CONFLICT BEHAVIOR IN THE DIVERSE CLASSROOM

by

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

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Increasing diversity in education necessitates the incorporation of diversity-related curricula to assure student learning and development. Responding to the diverse needs of students improves learning and development for all students, which in turn fosters inclusive environments in education. Avoidance of conflicts sparked by differences encountered in diverse classrooms may prevent the incorporation of diversity-related curricula. The literature suggests that the predominance of conflict-avoidance among educational professionals may be related to previous exposure to diversity-related issues and content in their educational training. However, empirical evidence of conflict-avoidance among educational professionals in response to this type of exposure has yet to be established. This study surveys students enrolled in a diversity-related education course in an effort to estimate the effects of diversity-related training on conflict-avoidant behaviors.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary schools and classrooms are becoming increasingly diverse (Banks & Banks, 2004; Bigler & Collins, 1995; Ladson-Billings, 2005). Increasing diversity generates a demand for the development of curricula that are appropriate for all students (Banks & Banks; Bigler & Collins; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Tatum, 1992; Van Soest, Garcia, & Graff, 2001). Increasing diversity and subsequent incorporation diversity-related content also challenges teachers to manage conflicts that derive from these diverse environments. The problem is that teachers are expected to incorporate material they may be unfamiliar with due to a lack of diversity in their own educational training (Bilger & Collins; Lawrence & Tatum; Van Soest et al.). The literature indicates that if teachers are better equipped through exposure to diverse issues and content, they may be less avoidant of diversity-related conflicts, and thereby incorporation of diverse curricula. Therefore, it may be necessary for teacher education programs to be aware of the effects of conflict-avoidant behavior on students and help prepare teachers for teaching in diverse classrooms. In fact, all university programs responsible for training educational professionals may need to address issues concerning the effects of conflict-avoidant behavior on contemporary educational systems.

According to the literature, teachers are predominantly avoidant of conflicts triggered by increasing diversity in contemporary schools; subsequently causing a failure to adequately incorporate diversity-related curricula (Banks & Banks, 2004; Helms, 1990; Revilla, Wells, & Holme, 2004; Rosenburg, 2004: Van Soest et al., 2001). This avoidant behavior among educators may be compounded by a lack of training in

diversity-related issues and content in their own educational training (Bigler & Colins, 2004; Lawrence $ Tatum, 1997; Van Soest et al.). The literature indicates understanding conflict in increasingly diverse schools and how educators may react to these conflicts is important for maximizing learning and development for *all* students; thereby increasing equity in education. Guided by the literature, this study investigated the effect of diversity-related educational training on conflict-avoidant behaviors among pre-service educational professionals.

Increasing diversity and the incorporation of diversified curricula can often instigate identity development struggles and subsequently spark tense emotional conversations in the classroom. These encounters with diversity in schools and tense conversations within the classroom often results in conflict. Therefore, discussions concerning diversity issues and the incorporation of diversified curricula are often avoided by teachers out of fear of conflict (Banks & Banks, 2004; Helms, 1990; Revilla et al., 2004; Rosenburg, 2004: Van Soest et al., 2001). As indicated by the literature, avoidance of these discussions negatively affects student learning and development because of a failure to incorporate more diversified curricula (Bilger and Collins, 1995; Nassir, McLaughlin, & Jones, 2009; Quintana, 2007; Tatum, 1992; Terenzini, Cabrera, Colbeck, Bjorklund, & Parente, 2001; Tyler, Boykin, & Walton, 2006; Van Soest et al.). If educators respond appropriately to diversity-related conflicts, studies suggest learning and development is increased for *all* students (Dudley, Johnson & Johnson, 1996; Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Stevahn, Johnson & Johnson, 2002). Educational professionals have an ethical and professional responsibility for maximizing student

learning and development. Theories of diversity-related conflict-avoidance in education have the potential to lead further research in this area.

The field of conflict resolution has developed a theory and instrument for empirically understanding conflict behaviors in increasingly diverse corporate environments, which may be applied to educational environments as well. As contemporary society pushes corporate executives to pay attention to the needs of diverse stakeholders and provide alternative solutions to conflicts over diverse needs and perceptions (Kilmann, 1995), educators too are pushed in this same direction to meet diverse needs and identities in schools. Unfortunately, educators rarely look to conflict resolution to gain further understanding of how their diversity-related conflict-avoidant behavior may affect students.

Conflict resolution suggests that individuals typically employ a preferred conflict behavior (Barsky & Wood, 2005). Conflict-avoidance, the most commonly preferred behavioral response (Barsky & Wood; Bello, 1998; Bigler & Collins, 1995; Hesse, 1996; Watt, 1994; Hample, Benoit, Houston, Purifoy, VanHyfte, & Wardwell, 1999; Morris-Rothschild & Brassard, 2006), leaves conflict unresolved and entrenches people in increasingly destructive cycles of conflict (Wilmot & Hocker, 1998). The literature indicates avoidance is fostered by a commonly held negative perception of conflict (Pistole & Arricale, 2003; Watt), which is perpetuated by increasingly destructive cycles of conflict. This, in turn, increases the prevalence of conflict-avoidance and reduces the opportunity for teachers to engage in constructive conflict processes and diversity-related activities (Van Soest, et al., 2001). Therefore, the avoidance of diversity-related conflicts

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further perpetuates a failure to incorporate diversified curricula in increasingly diverse classrooms.

The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument (2007) quantitatively measures individuals' predominant conflict behaviors (including avoidance), often in response to a scenario provided by the administrator of the survey. Measuring avoidant behaviors in response to educational training may help increase the understanding the effectiveness of such exposure in reducing destructive conflict behaviors. By overcoming conflict-avoidant behaviors, teachers may be better equipped to implement responsive curricula in diverse classrooms (Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Jones, 2004). Diversified curricula enhance student learning and development, additionally resolving issues of inequity in education through fostering inclusive educational environments.

This study empirically investigated the way diversity-related instruction effects conflict-avoidant behaviors for a sample of students enrolled in a diversity-related education course. Literature on diversity in education and conflict resolution was reviewed and the construct of conflict-avoidance in diverse schools was framed for this study. The research design employed to obtain data on conflict-avoidant behaviors for a sample of students enrolled in this study pertains to the way diversity-related educational instruction may affect conflict avoidant behavior for education students enrolled in this course. This question is based on the literature involving diversity in education and conflict resolution.

To gather data for this study, the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument (2007) was administered to answer the previous research question. This instrument empirically identifies five conflict management behaviors as a method "to help

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individuals in a variety of settings understand how different conflict styles affect personal and group dynamics" (Schaubhut, 2007, p. 1). Demographic data of individual student characteristics were gathered in the beginning of the online administration of this instrument, so that the sample population can be adequately described. Additional qualitative observational data was gathered for the purpose of informing discussions of diversity-related training and conflict-avoidance. These data were also utilized to adequately describe the diversity-related training and conflict-avoidance constructs in relation to the training intervention investigated in this study.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Relevant literature focuses on the following questions. How does increasing diversity effect students and curricula in today's schools? How prepared are teachers for teaching in increasingly diverse classrooms? How does conflict resolution help inform teacher avoidance in response to increasing diversity?

To answer these questions, two main areas of inquiry are identified, (a) diversity in education, and (b) conflict resolution. Diversity in education creates problems concerning teacher avoidance of diversity-inclusive curricula and the presence of diverse populations in the classroom, which may cause fear of conflict (Banks & Banks, 2004; Bigler & Collins, 1995; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Tatum, 1992; Van Soest, et al., 2001). The literature indicates teachers may avoid conflict, and do not use more inclusive curricula because of a lack of exposure to diversity related content and issues in their own professional training (Bigler & Colins; Lawrence and Tatum, Van Soest, et al.). Despite the potential value of this theory for leading research on educators' diversity-related conflict-avoidance, there appears to be a lack of empirical evidence in these claims of avoidance caused by fear of conflict, which may cause widespread failure to incorporate diversity-related curricula. Therefore, this study focused on conflict-avoidant behaviors in response to exposure to diversity-related issues and content in an educational training course.

Conflict resolution provides additional insights into how and why teachers may exhibit this type of conflict avoidance (Barsky & Wood, 2005; Bello, 1998; Bigler & Collins, 1995; Hesse, 1996; Watt, 1994; Hample et al., 1999; Morris-Rothschild & Brassard, 2006). The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument (2007), commonly

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utilized in this field, provides a tool for empirically identifying individuals' predominant conflict behavior; including conflict-avoidance. Conflict resolution theory, however, does not investigate conflict-avoidant behavior in the context of increasing diversity in the classroom.

Theories found in the literature on diversity in education and conflict resolution complement one another in important ways. Conflict resolution fills a gap in the literature on diversity in education by further defining and providing a mechanism for empirically measuring conflict behaviors. Diversity in education literature fills a gap in conflict resolution by framing avoidance in the diverse classroom and identifies the impact of this teacher behavior on student learning and development. The synthesis of these two areas indicates the importance of further research on teacher diversity-related conflict-avoidance.

Diversity in Education

The impact of diversity on education has been a topic of great debate among educational policy makers since the 1960's. Increasing diversity in the United States and around the world has caused concern over educators' ability to incorporate curricula that is representative for all students in their classrooms. The inability to respond to increasing diversity and incorporate diversified curricula in classroom has negative impacts on student identity development and learning (Bigler & Collins, 1995; Quintana, 2007; Tatum; Terenzini et al., 2001; Tyler, Boykin, & Walton, 2006; Van Soest et al., 2001). The effects of this negative impact may result in widening achievement gaps among students from different races, classes, and genders; impacting equity in education.

Teachers, and all educational professionals, play an important role in students' experiences with exposure to diversity and engagement in diversity-related activities. Unfortunately, many may be avoiding diversity activities in diverse environments because of the internal and external conflicts that often derive from this engagement (Banks & Banks, 2004). According to Banks and Banks, diversity-related conflicts are the result of dissonance in one's identity development caused by exposure to diversity, which can negatively impact student learning and development when avoided by students, teachers, and educational professionals alike. Available research shows that the avoidance of these conflicts does not facilitate the incorporation of diversity-related curricula (Banks & Banks; Bigler & Collins, 1995; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Tatum, 1992 Van Soest et al., 2001).

Diversification of Schools and Curricular Representation

According to the U.S. Census Bureau data, the nation's minority population totaled 98 million out of a total population of 296.4 million (U.S. Census Bureau Public Information Office). Census Bureau Director Louis Kincannon claims these data provide evidence of the increasing diversity in the nation's population. As the population of the United States diversifies so does the nation's schools. Banks and Banks (2004) confirm, "Schools are collection sites for a diversity of voices and identities" (p. 55).

Diversification in schools has been a topic of great interest and debate in educational policy since the landmark decision of *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. The Civil Rights movement of the 1960's sparked a nationwide restructuring of classrooms and curricula (Banks & Banks, 2004; Bigler & Collins, 1995). In the 1980's, Bigler and Collins note a lull in national concerns about the diversification of the nation's

schools, but emphasize that the politically correct consciousness of the 1990's sparked movement towards inclusion of diverse populations once again. Diversification efforts in the nation's schools also play out in international movements that continue to persevere throughout the world (Banks & Banks; Ball, 2009). As a result, schools around the world are being called upon to educate more diverse populations (Ladson-Billings, 2005).

As many schools struggle with increasing diversity, questions of the incorporation of representative curricula begin to surface (Banks & Banks, 2004; Bigler & Collins, 1995; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Tatum, 1992 Van Soest et al., 2001). Dramatic increases in diversity challenge the nation's schools to provide diversity-related experiences through offering diversified curricula. This diversity-related curriculum prepares students for work in multicultural environments (Lawrence & Tatum; Van Soest et al.). Several studies suggest diversity representation in curricula positively effects student learning and development outcomes (Bigler & Collins; Quintana, 2007; Tatum; Terenzini et al., 2001; Tyler, Boykin, & Walton, 2006; Van Soest et al.).

Curricular effects on student learning and development. Banks and Banks (2004) explain, the longer students remain in schools where their cultures and experiences are not represented in the curricula, the more their achievement lags behind those students are represented. A foundational qualitative study of diversity representation in curricula suggests that despite conflicts, student levels of understanding are greatly enhanced by engaging in this material (Tatum, 1992). In a study of culturally and linguistically complex classrooms, Ball (2009) explains increasing diversity has a profound impact on urban schools throughout the world, especially effecting students in the secondary grades. Findings reported by Yip, Seaton, and Sellers (2006) on a meta-analysis of race,

ethnicity, culture, and immigrant status research supports seminal authors' Cross and Fhagen-Smith's (2001) prediction that late adolescents is a critical period for racial identity development (as cited in Quintana, Chao, Cross, Hughes, Nelson-Le Gall, Aboud, Contreras-Grau, Hudley, Liben, & Vietze, 2006). The longer these students are not afforded the opportunity to engage in classrooms where both their affective and intellectual responses to diversity content are safely acknowledged and addressed (Tatum; Van Soest, et al., 2001), the greater the gap in student achievement becomes.

It is not sufficient to simply incorporate the presence of diversity in the classroom. Terenzini, Cabrera, Colbeck, Bjorklund, and Parente (2001), find students that are engaged in diversity-related activities benefit from a wide array of positive educational outcomes. Students benefit more from engagement in diversity-related activities, especially when teachers make use of language and speech styles from students' diverse cultures and experiences (Banks & Banks, 2004; Gutierrez, Baquedano-Lopez, Alvarez, & Chui, 1999). Quintana's (2007) longitudinal study demonstrates that exposure to activities around racism may stimulate more advanced identity development during adolescence. Most recently, Nassir, McLaughlin, and Jones (2009) found ethnic identity development, through engagement in diversity-related activities, predicted achievement in school for high school students. Therefore, simply hiring diverse faculty or desegregating schools does not appear to improve student learning and development.

The previously cited studies have value in that they suggest engagement in diversity-related activities is important for students, especially as they become adolescents. This research suggests that the ability and willingness of teachers to engage in activities, such as Johnson and Johnson's (2009) constructive conflict process, is

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essential to student learning and development. Unfortunately, the literature indicates avoidance of engagement in these types of activities may be a more common practice among today's educational professionals. Therefore, it follows that the incorporation of diversity-related curricula is overlooked by avoidant teachers. The following section will explore the reasons why increased diversity and diversity-related curricula may cause conflict, and thereby diversity-related conflict-avoidance.

