

**POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS' AND WORK-SITE SUPERVISORS'
PERCEPTIONS OF DIVERSITY EXPERIENCES AND NEEDS OF
STUDENTS IN A SCHOOL-TO-WORK TRANSITION PROGRAM**

by

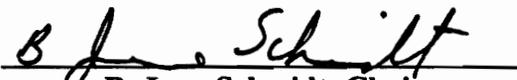
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in

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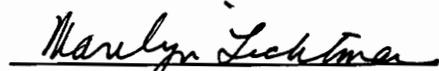
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(ABSTRACT)

The purposes of this study were (a) to provide documented accounts of cooperative education students' experiences when interacting with diverse groups and (b) to obtain cooperative education students' and work-site supervisors' perceptions of the knowledge and attitudes needed by cooperative education students to interact effectively with diverse groups. The outcomes of the study provided information related to the multicultural theory of knowledge being positional and relating to the knower's values and experiences.

Focus groups (group interviews) that were designed to uncover participants' points of view and perceptions were used to collect the data. Four groups of six cooperative education students and two groups of six cooperative education work-site supervisors participated in the study. Relevant topics, issues, and concepts relating to cultural and ethnic diversity derived from a review of the literature were summarized and incorporated in the discussion guides used with the student and work-site supervisor groups. All participants completed demographic data sheets. Each session was tape recorded, and the researcher took field notes.

The tapes of each group were transcribed. Transcripts were analyzed using ethnographic summaries and content analysis. Also field notes and data sheets were compiled. Recurring themes were identified and marked under the categories of: school experiences; work experiences; personal experiences; school, home and personal experiences combined; student perceptions of knowledge and attitudes needed; and work-site supervisor perceptions of knowledge and attitudes needed. Five major themes that evolved from the study were: understanding, self-esteem, acceptance, principles, and interactions.

Self-esteem was the dominant theme for all three questions followed by acceptance, interactions, understanding, and principles. The study revealed that productive interaction with diverse groups took place more often when students felt good about themselves. Giving value to themselves allowed them to also give value to others. Their self-confidence was reflected in their appearance, lifestyle, behavior, professional accomplishments, and relationships.

Study results also revealed that effective interaction with diverse groups was often inhibited by students' preconceived perceptions derived from a lack of knowledge. Information about culturally and ethnically diverse groups' beliefs, customs, languages, family backgrounds, ethnicities, communication styles, and/or perspectives were crucial to clarifying such perceptions.

Both work-site supervisors and cooperative education students responded that communication was also essential to effective interaction. Structured group settings that allow for student socialization with diverse groups were recommended.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my husband, Albert, and children, Tyrell and Joy, for your love, support, encouragement and patience while completing this project. Also special thanks to my mom, siblings, and other close relatives for your support, encouragement, and prayers.

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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Following World War I, there was a need for all Americans to come together and to emphasize their similarities in relation to values, customs, and beliefs. According to Ramsey, Vold, and Williams (1989), immigrants were encouraged to conform to the values and behaviors of the dominant Anglo-Saxon culture in order to maintain the democracy. By the end of World War II, there was considerable racial discord because African-American soldiers were still treated as second-class citizens. This marked the beginning of competition between whites and other racial groups for equality in the states (Ramsey et al., 1989).

The 1960s marked the beginning of the civil rights movement which advocated freedom, justice, and equality for all. As always, schools were called on to help in increasing racial understanding. The multicultural education movement grew out of the civil rights movement (Banks, 1993b). Often, educational movements are based in social movements within society. Minority groups started promoting cultural pluralism for the purpose of "sensitizing all individuals toward ethnic and racial differences, and increasing individual awareness of cultural traditions and sociological experiences" (Ramsey, et al., 1989, p. 9).

It is only natural that cultural pluralism would become the unifying element in multicultural education. This is evident in the definition of multicultural education

adopted in 1972 by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE). It states:

Multicultural education values cultural pluralism. It rejects the view that schools should seek to melt away cultural differences or the view that schools should tolerate cultural pluralism. Instead, multicultural education affirms that schools should be oriented toward the cultural enrichment of all children and youth through programs rooted to the preservation and extensions of cultural alternatives. Multicultural education recognizes cultural diversity as a fact of life in American society, and it affirms that this cultural diversity is a valuable resource that should be preserved and extended Multicultural education reaches beyond awareness and understanding of cultural differences. More important than the acceptance and support of these differences is the recognition of cultural differences and an effective education program that makes cultural equality real and meaningful. (Ramsey, et al., 1989, p. 12)

Banks (1981) suggests that knowledge of cultural differences and careful observation can enable one to recognize potential conflict among different ethnic groups. Early identification of any differences enables one to manage, avoid, or redirect tensions. Banks (1981, p. 44) further states that "cultural conflict is a result of individuals and groups with different goals, values, attitudes, and behavior patterns living and working together in constricted spatial limitations." Thus, there is a greater potential for conflict when teachers, employers, and students do not share similar ethnic identities, cultural codes, value systems, and background experiences.

To be successful in the future, students must cross barriers of language, values, cognition, and culture. For many of the poor and minorities in schools, there is no continuity between school and the rest of their lives because the values and culture of the two are so different, and, in many cases, no attempt is made to balance the two. Schools,

therefore, are being called upon, as in the past, to change society, and also to respond to changes in society. These institutions are able to assist in assimilating students into mainstream American culture (Banks, 1993).

Multicultural education is designed to help unify our divided nation and to support the notion of *e pluribus unum*--out of many, one (Banks, 1993b). The best ways to obtain the *unum* is debated because initially schools and society have tried to create unity by putting students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds into an Anglo-American culture wherein they experienced self-alienation. Even in instances where students were culturally assimilated, often they were structurally excluded from the mainstream institutions.

Multiculturalists say that *unum* must be negotiated, discussed, and restructured to reflect the nation's ethnic and cultural diversity. Reformation of the unit involves the participation of diverse groups. It involves power sharing and participation of diverse cultures who reach beyond their own cultural and ethnic borders to create a common civic culture that reflects and contributes to the well-being of all. Students should study both their own and other cultures to fully understand the American society (Banks, 1975). Multicultural education should be incorporated in all curricula to provide students with a better understanding of themselves and the social world in which they live.

Purpose of Study

The literature reveals that multicultural education links knowledge, values, empowerment, and action. Multicultural theorists say that knowledge is positional and

relates to the knower's values and experiences and implies action; therefore, different concepts, theories, and paradigms imply different kinds of actions. For one to have valid knowledge, information on social conditions and experiences of the knower are essential.

An examination of the current literature fails to reveal specific examples of how post-secondary cooperative education students interact in culturally and ethnically diverse groups. The purposes of this study were (a) to provide documented accounts of cooperative education students' experiences when interacting with diverse groups and (b) to obtain cooperative education students' and work-site supervisors' perceptions of the knowledge and attitudes needed by cooperative education students to interact effectively with diverse groups. The outcomes of the study will provide information related to the multicultural theory of knowledge being positional and relating to the knower's values and experiences.

Banks (1993a) cited five categories of knowledge construction--personal/cultural knowledge, popular knowledge, mainstream academic knowledge, transformative academic knowledge, and school knowledge--which were used in this study as a basis for relating information obtained to the multicultural theory and directed the group interview procedures used. Banks (1993a) states,

Students must become critical consumers of knowledge as well as knowledge producers if they are to acquire the understandings and skills needed to function in the complex and diverse world of tomorrow. Only a broad and liberal multicultural education can prepare them for that world. (p. 12)

The specific experiences and examples cited by cooperative education students and work-site supervisors in the outcomes of the study can be used to improve the cooperative education curriculum and/or general curriculum, as a basis for teaching about knowledge construction--students as consumers and producers of knowledge, and interactions with culturally and ethnically diverse groups.

Loden and Rosener (1991) state that productivity in the workplace is directly related to the ability to interact in a pluralistic society. Students' perceptions have a direct influence on their actions in the workplace. Work related programs offered through schools must be relevant and reflect the skills, concepts, and attitudes students need in the workplace. Internships, cooperative programs, and other innovative educational alternatives can provide occupational experiences and training to better meet the diverse needs of students and employers.

Statement of the Problem

Reports such as *One-Third of a Nation* (Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life, 1988), and *Workforce 2000* (Johnston, 1987) indicate that by the year 2000, only 15% of all newcomers to the U.S. workforce will be native-born white males as compared to 47% in 1987. The U.S. population is becoming more diverse in race, ethnicity, religion, language, music, art, literature, and other cultural expressions.

Copeland (1988) projected that by 1998, minorities will make up 25% of the population of the United States; by 2000, English will be the second language for the majority of California's population; and by 2020, the majority of California's entry-level

workers will be Hispanic. Also, sometime in the next century, whites will become the minority in the population of the United States. As a nation, we must devise a means for everyone to acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to function effectively in a culturally and ethnically diverse society. Multicultural education is the vehicle that can be used to empower individuals to become knowledgeable, caring, and active citizens.

Because society has become increasingly service-oriented and technological, business and industry employers are looking more to schools to assist in meeting their human resource and training needs. Individuals who can work with people of different cultures, lifestyles, and perspectives increase their chance of success in the workplace.

The study addressed the following questions:

1. What are the school, work, and personal experiences cited by post-secondary cooperative education students related to interacting with individuals from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds?
2. What knowledge and attitudes do cooperative education students perceive as needed to interact effectively with individuals from diverse cultural and ethnic groups in the workplace?
3. What knowledge and attitudes do cooperative education work-site supervisors perceive post-secondary cooperative education students need to interact effectively in a culturally and ethnically diverse workplace?

The study was qualitative in design, and focus groups were used to collect the data. The focus groups were conducted on the campus of a comprehensive community

college located in the southeastern United States. Participants in the study were current cooperative education students and current cooperative education work-site supervisors.

Significance of the Study

The nature of today's global society requires businesses to seek employees who can effectively work across national and cultural boundaries. Employees' exposure to multicultural education is intended to aid in sensitizing them to cultural norms. It emphasizes an understanding of differences in both communication and style. Effective and efficient training must be targeted to the person and job responsibility. Because multicultural education is not ethnic or gender specific, examples of different interpersonal behaviors can be demonstrated. For example, Americans are more direct in their approach and express specifically what they want, whereas Japanese are more circumspect (Odenwald, 1993).

In the marketplace today, business people must communicate with multicultural personnel and clientele. Their failure to respect and value each other causes lost time, opportunities, ideas, dollars, and goodwill in the workplace. A breakdown in communication between diverse groups leads to bad feelings, lowered productivity, heightened resistance, and reinforcement of preconceived ideas and stereotypes (Loden & Rosener, 1991).

The current presidential administration realizes the importance of workplace preparation programs such as cooperative education. The Departments of Labor and Education worked together to gain the authorization of funds to support the

reorganization of existing programs in order to help students transition more successfully to work. School-to-work transition is the term used ("Youth apprenticeship," 1993). It includes cooperative education, tech prep, youth apprenticeship, career academies, and school-based enterprises.

Governmental support for school-to-work transition programs is important because many schools are unable to absorb the total cost of preparing young people for the skilled jobs in the changing labor market. For the programs to be successful, all partners must work together to develop curricula that will prepare students to enter and succeed in technologically complex worksites. The result of an effective cooperative education program is a strong partnership between the employer, student, and educational institution dedicated to the development of educated, productive, and well-trained workers who adapt to the needs of culturally diverse coworkers.

Definitions

The following terms are defined for this study:

College experiences are classes, social events, organizations, and sports.

Cooperative education is classroom instruction that enables students to gain supervised work experience directly related to their academic major and/or vocational choice (Mason, Furtado, & Husted, 1989).

Cultural diversity is differences in behavior patterns, values, beliefs, and symbols (Banks, 1975).

Diversity is physical and cultural differences; human qualities different from our own and outside the groups we belong--present in other individuals and groups (Loden & Rosener, 1991).

Ethnic diversity is differences between groups of people based on racial, national, tribal, religious, and/or linguistic background (Fernandez, 1991).

Ethnic groups are those whose members share a unique social and cultural heritage passed from one generation to the next; distinct patterns of family life, language, recreation, religion (Banks, 1975).

Experience is direct observation of or participation in events as a basis of knowledge; the fact or state of having been affected by or gained knowledge through direct observation or participation (Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary, 1985). Inclusive of events that take place at school, work, and in one's personal life.

Multicultural education teaches about cultural differences by (a) reflection, learning, and the development of cultural awareness, (b) acceptance of conflict for its educational potential, (c) willingness to learn of one's own cultural reality from interaction with others, (d) the improvement of communication with people from other cultures, and (e) recognition of universality of multiculturalism (Wurzel, 1988).

Multiculturalism is a set of principles related to customary beliefs, social forms, and traits which can be defined and learned (Wurzel, 1988).

Delimitations

1. This study was delimited to students in the cooperative education program of a comprehensive community college in the southeastern United States during the winter/spring quarters of 1995.
2. This study was also delimited to work-site supervisors of cooperative education students at the community college during the winter/spring quarters of 1995.
3. In this study student experiences, knowledge, and attitudes relevant to cultural and ethnic diversity only were investigated.

Organization of the Study

Chapter 1 has stated the background of the study, purpose of the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, definitions, delimitations, and organization of the study.

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature related to the study.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology of the study.

Chapter 4 presents the results of the study.

Chapter 5 provides the summary of the study inclusive of the purpose and research procedures. Additionally, findings along with discussion based on the findings, implications, recommendations for curriculum and instructional development, and suggestions for future research are presented.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The literature review was divided into the categories of multicultural education, knowledge construction, school-to-work transition programs, cooperative education, diversity in the workplace, and focus groups. Review of the literature in each of the above categories contributes to understanding the purpose of the study.

Multicultural Education

Multicultural education is a complex and multidimensional concept. Some see it as only including content about ethnic groups in the curriculum, some view it as an effort to reduce prejudice, and others see it as only celebrating ethnic holidays and events.

According to Banks (1981), it is concerned with creating educational environments in which students from all cultural groups can experience educational equity. Vernu (1987) states that multicultural education was conceived to be concerned with all social groups with each group concerned with its own culture and also the interrelationships with other cultures.

Multicultural education is often thought of in reference to African-Americans, Hispanics, and other minority groups. Major theorists and researchers in multicultural education agree that its purpose is to restructure educational institutions to ensure that everyone gains skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to function effectively in a culturally and ethnically diverse world (Banks, 1993b).

Banks (1994) describes four major components of multicultural education: content integration, knowledge construction, prejudice reduction, and equity pedagogy. Because of its importance to this study, knowledge construction will be discussed in a separate section. Schools often use one or a combination of these components in teaching about cultural differences. A description of how each component is used in schools is given in this section.

Content integration occurs in schools when teachers use examples, data, and information from a variety of cultures and groups to illustrate key concepts, principles, generalizations, and theories in the subject area or discipline. This type of integration is used often in schools, but educators should go beyond this to other concepts/ways of incorporating multicultural education into the curriculum.

Prejudice reduction focuses on the attitudes and strategies used to help students develop more positive racial and ethnic attitudes. This occurs when ethnic and racial groups are portrayed more realistically in printed material and in the media. Cooperative learning activities with different racial groups also help develop more positive racial attitudes and behaviors.

Equity pedagogy exists when specific techniques and teaching methods are used to ensure academic achievement of students from ethnically and culturally diverse groups. Further research has shown that African-American and Hispanic students learn better when the cooperative method of teaching is used (Slavin, 1983).

