoon by others. Other colleges have had to consider policy changes regarding the use of restrooms on campus by
transgender students. Gender relationships change through the decades. One college administration sent a male college librarian to diversity training for holding a door open for a female faculty member without asking her permission. What was once viewed as politeness can now be viewed as oppression. I argue that a diversity curriculum can help prepare faculty, students, and administrators develop protocols for conversations and responses to these types of events as they occur and reduce polarization of opinion into one group who is right and the other group who is wrong.

Students today need to know how to evaluate information and engage in dialogues regarding differences. Yet at the very time when increased interpersonal skills are required to navigate changing societies, many American college students manifest traits that make successful social negotiation more difficult.

While the characteristics of groups in the diversity category are in the process of change, so too are the characteristics of much of the rest of the student population of the 21st century. These changes support Sayers’ (1941) premise that to expect to find one permanent solution to many major problems is unrealistic. Unfortunately, at least according to a number of studies (Twenge & Foster, 2010) today’s students are much more narcissistic than prior generations. The press labeled the Allied World War II participants The Greatest Generation and celebrated them for their traditional values of hard work, perseverance, and loyalty. Boomers, born post World War II through the early 1960’s, have the reputation of upsetting the status quo of the 1940’s and 1950’s. On the one hand, many participated in civil rights movements and helped bring needed change to American society. On the other hand, many are associated with Haight
Ashbury and indulging in the 1967 *Summer of Love*. Their generation brought the phrase *sex, drugs, and rock-n-roll* into the vernacular. The media label today’s younger students the *Millennials*. These students, many of them born in the 90s, belong to *Generation Me* (Twenge, 2006), a label earned by being a generation that has shown a marked decrease in empathy for others and a marked increase in narcissistic traits (Twenge & Foster, 2010; Zemke, Raines, Filipczak, & American Management Association, 2000). Generation Me, with its decreased empathy and altruism, is also faced with the 21st century challenge of how to respond to the proliferating number of and recognition of diversity groups. The next section summarizes research that describes much of the current college generation.

**Here’s Looking at Me**

The Me Generation is associated with an obsession for technology. Most of the messaging sent via text, chat, or webpage is about “me and mine.” While there are certainly pages dedicated to social justice or political causes, the majority of the conversation is merely social. Facebook is now a global phenomenon. Since its 2004 introduction, the use of social media by college students has soared. Statistics gathered on Internet usage between 2007 and 2011 showed that people who are on line spend one in every 5 minutes on social networks. Facebook captures the biggest share of user time online with one in every seven minutes spent on this social network. In addition, digital natives, people ages 15-24 who have grown up with technology, spend an average of 483 minutes per month on social networks compared to 67 minutes on e-mail (ComScore, 2012). Teens are changing their preferred form of communication from Facebook to
Instagram. In the last six months of 2014, Instagram grew by more than 50% with 1.35 billion active users (Lorenzetti, L., 2014). More than 100 million people use phones to check Facebook posts. In the USA, the proliferation of smart phones allows students to post, tweet, or text almost anytime or anywhere. Statistics on texting show that the average American teen is either the recipient or sender of about 1500 texts per month (Agosto, Abbas, & Naughton, 2012). With college students spending more time communicating through technology, rather than by face-to-face interaction, the question arises as to the impact of this activity in their academic, social, and psychological lives. More specifically, how will this affect their ability to interact with those whom they do not choose to be friends? Technology has provided students a way to spend more time with people more like themselves and has allowed them to avoid others more easily. Pre-technology, everyone on a college dorm floor might spend part of the evening in the hallway, discussing social life, but also discussing viewpoints on the world. If there were foreign students in the mix, there was a chance to hear other points of view. Now with nearly all students with their eyes on their smartphone or tablet, students may sit next to each other but be talking to someone else much farther away. Students not only talk about me but often only with those who are very much like me.

Studies have validated that levels of narcissism have increased considerably in the student population in the past few decades. This growth in self-focus increases the difficulty in negotiating dilemmas of diversity, whether on campus or after students graduate. Some researchers believe than an increase in narcissism is at least partially attributable to the emphasis on individualism in American culture, especially as promoted
by the media and popular culture. A meta-analysis by Twenge and Foster (2010) that looked at the Narcissistic Personality Inventory Scores of American college students between 1982 and 2009 confirmed that young people had become increasingly more individualistic and less community-minded. This statistic on community-mindedness is particularly troubling as both urban and rural areas absorb more immigrants. If I have no interest in the cohesiveness of my community, I will not work to get to know my new neighbors, nor to be prepared to work on solving disputes when they arise. As Ramadan (2010) reminds us, in attempting to meet the other, we must move out of our own center. For students steeped in self, this movement is no simple task. In addition, growing trends such as pre-college cosmetic procedures for both men and women attest to increasing self-absorption. Narcissism includes behaviors such as inflated views of one’s own qualities, e.g., intelligence, physical attractiveness, and power status. Facebook, or other social networking sites, offer a perfect forum for those with narcissistic qualities to manage the public perception of themselves (Buffardi & Campbell, 2010; Ryan & Xenos, 2011; Twenge & Foster, 2010). Can students who have invested considerable amounts of time and money in their public image be accepting of diverse physical and social characteristics?

Yet, the current Me Generation of students is the generation with some of the highest levels of depression and anxiety (Twenge, 2006). Without a strong understanding of their own beliefs, this generation will be unable to engage confidently with others with differing views and work through difficult dialogues of truth. Even more discouraging may be that a combination of narcissism and anomie may deter college students from attempting these conversations. Along with an increased narcissistic profile, students
today manifest less empathy than those of previous generations, creating another barrier in navigating through conflicts.

**Here’s Looking at You**

Movements such as “The Civility Project” at Johns Hopkins University speak to an increasing concern about the lack of civility and/or empathy among today’s college students. A meta-analysis by Konrath, O’Brien, and Hsing (2011) received considerable attention in the popular press from journalists lamenting the precipitous decline of empathy in American college students, levels that had declined by 30% since the 1970s (Olson, 2012; Zaki, 2010). Along with the decline in empathy, concerns have arisen about the increase in bullying through technology, dubbed “cyberbullying” (Bennett, et al., 2011; Renati, Berrone, & Zanetti, 2012). Science has proved the old adage, “Sticks and stones can break my bones, but words can never hurt me,” untrue. Functional magnetic resonance imaging has shown that the brain processes physical and emotional hurt in the same way (Kross, Berman, Mischel, Smith, & Wager, 2011). Incidents of cyber-bullying that have resulted in student suicides illustrate the critical need for students (and others) to develop empathy. Educators must take into consideration the effects of the anonymity of some cyber-communication combined with its ability to transmit text and/or photos nearly instantaneously as they develop courses or lessons focusing on concepts of self and other. The permanency of photographs and text on the Internet can turn a thoughtless rejoinder into an act with deadly consequences.

Much of the current content and structure of diversity courses does not provide strategies that students can employ when negotiating their relationships with
differentness. One of the limitations of diversity courses is that they traditionally begin
with a focus on others that is mostly cultural. College institutions often have a values
statement about honoring diversity and follow with the option or requirement to take a
course on another religion, gender or culture. Perhaps, however, the biblical mandate,
“Love thy neighbor as thyself,” is the place to start. Although a focus on self would seem
superfluous for the Me Generation, the question arises as to how well students know or
love themselves. The second part of the title of Jean Twenge’s book, Generation Me
(2006) is: Why today’s young Americans are more confident, assertive, entitled—and
more miserable than ever before. If students are self-centered, but miserable, are they
ready to begin a study of how to love or understand others? One aphorism to explain
aggressive behavior is, “They hurt because they hurt.” The idea is that many people hurt
others because they are suffering from hurts themselves. Approaches to self-examination
and reflection should be a precursor to examination of feelings toward others.

Once students have become knowledgeable of, or perhaps comfortable with, the
process of loving themselves, they will have more skills available for their attempts to
understand and/or have empathy for others. Clear definitions of the other for purposes of
diversity courses are often lacking. Students need to determine whether others are people
in different categories from themselves, such as racial, ethnic, religious etc., or whether
the process of othering is something more amorphous, without clear categorical
boundaries. From looking at the self, to analyzing others, the next challenge for students
while in college is to use their campus experience to develop models for dealing with
diversity.
And Diversity Too

Today many American colleges, as well as workplaces and community organizations, have a values statement about honoring diversity. Less ubiquitous are clear definitions of what diversity means as well as how people enact honoring it. In addition, students may wonder why a focus on diversity is necessary at all. While injustices still exist based on race or religion, some students may argue that overall, life is better than it used to be for those people who belong to the non-dominant race or religion.

In addition to the student objections, some researchers, such as Steven Pinker in *The Better Angels of our Nature* (2011), maintain that violence has declined greatly through the centuries and even more precipitously in the last 100 years. He cites numerous examples, beginning with death rates of over 50% during warfare in hunter-gatherer societies to the slaughters of the Crusades to the tortures of the Inquisition. So which is it, are our nations better off and headed toward being kinder and gentler or is there an ever-present need for education and reflection on self and other? What message does the violence in Ferguson, MO or other areas send where white police officers have killed unarmed blacks?

Despite decreases in overt physical violence, news sources document daily the conflicts between peoples of differing views and backgrounds. In addition, although some students may have trouble finding value in diversity courses, many studies have documented three major positive outcomes for students (Bowman, 2011; Chang, 2002; & Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). One consists of skills and willingness to participate in civic processes. Another reason to prioritize diversity is to promote better
campus relations. For example, campuses may be physically integrated in terms of race, but still very divided socially. Finally, on other campuses, schools advise students that their diversity courses will help them prepare for life in a globalized economy. Students who grow up in rather homogeneous societies may find themselves severely lacking in an understanding of how to work with others from different countries or even from different parts of the same country.

Unfortunately, listing diversity as a value in campus documents may simply demonstrate acquiescence to external governing bodies. To illustrate, in the state of Oregon, the Joint Boards’ Articulation Committee, a governing body now subsumed into the Higher Education Coordinating Commission, issued a report in 2009 regarding the purpose of general education. Included is the statement that general education seeks to promote: “An awareness of multiple perspectives and the importance of diversity,” (Oregon Joint Boards of Education, 2009).

Institutions of higher education most often demonstrate compliance with diversity mandates by requiring students to take institutionally-approved diversity or cultural literacy courses. However, the content of these courses varies widely. At some schools, diversity courses may cover various racial or ethnic studies, gender studies, or intercultural communication. The diversity courses at the University of California San Diego (UCSD) primarily are studies of ethnicity, race or gender (Appendix A). Yet at other schools, such as Clatsop Community College, classes as different as second-year French or medieval literature also meet the school’s diversity requirement (Appendix B). However, discrepancies within and among schools are very evident. At Clatsop
Community College, second-year French qualifies as a diversity course while second-year Spanish does not. Given the growing population of Hispanics in Oregon, one might think that a second year Spanish class that includes many cultural as well as linguistic aspects might be more appropriate as a relevant diversity course than second year French. An example of a difference between schools is the designation of a course related to Native Americans. At UCSD, the classes *History of Native Americans I* and *II* meet the diversity requirement. In contrast, at Clatsop Community College, the class entitled *Native American History* does not. While the institutions are overseen by differing governing bodies, common general criteria for diversity courses would clarify their purposes, yet allow faculty flexibility to make modifications according to the campus environment and the class being taught. Students at all institutions could benefit from protocols and practice in understanding how to negotiate situations of racial, ethnic, or other difference.

One of the primary clarifications needed is the determination of what diversity means and what it means to honor it. In addition, what characteristics define a diversity course? One course is hardly sufficient to prepare students to deal with the various types of diversity they will encounter both on campus and through their lifetimes. What will students know and be able to do upon completion of these courses? If colleges weave diversity concepts across the curriculum, students will have more opportunities to investigate their beliefs concerning themselves and their biases toward others, as well as analyze their protocols, if any for dealing with diversity. If students maintain a college portfolio, they can document if and how these beliefs change over their college years. As
part of this curriculum, colleges could offer students the opportunity to work with definitions of social justice to determine how social justice intersects with diversity. As Zajonc (2010) states, college should be the time when students focus not just on reading, writing, and math, but rather on their life purpose, core values, and direction. Before universities ask students to celebrate diversity, an option would be to cerebrate diversity.

Too often, people of Euro-American background believe that behavior such as eating tacos on Cinco de Mayo is evidence of their interest in other cultures. While appreciation of ethnic food may be a first step for some, people need to learn strategies to help them move beyond what is culturally appealing. College can be the place where students, staff, and faculty talk about differences and collaboratively develop strategies for meaningful communication and amelioration of tensions.

World strife is constant. A glance at news sources reveals the recurring themes of conflicts centered on differing views of immigration, religious practices, and ethnic customs. As the quotation by Tariq Ramadan at the beginning of the chapter states, much of society purports to honor diversity, yet a good portion of people also raise their hackles and withdraw when confronted by too great a degree of difference. When one group’s truth does not match the truth of its neighbor, how are disagreements resolved? Sometimes, issues do not have to be as significant as truths; heated encounters can occur regarding preferences. When one neighbor is comfortable with loud music but another is not, how do they resolve the conflict? What do neighbors do when one culture values dazzling or clashing colors of house paint and the others do not? Who decides what colors are clashing? Differences, religious or cultural, can be the spark for heated conflict that may turn violent.
Figure 1. Diversity education is a series of processes.

Religious symbols are sacred to some students and offensive to others. People who are accustomed to seeing nativity scenes, as well as Santa displays, at Christmas may now find that those displays have been banned (Lovett, November 19, 2012). Some people object to the change based on religious reasons; others resent losing what they consider a cultural tradition. Well thought out protocols for communication developed by students in a diversity curriculum can help ameliorate some of the conflicts that are present in heterogeneous societies.

Chapter Structure

I have divided this analysis into the following sections: Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the dilemma of diversity courses; Chapter 2 looks at the term diversity and reviews of studies of diversity courses, their objectives and accomplishments;
Chapter 3 provides examples of how examination of concepts of self mesh with the development of a diversity schema; Chapter 4 examines concepts of the other and how those beliefs are part of students’ biases in interactions. In Chapter 5, I examine the current status of diversity courses, and propose a cross-curricular framework that would allow students to develop an adaptable guide for situations of difference. Chapter 6 concludes with the implications, applications, and limitations of diversity courses as both American society and the world at large face with radical cultural changes.

This dissertation synthesizes material from multiple disciplines in order to draw attention to the breadth of knowledge that educators can be integrate into the foundations of diversity courses. Technical know-how is a characteristic of most of today’s generation of students; however, many possess scant knowledge of historical patterns. In addition, the current K-12 Common Core standards emphasize reading, math, and writing, often neglecting the lessons students can learn from in-depth historical studies. Diversity curricula can help students negotiate current crises by blending knowledge of the present with wisdom from the past.

**Key Terms**

**Bias** – is strong inclination of the mind or a preconceived opinion about something or someone. A bias may be favorable or unfavorable. (dictionary.reference.com) In this paper, bias refers to the beliefs people hold about a group that are gained from hearsay or individual experience, but are not necessarily generalizable to the entire group.

**Cultural Literacy or Diversity Course** – according to the Oregon Joint Boards Articulation Committee, (2009, p. JB-22). a cultural literacy course must, “Explore how
culturally based assumptions influence perceptions, behaviors, and policies; and examine the historical bases and evolution of diverse cultural ideas, behaviors, and issues.

Contact hypothesis refers to the idea that by structuring interactions among various groups that improved relations will develop. (Glossary of Diversity and Social Justice, n.d.). Bowman’s (2011) research has shown support for this hypothesis; however, the Glossary of Diversity and Social Justice states that improved relations result only under certain conditions, such as when there are common goals.

Diversity – entails one or more characteristics that people use to distinguish one thing from another (Oxford English Dictionary, 1989). I explore the definition of diversity as a contested concept in the following chapter. For purposes of this paper, diversity refers to categories of difference encountered in the higher education setting including in courses, on campus, or in contexts such as admissions and campus employment.

Dominant culture – are the values, beliefs and practices that are accepted as the norm in a particular context (Glossary of Diversity and Social Justice, n.d.). For example, in the United States, Christmas trees in public places have become part of the dominant cultural practice whether or not people claim to be members of the Christian faith.

Empathy – is identification with, or a vicarious experience of feelings or thoughts of others (dictionary.reference.com). In the search for commonalities amidst conflict, empathy allows participants to move beyond a cognitive understanding of the other’s beliefs. However, in Chapter 4, I introduce brain research studies that discuss the gap between what people think they are feeling about others and what brain scans indicate they are feeling.
**Equity** – refers to the quality of being right or fair (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 1998). While a focus on diversity seeks the inclusion of different racial, ethnic, or groups of all sexual orientations, a focus on equity strives for fairness in academic and employment opportunities. Equity may result in different academic conditions for different students such as those students with disabilities. Rather than a focus on all situations being equal, equity seeks to provide students with the conditions they need in order to achieve academic success.

**Inclusion** refers to the rights of persons with disabilities to be educated in the mainstream classroom (SEDL, 2014). The extended definition, according to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1997), is that full inclusion is an ideal, and therefore in various contexts must change. As stated in the encyclopedia, someone who is autistic and frightened by the sound of applause cannot expect applause to cease in all locations where she is present.

