



# Survey of Multicultural Education, Media Images, and Expectations of Minority Group Members on Campus

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## What is Multicultural Education (ME)?

Multicultural education (ME) in the US grew out of civil rights struggles surrounding racism and education. It emerged from diverse courses, programs, and practices responding to demands, needs, and aspirations of multicultural groups.<sup>1</sup> ME is a culturally responsive pedagogy built upon ideals of freedom, justice, equity, and human dignity. ME gained traction in schools as a means to improve the political, economic and cultural understanding of members of diverse racial, ethnic, language, and cultural groups. ME includes a wide variety of programs and practices related to ethnic groups, women, language minorities, low-income groups, and people with disabilities.<sup>2</sup>

Differences between mainstream and micro-cultures often lead to cultural misunderstandings, conflict, and institutionalized discrimination.<sup>1</sup> To address conflict, multicultural initiatives incorporate appropriate human relation skills that promote equal opportunity. College students who report interactions with diverse peers show greater openness to diverse perspectives and willingness to challenge their own beliefs.<sup>8</sup> Through culturally responsive teaching, some institutions embrace social justice within the curriculum through service learning, diverse staff employment, and diversity trainings.

## Value of Multicultural Education (ME):

Embracing multicultural education (ME) is critical. From 1976 to 2012 among enrolled college students the percentage of Hispanic students rose from 4-15%, 2-6% among Asian and Pacific Islander students, 10-15% among Black students, and 0.7-0.9% among American Indian and Alaska Native students.<sup>1</sup> ME introduces a classroom climate where students learn to work with all classmates and to appreciate uniqueness.

ME adapts teaching materials and practices to the diversity in the classroom.<sup>6</sup> ME incorporates histories, texts, values, beliefs, and perspectives of culturally diverse individuals with aims of re-teaching culture, community, and racial relations. It encourages positive interaction and learning from a wide variety of perspectives.<sup>10</sup> ME enhances academic achievement among students across

many races and ethnic groups. ME develops through improved intergroup relations using contact characterized by: (1) equal status, (2) cooperation (3) sanctions by teachers and administrators, and (4) interpersonal interactions for students to become acquainted as individuals.<sup>1</sup> ME also reduces prejudice and improves interaction with students with diverse backgrounds.<sup>8</sup>

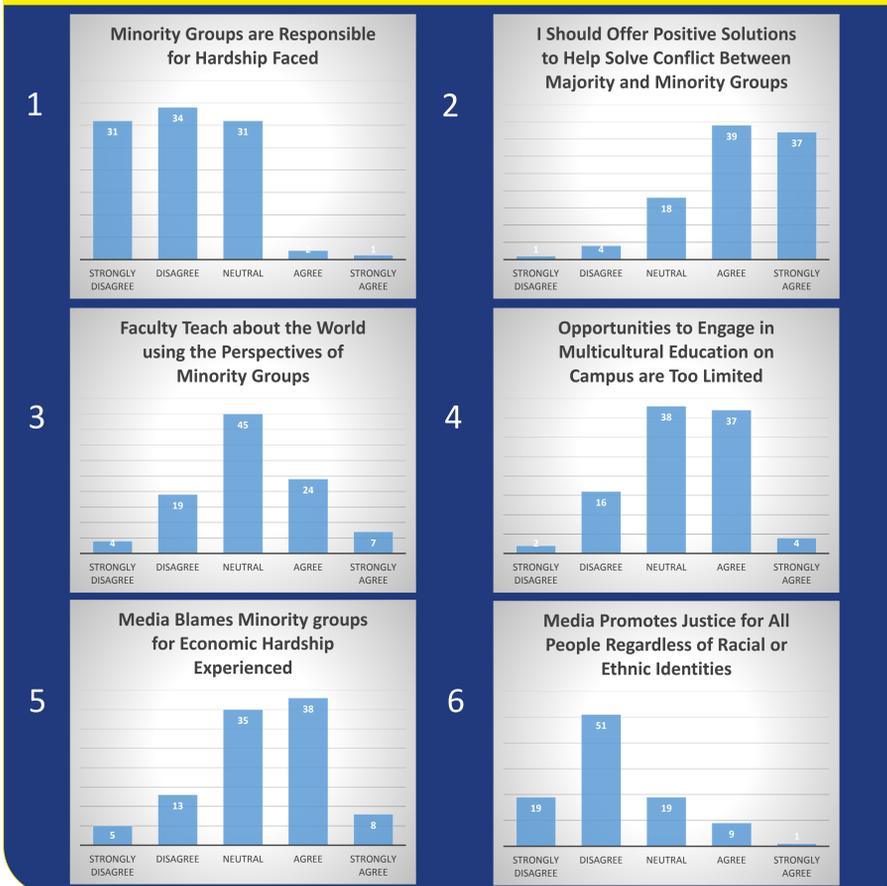
Critical Race Theory (CRT) explains social crises in classrooms and values differences and equitable share of power in the classroom. Teachers with high self-efficacy for teaching immigrant students are likely to be more willing to work in culturally diverse schools and confident about implementing ME.<sup>6</sup> ME is useful for discussing how institutions work toward becoming more equitable, diverse, and inclusive.<sup>3</sup>