Diversity and conflict. Understanding why diversity may cause conflict is important for understanding why teachers may be avoidant of diversity-related conflict. The literature on diversity in education outlines an understanding of why encountering diversity may instigate conflicts. These conflicts are experienced both internally and externally, as individuals encounter differences that are dissonant to their understanding of who they are and where they belong socially (Banks & Banks, 2004). Teachers may experience internal dissonance when attempting to incorporate diverse curricula due to their own inexperience with diverse issues and content (Bilger & Collins, 1995; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Van Soest et al., 2001). Internal dissonance in students and teachers alike can also be triggered by diversity-inclusive curriculum. External conflicts are often instigated as students at different stages of identity development attempt to make sense of increasing diversity among their peers and within the content of their courses (Helms, 1990; Tatum, 1992). Conflicts sparked by internal and external encounters with difference are often feared and avoided by teachers who may not be prepared for managing them.

Influential authors Banks and Banks (2004) explain that encounters with differences can bring with them affiliation as well as conflict. Discourses concerning

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these differences often become contested both internally as well as among groups. Since these encounters are experienced both internally and externally, conflict and affiliation that exists externally, between group differences, are also experienced internally. These internal experiences are influenced by an individual's history and facilitate identity development (Barsky & Wood, 2005). Therefore, as Banks and Banks explain, experiences with diversity-related activities challenge one's understanding of who they are and where they belong socially. These challenges often carry overwhelming emotional significance, which when contested may have profound effects on one's identity development. Therefore, how these conflicts are handled may be particularly important for students as they develop their identities in an increasingly diverse world.

When confronted with diversity within one's classroom or society, it is internalized as a conflict within oneself. Engaging in diversity-related content instigates these conflicts by focusing on identity differences. Bigler and Collins (1995) add that teachers and students alike are race, class, and gendered actors, and therefore both may experience dissonance from diversity-related activities internally. Therefore, the conflicts that occur are played out both internally and externally as students and teachers alike experience challenges to their identities in response to encounters with difference. It may be logical for teachers to encounter this internal dissonance in training before attempting to guide students through this important developmental process.

Conflict-avoidance is perpetuated by fear of the internal and external dissonance encounters with diversity and diversity-related curricula causes. This dissonance often results in conflict (Banks & Banks, 2004). These conflicts are feared by teachers who lack the experience to adequately guide students through this important developmental

process (Bilger & Collins, 1995; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Van Soest et al., 2001).

According to Banks and Banks, this fear may be related to the internal dissonance teachers have not had a chance to resolve due to inadequate development and educational training in diversity. Therefore, supporting teachers with training in diversity issues and content appears to be a logical place to begin addressing the negative impacts of avoidant behavior on student learning and development. The following section will explore racial identity development research, which lends support to the tendency towards diversity-related conflict and subsequent avoidance in education.

Research in racial identity development. In diverse classrooms, racial and ethnic differences are the most readily apparent. Socially constructed inequities of these differences are accentuated when course content does not acknowledge or engage students in activities involving the differences that exist; negatively exacerbating the internal and external dissonance and causing conflict. Therefore, examining research in racial identity development lends credence to Banks and Banks' (2004) theory of diversity-related conflict. Research supports the notion that teachers fear diversity-related conflict and may not have adequate knowledge and experience, which could potentially allow them to overcome this fear (Bilger & Collins, 1995; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Van Soest et al., 2001).

Studying the interaction of identity development stages in college students, Tatum (1992) notes the tension caused by discomfort and anger in student journal entries about race and racism. She suggests this tension is caused by a "collision in the developmental process" (p. 9). In these entries, students demonstrate internal dissonance upon learning new race-related information. One student depicts this internal struggle by writing, "I

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really did not have to form new ideas about people of color; I had to form them about myself-and I did" (p. 17). Tatum's qualitative data demonstrate the struggles involving identity development processes as students learn and are challenged by the diversity-related activities.

Tatum's qualitative study finds the introduction of diversity-related content often generates powerful emotional responses in students, resulting in student resistance to learning and interference with student identity development. Van Soest et al. (2001) also observe new and demanding challenges content related to diversity can create. These findings suggest diversity-related curricula may create anxiety and the conversations can often become heated and intense. Tatum states that this anxiety is predictable, as these responses are related to stages in student identity development, and are in accordance with Helms' (1990) groundbreaking racial identity development theory. These studies indicate intense emotions may be diagnosed and traced as one transitions through various stages of identity development. These emotional responses are indicative of the conflicts that often occur in response to diversity-related difference, as was described by Banks and Banks (2004).

Longitudinal studies are becoming a more common approach for research involving identity development among diverse populations (Qunitana et al., 2006). In Quintana's (2007) meta-analysis of these longitudinal studies, findings suggest an underlying internal psychological process that is similar across group differences. In a mixed methods longitudinal study of identity orientation among African American students, Nassir et al., (2009) coded qualitative data with five overarching racial identity themes; understand history, positive school, personal style, negative school, and "gansta"

(p. 78). All five identities exemplify internal conflicts in identity development for African American students within a culturally dominated white institution that does not enforce the incorporation of diversity-related curricula. These studies support the notion that development involves coming to terms with diversity and one's own identity in relation to diversity, especially when the social setting is conflicted and one is a member of a dominated group (Banks & Banks, 2004).

Research attests to the possibility that conflicts occurring in the classroom over diversity-related activities are an integral part of student learning and identity development processes (Bigler & Collins, 1995; Quintana, 2007; Tatum; Terenzini et al., 2001; Tyler, Boykin, & Walton, 2006; Van Soest et al., 2001). Therefore, these conflicts may be necessary to engage in with students (Tatum, 1992). Whereas most people have the perception of classroom conflict as having negative impacts on student learning and development, studies show that these conflicts may actually increase student learning and development (Bigler & Collins; Quintana; Tatum; Terenzini et al.; Tyler, Boykin, & Walton; Van Soest et al.).

The process of coming to terms with one's identity carries with it intense emotion, which may be displayed in a range of denial, anger, shame, or guilt (Van Soest et al., 2001). Tatum (1992) observes these emotions being expressed and suggests these reactions are related to varying stages in identity development. These emotional reactions may cause avoidant behavior in teachers as a predominant response to conflicts caused by students at different stages of development (Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Tatum: Van Soest et al.).

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Many teachers admitted they were fearful that conversations involving diversity content would degenerate into angry, personalized accusations of racism, according to the data obtained in a study of volunteer desegregations programs (Lawrence & Tatum, 1997). Therefore, it is clear these teachers avoid addressing and incorporating diversity-related issues and content. Bigler and Collins (1995) support these findings in an ethnographic study of teacher resistance to the incorporation of diversified curricula where teachers admittedly avoid discussions involving diversity.

It is common that diversity-related conflicts are perceived of as problematic for teachers who are typically unfamiliar with the appropriate processes for engaging in diversity-related curricula (Bigler & Collins, 1995, Lawrence & Tatum, 1997, Tatum, 1992; Van Soest, et al., 2001). Avoiding the incorporation of representative curricula in diverse classrooms is one way to disengage from uncomfortable and unfamiliar feelings, the emotional responses, as well as the internal and external conflicts that often occur.

Fear of these diversity-related conflicts, compounded by a lack of diversity-related knowledge and experience, instigates avoidant behaviors among teachers who are responsible for incorporating diverse curricula (Banks & Banks, 2004; Helms, 1990; Revilla, Wells, & Holme, 2004; Rosenburg, 2004: Van Soest et al., 2001). Unfortunately, the literature indicates diversity-related conflict-avoidant behavior results in teachers failing to incorporate representative curricula (Banks & Banks; Bigler & Collins, 1995; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Tatum, 1992 Van Soest et al.). Therefore, achievement gaps among students are a pressing issue in today's increasingly diverse classrooms and schools (Bigler & Collins; Quintana, 2007; Tatum; Terenzini et al., 2001; Tyler, Boykin, & Walton, 2006; Van Soest et al.).

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Engagement results in normalizing student experiences, strengthening identity

development, and increasing academic success. Providing curricula that teach students

the skills necessary for success in a diverse world and training teachers to take an active

role in facilitating conflicts constructively may benefit students and prepare them for

academic success (Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Van Soest et al., 2001). Additionally,

inclusive educational environments may help address issues of equity in education.

Unfortunately, the literature indicates teachers are unable to provide this constructive

engagement in diversity-related curricula if they have not had adequate training in this

area themselves. The literature also indicates diversity-related conflict-avoidance is a

significant problem and important for the identity development of students. The

following section will explore how this avoidant behavior manifests in the classroom by

exploring how and why students and teachers may resist engagement in diversity-related

issues and content.

Diversity-Related Conflict-Avoidance

The literature suggests that a failure to respond to increasing diversity through

incorporating diversity-related curricula may be the result of teachers being ill-equipped

to teach diverse populations (Bilger & Collins, 1995; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Van

Soest et al., 2001). Other authors argue this avoidance may be caused by a deeper and

more insidious form of discrimination (Rosenburg, 2004; Revilla et al., 2004; Van Soest

et al., 2001). Regardless of what causes this failure, conflict-avoidant behaviors are found

embedded within forms of resistance to diversity-related content and diverse

environments, as suggested by Tatum as well as Banks and Banks (2004). Subsequent

research conducted by Lawrence and Tatum (1997) and Van Soest et al. (2001) suggests

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that building teacher awareness of diversity issues and preparing them to deal with diversity-related conflicts alleviates the impact avoidant behaviors on student learning and development. Van Soest et al. (2001), Rosenburg (2004), and Revilla, Wells, and Holme (2004) have since explored the phenomenon of teacher avoidance, diagnosing possible discriminatory effects of this behavior. Whether resistance to diversity-related curricula through conflict-avoidance derives from being ill-equipped or a deeper form of discrimination, an inclusive education would consist of engagement in diversity-related activities. Professional responsibility suggests teachers may need to be prepared to deal with the internal and external conflicts that often surface in diverse classrooms.

Avoidance and resistance. The foundation for understanding how individuals respond to the conflicts triggered when engaging in diversity-related activities is established by Tatum (1992) with later theoretical support offered by Banks and Banks (2004). Tatum observes three sources of resistance in college students as they grapple with conflicts concerning cultural and ethnic differences. Each of these sources of resistance involves avoidance of diversity-related conflicts. Based on Banks and Banks' theory of internal and external conflicts instigated by encountering difference, it is assumed these same sources of resistance apply to teachers as well. These sources of resistance identified by Tatum are as follows.

Most individuals have been socialized to resist engagement in diversity-related content because it is considered a "taboo topic" (Tatum, 1992, p. 5) to openly discuss. Therefore, students and teachers alike have been socialized to accept avoidance of differences as a cultural norm. This leaves everyone ill-equipped to deal with the conflicts that derive from encountering these differences throughout their lives.

Another form of resistance lies in the strong belief that the United States is a *just* society where every individual has an equal opportunity to succeed (Tatum, 1992). When engaging in diversity-related content, the system of disadvantage that non-dominant groups face may become a topic of discussion. These discussions often challenge one's belief in a *just* society and create discomfort and tension. Therefore, an additionally common response observed by Tatum is denial of injustice followed by withdrawal from the conversation. The result of denial is avoidance of the subject in order to deter the discomfort of conflict.

The third form of resistance is denial of personal prejudice (Tatum, 1992). Tatum observes dominant groups denying any personal connection to prejudice, and the non-dominant groups failing to focus on their own prejudices. She explains students in the non-dominant groups are too busy responding to prejudices; therefore, these students do not tend to focus on their own personal prejudices. As *all* students realize their prejudices through engagement in diversity-related content in diverse environments, their participation in class often decreases. Decreased participation allows participants to avoid the uncomfortable conflicts triggered by diverse material.

As the students in Tatum's (1992) classes struggle with the cognitive dissonance caused by diversity-related material, she observes avoidance of course content as well as of classmates that are different from them. This avoidant behavior becomes more significant as the conflicts around this dissonance increase. Learning of the material and identity development is no longer possible when students avoid the material, each other, and their emotions. Therefore, it is important that curricula become diversified in order to help students push through these avoidant forms of resistance. It follows that the teacher

must not be avoidant either for maximum student learning and identity development to occur.

Educational training and avoidance. Working from the assumption that teachers must go through an identity development process as well (Bigler & Collins, 1995), Tatum and Lawrence (1997) study the effects of professional development on teacher resistance to diversity. The authors assert that most teachers' education has been mono-cultural and has not engaged them in diversity-related activities. Therefore, teachers have not been afforded the opportunity to develop a diversely proficient identity. As a result, deficiencies are common in teachers' knowledge and experiences with diversity-related curricula. Therefore, teachers may be ill-equipped to teach students to function in an increasingly diverse society; further perpetuating avoidant behaviors.

Bigler and Collins (1995) support the assumption of deficiencies in identity development among teachers, attributing avoidance of classroom diversity to the fact that most teachers have not received an education where diversity was a part of the curricula. Teachers lacking a fully developed racial identity due to low exposure to diversity may create barriers for student learning and identity development within diverse classrooms. These barriers are put in place by teachers avoiding the incorporation of diversity-related curricula. Studies also indicate that teachers may be additionally anxious about the conflicts that may occur (Banks & Banks, 2004; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Tatum, 1992; Van Soest et al., 2001). Therefore, barriers to maximizing student learning and development through the incorporation of representative curricula in diverse classrooms are considered to be the result of teacher diversity-related conflict-avoidant behaviors. These avoidant behaviors may be alleviated by providing diversity-related training to

teachers, giving teachers the confidence to engage in diversity-related activities in the classroom.

Professional development training through exposure to diversity-related issues and content may result in promoting greater comfort in addressing diversity-related conflicts, according to the findings of Lawrence and Tatum (1997). Furthermore, increased confidence allows teachers to engage in diversity-related activities (Van Soest et al., 2001). These findings are influential in leading further empirical research on diversity-related training for teachers.

