

AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

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Title: The Journey of Developing Multicultural Competence:
A Phenomenological Exploration of Lived Experience
in Student Affairs Professionals

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Prior research has noted the changing demographics of higher education since the Civil Rights Movement and the expanded need for multicultural education. Armando Hernandez Morales (2003) wrote that, "A multiculturally competent person is aware of and knowledgeable about cultural differences, their own cultural identity, and the history and contemporary struggles of marginalized groups" (Morales, retrieved 2005). This study adds to the field by examining the life experiences that led to the development of multicultural competence in student affairs professionals using a qualitative research method. Seven co-researchers were selected from a pool of 17 adults who were currently working or had recently worked in student affairs and who had been nominated by their peers for demonstrating multicultural competencies. Each of the co-researchers was posed with five prompts. The co-researchers' responses were recorded, transcribed, reviewed by the co-researcher, and then analyzed using phenomenology, a qualitative research method outlined by Moustakas (1994). The first step in this process was the *Epoche*, where the researcher disclosed her personal relationship to the questions. Themes from the interviews were clustered into 14 themes that were then categorized into three realms: personal, professional, and structural/institutional. The research concluded, within the personal realm, that the development of multicultural competence begins with a personal awareness of one's own multicultural background and an internal

motivation for self-improvement. Within the professional realm, in addition to continual training, it is necessary to operate under a shared vision and philosophy, and develop effective communication channels between departments. Finally, in the structural realm, leadership must act under a set of guiding principles that value diversity and equity, and that require the development of multicultural competencies. This study adds a qualitative perspective to the field of multicultural competence, illuminates the role of student affairs in this field, suggests ways to support graduate training programs develop these skills in student affairs professionals, and demonstrates the significance of personal background as the foundation of multicultural competence.

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The Journey of Developing Multicultural Competence:
A Phenomenological Exploration of Lived Experience
in Student Affairs Professionals

by

Serena Ota St. Clair

A DISSERTATION

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Major Professor, representing Education

Dean of the College of Education

Dean of the Graduate School

I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

Serena Ota St. Clair, Author

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The journey of achieving my doctorate has been a compelling combination of hard work, intellectual challenge, spiritual conviction, and joyful exploration. This is a goal I set for myself thirteen years ago as I was finishing up my masters degree at Dartmouth College. My life settled down after that experience was over, my family grew, my job expanded, and I was back to being fully engaged in juggling work, family, and community, without coursework or thesis hanging over my head. One might have thought that was enough yet for a couple of years I researched doctoral programs until I found one that would be a good fit for my life. The Community College Leadership Program at Oregon State University offered me an incredible opportunity to join a rich learning community, in a beautiful setting, and a rigorous academic challenge. I want to express my sincere appreciation to each of my professors, and deep gratitude for my colleagues in Cohort Twelve. These individuals made a difference in my life by the intense engagement in learning and the supportive community we created.

I am indebted to and honored to know the seven individuals, my co-researchers, who are all amazing human beings. I knew I was in the presence of greatness with each one of them. They are who brought life and light to my study because they are incredible people dedicated to social justice, equality and diversity, and empowerment through education.

I have finished a college degree in each of the last three decades. I've had a small child each time I was in school which meant they got to experience going to college along with their mom. I love each of my precious children, Dylan, Aidan, and Grace Anne, and I am grateful for their support, patience, and amusing distractions while I was a student. I couldn't have made this happen without Jon, who has been an amazing partner during this past four years and in our 26 years of marriage. He has made me nourishing meals, taken on the bulk of household and kid-duties, brought me countless cups of tea while I sat at my computer, and managed to pull me away occasionally with an inviting glass of

wine, conversation, and good music, while also working full time. I have been so lovingly held by my family and I hope my doctorate makes a difference in all of our lives potentially through new opportunities, maybe to inspire our children to become life-long learners, and at least to have a mom who isn't always excusing herself to do homework. I am grateful for the many friends who have helped me by taking my kids, understanding when I was not available, asked with interest and awe when I talked to them about my doctoral work, played with me when I came up for air, and loved me all the same.

I am also grateful to several organizations that supported my educational endeavors; The P.E.O. Sisterhood for their NW Regional Scholarship; The Soroptimists Club for the NW Regional Soroptimist Graduate Fellowship, The Oregon State University Graduate School for the Oregon Sports Lottery Scholarship and the Oregon Laurels Supplemental Fellowship, and the Oregon College of Education for the special honor of the Fred Thompson Memorial Scholarship. A very special thanks goes to the Oregon Commission for Women who gave me an incredible honor by presenting me with the Women of Achievement Award 2005. It is a profound feeling when a group of anonymous people believe in who I am and support my work so much that they were willing to bestow these gifts and blessings to me. I will try to be as generous to others as the kindness I received.

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much more than write poetic narrative. She is a bright, swift, honest, and efficient editor at 23, young enough to pull an all-nighter to help me get my final draft in on time.

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Finally I saved the two people who are the most important in my life to thank with my deepest love and appreciation, my mom and dad. Yayoi Ota St. Clair Steele, has offered me steadfast encouragement and supports me as a proud mother even though she asked me recently (by the way...) what my degree was in. My father, Erskine St. Clair, died when I was still a child. His life was full of adventure but it got cut short. He was A.B.D. (all but dissertation) and I did not realize this until I was in my doctoral program already. So to him I dedicate my dissertation as a loving offering to his memory. My sister, Patty, is also pursuing a doctorate and I think this is telling of how "Erk" lives on through others by inspiring and instilling in us, a deep respect for learning. I am a very fortunate and blessed woman. I thank all these people mentioned and more.

I offer the intention and purpose of this study to all the students and future students in higher education as a promise of hope that education can be one of the most profound life experiences that has the potential to free your soul, nurture your mind, and expand your world. Blessed Be.

In peace and courage,

Serena Erskine Ota St. Clair

Dedicated to the memory of my father, Erskine St. Clair.

1913-1974

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Doctoral Dissertation

The Journey of Developing Multicultural Competence:
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in Student Affairs Professionals

Section 1: Introduction

Students in higher education institutions in the United States today look different than they did fifty years ago. The Civil Rights Movement, national efforts to combat poverty, the G.I. Bill, and landmark legal cases such as *Brown vs. Board of Education* brought to light the limited access people of color had to education. This conscious invitation to a broader range of students in higher education was perceived to benefit all students for the potential exchange of ideas, for both the newer profile of students of color and the existing traditional White middle to upper class student populations (Maruyama and Moreno, 2000). Colleges and universities tend to be shaped by dominant cultural perspectives and systems which historically have reflected the White elite population who achieved a higher education. According to several authors (Jenkins, 1999; Stage & Manning, 1992; Strange & Alston, 1998), accommodating other marginalized populations, such as women, people of color, lower socio-economic classes, and people with disabilities, was not a consideration in the first half of the twentieth century. Therefore, when the pursuit for higher education in America expanded from the youth of White middle and upper class families to include students who were more diverse in culture, ethnicity, race, gender, age, sexual orientation, and (dis)ability, the pressure to recruit and retain these students became an essential role for student affairs (Jenkins, 1999; Stage & Manning, 1992; Strange & Alston, 1998). Increasing access to higher education and addressing the needs of an evolving multicultural mix of students is pushing college leaders to pay attention to how well their colleges attract and serve diverse student populations.

The complex mix of cultural dynamics on college campuses creates a challenge for educational professionals (Cierra, 2004). Making the curriculum more relevant to minority students, adjusting to the different learning styles based on cultural backgrounds and differing cultural views on teacher/student relationships, and adjusting communication style differences are huge challenges to higher education (Sue, 1991). College response can be observed by the expansion of the academic canon to include departments that teach Women's, African-American, and Latino/a Studies and by the proliferation of ethnic student unions, multicultural centers, and gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered resources

(Shollenberger, 2002). In addition to academic achievement, college missions generally include a focus on personal, moral, and social development (Maruyama and Moreno, 2000). Add to this more recent adoption of civic engagement and preparation for interaction with a global society, and the need to promote multicultural awareness and competency development becomes imperative (Association, 2007).