**Multiculturalism**, according to the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1997), provides a guide to responding to people with differing ethnicity, race, or religion, etc. The goal of the philosophy is to move beyond tolerance of the other to group differentiated rights. Although a few colleges still refer to multiculturalism as one of their core values, more institutions refer to either diversity and/or equity.

**Other/Othering** – one of the least complex definitions of the other from the Oxford Dictionaries refers to other as something that is distinct, different, or opposite to oneself (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). More complex views of the other are offered by Sartre who states that the other (that who is not us) alters our world merely by its appearance (Sartre,
Pluralism, according to Tariq Ramadan (2010), is the philosophy that results when we are able to move away from the lens of our own beliefs and view life’s questions through the larger view that encompasses a much wider landscape. Pluralism allows us to see the contours of concepts rather than a rigidly defined model.

Self, commonly refers to the traits, beliefs and behaviors that make up a person. Should these qualities change, someone might make the statement that the particular person is no longer himself. The *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (1997) notes that philosophers hold differing opinions on what constitutes the self, with some like Moran who believe that self entails the ability to regulate your own states, and others, like Decartes including infallibility about one’s own mental states.

White privilege – is a contested concept that some deny exists. Avakian (n.d.) describes white privilege as benefits and lack of restrictions that are unavailable to non-whites. What many whites consider normal customs and behavior are, according to Avakian, actually white privilege. These behaviors include dress and speech. The site quotes James Baldwin: “Being white means not having to think about it.”
CHAPTER 2
DEFINING DIVERSITY

“We are too much accustomed to attribute to a single cause that which is the product of several, and the majority of our controversies come from that.” (Marcus Aurelius)

Many educational, non-profit, and governmental organizations have adopted the construct of diversity as an institutional value. This section examines my first research question: In what ways have faculty and departments structured diversity courses on college campuses and have they met their objectives? The Clatsop Community College catalog lists as one of its student learning outcomes the ability to understand and appreciate diversity. In addition, as part of the Associate of General Studies major, one of the intended learning outcomes is that students “bring an understanding of the value of diversity to the community, the workplace, and the home” (Clatsop Community College, 2013, p.30). A major difficulty with this objective is that there is no universal or even institutional definition for what constitutes diversity nor how students will embed its value into the community, workplace, and home. This section examines diversity as a contested concept and reviews the literature on the cognitive, civic, and career benefits of diversity courses.

Diversity as Contested Concept

The word diversity falls into the category of what Gallie (1956) has termed an essentially contested concept. An essentially contested concept is one for which it is
difficult to find a consistent meaning, for example, the term *art*. Most people would say that they know what art is. On the other hand, various objects can engender heated debate over whether indeed the works qualify as art. People often define art in terms that can be interpreted very subjectively, such as Thomas Merton’s statement, “Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time,” (Gallie, 1956).

Where does that leave us in the quest to define diversity? We often find that institutions or governments agree on a basic connotation of differentness but interpret diversity inconsistently, if they attempt to define it at all. Most often, statements from workplaces or educational institutions state that they value diversity, but they do not clarify what that means. The meaning can vary greatly depending upon both the context and the speakers. The human resources site for the University of California at Berkeley (UC Berkeley, 2014) lists sixteen different dimensions of diversity: age, ethnicity, gender, physical abilities/qualities, race, sexual orientation, educational background, geographic location, income, marital status, military experience, parental status, religious beliefs, work experience, and job classification. For organizations looking to show that they value diversity, this list would almost certainly substantiate the existence of difference among employees or students at most organizations.

Gallie (1956) states that essentially contested concepts are those that people do not necessarily define in the same way, yet they share certain characteristics. He proposes seven criteria to determine whether a construct is *essentially contested* as part of its character or whether there should indeed be a definition that is amenable to all. The first consideration is that there must be some type of appraisal. With regard to diversity,
the appraisal often involves reference to whether a certain number of people fall into categories such as those listed by the UC Berkeley HR office. Are there people of different genders, races, religions etc.? The second is that the concept must be complex: the number and possibilities of combinations of differentness most definitely are. Third, the explanation of the concept must describe the contributions of the various features. People or institutions that value diversity must be able to state how different facets contribute to making the institution a better place. What is it about mixing genders, age groups, and races that produces a better workplace or other environment? The fourth consideration is particularly apt in today’s society. People must be able to modify their interpretation of the concept in changing circumstances. As populations shift due to aging and immigration, the ability to redefine what constitutes a diverse campus or workplace is particularly germane. Racial or ethnic groups that are the minority in one decade may constitute a majority in a subsequent one. Gallie’s fifth tenet is intriguing – that each group must recognize that other groups contest the use of the term and that each group defends aggressively its own definition. With regard to diversity, many people think initially, and sometimes exclusively of differences in race, ethnicity, gender, and perhaps sexual orientation. For some, a room of white men might fail one person’s definition of diversity, even if they came from different socioeconomic classes, religions or from different age groups. Thus some people might aggressively argue that a workplace was not diverse if populated in the majority by white males. 

In order to answer the charge that some definitions are simple mislabeling, Gallie states that an exemplar or prototype exists that establishes the least number of
characteristics the concept must possess in order to fall within the range of the definition. What leaves us with a truly contested concept is the idea that there is no general principle for deciding which of the various interpretations represent the definition of the word in question. Therefore according to Gallie, diversity would fall into the category of an essentially contested concept, particularly for institutions or groups that choose to place more emphasis on one or more features than others. UC Berkeley is one of the institutions that expands more fully on what its analysis of diversity in practice is. Regarding the workplace, the institution states that diversity should encourage the unique contributions of various individuals, and that ultimately, the diversity in the workplace should be a reflection of the population of the state. Most statements of diversity by educational institutions are less specific. For a diversity scholarship at the University of Oregon, three of the qualifying criteria were first generation to attend college, race and ethnicity (University of Oregon, n.d.). The large numbers of other categories that exist at UC Berkeley are not a part of the University of Oregon diversity scholarship description.

In addition to the contested concept of the term diversity, educational institutions do not agree on the definition of a diversity courses. The majority of institutions of higher education in the United States mandate diversity courses or participation in some type of diversity awareness activity. The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and 37 other higher education organizations have pledged to support the growth of equal opportunity and diversity (AAUP, 2013). However, how institutions operationalize this requirement varies widely. Research supports the combination of curricular and interpersonal activities as being the most effective in helping students to develop thinking
strategies to deal with difference (Bowman, 2010), but there is no universal requirement that diversity courses include interpersonal activities. In Oregon, community college students in the Associate of Arts transfer program must take one class designated as a cultural literacy course. Since the designation of cultural literacy courses is an institutional decision, the types of courses that meet the requirement vary widely.

Diversity as Curriculum; Diversity as Context

At its simplest, diversity refers to difference. No standard definition exists for a diversity class nor what the common elements of diversity courses are (Nelson Laird & Engberg, 2011). Those courses labeled as meeting the diversity requirement often focus on topics such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation or disabilities (Chang, 2002). However, Nelson Laird and Engberg (2011) also explored the extent to which content or controversies related to diversity were integrated into college classes and whether or not they were categorized as diversity courses. They found a number of non-diversity courses met the same criteria as diversity courses. Some of these categories include that students develop skills necessary to work with people from various cultural backgrounds; that the course content emphasizes contributions to the field by people from multiple cultures; and/or that the course covers topics from multiple theoretical perspectives. The researchers used a scale developed by Nelson Laird composed of two major categories: diverse grounding and inclusive learning. Diverse grounding includes elements such as whether students learn how to connect their learning to societal problems or whether students address their own biases related to course content. Inclusive learning examines the practices of the instructors. For example, does the professor learn about students in
order to improve instruction? Do instructors vary the pedagogy to elicit maximum participation from all students? (Nelson Laird & Engberg, 2011). Data from faculty at 100 four-year colleges determined whether courses met the requirements for diversity inclusivity. Researchers have not yet conducted studies of diversity inclusivity in non-diversity courses at community colleges.

Diversity is also defined in terms of its manifestation on the college campus. According to Gurin, Dey, Hurtado and Gurin (2002), diversity can be structural, curricular or co-curricular, or interactional. Structural diversity refers to the presence of diverse groups on campus and their numbers in courses. Curricular diversity refers to instruction that targets elements of diversity during the length of the course while co-curricular diversity may refer to workshops or a one-time emphasis. Finally, interactional diversity refers to communication across groups in activities structured by the campus community. Both the term diversity and the label diversity course have various meanings depending on context. Part of the dilemma of diversity courses in higher education is due to the lack of uniformity regarding what qualifies as a diversity course and what its objectives are. Most research in this area has been done at four year colleges; little if any data is available from studies done at community colleges.

**The Value of Teaching Diversity – Cognitive, Civic, Career**

While diversity has been adopted as a value by both accrediting bodies and institutions of higher education, not everyone, including many faculty, believes that diversity should be a part of the curriculum, especially as a part of all college courses. In one survey conducted at the University of Michigan, thirty percent of faculty believed
that promoting diversity resulted in admitting unprepared or underprepared students. (Maruyama & Moreno, 2000). Often departmental priorities do not reflect the campus commitment to diversity. While faculty tended to agree that diversity created more opportunity for the presentation of multiple perspectives, only one-third felt that this diversity led to the positive confrontation of racially or ethnically-based differentness (Maruyama & Moreno, 2000). One of the strongest predictors of whether faculty incorporated diversity into their class curricula was whether there was an integration of personal and institutional values (Mayhew & Grunwald, 2006).

Despite the doubts of many faculty regarding the value of diversity courses, studies have shown benefits of diversity studies in three areas: cognitive development, civic engagement, and career preparation (Banks, 2001; Bowman, 2010; Bowman, 2011; Engberg, 2007; Gurin, et al., 2002; Maruyama & Moreno, 2000).

Studies show an association between development of cognitive skills and cognitive tendencies and enrollment in a diversity course (Bowman, 2010; Gurin et al., 2002; Maruyama & Moreno, 2000). Cognitive skills refer to strategies used for thinking, reasoning, and processing information while cognitive tendencies signify habits of mind. One example of this trait refers to employing the strategy of effortful thinking about decisions and actions rather than responding to situations based on prior patterns. Diversity courses should present the opportunity for students to examine their beliefs and to consider how they arrived at them. While the initial classroom focus of this metacognition may be on beliefs related to difference, the incorporation of these strategies can help students identify underlying assumptions of other longstanding
beliefs. Not all diversity studies have the same effect on cognitive growth; interactions with racial diversity were more strongly associated with cognitive growth than interactions with non-racial diversity (Gurin et al., 2002). In addition, for cognitive growth, more is not better. One diversity course, as opposed to none, is associated with cognitive gains, but there is no further growth associated with additional courses (Bowman, 2010).

Some people consider college to be the ideal time for students to develop cognitive strategies that deal with differentness. The philosophies of the social psychologist Erik Erikson and developmental psychologist Jean Piaget (Gurin et al., 2002) provide two of the theoretical foundations for the inclusion of diversity. Erikson described college as a time of a psychosocial moratorium that allows students to experiment with different social roles. When students confront diversity at this time, they may question their own beliefs as well as those of others. This stage includes what Piaget calls disequilibrium, a period of questioning of previously held scripts and schemas. Students have the opportunity to rebuild their world view during this stage (Bowman, 2010; Gurin et al., 2002). Thus diversity courses at the university level can provide strategies for thinking and reasoning at a time when many students are already in the process of examining some of their beliefs.

In addition to cognitive skills, researchers have found an association between diversity studies and civic engagement. Studies showed a decline in American civic involvement in the last three decades of the 20th century. These civic activities included political participation, charitable giving, community involvement, and even social
activities (Bowman, 2011). Yet the meta-analysis conducted by Bowman (2011) on the effects of diversity courses showed that college diversity experiences are associated with greater civic involvement. Diversity experiences can prompt students into civic action. In addition, exposure to diversity can help students develop increased awareness of related social dilemmas and can trigger a participatory response. However, the impact of the diversity experience depends on the type. Interpersonal actions with racial diversity, such as structured face-to-face learning activities, are more effective in producing civic action than coursework (Bowman, 2011). Thus, in addition to a cultural literacy or diversity class requirement, Bowman’s findings support the argument for student involvement in the community in some type of service that brings them into contact with a culture other than their own. While many colleges do have a service learning component, the experience does not necessarily qualify as part of a diversity curricula. In addition, fulfillment of a service learning requirement can be a challenge for many of today’s students, particularly those community college students who are often commuting, working, and raising families as they attend college. Thus interactions to promote diversity may require multiple options for students at both four-year and two-year colleges (Bowman, 2011).

Finally, diversity studies not only provide a richer environment for learning, but they can also help students develop a more pluralistic orientation, a trait highly valued by employers. According to a study by the RAND institute, one of the qualities most sought by employers is the ability to interact, communicate, and negotiate with persons of diverse backgrounds and beliefs (Engberg, 2007). While many people consider diversity
education as a discussion of racial differences, diversity encompasses the aims of global education, that of understanding relations among and within countries. Banks (2001) states that diversity education should be transformative. Transformative knowledge results in action rather than simply explaining. Incorporating skills into instruction so that students know how to negotiate difference will result in graduates who are more prepared to succeed in the global workplace. Students who transition to career positions on global teams need to be prepared to employ strategies to deal with multiple and often conflicting perspectives. As Adler (2008) notes, diversity alone does not always contribute to team effectiveness. Exposure to differentness in an academic environment can serve as the first step in acquiring skills to communicate effectively in contexts of diversity.

Banks (2001) also advocates that diversity studies be a part of teacher education so that teachers can help students to develop strategies to explore difference. According to Banks, teachers need to foster cultural, national and global identifications for themselves and help students do the same. Thus diversity studies can have a direct career benefit both for educators and for others involved in the international workplace. However, a little knowledge (learning) is a dangerous thing (attributed to Alexander Pope). Unskilled educators, in an attempt to build a sense of national identification in students can create an atmosphere where students either barely tolerate or even persecute newcomers or those with different views. The immigration policies of many countries stipulate that the newcomers (especially undocumented ones) do not merit the same rights and/or treatment as those who have been in the country longer or reside there legally.
While there are cognitive, civic, and career benefits to diversity studies, the research subjects and type of diversity studied have produced varying results. For example, Maruyama and Moreno (2000) state that the development of strategies for conflict resolution involving multiple perspectives is a skill that requires repeated exposures to and participation in difficult dialogues of diversity; curricular diversity is not sufficient. On the other hand, while curricular diversity alone may not be sufficient, its total absence can produce negative effects. Chang (2002) reported that students who did not take a diversity course had less favorable attitudes toward blacks and Latinos at the end of their first semester than when they entered college. In contrast, in another study, white students who were finishing a diversity course had more favorable attitudes toward blacks than those who were just beginning the course (Chang, 2002). Thus one study emphasized repeated group interaction, while the other looked at either the absence or exposure to curricular diversity.

Despite the absence of a uniform model of a diversity course, research shows a positive association between these courses and cognitive development, civic involvement, and career preparation. Continued research is needed to explore changes in student behaviors and attitudes as a result as their involvement with others with different backgrounds, beliefs, and behaviors. One of the research gaps is that specific to community colleges.
Defining the Diversity Curriculum: The Role of Self and Other

While prior research has supported the positive effects of diversity courses in cognitive, civic, and career domains, the research has not shown that students have developed skills or frameworks to apply in future encounters with diversity. In deciding how to manage interactions in situations or dilemmas of difference, students need to first be aware of their own beliefs and the basis for them. If they follow the mandate of “Love thy neighbor as thyself,” how do they explain that self-love? From what source do they derive their values or are they even aware of what their values are? Thus before beginning to acquire knowledge about a group that has different beliefs, students need to examine their own philosophical foundations. In addition to examining what they feel about themselves, they need to examine why they may feel either kinship or hostility toward other groups of people. Are the majority of students’ beliefs unexamined traditions? Is a God or gods the author of any of the beliefs?
In this paper, I argue that diversity courses should not focus exclusively on the differentness of any particular group; instead, a more effective sequence would include a cross-curricular emphasis on diversity. Courses would incorporate an examination of self, beliefs toward others, and the tendency toward habitual response in the face of novelty. While some courses would by their content seem to allow for exploration of self, other, and diversity, research by Mayhew and Grunwald (2006) indicates the more important factor as to whether diversity was explored was the beliefs of the faculty and the policies of the institution. In Chapters 3 and 4, I examine the second and third research questions. Why should diversity courses include an exploration of views of the self? In what ways will an examination of the other aid in identifying student biases? Students could use parts of any or all three of these fields (or others) to examine the foundation of self and other as they create a standard by which to explore diversity.
CHAPTER 3
DEFINING THE SELF

“Love Your Neighbor as Yourself” (Matthew 22:39)

One of the major objectives of diversity courses is to help students learn about and appreciate cultures different from their own. Yet since 2000, student empathy levels have decreased by 40% and rates of narcissism are at an all-time high (Konrath, O’Brien, & Hsing, 2011; Twenge & Foster, 2010). While researchers have not established a link between the growing number of families with only one child and increasing rates of narcissism, students who have grown up without siblings are less likely to be accustomed to negotiating social differences. Rather than playing with all the kids in the neighborhood, many students have grown up playing with similar peers through arranged play dates. While research such as that by Twenge and Foster (2010) shows that students arriving at the campus of the 21st century are much more self-focused than those of prior generations, research is lacking that shows what value systems students have. If students have not examined their own concepts of self, it can be difficult for them to appreciate or negotiate situations of difference. Their response to difference may be simply, “Well, I believe it’s wrong because that’s the way I was brought up.” In addition, students with low self-esteem may have difficulty caring about others when they do not care about themselves.