Van Soest, et al. (2001) report that a limited knowledge base of diversified curricula triggers the same forms of resistance in teachers as were reported by Tatum in 1992, resulting in avoidance of effective diversity-related curricula. In an investigation of the factors that influence teacher responses to diversity-related conflicts, the authors identify a more insidious form of avoidance that may perpetuate discrimination and increases harm caused by avoidance. Teachers report that they understand diversity-related content is important and racism exists, but deny any personal duty to engage in this content or look at their own prejudices. These findings lend support to Tatum's qualitative findings of resistance found among a sample of college students. It is not clear if the cause of avoidant behavior is due to fear of conflict, discrimination, or both.

The findings summarized in this section diverge on the reasons given for teacher diversity-related conflict-avoidance, some authors suggest teachers are fearful or at least ill-equipped due to deficiencies in knowledge and experiences with diversity (Bilger & Collins, 1995; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997) and some suggest avoidant behavior is the result of a form of discrimination (Van Soest, et al., 2001). Regardless of the reason for

conflict-avoidant behavior, teachers should recognize its effects. Therefore, it may be informative to explore this theory of color blindness, a form of discrimination, alluded to by Van Soest et al.

Teacher avoidance and color-blindness. Denial of personal prejudice and difference as a "taboo topic" (p. 5), two of Tatum's (1992) findings of resistance, have been theoretically explored by Rosenburg (2004) as a form of discrimination in "Color Blindness in Teacher Education: An Optical Delusion." She is concerned that color blindness, defined as the denial of personal prejudices and practiced as if diversity were a taboo topic, is considered an ideal classroom practice for teachers today.

Rosenburg (2004) asserts color blindness is indicative of a deeper and more insidious form of discrimination, as opposed to a lack of awareness and knowledge of diversity-related issues. Rosenburg reminds her reader that color blindness, the new racial ideology, is coupled with safeguards to one's own racial privileges. These safeguards may be in the interest of protecting oneself from the internal dissonance caused by the discomfort of facing their prejudices or simply a form of discrimination. The literature reviewed does not provide clarity on why one would safeguard these privileges.

In a case study of color blindness, conducted by Revilla, Wells, and Holme (2004), two main reasons teachers provide for color blindness behavior were (a) to avoid conflict, and (b) to ignore racial borders and "see people as people" (p. 285). These authors adequately address the potential denial of personal prejudices in this study, but fail to acknowledge the potential effects of this socialization on diversity as a taboo topic, which could account for attempts to not "see" racial differences.

Tracing the development of these studies in racial identity development literature indicates that avoidance of the diversity-related conflicts may result in harming student learning and development. In fact, Van Soest et al., (2001) warn educators that avoidance may cause more harm through perpetuating an insidious form of discrimination. By doing nothing, prejudice and discrimination are allowed to continue unchecked. Worse yet, if teacher education programs are perpetuating color blindness as a common practice, avoidance may be solidified before teachers even begin teaching. Therefore, it is especially important these programs expose pre-service educational professionals to diversity-related issues and content in an effort to counteract the harmful effects of avoidance for students. Teacher preparation programs may want to specifically prepare these future educational professionals for educating diverse populations, as well as dealing with diversity-related conflicts.

Summary of Diversity in Education Literature Review

Diversity in education literature has the potential to direct empirical research investigating teacher conflict-avoidance. Currently, quantitative research in this area has yet to address the effects of exposure to diversity-related issues and content through educational training on conflict-avoidant behaviors. The literature indicates that these avoidant behaviors may derive from lack of exposure to diversity-related issues and content (Bilger & Collins, 1995; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Van Soest et al., 2001). Color blindness theory suggests it is possible that teacher avoidance may be perpetuating a deeper more insidious form of discrimination (Revilla et al., 2004; Rosenburg, 2004; Van Soest et al.). Whether avoidant behaviors derive from a lack of knowledge due to inadequate exposure to diversity-related issues and content in their own educational

training, or a form of discrimination, teachers may have a professional responsibility to overcome avoidant practices in response to diversity in the classroom (Tatum, 1992).

Increasing knowledge and exposure to diversity may be important for counteracting avoidance or discrimination and better equipping teachers to teach in diverse classrooms. Furthermore, training that engages educators in understanding diversity-related conflicts may decrease the tendency towards avoidance indicated in the literature. Empirical evidence of the relationship between conflict-avoidance and the exposure to diversity-related training may provide insights into whether this training is effective for alleviating avoidant behaviors among teachers.

After reviewing the literature involving diversity-related conflict-avoidance, several questions remain unanswered, indicating the significance and breadth of research in this area. Are teachers really conflict-avoidant and what exactly is conflict avoidance? If so, does training that exposes teachers to diversity-related issues and content help teachers overcome conflict-avoidant behaviors? Conflict-avoidant behavior theory may provide further insight into teacher avoidant reactions to diversity-related content. Therefore, it is pertinent to explore conflict resolution literature in the interest of further understanding of conflict-avoidance and the effects of this behavior on students, teachers, and educational professionals in diverse settings.

Conflict Resolution

Out of the five conflict behaviors identified in the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument (2007), research suggests that when confronted with conflicts most people will attempt to avoid or minimize any direct confrontations (Barsky & Wood, 2005; Bello, 1998; Bigler & Collins, 1995; Hesse, 1996; Watt, 1994; Hample et al., 1999;

Morris-Rothschild & Brassard, 2006). Conflict resolution offers suggestions for how avoidance may perpetuate destructive conflict, causing a commonly held negative perception of conflict, which further perpetuates avoidant behaviors. Exposure to conflict resolution may assist individuals in overcoming negative perceptions of diversity-related conflict. This training may in turn help alleviate avoidance of diversity-related conflicts in diverse environments, better preparing students for success in a diverse world. An exploration of conflict behavior theory facilitates a greater comprehension of the construct of conflict-avoidance and how destructive this behavior can become.

Dimensions of Conflict

A review of the literature in conflict resolution is important for furthering an understanding how people typically react to conflict. Developing this understanding lends support to assertions of teacher conflict-avoidance made in the literature on diversity in education. This review of the literature in conflict resolution explores the following dimensions of conflict: (a) conflict behavior, (b) conflict-avoidance, (c) research on conflict-avoidance, (d) perceptions of conflict, and (e) constructive conflict processes.

Conflict behaviors. The literature concerning conflict-avoidance derives from theory on conflict management styles, which suggests there are five behaviors people employ in reaction to conflict situations: avoidance, accommodation, competition, compromise, and collaboration (Thomas, 1976). According to this model, these conflict behavior styles may be predicted by two factors involving how assertive and how cooperative individuals are with one another (Barsky & Wood, 2005; Thomas). The assertiveness dimension is described as the extent to which a person will attempt to satisfy his or her own concerns when in conflict. Cooperativeness, the second dimension,

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illuminates the extent to which a person will attempt to satisfy the other person's concerns. These two dimensions are useful for defining the five primary methods of behavior in the face of conflict. Other authors have labeled these two factors, concern for self and concern for others (Ma, 2007; Rahim, 1983). Thomas and Kilmann (1978) were among the first to validate an instrument designed to empirically measure these five conflict behaviors. Thomas and Kilmann (2007) developed this measurement of these five domains of conflict behavior in response to corporate transformation and corporate cultures.

Employing the two basic theoretical dimensions of conflict behavior assertiveness and cooperativeness, Thomas and Kilmann (2007) identified five domains that fall within the construct of conflict behavior. Research in this field derives from a need to expand the capacity of managers to satisfy the diverse needs of multiple stakeholders within the corporate environment. The complexities of contemporary society are pushing corporate executives towards paying attention to the diverse needs of all stakeholders. Additionally, corporate executives have to take responsibility for providing alternative solutions in response to the conflicts that often emerge from the clash of increasingly diverse needs and perceptions (Kilmann, 1995). Educators too are being pushed to pay attention to these clashes caused by the diverse needs and perceptions of students in increasingly diverse classrooms. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers become proficient in engaging in positive conflict behaviors and teaching these behaviors to their students. The recent development of constructive conflict processes delineates processes for fostering teacher proficiency in diversity-related conflict resolution.

Although individuals are not necessarily characterized as employing one rigid style of conflict-handling behavior, most people have a tendency to employ certain modes more readily than others and explicitly demonstrate a preferred conflict behavior (Barsky & Wood, 2005). It is important to note, conflict behaviors are not static. Rather they are the result of a person's predispositions and personal history, and are influenced by the content of the conflict. Resonating with Banks and Banks' (2004) assertion that confronting differences in identity triggers internal conflicts, conflict behavior theory suggests avoidance may be attributed to one's personal predisposition formed by their history of exposure to diversity issues and potentially discriminatory practices. Therefore, although people have a tendency towards employing certain modes, training can affect the mode that they will typically choose. Of the five domains (compete, collaborate, compromise, accommodate, and avoid), research suggests avoidance is the most common and detrimental behavioral response to conflict (Barsky & Wood; Bello, 1998; Bigler & Collins, 1995; Hesse, 1996; Watt, 1994; Hample, Benoit, Houston, Purifoy, VanHyfte, & Wardwell, 1999; Morris-Rothschild & Brassard, 2006).

Conflict-avoidance. Conflict-avoidance, according to the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument (Thomas & Kilmann, 2007), is defined as follows:

> Avoiding is unassertive and uncooperative. When avoiding, an individual does not immediately pursue his or her own concerns or those of the other person. He or she does not address the conflict. Avoiding might take the form of diplomatically side-stepping an issue, postponing an issue until a better time, or simply withdrawing from a threatening situation. (p. 8)

The definition provided here operationalizes how one may react to conflict and resonates with the previous discussion concerning forms of resistance in diverse educational settings.

Collins (2001) asserts that managing conflict inappropriately has the potential to decrease individual and organizational effectiveness. These same pressures felt by corporations may be impacting the effectiveness of diverse classrooms, as the literature previously reviewed suggests. Responding to the literature indicating the prevalence of avoidant behavior identified in diverse classrooms, this review focuses on conflict-avoidant behavior as it has been defined by Thomas and Kilmann (2007). Avoidance is the main focus of this literature review because of the likelihood that this may not be the best pedagogical response for teachers to be making, potentially resulting in increasing achievement gaps.

Research in conflict-avoidant behavior. Conflict management experts suggest avoidance is a non-constructive response, which further supports the need for intervening in this behavior (Barsky & Wood, 2005; Dudley et al., 1996; Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Stevahn et al., 2002). Research regarding conflict-avoidance suggests this is the predominant behavior employed by people from individually oriented societies (Kozan, 1997). Tatum (1992) noted that these individualistic orientations create resistance to diversity-related content and activities, referring to this form of resistance as the myth of meritocracy. Avoidant behaviors appear to be the most common response to conflicts. Given the detrimental effects of this behavior, it is necessary to explore its impact on diverse schools.

According to Thomas and Kilmann's (1978) original study, avoidance was the found to be the predominant conflict behavior measured. A meta-analysis of research conducted on differences in conflict behavior between men and women suggests avoidant and accommodating behaviors are the two primary strategies utilized by both men and women in conflict situations (Keashly, 1994). In a report on an analysis of three corporate case studies, Chataway and Kolb (1994) found that, "Generally, organizational cultures do not value the open expression of conflict" (p. 262), indicating a societal norm of conflict-avoidant behavior fostered in the workplace.

According to several seminal authors in the field of conflict resolution, conflict is left unresolved when avoidant behavior is employed (Christie, Wagner, & Winter, 2001; Taylor & Miller, 2000; Wilmot & Hocker, 1998). In a study conducted by Bello (1998), avoidant behaviors not only create, but entrench conflict as well. The entrenchment of conflict is perpetuated by a tendency to equivocate when enacting avoidant conflict behaviors. These findings indicate conflict-avoidance is a problem in a variety of workplace and personal contexts that may in fact increase conflict. Van Soest et al. (2001) also found that harm was enhanced by avoidant behaviors, especially if enacted through discrimination, signifying a need to investigate the effects of this behavior in increasingly diverse educational settings.

Conflict-avoidant behavior strategies can take many forms, both verbal and nonverbal, according to Remland, Jones, and Brown's (1994) study of nonverbal communication among college students in relation to the escalation of conflict. Remland, et al. found that nonverbal communication involving status assertion escalates and entrenches conflict.

Barsky and Wood (2005) expand on these findings that suggest conflict escalation through avoidance. An ethnographic study found that out of 38 distinct methods of managing conflict, avoidant behaviors were coded the most. The authors of this study warn that avoidant behavior may compel individuals to address the conflict in a different manner, which could possibly result in more violent behaviors that potentially could persist outside of the classroom. Unfortunately, it is difficult to provide substantial evidence to support this claim. Wilmont and Hocker (1998), renowned conflict resolution experts, have formulated a widely recognized theory of "destructive conflict" (p. 41), which causes conflicts to go on unabated, turning into a "spiral of negativity" (p. 42).

When conflict behavior patterns are predominantly destructive and entrenched by avoidant behaviors, conflicts increase and a commonly held negative perception of conflict is fostered. This negative perception of conflict in turn fosters the prevalence of conflict-avoidant patterns. Negative perceptions of conflict reduce opportunities for engagement in constructive conflict processes as opposed to destructive conflict processes.

Negative perceptions of conflict. Some authors argue that conflict-avoidant behavior derives from a commonly held negative view of conflict (Pistole & Arricale, 2003; Watt, 1994). It has been demonstrated that avoidance may not be the best or most useful teaching practice in increasingly diverse classrooms. As previously mentioned, conflict-avoidance may diminish student learning and development through the avoidance of direct experiences with diversity-related activities. (Bigler & Collins, 1995; Nassir et al., 2009; Quintana, 2006; Tatum, 1992; Terenzini et al., 2001; Tyler et al., 2006; Van Soest et al., 2001). Worse yet, this behavior may in fact perpetuate destructive

conflicts among diverse populations (Roseburg, 2004; Remland et al, 1994; Van Soest et al.). Therefore, it is imperative that teachers are trained to handle conflicts in the classroom more constructively, thereby fostering positive perceptions of conflict. Unfortunately, most organizational cultures do not foster these positive perceptions (Chataway & Kolb, 1994).