In summary, multicultural education should enable students to think, decide, and take personal, social, and civic action. It should allow them to study content, concepts, and events from many viewpoints (Banks, 1993b). To do business with people from other cultures, we must first understand them; thus multicultural education is a vehicle toward this mean. One of the purposes of this study was to relate information to the multicultural theory of knowledge being positional. Multicultural education is the cornerstone of this research study.

Knowledge Construction

Knowledge construction is a procedure by which social, behavioral, and natural scientists create knowledge in their disciplines. It entails the ways that cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline influence the construction of knowledge (Banks, 1993a). The social context in which it is created is reflected.

There are several types of knowledge that reflect particular purposes, perspectives, experiences, goals and human interests. Postmodern theorists like Code (1991), Foucault (1972), Harding (1991), and Rorty (1989) say that knowledge is socially constructed and reflects human interests, values, and action.

Teachers can help students to understand how knowledge is created and influenced by factors such as race, ethnicity, gender, and social class. Upon learning about the different types of knowledge, students become better able to understand points of view of different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups.

In the areas of philosophy and sociology, Harding (1991), Code (1991), and Collins (1990) have extensively examined knowledge construction within the last decade. They have shown that knowledge is influenced by the gender and ethnic characteristics of the knower. They note that the human interest and value assumptions of knowledge creators should be identified, discussed, and examined. Code (1991) stated that the sex of the knower is epistemologically significant because knowledge is both subjective and objective, while Collins (1990) described ways that race and gender interact to influence knowledge construction.

Banks (1993a) categorizes knowledge construction into the constructs of personal/cultural knowledge, popular knowledge, mainstream academic knowledge, transformative academic knowledge, and school knowledge. Following are abstracts of each of the types of knowledge construction.

Personal/cultural knowledge

Personal/cultural knowledge consists of concepts, explanations, and interpretations that students derive from personal experiences in the home, family, and community cultures. Assumptions that are drawn from experiences at home and in the community are used to screen and interpret the knowledge and experiences encountered in schools, the workplace, and other institutions. It includes patterns of meaning, values, actions, and decision-making shared by and within social groups (Boyle, 1992).

Fordham and Ogbu (1986) conducted an ethnographic study on successful and unsuccessful students at a predominately African-American high school in Washington,

DC, which revealed that low-income African-American students' cultural/community knowledge was in conflict with the school knowledge because students often felt that if they adapted to school knowledge, they would violate their own cultural norms.

Milner (1983) studied racial attitude development in young children and the effects of racism on African-American children's development. A study done by him in two large English cities in Great Britain, with large minority populations, revealed that much of the knowledge students learn at home and in their communities about other groups is stereotypical and partial truths because many communities are still segregated along racial, ethnic, and social class lines.

Other studies and research indicate that students' cultural knowledge and school knowledge conflict the most when they (a) try to relate to and interact with the dominant group or culture (Hale-Benson, 1982; Ramirez & Castaneda, 1974; Shade, 1989), (b) use normative communication styles and interactions (Heath, 1983; Labov, 1975; Phillips, 1983; Smitherman, 1977), and (c) in their perspectives of the nature of U.S. history (Zinn, 1980).

Hale-Benson (1982) reviewed and analyzed existing research on African-American culture in an attempt to show the relationship between the natural learning styles in the family and the styles of learning in schools. African-American music, art, and literature from 1950-1980 was examined for reflections of the urban, northern, working class, and contemporary African-American experience. An educational model was developed to provide African-American children with the competencies needed to survive in America

and to change the way African-American children are perceived and treated in the educational process.

Ramirez and Casteneda (1974) formulated a philosophy of education called "cultural democracy" based on research using Hispanic students. They studied Hispanic children in first, fourth, and sixth grades along with the childrens' mothers. The study took place in three Southern California communities. Cognitive learning styles tests and socialization questionnaires were the instruments used. The outcome of the research was that Hispanics who copped effectively with two cultures (mainstream and home/community) exhibited the capacity to perform within both field-sensitive and field-independent cognitive styles. They progressed better in school when they could maintain an identity with their respective ethnic group/culture and also learn "mainstream" values. Schools are encouraged to teach bicognitive development. The researchers used this philosophy to influence educational policies and practices to sustain and promote pluralism.

A compilation of articles on cognitive/learning styles of African-Americans, Native-Americans, and Hispanics by Shade (1989) focused on understanding how culture influences students' academic performance. Readings are also included to provide educators with examples of how they can adapt the teaching-learning process to accommodate the different learning styles.

Heath's (1983) research was an attempt to answer the question, "What were the effects of the preschool home and community environment on the learning of those

language structures and uses which were needed in classrooms and job settings? (p. 4)"

She spent a decade recording and interpreting the language learning habits of children from two southern communities (one African-American and the other Anglo-Saxon).

Results of the study revealed that race is not the key factor in determining how children learn to use language, but key factors were family structures in each community, roles that community members were allowed to assume, concepts of childhood that guide child socialization, and places of religious activity.

Pre-school through elementary level students on an Indian reservation in Central Oregon were studied from fall of 1968 to spring of 1973 by Phillips (1983). The purpose of the research was to explore ways that the Indians' use of the English language was culturally distinctive and different from the use by the Anglos. The research was prompted by the Indian children's poor achievement tests in language-related skills. Results of the study revealed that the Indian children's academic comprehension was impaired because the school's curriculum was developed for Anglo-Saxon middle-class children. It did not fit or build on the interracial skills of the Indian children.

Smitherman (1977) researched the evolution of the African-American dialect in America in order to assist in the understanding of African-American English. She defines the structure and special lexicon of African-American English noting that the difference between it and traditional English is a rhetorical style reflective of African origins. She purports African-American English to be as legitimate as British-, American-, or Australian-English. The results of her research revealed that teachers need to be able to

understand the African-American dialect and accept it as a legitimate form of human communication in order to use it as an educational code for transmitting knowledge. She further states,

Students . . . need to know that the label or word is not the same as the concept or process, that linguistic designations are arbitrary, and that in all fields of human knowledge, language and terms for conceptual processes are subject to change (because of new discoveries in a field, or new ways of looking at accumulated human knowledge). . . . language change comes from people; it is not decreed from on high and there is nothing sacred about a given language. (p. 222)

Labov (1975) investigated language problems of the disadvantaged in the slums and ghettos of New York. He found that nonstandard English dialects are very similar to standard English dialect. The two show different versions of the same rules and extend and modify the grammatical processes common to all English dialects. The outcomes of the research are for the teacher to become more intuned with the nonstandard language of minority students by direct observation in order to adequately adjust teaching style.

After 20 years of research in American history and involvement in social movements, Zinn (1980) wrote about documented accounts of history and social movements from the viewpoints of all groups involved: African-Americans, American Indians, and Anglo-Saxons. The documented accounts are different than what is told in many mainstream school history books.

Popular knowledge

Popular knowledge is constructed by the mass media such as television, movies, videos, records, and other medium that shape popular culture. Messages carried by the

media are often called the societal curriculum and reinforce stereotypes and misconceptions of racial and ethnic groups. Usually the messages are presented in subtle ways like stories and interpretations of current events (Cortes, 1991a, 1991b; Greenfield & Cortes, 1991). For example, the movie "How the West Was Won," based on a screenplay (L'Amour, 1962) reinforces societal attitudes about ethnic groups and portrays Anglo-Saxons as being superior over the Indians, African-Americans, and Hispanics (J. A. Banks, 1993a).

Mainstream academic knowledge

Mainstream academic knowledge includes concepts, theories, and explanations that constitute established knowledge in the social/behavioral sciences. It is dynamic, complex, constantly changing, neutral, objective, and uninfluenced by human interest and values. There have been many challenges (Rosenau, 1992; Cherryholmes, 1988; Kuhn, 1970) to the dominant paradigms which have led to changes, reinterpretations, debates, disagreements, and new theories.

Even though much of this knowledge was originated in Western Europe, its application has been universal because it is accepted by most university researchers, academic societies, and organizations. The history of the United States, slavery in America, and the history of the American Indians are all examples of what is universally known in mainstream academic knowledge.

Transformative academic knowledge

Transformative academic knowledge challenges facts, concepts, paradigms, themes, and explanations usually accepted in mainstream academic knowledge. It seeks to expand and revise established theories, explanations, and research methods. It is influenced by human interests, and reflects the power and social relationships within society. The mainstream academic knowledge about AIDS is now being challenged by transformative academic knowledge.

Transformative academic scholars (Code, 1991; Harding, 1991; Minnich, 1990) believe that one of the purposes of knowledge construction is to help people improve society. Transformative academic knowledge encourages examination from the perspectives of different cultural and ethnic groups.

School knowledge

School knowledge consists of facts, concepts, and generalizations presented in textbooks, teachers' guides, and other forms of media designed for school use. According to Apple and Christian-Smith (1991); Goodlad (1984); and Shaver, Davis and Helburn (1979), textbooks are the main source of school knowledge.

Common textbook themes relevant to school knowledge identified by Apple and Christian-Smith (1991) include: (a) the U. S. grants freedom and justice to all; (b) there is no division due to social class, gender, and/or race in the U.S., and (c) all racial groups interact harmoniously in the U.S. Typically, textbooks portray particular constructions of

reality and ways of selecting and organizing the vast universe of possible knowledge.

"Whose knowledge is of the most worth?" asked Apple and Christian-Smith (1991, p. 1).

According to Shaver, Davis, and Helburn (1979) teachers tend to rely on and believe textbooks to be the source of knowledge rather than use them as support material thus failing to challenge the information contained within. The fact that there are a number of constraints and influences on the development of textbooks is one of the reasons that school knowledge often lacks in-depth discussions and analyses. School knowledge is most influenced by mainstream academic knowledge followed by transformative academic knowledge.

Goodlad (1984) discusses the state of schooling in the U.S. using data gathered in an in-depth study of more than 1,000 classrooms over several years. The purposes of the study was to increase one's understanding of schools and what goes on in them and to develop recommendations for improvement. He stated that "Acting out, role playing, dance, the manipulation of materials, and the like are rarely used as accompaniments or alternatives to textbooks and workbooks as media of instruction in academic classes." (p. 124).

In summary, knowledge created by people is heavily influenced by their interpretations of their own experiences and positions within certain social, economic, and political systems and structures in society.

School-to-Work Transition Programs

School-to-work transition is a collective term that is used to refer to cooperative education, tech prep, youth apprenticeship, career academies, and other school-based enterprises ("Why students need", 1994). School-to-work transition programs strive to serve students from a broad range of backgrounds and circumstances, including students of diverse racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds; and students with limited English proficiency (Hudson, 1994). The federal government realized the positive aspects of existing school-to-work programs and authorized funds to assist in supporting them in 1994. It promised up to \$300 million in funding for education programs that gave all students better access to postsecondary education and good jobs.

The average worker will change jobs seven to eight times in a lifetime, requiring flexibility and the ability to learn on the job ("Why students need", 1994). Technology and competitiveness are raising skill levels of front-line workers. Work transition programs allow students to test the latest technology without putting strains on schools to purchase and continually update equipment. Hudelson (1994, p.18) stated "School-to-work programs assist students in making the transition from school to a good first job and a high skill, high wage career track." Partnerships established between schools and employers prepare students for high quality jobs requiring technical skills or further education and training.

Seventy-five percent of the young people who enter college leave without receiving a college degree and aren't equipped with basic academic and occupational skills needed in the workplace.

The lack of comprehensive and effective school-to-work transition systems also has had a significant economic impact on students. In the 1980s the gap in earnings between high school graduates and college graduates doubled; for those without a high school degree, the gap was even wider. Not only has the lack of school-to-work assistance had a negative impact on the earnings potential of our young people, but it also has cost American businesses plenty. A lack of highly skilled workers causes productivity to suffer. This affects our entire economy. (Hudelson, 1994, p. 18)

Outside of local and regional school-to-work transition programs, no thoroughly developed national initiatives for matching young workers with employers exist. In spite of evidence from cognitive science about the importance of contextualized learning, few teachers stress learning in context of tasks that are meaningful to students (Lerman, 1994). Cooperative education is one of the oldest school-to-work transition programs. Federal support helps to emphasize the importance of continuing quality programs in the schools.

In summary a growing body of evidence exists that indicates people learn more efficiently and perform more competently when motivated by a desire or need to solve real-world problems. Learning is less efficient when formal knowledge is delivered in the abstract and when opportunities to apply knowledge to tangible purposes in realistic contexts are nonexistent (Vickers, 1994). The focus of the programs is to help students who prefer to learn by doing obtain an education that will allow them to realize their potential.

Cooperative Education

Cooperative education was established around the turn of the century as a part of a movement to create experience-based education (Stasz, 1994, p. 1). It is a method of instruction that blends school and workplace learning. Cooperative education stems from John Dewey's construct of experiential learning (Hoberman, 1994). Herman Schneider, a University of Cincinnati professor of engineering, used the theory to develop cooperative education in 1906.

Cooperative education is well established on two- and four-year college campuses. There are over 900 postsecondary institutions that offer cooperative education in the U.S. Forty-five percent of that total are two-year colleges and the remainder four-year colleges ("Co-op Goes to College," 1994). According to national data from the High School and Beyond studies, about 76% of all cooperative education students are white, 12% African-American, and 10% Hispanic (Stasz, 1994).

Cooperative education is a form of school-to-work transition (STWT) program offered to juniors and seniors in high school and at two- and four-year colleges.

"According to the National Commission for Cooperative Education, there are approximately 200,000 postsecondary cooperative education students" ("Co-op Goes to College," 1994, p. 29). It combines classroom instruction with paid, monitored, and credit-bearing on-the-job training related to the student's career goals (Stasz, 1994).

Students apply the theory and skills learned in school to a workplace setting.

Approximately one half of U.S. youth go to college from high school, but only 20% of those youth who start college complete a four-year degree (United States General Accounting Office [USGAO], 1991). Cooperative education helps the U.S. to compete in global markets by insuring workforce preparation and facilitating transition from school to work for those not completing four-year degrees.

In cooperative education, employers define skill requirements for jobs, participate equally in the governance of the program, offer quality learning experiences for students at the worksite, assist schools in the assessment of students' performance, and provide jobs for students and graduates. There are about 50,000 employing organizations of all sizes participating in postsecondary cooperative education programs nationally. Prominent sponsors include General Motors and IBM. IBM, for example, has as many as 4,000 postsecondary cooperative education students at any given time ("Co-op Goes to College," 1994).

The school's role is to provide job-related instruction for students while they are in school and at the worksite. Employment related instruction coordinated with technical skills required on the job are taught. In addition, in-school instruction also covers job search skills, resume writing, mock interviews and interview preparation, career planning, basic employment law, taxes, payroll deductions, and workplace behavior (Mason et al., 1989).

Students enrolled in cooperative education benefit because:

1. The integration of classroom learning and work experience gives greater meaning to the educational process.
2. They gain a greater sense of responsibility and understanding of others along with the ability to relate to others.
3. Cooperative education provides realistic orientation to the workforce.
4. Valuable contacts are established in business, industry, and/or the government which can be useful for later job placement. (USGAO, 1991).

Cooperative education seeks to recognize each individual student's need for specific instruction. Therefore instruction that occurs in school and on the job must be continuously correlated. Basic concepts, skills, and attitudes necessary for occupational competence are taught in school and applied in the workplace. Different training patterns such as group instruction and individualized assignments are established to address various student learning problems and unique job activities (Mason et al., 1989).