This section examines the second research question regarding why diversity curricula should include an exploration of views of the self. God asks us to love our
neighbors as ourselves. Many people do not love themselves, so how can they begin to extend love to others? People may express shame, disgust, even hatred of who they are. According to statistics from Emory University (2014), one in every ten college students has a plan for suicide; moreover, there are more than 1,000 suicides per year on college campuses. For those that have grown up in adverse situations with little love shown to them, it can be difficult to feel love for self. For other students, relatives or friends may have expressed love, but past mistakes or painful events cast a shadow over the present and the acceptance of that love. Often to love our neighbors, we must first forgive or let go of any actual or perceived transgressions. Similarly, people need to be open to confronting, healing, and finally letting go of their own self-negativity that does not allow them to open their minds and their hearts. Nel Noddings (2003), in *Caring*, notes that caring is tough. She defines self-care in terms of maintaining strength, courage, and joy. She alleges that people will be either unwilling or unable to care for others if they have not first cared for themselves. Therefore, institutions of higher education need to rethink the sequence and the depth of their diversity curricula. While faculty in college departments may be in agreement on what to teach about diverse groups, they must not forget who it is they are teaching. They are teaching a group of students noted for their lack of empathy, for their selfies and Facebook time, and also unfortunately for a preoccupation with suicide. To reiterate Nodding’s premise, caring is tough. Students need to figure out how they can not only care for and respect others but also care for themselves. Most of the time when Noddings refers to caring for self, she is referring to enhancing or preserving values, such as courage and joy. Many undergraduate students
in a diversity class may never have examined the basis for their own values. Next, Nodding suggests that after examining and practicing courage and joy in our own lives, we are ready to work to inculcate these qualities in our relationships with others.

The sections that follow look at some schools of thought that students can use to develop a foundation for their beliefs of self. Diversity courses should be part of a cross-curricular approach that allows students to examine their views of self, others, and their framework for interactions with difference. Whether from a philosophical, religious, or neuroscientific viewpoint, students need to have the opportunity to examine critically how they think about themselves and how they will determine their response to those with very different beliefs and lifestyles. As Plato wrote, “The unexamined life is not worth living.” The life to examine first is that of our own (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Foundations of the self.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Philosophy</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Neuroscience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Confucius -- Self and li</td>
<td>St. Augustine -- Self from sinner to saved</td>
<td>Churchland -- Self as biology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Descartes -- Innate self; self from experience</td>
<td>Miskawaya -- Self and character traits</td>
<td>Damasio -- Self as body and spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existentialist -- Self-existence precedes essence</td>
<td>Buddhism -- Non-self and peace</td>
<td>Pert -- Self as body, mind, and spirit</td>
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Defining Self – Philosophical Perspectives

Diversity courses usually begin with the topic of differentness, perhaps a culture or race that is distinct from that of the majority of students enrolling in the course. Many students, however, find while they are studying about beliefs and characteristics of others, that they do not have a grasp on what they believe or their own personal characteristics. This section gives only the briefest sampling of three philosophical perspectives that can be presented to students to help them better understand themselves and possibly understand why they do what they do. The following sections look at Confucian character traits, Descartes’ dualism, and Sartre’s existentialism. In addition to examining the basis for values, a look at a variety of traditions gives students practice in examining multiple perspectives when making value-laden decisions.

Confucian Character Traits

One way to look at the self is through character attributes. Confucius addresses these traits in *The Great Learning* (2014), *The Ethics of Confucius* (2014) and *The Analects* (1998). Written around 500 B.C., these writings provide a useful lens through which students can examine their lives that contrasts with the Western emphasis on individuality (Confucius, 2014; Confucius, Ames & Rosemont, 1998). The Confucian idea of self is built around *li*. Each person, or self, exists within a system of inter-relationship that requires the completion of specific duties. In order to carry out these duties, people need to develop specific character traits (Liu, 2004). In Book Two of *The Ethics* (2014), Confucius gives guidelines for the following character traits: the will,
fortitude, self-control, moderation, righteousness, earnestness, humility, aspiration, and prudence. The question arises as to how familiar today’s college students are with these terms and their implications for analysis of self. In terms of popular culture, to be bad is to be cool; Michael Jackson’s album of that name sold over 30 million copies. If students are not familiar with what philosophers and religions have often identified as characteristics for a well-lived life, are they ready to reflect on and incorporate a philosophy of diversity? Popular culture does little to promote virtues such as self-control and humility. In contrast to an emphasis on humility, the concept of grade entitlement is widespread. Students resort to cheating, plagiarism, and grievances to receive a higher grade while admitting they did complete the requirements for that grade (Boswell, 2012).

Some students may argue that the words of Confucius have little relevance for the 21st century; however, Peterson and Seligman (2004) in their book Character Strengths and Virtues: A Handbook and Classification have reintroduced the same the character traits discussed by Confucius. These core characteristics include: wisdom and knowledge; courage; humanity; justice; temperance; and transcendence. Studies of character traits of students are gaining increased attention as educators, administrators and politicians seek explanations for why so many students do not achieve academic success as measured by grades and college completion (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, & Kelly, 2007; Duckworth, Grant, Loew, Oettingen, & Gollwitzer, 2011).

Although development of all the traits mentioned by Confucius and Peterson and Seligman is beneficial, I will examine two traits and their relation to knowing self and
developing facility with difficult dialogues of difference. One core trait is self-control in speech and another, open-mindedness.

In both *The Ethics* (2014) and *The Analects* (2014), Confucius points out the need for self-control when speaking. He states that it is better to act first, then speak to reflect those actions, rather than speaking first and then not reflecting in actions what has been said. Self-control in speech does not seem to be practiced by many people in today’s reality-show saturated society. People are often very eager to explain and promote their beliefs to almost anyone, even complete strangers, without attempting to establish some type of common ground first. Phatic communication is becoming more of a lost art.

Phatic communication refers to speech that is used for sociability, to recognize someone else’s presence rather than to present information. For example, when strangers chat about the weather, they are engaging in phatic conversation. Students need to learn to open communication channels through phatic speech rather than launching into a monologue of their personal lives. Although culture and gender play a role in its acceptance, some cultures view highly emotional conversation as either off-putting or even threatening. Students interested in diversity conversations need to examine to what extent they are in control of their speech patterns and how those patterns mirror or contrast with those of others.

Another highly important trait for conversations that involve trusting someone else is that of open-mindedness. It is difficult to listen to the truths of others when you are convinced that yours is the only truth. Classroom discussion of difference should help students explore the extent to which they are open to different interpretations of the truth.
Confucius urges people not to mindlessly accept as true those beliefs that are the same as theirs while rejecting those in opposition. Likewise, Peterson and Seligman (2004) link open-mindedness with critical thinking, describing this trait as the ability to change one’s mind in the light of evidence. For some students, the decision to be truly open-minded will mean abandoning the use of the phrase, “Well, that’s just the way I was brought up,” in an effort to hide a lack of critical thinking behind a façade of cultural tradition.

Ultimately, the development of positive traits of character is of benefit not only due to the facilitation of positive interactions with others, but also due to their role in the development of the self toward a state of peace and happiness (Zhang & Veenhoven, 2008). Cultivation of the self in harmony with li leads to a state of expanded interconnectedness. According to Confucian thought, while the subjective selfish self dissipates into non-self, the non-self expands into a convergence with the universe (Berkson, 2005) resulting in a state of peace.

**Descartes’ Duality**

Another way to reflect on self is by determining what the elements of self are. What is it that makes up a person? Is the essence of self limited to biological processes or are there components or constructs called body, mind, and spirit? The French philosopher Descartes (1596-1650) is known for his exposition on the dual nature of the self, the eponymous Cartesian dualism. One part of the self is based on what people learn empirically, through the sensations; the other part of the self is based on thinking and on an internal logic. According to some researchers, this internal logic comes from God (Descartes, Cottingham, Stoothof, & Murdoch, 1984).
Part of the self develops through lived experiences. Neuroscience has validated Descartes’ assumption using functional magnetic resonance imaging. The brain rewires its neural networks and can change hippocampal volume as a result of certain experiences (Maguire, Woollett, & Spiers, 2006). In turn, this rewiring affects how people perceive and respond to subsequent events. These brain changes can have positive effects on the self and its ability to thrive in its environment. For example, taxi drivers who create spatial maps in their minds of the streets of London increase their hippocampal volume (Maguire et al., 2006). Conversely, people exposed to severe stress can suffer from a decrease in hippocampal volume, resulting in difficulties with memory (Kotulak, 2007).

The ramifications for negotiating encounters with difference are significant. Although people may be exposed to the same declarative (factual) knowledge as someone else, due to their separate experiences and learning, they may not interpret the sense of that knowledge in the same way. Thus Descartes’ analysis of the importance of experiential knowledge in creating the self was right on target. For students who are seeking ways to communicate across cultures, it is imperative to remember that our selves are partially created through our experiences and have a direct effect on how we respond to what others are saying or doing.

Descartes argued that there was more to the self than lived experience. For those elements of thought that were more abstract and could not be proven, Descartes posited innate structures that had God as their source (Gutek, 2004). Descartes notes in the Fourth Meditation that his relationship with God provides him a way to develop knowledge (Descartes, Cottingham, Stoothoff, & Murdoch, 1984). As students seek to
know others through diversity courses, one theme they will likely encounter is that of whether the self is simply a biological body, whether there is a separate mind, and/or whether there is a separate soul/spirit (something that lasts beyond the body). As philosophy and religion departments are eliminated due to budget cuts on many campuses, 21st century students often find college environments to be reductionist, attributing life, as Zajonc says, to “adaptive strategies and synapse firings (Palmer, Zajonc and Scribner, 2010, loc. 1178). Descartes makes clear in the Sixth Meditation that the mind and the body are separate and that the mind can continue to exist without the body. The mind exists in separate relationship with God, and the mind is what brings about understanding.

Descartes’ duality emphasizes two important considerations in negotiating truth. The first is that the self is constructed on the basis of sensation and experience. As is often documented in courtroom proceedings, two or more people can view the same event and recall the situation very differently. The events that I experience and how I code them in my memory affect my interpretations of future events and ideas. The second conundrum that arises revolves around whether students consider themselves religious, atheist, or agnostic. If a student with a dualistic belief in self is attempting to negotiate truth with someone who has a either a non-theistic or non-spiritual belief of self (no God, no spirituality of any type), can there be any hope of collaborated truth?

Existentialist Experience

A third philosophical viewpoint that students either may hold themselves or may encounter in others is that of existentialism. In this view, the self is not endowed with a
particular nature but rather the self is developed through actions, summarized in the phrase “existence precedes essence.” Existentialists such as Kierkegaard and Buber retain a belief in God while demonstrating their existentialism through a resistance to systems that attempt to constrain people’s choices. For the religious existentialists, a meaningful life is developed through direct relationship with God, not by following the dictates of organized religion (Gutek, 2004). For both religious and non-religious, another predominant theme in existentialism, in addition to individuality and choices, is the absurd. For existentialists, the conditions and choices of life do not necessarily make sense (Carlisle, 2010). As an example, in *Fear and Trembling* Kierkegaard (2006) relates the story of Abraham when he is asked to sacrifice Isaac. How can a loving God who has finally answered a man’s prayer for a son ask that man to sacrifice the son? Yet for Kierkegaard, the story is not about blind obedience; it is about faith and the individual choices that a person makes to live out that faith. The faith of Abraham is described as unshakeable, and Abraham did not argue with God about this command.

In the second chapter of *Fear and Trembling*, Kierkegaard discusses whether Abraham was to be faulted for his obeisance to the will of God, since presumably obeying that command would result in the death of Abraham’s son. Kierkegaard then writes of Abraham’s love for Isaac and also the love of God. Through God’s love and Abraham’s faith, Abraham was able to be joyful in following a command that would have brought pain to others. Kierkegaard introduces the construct of the absurd at this point. To arrive at this state of the absurd, it is necessary to make a leap, a movement into infinity, a time/space beyond our immediate perception. Here Kierkegaard

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introduces the knight of faith, he who has attained the spiritual state that puts him in communion with God. Making this leap, this movement, requires not reflection, which Kierkegaard states that his age does well, but rather passion. Joy results from faith. For some students, a *leap of faith*, may seem ridiculous or impossible. Yet exposure to existentialist philosophy can stimulate their thoughts toward an analysis of why perhaps they hold religious beliefs or why others might not.

In contrast to the existentialist joy described by Kierkegaard, Sartre often paints a dark picture characterized by existentialist angst. Life has no meaning other than what we choose to accomplish here and now, and in the end not only do our bodies turn to dust, but there is no spirit that continues the essence of ourselves. For those existentialists without a spiritual belief, life can be like those of the characters in Jean Paul Sartre’s play, *No Exit* (1956). We can create our own hell on earth by the choices that we make. In *No Exit*, each of the three protagonists, Garcin, Estelle, and Inez, followed their selfish desires and abused others in doing so. Although the most famous line from the play is, “Hell is other people,” the point of the play is not about other people, but the self. People are caught in their own hell once they believe they are stuck and that there is no exit (Bernasconi, 2007).

Existentialism emphasizes the importance of choices in what each person determines will be a meaningful life. Young people often question the status quo and wonder what decisions they should make for their careers or in their relationships. The changing face of modern society in the United States makes it even more crucial for students to know on what they will base their moral decisions. Today it is possible for
childless couples to obtain a surrogate from India to carry the baby to term for a cost of $6250, about one-third of the U.S. price (Sandel, 2012). How will students determine whether or not they are comfortable with this type of arrangement for themselves or others? Paid surrogacy is illegal in most European Union countries: however, it is legal in parts of the United States, Thailand and India (Cheung, 2014). An Australian couple asked a Thai surrogate to abort one twin that had Down syndrome. She refused, based on her religious beliefs. The couple took custody of only the healthy twin (Kittsilpa, August 3, 2014). How do we determine how to respond to ethical dilemmas created by modern medicine? If students hold existentialist views, they need to be able to articulate how their behaviors give meaning to their concept of self.

Defining Self – Religious Perspectives

In an attempt to negotiate diversity by first looking at the self, a survey of religious traditions might seem to add more complexity. One theme that reoccurs as students participate in the educational system, as well as in many life contexts, is how perceptions of faith and reason affect my view of self and consequently my interactions with others. Paul Griffiths (2001) defines religious belief as way of living that is identifiable by three characteristics: comprehensive, incapable of abandonment, and of central importance. Briefly, those characteristics can be explained as follows. A belief that is comprehensive is relevant to all facets of a person’s life. It is not a type of behavior that is relegated to cultural festivals. Second, the belief is incapable of abandonment in that it is integral to my selfhood. To Griffiths, religious belief as part of self is analogous to my relationship with my native language. My first language, regardless if I learn other languages, is still
my native language, more a part of who I am than secondary languages. Finally, my religious belief determines what is of most importance in ordering my life. My religious belief will determine whether my life is ordered around pleasing my god(s) in a particular way or whether my life is a precursor to one or more afterlives. Thus religious beliefs will have a major influence in how people understand themselves and how they relate to others, and will affect their ability to find intersections of agreement in fields of difference. Following is a brief description of some of the differences in self-concept that are derived from religious beliefs.

**Self as Sinner: A View from St. Augustine**

In 1987, millions of people walked around singing “I’m bad,” from the lyrics of the Michael Jackson song. Today, while some top pop songs speak of romantic love, others extol independence, toughness, and sometimes aggression. What makes it feel so good to be bad? Is this a recent development in societies where people have too much? Quite the contrary. St. Augustine details his own struggles with self, behavior, and purpose in *Confessions* (1952), a prayer to God written in ten books (chapters). One of the greatest early Christian theologians, St. Augustine was born in what is now Algeria and lived between 354 and 430 (Copleston, 1993). *Confessions* (1952) details the life of St. Augustine and how he came into the revelation that the way to find his true self was in relationship with God. The day-to-day details of Augustine’s life and their relevance to today’s students make this prose appealing and worthwhile as a topic of discussion for students seeking to define self.
Two themes stand out in the description of Augustine’s youth: his dislike of academics (except for Latin studies) and his attraction to praise from peers. Augustine would find plenty of company among 21st-century students with his distaste for traditional schooling. While parents, politicians, and pundits decry the status of American education (Chappell, 2013), Augustine reminds us, like the author of Ecclesiastes (1:9), “What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again, there is nothing new under the sun.” Augustine describes how as a young boy he sinned by studying less than he should and that memorizing basic arithmetic such as two and two are four, was a “hateful singsong” (Thomas, 1952, p. 6). He also makes it clear that he was more interested in sports (play) than he was in any academics. His comments on the games, however, indicate that sports were preferable not just because of the physical activity. What appealed to him was the adulation from his peers when he won (Thomas, 1952). Thus students who question whether education is now worse than in previous centuries may take solace in Augustine’s institutional antagonism and his summation that forced learning is ineffective compared to learning through natural curiosity.