In fact, most people maintain a negative perception of conflict, when enacting avoidant behavior (Pistole & Arricale, 2003; Watt, 1999). Research conducted by Morris-Rothschild and Brassard (2006) suggests that negative perceptions of conflict directly affect anxiety and integrating strategies of teachers when there is a potential for conflict to surface in the classroom. These claims are supported by Van Soest et al. (2001), who indicate diversity-related content in diverse environments may increase anxiety in teachers due to a fear of conflict erupting in the classroom. Hesse (1996) found that in cross-cultural contacts involving conflict, teachers shifted from active participants to passive listeners and efforts to control the conflict constructively were rare. As a result, students may turn to other forms of conflict behavior (Barsky & Wood, 2005), and never have an opportunity to develop constructive conflict resolution skills learned through effective communication. Therefore, research on negative perceptions of conflict support claims concerning avoidance of conflict and subsequently integrating diversity-related curricula.

Constructive conflict education practices. Conflict resolution education (CRE) programs have become more prevalent over the last two decades (Jones, 2004). However, a review of the literature demonstrates that teachers have not typically been trained to deal with conflict in the classroom (Howell & Tuitt, 2003; Kingston-Mann & Sieber,

2001). Recent CRE program developments focus on educating children for engaging in constructive approaches to managing conflict, whereas in the beginning these programs typically focused on the implementation of peer mediation (Jones). Today, CRE overlaps with a variety of fields including diversity-related education. However, a review of the literature demonstrates that little research has been conducted regarding the effects of CRE on teacher conflict-avoidant behaviors and classroom practices (Jones). Furthermore, there is a deficiency of CRE research in diverse populations.

Empirical research helps inform educators in designing the best approaches possible for such an important area of inquiry. Johnson and Johnson's (2009) meta-analysis of the benefits of constructive conflict in education suggests this process may alleviate the negative impacts of conflict-avoidance in diverse classrooms. Constructive conflict education may provide a solution for closing the achievement gap in diverse classrooms by providing students with direct experiences in diversity-related content.

Johnson and Johnson (2009) argue that teachers' apprehensiveness to engage in constructive conflict in the classroom is caused by the lack of operational procedures to guide them, resonating with research that finds teachers are unfamiliar with diversity-related activities (Bigler & Collins, 1005; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Van Soest et al., 2001). Educators believe that engagement in conflict in the classroom is too risky and fear negative outcomes. Alternatively, Johnson and Johnson claim avoidance tends to undermine interpersonal relationships, team performance, and may increase competitiveness. The deficiency of empirically validated operational procedures for constructive conflict processes in the classroom may prevent recognition of the efficacy of these processes for diverse educational settings. Similarly, the lack of training and fear

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of negative outcomes prevents the implementation of diversity-related curricula (Banks & Banks, 2004; Bigler & Collins; Lawrence & Tatum; Tatum, 1992; Van Soest et al.).

Constructive conflict involves five steps for implementing intellectual conflict in classroom practices. These steps lead students through the following process: (a) assigning students to a problem, (b) confronting them with opposing viewpoints concerning the problem, (c) causing uncertainty or cognitive dissonance (Tatum, 1992), (d) followed by engaging students in cooperative controversy, which is (e) naturally followed by epistemic curiosity, and (f) results in the adaptation to diverse perspectives and incorporation of new knowledge (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). The authors claim this process energizes students' engagement in learning course material. Constructive conflict practices could potentially resolve issues of diversity-related conflict avoidance in the classroom through positive engagement with conflict. Positive engagement may alleviate the more prevalent unassertive and uncooperative engagement with conflict caused by negative perceptions.

Johnson and Johnson's (2009) meta-analysis of constructive controversy and concurrence seeking research shows that constructive controversy results in a greater mastery over and retention of material and skills than concurrence seeking does. Constructive conflict promotes more accurate and complete understanding of opposing perspectives, fosters an increased motivation for learning, and promotes better interpersonal relationships among participants. These findings provide the necessary evidence to motivate research on the use of constructive conflict in the incorporation of diversity-related curricula, as the results show positive effects for student learning and development.

The recent focus on constructive conflict may be the solution for preparing teachers to deal with and adapt to increasing diversity in today's schools. It may also provide teachers with a process to rely upon for implementing diversity-related curricula. Finally, inclusive environments in education could be fostered and may in fact lead to addressing issues of equity in education.

Summary of Conflict Resolution Literature Review

Educators, like corporate executives, who utilize conflict resolution behavior theories and research, are pressured to adapt and respond to increasing diversity in their classrooms. The findings of conflict resolution research suggest that the majority of people are predominantly avoidant in conflict situations (Barsky & Wood, 2005; Bello, 1998; Bigler & Collins, 1995; Hesse, 1996; Watt, 1994; Hample et al., 1999; Morris-Rothschild & Brassard, 2006). Avoidant behaviors result in the entrenchment of destructive cycles of conflict that may continue outside of the classroom. Literature in conflict resolution supports the notion that teachers do not have adequate training to deal with conflicts in the classroom (Howell & Tuitt, 2003; Kingston-Mann & Sieber, 2001). Thus, conflict-avoidant teachers may be contributing to diminished learning and development for students, perpetuating inequity in contemporary educational systems. Constructive conflict processes may provide educators with guidelines for altering the prevalence diversity-related conflict avoidance in the classroom (Johnson & Johnson, 2009).

In this review of the literature, it was discovered that negative perceptions of conflict lead to increasingly destructive cycles and foster avoidant behaviors. Furthermore, quantitative research designed to investigate the effect of diversity-related

training on conflict-avoidant behaviors for educators has yet to be conducted. Once data is obtained of these effects, more targeted training strategies may be developed. One possible approach, informed by conflict resolution education may be diversity-related conflict resolution training and the incorporation of constructive conflict practices.

Conclusion

The primary questions that were addressed in this literature review are: (a) How does increasing diversity effect students and curricula in today's schools, (b) how are teachers responding to increasing diversity, and (c) how does conflict resolution inform teacher behaviors in response to increasing diversity? The concluding sections of this review of the literature include a summary of the literature in response to each of the previous questions. Recommendations for further research are offered as well.

The impetus for this inquiry is motivated by the effects of increasing diversity on students in contemporary schools. The overarching goal is to develop a theoretical framework that informs the appropriate approach for potentially fostering more inclusive environments in education. A careful review of the literature reveals several significant gaps in the research.

To establish the importance of educators' response to increasing diversity, it is necessary to ask how teacher behaviors and curricular adjustments affect student learning and development. The literature reveals that teachers fail to prepare students for success in a diverse world, if they are not engaging them in diversity-related activities. Failure to incorporate diversity-related curricula has negative impacts on student learning and identity development.

A review of the literature indicates that simply encountering diversity in the classroom is not sufficient for assuring student learning and identity development (Nassir et al., 2009; Quintana, 2007; Terenzini et al., 2001). Therefore, students must be engaged in diversity-related activities. When classroom practices involve conflict-avoidance, students do not have an opportunity engage in these activities (Bigler & Collins, 1995; Quintana; Tatum, 1992; Terenzini et al.; Tyler et al, 2006; Van Soest et al., 2001), which leaves them with little guidance for future success in a diverse world (Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Van Soest et al.). Currently, failure to incorporate diversity-related activities in the curricula allows typically marginalized students to fall behind. This failure may be the cause of increasing gaps in achievement among diverse populations in contemporary schools.

Interestingly, the literature demonstrates that engaging adolescent students is especially important for assuring academic success. A review of the literature reveals studies typically focus on diversity issues at the college level, which is unfortunate as these issues should be addressed at a much earlier age (Tatum, 1992). In fact, adolescence is a formative time for student development. If conflicts concerning diversity issues at this age are not handled appropriately, adolescent students are at risk of falling behind their peers (Terenzini et al., 2001). The literature does not appear to adequately investigate the impacts of teacher avoidance in the classroom on learning and identity development for *adolescent* students.

Conflict resolution indicates that this avoidant behavior paradoxically may escalate the very conflicts these behaviors attempt to quell (Barsky & Wood, 2005; Bello, 1998; Remland et al., 1994; Van Soest et al.; Wilmont & Hocker, 1998). Conflict

resolution literature suggests that avoidance may not be the best pedagogical approach for today's diverse classrooms. Unfortunately, avoidance is the most common response to conflict (Barsky & Wood, 2005; Bello, 1998; Remland et al., 1994; Van Soest et al.; Wilmont & Hocker, 1998). Perpetuation of destructive conflicts results in a predominantly negative view of conflict (Morris-Rothschild & Brassard, 2006; Pistole & Arricale, 2003; Watt, 1999), which is avoided at all costs. Interrupting this destructive conflict of cycle may require training that focuses on intervening in this commonly held negative perception of conflict. In fact, research suggests that constructive conflict education practices may affect negative attitudes about conflict (Dudley et al., 1996; Stevahn et al., 2002).

Research on racial identity offers a framework for understanding the avoidant behavior of teachers in reaction to the necessity of incorporating diversity-related curricula. Due to the conflicts that engagement in diversity may cause, this content is typically avoided by teachers. Despite adequate theory to drive research in diversity-related conflict-avoidance, the literature on diversity in education reveals a lack of quantitative evidence measuring teacher conflict-avoidant behaviors. While conflict resolution suggests most people are predominantly avoidant of conflicts (Barsky & Wood, 2005; Bello, 1998; Bigler & Collins, 1995; Hesse, 1996; Watt, 1994; Hample, et al., 1999; Morris-Rothschild & Brassard, 2006), the literature reveals a deficiency in research that investigates conflict behaviors in the context of diverse classrooms.

The literature involving diversity in education suggests teachers do not have adequate knowledge and experience with diversity-related issues and content in their own educational training. This lack of training contributes to fear and anxiety over the

conflicts that often derive from this material (Banks & Banks, 2004; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Revilla et al., 2004; Rosenburg, 2004; Van Soest et al., 2001). Deficiencies in diversity-related knowledge and experiences may result in the failure to incorporate representative curricula in diverse classrooms (Bigler & Collins, 1995; Lawrence & Tatum; Van Soest et al.). Alternatively, teacher avoidance of engagement in diversity-related curricula may be the result of a deeper more insidious form of discrimination called colored-blindness (Revilla et al, 2004; Rosenburg, 2004; Van Soest et al., 2001). A failure to incorporate this diversified curriculum and engage in subsequently related activities effects student learning and development. Regardless of the source of this failure, exposure to diversity-related issues and content in educational training may help counteract avoidant behaviors among teachers. This theory has potential to drive research in this area, but the literature reveals a lack of quantitative evidence of the effects of diversity-related training on conflict-avoidant behaviors for teachers.

Overall, the literature on diversity in education is largely qualitative. This may be due to qualitative methodology being conducive to investigating the lived experience of conflict. Furthermore, several of these studies do not appear to employ sampling and assignment procedures that would assure the validity of the inferences these authors make. Theoretically based and rigorously evaluated research is difficult to find in the literature, at best.

A careful review of the literature reveals several significant gaps in research concerning teacher avoidant behavior in diverse classrooms. While theory is clearly delineated and has potential to drive research in this area, there is also a lack of quantitative evidence involving the effects of diversity-related educational training on

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teacher conflict-avoidant behaviors. This is the most significant gap found in the literature, which motivates this study.

Recommendations for Future Research

The following recommendations will be made involving the areas revealed in this review of the literature that may lead to further research involving conflict behavior in the diverse classroom. It is important to note that this area of inquiry may be especially important, as this review suggested promise for creating inclusive environments in education; addressing issues of inequity. Inequity has been a long-standing issue in education that has been debated since the 1960's, and therefore promising solutions are considered to be of the utmost importance.

The literature reveals that teachers fail to prepare students for success in a diverse world if they fail to engage them in diversity-related activities. This failure has negative impacts on student learning and identity development. Furthermore, the literature indicates that diversity-related activities are especially important for adolescents. Therefore, one recommendation for further research is to empirically assess and evaluate the effects of diversity-related activities on *adolescent* student learning and development.

Literature in conflict resolution suggests that avoidant behaviors perpetuate destructive cycles of conflict. These destructive cycles create negative perceptions of conflict, which in turn increases conflict-avoidant behaviors. Research suggests that constructive conflict education practices may affect negative attitudes about conflict (Dudley et al., 1996; Stevahn et al., 2002). Interrupting this destructive conflict cycle may require training focused on intervening in this commonly held negative perception of

conflict. Therefore, it is recommended that further empirical assessment and evaluation be conducted on diversity-related training that is informed by conflict resolution.

Due to the conflicts that engagement in diversity may cause, the literature reveals this content is typically avoided by teachers. Despite adequate theory to drive research in conflict-avoidance, the literature on diversity in education reveals a lack of quantitative evidence involving teacher conflict-avoidant behaviors in response to diversity-related educational training. While conflict resolution suggests most people are predominantly avoidant of conflicts (Barsky & Wood, 2005; Bello, 1998; Bigler & Collins, 1995; Hesse, 1996; Watt, 1994; Hample, et al., 1999; Morris-Rothschild & Brassard, 2006), this review of the literature reveals a deficiency in the research that investigates teacher diversity-related conflict-avoidant behaviors in response to training. Therefore, it is recommended that further empirical research be conducted on diversity-related conflict-avoidance in relation to training that exposes pre-service educational professionals to diversity-related issues and content.

One role of a teacher is to guide students in their quest to gain knowledge and understanding of diverse material, which is essential to success in a student's life and career. The ability to understand everything from mathematical concepts to the significance of history, teachers play an important role in the growth of students as competent, informed citizens. Furthermore, teachers are responsible for educating students on and modeling socially responsible behavior so that these emerging members of our society will be prepared to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse and complex twenty-first century (Durden, 2007; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Van Soest et al., 2001). To do this, teachers may have a responsibility to their students to "encourage serious

inquiry, and to develop an understanding of what it means to be a part of a wider, diverse community" (Durden, p. 42). One approach is to engage in situations of conflict that might arise in class as platforms for addressing larger social issues and modeling importance of inquiry and dialogue as socially responsible citizens. In doing this, students and teachers alike can utilize such critical opportunities to expand one's understanding of the world through the appreciation and incorporation of diverse perspectives. First, teachers have an ethical responsibility to create inclusive environments that may lead to addressing issues of inequity in the current educational system. Teacher education programs have a responsibility to educate future teachers to engage diverse students, preparing them for greater success in today's multicultural world.