In summary, Mason et al. (1989), identifies the four major instructional outcomes of in-school instruction for cooperative education students. The third and fourth goals relate directly to the purposes of this study. Goal 3 addresses the development of understandings and concepts that require one to comprehend relationships between basic knowledge and concrete problems. Goal 4 addresses the development of learning attitudes and behavioral patterns that relate to the position one takes on an issue or problem.

Diversity in the Workplace

According to Fernandez (1991), the U.S. population includes 14% Anglo-Saxon ancestry, 13% Germanic ancestry, 12% African ancestry, 10% Hispanic ancestry, and 2% Asian ancestry. Also he states that by the year 2050, one half of the U.S. population will be African-American, Hispanic-American, Native American, and Asian-American and therefore domestic companies must develop short- and long-term plans to manage the new workforce effectively.

The development of cooperative and diverse work groups are important to organizations in the 90s. Teamwork and cooperation are essential otherwise organizations risk efficiency, consistency, and high-quality service over a period of time. Everyone enters the workplace with a unique perspective shaped by past experiences (Loden et al., 1991). Several people may work at the same place, read the same correspondence, attend the same meetings, yet experience it all differently.

Comments from employee seminars and studies done by Fernandez (1991) revealed that people are not free from prejudices about groups outside their own. Employees want to be heard. A culture of diversity in the workplace is built on values of fairness, diversity, mutual respect, understanding, and cooperation; shared goals, rewards, performance standards and operating norms of all employees (Loden et al., 1991).

The automotive industry has reaped rewards because of its handling of diversity in the workplace. In 1988, the United Auto Workers Union (UAW) joined the management of General Motors and Toyota Company to establish a new manufacturing organization

called New United Motor Manufacturing, Inc. (NUMMI). NUMMI had a diverse workforce which consisted of 28% Hispanic, 24% African-American, and 22% women. Management emphasized teamwork and employee flexibility. Since opening, NUMMI has had the highest productivity and quality levels in the GM system and all attributed to employee diversity. Managers at NUMMI say "having people of diverse cultures with different ideas is a plus in the team concept process" (Loden & Rosener, 1991, p. 207).

The ability to manage diversity in the workplace is the ability to manage a company without unnatural advantage or disadvantage to diverse groups. The types of multicultural training offered most often by companies are cultural awareness, multicultural communication, country specific training, executive development, language courses, and host-country workforce training (Thomas, 1990).

New employees are often overwhelmed and confused about the link between their jobs and the rest of the organization. Some companies have addressed this by developing courses to teach newcomers about the company culture. Unlike the past, company conformity no longer requires employees to completely abandon their ethnic distinction when entering the workplace. Units of instruction in this area have included: (a) joining the company team, (b) participating in groups, (c) gaining responsibility, (d) planning employee development, (e) resolving workplace issues, and (f) dealing with change (Bridges, Hawkins, & Elledge, 1993).

The objective of diversity training in any organization should be to develop multicultural awareness and to address ways that culture influences processes and

procedures within the organization. Summaries are given below of select companies and the training provided addressing diversity (Thomas, 1990).

Avon

Commencing in 1984, Avon implemented several changes in its policies and practices because it wanted to see its customer base reflected in its workforce. The company initiated awareness training at all levels but was emphasized in its recruitment, retention, and promotion practices. A Multicultural Participation Council consisting of the CEO and other high level employees was formed to oversee the management of diversity. A diversity training program was developed wherein racially and ethnically diverse groups of 25 managers are sent away for three weeks to confront their differences and learn to appreciate diverse viewpoints. The company has also helped African-Americans, Hispanics, and Asians to form networks in all 50 states with each network having representation on the Multicultural Participation Council.

Corning

In 1983, James R. Houghton took over as CEO of Corning. Believing also that the workforce should mirror the customer base, he established two quality improvement teams: African-American progress and women's progress. Mandatory awareness training was provided to over 7,000 salaried employees on gender and racial awareness. One of the goals of the training was to identify unconscious company values that work against minorities and women. Companywide communication was improved by the printing of

regular stories and articles about diverse workgroups in company newsletters thus publicizing employee success stories that emphasized diversity.

Digital

Digital created an environment where individual differences were valued and celebrated through a program called Valuing Differences. Core groups were formed to help individuals cope with strategies and false assumptions about themselves. A two-day voluntary training program called "Understanding the Dynamics of Diversity" was established.

Proctor & Gamble

The Corporate Diversity Strategy Task Force composed of men and women throughout the company was formed in 1988. Its purpose was to clarify the concept of diversity, define the importance to the company, and identify strategies for successfully managing a diverse workforce. The diversity training includes issues of race, gender, cultural heritage, personal background, and functional experience.

This section is important to the study because organizations realize the importance of effective interaction in the workplace. They have assumed some of the responsibility for breaking down communication barriers by managing diversity in the workplace thus enabling all employees to perform at their fullest potential. It requires knowledge, sensitivity, patience, flexibility, and training (Loden et al., 1991).

Focus Groups

Focus groups were initially called focused interviews and used mainly in marketing research to explain experiences, ideas, and events. In 1941, they were used to evaluate audience response to a radio program (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). They have been referred to as nondirective interviews which place the emphasis on the interviewee (Krueger, 1988).

Focus groups are formed to accomplish a specific purpose through a defined process. Qualitative information is obtained from a predetermined number of participants. The interview is limited to a small number of issues and the moderator promotes interaction and makes sure the discussion remains on the topic of interest. It can be adopted to provide the most desirable level of focus and structure (Hayes & Thatham, 1989; Morgan, 1993; Krueger, 1994).

Studies which have been conducted using group interviews or focus groups include (a) a study of the social effects of mass communication (Merton, Fiske, & Kendall, 1956); (b) a study of management problems in the military (Thompson & Demerath, 1952); (c) a study of faculty reactions to proposed budget cuts in a major university system (French, Gross, & Resnick, 1986); (d) a study of job satisfaction among casino card dealers (Frey & Carns, 1988); and (e) a study of older workers reentering the labor force--information on motivation to return to work and the meaning of work respondents (Frey & Fontana, 1988). In each of the above studies, group interaction was used to generate data and gather insights into the research topic. The emphasis of each group was

to find out as much as possible about participants' experiences and feelings on the respective topic.

Thompson and Demerath (1952) reported on the use of group interviews as a deliberate research technique. One such application was its use in a study done by the United States Airforce to identify recurrent management problems and to determine their importance. Commissioned as well as non-commissioned officers living in the same barracks but working at various jobs were participants. The interviews yielded various dimensions of problems, and uncovered hidden assumptions on which some statements were based.

French et al. (1986) held a group interview with 15 well-known faculty leaders to develop main topics relative to the effects of a budget-cut crises on faculty. Once there was group consensus on the topics, 45 people representative of the university were randomly selected to participate in several focus groups. The group discussions yielded four major features of the university structure central to stresses experienced by faculty.

The job satisfaction of Casino Card Dealers was researched by Frey & Carns (1988). A survey was supplemented by several group interviews with working dealers in Las Vegas. The results of the study yielded that casino card dealers exhibited characteristics of low job satisfaction.

Focus groups are often used in conjunction with other research tools but can be used independently. When the goal of research is to generate theory or explanations, then focus groups are an appropriate tool (Morgan, 1993). They are often used when insights,

perceptions, and explanations are more important than actual numbers. Focus groups allow the researcher to "go beyond counting noses and delve into the complexities of the human soul" (Hayes & Thatham, 1989).

They are valid if they are used carefully for a problem suitable for focus group inquiry. Validity is the degree to which the procedure really measures what it proposes to measure (Krueger, 1988). Overall, the validity depends on procedures and context. Validity is assessed through whether results look valid and the degree to which results are confirmed by future behaviors, experiences, or events (Krueger, 1988). Usually focus groups have high validity because of the believability of the comments from participants.

Reynolds and Johnson (1978) conducted two nationwide studies wherein they compared a study using focus groups to the same study using a large-scale mail out survey. The mail out survey consisted of 2000 females with a 90% response rate wherein 20 focus groups were conducted in 10 cities. Comparison of the two revealed a 97% level of agreement and where there were discrepancies, focus group results proved to have greater predictive validity compared to later sales data.

One should make cautious generalizations about focus group results. The goal is to understand reality and its inductive process. More emphasis is placed on the manner participants perceive problems. "If the focus group research has been carefully conducted and appropriately analyzed, the user should be able to make generalizations to other participants who possess similar characteristics" (Krueger, 1988, p. 44).

Quantitative research has been used mostly in the social sciences whereas qualitative research is more helpful in understanding the human experience. Data from focus groups is often used to evaluate social programs' accountability for the resources they consume. Relevance, practicability, and utility of the programs are major points of such discussions. Directors of education, medicine, and other social programs are often called on to document what they do and the impact of their efforts on people. Failure to do so can affect their future funding (Krueger, 1988), thus both public and private service providers have become increasingly interested in how clients view their programs.

The College of Agriculture faculty at the University of Minnesota were concerned about their declining enrollment of local rural youth who were choosing to go to school in other states. A series of focus groups held with those students revealed that they felt the university was too big and impersonal. Analysis of focus group data revealed that those perceptions were taken in part from the pictures that appeared on the school's promotional brochures. The school changed the brochures to emphasize compactness of the campus (Krueger, 1988).

It is common for the focus group discussion to begin with general open-ended questions and then focus on more specific issues. Focus group discussions produce a rich body of data expressed in the participants' own words and context. Interaction of group members stimulate new ideas regarding the topic of discussion that may never be mentioned in individual interviewing (Hayes & Thatham, 1989). Group interviewing provides some idea of the dynamics of attitudes and opinions. The format is such that

participants have time to respond to questions and/or comments, explain things, and share their experiences. Use of focus groups should be consistent with the objectives and purposes of the research. The moderator should be careful not to make judgments about responses and to control body language that might communicate approval or disapproval (Krueger, 1988). The moderator should be attentive to gestures of group members because they tell more than what is said (Hayes & Thatham, 1989). Things that can be observed from gestures include "reserve, disgust, disdain, irritation, enthusiasm, and a myriad of other emotional subtleties" (Hayes & Thatham, 1989).

Focus groups serve a variety of purposes in research. Detailed discussions and examples of the use of focus group interviews were compiled by Bellenger, Bernhardt, and Goldstucker (1976) and Higgenbotham and Cox (1979). Common uses included stimulating new ideas and creative concepts; generating impressions of products, programs, services, institutions, or other objects of interest; and learning how respondents talk about phenomenon of interest. The above uses provided the impetus for using focus groups as the research tool for this study.

Focus groups have advantages and limitations just like all other research tools (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990). Key advantages of focus groups include: (a) providing data from a group of people quickly and at a lesser cost than separate interviews, (b) allowing researcher to interact directly with respondents, (c) providing opportunity to obtain a large quantity of data in respondents' own words, (d) allowing respondents to react or build responses of group members, and (e) providing flexibility to examine a wide

range of topics. Key limitations are: (a) smallness of groups limit generalizing to larger population, (b) data obtained may be biased by dominant member, (c) researcher may place greater faith in findings than warranted, and (d) moderator may bias results by knowingly or unknowingly providing cues.

In summary, the overall intent of focus groups is to promote self-disclosure among participants in a permissive and nonjudgmental environment, thereby enabling participants to reveal more of themselves. Use of focus groups enabled the researcher to ascertain specific examples of how post-secondary cooperative education students interact in culturally and ethnically diverse groups.

Summary

The review of relevant literature presented in this chapter revealed that multicultural education in schools is imperative if we as a nation want to remain competitive globally. Knowledge construction was presented as a basic component of multicultural education to which all students should be exposed. Several studies cited support the multicultural theory of knowledge relating to one's values and experiences. Learning styles, cultural values, and linguistics were the focus of most of the studies.

School-based work programs such as cooperative education serve to link schools, businesses, and industry, thereby blending school and workplace learning. Our mobile society and the need for highly skilled workers in entry-level positions provide the justification for school-to-work transition programs.

Often, lack of knowledge makes it difficult for culturally and ethnically diverse groups of people who look, believe, and act different to work together. Effective interactions among these groups require understanding, patience, and training. Organizations have been proactive in addressing issues related to diversity in the workplace through corporate sponsored educational programs.

For this study, focus groups were used to gather the data and gain insight into the research topic because they allowed for group interaction. Initially called focused interviews, focus groups have been used since 1941 to gain insights, perceptions, and explanations of phenomena.

An affirmation of human diversity is simply acting out of respect and appreciation for human differences (Boyle, 1992). Education should include the total experience of humankind (Banks, 1975). It is important that we teach our students about different cultures because all individuals have cultural layers that teach them how to interpret everyday events and how to behave (Simons, 1989), but the layers make all alike in some ways and different in other ways.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

This chapter describes the methodology and procedures used in the study. The chapter is divided into the following sections: (a) research procedures, (b) area description, (c) participant selection process, (d) instrument development, (e) data collection, (f) analysis, and (g) summary.

Research Procedures

A qualitative design was selected to collect the data for this study because (a) it is often used to enhance generalization to theory rather than to populations (Moon, Dillon, & Sprinkle, 1990), and (b) it provides rich descriptions. Patton (1980) defines qualitative research as "detailed descriptions of situations, people, events, interactions, and observed behaviors; direct quotations from people about their attitudes, beliefs, and thoughts; and excerpts from documents, correspondence, records, and case studies." The goal of qualitative research is to distinguish which topics are most important and thoroughly portray their importance. This study used focus groups to examine specific student and work-site supervisor experiences when interacting with diverse groups and to support the multicultural theory of knowledge relating to the knower's values and experiences.

"Focus groups are carefully planned discussions designed to obtain perceptions on a defined area of interest in a permissive, nonthreatening environment" (Krueger, 1988, p. 18). The ability to uncover participants' points of view and perceptions are important strengths of focus groups. "When all goes well, focusing the group discussion on a single

topic brings forth information that would not surface in either the participant's own casual conversations or in response to the researcher's preconceived questions" (Morgan, 1988, p. 21).

Focus groups allow the researcher to ascertain participants' attitudes and opinions. "Focus groups are useful when it comes to investigating what participants think, but they excel at uncovering why participants think as they do" (Morgan, 1988, p. 25). Effective focus group interviews "cover a maximum range of relevant topics, provide very specific data, foster interaction that explores participants' feelings in some depth, and take into account personal context that participants use in generating responses to the topic" (Morgan, 1988, p. 54).

According to Krueger (1994, p. 136), focus groups should seek answers to the following questions: (a) What was known and then confirmed or challenged by the study?; (b) What was suspected and then confirmed or challenged by the study?; and (c) What was new that wasn't previously suspected?

The procedures detailed in this chapter were used to address the following research questions.

1. What are the school, work, and personal experiences cited by post-secondary cooperative education students related to interacting with individuals from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds?

2. What knowledge and attitudes do cooperative education students perceive as needed to interact effectively with individuals from diverse cultural and ethnic groups in the workplace?
3. What knowledge and attitudes do cooperative education work-site supervisors perceive post-secondary cooperative education students need to interact effectively in a culturally and ethnically diverse workplace?

Use of focus groups allowed the researcher to create an environment that nurtured explanations of different perceptions and points of view without pressuring participants or having them reach a consensus (Krueger, 1988).

Area Description

The following facts and statistics of the area were taken from the local 1994 Chamber of Commerce Newcomer's Guide. The area where the study was conducted has a diverse population of 359,000. Growth in the minority population has been on the increase since 1980 with the African-American population doubling and the Asian and Hispanic populations tripling. In 1990, 16% of the residents were foreign-born. In 1992, the area's diversity was distributed as follows: 6.6% African-American, 9.3% Asian, 6.2% Hispanic, and 76.7% white.