Higher education institutions are making deliberate and conscientious efforts to support diverse populations by providing professional development for improving teaching practices, increasing staff awareness of diversity, hiring a more diverse staff, and developing a more culturally competent service delivery to students (Jenkins, 1999; Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004). Student Affairs educators play a vital role on college campuses for advancing the goals of a multicultural agenda (Stage & Manning, 1992). One goal is to insure a dynamic, relevant and accessible education for all students, student affairs is a focal point because it's mission and role at a college is to support the intellectual development of students by focusing on personal and ethical development (Bliming & Whitt, 1999). Another goal includes the assurance of a welcome and supportive campus for all students, then institutions must develop and improve upon culturally sensitive and appropriate programs and services by supporting the development of a multiculturally competent staff and faculty (Pope et al., 2004). A final goal includes working towards an educational environment that seeks to challenge students and promote social justice, then student affairs professionals will engage in this movement through their multicultural competence (Jackson & Hardiman, 1981; Pope et al., 2004).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to gain understanding of how student affairs professionals develop their own multicultural competence. Multicultural competence refers to an assessment of awareness, knowledge, and skills, with the expressed intention of promoting the principles of social justice in education. The following attributes are all components of multicultural competency: awareness and beliefs about the value of cultural differences and the effect of one's cultural heritage on attitudes and behavior; knowledge

and curiosity of cultural diversity and issues that have contributed to the marginalization of diverse groups, and a perspective on root causes and systems of privilege and oppression; skills in communication, empathy, incorporation of new learning, and the ability to understand and advocate in issues for social justice (Morales, 2003; Pope et al., 2004).

I believe increasing the capacity for multicultural competence comes from a cumulative life journey that encompasses personal and professional experiences. Through a deep exchange with study participants about their lived experiences explanations and motivations were revealed about how student affairs professionals could develop these crucial characteristics needed to be effective with an increasingly diverse population of college students. This study relied on definitions of multicultural competence as defined by researchers in the field of student affairs, some of whom are reviewed in the first section of the literature review (see pp. 13-16). The study participants were nominated by one or more colleagues for their observable and notable multicultural competence. Therefore, this study sought to analyze the experiences of these selected student affairs professionals, experiences which may have had an effect on the development of their multicultural competence.

Throughout this research, I had two objectives:

The first objective was to understand, “How did these select student affairs professionals cultivate their multicultural competence? What significant life events or experiences have moved individuals along the continuum of developing a complement of knowledge, awareness, and skills in cultural competence?” By understanding an individual’s evolution to greater competence in multicultural interactions and service, common themes in the progression of multicultural competency might emerge and potentially offer a framework for a theory of how to search for or support the learning of these competencies in others.

The second objective was to find out, “What professional education or training, if any, had an influence on the development of multicultural competence in these selected student affairs professionals?” Understanding what has been effective with individuals who are considered multiculturally competent might suggest structured training, professional standards and guidelines, possibly even policy, for professional service. Indicators might be

revealed that informal staff training, graduate school curriculum, human resources practices, and supervision.

These research queries encouraged personal reflection by the nominated student affairs professionals, by asking questions that lent understanding to the origins of their multicultural competence. Each of the student affairs professionals responded to five prompts.

Prompt 1: What is your understanding of multicultural competence? Why do you think you were acknowledged by your professional peers as someone who is highly multiculturally competent?

I asked these questions because it was important to establish a shared understanding between the researcher and study participant of the intention of the concept by learning how the study participant defined and described this term. Secondly, I wanted to listen for how they personally identified with being multiculturally competent.

Prompt 2: Describe your lived experiences personally and professionally, that have contributed to the development of your multicultural competence. Please recount any particular events, cultural influences, familial ties, regional background, ethnic/sexual/gender/racial/mobility identity, peer group membership, training and educational practice, or other life situations that you can identify as part of your cumulative growth and development.

From this prompt, I hoped to hear from their perspective about the major influences in their life that they believed had an effect on their development as a multiculturally competent person. I hoped that what they attributed their personal effectiveness to would reveal a set of values and ethics that guided their professional development in student affairs.

Prompt 3: In what ways do think you will continue to grow in your competence for dealing with the diverse and dynamic populations of your college, both students and staff?

I used this third prompt to get a sense of what the study participants thought were the most effective and important interventions or practices in increasing their multicultural competency beyond their current self-assessment.

Prompt 4: Do you see your position at the college as an opportunity to reach out to the complex diversity of the student body you serve? How do you think your level of multicultural competence contributes to your overall effectiveness as a student affairs professional? Do you believe that you can have a positive influence on social justice in your college culture and environment?

I used this prompt to determine the study participants' views on the role that student affairs plays in student development and how they see this interplay with social justice. I hoped to gain insight from their perspective on the purpose of student affairs in a college institution.

Prompt 5: How can others be taught to achieve what you have realized in your multicultural competence?

From the final prompt I wanted to glean from their perceptions and experiences of what seemed to work in a professional and or graduate education setting to lead others in increasing their multicultural competence.

Significance of Study

If the purpose of scholarship is to provide leadership for the field (Allen, 2002), then the significance of this qualitative study is to offer new insight and innovative ideas about how and why an individual's lived experiences contribute to the development of multicultural competency. There are five ways that this in-depth investigation enlightens understanding about multicultural competency in student affairs professionals.

Adding a Qualitative Perspective to the Assessment of Multicultural Competencies

In several articles written about studies on multicultural competencies (King & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Pope et al., 2004) there has been a recurring suggestion in implication sections about how qualitative approaches to studying this topic would complement the quantitative research to date. The analysis of multicultural competence has primarily focused on self-assessment surveys where individuals rate themselves on descriptive scales designed to indicate where one places on a continuum scale of

multicultural competence measurement. One of the authors, King (2003), questioned the validity of skills self-assessment without some substantiated independent evaluation by others (p. 131). Another author, Pope (2004), also suggested that experiential and educational predictors of multicultural competence need further investigation, since these variables could become tools for programs and training for graduate students, professional development, and supervision and evaluation (p. 179). “Research informs theory, assessment informs practice” (Pope et al., 2004, p. 101). This study will add a qualitative depth, color, and richness to the current scholarship on multicultural competence.

Illuminating the Role of Student Affairs in Shaping Holistic Student Development

Student affairs has a significant role in developing college students as they learn and grow in academic content and self knowledge. Student affairs has become a partner with instruction to provide students with leadership activities and campus involvement that support the comprehensive, or holistic, development of students. The *Student Learning Imperative* (SLI) written by the American College Personnel Association (1996), outlines the mission of student affairs for fostering student learning in areas such as cognitive competence, intrapersonal competence, interpersonal competence, and practical competence (Barr & Desler, 2000). Within this SLI study, Bliming, Whitt, and Associates (1999) discussed “Seven Principles for Good Practice”. One of these principles, “Helping Students Build Coherent Values and Ethical Standards”, is about cultivating character and intellect which is the foundation of higher education. These authors are well known in the field of student affairs, because they have explicitly framed the breadth and depth of ways student affairs contributes to the overall mission of higher education to produce an educated and civically engaged citizenry (Association, 2007). Strange and Alston (1998) referenced Jane Fried (1995), who suggested that for a society to be fully multicultural it depends on each individual’s ability to be able to “see beyond the intrapersonal borders of his or her current limited perspectives...[and] begin to understand the role of culture in shaping individuals - their perceptions, beliefs, and behavior” (p. 87).