Theoretically based and rigorously evaluated empirical research of diversity-related conflict-avoidance is difficult to find in the literature on diversity in education and conflict resolution. The principle of theoretically based and rigorously evaluated research should be adhered to whenever possible. As each of the preceding recommendations suggests, further empirical research is recommended for determining how to address increasing gaps in achievement for diverse student populations. Following these recommendations could potentially lead to increasing equity in education and signifies the importance of research designs influenced by this theoretical framework.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The primary purpose of this study is to empirically investigate whether diversity-related instruction affects conflict-avoidant behaviors for a sample of students enrolled in a single diversity-related education course. The literature indicates that teachers may be avoidant of incorporating or addressing diversity in the classroom. The existing theories suggest teachers fear the conflicts that often occur as a result of encountering diversity in the classroom and exposure to diversity-related curricula. This avoidance may be related to a deficiency in previous exposure to diversity issues and content in their own educational training. Unfortunately, these diversity-related conflict-avoidant behaviors have not been empirically measured in response to this type of training. Therefore, this study investigates the effect of diversity-related instruction on conflict-avoidant behaviors in response to exposure to diversity-related issues and content in educational training.

Pre-service educational professionals are the population of interest because this study provides an empirical foundation for the development of training interventions that alleviate avoidant behaviors in contemporary classrooms. Prior research has failed to identify factors that impact diversity-related conflict-avoidant behaviors of educational professionals, and therefore provides a weak foundation for developing training interventions. This is of particular importance to university teacher-training programs responsible for implementing the appropriate curricula that could prepare future educators for success in an increasingly diverse educational culture.

Research Question

The research question for this proposed study pertains to the way diversity-related educational instruction may affect conflict avoidant behavior for education students enrolled in this course. Does diversity-related educational instruction affect conflict-avoidant behavior for educational students enrolled in a diversity-related course in comparison to educational students who are not enrolled in this course? This question is driven by the literature involving diversity in education and conflict resolution.

Hypotheses

It was predicted that the students in this study would exhibit conflict-avoidant behaviors comparable to the avoidant behaviors of participants in previous published qualitative studies conducted on conflict behaviors. Prior research suggests that exposure to diversity-related content and issues through educational training may decrease conflict-avoidant behaviors in response to a diversity-related conflict scenario. This study takes prior research a step further by *quantitatively* measuring conflict-avoidance before and after diversity-related training in comparison to conflict-avoidant behavior measures from a group of students who did not receive this training.

Hypotheses for this study include:

1. Conflict-avoidant behaviors of education students will decrease after they complete one diversity-related education course.

2. Conflict-avoidant behaviors of education students who did not receive diversity-related education instruction will remain the same.

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Research Design

A non-experimental pretest-posttest comparison group research design was used to test the effect of diversity-related instruction on conflict-avoidant behavior. Two groups of educational students, enrolled in two different educational training courses offered within the College of Education at a university in the Pacific Northwest, were purposively sampled and surveyed. Students enrolled in a diversity-related education course served as the treatment group. Their peers not enrolled in the diversity-related education course comprised the comparison group.

The between-group independent variable for this study was educational instruction. The dependent variable was conflict-avoidant behavior of pre-service educators enrolled in purposively selected educational training courses. In addition to educational instruction, the pre/post measures were treated as a within subjects independent variable. All participants were asked to complete an online administration of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument to measure their predominant conflict behavior both before and after they complete each respective course. Data were obtained from educational students who enroll in the respective courses purposively selected for this study. Supplemental qualitative observational data were gathered for descriptive purposes.

This design provided empirical data necessary for testing the hypothesis that diversity-related educational training diminishes diversity-related conflict-avoidance. Participants were purposively sampled from two independent higher-education classes, one focused on preparing students for responding to diversity in the classroom and the other unrelated specifically to diversity. Data were gathered on the conflict-avoidant

behaviors among students enrolled in these courses in order to investigate whether or not diversity-related instruction affects this behavior.

Using diversity instruction as a non-experimental factor, obtained data provided an empirical foundation for the development and study of relevant interventions for reducing educational professionals' diversity-related conflict-avoidance. Data were analyzed using a repeated measures analysis of variance. Non-experimental groups of students enrolled in both of these courses were compared with respect to conflict-avoidant behavior using this statistical approach, supplemented by qualitative observational data.

Research Design Validity

The validity of this design attempted to maximize the degree to which the obtained findings were interpretable (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Four types of validity have been taken into consideration, (a) statistical conclusion validity, (b) internal validity, (c) construct validity, and (d) external validity.

Internal validity of this design was established by the inclusion of a comparison group, as well as the pre and post measure of conflict-avoidance behavior. The researcher attempted to control for selection threats to validity by purposively selecting a required diversity-related education course as the treatment group. Qualitative data were gathered to verify the validity of this particular diversity-related course for study. Internal validity is weakened by the inability to randomly assign students to treatment and comparison groups. Potential confounding factors, e.g., student history, are not controlled and may vary differentially. For example, a student may encounter a situation outside of class that influences their ability to engage in diversity-related issues, which could affect their

conflict-avoidant behaviors. Typical student maturation in the first several years of college may also be a threat to the validity. This study surveyed students over the duration of one year, so maturation effects on conflict- avoidance are considered minimal. If this were a longitudinal study this threat to validity may be a greater concern. Testing threats to validity, introduced in this pretest-posttest design, were accounted for in the statistical analysis of the data. Standardizing the implementation of the procedures and the instrumentation for both groups of students controlled for instrumentation threats to validity. If a significant number of students were to drop the course, the researcher could have compared the results on the pretest between the students who dropped the course and those who did not to determine if this mortality threat greatly biases the results. This was not possible in this study.

A standardized instrument for measuring conflict behaviors with proven construct validity for measuring conflict-avoidance (see instrumentation section for construct validity evidence of this instrument) was administered to participants. Diversity-related construct validity was established by providing the students with a diversity-related conflict scenario to reflect upon in their responses to each item in the instrument, as was also done in the validity and reliability studies conducted by Kilmann and Thomas (1978). Diversity-related instruction was implemented through student enrollment in one diversity-related education course, which introduces a mono-operation bias threat to the construct validity of this study. Due to limitations in implementing a standardized treatment to several different groups and the subsequent confounding variables, a single-course was selected as the best option for operationalizing the diversity-related instruction construct. Students majoring in education and enrolled in a diversity-related

course were sampled to assure the inferences made about the effectiveness of instruction on diversity-related conflict-avoidance in the classroom were relevant. A control group was measured to lend support to findings concerning the construct of diversity-related instruction. Definition of this construct was driven by the literature to assure adequate explanation of the variables included in the design of this study.

Criterion-related validity for this design was addressed by integrating a diversity-related conflict scenario to prompt each student's responses to every item in the survey. As was previously mentioned, this is a common practice in the administration of this instrument (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). The prompt related to a racial conflict, as the literature on racial identity development indicates professional development for teachers in diversity-related issues, such as race and racism, may influence their conflict avoidant behaviors (Banks & Banks, 2004; Bigler & Collins, 1995; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Tatum, 1992; Van Soest et al., 2001). Prompting students with a diversity-related scenario improved upon the predictive validity of this design. Also, every effort was made to select a diversity-related education course that focuses in part on exposure to diversity-related issues and content, such as issues of race and racism and subsequent conflicts. Convergent validity was addressed by sampling a comparison group of students similar to the treatment group in every way except for the exposure to diversity-related instruction they receive. Finally, discriminate validity evidence was limited to comparisons between the comparison and treatment groups.

External validity was limited to generalization made only for students enrolled in a carefully selected diversity-related education course at one institution in the Pacific Northwest. This purposeful selection was made in an effort to control for variation in

instruction that may occur if more than one course were measured in more than one place. The sample included students from one particular university to control for variation in institutional climate. One particular course was selected to control for variation in the diversity-related training students receive. All subjects received a standardized administration of the instrument online, alleviating any variation in the measurement variables.

Setting and Participants

A purposive sampling procedure was used to select participating students enrolled in a diversity-related education course. Qualitative observational data was collected to demonstrate the fit between the selected training course and the construct of diversity-related conflict-avoidance. The purpose of this selection was based on the specific factor of diversity-related instruction focused on exposing pre-service educational professionals to diversity-related issues and content in their educational training. These sampling procedures facilitate a description of the effect of this training on conflict-avoidant behavior for students majoring in education-related fields. All students enrolled in the selected course had an opportunity to participate in the online administration of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument.

Setting. Students enrolled in two courses offered within an educational college at a major university in the Pacific Northwest were measured for conflict-avoidant behavior. The courses selected are offered by education programs that instruct students interested in educational professions. These courses are offered within the College of Education at a major public university in the Pacific Northwest. Students' conflict-avoidant behaviors

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were measured online during the beginning and end of their respective educational training courses.

Comparison course. The comparison group for this study was selected based on the lack of fit of this course to the diversity-related conflict construct defined by the literature. This means that this course did not focus on diversity-related issues and content in any fashion. To assure the comparison group did not receive diversity-related training, the researcher purposively selected from statistics-related courses for student participation. The logic behind purposively selecting this course was that this course primarily engaged in statistical procedures, not diversity-related issues and content. Although, the research-related examples may have involved diversity-related demographic data, the main focus was on the logic behind and equations of these statistical procedures, as opposed to diversity-related issues and content.

Training course. The training course was selected based in its fit with the diversity-related educational training construct. This course purportedly engages students in, "a broad exposure to issues of diversity for professionals preparing for work in school and clinical settings" (Anonymous, 2009). Therefore, this course exposed pre-service educational professional to diversity-related issues and content, in accordance with the existing theoretical framework found in the literature on diversity in education. The diversity-related training course did not specifically focus on exposure to conflict resolution skills, in accordance with the literature on conflict resolution. In selecting this course, however, the instructor indicated a propensity to utilize conflicts that occur in the classroom as opportunities for learning and development. He also indicated that he encourages students to do the same when they encounter diversity-related conflicts in

their respective careers, providing suggestions for dealing with these types of conflicts when they occur. Qualitative observational data was gathered to lend support to the fit of this course to the diversity-related training construct outlined in the literature, specifically focusing on (a) the open expression of conflict, (b) the positive framing of conflict, (c) constructive conflict processes, and (d) most importantly, diversity-related activities. The setting from which all students enrolled in each of these courses participated in the quantitative measurement of conflict- avoidant behaviors is described as follows.

Instrument administration. The administration of the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument took place online. Online administration through CPP, Inc. allowed for the greatest amount of control over instrumentation. In the email and instructions provided, subjects were asked to devote 15 minutes of uninterrupted time to taking the survey in an effort to control for location threats to validity as much as possible. To increase voluntary participation and assure that subjects take ample time in completing the survey, they were allowed to take the survey wherever they had access to a computer during the first and last weeks of each respective course.

Participants. The target population of interest for this study was students who receive diversity-related educational instruction in their respective educational majors. The accessible population for this study is a sample of students enrolled in a diversity-related course and a sample not enrolled in a diversity-related course at a university in the Pacific Northwest. Limiting the sample to students enrolled in education courses assured that diversity-related conflict-avoidant behavior measures represented students interested in educational professions. Other blocking factors were not implemented so that a large enough sample size could be obtained.

Instrumentation

Generally speaking, the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument (TKI) reveals patterns of predominant conflict behaviors in the interest of informing instances when one conflict behavior is productive and when choosing another style may be more effective (Thomas & Kilmann, 2007). CPP, Inc. established this instrument as a psychometrically sound instrument for determining conflict behavior within a variety of organizations for diverse populations (Thomas & Kilmann). unfortunately, after an extensive search of the literature and contacting the administrative company (CPP, Inc.) for validity and reliability data, little evidence was found. Given the available psychometric data and the widespread use of this instrument, it was selected as a credible measure for the purposes of describing conflict-avoidant behavior in pre-service educational professionals.

Instrument design. The Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument (TKI) is a scaled test of the conflict behavior construct used for determining the predominance of conflict-avoidant behavior. Items are designed using an inventory of semantic differential responses to an attitude scale of reactions to a conflict situation in the classroom. Results of semantic differential responses are tallied and reported on a numerical scale in five domains of conflict behavior (competing, collaborating, compromising, avoiding, and accommodating). Each domain contains 12 items. The domain with the highest number of semantic differential responses indicates the subjects' predominant conflict behavior. The TKI measures the degree of conflict-avoidance each subject has on a scale of 1-12, 12 indicating a strong tendency towards avoidance of conflict.

The TKI prompts subjects to consider a situation in which they experience

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conflict and answer each item according to how they usually respond in such a situation. For the purposes of this study, which was specifically interested in diversity-related conflict-avoidance, subjects were prompted with a scenario to consider in response to each item. Subjects were instructed to answer each item according to how they would typically respond in these more construct specific situations. Each subject responded to 30 pairs of semantic differential statements describing possible behavioral responses to the diversity-specific classroom conflict scenario. They were instructed to circle one of the responses that best characterize their behavior in such a situation. In the cases where the semantic differential responses provided for that item are not very typical of a participants' behavior, they were asked to select the response they would be most likely to use.

Instrument scenario prompt. In addition to the formatted instructions for taking the TKI, a scenario was provided for students to reflect upon in their responses to each item (See Appendice A for prompt). The prompt provided subjects a description of a diversity-related conflict in the classroom. All subjects received the same prompt to maintain standardization in the administration of this instrument. The prompt described the context of a diversity-related conflict and asked the subjects to respond to the instrument items based on how they would react as an educational professional in their respective areas of interest. Including the same scenario to prompt all students' responses allowed the researcher to make inferences concerning diversity-related conflict-avoidance, as opposed to conflict-avoidance regarding any conflict participants may think of.

The TKI is designed to measure conflict behavior for a variety of organizations

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and companies to use in training and professional development (Thomas & Kilamnn, 2007). To maintain adaptability to this wide variety of contexts, the online administration allows for scenarios prompts to be built into the instructions provided to the subjects. In fact, Kilmann and Thomas (1977) utilized one such scenario in the validity and reliability studies they conducted.