Nearly 76% of the area's residents age 25 and older are high school graduates. More than 50% of the residents go on to post-secondary education. A comprehensive community college which participates in the state's Employee Training Program provides

an array of services to the residents and business community. Specialized skills needed by new and expanding businesses are taught.

The area's business base is characterized by the predominance of several types of industries, including services, manufacturing, trade, transportation, construction, and regional and national company headquarters operations. Many of the employers participate in the cooperative education program at the community college. Occupations with the largest job openings include technical, sales, and support services, 34%; managerial and professional, 26%; operators, fabricators, and laborers, 17%; and services, 11%.

The community college has an enrollment of approximately 6,500 students on the main campus. Its mission statement indicates that it is committed to delivering quality educational programs and services. Goals relevant to this study are: (a) to provide learning opportunities for all segments of our diverse community; (b) to develop and maintain programs that support and enhance the economic development needs of the local community; (c) to form alliances and partnerships wherein the college and community interact in educational, civic, social, and multicultural activities; and (d) to develop and maintain programs that are responsive to the changing educational and training needs of the people it serves through basic skills and lifelong learning opportunities.

Participant Selection Process

Qualitative research tends to look intensively at a few cases rather than broadly at many cases. Emphasis is placed on individual differences and context. Morgan (1988)

recommends a moderate sized group of from six to ten participants for a focus group. Twelve is generally the largest size and four the smallest. There is generally greater involvement of each participant in small groups even though they are more expensive to conduct. Small groups also provide a clearer sense of each participant's reaction to a topic. Typically in a large group, individual participants contribute less to the discussion. Moderator involvement is key to keeping the larger group focused.

Krueger (1994) recommends that focus groups be conducted until little or no new information is provided. Morgan (1988, p. 43) states that "The goal is to do as many groups as are required to provide an adequate answer to the research question. The best advice is to determine a target number of groups in the planning stage, but to have a flexible alternative available if more groups are needed."

Students currently enrolled in the cooperative education program at a comprehensive community college were participants in this study along with cooperative education student work-site supervisors. In the winter and spring quarters of 1995, there was a total cooperative education student enrollment of 139. The ethnic breakdown of the cooperative education students was 18% African-American, 80% Anglo-Saxon, and 2% Asian. A total of 33 occupational areas were represented which included accounting, office technology, architectural technology, computer programming, machinist, upholstery, drafting, commercial art, and welding.

A letter was sent to the Director of Cooperative Education at the college to ask assistance and permission to use cooperative education students and work-site supervisors

in the study. A copy of the letter appears in Appendix A. The Director of Cooperative Education was instrumental in helping the researcher contact the cooperative education students and work-site supervisors.

Criteria used for selection of cooperative education student participants in the student focus groups were in order: ethnic group (i.e., African-American, Anglo-Saxon, Asian), location, occupational area, and willingness to participate. An attempt was made to balance the ethnic representation in each group as much as possible. No further attempt beyond ethnic designation was made to balance the groups by cultural background. Because of the diversity of the student body at the college, the student participants were representative of various cultural backgrounds.

Letters, as shown in Appendix A, were then sent to the selected students requesting their participation in the focus groups. The researcher phoned the students a few days after the letters were sent to confirm their participation. If a selected student was unable to participate, then the researcher selected another student from the list and started the process again until the desired number of participants were selected. Four different student focus groups were formed composed of six participants each, thus allowing for extensive student involvement in each group.

A select number of work-site supervisors were chosen from the list of cooperative education work-site supervisors. The employer participants consisted of cooperative education student supervisors. Two different work-site supervisor groups were formed composed of six work-site supervisors each, again to allow for greater involvement from

each participant. Letters, as illustrated in Appendix A, were sent to the selected work-site supervisors requesting their participation in the focus groups. The researcher phoned the work-site supervisors a few days after the letters were sent to confirm their participation. If a selected work-site supervisor was unable to participate, then the researcher selected another work-site supervisor from the list and started the process again until the desired number of participants were selected.

To ensure the desired number of participants for each focus group session, the researcher asked two extra participants over the required number to participate. When all of the original group showed up, then the extras were thanked and invited to stay as observers if they so desired. A total of 24 students (4 groups, 6 students each) served as participants in the student focus groups while a total of 12 work-site supervisors (2 groups, 6 work-site supervisors each) participated in the work-site supervisor focus groups.

Instrument Development

As its name implies, a focus group must maintain a clear focus on the topic and not explore too many areas that are not directly related. For the structured focus groups used in this study, instruments were developed that consisted of topic questions, with related elements under each, to be used as a guide by the moderator (Morgan, 1988). Relevant topics, issues, and concepts relating to cultural and ethnic diversity derived from a review of the literature were summarized and incorporated in the summary topic guides

when applicable. The two instruments, one for the student groups and one for the work-site supervisor groups, appear in Appendix B.

The instruments were field tested with four student volunteers and two work-site supervisor volunteers prior to use with actual study participants. Field-test participants were selected based on ethnicity, willingness to participate, and experience with cooperative education. The field-test participants comprised the following ethnic groups: 2 (33%) African-American, 2 (33%) Anglo-Saxon, and 2 (33%) Asian. Through the field test, the researcher gained experience in conducting focus groups and refined procedures to follow with actual study participants. Both field-test sessions lasted approximately one hour.

Feedback from the field-test participants required the researcher to make some changes in the topic guides. Changes included rephrasing questions to reflect a more positive tone, changes in terminology, deletion of questions that weren't applicable to the research questions, and adding to the questions to get specific information on knowledge construction. Additional demographic information was requested on the student and work-site supervisor information sheets. Two key themes that emerged during the field tests were understanding and interaction.

The field test provided the researcher a feel for potential responses and alerted the researcher to any potential misunderstandings from the questions. After revisions were made to the instruments, they were reviewed by the major advisors and research professor for their input before actual use with the study focus groups.

The researcher served as the moderator and used the same student and same work-site supervisor summary guides for each respective focus group thus allowing for the natural progression across topics with some overlap among topics. The guides were used literally as a means to allow the moderator to probe more deeply when necessary during focus group discussions, skip over previously covered areas, or to pursue a completely new topic if necessary.

Participants recorded demographic data on information sheets provided by the researcher at the beginning of each session. Participants were also informed of the fact that the sessions would be audio taped along with other ethics protocols and asked to sign a form confirming their agreement. Both the information sheets and the ethics protocol sheet appear in Appendix B and were used in the field tests. They were also reviewed by the major advisors and research professor.

Data Collection

The researcher telephoned each participant one day prior to the focus group session to remind the participant of the time and place. The focus groups met in a facility on the campus of the college. Four student and two work-site supervisor focus group sessions were conducted. Each session was from one to two hours in length. Since audio taping is the principal means of capturing observations in focus groups, each focus group session was recorded. The researcher served as moderator and took field notes for each of the focus group sessions.

Data were collected for Research Questions 1 and 2 as detailed below:

1. What are the school, work, and personal experiences cited by post-secondary cooperative education students related to interacting with individuals from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds?
2. What knowledge and attitudes do cooperative education students perceive as needed to interact with individuals from diverse cultural and ethnic groups in the workplace?

The researcher gathered data for these questions through four different focus group sessions of culturally and ethnically diverse post-secondary cooperative education students. There were a total of six students per group. Group discussions were tape recorded and then transcribed. The researcher also compiled field notes.

3. What knowledge and attitudes do cooperative education work-site supervisors perceive post-secondary cooperative education students need to be effective in a culturally and ethnically diverse workplace?

The researcher gathered data through two focus group sessions with post-secondary cooperative education work-site supervisors consisting of six work-site supervisors each. Group discussions were tape recorded and then transcribed. The researcher also compiled field notes.

Analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research generally occurs throughout the data collection. There is no one right way to conduct analysis (Krueger, 1994). "The data

analysis consists of examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence, to address the initial proposition of a study" (Yin, 1984, p.99). The problem drives the analysis. According to Stewart and Shamdasani (1990, p. 106) "every effort to interpret the focus group represents analysis of content." The main goals of the analysis for this study were to generate rich descriptions of phenomena (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984) and also to identify trends and patterns in perceptions (Krueger, 1994).

Transcripts prepared from tapes were the key data provided from the focus group discussions. The transcripts of each focus group were analyzed using ethnographic summaries and content analysis. The two approaches complement one another because a "summary of the data is improved immensely by including quotes that demonstrate the points being made" (Morgan, 1988, p. 64). Qualifiers such as "several participants strongly felt that . . ." are used to support focus group results (Krueger, 1994).

Field notes and tape transcripts were transcribed, read, coded, and categorized for this study. The researcher examined the transcripts and identified sections relevant to the research questions. The sections were searched for a common code word or words that tied related sections together. If no common code word or words were used in the related sections, the researcher selected a code word for those sections. Segments of text associated with a particular code word or words were sorted and retrieved to form analytic categories (Morgan, 1993). These code words served as the basis for the themes and subthemes developed. Some themes, such as understanding and interactions, were clear from the beginning while others emerged during the data analysis. Text segments

were examined together when inferences were made concerning themes and subthemes under investigation.

Quotes were taken from the transcripts to illustrate themes that emerged. Some editing was done on quotes where correct grammar was not used, but the actual meaning was kept intact (Krueger, 1994). In using ethnographic analysis, the researcher used material in the transcripts as a source of potential quotes for confirmed code categories and also as a source of inspiration for new code categories. The topic summary guides used by the researcher during the focus groups discussions were helpful when organizing a topic-by-topic analysis of the discussions. Common themes in the transcripts were identified by the researcher with the help of word processing software search feature.

Several key factors recommended for consideration during analysis by Krueger (1994, pp. 149-151) are:

1. words--actual words of participants versus meanings
2. context--interpret comments relative to the environment: tone of voice and intensity of the comment
3. internal consistency--opinion shifts
4. frequency or extensiveness of comments--comments discussed by several participants
5. intensity of comments--usually communicated by tone, talking speed, emphasis on certain words

6. specificity of responses--more weight should be given to responses based on experiences
7. find the big idea--usually merge from accumulation of evidence such as words used, body language, and intensity of comments

During each focus group session, the moderator noted each group's enthusiasm, excitement, degree of spontaneity, extent of participant involvement, body language, and nonverbal responses. The accuracy of analysis was enhanced because the researcher was intimately involved with the data collection by serving as moderator. Reliability was also enhanced because the same moderator was used for all groups (Klein, 1989) which also contributed to greater trust, predictability, and honesty in responses (Roller, 1992). To ensure that the analysis would be systematic and verifiable (Morgan, 1993), prescribed and sequential processes were followed that would enable another researcher to arrive at similar conclusions using available documents and raw data.

Summary

This chapter on methods and procedures outlined research procedures, the participant selection process, area description, instrument development, data collection, and analysis for this study. Focus groups, a qualitative means of collecting data, were used. The study involved six focus groups. Represented in the groups were cooperative education students of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds as well as cooperative education work-site supervisors.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Focus groups were used in this study to ascertain experiences of post-secondary cooperative education students and work-site supervisors when interacting with people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Students' and supervisors' perceptions of knowledge and attitudes needed by students to interact more effectively were also obtained.

Four student and two work-site supervisor focus groups were held consisting of six people each from culturally and ethnically diverse backgrounds. Content analysis defined by Krippendorff (1980, p. 21) as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context" was used. The occurrence of common themes along with consistency of responses were indicators to the researcher that the number of groups and participants was adequate.

Student and work-site supervisor demographics are included in this chapter along with ethnographic summaries from the interviews related to the three research questions. Examples of support for the multicultural theory of knowledge being positional are also presented.

Student Demographic Data

Information for this section was taken from a student demographic data sheet that each student completed at the beginning of each session. Also additional information was obtained from the taped transcripts, wherein students introduced themselves and told a

little about themselves. Field notes taken by the researcher/moderator during each session provided further documentation.

The 24 student participants were enrolled in cooperative education during either or both the winter and spring quarters of 1994-95. Eight (33%) of the students were males and 16 (67%) females. The ethnic breakdown of student participants was 15 (62%) Anglo-Saxons and 9 (38%) African-Americans. Approximately 2% of all cooperative education students were Asian, but the researcher was unable to get any of them to participate because of scheduling. The students ranged in age from 18 to 47 with the mean age being 24.

Each student focus group was ethnically diverse. Group 1 consisted of four African-Americans and two Anglo Saxons. Group 2 consisted of three African-Americans and three Anglo-Saxons. Group 3 consisted of one African-American and five Anglo-Saxons. Group 4 consisted of one African-American and five Anglo-Saxons. The gender breakdown of each group was: group 1--five females and one male; group 2--six females; group 3--three males and three females; and group 4--two females and four males.

The students were enrolled in the following programs of study: 7 (29%) Medical Office Technology, 3 (13%) Microcomputer Technology, 2 (8%) Business Administration, 2 (8%) Administrative Office Technology, 2 (8%) Architecture, 2 (8%) Automotive Service Technician, 2 (8%) Business Computer Programming, 2 (8%) Customer Service Technology, 1 (4%) General Office, and 1 (4%)Legal Secretary.

The job titles of the students were front-office clerk, customer-service representative, personnel clerk, supervisor, accounting clerk, purchasing clerk, computer operator, secretary, sales associate, service technician, draftsman, computer lab assistant, technician trainee, automotive technician, and student nurse. Ninety-five percent of all the students had been employed prior to the cooperative education position. Overall, the student groups were very spontaneous and expressive. There was good eye contact and use of body language. Enthusiasm was high.

The students were representative of various cultural backgrounds. Two students were from Africa and had attended secondary school in England. Many of the students lived in other places in the United States or had traveled to other places. One student's father had been in the military, and she had lived in places outside of the United States. Two of the Anglo-Saxon female students were married to African-American men. One of the spouses was from the Caribbean Islands. All of the students were attending school full time and working part time.

Work-Site Supervisor Demographic Data

Information for this section was obtained from the work-site supervisor demographic data sheet that each work-site supervisor completed at the beginning of each session. Additional information was obtained from the taped transcripts wherein work-site supervisors introduced themselves and told a little about themselves and their place of employment. Data from field notes taken by the researcher were also used.

The work-site supervisors were 4 (33%) males and 8 (67%) females. Eight (67%) were Anglo-Saxon and 4 (33%) African-American. Group 1 consisted of 2 African-Americans (one male and one female) and 4 Anglo-Saxons (2 males and 2 females). Group 2 consisted of 2 African-Americans (2 females) and 4 Anglo-Saxons (one male and 3 females). The professional titles of the work-site supervisors were manager, director, supervisor, buyer, and cost accountant.

The businesses represented were automobile dealerships, architectural firm, teleservice organizations, medical providers, post-secondary institutions, manufacturing (pharmaceutical and clothing) industry, and retail stores. The number of employees employed with each business ranged from 40 to 2,000.

One company was a minority-owned company, and 90% of its employees were minorities. Otherwise the majority of each employer's workforce was 50% or more Anglo-Saxon. Anglo-Saxons and African-Americans comprised approximately 90% of the workforce for each work-site supervisor. Other minority groups represented included Asians, Indians, Native Americans, and Hispanics. Sixty-seven percent of the employers consistently employ cooperative education students.

One group seemed to be a victim of its own environment (predominately African-American/Anglo-Saxon) because immediately when cultural and ethnic diversity was mentioned, they seemed to think of only differences between African-Americans and Anglo-Saxons. The gestures of the two work-site supervisor groups were informative.