For student affairs practitioners to be effective in this task they must find a way to be inclusive of all the students they are working with and model their multicultural competencies so that students can learn from their interactions and relationships. Derald Wing Sue (2001), a counseling psychologist, believed that, along with being multiculturally competent with students, in order to support comprehensive student development, we must also seek to change institutional structures and societal attitudes to become inclusive and welcoming to diverse student populations. This study supports the suggestion that advocacy within institutional culture will help to create a more inclusive setting for students who are culturally diverse from the majority population.

Effective Ways to Support the Development of Multicultural Competence in Graduate Students Programs Affairs Professionals

Many articles recount studies and recommendations about the need to incorporate specific coursework and practicum to support multicultural competence in graduate programs that educate future student affairs professionals (Kocarek et al., 2001; McEwen & Roper, 1994; Ponterotto et al., 1994; Pope et al., 2004; Rhoads & Black, 1995; Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000). Particularly in student personnel administrative graduate programs, it is important that students are provided with the type of learning opportunities that enhance their multicultural knowledge, awareness, and skills. “Encouraging students to think about multicultural problems from a more complex point of view may help them better understand the plight of underrepresented groups by taking multiple perspectives” (King & Howard-Hamilton, 2003, p. 132). This study identifies and organizes themes that could provide a basis for effective pedagogical strategies which could teach and build upon multicultural competencies.

Student Affairs Scholarship that Provides Direction for Professional Development

There is a push in the student affairs community to connect practice and theory. Allen (2002) questioned whether or not research in student affairs was keeping up with practice. She suggested that practice should be driving research questions, as opposed to the other more traditional approach where research develops the theories from which practice surfaces. With a work pace that seems to increase exponentially, there isn't time to step back and review research or to incorporate changes based on its finding. Instead, she challenged educational professionals to access scholarship to improve practice that is meaningful and "creates connective wisdom for the field" (p. 149). This study encourages research to learn about effective staff development of multicultural competence from an understanding of behaviors that are proven to be valuable in practice.

Burkard, Cole, Ott, and Stoflet (2005) suggested that student affairs professionals could be a significant resource to another division of the college, human resources, by proposing the desired qualifications in job descriptions that address working with diverse students and colleagues because of their experience of what has been effective in their practice. As a leader in creating and maintaining an institutional culture that supports working with a diverse and changing student body, student affairs can inform college leadership about what strategies and attitudes might help to recruit and retain culturally diverse staff.

Ultimately, having a broad base of multiculturally competent staff has a positive effect on student development by creating an optimum environment for learning based on integrity, practice, and the realization of social justice. This study puts into perspective the key role that student affairs can play in leading a campus in this direction.

Personal Background as the Foundation for Multicultural Competence

I am an advocate for social justice, and because of this I have been leading and facilitating diversity initiatives and trainings for over a decade with the goal of making the educational environment welcoming and workable for every individual who chooses to engage in it. I am not convinced this will be accomplished by working from the "outside-in", only offering trainings and workshops to staff where they are fed information about

other cultures or appropriate protocols. I am fascinated by how my personal world view has been tempered by life experience, familial attitudes, travel adventures, regional upbringing, ethnic exposure in family and community, social class, and education. I identify myself as a multicultural person. I embrace and acknowledge all the different parts of myself and my life and see the impact on developing my own multicultural competence. I believe that by helping student affairs professionals to acknowledge their own multicultural background from the “inside-out”, they will become adept at accessing some level of empathy with the different types of students and staff with whom they work. It is this awareness of self that creates a shared expression and respect for each unique person. This study looks at the lived experiences in the backgrounds of the study participants to demonstrate their significance.

Summary of Purpose and Significance

The title of this dissertation, *The Journey of Developing Multicultural Competence*, suggests that gaining multicultural competence is a process that develops over time from a variety of experiences that could be personal, academic, professional, and internal. This phenomenological study sought to gain a deeper understanding of individuals’ lived experiences which contributed to their knowledge, skills, and awareness of cultures and helped them to be more effective in a multicultural mix of students and staff. By first focusing on how these study participants understand multicultural competence and self-identify with this description, they were able to recount the lived experiences that contributed to their multicultural competence development. Deepening this inquiry by asking how they relate multicultural competence to their practice in student affairs, how they see their abilities contributing to social justice, and how they continue to grow these proficiencies, revealed a personal priority of being multiculturally competent. This study suggests the importance of developing multicultural competence in student affairs staff. It also suggests that student affairs can act as a leader on a college campus by demonstrating the effectiveness of having multiculturally competent staff working with an increasingly diverse student body.

Section 2: Review of Related Literature and Research

A multifaceted approach was used for gathering information for this section of the proposal. I first searched several databases, including Academic Search Premier, Dissertation Abstracts, Education Full Text, ERIC (FirstSearch), ERIC (EBSCOhost), Google, Psychological and Behavioral Science Collection, and Wilson Web, using various combinations of the following key words: cross cultural communication, cultural awareness, cultural competence, cultural pluralism, diversity, multicultural competence, multicultural counseling, multicultural education, student affairs, student development, and student services. This search led me to a book titled *Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs*, and written by Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2004). In narrowing my topic into a specific focus, their work presented the existing research on multicultural competence filtered through the theory, philosophy and practice in student affairs. I decided to build on their recommendation for further research using qualitative methods to learn more about this concept. I used the bibliography from this book to retrieve many articles and author references. I focused on articles, books, and dissertations that were published from 1990 forward with a few exceptions for earlier articles that contributed to the foundation of this concept in student affairs. I also read literature from the counseling-psychology discipline which has conducted much of the original research on multicultural counseling techniques and investigated its application to student affairs. Therefore my search included prominent authors in the counseling-psychology fields but primarily focused on scholars in education, particularly in student affairs.

The literature review for this study includes four sections.

The first section, Meaning of Multicultural Competence, summarizes several author's definitions and descriptions of what multicultural competence is for an individual and an organization. This section also makes a connection between multicultural competence and how it supports social justice. *Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs*, by Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2004), is completely dedicated to examining multicultural competence in student affairs and serves as the main resource for defining and establishing the meaning of multicultural competence.

The second section, *Who is Multiculturally Competent and Why?*, considered research directed at understanding and predicting the demographics and other characteristics of multiculturally competent practitioners and students in student affairs preparation programs. The purpose of this study was to discover personal foundations of multicultural competence. This section provided insight for how to select subjects to study in an in-depth inquiry of lived experiences that contribute to becoming multiculturally competent.

Section three, *Teaching Multicultural Competence*, is comprised of several studies of graduate programs that prepare student affairs professionals. These studies wanted to insure that teaching multicultural competence was being addressed in programs by measuring the proliferation of courses or practicum experiences, incorporating best practices, teaching with commitment, and inspiring the promotion of social justice. The articles and studies reviewed in this section looked at the evolution of this undertaking first suggested over a decade ago by McEwen and Roper (1994). My research topic is to understand how someone develops their multicultural competency. The role that formal education plays in that development is a significant link to this discovery process.

The fourth section, *Emphasis on Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs*, examined the roots of cultural sensitivity and social justice and challenges educational leaders to take responsibility for the development of cultural sensitivity and social justice within students and the institution. Student Affairs has been built on a foundation of values (Bliming, 1998). In contrast to academic delivery in higher education, student affairs generally contains a range of services that span a student's entire tenure at an institution. From admissions, advising, housing, and student life, to graduation, student affairs has the potential to interact with students on a personal level. This contact is often characterized by personal concerns that come up in issues outside of the classroom, such as counseling, residential needs, financial arrangements, and grievances (Choi-Pearson, Castillo, & Maple, 2004; Sanlo, 2002). Student development theories support the development of the whole student, meaning their cognitive and behavioral development leading to self-actualization. Focusing on holistic learning requires the integration of the social, emotional, and intellectual aspects of student learning. There is often disconnect

between the intention behind what faculty and student affairs professionals are responsible to teach to students in order to ensure holistic learning (Cove & Love, 1996). Tracing the development of student affairs leads to its current mission within institutions to collaborate with students, faculty, administration, and others. Living a commitment to student learning by appreciating individual differences, emphasizing education for effective citizenship, personal responsibility, and holding high standards for ethics and values are central to the mission of student affairs (Bliming, 1998).