Including this prompt increased the construct validity of diversity-related conflict-avoidance. Although the prompt may have caused subjects to respond in a way that makes them look good or politically correct, the prompt assisted the subjects in responding to the same diversity-related conflict within an educational setting. Additionally, many subjects may not have actual experiences to reflect upon as educational professionals, much less experiences that are diversity-related. Therefore, the costs of including this prompt were outweighed by the benefits to construct validity.

Technical adequacy. Although there is a dearth of validity and reliability evidence available for the TKI, Thomas and Kilmann (1978) conducted a study of the substantive, concurrent, structural, and external validity of the instrument. Additional reliability studies compared the TKI with three other conflict behavior instruments. The motivation behind the design of this instrument was to control for social desirability response bias because these issues were found in preexisting instruments. The most extensive test of validity conducted by the authors was for substantive validity.

First, the authors rated items in terms of a social desirability scale. Items were revised accordingly to eliminate social desirability bias. The first version of the instrument was then constructed by pairing items whose mean social desirability ratings were nearly identical. The instrument was then tested for a fifty-fifty response

distribution to pick up significant shifts in social desirability and eliminate the correlation between social desirability and item responses. Items were then revised once more to assure substantive validity.

The authors then administered the revised instrument along with three preexisting instruments. Additionally, twenty-nine subjects rated item statements according to their social desirability to enable a calculation of the social desirability differential. This differential was then correlated with the proportion of the remaining subjects who selected one statement over the other for item and mode responses. For both the items and the modes, the TKI showed lower correlation ($r = .21$ and $r = .41$) and variances than the other three instruments, which demonstrates the instrument has accounted for social desirability bias. In other words, these procedures show the aggregate self-ratings on the items and the aggregate scores for each of the five modes that can be accounted for by the social desirability value are much less in comparison to the other three conflict behavior measures that have higher correlations. These procedures gave the authors additional confidence in the instruments substantive validity.

The final test for substantive validity the authors conducted was a measure of the frequency distribution analysis of the item responses in comparison to two preexisting social desirability scales. Unfortunately, the authors deemed this test inconclusive because the two social desirability scales were found to measure different constructs of social desirability.

The authors then administered a test for the reliability of this instrument in comparison with the data previously gathered from the three preexisting instruments. The authors analyzed internal consistency coefficients, which were all within a moderate

range, with an average alpha coefficient of .60 for the TKI in comparison to alpha coefficients of .45 and .55 on two other instruments measured. A test-retest analysis of reliability resulted in consistency across modes in comparison to the other instruments, with average test-retest coefficients for the TKI being .64, .39 for the Blake-Mouton, .50 for the Lawrence-Lorsch, and .55 for the Hall instrument. Therefore, the TKI compared well overall on the criteria of internal consistency and test-retest reliabilities.

Construct validity was established by analyzing intercorrelations with the other three instruments, after correcting for attenuation due to low measurement reliability. The authors conclude that there is evidence of convergent validity, especially on the competing mode. The authors assert that the other four modes in the three instruments measure different aspects and contain different interpretations than the TKI. This is why convergent evidence was not as high for the other five behaviors measured by each of the instruments (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977).

Structural validity of the TKI was established by conducting an ipsative intercorrelational statistical analysis. This analysis was chosen to demonstrate that a higher score on one mode would result in a decreased score on another mode; allowing for more confidence in the inferences made from the scores of each of these modes. This analysis allowed the authors to conclude that factors of (a) the perceptions of the amount of conflict present in a given situation and (b) subject errors in response scales did not affect the results. The results of this analysis allowed for greater confidence in the structural validity of the instrument.

Finally, the authors studied the external validity of the instrument. Three different analyses were conducted, which indicated consistency in mean scores with the literature,

empirical support for the two dimensional theoretical model the five modes derive from this model, and meaningful correlations between the TKI and other personality tests. The authors did not provide an adequate discussion of their findings to give the reader much confidence in the external validity of this instrument. While the authors state that they interpret these findings with caution due to the infancy of the instrument, they do claim that the external validity tests conducted indicate this instrument "can discriminate expected…differences between student behavior towards teachers versus generalized others" (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977, p. 323).

Procedures

After reviewing course descriptions and syllabi to identify the course that best fit the diversity-related training construct, instructors were contacted via email by the researcher, requesting their participation. The instructors from each course were asked to assist the researcher in carrying out the procedures for this study. These procedures involved soliciting voluntary participation from the students enrolled in these courses in a pre and post-test online measure of their predominant conflict behaviors. To maintain confidentiality the course syllabi are not included in appendices.

Students enrolled in each course were asked to voluntarily participate in this study during the first week of the course. Students received instructions for the online administration of the TKI in class and via email (See Appendice B for instructions). These instructions described the online administration procedure and the use of pseudonyms for matching pretests with post-test as well as maintaining confidentiality. A print out of the assessment completion confirmation page was submitted to each instructor with the students name and pseudonym written on it after they complete the

pretest assessment. These print outs served to remind students of their pseudonyms at the end of the term, and allowed the instructors to offer incentives in the form of bonus points to students who participated. At no point did the researcher have access to these print outs at any time before, during, or after the study was conducted.

After the students were asked to participate, the instructors sent two reminder emails to them during the course of the next week explaining the procedures for the study. The email explained the study in non-technical terms and requested the students' voluntary participation. It also explained that they take the survey once at the beginning of the term and once at the end of the term. Finally, voluntary consent and confidentiality procedures were explained in this email.

During the last week of the course, the instructors requested post-test participation and reminded students of their pseudonyms, if necessary. Students received the same two reminder emails again, requesting their voluntary participation in the post-test administration. A confirmation page was submitted to each instructor, verifying the student's participation for credit. This email also contained all the voluntary consent, confidentiality procedures, and appropriate instructions for participation.

Students logged-on to an online administration site to take the Thomas-Kilmann survey. The administering company, CPP, Inc.., established a website for students to participate by clicking on the URL they received in the instructions requesting their voluntary participation. They logged-in with the user name and password provided in these instructions. Both the email and the instructions that students read once they logged-in explained confidentiality procedures. These confidentiality procedures included the use of the name "student" for their first names and a pseudonym of at least eight

letters for their last names. Students were asked to use this name and pseudonym procedure when prompted to provide their names in the demographic data gathered in the survey. The email and instructions also explained that their participation was voluntary and the completion of the survey indicates their consent to participate. Finally, the instructions included a conflict scenario prompt that provided the context for the subjects to consider in answering each of the survey items. Subjects then responded to the thirty items pertaining to their typical responses to this conflict scenario. Upon completion of these items, the subjects printed out the survey completion confirmation page, wrote their names and pseudonyms on it, and submitted this confirmation page to their instructors for bonus credit. Upon completion of each assessment, the survey was automatically scored by SkillsOne.com. At that time, the researcher accessed the scores through a pre-established account, which contains all of the data collected.

Since the subjects were all college students, it was assumed that they had the ability respond online and understand the items. The TKI is designed for subjects ages 13 and up. Each subject did not have access to their results in order to prevent testing threats to validity by subjects sharing their responses and reactions to the instrument or specific items. The TKI was administered online through CPP, Inc.'s online assessment delivery system; SkillsOne website. The online administration through this company maximized the standardization of the conditions the instrument was administered under. The online administration assured that no changes in the instrument or persons collecting data may affect the results. The researcher had no direct involvement with the subjects in the online administration of the survey. Therefore, the researcher had no influence on the subjects. Furthermore, the results were not influenced by changes in the way the instrument was

administered. As a result of the online administration and the instructor's assistance in

this study, the scores are free from data collector bias and characteristic influences.

Therefore, experimenter effects are considered to be minimal.

Finally, the researcher gathered qualitative observational data from two of the

diversity-related classes. These observational data were gathered to confirm the course fit

with the diversity in education and conflict resolution constructs defined by the literature.

To gather these data, the researcher observed and took field notes from two sessions of

the diversity-related training course. Observations were made of the course content, as it

relates to five themes selected from the literature, which may decrease conflict-avoidant

behaviors. In accordance with the literature, the researcher documented observations

concerning the courses use of open expression of conflict, positive framing of conflict,

engagement in diversity-related activities, constructive conflict processes, and conflict-

avoidance discussions.

Analyses

For this study, the independent variables are diversity-related educational

instruction (between group) and time (within group), and the dependent variable is

conflict-avoidant behavior. The research hypothesis for this study was that conflict-

avoidant behaviors of education students decrease after they complete one diversity-

related education course in comparison to students who do not complete a diversity-

related education course. The null hypothesis was that there is no significant difference in

conflict-avoidant behaviors among the two groups of students after completing their

respective courses. Based on the research design and subsequent hypotheses, a repeated

measures statistical analysis was employed to test the ways that diversity-related

instruction effects conflict-avoidance for pre-service educational professionals. Data obtained from students enrolled in both the diversity-related course and the comparison courses were compared with a 2X2 analysis of variance model.

The repeated measures analysis was selected to increase statistical power and control for initial group differences on the pretest measure of conflict-avoidance (D'Amico, Neilands, & Zambarano, 2001; Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003). Therefore, this model was selected as the most appropriate for interpreting significant differences between group post-score means. It should be noted that the interpretation of results are limited due to the inability of random assignment in this design, which did not allow the researcher to assume that the groups were equal and the design was balanced. Thus, interpretations of the results are limited due to the possibility that other uncontrolled variables could be related to the dependent variable, and hence may affect statistical findings.

Statistical conclusion validity was considered in this study by comparing the conflict-avoidant behavior data obtained from a diversity instruction treatment group with the behaviors of a comparison group that did not receive this instruction. If the avoidant behaviors of the diversity instruction group were affected and the behaviors of the other group were not, inferences concerning the effects of diversity-related instruction on conflict-avoidance could be supported. This control group design helped to assure statistical validity by lending support to the inferences made from the analyses of the obtained data. That said the inferences are limited with respect to the strength and effectiveness of the treatment.

Field notes collected by the researcher were thematically coded by the course and

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student interaction categories. Field notes were then read in one sitting by the researcher. Data from course observations were then coded in five categories; (a) open expression of conflict, (b) positive framing of conflict, (c) constructive conflict processes, (d) engagement in diversity-related activities, and (e) discussion of conflict-avoidance. Data from the field notes were color-coded by each theme. Then the thematically coded field notes were reduced to a simple descriptive content phrase. These data are useful in describing the specific diversity-related training course evaluated in this study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The research design required a two-way analysis of variance to test the effects of treatment on diversity-related conflict-avoidance. Comparison and treatment groups of pre-service educational professionals were compared on pre-post measures of conflict-avoidance. Additional quantitative observational data were obtained and analyzed.

Mean Scores

A summary of pre-test and post-test conflict avoidance scores for the Comparison and Treatment groups are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Conflict-Avoidance Scores over Time and Instruction

Conflict Avoidance	Treatment			Comparison		
	M	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*n*
Pretest	6.38	2.86	26	7.29	2.60	24
Posttest	7.27	2.16	26	7.50	2.45	24

Note 1. Conflice-avoidance was scored on a scale of 0-12.

The instrument used to measure the dependent variable, conflict avoidance, is believed to have technical adequacy (Kilmann & Thomas, 1977). Reliability and validity analyses of the Thomas Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument were reported in the Methods Chapter. While it would have been prudent to estimate internal reliability using the item data obtained in this study, the administering company, CPP, Inc., would not release

these data, which are consider key intellectual property (Mike Morris, personal communication, June, 23rd, 2010). Credibility for the technical adequacy of the TKI is established both in the widespread use of this instrument in a variety of different organizations and the psychometric data provided by the authors Thomas and Kilmann (1978).

Two-Way Mixed Effects Analysis of Variance

Data were analyzed as a two-way, mixed-effects analysis of variance with one between-subjects effect, instruction, and one within-subjects effect, time. The dependent variable was student's conflict avoidance. Instruction was a between-subjects effect with two levels, treatment and comparison. The within-subject effect was time also with two levels, pre-test and post-test. The analysis of variance results are reported in Table 2.

Table 2

Two-Way, Mixed-Effects Analysis of Variance Summary Table for the Effects of Instruction and Time on Conflict-Avoidant Behavior Scores

| Source	*df*	*SS*	*MS*	*F*
Between subjects				
Instruction	1	8.08	8.08	.80
Error	48	483.92	10.08	
Within subjects				
Time	1	7.54	7.54	2.75
Instruction by time	1	2.85	2.85	1.05
Error	48	103.31	2.72	
Total	99	605.70		

The instruction by time interaction effect was not significant, $F(1,48) = 1.05$, $p > .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.021$. The two-way interaction explained approximately 2.1% of the variance in conflict avoidant behaviors. The research hypothesis that conflict avoidant behavior would decrease after training and remain the same after receiving no training was not statistically significant. Consequently, consistent with conventional analysis of variance, main effects of instruction and time were examined. The main effect of instruction was not significant, $F(1,48) = 0.80$, $p > .05$. Thus, the hypothesis that the diversity instruction was different from the comparison instruction was not supported. The main effect of time also was not significant, $F(1,42) = 2.75$, $p > .05$. As a result, the hypothesis that pretest assessment of conflict avoidance would yield higher scores than a posttest assessment was rejected.

Power Analysis

Figure 1 illustrates group adjusted mean scores, suggesting a possible interaction. Power analysis provides an estimate of Type I error β (stating there is not an effect when in actuality there is one). The value $1-\beta$ is the power for detecting an effect when there is one. The observed power for the repeated measures analysis addressing the primary research hypothesis was .20 with a sample size of 50, and an alpha of .05, and .30 for an alpha of .10. Therefore, an analysis using either alpha level for significance testing would not result in obtaining a significant effect. The observed power in this study may be attributable to the small sample size (N = 50), rather than measurement error, i.e., unreliability. Figure 1 shows the regression.