Participants of one group were very absolute and emphatic in their responses, as indicated by their body language (i.e., voices, facial expressions, and hand gestures).

Responses to Research Questions

The researcher read through all transcripts and marked themes that appeared repeatedly under the categories of school experiences; work experiences; personal experiences; school, work, personal experiences combined; student perceptions of knowledge and attitudes needed; and work-site supervisor perceptions of knowledge and attitudes needed. Integrated software with word processing and spreadsheet capabilities was used to perform this task making it easy to count the number of theme occurrences and to identify the location of each. Once the occurrences were all marked, the Key-Word-In-Context (KWIC) technique (Stewart & Shamdasani, 1990) was used to search for themes and to list each theme along with surrounding text. The subcategory of knowledge construction which relates to the multicultural theory of knowledge being positional and relating to the knower's values and experiences was incorporated when applicable under the above-mentioned categories.

An analysis of the transcripts revealed the themes and subthemes listed in Table I. The five major themes are defined as follows: *Understanding* is the power to make experience intelligible by applying concepts and categories, explanations, and interpretations. *Self-esteem* is confidence and satisfaction in oneself. *Acceptance* is favorable reception. *Principles* are opinions, attitudes, or beliefs that exercise direct

Table 1

Themes and Subthemes

| Understanding | Self-Esteem | Acceptance | Principles | Interactions |
|---------------|--|----------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Compassion | Appearance | Open-mindedness | Morals | Communication |
| Patience | Attitudes | Willingness to learn | Spirituality | Listening |
| Perception | Language barriers (dialects and accents) | | Values | |
| Tolerance | Respect | | | |

influence on life and behavior; rules or codes of conduct. *Interactions* are mutual or reciprocal actions or influences.

The subthemes are defined as follows: *Compassion* is sorrow for the sufferings or trouble of another or others with the urge to help. *Patience* is the bearing of suffering, provocation, delay, and tediousness with calmness and self-control. *Perception* is consciousness, awareness, insight, or intuition. *Tolerance* is respecting views, beliefs, and practices of others; freedom from bigotry or prejudice. *Appearance* is the look or outward impression of a person or thing. *Attitudes* are manners of acting, feeling, or thinking that shows one's disposition or opinion. *Language barriers* are things that hold apart or separate human speech. They include dialects and accents. Dialects refer to forms of spoken language peculiar to a region, community, social group, or occupational group. Accents refer to distinguishing regional or national manners of pronouncing. *Respect* is consideration or courteous regard for others. *Open-mindedness* is being free from prejudice or bigotry and open to new ideas. *Willingness to learn* is consenting to receive knowledge. *Morals* are standards or habits with respect to right or wrong in conduct and in ethics. *Spirituality* is of the spirit or soul; the religious or moral aspect of something; spiritual character. *Values* are acts, customs, institutions, etc. regarded in a particular, especially favorable, way by a people or ethnic group. *Communication* is the giving and receiving of information, signals, or messages by talk, gestures, or writing. *Listening* is attending to closely so as to hear.

Research Question 1: What are the school, work, and personal experiences cited by post-secondary cooperative education students related to interacting with individuals from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds?

All student participants in the focus groups were able to give examples of an experience interacting with individuals from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Themes emerging from this question were understanding, self-esteem, acceptance, and principles.

School Experiences

School experiences were those experiences that took place at school inclusive of classes, sports activities, organizations, meetings, and social functions. Three themes noted were understanding, self-esteem, and principles.

Understanding. An African-American student shared an experience with her college age daughter when taking her back to campus after a weekend break. The subtheme was perception.

I would pick her up from school on weekends and take her back. I loved to hug. That is how I am with my children and family. I reached over to hug her, and she says "No, no mama, do not do that. There are a lot of homosexuals and a lot of gay women and men here. I do not do that because if they see you doing it, then they may feel like they can do that to me." It was a learning experience for me.

The African students talked about the many misconceptions of life in Africa that many American have because of knowledge received through the media. The subtheme was perception.

There is this lady in my speech class who calls me and tells me "How do you survive with all of those animals? You know they show us on TV that lions just walk past your door and they are everywhere." I tell her everyday when I go to class that you only see those animals when you go to the game park. You have to pay to go there. Some kids have never even seen a lion or an elephant because they do not have the money to go to the game park to view the animals. She asks me that all the time, and I have to remind her that is not the case.

Self-Esteem. An African student told of school experiences related to the subtheme respect. She wanted to share something with her speech class about the ritual that young women endure before marriage in her culture. She wanted to get their approval first because she thought the object might be taboo in the American culture. She stated:

I had a little carving and I wanted to show in my speech class. I was kind of worried. Is it going to be offensive? . . . So I came to class very early in order to see my speech instructor and show her the carving and ask if she thought it offensive to show to the class because it was part of what I was going to talk about. She said to her it was not offensive, but she wanted me to go to each of my classmates who came in early, show them the carving, and ask them about their opinion before I showed it in class. About half of the class was there. So I showed them, and they said they had seen much worse things than that. So it was not anything offensive to them.

Another student commented on an experience in school which dealt with the subtheme language barriers.

Somebody came in today and asked where was a shop. And I said a shop? You need to go and ask a teacher. I do not know of a shop around here. And it turned out, he had to say it three times, but he was looking for a sharpener. There was one right on the door.

Principles. An Anglo-Saxon student spoke of an experience in class involving the religious differences of class members. When someone of a different religious persuasion would leave the class during the celebration of certain holidays, class members talked unfavorably about the individual because they knew nothing about the individual's faith. The subtheme was spirituality.

I was in school with someone of a different religion. When we would celebrate holidays they did not believe in, she would leave the room. She understood my religion, and I understood hers. Several people commented when she left the room because they did not understand her religion or respect it. They would ask "What's wrong with her? Why is she leaving?" A lot of people talked about it.

Work Experiences

Work experiences occur at the workplace inclusive of regular work assignments and meetings. Themes associated with these experiences were understanding, self-esteem, and acceptance.

Understanding. A female student from Africa working for a retail sales organization had the following experience wherein perception was the subtheme.

It is as if we do not speak the same dialect or accent or something. There is something to be expected. We are not American. We were not born here, so sometimes we get customers who are very rude. The first question they ask is "Why don't you speak English? Since you are not from here, who taught you how to speak English?" And they ask you where you come from. Then they ask if you still sleep on top of trees. Do you live with animals?

An African-American male student shared an experience of a personal conversation with his older Anglo-Saxon male supervisor. He used his basic values to explain his point. The subtheme of compassion was evident.

I actually was able to talk to him about problems which is one thing you do not find. People are so hard and cold, the one thing I was able to do with someone from a totally different background and everything . . . it shocked me because he was so much older than me Because even with a vocabulary expansion so much beyond mine, I did not think I could talk to a grown man like I talked to him. What I did was basically comfort him. He actually felt good about it, and he was beyond racial experience, actually cultural experience because I used what I knew and everything I had learned.

Self-Esteem. A female Anglo-Saxon student told of the following experience when working for a year with Koreans. When she first started working for them, she felt intimidated when they spoke their language around her. Other students in similar situations said they felt the same way when people from other countries spoke in their native language in public. Because of the emphasis Koreans place on certain syllables, the student felt they were yelling at each other. Once she learned something about the language, she realized that was not the case. The relevant subtheme was language barriers.

They spoke their language. At first, I felt intimidated when they would go back in the kitchen and they would be ooooh ooh. I thought they were yelling at each other. Some languages, especially Korean, . . . only have, I think it is like 6-14 syllables in their whole language, they use these harsh tones. I thought they were mad at each other, but that is just the way they talk. Then after a while, I got used to the way they spoke, and I learned some of their words. I felt like we interacted better We kinda got along better because they learned something about me as an Anglo-Saxon, and I learned thing about them being Korean.

Acceptance. Another young Anglo-Saxon female student shared the following experience which had the subtheme of willingness to learn.

I worked with a girl from Africa. She and I were telling stories about things she did when she was younger and things that her parents dealt with, and I found that very interesting. I like to learn from her.

Personal Experiences

Personal experiences are all of those experiences outside of school and work. The themes identified with these experiences were understanding, self-esteem, and acceptance.

Understanding. A female African student shared the following experience in which she reflected back on life in Africa and compared it with life in America. She talked about how much she has learned about diversity since coming to America. The subtheme was compassion.

When I was back home, I took a lot of things for granted. My country has 72 tribes, and all tribes are different from one another. The cultures, beliefs, and traditions are reinforced by whatever the tribe believes in and particularly different on a one-to-one basis. If you are visiting, you cannot tell the difference. As a Zambian, I could. Coming here, I felt we were all the same in Zambia. When I came here, it helped me to understand the people back home. It is only when you travel out of your own place that you begin to appreciate things that are better there or worse. You see the difference. When I first came here people asked me a lot of questions that upset me. I did not understand why I was getting upset. Now I know. This is why I would like to help people clear their minds.

The same student continued and perception was the subtheme:

The first time I met people here at school, and I told them I came from Africa, they asked me how I got here. I said that I came by plane. They were shocked. "They have planes in Africa? Planes just like our planes?" I said yes. I used to get upset. Do they think that I walked to America? Somebody asked me if we have electricity. Now I know the reason people

ask questions like that. They do not mean to offend you. It is out of ignorance because I know some kids who were born, worked, and died in the same place. They have not explored the rest of the world, and they do not know. It is important to travel out of the United States. The things that you take for granted here, you will learn to appreciate them. And it will also help you to understand different cultures and beliefs, and help you to know other people very well so that certain things will not surprise you. You will understand why she dresses like this. You will understand why people eat certain foods.

A student spoke of an experience with someone from the Middle East after hearing a newscast of the war going on in his country. His knowledge of other cultures helped in his understanding of this Middle Easterner's reaction. Compassion was the subtheme.

Someone I know from Jordan heard a newscast about Israel and America. He started cursing Israel and America. Unfortunately, there was a whole room full of naturalized Americans who found offense. I was kind of offended by it, that he would come here to live and then demean America like that. It was just something about it, and I am not a very patriotic person. But here is somebody from another country living here. I can understand now his point of view being from Jordan. Israel attacked them several times. So he had lost brothers and relatives in wars. So of course he has an opinion on that, and he has a right to it, I guess.

Self-Esteem. Several students shared experiences where language barriers (dialects and accents) were the subtheme. One student remembered a trip to Washington, DC, with a tourist group. While conversing in an elevator, she felt she was perceived negatively and was embarrassed because of her southern accent. She later realized that her accent was part of her culture and nothing to be embarrassed about.

I said something in the elevator, and everyone in the elevator turned around and looked at me. One of them said, "Where are you from?" I said, "Tennessee." They all laughed. They all thought it was the funniest thing in the world. I do remember being so embarrassed and so very hurt because they picked me out because of my accent.

Another student in the same group said outsiders believe that people with southern accents are not very smart.

I am continuously trying to get rid of mine because it is awful. To hear somebody mock you is even worse because you say, "I do not sound like that at all. I hope I don't." And then in a way you say, "I am supposed to be proud of where I am from. I am proud of my family." It almost seems like you are not smart or something. You have nothing going for you because you are from the South.

A student from the South compared the southern accent to other accents and stated that it was not put in the same positive category as others and is not thought of in the same positive light as other accents.

Think of all the cultures. Say, for instance, you are from England. You have a very different accent. No one looks down on you because of that. They think you are an intelligent and dashing person. If you are from Scotland or if you are from Jamaica, they may think what a wonderful lifestyle you must have living there. They think positive things. They think it is neat.

One student commented positively toward the southern accent:

But you do find certain instances where people will say something positive about "that southern accent." That has only happened to me one time. That was weird. Most of the time it is someone mocking me. Sometimes I think you take it negatively, I tend to.

In talking to people with a different accent than she has, one student noted that she talks slowly so that they can understand her and she asks them to repeat if she does not understand them.

I try to talk to Oriental people slowly But with anybody that has an accent, you try to talk slowly. Mexican people are somewhat difficult to

understand because they have such a strong accent. So I try to talk slowly, and if I do not understand them, I let them know rather than saying, "yeah I understand . . . "

A female Anglo-Saxon student married to an African-American male from the Caribbean Islands who spent time in England told of her experience learning about her husband's culture and the Pataou language and his learning about her culture having grown up in a predominately Anglo-Saxon northeastern town. Again the subtheme was language barriers.

But I learned Pataou, and it just happened that I was able to pick it up very quickly. I cannot speak it, but anybody in his family can stand and have a conversation with him, and I can understand it completely. I can turn and tell you exactly what they said. I think that by me picking it up quickly helped me to become better accepted in his family because I adjusted to his culture so quickly.

On the contrary, an Anglo-Saxon male student also of American-Indian descent, said that when he is around different groups of people he finds himself mimicking their speech patterns in order to blend in more. He said it sometimes causes conflicts because some people feel he is insulting them, but most of the time no one says anything. He does it to make himself blend in more with that particular group and to be accepted.

I have found that when I hang around with a certain group of people or individuals, I find myself starting to talk more like them, carry the accents and the speech patterns they have. Even talking briefly on the phone with someone from the Middle East, my wife caught me doing it . . . I found myself slurring my words exactly like that person did, sort of mimicking him. I did not mean to do it, but I fell into that pattern just by listening to him for a few minutes . . . If I am hanging around with some of my African-American friends, I find myself talking a lot more slang or neighborhood jargon than I would say in a professional office where everything is more in the King's English. But I pick it up without thinking.

Acceptance. A student commented on her willingness to learn to eat different types of food.

The food that they eat is totally different from the food that I am use to. In the northeastern United States, where I am from, everything is bland. You know you do not have any spices whereas his food is like wow it is hot, so I had to learn his culture. and he is also learning mine. And luckily it has been very successful.

School, Home, and Personal Experiences Combined

Some students shared experiences that were reflective of a combination of school, home, and their personal lives. Themes derived were understanding and acceptance.

Understanding. An Anglo-Saxon student responded that what he knows about other cultures was learned in school, at home, and from personal experiences. In his personal life, the student talked about the influence of the media where the subtheme was perception.

The media reinforces different things about other backgrounds all the time. You are constantly bombarded with stereotypes from both TV and radio. I also felt as if the media contributed to what I viewed about other cultures. As I was saying about the Asians, I didn't really know much about those individuals until I met them. I think my idea was generally that all Orientals were the same until I met more and more people that were from that background, and then I realized that they had different backgrounds. But what I knew about them, I learned from the media.

Acceptance. A student expounded on the home influence with the subtheme of open-mindedness:

When I say stereotypes, I mean southerners, people from the north, racial differences, all of those stereotypes are reinforced at home My family had certain views and ideas about African-Americans that they passed on to me. And then I had to weigh those against what I actually experienced.

Another student noted learning from a combination of school, home, the media, and personal reading. Willingness to learn was the subtheme.

I think it is really from a combination of things like here at school and home and then the media and just reading some things on my own. I am willing to learn whatever I can about you if you are willing to learn about me. I agree that when you are in the store, and you hear different languages, you feel a little intimidated because you do not know exactly what they are saying and what is going on.

An African-American student shared a personal childhood experience when her father was in the military and on a tour of duty. The subtheme was willingness to learn.

There were a lot of Mexican people who lived down there in different apartments. I remember them showing me how to make tortillas, and they were going to pierce my ears. That was one main way that I learned about different nationalities.