Meaning of Multicultural Competence

This section will discuss various yet congruent descriptions of multicultural competence.

Multicultural Competence 101

The School of Education at University of Wisconsin- Madison (UW) stated a belief that to prepare for professional work in a multicultural society future educators need to develop multicultural education awareness and skills, so they can push for comprehensive school reform that challenges discrimination, permeates interpersonal relations in the classroom, and promotes the principles of social justice (Nieto, 1992). Armando Hernandez Morales (2003) from the UW wrote a description of multicultural competence in relationship to becoming an educator:

A multiculturally competent person is aware of and knowledgeable about cultural differences, their own cultural identity, and the history and contemporary struggles of marginalized groups. They balance this awareness and knowledge with continuous empathy and curiosity. They also examine how social context, power, and systems of privilege and oppression influence and constitute their own worldview, and relationships. This whole process is grounded in a commitment to social justice that seeks action, empowerment, and social transformation. (Morales, retrieved 2005)

He separated this working definition into six parts, which he defined further: awareness of difference, cultural self-awareness, awareness of social context, cultural knowledge, cultural curiosity, and commitment to social justice. Each part contributes to

his multidimensional definition. Morales's definition of multicultural competence goes beyond specific skill sets and places it into the larger context of social change.

Programming for Multicultural Competencies

Mary Howard-Hamilton (2000) contributed an article about examples and resources for effective diversity programming, which suggests that student activity planners along with student leaders should possess multicultural competencies. She stressed the vigilance needed by student affairs administrators to infuse institutions and campuses with multicultural competencies. She believed that staff must model competencies when working with students in order to insure thorough and successful programming. In this article she referenced two sets of competencies, one necessary for students (Howard-Hamilton et al., 1998) and the other necessary for practitioners (Pope & Reynolds, 1997).

Pope and Reynolds' matrix laid the foundation to their text, *Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs* (2004), and is a continual reference point in this study for a description of multicultural competence. Both sets of competencies are divided into three categories: *knowledge*, *skills*, and *attitudes* for students; and *knowledge*, *skills*, and *awareness* for practitioners. (See Table 2.1 and Table 2.2) The author made the point that when multiculturally competent staff work with students, the students will increase their own competence and begin their movement on the continuum of multicultural competence development. I have included adaptations of both matrices for comparison and contrast of expectations for students and student affairs professionals.

Howard-Hamilton suggested that certain behaviors should manifest when a culturally competent staff is working with students. This is how outward attributes might look for a multiculturally competent educator at work.

For example, she writes that a culturally competent staff member:

- Is comfortable with and understands own racial-identity,
- Is comfortable with own cultural identity (ies),
- Understands own bias and checks assumptions,

Is willing to ask questions about diversity and suspends judgment,
 Understands limits of own expertise and consults with students,
 Sets a climate for dialogue, disagreement, reflection, challenge, and support,
 Develops realistic learning goals and objectives,
 Follows up with students,
 Enrolls in multicultural courses or workshops regularly,
 Shares ideas and issues with a multiculturally competent mentor.

(pp. 69-70)

The balance of the article highlighted creative and effective diversity programming at a variety of colleges and universities.

Table 2.1 Culturally Competent Student Attributes (adapted from Howard-Hamilton et al, 2000, p. 69)

	Knowledge	Skills	Attitudes
Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - personal cultural identity - other cultures - relationship between you and other cultures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - self - reflection - identify similarities and differences 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pride - okay with being different
Understanding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understand and/or aware of oppression - concept of multiple oppressions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - multiple perspectives - understands difference, multiple contexts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - discrimination based on culture is not okay
Appreciation/ Valuing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - understands parts of social change - gets the connection between culture and communication styles 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - willing to challenge perceived discrimination - cross cultural communication skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - will risk for social change - sees the value in cross cultural connections

The matrices created by Howard-Hamilton et al. (2000) and Pope and Reynolds (1997) are significant in that they frame a guideline for measures of multicultural competence for students and student affairs practitioners. These descriptions served as a guide for discussion with this study's research participants and in the analysis of their interviews reflecting on the interpretation of their multicultural competence. The strength of this Howard-Hamilton article is her extrapolation of how these competencies might show up in actual behaviors of practitioners. I realized the relevance of these examples when listening to my study participants' interviews and looking for examples of how they manifest their multicultural competencies in their work with students and staff at their institutions.

Table 2.2 Characteristics of a Multiculturally Competent Student Affairs Practitioner
(adapted from Pope & Reynolds, 1997)

Knowledge	Skills	Awareness
Content knowledge about other cultures including aspects of oppression for that group	Able to communicate about issues around cultural difference	See value of and possess healthy curiosity in learning about others
Understanding about individual change process	Able to observe and effectively communicate interculturally	Willing and motivated risk taker for individual growth
Understand verbal and nonverbal communication is affected by cultural difference	Able to make empathetic connection with people who are culturally diverse	Commitment to social justice and social change
Understands how identified categories (ie. Gender, race, class, sex orient., ethnicity, etc.) affect individual life experiences	Able to learn, adapt, and incorporate new information	Understand how personal worldview has been internally developed and how it acts as a filter for personal attitude
Utilize resources that support cultural diversity and know how to refer to others	Able to build trust and connection with others who are culturally diverse	Motivation to study and shift attitudes, bias, and values based on new information or experience
Understands systems of oppression and power differential	Able to assess personal multicultural skills on a continuum	Welcomes change as part of personal growth and progress
Familiar with identity development and cultural adaptation progression on individual to societal level	Can articulate differences and commonalities in individuals and cultures	Appreciates and accepts other ways of thinking and perceiving the world. See themselves as a learner.
Understands the complexity within the experience of being multicultural based on several factors such as: ethnicity, culture, gender, religion, race, disability, etc.	Aptitude and understanding at what being an “ally” involves, willingness to participate in, and competence with, advocacy activities	Have confidence that valuable relationships will prevail despite cultural differences in communication
Recognizes that internalized oppression exists and the potential affect on identity and individual self worth	Competence in moving forward actions that address multicultural needs within individuals to institutions	Embraces personal and cultural heritage and the affect on values and beliefs
Understand how institutional systems of oppression can act as barriers to access and success in higher education	Access cultural knowledge as a resource to intervene in situations that are sensitive	Sees the impact of personal behavior when interacting with others
Familiar with systems change, thinking, and theory		Notice the personal dynamics in a dyad of cultural exchange

Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs

In 2004 Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller wrote a comprehensive follow-up to the research that Pope and Reynolds published in 1997 about multicultural competence in student affairs. The authors explained the concept of multicultural competence as “those awareness, knowledge and skills that are needed to work effectively across cultural groups, and to work with complex diversity issues” (p. xiv). They couched this in a framework that these competencies should be expected from all staff that work in student and academic affairs, as well as business and human resources. They organized the book into the seven areas in which multicultural competency is needed for effective and ethical practice. They referred to the “Dynamic Model of Student Affairs Competence” in a wheel diagram containing seven categories: multicultural awareness-knowledge-skills, theory and translation, administration and management, helping and advising, assessment and research, ethics and professional standards, teaching and training (Pope et al., 2004).

In the first chapter of the book, the authors gave a brief history of multicultural competence in higher education as it was derived from the counseling-psychology field where multicultural counseling provided the foundation for application in student affairs. Pope et al. credited this body of knowledge, in large part, to the counseling psychology field, and they mentioned the original scholar-researchers and instruments of assessment. Finally, they give examples of how exemplary multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills look in professional actions.