Augustine also explores the lure of bad behavior. He admits to various acts of thievery as well as cheating during sports. In both cases the goal is the admiration of others. He stole items from his parents’ cellar in order to bribe various boys to be included in their sports competitions. He admits to cheating during games and then lying when accused. One tale particularly illustrates this desire for idolization by his peers. The boys steal pears from an orchard, not because they are hungry, nor even because the pears were of good quality, and then throw the pears to the hogs. Augustine describes the
behavior as the deliberate desire to do what was wrong. The feast was not the pears, but the feast was sin.

Self as sinner is not a trendy concept. While people still sing or talk admiringly about someone who is *bad*, it would be highly unusual to hear the same veneration used with someone labeled a *sinner*. Why does self as *bad* seem to be good and self as *sinner* seems to be not good? In the popular usage, *bad* is an antonym, a word that has now come to mean the opposite of its original meaning. Yet, the word still retains the nuance of someone who flouts convention. A sinner may also flout convention, but word conveys disapproval rather than approbation. Sinner, in the theological sense, refers to a separation from God as a result of unbelief and thus a failure to attempt to follow the will of God for one’s life. Augustine leaves no doubt about the sins of his youth, stating that for nine years from the age of 19 to 28 he lived, “seduced and seducing, deceived and deceiving,” (Hutchins, 1952, p. 19).

In Augustine’s life, this separation from God results in what he calls a sick and diseased soul. He also found that the two things he desired, to love others and to be loved by them, had become unattainable. Yet despite the unease of his spirit, Augustine still found comfort in the advancement of his career. He speaks of his success in the field of rhetoric and how proud he was to have obtained that status. Likewise, in American culture, career status is highly important. It can be not only a source of pride to the individual but can determine treatment by others in society. Thus while Augustine has unease in his soul, outwardly he still feels that his life has validation based on his career.

In determining the identity and value of one’s self, career achievements or material possessions often play a major role in 21st century society. While Americans do
not have titles of nobility, they often make sure to use or display academic credentials in order to win praise from others. When academic credentials are lacking or irrelevant, other career markers such as fame and money more than suffice.

In knowing myself as I attempt to know others, how will I determine my selfness? Am I a composite of characteristics and experiences, or is there a soul that suffers by not being in communication with God? Ultimately, through reading of the Scriptures and with the help of Ambrose, Augustine has a spiritual experience that convinces him of the purpose of humankind, to love God and live joyfully in relationship with the Creator. For Augustine, the self is a spiritual being that thrives through knowing and loving God. A self separated from God lacks peace and joy.

Also, the theme of peace and joy for the self through following religious teachings can be found both in Islam and Buddhism. This theme of peace and joy is particularly relevant, given the earlier statistic of the high rate of suicide and suicide attempts among college students. Attempting to learn about and/or empathize with others while contemplating harm to oneself is not the way to seek reconciliation and/or understanding among multiple viewpoints.

**Self and the Qu’ran: Multiple Islamic Views**

The largest religious affiliation in the U.S. is Christianity. According to the Pew Research Institute (2007), 78.4% of Americans consider themselves Christians while only 0.6% consider themselves Islamic. For many American students, what little they know about Islam is what they have learned from the media. Although Islamic extremists do not represent the tenets of Islam any more accurately than the actions of Christian
extremists represent the tenets of Christianity, the actions of violence and intolerance are the images that come to the minds of many people when thinking about Islam. Sectarian fighting in the Middle East, kidnappings and murders by Boko Haram or the Islamic State of Iraq (ISIS), and bombings in the U.S. at the Boston Marathon and the World Trade Center are all associated with Islam. According to Pew Research (2012), Islamic believers comprise 23% of the world population. Thus, in looking to understand diversity and views of self, the tenets of Islam merit inclusion.

Just as there are a multiple interpretations of the Bible and of the principles of Christianity, the same is true for interpretations of the Qu’ran and the beliefs of Islam. One eminent Islamic philosopher was the Iranian Ibn Miskawayh, who lived from 932 to 1030. Fakhry (1970), in *A History of Islamic Philosophy*, states that Miskawayh argues for the existence of a soul in addition to the body. The soul is capable of cognition and reason, setting humans apart from animals, and the soul acquires virtue by rejecting bodily desires and pursuing good. The end result is happiness. Miskawayh posited a tripartite soul: the rational, found in the brain; the appetitive, found in the liver; the passionate, found in the heart. The rational seeks wisdom; the appetitive can also comply with reason and the result is temperance. When the rational controls the passionate, self-control results (Fakhry, 1970).

Like Confucius, Miskawayh emphasized the importance of character traits for a self in harmony with itself, others and God. These traits (also referenced by Plato) are: wisdom; temperance, courage and justice. All of these virtues may be required in attempting to know and interact with others from different backgrounds and with
different beliefs. While many college value statements speak of the need for integrity, few reference courage and what courage may mean in a 21st century context. In addition, adolescents tend to be risk-takers, and thus they may not have a clear understanding of they perceive as courage may actually be recklessness. Accordingly, an examination of what virtues students deem important and how they define them should be part of the foundation for diversity studies.

Aydin’s (2010) Sufi interpretations of the Qu’ran align fairly closely with those that Fakhry (1970) described concerning Miskawayh’s. However, Aydin compares the components of self from the Qu’ran to those psychological components of the soul listed by Freud: the id, the ego, and the superego. By becoming familiar with the components of the soul, and by pleasing the ego rather than the id, people can live lives characterized by happiness derived from closeness to and communication with God. The component analogous to the id is the *nafsi ammar*. This is the part of the soul where self-centered desires spring from that pull people away from God. Actions that result are often harmful and based on impulse. *Nafs* refers to the self or essence of a person. This is the self that persists after death (El-Najjar, 2004-2005). Parental and cultural influences develop the *nafsi lawwm* which corresponds to the superego, while the most enlightened state is *natsi mutainnan*, a component of self developed through prayer (Aydin, 2010). This highest state of enlightenment similar to Maslow’s state of self-actualization, which Maslow describes as becoming more than one is now and reaching one’s highest state of potential (Maslow, 1943). Some Muslims also believe in the existence of *Satan* who uses images and feelings to lead the soul away from God.
Tariq Ramadan (2010), a contemporary Islamic philosopher, argues that we are all in a state of tension searching for both peace and meaning. We can approximate the condition of inner peace through working to understand both ourselves and others. Ramadan goes beyond Descartes’ emphasis on reason by arguing for the importance of emotion in self-discovery. He states that the heart experiences and responds differently from both the senses and the mind (reason), and quotes from the Qu’ran that God lies “between man and his heart” (Ramadan, 2010). In this sense, he is in agreement with Immordino-Yang and Damasio (2007), whose research regarding the significance of emotions as part of self I will discuss in the next section on Defining Self: The Neuroscience Perspective. For students with little or no exposure to Muslim culture other than through coverage of war, an examination of Muslim beliefs of self can help them see how the beliefs often align with those of Western traditions, and perhaps they can replace fear and/or anger toward non-extremist Muslims with understanding.

**Self and Non-self: Buddhism**

Buddhism is the third most practiced religion in the United States, following Christianity and Judaism (Pew Research Religion and Public Life Project, 2007). Some sources define Buddhism as either a religion or a philosophy (Oxford English Dictionary, n.d.), while others such as Pew Research classify it as a religion; however, most of the major tenets are shared regardless of the label. The concept of the self in Buddhism involves the paradox of striving for the state of no-self or anatta. What does this mean to have no self? According to the tenets of Theravada Buddhism, we as humans are not separate selves. We are an aggregate of entities called the skandhas.
The first is *rūpa* (matter) composed of the elements of earth, air, fire and water. Next is *vēdanā*, referring to the senses. Along with the traditional sense organs of sight, smell, hearing, touch, and taste, *vēdanā* also includes the mind. A separate aggregate, *saññā* processes perceptions of objects, both physical and mental. *Saṃkārā* has no English equivalent and refers to fifty different activities or states of volition. Finally *viññāṇa* is consciousness. Consciousness is not an active state, but rather is a response condition that is combined with one of the other skandhas (De Silva, 1979).

What is the point of having students examine beliefs that might be extremely contrary to their conceptions of self? One reason to examine other such beliefs is that by examining the multiple components of self as posited by Buddhism, students have another perspective through which to examine their view of self. They can use the skandhas as a framework to determine how much of their self, their character, they see as being determined by their mind and senses. Alternatively, reflecting on their self-concept through the skandas can give them a perspective on how others might view themselves.

For Buddhists, the mind is the source of conflict and the body is the source of desires. Our thoughts and desires bring about suffering. Thus the goal of humans is transformation from self-focus to non-self. In becoming non-self, people no longer need be concerned with permanence and possession. In emptying self, we are now not separate from the other, whether people or other entities. Perfection of this state results in harmony with the universe (De Silva, 1979; Kelsang Gyatso, 2011; Nhất Hạnh, 2007).

Although the Buddhist perspective of self and non-self is often difficult for Western minds to grasp, the focus of the sutras is clear, making choices that reduce
conflict within self and among others. The Sutra on the Eight Realizations reminds readers that difficulty is to be expected and that without those difficulties it would be easier to stray from the path of non-self. For example, the sutra advises that people not focus on praying for the alleviation of illness. For some, illness can be a time to refocus our life purpose. Several of the realizations emphasize the importance of interacting honestly and generously with others. For ultimately as we begin to empty ourselves, we become more aware that we are all part of the same universal self. Although the Buddhists define our lives as one of suffering, through following the sutras, we can achieve a state of happiness. This is one end that all the previously discussed religions have in common, that by following God, or by following the teachings, the result will be happiness here on earth (De Silva, 1979; Kelsang Gyatso, 2011; Nhất Hạnh, 2007). The Mangala (Nhất Hạnh, 2007) emphasizes that the path to happiness includes a right environment. This environment includes both the social and physical. Right friends and pleasant surroundings are components of our happiness. With these elements we need to combine compassion and generosity toward others. The Buddhist perspective combines the reality of suffering with the destination of happiness. By working to empty self into non-self, we instill meaning and peace into our lives.

All three religious perspectives, that of St. Augustine, the Islamic, and the Buddhist, have the goal of bringing peace into our lives. For students harried by career choices, financial pressures, and often family and work obligations in addition, finding peace may seem impossible. However, in the search to find peace in interactions with diversity, students should grant themselves the time to seek peace in their own selves.
While exposure to multiple philosophies makes self-definition more complex, this introduction to various ways of thinking assists students in preparing for the lifelong encounters students will have with different modes of thought. Each decade brings ethical challenges that old beliefs may be able accept or that may need modification. Exposure to multiple ways of thinking can prepare students for that kind of cognitive flexibility.

**Defining Self – The Neuroscientific Perspective**

While traditional religions speak of body, mind, and spirit, today’s neuroscientists speak of brain, mind and self. Three neuroscience researchers who represent varying views of who or what constitutes the self are Patricia Churchland, (2013) Antonio Damasio (1994, 2010) and Candace Pert (1997). Churchland and Damasio both define self as the result of physical interactions in the brain and body. Pert, in contrast, discusses body, mind, and spirit. An examination of the works of these three scientists can give students a different set of perspectives to help them clarify and formulate their own identities.

**Churchland: Self as Biology**

Churchland, in her book *Touching a Nerve* (2013), boldly states that the self is solely the result of brain functions. In contrast to religious traditions and scientists such as Pert, Churchland believes that there is no separate spirituality, nothing that humans can label spirit or soul. What we know as ourselves is the result of the functions of our brain. Churchland does not expect to find a widely sympathetic audience to her premise that there is nothing akin to an eternal spirit that dwells within us. From the anticipation of that reticence or opposition comes the title of her latest book, *Touching a Nerve* (2013).
Churchland expects that many will be very disturbed by and resistant to her proposition. As part of her background, she describes prior scientific discoveries that other researchers challenged due to their conflict with current religious dogma. These included Galileo’s theory of the earth revolving around the sun as well as Harvey’s discovery that the heart functioned more like a mechanical pump than the set of animistic spirits.

Aside from building an argument that people have always been reluctant to accept new beliefs, Churchill works to convince readers that she has finally put to rest the idea that there is something beyond the concrete body and mind. She states that the brain consists of, among other structures, neural networks that code our memories and store our patterns of behavior. The networks are made up of neurons, and the brain has about 86 billion of them (Voytek, 2013). Once the neurons are lifeless, the memories and patterns of being disappear and there is no self. During one’s lifetime, people acquire knowledge of the self through the processes of learning about one’s brain. One of the advantages of learning about the neural self is that what past generations may have attributed to character flaws (as in the case of the behavior of people with schizophrenia or autism) can now be explained as neural networks gone awry. The self is the product of the processes of the brain and can be subject to limitations depending on genetics, environment, and experience. Churchland’s work can provide one strategy for students to examine and learn about themselves. Although her paradigm will not be sufficient for students with religious beliefs, her decades of neuroscientific research can provide an insight into aspects of why people behave as they do.
Damasio: Self as Body and Spirit

Antonio Damasio has also spent decades researching the concepts of mind and brain. For Damasio, the self is composed of an organism that integrates functions of both the brain and the body to form what some people call the mind (Damasio, 1994; Damasio, 2010). Damasio challenges Descartes on his classic phrase, “I think therefore I am.” To Damasio, reason and cognitive capacities are only partial components of the self. Both emotion and feeling are necessary for social competence. In contrast to Churchland, who does not use the term soul for a part of the self, Damasio does; however, his theory is that feelings are the basis for the terms soul and spirit in contrast to the traditional religious meanings that often signify an essence that continues after earthly life. To emphasize the organic wholeness of mind and body, he states, “The soul breathes through the body, and suffering, whether it starts in the skin or in a mental image, happens in the flesh,” (Damasio, 1994, Location 294). It is through the soul and spirit that art can cause elation or that music can bring us to tears.

Damasio (1994) supports his premise that feelings and emotion are integral components of the mind (and thus the self) by discussing two case studies: one, the classic study of Phineas Gage; and the second, a patient named Elliot. Phineas Gage was a construction foreman for a railway in 1848. As a result of an explosion, a piece of metal pipe that was three feet seven inches long and 1.25 inches in diameter, weighing thirteen pounds, entered his left cheek, then went through the base of his skull and came out the top of his head. Gage miraculously recovered physically, but his personality was different. According to people who knew him, he was no longer himself. What makes
people no longer “themselves”? People who encounter an acquaintance after many years might remark, “She’s not herself anymore.” Although we expect aging of the body, we tend to believe that people will be mostly the same; where we expect to see that sameness is in emotions and in social interactions.

Phineas Gage, before the accident, was a polite hardworking man, who was fiscally responsible. After the accident, he had a violent temper and could not hold down a job. He wandered from Vermont to South America and then north to San Francisco to stay with a sister. He died from seizures at the age of 38 (Damasio, 2004). A modern-day patient of Damasio’s, given the name Elliot, demonstrated the same loss of self after having a brain tumor removed. Elliot had been a successful businessman before the onset of headaches due to the tumor. He had a job that paid well, a home, and a family. After the removal of the tumor, he began a slide from his former independence into a state of dependence, living on disability. Tests revealed that his IQ was still the same. In addition, in other testing, Elliot knew the correct answers to questions regarding social competence. Perhaps more amazingly, he also recognized that though certain choices were the correct ones, he knew they would not be the choices that he would make. Elliot, like Phineas, had lost his former self and had become someone different, a person who was difficult for friends, relatives, and co-workers to relate to.

Students seeking to know and understand themselves better can benefit from the research of Damasio on the significance of emotions and feelings in our ability to learn and thrive in social settings. Because the majority of formal school education and most job opportunities take place in social settings, this ability to understand and feelings and
emotions is crucial in knowing self. Neuroscience research such as Damasio’s has provided evidence that although some people know what the proper social behavior is, they fail to employ it due to neural deficits. These students can learn in classroom settings but are unable to apply this information in real life (Immordino-Yang & Damasio, 2007). For college students, this knowledge of the role of the brain in social behavior can be an important component of understanding the self.

**Pert: Self as Body, Mind and Spirit**

The third neuroscience paradigm for the self is that of Candace Pert. Pert died in 2013, leaving a body of recognized scientific work in psychoneuroimmunology as well as work that many scientists considered more controversial. She was associated with the alternative medicine movement due to her beliefs concerning the role of thought in illness. In contrast to Churchland and Damasio, Pert argues for the existence of an integrated body/mind (Pert, 1997). She states that the weakness of psychology is that it deals only with the mind and ignores the body, while the opposite is true for traditional medicine; it deals with the body while ignoring the mind. How can this model be of any relevance for students as they attempt to understand themselves? For students, especially those combining schoolwork, a job, and family, understanding and regulating the emotions can be vital to achieving academic success. As with the models of Churchland and Damasio, Pert’s interpretations of her research may not resonate with everyone. Yet, her explanations could provide the framework some students need in order to better understand themselves.