Research Question 2: What knowledge and attitudes do cooperative education students perceive as needed to interact effectively with individuals from diverse cultural and ethnic groups?

Knowledge is defined as facts and ideas acquired by study, investigation, observation, or experience. Attitudes are a mental position with regard to a fact or state; a position assumed for a specific purpose. The themes developed from this question were understanding, self-esteem, acceptance, principles, and interactions. Most students responded that acceptance was the most important quality with interactions second.

Understanding

There were several instances where understanding was emphasized. The students felt that you should be patient and take time to get to know others from diverse groups

and vice versa. They cautioned that one should not be judgmental. Once you had some perception of an individual and spent time with that individual, then a more positive bond could develop. Compassion for other people's feelings and their way of life was also emphasized. Two different students stated:

You have to be understanding and accepting of other people's ideas. It is not necessarily that I am from a different background and the person sitting next to me is from the Middle East. People are different religiously and morally, not just different in color, style, and dress. You must understand everyone's differences no matter what the differences may be.

You have to try to be understanding . . . to all those around you and the environment in which you are in, be it work, be it class, be it your neighborhood. You have to know how to deal with people on all levels, all classes, and all ethnic groups. I had to learn to be understanding to different cultures, different individuals, and also different age groups, and their backgrounds. I am trying to get a feel of where they are coming from.

Self-Esteem

Students felt it was important to know oneself, including strengths and weaknesses. Individuals should be able to apply strengths in the workplace without adversely affecting other people. Personal appearance and a positive attitude were considered important because an employee represents the company.

A student talked about appearance:

Everyone is different and everyone is individual If others wear something different than you then that is their business. They paid for it. Be respectful of other people, and consider other people's feelings as you would want your feelings to be considered.

Acceptance

Open-mindedness was the key subtheme for acceptance. Students felt that you should be willing to get to know others without bias or judgement regardless of race. Students need to have an open mind because everyone is not raised alike and people do different things. Without an open mind and a willingness to learn, it was felt that you would not succeed in life but be "stuck in a bubble."

Interestingly, several students reported:

I think they need to be open to different groups, not argumentative if it does not work out . . . they are not going to believe what you believe.

They are very closed minded about other cultures, and they need to be taught more maybe like in history class They need to be taught more about cultures instead of strictly about what happened in whatever war.

You know, we come from different backgrounds, different cultures, and different ethnic groups. Someone can do the same thing, achieve the same goal as you, but in a different way. Everything is not always straight and narrow or your way. You can have the same outcome by just listening to someone else.

I think everybody has to have an open mind about each person's beliefs, behavior styles, customs and family life. You have to be open-minded about things like that because people do things differently. You should have an open mind and not start to oooh because you do not like someone. You should just accept people for how they are and have an open mind.

. . . the first thing you have to do is treat people as equals rather than different ethnic groups. Then after you accept them as they are, you can start going off into other areas and appreciate them for what they are. I think you have to have a basic love of people.

Principles

The subthemes of values and morals were emphasized for principles. One older student felt that this generation of students lacked the morals and values needed to interact effectively with diverse groups in the workplace. She stated:

I was given morals, I had something to fall back on I was given some type of stability . . . this generation that is growing up like they have no sense of It is like you got it, and I am going to get it. They do not care. They do not have any type of sympathy.

Interactions

Subthemes for interactions were communication and listening. It was felt that because of the diversity of the workplace, students should try to mingle, by going outside of their comfort zones, with all groups as much as possible. One student stated:

. . . you have Hispanic, you have African-American, you have Anglo-Saxon, you have everything in the workplace. In school, they are sticking to one race, and that has been a problem because people do not know how to deal with different races in the workplace.

Other students felt that good communication skills and being firm in one's beliefs, behavior styles, and customs were important. One student stated:

. . . the best thing for me to do is to communicate and let people know that we are here. Even though we might not believe the same, even though we might not live the same, we can come together and work together.

Research Question 3: What knowledge and attitudes do cooperative education work-site supervisors perceive post-secondary cooperative education students need to interact effectively in a culturally and ethnically diverse workplace?

Most work-site supervisors felt that schools should play a greater role in preparing students for the diverse workplace. The emerging themes were understanding, self-esteem, acceptance, principles, and interactions. Interactions and self-esteem were reported more frequently by the supervisors than the other three themes.

Understanding

There was an instance where a supervisor elaborated on understanding as key to students interacting effectively in the workplace. She was from an architectural firm and stated that the design of architectural jobs was somewhat difficult because of the detail involved. Employees from other cultures had an even more difficult time understanding western design and style because they had not been exposed to it. She stressed the importance of spending time with the students explaining the differences in culture relative to certain building designs and their functions. She stated the following:

. . . our greatest task is really explaining the differences in cultures and interactions as far as building designs are concerned. There are a lot of things that are not handled the same way even in our culture Many hours are spent trying to make sure they understand the differences It's basically educating them as to the basic culture and customs.

Self-esteem

For those students just coming out of school, the supervisors felt their self-esteem was not where it should be in order to interact effectively in the workplace. They commented that schools and employers should work together to build students' confidence. Emphasis was placed on positive attitudes, dependability, and professional appearance.

One supervisor stated the following about appearance:

I am sure they have their opinions as to what is appropriate, but when you are going into a place of employment, at some point you have to relinquish the I and look at what that employer will accept. There are positions that just require a certain type of protocol You are interacting with these people all the time, and you have to be in a position where you can make a professional appearance. Those are just things required, and an employer is not going to dispatch you into any situation where you cannot represent that company or firm.

Another supervisor commented:

You will be surprised at some of the things that students wear to apply for positions or how they handle themselves. Sometimes you have to wonder if they could really be for real. If they do not make an impression on the employer who ultimately has the decision to say yes or no, they will never get an opportunity.

Acceptance

One supervisor felt students need to be in the learning mode at all times. Changing jobs, even though they may be similar, requires that one learn the procedures of that office. Students should be cautioned not to take the know-it-all position. The supervisor states further:

You have to be flexible to learn to adjust to the types of things that are being done in that particular office You have to learn to adapt to those changes and be in a learning type of mode.

She commented further that students should not:

. . . be in a fixed position with "we do it this way," or "this is how I am accustomed to doing things," because every office is different even though you may be doing the same thing.

Students are encouraged to be open to differences and to recognize and respect the differences of other people. Differences in others should not be something that takes away from a person. Learning to respect others' differences enables you to work with them rather than attacking them. A supervisor stated:

Stop long enough to learn if you disagree, why do you disagree. It may even change your opinion if you stop long enough to listen to someone else, and let something else prevail on you besides your own personal opinion. I think that there is a lot to be accomplished if we can master that part of it.

Principles

There were instances where principles were stressed relative to spirituality and observance of religious holidays. Because of the supervisors' awareness of different cultural beliefs and celebration of holidays, their respective companies had to rethink the celebration of religious holidays, especially Christmas, because of the make-up of their employees. One supervisor from a manufacturing firm expounded:

When we were planning festivities around the Christmas period, we bumped into some things We started wondering if we were in fact handling some things as we needed to We have people who are Christian, but we also have several other religious affiliations. We have Buddhists, we have Jews, we have Indians, we have all sorts of people who are not necessarily Christian as part of our population. So when we were planning our Christmas celebrations, we tried to take into consideration and plan some things that would be suitable to all.

Interactions

Communication was the dominant subtheme under interactions. One supervisor stated that her company had a large population of hearing-impaired customers.

Employees took sign language so that they would be able to communicate at least at a minimum level with them. The supervisor smiled as she stated:

. . . if you can just say hello to a hearing impaired student in sign language, you can have the rest of the conversation by notes. The fact that you can at least just greet them initially makes a difference.

Other supervisors stressed the importance of students possessing and exhibiting good written and verbal communication skills. They commented as follows:

I am of the opinion that a student needs a very good grounding in communications skills especially the English language since it is the language of business.

. . . a speech class taught me how to speak in front of other people. Sometimes if you did not have a topic, the professor would give you a topic It taught me to be fast on my feet Some people do not know how to talk to people. This is a way to communicate effectively.

Supervisors agreed that in a business environment, it is important that standard English is used to avoid misunderstandings in communication. Someone from another cultural or ethnic group may not interpret nonstandard English the same as the group using it. An Anglo-Saxon supervisor who worked with a student from Africa told of the experience of sometimes talking with the African student:

He is thoroughly Americanized. Occasionally, we will say something, and he will just laugh for all he is worth because we have said something that means something totally different where he is from. Now he has been in this country long enough that he is comfortable with most of our mores and most of our slang expressions. Once in awhile something will come up, and we will interpret it for him or we will get him tickled because it is something odd to him.

One supervisor reiterated what a student said in the student group about oral communication. It was his first time working with a student from Africa. He commented on the type of English that they speak:

... they speak English, but it is a different type of English. Sometimes we have to speak slowly, and then we have to listen to them more carefully about what they are saying.

One supervisor stressed the importance of schools offering some type of structured activity, a class or group session where students get together to just talk about cultural and ethnic differences. It would be an open forum where anyone could ask questions and talk about different cultural and/or ethnic backgrounds. The supervisor noted:

Oftentimes by choice, we choose to spend our time with people that we know and are comfortable with. We miss the opportunity to learn about other people because we do not take the opportunity. Sometimes we have to be structured or geared into those opportunities where you have contact with those people, and you learn to interact with them.

Another supervisor commented:

I have a colleague who is a German national. I tend not to ask questions of him because often people perceive it as just a lot of personal nosiness whereas you might very well be curious about things and want to ask questions. When you have a structured format where you know in advance what you will be discussing, then that is when you ask questions. I think people probably would feel freer to ask questions.

A supervisor did stress the importance of listening skills:

... required that we pay attention to what people were saying and not so much to how they said it in order to ask questions. I think that is something that we just do not do.

Summary

Focus groups were used in this study for two purposes: (a) to uncover the experiences of post-secondary cooperative education students when interacting with people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds, and (b) to obtain cooperative education students' and work-site supervisors' perceptions of the knowledge and attitudes needed by cooperative education students to interact more effectively. Six focus groups were held: four students groups and two work-site supervisor groups. Each group consisted of six participants.

Demographic data sheets were used to obtain information on students and work-site supervisors. Also field notes taken by the researcher/moderator provided further documentation. The student groups consisted of 8 males and 16 females. The ethnic breakdown was 15 Anglo-Saxons and 9 African-Americans. They ranged in age from 18 to 47 years. Fifty percent of the students were enrolled in Medical Office Technology, Microcomputer Technology, or Business Administration. Student participants were enrolled in a total of 10 different programs at the college.

There were four male and eight female work-site supervisors. Eight were Anglo-Saxon, and four African-American. The professional titles of the supervisors were manager, director, supervisor, buyer, and cost accountant. Businesses represented were: automobile dealerships, architectural firms, teleservice organizations, medical providers, post-secondary institutions, manufacturing industry, and retail stores. The businesses employed from 40 to 2,000 employees.

The tape recorded transcripts were transcribed. Then they were analyzed using content analysis and ethnographic summaries. Five recurring themes were identified under the categories of school experiences; work experiences; personal experiences; school, work, personal experiences combined; student perceptions of knowledge and attitudes needed, and work-site supervisor perceptions of knowledge and attitudes needed. The themes and corresponding subthemes were:

understanding -- compassion, patience, perception, tolerance

self-esteem -- appearance, attitudes, language barriers, respect

acceptance -- open-mindedness, willingness to learn

principles -- morals, spirituality, values

interactions -- communications, listening

Further the results were recorded according to research questions. In the researcher's perception, self-esteem followed by understanding were the dominant themes derived from Question 1. Acceptance followed by interactions were the dominant themes derived from Question 2. Interactions followed by self-esteem were the dominant themes derived from Question 3. Overall, self-esteem was the prevailing theme in all three research questions.

Effective interaction took place more often when students felt good about themselves. Giving value to themselves allowed them to also give value to others. Self-confidence was reflected in appearance, lifestyle, behavior, professional accomplishments, and relationships.

Effective interaction with diverse groups was often inhibited because of preconceived perceptions due to a lack of understanding. Information about the groups' beliefs, customs, language, family background, ethnicity, communication style, and/or perspectives were crucial to clarifying such perceptions.

Both work-site supervisors and cooperative education students responded that communication was essential to effective interaction. Good written and oral communication skills were stressed. Structured group settings that allow for student socialization with diverse groups were also recommended.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, FINDINGS, DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A summary of the study inclusive of the purpose and research procedures is included in this chapter. Additionally, findings along with discussion based on the findings, implications, recommendations for curriculum and instructional development and suggestions for additional research are presented.

Summary

The onset of the civil rights movement in the 1960s provoked minority groups to promote cultural pluralism. Statistics taken from such reports as *One-Third of a Nation* (Commission on Minority Participation in Education and American Life, 1988) and *Workforce 2000* (Johnston, 1987) indicate that the population of the United States is becoming more diverse in cultural expressions such as ethnicity, religion, language, music, art, and literature. Because of highly technological and complex worksites composed of individuals and groups with different goals, values, attitudes, and behavior patterns, it is more important than ever that members of the workforce value and respect one another.

Schools are called upon once again to respond to this change in society. Research shows that effective interaction in a pluralistic society (Loden & Rosener, 1991) directly affects productivity in the workplace. School-to-work transition programs must be relevant and reflect the skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed by students in the workplace. Students' perceptions directly influences their actions in the workplace.

Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study were (a) to provide documented accounts of cooperative education students' experiences when interacting with diverse groups and (b) to obtain cooperative education students' and work-site supervisors' perceptions of the knowledge and attitudes needed by cooperative education students to interact effectively with diverse groups. Banks' categories of knowledge construction were used to relate the outcomes of the study to the multicultural theory of knowledge being positional and relating to the knower's values and experiences. The specific experiences and examples cited by cooperative education students and work-site supervisors in the results of the study can be used to improve the cooperative education curriculum, the general curriculum, and as a basis for teaching about knowledge construction and interactions with culturally and ethnically diverse groups.

Research Procedures

Focus groups are used often in education and other social programs to document what is expected and the impact on people. Major points of discussion for such groups include relevance, practicability, and utility of the programs. Focus groups were used to gather data for this study because of their emphasis on insights, perceptions, and explanations, and also because they provide for group interaction. Other common uses of focus groups in research (Bellenger, Bernhardt, & Goldstucker, 1976; Higgenbotham & Cox 1979) include stimulating new ideas and creative concepts; generating impressions of

products, programs, services, institutions, or other objects of interest; and learning how respondents talk about phenomenon of interest.

Twenty-four students and 12 employers were selected from a list of cooperative education students and employers provided by a southeastern comprehensive community college. Four focus groups comprised of six currently enrolled students each were held on the school site. Two focus groups comprised of six current work-site supervisors of the students were also held on the school site.

Each focus group session was from one to two hours in length. The sessions were tape recorded and field notes were taken by the researcher. Additionally, each participant completed an information sheet. Focus group discussions were transcribed, and field notes and information sheets were compiled. The transcripts were read, coded, and categorized. Further, ethnographic analysis was used. Recurring themes were identified and marked under the categories of school experiences; work experiences; personal experiences; school, home, and personal experiences combined; student perceptions of knowledge and attitudes needed; and work-site supervisor perceptions of knowledge and attitudes needed. The five major themes that evolved were understanding, self-esteem, acceptance, principles, and interactions.

Findings

Research Question 1

What are the school, work, and personal experiences cited by post-secondary cooperative education students related to interacting with individuals from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds?