In each subsequent chapter, titled according to the Dynamic Model-wheel, the authors described scenarios where professionals’ multicultural competence could be tested and applied, followed by an in depth discussion on the meaning and relationship of these core competencies to these areas of leadership and service. Throughout the book they wove in the concept of social justice, graduate training programs for future student personnel administrators, predictors of multicultural competence, multicultural organizational development, research and assessment, student development theory, and further research implications. Overall, the book demonstrates that having multicultural perspective informs practice.

In a review of *Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs*, Moore (2005) noted that the book could have offered examples of situations that might challenge the assumptions of someone's worldview. Moore also noted a lack of discussion about cognitive complexity in stretching a long-standing ethnocentric perspective and suggested that Pope et al. did not address the real capability of someone to cognitively restructure her or his thinking in order to continue developing multicultural competency.

This book was an essential read for the basis of my dissertation study. Everything the authors wrote summed up the vast literature on this topic from the counseling-psychology field to higher education. Having read Pope and Reynolds' 1997 article in my early investigation of this topic, this book, which was published after I had already begun my research, became a focal point for the development and refinement of ideas. I referenced the extensive bibliography and gleaned, located, and read many of their original sources. I contacted one of the authors, Raechele Pope, to discuss my progress and to affirm my research topic and qualitative methodology. Much of Pope and Reynolds' work has revolved around what these competencies are and how they are measured by a self-assessment instrument they developed, called the Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs-Preliminary Form 2 Scale (MCSA-P2). The implications for further research noted in this book support my research about how someone has developed these competencies.

The authors contended that research on this topic was ten years behind the research on multicultural competence in counseling-psychology. They suggested that further work must be done on measurement and insuring reliability and validity. They also suggested diversifying multicultural assessment, particularly by employing qualitative research methods, in response to the complexity and fluidity of this concept. Also outlined is a need to further explore predictors and variables of multicultural competency and their correlation to each other. They also suggested that further research explore the relationship between multicultural competencies and other professional competencies (Pope et al. 2004).

Summary of Meaning of Multicultural Competence

This section of the literature review offers several descriptions of multicultural competency. Although different in the nomenclature of the definitions, there is a common basis in the essence of what multicultural competency is, how it is derived from a social justice perspective, ways it looks in practice, and how it can be measured. Significant to this section, also, is the identification of the prominent researchers in the field and their most current work. The definition written by Morales (2003) offered a succinct concept of multicultural competence that I utilized when I introduced my study to student affairs professionals. Table 2.2, which lists the characteristics of a multicultural professional, gave me a useful framework for to compare alongside the competencies of my study participants as they told stories of their lived experiences. Additionally, the behaviors Howard-Hamilton listed that illustrate these competencies aided in my interpretation and understanding of my study participants. Finally, the authors who presented matrices of knowledge, skills, awareness/attitudes have conducted quantitative research, mostly in the form of self-assessment instruments, gauging personal perception of achievement of this characteristics. In their summaries, both sets of authors suggested the need for qualitative research to complement their survey-based assessments of multicultural competence. This was a significant message from the literature reviewed because it was a direct affirmation of my decision to conduct a qualitative research study to further contribute to the scholarship of this concept.

Who is Multiculturally Competent and Why?

This section of the literature review will discuss research that seeks to forecast who, among students and professionals, is most likely to demonstrate multicultural competence either in their workplace or educational programs. Some studies have attempted to determine if certain factors, characteristics or conditions might influence or predict someone's level of multicultural competence. Other studies focus on individual development. Most of the works reviewed in this section address the effect of exposure

and education to the concept of multicultural competency on individuals in student affairs graduate programs and counseling graduate programs.

Cultural Competence: A New Challenge to Student Affairs Professionals

This article by Ebbers and Henry (1990) is one the foundational writings that charges student affairs to play a key role in increasing cultural competence in staff. The authors pulled together the work of many scholars to create a case for the significance of cultural competence and its right placement within student affairs. They asked key questions around how to approach the training needs of the profession: “What is cultural competence? What level is desirable? How is it attained and measured? Should cultural competence become an integral part of pre-service programs and also on-the-job training?” (p. 320). This article supports the notion that, while most student affairs programs already promote cultural awareness, a deeper understanding from an individual’s standpoint is how cultural competence will be achieved whether they are from a majority or minority culture group. This article finishes with the charge that “further research must be conducted by student affairs professionals to analyze staff development and pre-service programs in order to determine the development of cultural competence” (p. 322).

In all the reading I completed on multicultural competence from higher education, these two authors, Ebbers and Henry, were referenced as some of the earliest writers to bridge these skills from the counseling-psychology field to student affairs. The significance of this article to my research is the focus on the individual’s internalized assessment of their competence. Ebbers and Henry suggested that professionals must be cognizant of the influences from their own culture, which has an effect on how they provide service to others. The series of questions they posed have guided research on multicultural competence in most studies for the last fifteen years.

Multicultural Counseling Competencies as Tools to Address Oppression and Racism

In this article Patricia Arredondo (1999) contributed an important model called “Dimensions of Personal Identity” suggesting that having multicultural counseling competencies are a crucial tool to address internalized oppression and racism in clients seeking services (p. 106). In this model, she illustrated three spheres of personal influences that affect individual world views. In Dimension A she listed: age, culture, ethnicity, gender, language, physicality/mental well being, race, sexual orientation and social class. In Dimension B she listed: educational background, geographic location, hobbies/recreational interests, military experience, relationship status, religion/spirituality, work experience, work experience, and health care practices/beliefs. For Dimension C she suggested historical moments and eras (p. 106). This model describes multiple fixed and flexible dimensions that can make up an individual’s identity and perspective within a sociopolitical and historical context. She emphasized the notion that individual people can be oppressed because of several dimensions of their personal identity.

The author used well articulated examples to illustrate the potential inability for a counselor to connect with a client based on the disparate backgrounds. For example, a White, middle-class, male, well-educated counselor could find it difficult to relate to the issues of a low income woman of color because the counselor may lack awareness, knowledge, and skills of his/her client’s culture. Examples like this made a strong argument for the need to learn and incorporate multicultural counseling techniques. While the bulk of this article is dedicated to highlighting specific competencies by explaining and elaborating on a framework of counselor awareness, understanding, and intervention techniques, I found her connection of reasons for multicultural counseling competence, as a means to address oppression, the most compelling part of the article. I believe, from my own experience and multicultural background, that when I reflect deeply on my own experiences of oppression and get in touch with its effect on my emotional, spiritual, physical self, that I am more open and empathetic to another person’s expression of oppression, whether or not I have direct knowledge about the

cultural situation they describe. In this research study I hoped to hear from my study participants similar descriptions related to Dimensions A, B, and C in the context of lived experience, which might reflect how incidents of oppression and the lessons that came from these experiences, was embedded in participants' current level of multicultural competence.

*Multicultural Competencies of Doctoral Interns at University Counseling Centers:
An Exploratory Investigation*

Pope-Davis, Reynolds, Dings, and Ottavi (1994) are four names frequently associated with the concept of multicultural counseling competency. Reynolds is also closely aligned with student affairs research. These researchers conducted a study in which multicultural competencies of 141 doctoral students in counseling preparation programs were measured. This is one of many studies that attempted to identify predictors of multicultural competence. Their research objective was to inform the field on how to teach multicultural competence using components of knowledge, skills, and awareness. They worked off the findings of another study by Ponterotto, Reiger, Barrett, Harris, Sparks, Sanchez, Magids (1993) where demographic items of race and gender, along with the following educational variables, were used to measure increased competencies: supervision for multicultural counseling, numerous workshop attendance, and amount of coursework about multicultural topics. Pope-Davis et al. (1994) explored the relationship between educational and demographic variables and the current multicultural competencies of doctoral interns at university counseling centers.