## Solution: Effective Multicultural Education

There are **FIVE** dimensions of effective multicultural education:<sup>1</sup>

- Equity pedagogy:** using linguistic diversity and different teaching styles to promote diversity education and healthy living in a just, humane, and democratic society
- Prejudice reduction:** using a positive cultural dialogue and techniques to breakdown destructive stereotypes and enhance collaboration
- Empowering school culture:** professional development for teachers encouraging diversity and multicultural decision-making processes
- Content integration:** using resources from various cultures to teach
- Knowledge construction:** teachers help students understand, investigate, and determine cultural biases within the discipline

## Survey Results:



## Findings:

The sample included 99 students on a university campus; 90.8% were between the ages 18 and 24; 63 were White, 23 African-American, 6 Hispanic, 2 Asian, and 5 identified as "other". There were 23 freshmen, 32 sophomores, 28 juniors, and 16 seniors. There were 51 female, 47 male, and 1 student as "other". Most students (89.9%) claimed to understand the value of multicultural education; 65% agreed that minority groups are not responsible for hardship faced; 37% reported witnessing experiences of racial discrimination on campus. Some (30%) recognized efforts of faculty to engage but 40.5% claimed that opportunities to engage multiculturalism on campus were too limited; 26.2% had negative interpretations, 40% were neutral, and 30% had positive attitudes about course information introduced. Only 5% of students reported a lack of concern about the rights of all people. Almost half of the participants believe the media does not offer solutions that promote multiculturalism and believes the media blames minority groups for their own economic hardship. However, perceptions about positive media exposure differs. Many students (44%) believe the media has done a poor job creating awareness about valuable cultural attributes of minority group members. Almost half report learning about injustices experienced by minority groups in the media.

## Project Overview:

As demographics on college campus becomes more diverse, teaching diversity and respect may allow for more acceptance and less violence. An array of literature describes the importance of multicultural education (ME) but authors rarely highlight the effectiveness of multicultural pedagogy in creating positive images of minority group members. With this idea considered, this study examines what students have learned in college courses about race and ethnicity and whether or not this knowledge has influenced personal feelings about people of different races and ethnicities. Contrasting ME are misrepresentations of minority group members presented in the media that reinforce negative

stereotypes. This presentation also explores whether media images about different cultures and experiences changes student's attitudes about racism, ethnicity, and privilege. College students completed a multiculturalism study in dorms, the library, during student union meetings, and in classes at one Liberal Arts University. The survey assessed college-level and media influences, and perceptions of student expectations of minority group members. Findings and correlations from the survey data are presented to explain expectations for and awareness of difference races and ethnicities on campus and in society.

- Hypothesis 1** Student participants are concerned about multicultural education
- Hypothesis 2** Student participants should be exposed to multicultural education on campuses in courses and during campus events
- Hypothesis 3** Student participants believe media representations of minority group members are negative

## Media Misrepresentations:

- Local television is a dominant force in influencing perceptions of race and ethnicity in communities across America.<sup>13</sup>
- News media has been criticized for reporting from a White-only perspective and failing to report the history, culture, and activities of Blacks in American society.<sup>14</sup>
- Exposure to distorted portrayals of crime and race on local news reinforces the stereotype that people of color have a propensity towards violence and criminal behavior.<sup>4</sup>
- Although an equal number of Black and White perpetrators were covered in the local news in Chicago, there were far more White victims than Black victims.<sup>5</sup>
- Black perpetrators were more likely than White perpetrators to be shown in a mug shot and in jail clothing, handcuffed, grasped, or restrained by an officer.<sup>13</sup>

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## Social Justice in the Media:

- Constructions of **strong female roles** in the film industry<sup>17</sup>
- Inclusion of **non-white family images** to reflect real life beyond ghettoized niche networks<sup>7</sup>
- Sensitive **treatment of a woman's right to choose** beyond content that stigmatizes decisions about pregnancy<sup>18</sup>
- Increased **diversity casting** including talented actors beyond blue-eyed/blonde hair choices and various portrayals of sexuality<sup>9</sup>
- Reports and research on **issues that the mainstream media largely ignores**
- Dominant **females are portrayed in a spotlight** beyond good and nice images
- Visibility of **transgender characters** where the actors are welcomed and not villainized