There were several examples given of student experiences interacting with culturally and ethnically diverse groups. The four themes that emerged and the order of dominance were understanding, self-esteem, acceptance, and principles.

Understanding. To gain understanding, several participants strongly supported making experience intelligible by applying interpretation or explanation. There were many instances where students reflected on an experience and combined it with other related information to reach a better interpretation. Students' lack of knowledge about diverse groups often contributed to their inability to understand them. Travel was frequently cited as a way to broaden and enlighten people of other cultures and groups.

The participants felt that most people's knowledge of diverse groups comes predominantly from noneducational media programming wherein representations are not necessarily accurate or complete. Students recommended that media knowledge be checked against other knowledge sources. People should not hesitate to question knowledge obtained through the media.

Perceptions are often based on inaccurate media knowledge, cultural knowledge, and/or lack of knowledge. In such cases, individuals are encouraged to ask questions to

verify what they have heard. Individual perceptions based on media and/or cultural knowledge were typical for Research Question 1. The students emphasized compassion towards others. Once people have an understanding of something, then they are more tolerant to answer questions for clarification.

Self-Esteem. Language barriers was the dominant subtheme. These barriers often left many students with a feeling of intimidation. Sometimes they led to misunderstandings and misinterpretations because of unclear pronunciation of a dialect or accent. Removal or understanding of a language barrier enabled better interaction. Some students said they overcame the barriers by speaking slowly or having the other party speak slowly and ask questions.

Several students expressed pride when they had a good understanding of a distinct dialect or accent. One student's understanding and ability to mimic different accents and dialects gave him great satisfaction because it enabled him to fit in better with certain groups, thus their accepting him more quickly.

There was a great deal of discussion relative to language accents and the way that different accents are perceived and the effect on one's self-esteem. Overall, many southerners were embarrassed by their accents because people tended to look down on their accent and perceived southerners as being less intelligent. To counter that thought, some students felt that individuals should be proud of their birthplaces and feel good about them. Students commented that an accent or dialect is not a measure of one's

intelligence. They also felt that if southerners themselves took a more positive stance, then others would not criticize their accent so much.

Having the respect of others tended to raise self-esteem. Many students felt that giving respect begets respect and went out of their way to show it. For instance, students from other countries, in an effort not to offend customs of this country, did not flaunt their customs.

Acceptance. The students gave equal weight to willingness to learn and open-mindedness. They felt very strongly about letting other-than-familiar-thoughts prevail in one's mind. Exploring the unknown and trying new things were encouraged. People should not let family cultures with strong stereotypical views of other groups stop them from weighing family knowledge with knowledge from other sources and experiences.

It is important to be willing to learn about different lifestyles and beliefs. That learning should come from different sources such as school, work, home/community, and the media. When individuals are open to learn about others, then others tend to be open to learn about them.

Principles. Spirituality prevailed as the subtheme here. The key was that people are more inclined to respect the beliefs of others when they know something about them. The advice most often given was that people should not be so quick to judge others because of their beliefs but should try to learn more about them.

Students felt that religion was sometimes a problem in schools, especially if little was known about a religion. They noted that each school should be structured to show sensitivity to all the known religions of its population in order not to offend anyone.

Research Question 2

What knowledge and attitudes do cooperative education students perceive as needed to interact effectively with individuals from diverse cultural and ethnic groups in the workplace? The five themes that emerged, in the order of the ones mentioned most frequently, were acceptance, interactions, self-esteem, understanding, and principles.

Understanding. Students felt that one should try to understand the many differences in people and reserve judgment until more is known about them. Because people in our society are different in many ways (i.e., ethnicity, customs, values, religion), one should show compassion for their feelings. Also patience is required in order to fully get to know individuals from diverse groups.

Self-Esteem. Focus group participants felt that people need full knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses in order to apply the strengths in the workplace without adverse effect on others. Participants reported that individuals should treat other individuals as they want to be treated. Even in instances where there is disagreement, it is important to respect other people and their choices. Personal appearance and a positive attitude were felt to be important when representing a company.

Acceptance. Open-mindedness and willingness to learn were considered important for success in life. Students said they needed to be taught more about other cultures in

school thereby enabling them to accept people for what they are and to be open minded to their differences. People should treat other people as equals regardless of their ethnic group.

Students should be open to meeting and learning about different groups of people even if they do not believe in the same things. A student stated that "there are several ways to come up with the same answer because we are all different and have our own ways of doing things; people cannot always expect things to be their way."

Principles. Some of the students said that students today lack the morals and values needed to interact more effectively with diverse groups. Other students alluded that morals were at the core their beliefs.

Interactions. Students reported the importance of having a firm belief in their own behavior styles and customs. They stressed good communication skills. Students emphasized the importance of greater interaction with diverse groups in school even to the extent of stepping out of ones comfort zone because this will improve interactions in diverse workplaces.

Research Question 3

What knowledge and attitudes do cooperative education work-site supervisors perceive post-secondary cooperative education students need to interact effectively in a culturally and ethnically diverse workplace? The themes that emerged and their order of dominance were interactions, self-esteem, acceptance, principles, and understanding.

Understanding. Work-site supervisors stated that employers should take time to explain step-by-step what they expect students to understand. In cases where there is a diverse group, then some background information may be required to ensure everyone is on one accord.

Self-Esteem. Supervisors reported that many students coming out of high school have low self-esteem. Schools and employers should strive to build positive self-esteem in students.

Appearance was perceived as important because employees represent the company and also sometimes perceptions and judgments are formed based on a person's appearance. Students sometimes fail to place enough emphasis on professional appearance in the workplace.

Acceptance. The participants stated that people should always be willing and ready to learn and not take a know-it-all position. They said that workplaces are different and therefore employees must learn the way each company does things. Flexibility and adjustment to changes are essential in the workplace.

Students need to recognize and respect differences in others. When disagreements occur, they should try to find out why. The supervisors encouraged students to let something other than their own opinion prevail.

Principles. Organizations are now proactive in their sensitivity to different cultures and beliefs. One way that sensitivity is demonstrated is in the ways that they recognize and celebrate certain holidays.

Interactions. People are pleased when they know that you have gone the extra step to interact with them. Good verbal and written communication skills were stressed. One supervisor advised that since standard English was the language of business, students need grounding in it to avoid miscommunication.

Students and employers should speak slowly when talking with someone who speaks a different language for better comprehension. Also, study participants emphasized the importance of really listening to the message rather than how the person says it.

Speaking before others was emphasized and speech classes were recommended. Open forums held at school for students to openly communicate with diverse groups and ask questions were believed to be very effective. In many instances, structured group sessions were the only time that people were able to interact and ask questions about different cultures.

Overall, the researcher perceived that supervisors felt strongly that students needed some training through school in interacting effectively with diverse groups. They felt that sensitivity should be shown toward those who are different. They expressed concern that all students be able to communicate verbally and in writing using standard English because it is the language of business. Supervisors stated that all people should strive to know something about diverse individuals and/or groups that they encounter. They also stated that schools could provide direction toward successful interaction.

Discussion

From the results of the study, five main themes emerged. They were understanding, self-esteem, acceptance, principles, and interactions. In focus group discussions related to the three research questions, students and supervisors alluded more often to the theme of self-esteem than the other four themes. Acceptance and interactions tied for second place relative to frequency of discussion. The discussion that follows is organized in two parts: discussion related to Research Question 1 and discussion of Research Questions 2 and 3 together.

Research Question 1

The themes that emerged from this question were: understanding, self-esteem, acceptance, and principles. The theme that surfaced most often was self-esteem.

Understanding. Understanding was defined as the power to make experience intelligible by applying concepts and categories, explanation, and interpretation. Subthemes that evolved were compassion, patience, perception, and tolerance.

The intended outcome of this study was to provide information related to the multicultural theory of knowledge being positional and relating to the knower's values and experiences. The experiences cited by students revealed that their inability to understand the actions of diverse groups was mainly because of their lack of knowledge of the groups.

In cases where individuals had an opportunity to learn something about the groups, then they were able to apply that knowledge to their preconceived perceptions and move forward. Information on the beliefs, customs, language, family background, ethnicity,

communication style, and perspectives of diverse groups were key in clarifying perceptions. Research has shown that students' perceptions directly influence their actions in the workplace (Loden & Rosener, 1991).

The accounts of students' experiences interacting with diverse groups of people also revealed that much of their knowledge of diverse groups came from the media, which in many cases was inaccurate and/or incomplete. Some students went as far as to say that people need to take media knowledge and check it with other types of knowledge for accuracy.

This statement reinforces what Banks (1994) said about the importance of educators teaching students about knowledge creation and factors that influence it. He classified media knowledge under the label of popular knowledge. Other research (Cortes, 1991a, 1991b; Greenfield & Cortes, 1991) revealed that media knowledge often reinforces stereotypes and misconceptions of racial and ethnic groups. Individuals need to be aware that information in the media is usually presented in subtle ways like stories and interpretations of current events. Along the same lines, students stated that cultural knowledge of diverse groups received at home and/or in the community should also be verified for accuracy for some of the same reasons as media knowledge.

Self-Esteem. Self-esteem is defined as confidence and satisfaction with oneself. This was the dominant theme for Research Question 1. The subthemes were appearance, attitudes, language barriers, and respect.

Overall, students recognized their uniqueness and had a sense of their own worth. They strived to maintain and develop their own high standards and expressed a desire to be liked by others which in turn made them feel special about themselves. Some students realized the importance of setting their own internal standards rather than comparing themselves to others.

The dominant subtheme was language barriers--accents and dialects. There is a great deal of language diversity in the United States because of its racial and ethnic makeup. Several students agreed that when talking to someone with a different accent or dialect, it was important for both parties to talk slowly and ask questions to avoid misunderstanding. Pride was also expressed when the language barriers were overcome. The literature review (Banks, 1981; Odenwald, 1993) revealed that conquering language barriers would contribute to students' future success.

Many students stated how they were intimidated when people talked in a foreign language in their presence. The reason given was their not knowing what was being said and a lack of knowledge of the individual or group speaking. When time was taken to explain something about the language and the speaker(s), then the mystic was removed. Students said that provided encouragement for them to learn to speak a few words of the language.

Several students felt strongly that the southern accent was looked down on. They felt embarrassment when people commented negatively about the accent, insinuating that southerners were not very smart. Those who had a high level of confidence about

themselves realized that the accent was not an indicator of their intelligence and expressed pride in their speech.

Acceptance. Acceptance was defined as favorable reception. Subthemes were open-mindedness and willingness to learn. Several experiences were also shared relating to this theme.

The students believed strongly that people should let something else prevail in their thoughts other than the familiar. They stated the importance of people being open-minded to learn new things from different sources--school, work, home/community, etc. They stated that current knowledge should be weighed against new knowledge learned from different sources. This is an example of knowledge construction which is influenced by cultural assumptions, frames of reference, and perspectives within a discipline. Students must learn to be creators of their own knowledge.

Principles. Principles was defined as opinions, attitudes, or beliefs that exercise direct influence on life and behavior; rules or codes of conduct. Subthemes that evolved were morals, spirituality, and values.

Many students felt that individuals should not be too quick to judge other individuals based on religion before knowing something about that religion. Individuals should respect and be sensitive to all religions. Schools and employers need to be sensitive to the various religions of their clientele. This relates to students having a strong sense of their cultural values and being able to personify those values without offense to others.

Research Questions 2 and 3

These two questions dealt with the knowledge and attitudes that cooperative education students and work-site supervisors perceived cooperative education students needed to interact more effectively with individuals from culturally and ethnically diverse groups in the workplace. The themes that emerged were understanding, self-esteem, acceptance, and interactions. The dominant themes for Question 2 were acceptance followed by interactions. The dominant themes for Question 3 were interactions followed by self-esteem.

Understanding. Both employers and students emphasized the importance of reserving judgement of others until more is known about them. They stated that one should not stereotype but try to get to know people. As stated in the research (Banks, 1975), the more one knows about another individual, the better he or she will understand them.

Self-esteem. Students stressed the importance of respecting other people's choices even in times of disagreement. Also, they believed that people should treat others as they wanted to be treated.

Supervisors stated that schools and employers need to work on helping students to build their confidence level. Positive self-worth comes from within and is reflected in grooming, lifestyle, behavior, professional accomplishments, and relationships. Employee grooming and appearance were emphasized because of the reflection on the company. Personal styles of students often conflicted with acceptable business attire.

Acceptance. Both students and supervisors felt that students should always be willing to learn about diverse groups. They both emphasized respect for differences in others.

Students believed that schools should teach more about other cultures so that students can be more accepting and open-minded about culturally and ethnically diverse groups. Students should also realize that there are several ways to get the same results. They should not reject others because they do things differently.

Supervisors felt that when students were in a situation where they disagreed with someone, students should try to find out the cause of the disagreement. Supervisors stressed the importance of students letting something else prevail on their minds besides their own opinions.

Interactions. Students and supervisors saw a need for students to socialize more with diverse groups. Supervisors recommended that schools support more structured types of group settings where students can get together to discuss and ask questions on issues related to cultural and ethnic diversity. Both students and supervisors also emphasized the importance of good oral and written communication skills. Supervisors stated that a strong foundation in standard English was imperative because it is the language of business. Students believed that individuals should have a firm belief in their own behavior styles and customs. Supervisors recommended that when language barriers surface, individuals involved should speak slowly and ask questions when misunderstandings occur.

Implications

Based on the findings of this study, effective interactions between culturally and ethnically diverse groups would serve to improve cooperative education programs at the post-secondary level. The findings support other research that found productivity in the workplace is directly related to the ability to interact in a pluralistic society (Loden & Rosener, 1991). There is a greater potential for conflict when individuals do not share similar ethnic identities, cultural codes, value systems, and background experiences.

Student participants in the study did not report any formal preparation for interacting in a multicultural society. Supervisors emphasized the importance of effective interaction in the workplace and made recommendations for what knowledge and attitudes they perceived students needed to interact more effectively with others. Supervisors also suggested the role that schools could play in that preparation.

Student experiences reported in the study can serve to develop educational materials for teaching about effective interaction. Experiences provided by students and the knowledge and attitudes that supervisors perceived students need provided actual examples that related to four of Banks' categories of knowledge construction: personal/cultural knowledge, popular knowledge, mainstream academic knowledge, and school knowledge. These experiences added to the validity of the multicultural theory of knowledge being positional. Examples of Banks' category of transformative academic knowledge were not cited by the students and work-site supervisors interviewed in this study.

The student experiences and supervisor perceptions can be incorporated in school-to-work transition programs, such as cooperative education, to help make them relevant and reflect the skills, concepts, and attitudes that students need in the workplace. The study provides a base for developing educational material in context with emphasis on the five themes that were revealed. The real-life experiences on effective interactions provided in this study can serve as a basis for further study.

Recommendations

Overall, students talked more about experiences they had interacting effectively with culturally and ethnically diverse groups related to the themes of self-esteem followed by understanding, acceptance, and principles. Students and supervisors stated that the knowledge and attitudes needed by students to interact more effectively related to the themes of interactions followed by acceptance and self-esteem, and then understanding and principles. The dominant theme for all three questions was self-esteem followed by acceptance and interactions and then understanding and principles.

The study revealed that effective interaction took place more often when students felt good about themselves or were self-assured. Giving value to themselves allowed them to also give value to others. Self-confidence was reflected in appearance, lifestyle, behavior, professional accomplishments, and relationships. Effective interaction with diverse groups was often inhibited because of preconceived perceptions based on a lack of understanding. Information about the groups' beliefs, customs, language, family

background, ethnicity, communication style, and/or perspectives are crucial to clarifying such perceptions.