What they found was that educational variables are a significant factor in increased multicultural competence in "knowledge" and "skills", while demographic variables are not. They also noticed that the multicultural competence of "awareness" does not seem to be addressed by either educational or demographic variables tested. The implications of this study suggest that further research be done on the influencing factors on interns' awareness.

This study was associated with some of the prominent researchers in the field of multicultural counseling competencies and included a scholar who crossed over into

student affairs. What I found significant in this study reinforcement of the idea that an individual's personal experiences and beliefs have a major impact on the level of her/his multicultural competence. In my research I sought out individuals to recount their personal experiences and beliefs as those related to their perception of their multicultural competence. Another implication from this study by Pope-Davis et al. (1994) is that multicultural competency needs to be assessed by observation and not only by a self reporting measure. In my study I sought nominations for study participants from peer and supervisory professionals who had observed and ascertained that a person possessed a high level of multicultural competence, giving them Morales's (2003) definition as a guideline.

An Assessment of Multicultural Competence

The team of King and Howard-Hamilton (2003) conducted a study that assessed the multicultural competencies of students in a graduate student affairs preparation program, their internship supervisors, and the diversity educators in the program. Then they cross-examined this assessment with gender and racial demographics. They focused on higher education pre-professional training programs because they make the case that with increasing diversity on college campuses in the United States, student affairs graduate students need more thorough and focused preparation for supporting and working with diverse student populations. Basically, King and Howard-Hamilton made the case for graduate students to assess and improve their multicultural competencies. In the article they referenced the defining work of Pope and Reynolds (1997) to list and describe examples of the competencies in the familiar categories of knowledge, awareness and ability. In addition they assessed similar attributes developed by Howard-Hamilton et al. (1998) of "knowledge of self as it relates to one's cultural identity, the ability to identify similarities and differences across cultures, and the ability to articulate with others" (p. 11). They used two survey instruments, one of their own design, the Multicultural Competency Questionnaire, (King & Howard-Hamilton, 2003), and the Multicultural Competencies for Student Affairs-Preliminary Form (MCSA-P) developed

by Pope, et al. (1997). They wanted to understand if one's position - student, internship supervisor, or diversity educator - had a determination on one's multicultural competence, they also considered race, particularly in contrasting minority and majority respondents, in the results as well. What the results indicated was that students of color scored higher than their white classmates and their white internship supervisors. The diversity educators also carried higher measurements. Gender did not seem to be indicating factor for competence.

Most significant for the field of my research was the critique of the research instruments. The authors pointed out that the study lacked extensive testing, that norms for measurement were not yet developed, and the definitions of multicultural competence only described current assessment of competence but did not attempt to explain the development of these competencies. The authors went on to question the validity of participants' own demonstrated competence because all the participants self-assessed their competencies with no external corroboration of their work. King and Howard-Hamilton reinforced several times in the article that they were laying a foundation for understanding the process for achieving multicultural competence.

This research, conducted by two prominent scholars associated with the study of multicultural competence in student affairs, held bearing on my study in two ways. First, King and Howard-Hamilton suggested that intentional support of a pre-professionals multicultural competence development is essential to the goals of most institutions of higher education that are striving to achieve goals related to diversity and multiculturalism (2003). Secondly, they contended that not enough research had been done to explain how this competence is developed, and, without an understanding of the process, education programs may be off the mark in their efforts. The fact that a dimension of their study attempted to predict who would score higher on a multicultural competence scale was relevant in my selection of study participants. Since I interviewed people who are considered by others as highly multiculturally competent, I chose to look for a demographic sampling that was diverse in factors such as gender, race, and role.

Summary of Who is Multicultural Competent and Why

This section's selection of articles and studies supported similar conclusions that I developed after reading at least five or six additional articles attempting to predict who is more likely to be multiculturally competent and why. The first recurring theme in the research on multicultural competencies is that there are instruments that can measure one's self-assessment of her or his competency, but there is not an external measurement that can substantiate the results. The second theme is that there is not a fully developed framework to predict who will be multiculturally competent based on race, gender, age, or professional role. The third conclusion I drew from these and other articles is that there is a need to support these quantitative measures with qualitative methods. Several of the authors suggested that, though the quantitative instrument made incredible progress, this research must be taken down to a deeper human experience level where each individual must generate a personal interface with the external world which they relate to in all their roles. In an article written by Ponterotto (1998), he respectfully suggested that factor analysis instruments fall short of capturing the dimensions of the concept of multicultural competency partially due to the reality that paper-and-pencil instruments simply fail to pick up on the complexity of what these models attempt to describe. He also became a proponent of the need to shore up all this work with qualitative research designs. Therefore, in this dissertation, I explored the journey to multicultural competence in a phenomenological study that adds to this body of knowledge and informs the practice in student affairs.

Teaching Multicultural Competence

There are many ways to develop professional competencies. In the case of educational training programs, the curriculum and program outcomes should reflect the professional and ethical standards expected to be met by new professionals entering their fields. The case for including a standard for multicultural competency in student affairs has been debated, supported, tested, and incorporated in many higher education programs

in the last decade. It has become necessary to possess the knowledge, skills, and awareness to work effectively with an increasingly diverse student population attending college. Multicultural competency is an underlying force inherent when adopting a social justice model of empowerment through education. This next section of articles focuses on the need to require teaching multicultural competence in student affairs graduate preparation programs.

Incorporating Multiculturalism into Student Affairs Preparation Programs

McEwen and Roper's (1994) article is quoted almost universally in all articles written about multicultural competency in student affairs. The authors boldly suggested that "Educating and preparing graduate students in student affairs to work effectively with a multicultural student body is an ethical and professional responsibility" (p. 46). This statement challenges all practitioners and educators to pay attention to an ethical duty, not just a preparatory one, in which the integration of multicultural knowledge and experience is incorporated. In addition to this ethical responsibility, the authors charged that research indicates that many graduate students need this training due to their limited understanding and experience of multiculturalism. Finally, they implied that the profession of student affairs must rise up with a unified purpose to respond to diverse college students' needs with humility and efficacy. This article covered in great detail twelve areas for program preparation standards and elaborated in fine detail the justification for adopting multiculturalism into preparation programs. For my dissertation, the significant opening of this article established the ethical responsibility of integrating multiculturalism into programs and professional practice.

National Study of Diversity Requirements in Student Affairs Graduate Programs

Almost ten years after the McEwen and Roper (1994) article, Flowers (2003) conducted a study of 78 student affairs graduate programs in the United States. His findings were significant and brief in relation to the challenge set off in 1994; 74% of the programs had a diversity course requirement, and a third of the remaining programs were

in the process of instituting one. That left 18% of programs without any intentional diversity requirement. He surmised that the results reflected substantial curriculum changes which would enhance graduate students multicultural competencies through increasing knowledge and skills. In the programs without a specific diversity requirement, he speculated that they had some form of an integrated approach to diversity training, adding a caveat that the learning outcomes might not be effectively articulated without the focus of this requirement. Flowers also suggested that a diversity course requirement and a diversity integration plan would be an optimum opportunity for training student affairs leaders to be effective in dealing with a diverse student body. This study informed my research questions by revealing the different ways a student affairs preparation program might approach teaching multicultural competencies to future professionals, in that it suggests that not all students will be assessed on this learning outcome as part of their graduate requirements. The question then became, how does an individual graduate student prepare for the inevitable diversity challenges they will face on the job?

The significance of *Incorporating Multiculturalism into Student Affairs Programs* and the *National Study of Diversity Requirements in Student Affairs Graduate Programs* is their discussion of the challenge and practice of incorporating teaching and learning that supports the development of multicultural competencies for students preparing to work in the field of student affairs. One pathway for entering the student affairs profession is through the completion of a graduate professional program. In my study I listened for learning experiences that might have contributed to the study participants' multicultural competency development. Understanding the context and process for this learning outcome in a graduate program helped frame my understanding of their lived experience.