Prior to Pert’s research, what many scientists described- the emotional brain as
limited to regions such as the amygdala, the hippocampus, and the hypothalamus. These areas are all very important to what we call mind and directly impact or feelings and emotions. For example, the amygdala processes information from the senses and visceral areas and is key in emotional learning. The hippocampus connects senses and emotion (such as aromas with a pleasant feeling) as well as being involved in memory formation. Finally, the hypothalamus has several functions, but one that is key to emotions is the production of hormones (Wright, 2013).

The function of peptides as messengers of emotion featured prominently in Pert’s research. While most people think of communication in the body happening across neural synapses, only two percent of neuronal communication actually does. Pert found that peptides could affect our emotions, our mind, and our immune system at the same time. She also discovered that memory was stored not just in the brain, but throughout the body. The significance to those trying to know themselves better is this: According to Pert, the mind lives throughout the body. What we store, repress, learn, or filter affects our perceptions of the world as well as the health of our bodies.

A study of the work of Candace Pert can assist students not only in understanding their emotions better, but also in understanding why they and others can have radically different perceptions of the same situation. Our brains not only constantly receive information from the environment, but also constantly filter information. There are too many continual stimuli for us to process all sights, sounds, smells etc. In reducing the amount of stimuli that the brain pays attention to, one person may retain a very different memory from another. Thus, as students seek to understand themselves and enter into
difficult dialogues with others, Pert’s research can contribute to their understanding of how people can have radically different perceptions of the same situation.

Another contribution of Pert’s research to students in search of themselves is her recognition of body, mind, but also spirit. Churchland and Damasio stick to empirical descriptions of how the body and brain interact to form the self. Yet most Americans claim to be part of a religion or to possess spiritual beliefs. According to a Gallup poll in 2011, nine in ten Americans claim a belief in God (Gallup, 2011). The studies by Pert can provide a perspective to students on how their beliefs about self affect not only their mental states, but their entire well-being.

To conclude, students need to have a foundation of beliefs regarding self in order to help them relate to others. Rather than struggle to formulate and articulate their beliefs solely from their own immediate thoughts or long held impressions, students should avail themselves of the works of the great philosophers, religious traditions, and neuroscientists to analyze the beliefs that they hold about themselves and their purpose in life. Through research and introspection, students are sure to find some premises that support their beliefs and, of course, other concepts with which they totally disagree. However, students will be engaging with those who challenge their beliefs, whether in college, in the work place, or in the community. One of the purposes of diversity classes should be to allow learners to wrestle with the literature in determining their perceptions of self. The classroom can be a space where students explore their ideas and learn to articulate them, not from a position of fear and/or anger, but from a position of expressing truths as they know them, aware that truths are not always eternal.
CHAPTER 4
DEFINING THE OTHER

“We are the Other of the Other.” (Marcus Aurelius)

In Oregon in 2009, the Joint Boards Articulation Committee (JBAC), one of the former state administrative bodies for higher education, developed standards for general education requirements. One of these standards addresses the issue of cultural literacy. To meet the JBAC standards, a cultural literacy course must, “Explore how culturally based assumptions influence perceptions, behaviors, and policies; and examine the historical bases and evolution of diverse cultural ideas, behaviors, and issues,” (Oregon Joint Boards Articulation Committee, 2009, p. JB-22). In other words, students who receive four-year degrees at public colleges in Oregon must take at least one course to increase their awareness of different patterns of beliefs and/or different behaviors of others.

Most people would agree that differentness in others can create unease. Corporate America counts on comfort with sameness, the desire to find Starbucks in San Francisco or Shanghai. Yet concurrent with the spread of sameness through globalization are continued conflicts of differentness sparked by political changes such as immigration and balkanization. The populations of Great Britain and the U.S. were mainly white and Christian at the beginning of the 20th century. Both are now much more diverse and are continuing to change rapidly. In some schools in inner city London, 80% of the students are non-native speakers of English (Loveys, 2010). Similarly, students in the New York
City School District speak one hundred eighty different languages (Office of English Language Learners, 2013). As these students move on to higher education, most college students will find themselves in classes with people very different from themselves. The need for strategies to help students negotiate the tensions of differentness is more and more crucial.

In the Bible in both in Leviticus (19:18) as well as in the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:27) we are told to love our neighbor as ourselves. Like the tax collector, we often wonder who is this neighbor, this person other than ourselves whom we are told to love? How does our concept of “the other” affect our behavior with persons unlike ourselves? Through the centuries, philosophers and theologians, and now neuroscientists, have described the mindsets that shape our thoughts and predispose us to act in certain ways. An understanding of categorizations of the other can help us develop a strategy to become aware of our beliefs and to encounter differences in a way that can allow for more positive interactions. Tariq Ramadan (2010) suggests that we create “spaces of intersection where we can meet on equal terms” (p. 14). A look at philosophy, religion, and neuroscience can help us understand how our own biases prevent us from accessing those spaces where we can get to know each other better (Figure 4).
Philosophical Perspective

One way to reflect upon the nature of the other and is the other’s influence on our thoughts and actions is through various philosophical viewpoints. The Greeks were meticulous in categorizing others according to their place of birth and also their function in society. Sartre claims that the others provide us a mirror without which we cannot truly examine ourselves. The philosopher Nel Noddings encourages us to examine our relationship to others in the context of caring. People today employ larger or smaller elements of these philosophies as they attempt to negotiate relationships of difference in today’s world. Students can increase their cognitive choices of how to deal with difference by reviewing each of these options and deciding which ones can help them increase understanding and/or alleviate conflict in situations of cultural or political opposition.
The Other as Alien

Othering has been a component of most political systems for centuries. Citizens have rights governments deny to non-citizens, such as foreigners. Historians often laud classical Greece as the birthplace of democracy, yet only native-born adult males were able to participate fully in the political process. Some people, such as slaves, had no rights at all. Aristotle, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, describes slaves as living tools. The Greeks identified three types of non-citizens: Ξένος, μέτοικος and βάρβαρος (Meyniac, Phelippeau, & Borgo, n.d.). The word Ξένος (xenos) is the root of the word xenophobia, fear of foreigners. Historically, the xenos was a traveler, someone who was passing through. The travelers identified as xenoi were usually Greeks from other city states. Greek custom required that hosts show a xenos hospitality. Thus although xenoi were people who did not belong to the area and did not have political rights, they were to be treated well. The second group, the meta-oikos (literally “change-home”), were non-Greeks who had settled in the city for business purposes. They were required to pay taxes, but were unable to own land. The majority of these residents were merchants. In order to reside legally in the city, they had to register, and they had to have a sponsor. Some meta-oikoi were further identified as having darker skin (and thus non-native Greeks). The third group, barbarians, comprises those who are the most different and the group from the citizens took slaves. The name itself conveys the attitude that the Greeks held toward this group. The name barbarian is an ideophone; the sound of *bar-bar-bar* was the equivalent of today’s *blah, blah, blah* and conveyed the idea that the language of the other, and possibly the other himself, was unintelligible (Thefreedictionary.com, 2014).
While beginning with categories of Greek citizens and aliens may at first seem irrelevant to college students looking at diversity, some further examination shows that these categories persist in similar forms in democracies of the 21st century. Identification of and discussion about these categories as they exist in the United States can help students identify the contexts that affect how receptive they are to getting to know new people. In the college environment, particularly residential campuses, many of the students could consider themselves xenoi. At large state colleges, there are usually students from all over the United States as well as students from foreign countries. Students have an opportunity to examine which other students they tend to associate with and why. Do they tend to stick together because of their geographical roots? Al Gore has stated that he and Tommy Lee Jones got along so well as room-mates at Harvard because they were both Southern boys. Diversity classes need to help students examine who is an other (not like me) in both the college and the larger environment and what are the likely consequences of that label? What do I lose by not associating with others who are not like me?

Unlike in classical Greece, the notion of hospitality to strangers, particularly in terms of welcoming them into the home, is less prevalent in the United States than in many areas of the world such as Latin America and the Middle East. Many people demonstrate an interest in strangers that they consider on par with themselves (equivalent to fellow Greeks visiting a neighboring city). People from Portland, Oregon may be interested in finding out from New Yorkers what life is like in a much faster-paced city.

However, unlike the home hospitality of other countries, fear or finances often limit the socialization to a coffee shop or other area away from a personal residence. In
American society, the other who is a foreigner can be a threat either to me physically or to my resources. Although fellow citizens are not considered foreigners, the notion of difference based on geographic origin persists. The phrase, “You’re not from around here, are you?” is one that can be heard in all parts of the United States. People are identified through their speech, their mannerisms, or perhaps the color of their skin. Whatever the combination of markers may be, the greater the differences between native and non-native, the more complex interactions tend to be if they occur at all.

The modern resident aliens, particularly those who have acquired residency status through the purchase of businesses, are equivalent to the meta-oikoi group of ancient Greece. The name itself, resident alien, conveys the sense of other. Alienation is separation from something else, often from the society at large. The merchant resident alien class must pay taxes and obey the laws, but cannot participate as voters. They are often stereotyped, the stereotypes generated in part from facts: Indians run motels; Vietnamese women run nail salons; Koreans run small markets.

Today, people use the term barbarian more commonly to describe people who are either extremely cruel or boorish. In ancient Greece, however, the barbarians were the foreigners that were the absolute other; the groups most difficult to understand. Similarly, in most countries today there a group of non-natives who have few or no rights. In this country, they are often called illegal aliens or, perhaps less pejoratively, undocumented workers. Other people exploit for their labor. The undocumented often fill jobs in the economy that no one else is willing to do at wages that are lower than those required by law. Because of their lack of legal status, these immigrants are always
the other. In many cases, their life comes close to how Aristotle (n.d.) described slaves; they are tools. The harsh life of many of the undocumented also shortens it. In the United States, the average life expectancy of a farm-worker is 49, compared to age 75 for the general population (Cornell University, 2000).

Often people consider these varying classifications of the other as acceptable, and thus become accepting of the philosophy that the rights of some should necessarily be different from the rights of others. A category of those that are “less than” in terms of rights often fills a psychological need for some. It allows people to dismiss wrestling with the social justice issues of having some do work that others with full status often refuse to do. This category also creates a scapegoat for social problems. Instead of searching for various causes that may result in social problems, it is often this third category, the barbarians (today’s undocumented aliens) who shoulder a substantial portion of the blame. Various groups accuse the modern barbarians as the source of job scarcity, of exploitation of government social services, and/or of overburdening school districts. Without, the barbarians and the opportunity to place blame externally, the remaining, less pleasant choice is to look for causes of strife and injustice internally.

The ancient Greek classification system of others provides a starting framework for students as they examine why they feel as they do about others. Are the others simply people of difference passing through? Are they someone to be welcomed? Do they add to the economy by establishing businesses or are they a drain on what resident peoples consider to be their exclusive resources and a threat to their current way of life? Schools and businesses stress the need for Americans to be globally competitive. In viewing the
other solely as competitor, students put themselves in a state of tension. As students work through their college years, it is important for them to consider whether their fellow students are people from whom they can learn and with whom they can cooperate, or whether they are competitors who take away from what they have. Is the other always an alien and what does that mean in terms of our interactions?

The Other is a Mirror

While the ancient Greeks labeled others according to their origin and treated them accordingly, the philosopher Sartre looked at the effect that others have on how we view ourselves. In *Being and Nothingness*, Sartre (1992) casts aside solipsism, the view that our existence is the only thing that we can ever know, and provides an analysis of the role of the other in how we live our lives.

Although a first glance at existentialism might lead people to believe that all that matters in this life are their solitary actions, Sartre points out that the other reveals who I am. He gives the example of making a vulgar gesture. He states that a person who makes the gesture while alone feels no shame; however, the presence of another changes the nature of the act. The other reflects back to me what I am doing, or feeling, or some other aspect of my nature. The more the reflection conforms to what I believe about myself, the more comfortable I am with that other. The more the reflection shows me a self that is unexpected or unpleasant, the more irritated or uncomfortable I may be with the other. For example, if I am walking down a street with no one around, I may be either absorbed in thoughts or involved in observing my surroundings. If people appear who are like me, or to whom I am accustomed, my behavior is unchanged. However, if
people appear who are unlike me, I become very conscious of the others and my reactions to them. Are they a threat? If I perceive them as a threat, why do I do so? Am I afraid of people of a different race, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status harming me? My focus bounces from the other to myself, revealing not only information about the other, but information about myself. My encounter with the other elicits a behavioral response on my part, anything from happiness to fear, a response that I may not be eager to analyze or confront.

Two other key concepts developed by Sartre with regard to the other are that of spatializing and temporalizing. In an encounter with the other, I am at a particular place and also at a specific time. Students working to develop a framework for interaction with difference need to consider these two constructs. When I think of someone who is not like me, where do I perceive them to be? Do I think of a particular group in a particular geographic location? When I am in a face-to-face situation with the other, how does this affect the interaction? Some courses that are labeled diversity courses deal with literature of different ethnic or racial groups. Students need to consider to what extent an encounter with the literature or art of a particular group will affect (if it will) not only my thoughts about that group, but also my spatial interactions with that group. How are my feelings and reactions different if someone is across the street from me? What if that person bumps into me?

Sartre writes not only of the spatializing effect of the other, but also the temporalizing effect. By reading about groups and their characteristics in the 20th century, can I develop a schema for interaction for the 21st century? Sartre argues that we
must consider the simultaneity of time and place and how this affects our interactions with the other. Whether with regard to time and space, or simply with our encounter with the other, Sartre brings up a weighty point. To what extent would our behavior change in the absence of all others? The other is a force who not only reflects our behavior back to us, but has the capability to change any type of response we might have at all. Diversity classrooms provide great opportunities for students to reflect on how others affect us and why. In an existentialist sense, how does my response to the other speak to who I am?

Students who consider themselves existentialists will need to consider how their interactions with others create the definition of themselves. Since existentialists believe that they enter the world with no pre-determined purpose, their choices in interactions of diversity (as well as other choices) will play a major role in defining who they are. As college students struggle to find their purpose and identity, their decision of how to view and treat others is of major consequence. Sartre leaves no doubt as to the importance of the other when he says that men are responsible not only for themselves, “but are responsible for all men (Sartre & Baskin, 1993, p. 36).

The Other as Cared for

Chapter 3 Defining the Self began with Jesus’ words to love our neighbors as ourselves. In that chapter we looked at the perspectives of self provided by various religions. We now return to that quotation, this time to look at the command to love the other. When Jesus asked the lawyer what were the two great commandments, the lawyer responded that the one was to love God and the other was to love one’s neighbor. The lawyer then asked who his neighbor was, to which Jesus replied with the parable of
the Good Samaritan. The Samaritan, who helped the man who had been beaten and robbed, was the neighbor, the one who had showed compassion to the injured man (Luke 10: 25-37).

Nel Noddings, in her book *Caring: A Feminine approach to Ethics & Moral Education*, labels the agent as *the one caring* and characterizes the other as *the one cared for*. The need for increased caring is evident in many work and social environments, but particularly in today’s school’s systems. A frequent criticism made by students is that either nobody cares or the teachers really do not care (Cameron, 2012, Noddings 2003). This perceived lack of caring by teachers, parents, peers, and others leads to school environments with high student apathy or school violence. Cameron (2012) found that one of the most prevalent reasons that students dropped out of high school was that no one cared. Students mentioned that the institutions wanted them to graduate, but really did not care about them as individuals. Nel Noddings advocates that we begin in schools to create environments of caring. She recognizes that often we do not feel like caring about the other and distinguishes between the concepts of ethical caring and natural caring. Ethical caring occurs because we know we should, whether we feel a connection to someone or not. Natural caring is the nurturing and protection we give our children because of our bond with them. We know that most teachers demonstrate ethical caring: they care about whether students pass their class and possibly about the students’ general well-being; however, Noddings states that the potential “cared for” sees this ethical caring as non-genuine and, consequently, interactions meant to resolve problems are more likely unsuccessful.
Caring is a process that takes us, as much as possible, into the situation and mind of the other. It is not simply a matter of providing money or goods to those in need. Through caring, we are attempting to understand the reality of the other. For dialogues of difference to bear fruit, it is necessary that the one caring work to understand the situation of the other and then do something to meet the others’ needs. This process may not seem too difficult to some. Yet the practice of understanding others is just that; it is a practice. Like any other skill, it requires frequent, if not daily practice. Too often, in our attempt to know and even care about the other, we do not take the time observe, absorb, and/or appreciate the differentness of the other. An encounter by students in a diversity class of another group with very different beliefs may result in summations analogous to the characters of the *Blind Man and the Elephant*. Each student perceives a truth about the other group. Yet by perceiving a limited picture of the characteristics of the other, the perception that they have is false. An elephant is not just a trunk or a tail; neither is any one group composed of one or two isolated characteristics. Thus Noddings’ emphasis on knowing as one of the primary steps in caring is of prime important. We do injustice and possibly hurt to the other when we claim to know who they are and what they need (as do the political policies of many nations).