Work-site supervisors and cooperative education students both responded that communication was essential to effective interaction also. Good written and oral communication skills were stressed. Structured group settings that allow for student socialization with diverse groups were also recommended.

Based on the findings of this study, the researcher offers the following recommendations and examples for curriculum and instruction development.

1. Schools should incorporate multicultural education and experiences throughout the curriculum where applicable in an effort to enable students to study content, concepts, and events from many viewpoints. This could be done through units in various classes where applicable. Students with multicultural experiences could be allowed to share them in class. Multicultural instructional materials, such as textbooks and readings, could be used in classes, assuring that at least the contributions to society of the diverse groups represented in the schools are mentioned and celebrated in some way. Members of the community should also be invited to classes to share their experiences and ideas when appropriate.

2. Schools should schedule structured times for interaction between diverse groups of people. These could be in classes, during specific events, and/or at selected times during the day. Seminars could be scheduled during the cooperative education class

or at some other time during the school day for all students. Student organizations could set aside times during their meetings for interactions among their members.

3. Case studies and scenarios could be developed based on data generated from this study to be used in helping students learn to interact effectively with diverse groups and individuals from diverse groups. The student experiences cited relating to inaccurate and incomplete media knowledge could be used in scenarios in cooperative education as well as other classes.

4. Cooperative learning should be used more throughout schools so that learning is linked to something tangible and also to assist in preparing students for workplaces. Using the team approach requires employees to know more than one job and also the relationship of their job to other jobs in the organization. When students are allowed to get together during school in an open forum as suggested in this study, they can interact with diverse individuals and ask questions about their cultures. This process can aid students in developing the ability to work cooperatively with diverse individuals.

5. Educators should strive, whenever possible, to build students' self-esteem by confirming their uniqueness and encouraging them to develop and maintain high standards for themselves. Areas to emphasize include appearance, lifestyle, and behavior. This could be facilitated through organizations, classes, seminars/workshops, and sports. Many of the experiences cited by students and supervisors in this study could be used as a basis for preparing the material for the sessions.

6. Communication skills should be emphasized throughout the curriculum.

Stress should be placed on the importance of strong oral and written communication skills in school and in the workplace. Applied types of activities should be used for reinforcement. Case studies and scenarios could be used in various classes developed from experiences cited by students and supervisors in this study. Cooperative education could take a lead role by holding specific seminars for the purpose of enhancing written and verbal communication skills. Employers should be encouraged to participate.

7. When applicable, instructors should strive to show the relationship between learning and the workplace. More applied types of exercises should be included with assistance from employers. Cooperative education classes could incorporate exercises on interacting with diverse groups using experiences cited from this study.

8. Knowledge construction should be emphasized and students should be taught ways of analyzing information to determine its validity. Students should be encouraged in all of their classes to look to more than one source for knowledge. Students should be made aware of Banks' five categories of knowledge construction and encouraged to challenge textbooks, media, and mainstream knowledge sources.

Recommendations for additional research include:

1. This study focused solely on cooperative education students and work-site supervisors. Additional research can be done to examine student experiences in other school-to-work transition programs. The study could also include coworkers and/or peers in the workplace involved with cooperative education students.

2. This study focused on cooperative education students from one post-secondary institution and their work-site supervisors. Additional research can be done that focuses on experiences of cooperative education students and work-site supervisors at other post-secondary institutions thereby strengthening the validity of the findings of this study.

3. Additional research can be done that focuses more on how culturally and ethnically diverse cooperative education students construct knowledge. Again, Banks' five categories of knowledge construction could be used as the basis for the study. The study could also be broadened to focus on how students in other school-to-work transition programs construct knowledge.

4. Since this researcher perceived self-esteem to be the dominant theme for this study. Therefore, additional research focusing on self-esteem related to effective interactions among diverse groups could be done using post-secondary students in cooperative education or other school-to-work transition programs that focus on self-esteem as it relates to effective interactions among diverse groups.

The above recommendations and examples will enhance curriculum and instruction by emphasizing the importance of diverse groups being able to interact effectively both at school and in the workplace. Additional research should provide educators and employers with information on effective interaction among diverse groups.

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APPENDIX A

Letters

Letter to Cooperative Education Coordinator

Current Date

Name

Cooperative Education Coordinator

Address

City/State

Dear :

To help students succeed in the workplace, I am studying diversity training in cooperative education work programs at the community college level. The purpose of the study is to document experiences cooperative education students and work-site supervisors have had when interacting with diverse groups of people. I need your assistance in contacting cooperative education students and work-site supervisors.

Cooperative education programs are needed in our service-oriented and technological society because business and industry look to schools for assistance in meeting their human resource and training needs. Individuals who can work beside people of different cultures, lifestyles, and perspectives tend to be more successful in the workplace.

You can be assured that all information obtained will be kept confidential and will be used exclusively for this study. The identity of the participating students and work-site supervisors as well as the name of the college will not be revealed in any written or oral presentation or report.

My goal is to use the outcomes of this study to enhance cooperative education programs, thus ensuring they continue to provide occupational experience and training to better meet the diverse needs of students and employers. A copy of the results will be provided for your review at your request. This study has been approved by the graduate committee members at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University in Blacksburg, VA.

Your assistance is greatly appreciated. I look forward to hearing from you soon. You can reach me during the day at (999) 999-9999.

Sincerely,

Thelma C. King

Student Letter

Current Date

Student Name

Address

City/State

Dear Student:

Presently, I am researching the topic of diversity experiences of cooperative education students at the community college level. The purposes of the study are to gather documented accounts of student experiences when interacting with culturally and ethnically diverse groups of people and to obtain their perceptions of the knowledge and attitudes needed to interact effectively.

Cooperative education programs are needed in our service-oriented and technological society because business and industry look to schools for assistance in meeting their human resource and training needs. Research has shown that individuals who can work with people of different cultures, lifestyles, and perspectives stand a better chance of success in the workplace.

I am requesting your participation through student group discussions. Each group will consist of six students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds. For the purposes of this study, ethnic refers to race or nationality and cultural refers to values and beliefs of certain groups of people. I will serve as the facilitator.

Participants will discuss experiences communicating with culturally and ethnically diverse people. The group discussions will be held at a mutually agreed on time at the college. They will last approximately 1 1/2 hours. The sessions will be recorded on audio tape for later data analysis. You can be assured that all information obtained will be kept confidential and will be used exclusively for this study. The identity of participating students as well as the community college will not be used in any written or oral presentation or report.

My goal is to use the outcomes of this study to enhance cooperative education programs. This will ensure that continue to provide occupational experience and training to better meet the needs of its diverse students and employers. A copy of the results will be provided at your request. Your assistance is greatly appreciated. I will call you in a few day to confirm your participation. If you have questions, you may call me at (910) 334-7657. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Thelma C. King

Work-Site Supervisor Letter

Date

Work-Site supervisor Name
Address
City/State

Dear Work-Site supervisor:

Presently, I am researching the topic of diversity experiences of cooperative education students at the community college level. The purposes of the study is to gather documented accounts of experiences cooperative education students and work-site supervisors have had when interacting with culturally and ethnically diverse groups of people and to obtain your perspective of the knowledge and attitudes needed to interact effectively.

Cooperative education programs are needed in our service-oriented and technological society because business and industry look to schools for assistance in meeting their human resource and training needs. Research has shown that individuals who can work with people of different cultures, lifestyles, and perspectives stand a greater chance of success in the workplace.

I hope you will participate in the study. The data needed will be collected through separate student and work-site supervisor group discussions. Four student groups consisting of six cooperative education students from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds and two cooperative education work-site supervisor groups consisting of six work-site supervisors each will be used. For the purposes of this study, ethnic refers to race or nationality and cultural refers to values and beliefs of certain groups of people. I will serve as the facilitator.

Student participants will discuss any type of diversity experiences they have encountered and how they interacted during the experience. Participating work-site supervisors will discuss experiences interacting and the knowledge and attitudes they perceive cooperative education students need to be effective in the workplace. The group discussions will be held at a mutually agreed on time and place. They will last approximately 1 1/2 hours. The sessions will be recorded on audio tape for later data analysis. You can be assured that all information obtained will be kept confidential and will be used exclusively for this study. The identity of work-site supervisors of cooperative education students as well as the community college will not be revealed in any written or oral presentation or report.

My goal is to use the outcomes of this study to enhance cooperative education programs, thus ensuring they continue to provide occupational experience and training to better meet the needs of its diverse students and employers. A copy of the results of the study will be provided at your request. Your assistance is greatly appreciated. I will call you in a few days to confirm your participation. If you have questions, you may call me at (910) 334-7657. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Thelma C. King

APPENDIX B

Focus Group Materials

Summary Topics for Student Focus Groups

1. Give examples of interactions with individuals from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
-How did your cultural values influence your interaction?

-How did your knowledge of other cultures influence your interaction?

-How did you obtain your knowledge of other cultures?
-school -media -home/community
2. Describe specific procedures/tactics you use in school and the workplace to interact with those with different cultural and ethnic backgrounds:
- situations - personal experiences -examples -workshops
3. Discuss college experiences that have aided in your understanding of culturally and ethnically diverse groups:
- units in courses - outside reading -sports
- organizations - class discussions -simulations
- personal experiences - working in groups -assignments
4. Describe diverse situations experienced in school, at work, and/or in your personal lives. How did you interact, including later reflections or other ways of interacting.
- meetings - social functions
- school functions - one-on-one encounters
5. Give examples of experiences, including knowledge and attitudes, you perceive students need to be effective in diverse workplaces.
- understanding other cultures and ethnic groups
- discussions of religion, language, music, art, literature, etc.
- discussions of values, cognition, cultural norms
- understanding communication and style
- examples of different interpersonal behaviors discussed or demonstrated
- behavior styles, beliefs, customs
- social views, perspectives and world views
- methods of reasoning and validating knowledge

Summary Topics for Work-Site Supervisor Focus Groups

1. Describe workplace and employees.
 - *type of business*
 - *types of employees (ethnic groups, gender, cultures, etc.)*

2. Cite examples of experiences/situations when interacting with culturally and ethnically diverse employees. Reflect back on any after thoughts or other ways of interacting.
 - *meetings*
 - *social functions*
 - *school functions*
 - *daily instructions/assignments*
 - *one-on-one encounters*
 - *company sponsored events*
 - *employee evaluations*

3. Give examples of specific experiences, including knowledge and attitudes, you perceive students need to be effective in culturally and ethnically diverse workplaces.
 - *understanding other cultures and ethnic groups*
 - *discussions of religion, language, music, art, literature, etc.*
 - *discussions of values, cognition, cultural norms*
 - *understanding communication and style*
 - *examples of different interpersonal behaviors discussed or demonstrated*
 - *behavior styles, beliefs, customs*
 - *social views, perspectives and world views*
 - *methods of reasoning and validating knowledge*
 - school books & material*
 - media*
 - family & community values*

4. Explain your perceptions of the school's role in assisting students in gaining the knowledge and attitudes necessary to be effective in a culturally and ethnically diverse workplace.
 - *special classes on diversity*
 - *units on diversity in the cooperative education class*
 - *incorporate diversity training into the school curriculum; if so how?*
 - *observance of ethnic holidays*

STUDENT INFORMATION

NAME: _____ AGE: _____

MAJOR: _____ GENDER: __ Male __ Female

ETHNIC GROUP: __ African-American __ White __ Hispanic __ Asian

__ Other: What? _____

EMPLOYER: _____

JOB TITLE AND DESCRIPTION: _____

PREVIOUS WORK EXPERIENCE

TITLE & DESCRIPTION: _____

TITLE & DESCRIPTION: _____

TITLE & DESCRIPTION: _____

WORK-SITE SUPERVISOR INFORMATION

JOB TITLE OF RESPONDENT: _____

ORGANIZATION NAME: _____

TYPE OF ORGANIZATION: _____

EMPLOYEE POPULATION BREAKDOWN:

**APPROXIMATELY WHAT PERCENTAGE OF THE FOLLOWING ETHNIC
GROUPS ARE EMPLOYED BY YOUR ORGANIZATION IN THIS COUNTY?**

___ African-American ___ White ___ Hispanic ___ Asian ___ Other

JOB TITLES OF CURRENT COOPERATIVE EDUCATION STUDENTS:

DO YOU CONSISTENTLY EMPLOY COOPERATIVE EDUCATION STUDENTS?:

___ yes ___ no

STANDARD ETHICS PROTOCOL

My name is Thelma C. King. I am the principal investigator for a study on the topic of diversity experiences of cooperative education students and work-site supervisors.

Thank you for your willingness to participate in this research project. Your participation is very much appreciated. Just before we start the group discussion/interview, I would like to reassure you that as a participant in this project you have several very definite rights.

- (1) Your participation in this group discussion is entirely voluntary.
- (2) You are free to withdraw from the discussion at any time.
- (3) You are free to refuse to answer any question at any time.

This group discussion/interview will be kept strictly confidential and will be available only to the researcher. Because audio taping is the principal means of capturing observations in this type of group discussion, I am requesting your permission to tape the session.

Excerpts of this group discussion/interview will be made part of the final research report, but under no circumstances will your name or identifying characteristics be included in this report.

I would be grateful if you would sign this form to show that I have read you its contents and you agree to the taping of the session.

(Signature)

(date)

EXAMPLES OF DIVERSITY ISSUES

Definitions for the purposes of this study are as follows:

cultural diversity - differences in behavior patterns, values, beliefs, and symbols

ethnic diversity - differences between groups of people based on racial, national, tribal, religious, and/or linguistic background

Examples of diversity issues are as follows:

References to/study of/comments about/ or discussion about

-religion, language, music, art, literature, or other cultural expression

-cultural values, understandings, cultural norms/standards/traits

-communication styles (verbal and non-verbal)

-interpersonal behaviors

-concepts, theories, paradigms

-social views, perspectives, and world views

-beliefs, behavior styles, customs, family life

-methods of reasoning and validating knowledge

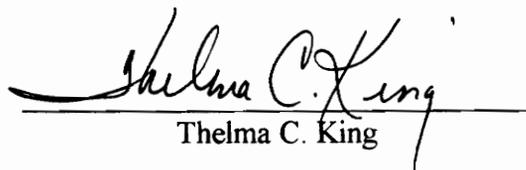
VITA

Thelma C. King
1319 Covered Wagon Road
McLeansville, NC 27301

Thelma C. King was born on May 22, 1955, in Lumberton, NC. At the age of six, her family moved to Greensboro, NC, where she grew up. She was graduated from James B. Dudley Senior High School in June 1973. Thelma continued her education and received a Bachelor of Science in Business Education from NC A&T State University in Greensboro, NC, in 1978; she received a Master of Science in Business Education from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in 1986; and she completed the Doctor of Philosophy in Vocational and Technical Education concentrating in business education from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University (Virginia Tech) in the fall of 1995.

Thelma has over 12 years of teaching experience at the post-secondary level. She taught at Guilford Technical Community College, Jamestown, NC, and also served as Department chair in the Administrative Office Technology Department. She was a graduate teaching assistant at Virginia Tech for one year and taught part-time at Northern Virginia Community College in Manassas, VA. She is presently an assistant professor in business education at North Carolina A&T State University in Greensboro, NC.

Thelma is active in Delta Pi Epsilon, a business education honor society; the National Business Education Association; the American Vocational Association; the American Vocational Education Research Association; and the American Association of University Professors.


Thelma C. King