Entry-Level Competencies of New Student Affairs Professionals: A Delphi Study

Four researchers, Burkard, Cole, Ott, and Stoflet (2005), conducted an in-depth study of the perceptions of mid and senior level student affairs administrators about the

responsibilities, competencies and theories needed in professional practice. Their results were intended to inform student affairs graduate programs of which pre-professional abilities are significant to professional practice and success. The authors also suggested some new competencies they believed to be important to working effectively with students. One of these is multicultural competency. Skills were divided into several sets with management skills being a priority and human relations skills being a close second. Particularly delineated were skills associated for working with diverse populations, such as communication, interpersonal skills, empathy, firmness, and caring (2005). Most significant was that study participants were already rooted in student affairs and had the experience of recruiting, selecting, and supervising newly graduated staff. While the participants expected new professionals to possess some counseling skills, they noted that skills not always addressed in graduate programs, such as multicultural competency, conflict resolution and mediation, and group facilitation were much needed to be effective in these anticipated roles. Burkard et al. (2005) saw this realization as a significant change in expectations from a prior paradigm in the field. Respondents identified multicultural based theories that they expected to apply to, in conjunction with standard student development theories, such as women's development, identity development, gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender identity, and minority identity, noting that diversity issues were the second most important collection of theories driving student affairs practice. This study's limitations revolved around sample size and selection since two year institutions and minority serving institutions were not considered.

This study offers a significant contribution to the evolution and improvement of student affairs graduate preparation programs. If, in the year 2005, there was a strong linkage suggested between actual student affairs practice and their educational training partners, which now include multicultural competencies, then there is hope for a future universal adoption of these learning outcomes. This is an affirmation that professional settings must require all employees, especially newly graduated student affairs professionals, to possess a level of multicultural competence that supports quality service and student relationships. In my study I took note of the competencies gained from

formal graduate training and those gained from professional experience in my study participants.

A Call for Change in Multicultural Training at Graduate Schools of Education: Educating to End Oppression and for Social Justice.

In this lively and refreshing article by Wallace (2000), she put out the call to extend the reach of multicultural training and awareness to include issues related to linguistic diversity, sexual orientation, disability, and spirituality, because they deserve the same chance to be eliminated along with all other historically marginalized and dehumanized populations. She focused on the dual goals of multicultural training to end oppression and to teach for social justice. She believed this could happen if graduate schools of education were to embrace the teaching of multicultural competence as part of their mission and vision. She stated that “the promotion of liberation of the oppressed is also at the core of the work of those pioneering teaching for social justice” (p. 1089). Elaborating on that point, Ayers (1998) explained that teaching “arouses students, engages them in a quest to identify obstacles to their full humanity, to their freedom” (p. xvii). They both suggested that teachers need to be inspired in order to realize the impact they can have on social justice, given their message and influence on the world. Wallace offered a different definition of multicultural competency that is not a list of attributes on a continuum. She combined multicultural sensitivity and an attitude of inquiry when interacting with diverse persons, along with multicultural competence in order to create a shift in perspective and increase one’s “repertoire” of behaviors that are helpful when interacting with others (Wallace, 2000). She concluded that “a graduate school is in a unique position to impact many fields, and [can] specifically prepare professionals to function effectively within a multicultural society. Multiple fields may be transformed for engagement with multicultural populations by virtue of graduate students being exposed to theory, research, and practical supervision in developing multicultural competence” (p. 1107).

Wallace offered a feisty challenge to educational graduate programs to join her in acknowledging and acting on the awesome influence they have to impact our social

agenda and to work for social justice. I appreciated her inclusion of disability, sexual orientation, and spirituality which was unique among the stacks of articles I reviewed on the topic of multicultural competency, because she named them and didn't assume that one would include them in a text definition of diversity. Her article was significant to my study and to me personally, because I conducted this research as a proponent of social justice and a firm believer in the power and influence of an educator. In the interviews I shared with my study participants, I was inspired by their stories of right use of power, how they have supported the empowerment of those they have worked with and advocated for, and the acknowledgement of the difference they have made due to their multicultural sensitivity and competence.

Summary of Teaching Multicultural Competence

This section of the literature reviews sums up the range of potential for the role of formalized teaching of multicultural competence in a graduate professional preparation program. The articles and studies reviewed lay down a foundation for the relatively recent inclusion of multicultural competencies in student affairs in higher education, both as a professional practice and as an educational learning process. The evolution of multicultural competence education began with McEwen and Roper (1994) when they took the position that incorporating this competency into student affairs graduate programs was an ethical decision and its progression in Wallace's (2000) contention that, if multicultural competence was incorporated, it would ensure that social justice was alive and well in our institutions of higher education. In this study I reflected on the multicultural competency movement by gauging its infusion into the mainstream experience of learning in higher education.

Emphasis on Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs

Central to the mission of colleges and universities is educating an increasingly diverse group of students to become multiculturally competent in our contemporary pluralistic world (Greiger, 1996). Student affairs leads in this movement toward a critical

cultural perspective (Rhoads & Black, 1995). This post-modern perspective emphasizes that student affairs professionals work from the critical awareness of the effects that cultural oppression has on students and staff. From this underpinning of social justice, student affairs practitioners can lead a campus transformation that seeks to diminish conditions of oppression and create an environment where multiculturalism is nurtured and supported (Greiger, 1996; Manning, 1994; Pope, 1995; Rhoads & Black, 1995). It is student affairs professionals who articulate a “moral imperative” to speak for those whose voices are repressed and to raise the dignity of all students in our colleges today (Clement & Rickard, 1992). When referencing multiculturalism, it is important to recognize that this includes all people, not just historically underrepresented groups by race, ethnicity, gender, (dis)ability, sexual orientation, national orientation, and socioeconomic status, because everyone has personal characteristics within these descriptions (Pope, Reynolds, & Cheatham; 1997). Developing multicultural competence in student affairs professional staff ensures that the tools and expertise necessary to support student empowerment and achievement with respect to the care, sensitivity, and acceptance of diverse cultural backgrounds are firmly rooted in the foundation of the institution.

Expanding Multicultural Competence through Social Justice Leadership

This article, authored by Arrendondo and Perez (2003), was written in response to another article by Vera and Speight (2003), in which they discussed expanding the roles and practices of counseling psychologists. The contention of this response article is that the original authors skipped over historical underpinning of multicultural competency in counseling. Arrendondo & Perez asserted that social justice and multicultural competency have been inextricably linked for forty years. They identified the origins of the evolution of multicultural competency development to the Civil Rights era which sparked action by service professions to embody action in this social change movement. They stated that “social justice has been the aim of those working to develop and promote multicultural competencies” (p. 283). They recounted that, although the original intention

of multicultural competency development was to advocate for individual change, this charge was readily transferred into a sweeping recommendation for institutions of higher education, public schools, and mental and physical health facilities to engage in a reflective process of becoming multicultural (Arrendondo & Perez, 2003). They went on further to discuss the work of social justice leaders, such as Martin Luther King Jr. and Cesar Chavez, as a reciprocal energy exchange where the leader and student were colleagues sharing in the life transformation sought out in education or other issue oriented work. The authors described social justice leadership as coming from inner strength, personal courage, and deep spiritual convictions. They defined advocacy as a “means to empower clients or groups and contribute to social and systemic change, [which] can be taught” (p. 287). They concluded by challenging professionals to be responsible role models in “word and deed” suggesting that professionals go beyond service to active advocacy for student issues, particularly for those who do not have a voice in the system yet.