**The Religious Perspective**

According to a recent survey of American college students, approximately one-third consider themselves religious, one third consider themselves spiritual, and the remaining third, secular (Kosmin & Keysar, 2013). While 70% of the religious groups believe in God, 77% of the secular group either do not believe in God or do not know if
there is a God. In classroom participation, students need to consider how their views of others’ religious beliefs affect their ability to listen and give credence to what others say. Is it possible to take seriously people who claim that they are God’s chosen people if I have no belief in God at all? If the others in my environment hold religious beliefs that I find objectionable, what are my possible responses? College students will face these and other dilemmas.

**God’s Chosen: The People of Israel**

The concept of *the other* appears prominently in a number of religions. Beginning in the Old Testament, Scripture records that the children of Israel occupy a special status with God. Deuteronomy 7:6 states, “For you are a bold people to the Lord your God; the Lord has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. These references to the people of Israel as God’s chosen sets up a dichotomy of thought. Some people are God’s people and others are not. The other seems often to be a threat and the resulting conflict can lead to war. For example, in Exodus, God’s people must flee the other, as characterized by the Egyptians. In Numbers, God orders Moses to destroy the Midianites. In Samuel, the Philistines are the enemy. Throughout the Old Testament, the other is usually an opponent who the Israelites need to destroy. Consequently, the children of Israel fight wars with the other and occupy their lands. The rightness of their actions lies in their belief as the chosen people of God.

The idea that their beliefs entail a life apart from the other continues in the views of many orthodox and conservative Jews. For example, Rabbi Nissan Dovid Dubov
(n.d.) argues strongly against marriage with non-Jews. His reasoning is based on a combination of factors, including the analogy that each Jew is a like a letter in the scroll of the Torah and has a particular role within the Jewish community. Intermarriage mars the ability Jews to carry out their unique role.

A prayer that has been passed down by generations of Jews illustrates the othering of not only non-Jews, but also of Jewish women. The person praying (male Jew) thanks God that he is neither a gentile (in original versions a boor) nor a woman, nor a dog (Kahn, 2011). This prayer makes the point that not all are equal in the eyes of God, in this case the “others” being both non-Jews and women. The effect of this prayer on categorization of others might depend on the attention people pay to rote prayers. For example, a number of school children grow up reciting the Pledge of Allegiance. For many the phrase, “I pledge allegiance to the flag,” does not carry much meaning. Does this mean I will bear arms? Does it mean, “My country right or wrong?” Similarly, the extent to which the prayer prejudices a young Jewish boy against women depends upon what attention he pays to the prayer and how parents reinforce it in the home. As stated in research question three, “In what ways will an examination of the other aid in identifying student biases?” Students need academic spaces in which to reflect upon unexamined beliefs and traditions that may be affecting their abilities to relate to others.

Jews themselves have been othered throughout the centuries. They have lived as communities unto themselves, following Jewish rituals, and until recent decades, not intermarrying. This physical separation from other residents has led to discrimination and persecution. Conversely, particularly on the East Coast, Latinos and Blacks feel they
have been othered by Hassidic Jews. While each group claims to have been
discriminated against, all groups deny discrimination against the other.

A very complex and thorny issue beyond the scope of this paper is how religion
affects the views of Israelis and Palestinians as others. If some Israelis view themselves
as the chosen people of God, can they be in the wrong concerning their claim to land both
they and the Palestinians inhabit? How do these perspectives affect not only those who
live in the Middle East, but also the views of those of Arab and Jewish ethnicities who
live in the United States? Pro-Palestinian rallies have been held in 2014 both in the US
and abroad. Diversity courses should strive to offer students a range of tools that they
can use not only in classroom conversations, but also in rallies that often develop into
more heated conflict. Universities should seize the opportunity to help students develop
skills they will need in crises and conflicts to be mediators rather than agitators.

**God’s Chosen: America the Beautiful**

The theme of God’s chosen people has continued in various denominations of
Christianity and has become a part of U.S. nationalistic thought as well. American
history is replete with references to God’s favor toward the United States. As college
students reflect on diversity and the other, they should consider role that American
history has played in their lives in establishing their identity.

Whether through documents or speeches, the destiny of the United States has been
described by many as a special charge from God. The Declaration of Independence states
that King George attempted to deny rights given by the Creator, those rights being life,
liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. While at that time, liberty was limited to whites, the
point was that King George was denying rights given by the Creator to the colonists. During the Civil War, the Northern churches emphasized the role of the Union in preserving Christian values. Thus the war was about more than the economics of slavery; it was a battle by God’s people to do his will (Moorhead, n.d.).

As the American colonies grew and spread across the continent, the annihilation and incarceration of native peoples were justified based the concept of *manifest destiny*. According to Pratt (1927), the term *manifest destiny* was first used in Congress by Representative Robert Winthrop in 1846 as part of the argument for U.S. control over the area now known as Oregon; Winthrop stated that God had given the U.S. the rights to these lands. Congress repeated the term when considering annexing territory that belonged to Mexico. As did the children of Israel, Americans named God as the source of authorization for the domination of others and the acquisition of their lands. The lyrics to *America the Beautiful*, written in 1893, describe the continental U.S. as a place that has received the grace of God. The song mentions the pilgrims but makes no mention of the dispossessed Native Americans. From the Civil War to the Civil Rights Movement and beyond, God is the alleged source of truth for the beliefs of many political and religious groups. Much of what students have learned in school, read in the press, or heard from politicians refers to a special role determined by God for the United States. As students contemplate their attitudes toward the other, they need to include an examination of how their historical perspective of the United States affects their ability to relate to others.
God’s Chosen: I Know I’m Right; Are You Right Too?

Religion strongly affects people’s perspectives of who the other is. For many, anyone who does not belong to the same denomination is an other; a person who is in partial possession of the truth. According to Paul Griffiths (2001), a religion is a form of life. This form of life possesses three central qualities. It is comprehensive, affecting all that people do. People will not abandon it because of its central importance in their lives. In contrast to Griffith’s definition, people may call one group of practices a religion, but it is simply a collection of cultural practices. Many people attend church sporadically, often attending on major holidays such as Easter and Christmas. They call themselves Christians but would not consider their beliefs of central importance, and their interpretations of Christianity do not affect all that they do.

Can religious people from different faiths tolerate, co-exist, or cooperate with the other given that each believes a different set of truths? Does recognition of another’s beliefs represent a betrayal or rejection of my own faith? Griffiths points out that responses to the religion of the other can be either exclusivist or inclusivist. If I am an exclusivist, then I believe that I will find truth only within my own religion. Inclusivists believe that in addition to the truth of my religion, I may encounter truths in other religions as well. Griffiths maintains that that few religions maintain a purely exclusivist stance, yet he acknowledges that for many, their chosen religion is “privileged with respect to the truth,” (p. 56). Christian evangelical denominations thus face a barrier in listening to truths professed by those of other religions. If the evangelicals believe it is their calling to convert others to their beliefs, they will be unable to adopt a belief system
of religious parity. If two groups are in conflict, and one group believes that it is the sole possessor of the truth, how can resolution be achieved?

Griffiths argues that one way people have become comfortable with the idea of religious parity is by viewing religion as a privatized, preference-based system of beliefs. He states that legalization of abortion, based on a woman’s right to choose, established the idea that one’s religious beliefs are private, individual matters and thus under the First Amendment, cannot be subject to the control of the government. Thus religious claims become matters of preference. Under this construct, Griffiths likens them to preferences for ice cream flavors. One person likes vanilla, another chocolate. One likes Buddhism, another Christianity. No problem. However, as people begin to deal with such issues as abortion or the obligation of an employer to provide birth control for women, many are not comfortable with what they consider moral choices cloaked as preferences.

Othering allegedly based on claims of knowing God’s will has persisted through the centuries. In the early days of Christianity, non-believers were othered either as Jews or Gentiles. This mindset has led to a continued division in many societies between those who are of one religion (believed to be the true one) contrasted to the beliefs of others. In some cases, the non-believers are shunned or isolated; in other cases, they are view as potential converts. As students work to develop a framework for diversity, one of the concepts with which they will wrestle is whether they accept the possibility of religious parity. Is it possible for various religions to possess versions of the truth? If not, and I believe that my religion alone expresses the truth concerning God and the purpose of life, how will I respond to others who disagree with me?
The Neuroscientific Perspective

As students look at the complexity of diverse environments, it is important to realize that not all othering is the exclusive result of socialization processes or cultural traditions. As biological beings, we are wired to notice difference. Noticing difference is a survival mechanism. We need to determine if something is a threat. However, if we classify all difference as a potential threat, we create difficulty for ourselves and others when we are in a heterogeneous environment. Neuroscientific research is helping scientists understand why people behave as they do in the presence of differentness and why, in some circumstances, changing what is perceived as a negative behavior can only take place over time.

The Other – Wired to Notice

Multiple sources of sensory input from our environment constantly bombard the brain. Our brain must continuously sort the stimuli to determine what we need to pay attention to. Of primary importance are those stimuli that may be linked to our survival. If we are walking down the street and hear an extremely loud noise, we focus our attention on finding the source. We may stop, not moving until we have determined whether the source is a threat and whether we need to move away quickly. On the other hand, the sound of people talking in low tones as they pass us by may not even elicit a glance in that direction. We become conditioned to certain sensory stimuli in particular environments. Through habituation, we realize that these sights and sounds do not pose a threat and no longer respond to them (Medina, 2008; Sweeney, 2009). Depending on our beliefs about the stimuli, habituation will occur over a varied length of time. Our
memories also determine whether we can remove a stimulus from automatic alert status. For example, many persons who have had a bad experience in a particular country may continue to feel unease around people from that area. The memory creates an emotional association that causes a negative reaction in the presence of that category of other.

Our brains begin to develop connections that focus on difference at a very early age. At the time of birth, babies begin to develop a system for facial discrimination (Johnson and Morton, 1991). Whether the other is perceived as friend or foe can often depend on parental reaction. During the first year of life, infant response, whether one of calmness or anxiety, often depends on the tone of voice of the parent in the presence of the other. In the second year of life, the infant begins to search the parents’ face for cues to the safety of the situation. Whether an infant grows up to be novelty seeking or novelty avoiding largely depends on the actions of the parent or caregiver when the infant is faced with novelty (Crockenberg & Leerkes, 2004).

As adults, one example of the variation of how we experience the novelty of the other is our response to travel. At one end of the spectrum are the tourists who want minimal direct exposure to difference. They ride in buses, separating themselves from the local people and gazing through glass windows at sights on the other side. Their experience of difference is a limited amount of visual diversity. The visitors mostly restrict or exclude other types of sensory difference. They may ride through a foreign countryside listening to 1990’s American music on their headphones. They travel in packs and speak their native language rather than attempting the local ones. In larger international cities, instead of trying the local foods, they head for Starbucks,
McDonald’s or Burger King. Tactile differences are irritating to many tourists. Beds are too hard; clothing materials do not have the right feel. Odors from novel foods are often labeled *smells* rather than *aromas*. Many Americans appreciate and accept physical contact, whether through handshaking or hugging, but too often people avoid or merely tolerate it. Contact with the other, if it is to be experienced at all, may be acceptable only in small doses.

Other people live at the opposite end of the novelty spectrum. If they travel with those from their own country, they include others from different countries as well. They attempt the language, try the foods, and are accepting of varying living conditions. They are more likely to accept hugging is more likely as a daily greeting, rather than an attempt at impropriety. People’s tolerance for novelty can limit how open people are to listening and accepting views of *others*. The validity of new views loses its strength simply because it is different.

While paying attention to the unfamiliar is part of our survival mechanism (Medina, 2008) and is also a pleasant source of stimulation to some, when and how we pay attention can create problems in our societies today. Young children often embarrass their parents by calling attention to people who appear different, whether because of race, body type, or other physical characteristic. While adults usually do not usually cry out vocally, “Look at that man!” they may have to fight the urge to fix a prolonged gaze on someone who is markedly different.

In sum, the urge to single out the other has basic biological roots stemming from our need to identify threats in order to survive. However, in addition to the need to
identify threats, other people, whether due to their genetics or upbringing experience
discomfort when confronted with the other. One part of the diversity curriculum should
assist students in identifying what kinds of encounters create discomfort in the presence
of the other and why. Some students may be isolating themselves from groups of people
based on beliefs and experiences from the past. In an academic environment, students
can work together to examine the roots of these beliefs and collectively examine whether
there is a reason for these beliefs to continue.

The Other – The Biology of Trust

My body chemistry can also affect how I feel about the other. The neuroscientist
Candice Pert (1997) describes people as full of hormones that affect our bodies and minds.
Hormones also affect the memories we form and the emotions that we feel. Oxytocin is a
hormone that increases bonding and trust. Women produce higher levels of oxytocin in
childbirth, allowing them to bond to their infant. Oxytocin levels also increase in the first
few years of a couple’s relationship (Sweeney, 2009). However, an increase in oxytocin
levels can also cause a person to put misplaced trust in others. In one study, researchers
gave subjects a nasal spray with oxytocin. The subjects and a control group (who sniffed
a placebo spray) were allocated play money to give to investors. The researchers advised
both groups that the investors might invest and share the proceeds or might keep all the
money. In the oxytocin group, 13 of the 29 subjects gave the investors all their money,
while in the control group only 6 of 29 did so. As people seek to determine whether
someone is a threat or is trustworthy, they need to be aware that biological states can
affect their cognitive choices (Zak, Stanton, & Ahmadi, 2007).
Another part of the brain can also affect my ability to decide whether the other is friend or foe. The insula is involved in making decisions regarding trust. As people get older, the insula is less active, making them more vulnerable to scams (nbc news, 2012, 12/03). This partly explains why elderly people tend to believe the phone call that tells them they have won a foreign sweepstakes or believe the repair person who claims to need a very high prepayment for a house repair and then never returns. The elderly are victims not only of the scammers, but also of a part of their brain that no longer functions as effectively as when they were younger. In addition to changes due to aging, the insula is also sensitive to temperature. Cold puts the insula on alert; warmth quiets it down.

When research subjects played a game of economic trust, their sense of trust increased when they touched a warm pack prior to the game and decreased after touching the cold pack (Kang, Williams, Clark, Gray, & Bargh, 2011). Researchers have also found that a person who is asked to hold a cold drink by someone else finds that person to be less likeable than when asked to hold a warm drink (Williams & Bargh, 2008).

In sum, a complex set of elements intersect when we meet “an other” and make a decision as to whether this person is a threat, a possible acquaintance that we might add to our Linked-in file, or someone who might become a close friends. Are they like us? If not, many aspects of my biology and my environment affect my ability to interact on a positive basis with the other. As mentioned, these include my genetics, the reaction of my childhood caretaker to novelty, my current spectrum of tolerance for novelty, the state of my insula, my levels of oxytocin, and whether there is a perception of environmental warmth (not heat) or coolness associated with the encounter. These are all factors which
the ordinary person does not think about upon meeting someone. Diversity across the curriculum at the higher education level can create workshops or classroom activities where students and instructors can explore differing conditions and student reactions.

**The Other – The Biology of Empathy**

What can neuroscience tell us about why we are able to feel empathy for some but apparently cannot feel empathy for others? As I stated in the previous section on trust, there are a number of factors, both biological and environmental that affect our ability to trust someone. Similarly, a number of factors affect our ability to empathize with someone beyond their resemblance to ourselves. Studies support our tendency to feel empathy for those who share our preferences (Cikara, Bruneau & Saxe, 2011). More strikingly, studies show that infants as young as nine and fourteen months prefer those who mistreat dissimilar others (Hamlin, Mahajan, Liberman, & Wynn, 2013). While many of us would like to blame our parents or our environment for mistrust or dislike of others, or even joy at their misfortunes (schadenfreude), outside influences are not the only sources of our reactions.

Unfortunately, at least in terms of getting along with people who are different, we are wired to feel empathetic toward the sufferings of those who are most like ourselves and to feel less or no empathy, or even schadenfreude at the sufferings of those who are different. In an article entitled, *Not Like Me = Bad: Infants Prefer Those Who Harm Dissimilar Others*, (Hamlin et al., 2013) the authors found that infants at 9 months and 14 months preferred characters (puppets) who had the same food tastes as they. One group preferred crackers and the others green beans. When the character with
the same food preference as the infant helped out a third puppet with the same preference, the infants continued to like the puppet. What is disturbing is that if that same puppet (for example the one that liked crackers) helped out a character that liked the green beans, the original infant no longer liked the character. In sum, the infants preferred those with similar preferences unless that puppet assisted another character that was non-similar.

The implications of this research are immense. As college instructors work to help students develop frameworks for dealing with diversity, all involved in the process must consider the various dimensions of the task. Students not only need to examine beliefs that were held by family or in their environment, but also need to consider the degree to which they have an innate preference for sameness and how this preference influences their relationships.