Figure 1

Comparison and Treatment Group Pre and Post TKI Conflict-Avoidance Mean-Scores.
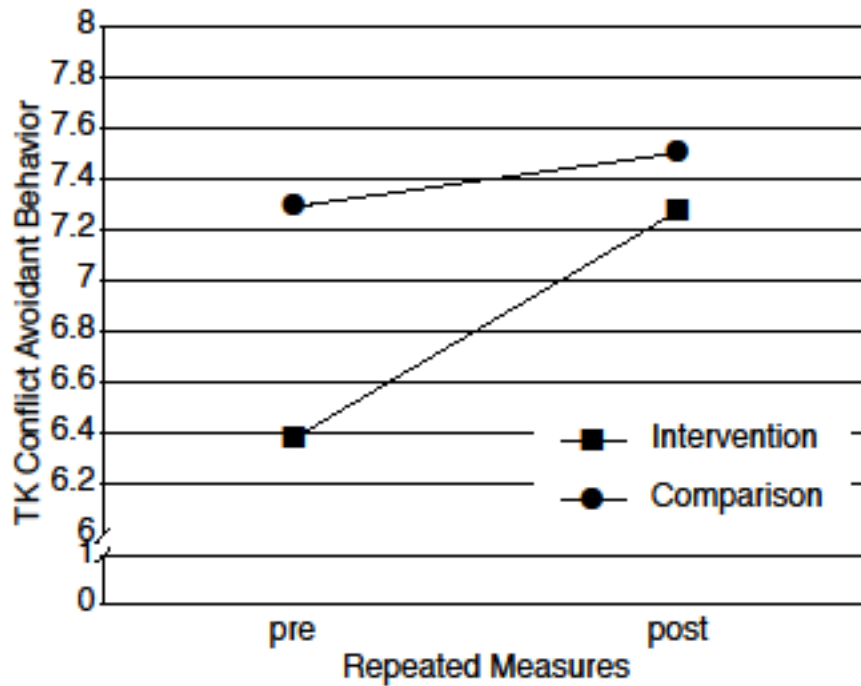
Qualitative Observational Analysis

Results are presented relative to the diversity-related training construct guided by the theoretical framework developed in Chapter II. Data are analyzed to provide descriptive evidence of the diversity-related training intervention. Results of the diversity-related training course are analyzed for fit of this particular course with the diversity-related conflict-avoidance construct as informed by the literature in diversity in education and conflict resolution.

Diversity-Related Training

Qualitative observational data gathered for the diversity-related training are analyzed for the following five themes; (a) open expression of conflict, (b) positive framing of conflict, (c) constructive conflict processes, (d) engagement in diversity-

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related activities, and (e) discussions of conflict avoidance. These themes are selected as the representative interventions to diversity-related conflict-avoidance that were suggested by the literature.

The particular course observed involved content and activities around the concept of color-blindness. After the instructor reviewed the article students were to read for class concerning racial microaggressions, he made the argument that these types of aggressions are not just about race, but diversity in general. Describing these microaggressions as subtle and often more harmful, he moved into a discussion of color-blindness versus color consciousness. Color-blindness was described as the behavior where one does not see, talk about, or bring up diversity in any way. Everyone is seen as having equal opportunity and equal treatment. The instructor calls this the myth of meritocracy. Therefore, this class was appropriate for qualitative observation because it involves diversity-related conflict-avoidance construct as it was defined by the literature. The discussion sets the stage for engagement in diversity-related activities. In these activities and subsequent discussions, the researcher observed the five themes for diversity-related training described above. Results of the data coding and reduction for two of the themes follow.

Open expression of conflict and engagement in diversity-related activities are two of the five themes coded in this qualitative data analysis. The open expression of conflict theme was observed in four out of five different activities during the observed class. The instructor encouraged this open expression of conflict by asking students to partner with other students that they disagree with to discuss the topic of color-blindness. During another activity a student expressed frustration over the fairness of this diversity-related

activity, the instructor explains that he set up the activity to make her feel that conflict within herself. Observing an activity involving a conversation between the instructor and a minority student regarding her first thoughts when they met, the discussion was found to spiral into tension and emotional expressions of diversity-related conflict. After the student finished what she was saying, the instructor thanked the student for sharing her thoughts. Finally, the journal assignment the students were given at the end of class involved reflections upon the conflicts expressed in class that day. The final diversity-related activity involved discussing examples of diversity-related microaggressions in schools.

During the previously mentioned diversity activity when the instructor thanked a student for expressing the conflicts she had with the course content, he specifically said, "Thank you for sharing because I didn't know what you were experiencing." The student responded by saying, "I didn't know either until the second day of this class." The appreciation expressed by the instructor helped the student reframe the conflict she was experiencing in a positive way that allowed her to understand her experiences. This was the only observation of positive framing of conflict.

Throughout the class, the instructor and students alike offered suggestions for skills and techniques that students could use in the future professions. These suggestions are thematically coded as constructive conflict processes. While students were discussing the examples of diversity microagressions, several suggestions were made for constructively dealing with these microaggresssions or conflict examples. The instructor explained that teachers need to have the skills required for responding constructively to these conflicts. The suggested skills include an appreciation and acknowledgement

strategy, saving face strategies, establishing safe space, perspective taking, and engaging in conflict.

Finally, observational data of course content involving avoidance of diversity-related issues are analyzed. In the review of microaggressions, the instructor explains that people often avoid dealing with these conflicts. He explains confronting these conflicts, "often ends up being a bigger deal than the actual act itself." In another situation a student admits not giving 100% to engaging in the course, which the instructor acknowledges and proceeds. Three students admitted to being avoidant at some point in the course as the discussion of avoidance proceeded during this class activity. The discussion of color blindness is also included in these findings, as the instructor defined this behavior so that it fit the diversity-related conflict-avoidant construct, as mentioned above.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Interpretation and discussion of the findings are related to the theories and prior research. Limitations of this research and suggestions for further research are also discussed in this chapter.

The literature on diversity in education suggests avoidance among teachers is related to the amount of exposure they have had to diversity-related issues and content (Bigler & Colins, 1995; Lawrence & tatum, 1997; Van Soest et al., 2001). Unfortunately, quantitative evidence of diversity-related conflict-avoidance in response to this training has yet to be established. While conflict resolution literature does not specifically address diversity-related conflict-avoidance in schools, the literature does indicate that most people are conflict avoidant (Barsky & Wood; Bello, 1998; Bigler & Collins, 1995; Hesse, 1996; Watt, 1994; Hample, Benoit, Houston, Purifoy, VanHyfte, & Wardwell, 1999; Morris-Rothschild & Brassard, 2006); especially those with a negative perception of conflict (Pistole & Arricale, 2003; Watt, 1999). Conflict resolution literature suggests that training people to deal with conflict will reduce avoidant behavior (Howell & Tuitt, 2003; Kingston-Mann & Sieber, 2001) and engaging students in constructive conflict processes may assist in the incorporation of diversity-related curricula (Johnson & Johnson, 2009). The field of conflict resolution provides a tool for measuring avoidant behavior. This study set out to test the hypothesis that diversity-related educational training diminishes diversity-related conflict-avoidance, using the TKI instrument commonly employed in conflict resolution. Finding no significant effects in the repeated measures statistical analysis, the following section explores potential reasons for this

through a discussion of the qualitative data gathered for this study.

Interpretation of Findings

While the qualitative observational findings align with the theoretical framework for diversity-related conflict-avoidance, the empirical quantitative data does not support this theoretical framework. This could mean that (a) the published theoretical model is inaccurate, b) the particular training intervention is ineffective, and/or (c) the measurement is invalid psychometrically.

The literature indicates that teachers are avoidant of diversity-related conflicts (Banks & Banks, 2004; Helms, 1990; Revilla, Wells, & Holme, 2004; Rosenburg, 2004: Van Soest et al., 2001). Educators may be avoidant because of a lack of exposure to diversity-related issues and content in their own educational training (Bigler & Colins, 1995; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Van Soest et al.) or a failure to train pre-service educators to deal with conflict (Howell & Tuitt, 2003; Kingston-Mann & Sieber, 2001). The lack of significance found in the repeated measures analysis of conflict-avoidant behaviors suggests that the theoretical model found in the literature may be incorrect.

Since this study was unable to establish significance in the quantitative evidence of conflict-avoidance among pre-service educators, avoidance of the conflicts may not actually be the factor preventing teachers from responding to diversity in constructive ways that increase student learning and development. There may be other non-avoidant factors operating. In fact, the literature indicates that this avoidant behavior may actually be a deeper, more insidious form of discrimination (Rosenburg, 2004; Revilla et al., 2004; Van Soest et al., 2001).

On the other hand, diversity-related conflict avoidance in the classroom may in

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fact serve a functional purpose. There may be cases where avoidance is actually a functional response to conflict in the classroom. In other organizational settings, it has been theorized that avoidance may be a functional response to conflict when (a) the conflict has not reached a degree that is optimal for constructive engagement and resolution processes to be effective, (b) the risk of harmful relational interactions is too great to justify cooperative and assertive behavior in the context of that particular conflict, or (c) the destructive impact of the conflict may be too low to warrant constructive engagement in the conflict and time away from other pertinent activities (Wilmont & Hocker, 2011). Therefore, the literature indicating that training through exposure to diversity-related issues and content decreases conflict-avoidance for teachers may be inaccurate.

Conflicts have to reach a certain degree of ripeness before parties are ready or even capable of engaging in constructive processes towards resolution. Furthermore, conflicts can also reach a degree where the conflict becomes intractable and irresolvable. This is particularly dangerous in educational settings, as the conflict can manifest itself in destructive and often violent behaviors outside of the classroom. Therefore, it is important for third-parties, such as mediators and teachers, to understand these thresholds of conflict in different contexts and environments.

There may be cases where low-power people are engaged in conflicts with high-power people (Wilmont &Hocker, 2011). If high-power individuals practice unjustified forms of power-over others (Warren, 2000) in unethical and/or violent ways, avoidance may be the best alternative solution to coping with the conflict at hand. However, this problem typically involves cases of domestic violence or larger scale intractable conflict

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between cultural groups. If this risk exists in the case of diversity-related classroom conflict, it is likely caused by the threshold of conflict reaching a tipping point that could have been addressed prior to the development of this type of risk.

Finally, in some situations, the teacher may not have time to engage students in constructive conflict processes. Furthermore, some conflicts simply may not matter that much in the context of maximizing student learning and development. Teachers should be trained to understand the impact of diversity-related conflicts in order to know when a conflict's impact warrants engagement in constructive processes.

Alternatively, the difficulty in obtaining significant findings may be the result of low statistical power and a relatively weak, ineffective training intervention for reducing conflict-avoidant behaviors among pre-service educators. While qualitative observations confirm that the training did involve exposure to diversity-related issues and content in constructive processes, qualitative evidence indicated that emphasis on positive perceptions of conflict in the training content could be increased. This is interesting because the literature indicates that training pre-service educational professionals to deal with conflict may decrease conflict-avoidant behaviors. This theoretical framework also indicates that people have a predominantly negative view of conflict, which entrenches conflict and increases avoidant behaviors. The evidence suggests that learning to deal with conflict constructively may necessitate a reframing of conflict from negative to positive in order to increase the power of the intervention, potentially yielding significant effects. While the instructor for the course observed employed constructive conflict processes, only one observation was made of positive framing of conflict.

The qualitative findings suggest that more positive framing of conflict in the

course content may be one area that could be improved upon. Since, the literature indicates that negative framing of conflict is the main contributor to destructive cycles of conflict-avoidance (Pistole & Arricale, 2003; Watt, 1999; Wilmont & Hocker, 1998), it is logical to take this factor of positive perception into consideration. That said, the literature on diversity and education and conflict resolution has never been synthesized, so one would not necessarily know to incorporate positive reframing techniques into their curriculum.

According to experts in both the fields of education and conflict resolution, an effective training intervention would entail (a) exposure to diversity issues and content in educational training, (b) training in dealing with conflict, and (c) constructive conflict processes. This discussion expands on these minimal requirements by suggesting a more complex and in depth training intervention may be necessary for reducing diversity-related conflict avoidance in the classroom.

An effective training intervention should also include understanding the nature of conflict in order to understand its threshold, risk, and impact for all parties involved. This training should be integrated comprehensively into the curricula of pre-service professional educator programs. It takes more than just one weekend seminar or just one course to prepare pre-service educators to effectively address and intervene in diversity-related conflicts. Students enrolled in pre-service professional education programs must first confront their own biases and reactions to diversity-related issues and content. Then they must learn to shift their negative conflict perspectives to positive perspectives. This perspective shifting should be practiced throughout their tenure in order to solidify their positive reaction in the variety of situations they are likely to encounter in their future

profession. At the end of their program, students should then be provided with opportunities to practice applying constructive conflict engagement and resolution processes in a variety of classroom settings. Professional education programs would be liable for any attempt at inciting diversity-related conflicts for pre-service teachers to practice these skills over the duration of one course or seminar. Therefore, it is important for interventions to be weaved comprehensively into every program that teaches pre-service educational professionals. This comprehensive approach is imperative for maximizing experiences with the conflicts that naturally surface in the face of increasingly diverse-classrooms.

To conclude this discussion, the ethics of constructive conflict processes in the classroom must be addressed. As mentioned above, inciting diversity-related conflict in the classroom carries with it a great deal of liability and is unethical, even in the context of a fictional role-play. Soliciting conflict among students is unethical for the conflict may not have reached the threshold for constructive resolution. Even worse, inciting a conflict may surface intractable dynamics and put students at risk of greater harm. Finally, the impact of a conflict that has not surfaced organically in the context of each particular setting may have different results for different students. Measuring and controlling this impact is not possible when the conflict does not occur naturally. Therefore, teachers have an ethical responsibility to adequately deal with diversity-related conflicts as they surface, but *never* to incite them in the classroom. Exposure to diversity-related conflict in the classroom occurs organically and is bound to happen repeatedly in an increasingly diverse society. Therefore, to contrive or incite a conflict is not necessary. This ethical guideline is important to note in the development of training

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interventions for pre-service educators, as well as in the management of diversity-related classroom conflicts and the incorporation of diversity-related curricula.

Limitations

The research methods for the current study have noteworthy limitations with implications for the obtained results, and future research. Specifically, limitations in sampling procedures are associated with both external and internal research validity. According to McMillan and Schumacher (2006), these limitations, e.g., design, sampling, etc., characterize many educational research designs.