Throughout life, adults develop numerous categories that often determine whether they will feel empathy for one group or feel schadenfreude for another despite the relative similarity of the situation. The difference in response often depends to the extent the individual is able to identify with the other. Batson (2009) describes empathy as a combination of cognitive and affective categories. Two of those categories involve perspective taking: how would I feel in the other person’s shoes; and how do I believe the other person feels in her situation. The next two categories include emotional responses to the other: how does that outgroup member feel and how do I feel toward them? Therefore, rather than empathy being a simple gut response of feeling sympathy (or not) for an other, the construct is composed of a variety of elements.
Often when people lack empathy for another’s situation, counselors or friends ask them to imagine themselves in the place of the distressed (one of Batson’s aforementioned categories). However, the empathetic response to the other depends not only on the type of adverse condition but other factors as well. The responses of the infants by food preference had the effect of dividing them into two groups: those like me, the in-group; those different from me, the out-group. In addition to common in-group membership, the degree of empathy is also affected by space, time, and kinship (Bruneau, Dufour, & Saxe, 2012). In a study of two conflict groups, (Bruneau et al., 2012), Arabs and Israelis, read stories of suffering of their and the other group. Not surprisingly, each group felt more empathy for the sufferings of its own group. The researchers not only queried the subjects about their feelings, but also measured brain activity in those areas associated with empathy. When Israelis and Arabs read about the sufferings of South Americans, they both verbally expressed more empathy than for the conflict group. Yet, measurements in the brain showed less activity in those areas that indicate compassion despite what the subjects said. Thus although we may read about the injustice suffered by an out-group and express sympathy, our spatial proximity to that group affects our empathy at the unconscious level.

In addition, how recently I have had contact with a particular group or person and/or whether the person or group affects my ability to empathize. When an airliner goes down in another part of the world, the news focus is on how many Americans were on the plane. Writers even further dissect the news into whether the person was from the same state or city as the broadcast. On the one hand, we would all be emotionally
overtaxed if there were not some hierarchy for determining for whom we feel the most empathy and to what person or groups we will respond. Perhaps knowing that spatial, temporal and kinship factors do affect our sense of empathy can perhaps help us understand better why we feel empathy for some, yet not for others.

Studies of the other in diversity curricula can help students deepen their understanding of either their interest in or apathy for people who are different. These studies can also prepare them to look more analytically at situations that involve race and law enforcement, not relying exclusively on one media perspective. How we feel about those who are different involves a complex set of elements. We have brains wired to react to difference, brains that trust depending on a variety of chemical and environmental situations and empathy that varies depending on several categories. Classroom and campus conversations offer a calmer space to analyze influences than in the surroundings after a shooting or some other type of tragedy has occurred. We need to be aware that our brains can help us to understand others, but can also reinforce prejudice if we are not aware of our own metacognition.
CHAPTER 5
CULTIVATING DIVERSITY: CHALLENGES IN HIGHER EDUCATION

“How can you govern a country which has 246 varieties of cheese?”

(Charles de Gaulle)

Similarly, how can we cultivate diversity education when we cannot define diversity, classify it, or identify our most pressing objectives for including it in the college curriculum? Most institutions of higher education in the United States have made the inclusion of diversity education a priority. As mentioned in Chapter 2, The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and thirty seven other higher education organizations have aligned to promote campus-wide diversity, both in terms of admission and hiring as well as a part of campus education (AAUP, 2013). The first chapter of the paper introduced the two major components of the diversity dilemma in higher education. One is the consideration of who the 21st century students are and what it is that they believe about themselves as well as others. Another key issue is the lack of conformity among the variety of courses that satisfy the diversity requirement at different institutions. Chapter 2 explained and explored diversity as a contested concept, one for which there is no universally agreed-upon definition. In addition, the chapter provided a review of the literature of various diversity programs at four-year institutions. The research supports diversity courses as sources of cognitive, civic, and career benefits, yet fails to define key elements for all diversity courses or a cross-curricular program.

In chapter 3, I argued that for students to acquire empathy for and understanding
of others, they first need to examine themselves and the basis for their beliefs. While the Bible says to love thy neighbor as thyself, and Socrates advises “Know thyself,” Goethe seems a little more reluctant to begin with the self when he states, “Know thyself? If I knew myself, I’d run away,” (von Goethe, n.d.). For those students that we can convince to be more adventurous than Goethe, a look at the self is a worthwhile endeavor before attempting to understand others. Chapter 3 looked at belief systems that students can use to clarify their own values and included views of the self from selected philosophical, religious, and neuroscientific perspectives. Finally, Chapter 4 stated that once students are armed with some knowledge of self or at least more awareness of their values and their origins, they can more effectively examine their beliefs about the other. They can seek the roots of their beliefs in psychology, religion, and neuroscience or family and personal experience. Particularly if the analysis of self, other, and diversity interaction is embedded throughout the college curricula, students will be better equipped to develop a process for dealing with difference within and beyond the academic system. Rather than merely taking a diversity course that provides them with information about others, students can begin the process illustrated in Figure 1, (p. 12). The process involves studying self, studying others, developing a framework for interactions with diverse and often conflicting views, and then applying and modifying the paradigm according to what students learn and how the world changes.

Chapter 5 narrows the focus on diversity education to the college where I work and examines some of the recent episodes involving interpretations of diversity at Clatsop Community College. Subsequent to the description of the events, I comment on how the
outcomes of the events could have been different had a cross-curricular emphasis on diversity been in place. Finally, I list some of the courses that qualify for the cultural literacy requirement for the Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer Degree (AAOT) from community colleges and discuss the lack of common objectives among them.

**Introduction of the Cultural Literacy Requirement**

In 2009 by a workgroup composed of faculty and administrators from colleges in Oregon developed the criteria for a cultural literacy requirement. The workgroup developed the standards as part of an effort to create equivalency of designated cultural literacy courses across institutions of higher education in the state of Oregon. The Joint Boards’ Articulation Committee (JBAC) in approved The *Outcomes and Criteria for Transferable General Education Courses in Oregon* in late 2009 and adopted them in 2010. There are two criteria for a cultural literacy course: exploration of culturally-based assumptions and their effects; and examination from a historical perspective of the development of diverse cultural ideas and behaviors (Joint Boards of Education, 2009).

**Designation of Cultural Literacy Courses**

The trail of evidence regarding the selection of cultural literacy courses at Clatsop Community College is not easy to unearth. The self-evaluation report submitted to the Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities notes that courses in both Arts and Letters and Social Sciences were “deemed to meet” the requirement (Clatsop Community College, 2011); however, neither the process nor the participants were identified (Clatsop Community College, 2011). Therefore, although there are approximately 30 courses that, according to the Clatsop Community College catalog, satisfy the cultural literacy
requirement, the process for their inclusion is unclear. There are also no descriptors in
the catalog that indicate how the courses meet the outcomes of a cultural literacy course.
One of the intended learning outcomes for students completing an AAOT is that they will
show respect for diverse cultures and differing world views while embracing a sense of
pride in their own regional values and heritage. While some classes such as Cultural
Anthropology seem by their content to focus on diverse cultures, the relevance of other
courses, in the absence of additional information, is vague. Classes such as English
Literature—both the Medieval and Renaissance courses—are listed as meeting the
cultural diversity requirement, while the survey of American Literature does not. In
addition, neither does the course, Great Religions of the World, which during one quarter
focuses on Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism. The absence of easily accessible
criteria for cultural literacy courses can leave both students and advisors confused. The
unavailability of these benchmarks also leaves in question how participation in these
courses enhances a student’s cultural awareness and or interaction skills.

Examination of Components of Diversity Courses

Gurin, et al. (2002) classified diversity into three components: structural,
curricular, and interpersonal. At Clatsop Community College, the structural diversity
reflects that of the state of Oregon in general. For both, the white population is about
85%, black about 2%, and Latino about 8% (Clatsop Community College, 2013;
infoplease, 2013). Thus the majority of students enrolling in the college will not
encounter much structural diversity with regard to race. Based on their campus
interactions, students are unlikely to reexamine their beliefs regarding race. All students
enrolled in the AAOT degree program presumably experience curricular diversity through the completion of the required cultural literacy course. However, there is currently no survey or exit exam that measures how or if student beliefs have changed by the end of the term. Students enrolled in the AAOT program must take Speech 111, Fundamentals of Public Speaking. Because this class meets the cultural literacy requirement, students in this program need take no other cultural literacy class. The course outline for Speech 111 indicates that the class will include the ethos of persuasion, thus possibly introducing multiple perspectives of persuasion. In contrast, English Literature of the Medieval Period, has also been designated a cultural literacy course. The course outline indicates that students will understand the context of medieval culture. Campus or other scholarly research has not documented how well the cultural information in either of these courses transfers to student interactions on campus or in the community.

A campus committee, called Isms, Obias, and Us (IOU), composed of college faculty and staff, provides the majority of co-curricular activities emphasizing diversity. Part of the mission of the group is to provide education regarding cultural competence, power, privilege, and oppression. The group sponsors programs that focus on racial or ethnic diversity and how power differences affect those relationships. Although more students are beginning to take advantage of these programs, no students are members of the committee. The college also publicizes events by the Lower Columbia Diversity Group in an effort to provide students with opportunities to learn about cultures different from their own. Thus although options exist for learning more about diversity, the
majority of students do not take advantage of them unless as part of a class requirement. Researchers such as Bowman (2011) and Maruyama and Moreno (2001) have demonstrated that interpersonal diversity, in contrast to in-class learning, is the most effective method for changing student behaviors and attitudes. Nevertheless, due to the lack of structural diversity, particularly racial, there are few opportunities on campus for organized dialogues across and within groups. There is a Latino Club which is open to all students. However, there is only one non-Latino student who attends. The Latino Club raises money for scholarships, speaks at schools to encourage Hispanic transition to college, and does community volunteer activities. However, there are no structured conversations with other races or ethnicities to discuss their commonalities and differences. One difficulty in getting students to participate in any kind of on-campus co-curricular activity is that the campus is non-residential. All students are commuters and the majority of them hold jobs off campus. Thus even if diversity groups sponsored these events, students might need to be given class credit or some other incentive in order to make it a priority to attend.

**Clatsop Community College: Diversity as an Institutional Value**

The college where I teach, Clatsop Community College, is a small rural community college in the Pacific Northwest with a full time enrollment of about 1500 students. Although the structural diversity is limited, with whites comprising approximately 85% of the enrollment, the college has made a commitment to diversity. The ability to understand and appreciate diversity is one of the general institutional learning outcomes. In addition, the Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer (AAOT) degree
requires a cultural literacy course. For purposes of this paper, the terms diversity courses and cultural literacy courses are treated as equivalent (see key terms, p. 15). The section also examines how well the implementation of the cultural literacy requirement has aligned with the research findings described in the first part of this paper.

**Two Cases of Diversity Issues on Campus**

Two incidents in the past year illustrate the kind of diversity dilemmas that have arisen on campus. These events also provide an opportunity to evaluate the campus responses and to hypothesize whether the outcomes could have been more favorable. Every year in the spring, the Gideons come to campus and pass out Bibles. This past year their presence evoked quite a response (via campus e-mail) from various staff and faculty. In response to some who were upset, others responded that the Gideons’ presence should be accepted, if not welcomed, as part of the college’s commitment to diversity. Some people argued strongly against the inclusion of the Gideons as demonstrative of this value. Those who objected felt that since Christian belief was part of the dominant societal culture in the United States, allowing its expression was a reinforcement of a majority viewpoint, rather than an introduction to an alternate belief (and thus not *diversity*). There was no visible student response to the Gideon presence on campus. Because one of the outcomes of diversity studies can be cognitive development, instructors might have used this dilemma to query students about their beliefs about those labeled “persons of privilege” and whether this label was relevant to the larger picture of diversity or what the meaning and effects of this label were. In addition, since there was no official survey establishing that the majority of students on campus were Christian, instructors could have helped
students sort out the facts versus the assumptions being made in this case. Then depending on the subject, students could have analyzed another situation and determined what is a dominant group and how does its rights differ (if they do) from the rights of anyone else.

The other event occurred with the publication of the first edition of the student newspaper this term. In prior years, there had been an advice column entitled “Ask Aunt Blabby.” Because the author of that column has graduated, the journalism students decided that they would start an advice column with a new name. The Clatsop Community College mascot is a raccoon and the title of the publication is The Bandit. When the campus community opened the October edition, it saw a new column entitled, “Question the Coon.” The institutional response was disparate. Initially the reply from the dean of students to concerned faculty was that the column was allowable as freedom of speech. Many in the campus community were concerned with and unsatisfied by this answer. On November 5th, the dean of students sent out a letter explaining more of the circumstances. According to the dean, the students had been unaware of the connotations of the word coon and had thought they were simply referring to the college mascot in an alliterative manner. In addition, he stated that the student staff had inserted the column subsequent to the review of the paper by the journalism instructor. In response to this situation, the dean explained that the journalism student group would change the name of the column, write an apology, explain the derogatory meaning, and put an edited copy of the paper online.

The controversy continued to evolve when The Daily Astorian, the town’s local paper, published an article on the front page about the column in the student newspaper.
In the article, the student who had written the Bandit column stated that he still would have used the word even if he had known what it meant. He stated that his intent was simply a play on words. The college president subsequently sent a letter to all staff urging that we consider ways to foster our commitment to inclusion on our campus. The next issue of the Bandit included an apology, but it also included articles and comments by students that people who objected to the term were overreacting.

These two incidents in the past year are evidence that the campus is in need of more discussion of difference. Students need to practice using strategies to examine their assumptions and thought processes as part of their cognitive development during their college years. As a college that has made diversity a campus wide value, administrators and instructors need to expend more effort in exploring teaching techniques and classroom opportunities for difficult dialogues across difference.

A few changes are taking place in an effort to get the college staff thinking about situations of diversity and what their responses might be. At an in-service, staff at each table received a quotation to discuss. The campus diversity group Obias, Isms, and Us collected the statements from students who had felt uncomfortable on the Clatsop Community College campus due to their differences. This activity allowed discussions in small groups about situations that arise daily on campus. Then each table read their quotation and offered some responses to the situation. For example, one student had complained that as a member of a racial minority, either the instructor or other students singled her out in class discussions as the spokesperson for that entire race. Group members then discussed why this might happen and discussed ways to develop a process
to avoid this assumption. The inclusion of this twenty-minute activity was an effective way to hold a cross campus diversity discussion. Often when an administrator schedules a diversity sensitivity session as a required one to two hour activity during inservice, staff arrive resentful that this activity has usurped part of their workday. Thus, no matter how informative and useful the session might be, the presenters have first to overcome the mental resistance of the staff. While institutions document the development of diversity education as valuable, often neither faculty, staff, nor students appreciate the mandate to participate in lengthy trainings or activities.

Although administrators, college board members, faculty and staff should all be included in the conversation about diversity issues, ultimately, the responsibility to implement cross-curricular change lies with the faculty. Classes that specifically address the challenges of diverse beliefs and cultures are one element. However, faculty need to be supportive of a cross-curricular model in order for all students to have the opportunity to develop cross-cultural skills during their academic years. While mandates are often resented and/or ignored, departmental discussions that include the why and the how of curricular integration can result in positive support by faculty.

In the case of controversies that extend beyond any one classroom, a diversity group or equity officer should ensure that issues are not left totally unresolved. The controversy about the Gideons and whether “people of privilege” should have the same campus access to minority groups was limited to a discussion on college e-mail. There is no on-going communication about what will happen in future years with groups that staff or students may consider more or less desirable on campus. The “Question the Coon”
journalism incident ended with an apology by the journalism staff, but overall did not result in any visible increase in awareness of how words and actions by some can create a toxic environment for others. One of the end results of diversity education should be to assist students in becoming aware of how difference can enrich but also strain relationships.

Figure 5. From implementation to innovation

Differences in point of view regarding the necessity of processes to improve diversity conflicts are not unique to Clatsop Community College of course. In a recent article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (2015, February 5), Barrett and Hoover reported that in a survey of college freshman, over half of black students considered it a priority to work to improve race relations. In contrast, less than a third of the white students thought so. Whether in courses, structured activities, or everyday transactions, educational institutions will encounter campus conflicts that require resolution and may result in changes
in university procedures. Again, as mentioned by Sayers (1941), in dealing with challenges such as poverty or discrimination, we are not looking for a one-size permanent solution. We are looking for malleable processes that fit the students and the institutions. (Figure 5, p. 91) that will need to change over time depending on the conflicts and the participants.

Chapter 6 follows up on the theme of diversity curricula as a process rather than a problem and looks at the role of diversity across the curriculum. In closing, I examine some of the challenges posed by the juxtaposition of terms such as diversity and equity, and the call by some to eliminate any group rights that constitute some type of privilege, particularly what is known as *white privilege* (see key terms, p. 18). In addition, based on the research in this study, I propose changes that could be made to diversity curriculum in higher education in order to provide students with a model for dealing with differentness not just in college, but throughout their lives. Of course students will need to know how to modify this paradigm with as society changes. In the 21st century, the issue of differentness will continue to evolve as various groups seek to define themselves and articulate their rights within educational institutions and society at large.
“Why, sometimes I’ve believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast.” (Lewis Carroll – *Alice in Wonderland*)

Is it possible for students who complete a program of study at an institution of higher education to graduate with a schema for managing either person-to-person or group conversational conflicts rooted in racial, religious, or other differences? Although a lofty goal, associations of institutions of higher education have already made a commitment to promoting diversity. While most campuses would probably be able to document some progress in terms of increased emphasis on diversity studies and diversity activities, none would likely be confident in saying that they have reached their objectives and need do no more. As time passes, diversity issues involve than just race, religion, and gender. How are institutions preparing students to engage in dialogues that involve irreconcilable beliefs?