Sampling and External Validity

The external validity of this research design may be improved by increasing participation and sampling random populations of pre-service educators. Accessing diversity-related educational training courses, however, that involve the specific diversity-related construct defined by the literature was difficult at best. Due to class-size and budgetary constraints, the sample size for this study is small and control of confounding variables through randomization was not possible while maintaining control of a standardized training intervention. To overcome the weak design and obtain the largest possible sample size, the researcher continued to sample the same course, taught by the same instructor, using the same curriculum, over the duration of one full academic year. The comparison group was also sampled during this 2009-10 academic year. Despite these efforts, low statistical power may also be the result of a small number of participants and an inability to obtain a random sample.

Internal Validity

It is argued that issues with internal validity for this study derived from the quasi-

experimental research design, poorly defined intervention, and construct validity of the instrument used for collecting quantitative data. In the Methodology Chapter, the implementation of a diversity- related conflict scenario is discussed in the interest of improving the construct validity of the inferences made from conflict-avoidant measures. While this scenario is implemented within the instructions of the Thomas-Kilmann Instrument, it is unclear how this scenario impacted the results of the scores. One may speculate that the scenario could have caused participants to provide politically-correct responses to each item, and not true to the avoidant behavior they may predominantly employ. Also, measurement error due to an unreliable measure of conflict-avoidance may be causing difficulty in obtaining significant findings.

Instrument Validity and Reliability

Another limitation of this study involved the validity and reliability of the instrument. While the authors, Thomas and Kilmann, conducted validity and reliability analyses of this instrument, the administering company would not release item level data for the purpose of administering one's own reliability analyses. Previous validity and reliability studies that were conducted by the authors of the instrument were reported in Chapter III.

Another important issue with the instrument utilized for this study involves the construct validity of the inferences made at the item level. Since the instrument was originally designed to use in corporations, the items are not diversity-related. The researcher attempted to compensate for this by implementing a diversity-related scenario.

Suggestions for Future Study

Recommendations for further study include suggestions for the improved, more

appropriate research design. Participant sampling (pre-service teachers and higher-education instructors), random assignment to experimental groups, and the training intervention could be improved. A measure of the diversity-related conflict-avoidance construct is also necessary for assuring the validity and reliability of the training intervention and inferences made from the conflict-avoidant measures. Therefore, recommendations for design improvement are discussed as recommendations for future research, in addition to suggestions made about the training intervention itself.

Accessibility to a large enough sample size that adheres to standardized diversity-related conflict-avoidance construct is difficult in educational research. Furthermore, this study attempted to establish quantitative evidence in an area of study that has not typically been investigated, so interventions were difficult to standardize and sample. These sampling procedures could be improved in future studies by increasing the sample size recruitment procedures, and experimental randomization. This can be achieved by measuring a variety of standardized training courses and standardized comparison of courses to obtain a larger sample size, with increased treatment validity. Furthermore, a larger sample size would allow for a random selection of subjects scores to include in analysis. A random sample with an adequate sample size would significantly improve the statistical conclusion validity of this study.

Research design issues should not prevent this study from being utilized as a foundational pilot study that is improved upon and conducted again. After all, if training interventions are targeting conflict-avoidance when the issue really lies in another covert form of discrimination, achievement gaps will persist among increasingly diverse student bodies.

It is well known that random sampling and assignment procedures are difficult to apply in educational settings (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). Therefore, it may be more practical to address the construct validity of the instrument utilized to measure diversity-related conflict-avoidance, in addition to improving upon research design. It is recommended that an instrument, similar to the TKI be designed that specifically measures this construct of diversity-related conflict-avoidance at the item level.

Given the support found in the qualitative analysis of the observational data collected for this study, it is unlikely that the training intervention was ineffective in exposing students to diversity-related issues and content. A great deal of the quantitative evidence found in the literature review informing this study indicates that teachers may be ill-equipped to respond to and incorporate diversity adequately for all students (Bigler & Colins, 1995; Lawrence & Tatum, 1997; Van Soest et al., 2001) *or* they may not have been trained to deal with conflicts that often occur in response to diversity. The qualitative findings, however, suggest the training intervention could have relied more on conflict training, specifically focusing on the positive framing of conflict perceptions in order to decrease conflict-avoidant behaviors, as is indicated by the literature in conflict resolution. Therefore, further research may be conducted on training that exposes students to diversity-related issues and content, constructive conflict resolution skills, and positive perceptions of conflict.

The literature in conflict resolution indicates a need for further research involving the effect of diversity-related training on conflict-avoidant behaviors. Training that focuses on transforming destructive cycles and negative perceptions of conflict into constructive processes may facilitate the incorporation of diversity-related curricula. This

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research is important for increasing student learning and development and potentially alleviating destructive cycles of conflict. Utilizing diversity-related training to intervene in negative attitudes of conflict may allow teachers to become skilled in transforming destructive conflict patterns into constructive conflict patterns. This transformation could affect classroom practices and allow for the incorporation of diversity-related curricula. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers are trained to handle conflicts in the classroom more constructively, and foster more positive perceptions of conflict. Unfortunately, most organizational cultures do not foster these positive perceptions (Chataway & Kolb, 1994).

Conclusion

While this study did not yield significance for the effect of diversity-related training in reducing conflict avoidance among pre-service educational professionals, this study did provide data useful for a pilot study of this design. Therefore, validity issues should be addressed with improved research design, sampling procedures, and instrumentation at the item level. This study also provided useful qualitative evidence for the improvement of diversity- related educational training.

Based on the qualitative observational findings, this study appears to have construct validity in the training intervention sampled for participation in relation to exposure to diversity-related issues and content. According to the literature, the inability to find significance may be the result of a deficiency in positive reframing of conflict in the intervention implemented for this study. Exposure to conflict resolution may assist individuals in overcoming negative perceptions of diversity-related conflict. This improvement in training may in turn help alleviate avoidance of diversity-related

conflicts in diverse environments, better preparing students for success in a diverse world.

According to the literature, teachers have not typically been trained to deal with conflict in the classroom (Howell & Tuitt, 2003; Kingston-Mann & Sieber, 2001). Training may help alleviate negative perceptions of conflict, allowing teachers to engage in constructive conflict processes and incorporate diversity-related curricula more effectively. Conflict resolution education (CRE) may inform alternative procedural guidelines, thereby granting teachers more confidence in implementing diversified curricula in today's schools.

Recently, schools began to implement CRE in curricula and classroom practices. Unfortunately, Jones (2004) attests to the, "woeful lack of research on CRE and diverse and non-dominant populations" (p. 204). Establishing empirical evidence of the relationship between conflict-avoidant behavior and diversity-related training may indicate the need to foster the implementation of CRE training procedures. If improved training strategies are integrated in teacher training programs, learning and developmental problems caused by avoidant behavior may be alleviated. As a result teachers may more effectively incorporate diversity-related curricula in today's increasingly diverse classrooms.

In conclusion, this study has made a contribution to the existing theoretical framework of diversity in education and conflict resolution in two ways. One contribution involves the use of this study as a pilot for future study. Another, perhaps more significant contribution is made in the qualitative evidence indicating a possible

improvement in diversity-related training interventions through the incorporation of

positive frameworks of conflict.

SCENARIO PROMPT ONLINE INSTRUCTIONS

Thank you for your participation in this study. Please review the following instructions carefully.

By completing this survey you consent to voluntarily participate in this study. Confidentiality will be maintained by entering the first name "student" and six random letters for your last name when prompted. Be sure to keep a record of the six random letters you use for your last name, as you will need to use the same six random letters when you take the survey again at the end of the term.

In responding to each of the thirty items in this survey consider the following situation. While teaching a class that engages students in discussions of involving differences in student identity, a conflict breaks out. Student B shares a personal experience involving socially perceived identity in the context of the course content. Student A gets upset over Student B's use of a word that has a history of racism. Student A is upset that Student B used the word without acknowledging the racial history of the term. Student B argues that s/he was not aware of this historical context, which upsets Student A even further. The class discussion becomes heated and a conflict surfaces with some students taking Student B's side and others taking Student A's side. As the teacher, how would you typically respond in such a situation?

The following survey contains 30 pairs of statements describing possible behavioral responses. For each pair, please indicate the letter ("A" or "B") of the statement that best characterizes your behavior.

In many cases, neither the "A" nor the "B" statement may be very typical of your

behavior; but please select the response you would be more likely to use.

APPENDIX B

EMAILED INSTRUCTIONS

First Email

Dear Students,

        Your instructor has volunteered to participate in a study of pre-service education professionals' conflict behaviors. As a result of your enrollment in this course, you were selected to receive this email requesting your participation in taking the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict MODE Instrument online two times. This message will provide you with a brief description of this study, instructions for the instruments administration, as well as consent and confidentiality procedures.

        This study of conflict behavior is intended to describe how students enrolled in pre-service teacher training courses may react to conflicts that may arise while teaching. This foundational study is important for providing information on how prepared educators are for dealing with conflicts in the classroom. Research in this area may be important for increasing student learning and development for *all* students. This study attempts to lay the foundation for the design of curricula specifically focused on preparing pre-service education professionals for dealing with conflicts in the classroom.

        You have been selected to take this 15 minute online survey. You will be provided with explicit instructions for taking this survey in class. You may take the survey this week at a time and place that is most convenient for you. Allow yourself 15 minutes of uninterrupted time, and please **do not** discuss the survey with any of your classmates. When you logon to the website, you will receive further instructions pertaining to the instrument.

        No identifying information will be gathered in the administration of this survey. Confidentiality is assured by asking you to provide a pseudonym when you are prompted for your name after you login to the survey. Please **do not** enter your real name. Instead use the first name *student* and a series of *eight random letters* for your last name. When you complete the survey the first time, please print the confirmation of completion page and write your first and last name on it, as well as the eight letter pseudonym you selected and turn it in to your instructor(s). If you forget the pseudonym you entered the first time you took the survey by the end of the term when you will be asked to take the survey again, you may ask your instructor(s) to remind you by looking at the first print-out you submitted. Upon completion of the survey the second time at the end of the term, please print the confirmation of completion page and write your first and last name on it and turn it into your instructor(s). Once both completion print-outs have been turned in, your instructor(s) will award you two points in the course. The researcher will not have access to these print-outs and your instructor(s) will shred them as soon as your probe point has been awarded. Your responses will be scored by SkillsOne.com and provided to me, the researcher, for added consistency and confidentiality.

        Participation in this study is voluntary. Your completion of this survey signifies your consent. Participating in this research does not serve to assess your performance and will not affect your relationship with your instructor, your department or your institution. Refusing or discontinuing participation in this research involves no penalty to you. You may keep a copy of this email verifying informed consent procedures for your records. If

you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Office for Protection of Human Subjects at 541-346-2510 or human_subjects@orc.uoregon.edu. You may also address any additional questions and concerns you may have with my advisor, Paul Yovanoff (541-346-1495; yovanoff@uoregon.edu) or me (541-255-5750; aclott@uoregon.edu).

Your participation in this survey is especially important for beginning to understand how conflict in the classroom affects you as pre-service education professionals, and thereby your students as well. This study has the potential to establish a foundation for further study concerning how to best develop your skills as a pre-service educator facing these conflicts in the diverse classroom. Your professional contribution to the field of education through participating in this study is sincerely appreciated.

Thank you.
Respectfully,
Aimee Clott
Doctoral Candidate
Educational Methodology, Policy, and Leadership
aclott@uoregon.edu
541-255-5750

Second Email

Dear Students,

Two days ago you received an email requesting your voluntary participation in a study of pre-service educator conflict behaviors. This will remind you of the importance of this study, provide you with a few instructions for taking the survey, as well as provide you with consent and confidentiality procedures that were also sent in the initial email that you received. Please do not forget to complete this online survey and contribute to this foundational study this week!

This study of conflict behavior is intended to describe how students enrolled in pre-service teacher training courses may react when conflicts arise when teaching. This foundational study is important for providing information on how prepared educators are for dealing with conflicts in the classroom. Research in this area may be important for increasing student learning and development for *all* students. This study attempts to lay the foundation for the design of curricula specifically focused on preparing pre-service education professionals for dealing with conflicts in the classroom.

You have been selected to take this 15 minute online survey. You will be provided with explicit instructions for taking this survey in class. You may take the survey this week at a time and place that is most convenient for you. Allow yourself 15 minutes of uninterrupted time, and please **do not** discuss the survey with any of your classmates. When you logon to the website, you will receive further instructions pertaining to the instrument.

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and turn it in to your instructor(s). If you forget the pseudonym you entered the first time you took the survey at the end of the term when you will be asked to take the survey again, you may ask your instructor(s) to remind you by looking at the first print-out you submitted. Upon completion of the survey at the end of the term, please print the confirmation of completion page and write your first and last name on it and turn it into your instructor(s). Once both completion print-outs have been turned in, your instructor(s) will award you two points in the course. The researcher will not have access to these print-outs and your instructor(s) will shred them as soon as your probe point has been awarded. Your responses will be scored by SkillsOne.com and provided to me, the researcher, for added consistency and confidentiality.

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your completion of this survey signifies your consent. Participating in this research does not serve to assess your performance and will not affect your relationship with your instructor, your department or your institution. Refusing or discontinuing participation in this research involves no penalty to you. You may keep a copy of this email verifying informed consent procedures for your records. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Office for Protection of Human Subjects at 541-346-2510 or human_subjects@orc.uoregon.edu. You may also address any additional questions and concerns you may have with my advisor, Paul Yovanoff (541-346-1495; yovanoff@uoregon.edu) or me (541-255-5750; aclott@uoregon.edu).

Your participation in this survey is especially important for beginning to understand how conflict in the classroom affects you as pre-service education professionals, and thereby your students as well. This study has the potential to establish a foundation for further study concerning how to best develop your skills as a pre-service educator facing these conflicts in the diverse classroom. Your professional contribution to the field of education through participating in this study is sincerely appreciated.

Thank you.
Respectfully,
Aimee Clott
Doctoral Candidate
Educational Methodology, Policy, and Leadership
aclott@uoregon.edu
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