As I discussed in Chapter 2, research shows an association between diversity education and outcomes such as cognitive development, civic involvement and career preparation. Studies also show interpersonal diversity is the form of diversity most likely to lead to cognitive change. In a 21st century world characterized by continuous conflict, to what extent are colleges providing students with both curricular and interpersonal opportunities to develop skills to navigate situations of difference and divergence? At a time when legislators are urging colleges receiving public funding are to streamline the
graduation path, the development and inclusion of diversity curricula will face increasing opposition. Some will argue that diversity requirements add, rather than decrease, the number of required courses for graduation. Others may argue that embedding a focus on diversity in all courses will result in removal of other core material. If colleges choose to honor diversity in more than just institutional value statements, they will have to be willing to convince opponents of the necessity of the inclusion of diversity education.

**A Model for the 21st Century for Diversity in Higher Education**

Although many people describe the world as becoming more alike through global marketing and businesses, there are other characteristics that have not changed or have become even more diverse. For example, certainly it is possible to see the influence of American corporations worldwide, such as in food franchises, music, and clothing. On the other hand, other regions of the world are reverting to older traditions that make them now different from neighbors who formerly shared more cultural traits. For example, under the reign of Franco, Spain was a unified country with one official language: Spanish. Spain now consists of sixteen autonomous regions and official languages include: Castilian, Catalan, Galician as well as Basque. Similarly, many American students are under the impression that since the Civil Rights movement of the 1960’s, racial groups have become more integrated. Yet, a survey by Barrett and Hoover (2-15, February 15) revealed that over 25% of freshman come from neighborhoods that are either all white or all non-white. Students are more likely to socialize on social media than in person so that even a relatively structurally diverse campus may not result in much interaction among different groups. Thus the role of higher education in opening
conversations about diversity and responses to conflicts about diversity becomes ever more important.

*Figure 6. A Model for Integrated Diversity Education in Higher Ed*

One of the first steps colleges can take is to clarify definitions for words such as diversity education and then re-examine the objectives for campus diversity courses and activities. Next, institutions should establish clear guidelines for what qualifies a course or activity as part of that education. For example, almost all the diversity, equity, and inclusion courses at institutions such as the University of California, San Diego, (UCSD-Appendix A), cover topics such as race, ethnicity, or gender. This is in contrast to courses at Clatsop Community College (Appendix B) where second year language classes in French qualify as part of the cultural literacy requirement, but second year Spanish classes do not. As shown in Figure 6 (p.6), diversity education can occur as part of campus activities, cross curricular content, or specific courses devoted to study of a particular group.
Campus Activities

While many campuses, including Clatsop Community College, have clubs, such as the Latino Club and the Isms, Obias, and You that deal with diversity, the range in student interest and participation can vary greatly. As mentioned earlier, there are no student members of the Isms, Obias, and You club on our campus. This lack of interest at a school that is primarily white mirrors the trends noted by Berrett and Hoover in their survey (2015). If students had grown up in mixed race neighborhoods and socialized with other races, 77% said they would be likely to continue to do so in college. If students had never or only rarely socialized with a person of a different race, then only 40% said they would be likely to do so in college. The researchers did not gather these statistics from small rural community colleges like Clatsop, but were from surveys of 153,015 first-time, full-time freshmen at 227 four year institutions.

In addition to clubs, speakers provide another important resource for students to learn about other cultures and diverse points of view. In prior years, little educational activity has accompanied neither the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday nor Black History Month. This year, the talk given by Kathleen Sadaat, the former director of Diversity Development and Affirmative Action for the city of Portland, on Keeping the Dream Alive was very well attended by the campus community. For many students, this talk was an important reminder of racial issues that are a part of the past and current history of the Pacific Northwest.

Student orientations and first year experiences are another way to include diversity studies as an integral part of the college experience from the beginning of
students’ academic careers. The American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU) has endorsed diversity and global learning as one of the high impact educational practices that can help change student mindsets about academics. Rather than students believing that college is merely a means to greater financial earnings (Barrett & Hoover, 2015, freshmen orientation or first year experiences can awaken students to the challenges that diversity may create in academics and beyond and how they can prepare to address them. College clubs, speakers and activities, as well as themed first year experiences can all give students a foundation for interactions with difference.

**Cross Curricular Studies that Embed Diversity**

Another option is for faculty and administrators to analyze campus diversity views based on the Nelson Laird scale (Nelson Laird & Engberg, 2011) and to propose curricular changes based on their findings. As Nelson Laird showed, discussions of diversity and development of strategies for developing multiple perspectives do not have to be limited to what are traditionally considered diversity courses. In Chapter 2, I discussed the two categories that Nelson Laird developed: diverse grounding and inclusive learning. Diverse grounding includes elements such as whether students learn how to connect their factual course knowledge to societal problems and/or whether students address their own biases related to course content. Using this model, faculty can develop assessments to measure to what extent students can connect their course content to societal problems. Students often ask faculty what value a course has to their lives. Faculty should be able to give them an answer. Also, using pre and post surveys, faculty can determine whether students retain the same biases with which they entered they
course and/or the extent to which their views or beliefs have changed. The inclusive learning category directs faculty to reflect upon to what extent their teaching accommodates and encourages participation from all students, rather than perhaps basing instruction on students who learn most like themselves. Rather than viewing a diversity requirement as a meaningless obligation, faculty, administrators, and students should understand how crucial skills to negotiate difference are and should be able to participate in the construction of a meaningful cross-curricular diversity theme.

Diversity Specific Courses

Many courses are focused on a specific race, gender, or religion and use the opportunity for students to reflect on their own biases as they learn about cultures and beliefs that are different from, and may conflict with, their own (See Appendixes A & B). Courses at the University of California at San Diego range from Asian literature to Latino politics in the U.S. as well as Jazz and the African-American diaspora. Students acquire new perspectives that can expand the way they view the world.

Yet specific diversity courses not only bring up issues of enrichment, but also issues of conflict. As discussed in Chapter 4, Griffiths (2001) defined a religion as a set of beliefs that is impossible to give up. In courses that discuss a specific type of diversity, particularly one that includes beliefs that are unacceptable to some students, the instructor has the opportunity to guide the classes through discussions of truth. Rather than a diversity class being limited to ‘facts’ about the other, the courses can be approached as Parker Palmer (2010) suggested all classes be approached. Palmer exhorts us to integrate “mind and heart, hard data and soft intuition, individual insight and communal sifting and
winnowing,” (Location 590). We can become aware of the violence within our own culture and within ourselves. Rather than accepting the American mantra that we know best not only for our country, but also for the rest of the world, the diversity class offers the opportunity to begin to view the world around us through a different lens. As mentioned earlier, many countries are becoming politically more fractured despite the alleged zeitgeist of globalization. Yet in studies of diversity, students and teachers can attempt to create paradigms or frameworks that recognize difference, yet seek a wholeness of humanity.

**Beyond the Diversity Conundrum: Equity and Inclusion**

As people struggle to define diversity, to decide whether to ignore it, fight it, tolerate it or celebrate it, the demographics of U.S. campuses and workplaces continue to change. Institutions of higher education are in a unique position to be able to help students develop approaches to respond to situations of difference. Environments encompassing diversity can be challenging, but also rewarding, and students, as national and global citizens, need to be ready to respond in a positive manner.

In the 1990s, many colleges began to make diversity an institutional value. This implied not only the inclusion of required diversity courses for many majors, but also an emphasis on recruitment of a more diverse campus staff and student body. However, here we return to number four of the research questions, “How can a cross-curricular diversity focus assist students in developing a framework for use in negotiating dilemmas of diversity?” For students to begin the process of developing a schema for encounters with difference, they first need to become aware of their own biases and beliefs. Studies
have shown that many white students do not believe that they have any racial prejudice, yet when asked a series of situational questions, bias against blacks is evident in their answers (Black, 2014; Bonilla-Silva & Forman, 2000). One designated cultural literacy class will not be sufficient to allow students time to review and reflect on their beliefs, much practice new responses to difference. Thus, one of the changes that needs to be made by institutions of higher learning is to make diversity education a priority across the curriculum.

As illustrated by the situation with the Gideons’ distribution of Bibles at Clatsop Community College, not everyone is in agreement as to what constitutes a process that provides equity for different groups. Some people feel that the preservation of certain white cultural traditions reinforces the idea of white privilege and should not be supported in the way that other events are considered illustrative of cultural diversity. For example, Penna (1990) states,

*Group rights* must not be taken to mean the preservation of white privilege, in an economic or political sense. Therefore, any effort to protect group rights which institutionalizes not only cultural uniqueness, but also group privilege, is likely to be unacceptable to the majority of the population (Penna, 1990).

Over the last few decades, campus departments dedicated to racial and gender issues have expanded and changed their missions. While the term *Office of Diversity* was most common label at institutions of higher education, the term *equity* has been added and finally the word *inclusion*. A Google search for the term *Office of Diversity, Equity,*
and Inclusion brings up 58,000,000 links while Office of Diversity and Equity returns 107,000,000. With so many institutions and people using the term diversity and making inclusion a priority, it’s time for clear definitions and processes.

As Sayers (1941) proposed, many issues that we view as problems are better understood as components of evolving processes that do not have a final solution. Diversity initially referred to classes of people, whether race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation. Now diversity includes such categories as socio-economic class and geographical background. Equity meant providing accommodations so that persons with either a deficient academic background or physical or learning disabilities would have the same opportunity to succeed in the workplace or on campus. According to the UC Berkeley website, The Division of Equity and Inclusion provides leadership and accountability to resolve systemic inequities for all members of UC Berkeley (2014).

Can institutions of higher education do as the Berkeley Division of Equity and Inclusion proposes and resolve inequities for all members of their communities? Probably not, but that is no reason not to take steps to improve education regarding negotiating situations of difference. University campuses should consider the programs and classes that they have in place and determine what objectives are being met. Are students being taught how to recognize, analyze, and respond to conflicts rooted in diversity? Bryan Stevenson, founder of the Equal Justice Initiative, asked listeners in a TED talk the following. If the same proportion of Jews were being jailed in present day Germany as the proportion of Blacks being jailed in the United States, would people be disturbed? (Stevenson, 2012). Where is the outcry?
Closing Summary and Recommendations

The dilemma of diversity courses in higher education illustrates the current conflict over what constitutes diversity, equity, and inclusion and offers colleges an opportunity to respond constructively. No one course or cross-curricular program will eliminate the discord that can emerge when people hold different beliefs. Yet colleges, in upholding their statements of valuing diversity, need to provide students with the courses and interactions that will prepare them for the inevitable conflicts they will encounter in their lifetimes. College campuses, students, faculty, administration, and staff must work to establish a roadmap to understanding what the objectives of diversity education are and the criteria to know when those goals have been reached. Diversity education will involve a process of defining and redefining objectives and the steps for meeting them. The processes will include the study of self, others, and diversity challenges and will be fluid rather that fixed. As Tariq Ramadan states, our goal is not to try to become like the other or to have them become like us. We want to reach agreements on where the boundaries, physical, emotional, and spiritual lie. We need to learn from the unknown, but be able to seek comfort in the known. We can unite to work on social injustices such as poverty and lack of freedom while we demonstrate our diversity in our arts, our sciences, and other aspects of our culture; we can both debate and celebrate cultural diversity. However, in a world with constant violence rooted in racial, religious or other differences, the challenge to higher education is to create learning environments in which students discover how not only to celebrate, but also how to cerebrate diversity.
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Appendix A

Diversity Courses UC San Diego

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department/ Program</th>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Course Title</th>
<th>Course Prerequisites and/or Restrictions</th>
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<td>Anthropology</td>
<td>ANSC 113</td>
<td>Language, Style, and Youth Identities</td>
<td>Upper-division standing or consent of instructor</td>
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<td>ANSC 122</td>
<td>Language and Society</td>
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<td>ANSC 145</td>
<td>Indigenous Peoples of North America</td>
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<td>ANSC 162</td>
<td>Language, Identity, and Community</td>
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<td>ANTH 23</td>
<td>Debating Multiculturalism: Race,</td>
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<td>Ethnicity, and Class in American Societies</td>
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<td>Practicum in Child Development</td>
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<td>CGS 112/ ETHN 127</td>
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<th>Department/Program</th>
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<td>EDS 125</td>
<td>History, Politics and Theory of Bilingual Education</td>
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<td>EDS 126/ SOCI 126</td>
<td>Social Organization of Schools</td>
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<td>EDS 130/139</td>
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<td>EDS 136/139</td>
<td>Introduction to Academic Mentoring of Secondary School Students</td>
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<td>Ethnic Studies</td>
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<td>Introduction to Ethnic Studies: Land and Labor</td>
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<td>ETHN 2</td>
<td>Introduction to Ethnic Studies: Circulations of Difference</td>
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<td>Introduction to Ethnic Studies: Making Culture</td>
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Note: Course replaces ETHN 1A; will be offered beginning Fall 2013.

Note: Course replaces ETHN 1B; will be offered beginning Winter 2013.

Note: Course replaces ETHN 1C; will be offered beginning Spring 2013.

EDS 139 must be taken as a corequisite; department stamp required.
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<td>ETHN 1A</td>
<td>Introduction to Ethnic Studies: Population Histories of the United States</td>
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<tr>
<td>ETHN 1B</td>
<td>ETHN 1B</td>
<td>Introduction to Ethnic Studies: Immigration and the Transformation of American Life</td>
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<td>Introduction to Ethnic Studies: Race and Ethnic Relations in the United States</td>
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<td>ETHN 20</td>
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<td>Human Development Program</td>
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<td>Practicum in Child Development</td>
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<td>HDP 115/COMM 102C</td>
<td>Media and the Design of Social Learning</td>
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<td>HILD 7A</td>
<td>Race and Ethnicity in the United States</td>
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<td>Race and Ethnicity in the United States: Asian American History</td>
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<td>HILD 7C</td>
<td>Race and Ethnicity in the United States: Chicana/o History since 1848</td>
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<td>HITO 156</td>
<td>Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the United States and Europe: Multiple Multiculturalisms</td>
<td>Completion of one college writing course or one lower-division History course</td>
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<td>HIUS 113</td>
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<td>African-American Legal History</td>
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<td>Social and Economic History of the</td>
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<td>Introduction to Chicano/a and Latino/a Literature</td>
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<td>Asian American Literature</td>
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<td>LTEN 185</td>
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<td>Freedom, Equality and the Law</td>
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<td>Politics of Immigration</td>
<td>POLI 150A</td>
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<td>Managing Diverse Teams</td>
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<td>VIS 152D</td>
<td>Identity Through Transnational Cinemas</td>
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## Appendix B:

### Clatsop Community College – Partial List of Diversity Classes

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<td><strong>ARCH 215</strong></td>
<td>History Pacific NW Architecture</td>
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<td><strong>ARCH 216</strong></td>
<td>Northwest Architects</td>
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<td><strong>ART 115,116,117</strong></td>
<td>Basic Design I, II, III</td>
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<td><strong>ART 204,205,206</strong></td>
<td>History of Western Art I, II, III</td>
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<td><strong>ASL 201</strong></td>
<td>Amer Sign Language-Conv Skills ..</td>
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<td><strong>ENG 104</strong></td>
<td>Intro to Literature-Fiction</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>ENG 106</strong></td>
<td>Intro to Literature-Poetry</td>
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<tr>
<td>♦ENG 107</td>
<td>World Lit.-The Ancient World</td>
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<td>♦ENG 108</td>
<td>World Lit.-Medieval/Renaissance</td>
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<td>World Lit.-Africa/Asia/Latin Am</td>
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<td><strong>ENG 110</strong></td>
<td>Introduction to Film Studies</td>
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<td>Gothic Literature</td>
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<td>♦ENG 204</td>
<td>English Literature:Medieval</td>
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<td>ENG 206</td>
<td>English Literature: Renaissance</td>
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<td>English Literature: Victorian/Modern</td>
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<td>ENG 220</td>
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<td>Creative Writing-Poetry</td>
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<td>Writing Children’s Books</td>
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<td>ENG 253,254,255</td>
<td>Survey of American Literature</td>
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<td>Literary Publishing</td>
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<td>Intro: Biological Anthropology</td>
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<td>ANT 102</td>
<td>Intro: Archaeology and Prehistory</td>
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<td>ANT 103</td>
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<td>CJ111</td>
<td>Introduction to Criminal Justice</td>
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<td>General Psychology</td>
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<td>Principles of Economics</td>
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<td>Teaching in Anti-Bias Classroom</td>
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<td>Juvenile Delinquency</td>
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<td>HST 245</td>
<td>Lewis/Clark Course of Discovery</td>
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<td>HST 277</td>
<td>History of the Oregon Trail</td>
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<td>♦PHL208</td>
<td>Political Philosophy</td>
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<td>American Government</td>
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WS 210: Cultural Perspective/Women of Color
WS 221: Women, Difference & Discrimination
WS 230: Women and Social Action

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