This article delivered a powerful message about the connection of multicultural competency and social justice. The historical link the author drew between these concepts and the Civil Rights Movement is significant and often overlooked in the contemporary writings about multicultural competency. My study was not framed in a critical theory perspective, yet there is no way to deny the symbiotic relationship of my conviction to explore and experience multicultural competency and the powerful impact it has on student development. These authors were situated in a counseling-psychological perspective and from there this concept has bridged into higher education through the close connection of counseling to student affairs. What I gleaned from the inspiring and challenging imperative of Arrendondo and Perez is that, by permeating our institutions of higher education with multicultural competence and social justice, education will truly transform lives.

Meeting the Needs of All Students and Staff Members: The Challenge of Diversity

This article, by Howard-Hamilton, Phelps, and Torres (1998), poses the difficulty in student affairs to promote multiculturalism while balancing the individual rights and

freedoms of the students and staff of an institution. The authors established that in student affairs every practitioner is responsible for promoting diversity, which includes putting issues into a historical and contemporary context. They described the responsibility of student affairs to craft policies, procedures, and practices that maintain this balance. They pointed out the pressures coming at these tasks through legislative directives, laws, research and best practice, constituency interests, and administrative politics. They also suggested that sometimes this leads to “ethical concerns, conflicts with student development theories and their own professional values, and questions of person-environment fit” (p. 49). They went on to recount in detail several laws and regulations that govern all college campuses, such as affirmative action, Title IX, First Amendment Rights, Americans with Disabilities Act, and Title VII. This discussion highlighted the legislated rights of persons with disabilities and gay/lesbian/bisexuals, in addition to women and people of color. The authors then shifted the focus of this legal interpretive section to the assertion that higher education institutions are not always healthy environments for many underrepresented students. This manifests in hate crimes, lack of inclusive curriculum, safety issues, insensitive and discriminatory behavior, lack of access to resources, and alienation or invisibility. They charged student affairs with an ethical responsibility to be competent in providing culturally responsive services. They continued to make suggestions regarding how this might be accomplished professionally and in graduate training programs and outlined core competencies for student affairs practitioners. They ended by reinforcing the role of student affairs in leading the promotion of diversity issues and freedom of speech at their institutions through policies, procedures, and programs.

Howard-Hamilton et al. (1998) offered an important foundation point to the work of student affairs and multicultural competency development. They wrote about legislation written to regulate and protect all students and staff. I found this to be a powerful reminder that the focus of diversity/multicultural work is not only an ethical and social justice imperative, but in some cases it is the law. This added a dimension to my basic understanding of multicultural competency development in the context of institutional policies and procedures. In my study I listened for experiences that connect

people's attitude and actions to an adherence to processes that go beyond social control into legal cooperation.

Student Affairs Practitioners as Transformative Educators: Advancing a Critical Cultural Perspective

Rhoads and Black (1995) presented a different way of conceptualizing the practice of student affairs by filtering it with a critical cultural perspective. They believed that the work of educators who seek to transform the culture of their institution is centered in the establishment of an ethics of care and democratic organizational principles. They initially related what they referred to as two distinct "waves" of theorizing in student affairs. *In loco parentis* was an era where teachers provided a protective environment for students away from home, by assuming a parental-type relationship with them. Student development theory eventually took the place of this parental relationship by focusing on activities and services that support holistic student development. The article expands into a discussion of what they proposed to be the third wave of student affairs—a critical cultural perspective. The authors discussed the four schools of thought that contribute to this new paradigm: feminism, critical theory, postmodernism, and multiculturalism. Feminism is defined by the work of Gilligan (1982), who pointed out the male-dominated views of human development and highlighted the sense of connectedness and caring necessary for female development. Critical theory is defined by the challenge to increase the opportunities to have all people's voices and opinions heard so they can participate in decisions that affect their lives. Postmodernism holds a relativistic view of power within culture, rejects the status quo, and envisions of embracing and elevating cultural differences. Multiculturalism, considered from a systems perspective, challenges institutions of higher education to be more inclusive in their work with students and staff. The point of intersection for these four philosophies is that "they speak to the issue of inclusiveness, ...envision collaborative decision making, ...[and] encourage egalitarian relationships and resist organizational hierarchy" (p. 417).

This discussion set the stage for an expansion on the topic of student affairs practitioners as transformative educators who engage with students to create a more democratic campus. Rhoads and Black (1995) laid out seven principles to guide this vision. As transformative educators, student affairs practitioners will (a) “Play a crucial role in the way college communities are structured” by collaborating with students, faculty, and staff in and out of class; (b) “Build empowering social and cultural settings” for student to develop their full potential as community members and democratic citizens; (c) “Contribute to the development of campus community based on an ethic of care and commitment to democracy”; (d) “Create conditions where diverse students, staff and faculty can fully participate” in the decision making process for the campus; (e) “Respect cultural differences” and model this to others; (f) “Treat students as equals in the struggle to create a more just and caring academic community” by breaking down hierarchies that are barriers to the process; and (g) “Embrace conflict as an opportunity to transform the academic community.” (pp. 418-419)

This article redefines student affairs practitioners as transformative educators. I thought the authors effectively wove together significant theory, historical development, and political thought. I applied the principles of the transformative educator to my dissertation. I strongly believe in the partnership of academic and student affairs in teaching from a holistic perspective of a college education. Rhoads and Black (1995) captured the essence of this often overlooked role of student affairs professionals. Having a high level of multicultural competence gives one the ability to effectively join together, as suggested in the principles, all groups necessary to make a democratic campus a reality.

Summary of Emphasis on Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs

This series of articles and enhanced references from others who have written on the topic of multicultural competence serves as an important culmination of my research on student affairs professionals and their development the multicultural competencies they put into use with students and colleagues every day. As a student affairs

professional, for my entire tenure in higher education I have watched the mission and philosophy of my division evolve with respect to internal and external pressures of our increasingly multicultural populations. Student Affairs professionals have led the college in policy and procedure formation, program innovations, staff development, and recruitment and retention strategies that account and respond to the diversity of our students. My passion for work is centered in my deep desire to witness, participate, and inspire social justice for my fellow students and staff. I see education as the transformative agent of change that empowers and equips people to reach their potential and goals. The exercise of tracing the roots of multicultural competency back to the Civil Rights Movement and the practices that have sprung into action in a myriad of ways since this time gave me an even more compelling reason to focus my study on how student affairs professionals explain and reason their multicultural competency journey.

Summary of Literature Review

The literature selected for this review was intended to (a) explore the meaning of multicultural competency, (b) ask questions about who is multiculturally competent and why are they that way, (c) assess how or whether multicultural competence is taught, and (d) understand why there is an emphasis on multicultural competence in student affairs. These four aspects of my dissertation topic provided me with a solid foundation to ask research questions of selected individual's life journeys regarding the development of their multicultural competency and the utilization of them in their work in higher education.

I first sought out study participants' own understandings of multicultural competence and affirmed their personal claims to this collection of knowledge, awareness, and abilities. Then, with my enriched and well researched range of interpretations from the scholars in the field, I was able to fully engage study participants in personal definitions and applications of these qualities.

In getting to know my participants by listening to their stories I was able to identify and determine aspects of their lives and identities that have influenced their

multicultural competency development. My review of academic research studies that have tried to identify predictors of multicultural competence in an individual was a thought provoking comparison as I conducted analysis of the study participants' narratives.

By attempting to track one's learning of these competencies, I listened for formal and informal educational events and opportunities that my study participants credit for their personal development. Knowing there is a movement within graduate student affairs preparation programs to incorporate the teaching of multicultural competencies, I saw linkages between formal education and experiential learning. Questioning my participants' intentions and desires to continue developing their multicultural competence reinforced the need to continually create and address new ways to approach and expand our range of abilities and service in student affairs.

I questioned the assumed necessity for multicultural competence when working in student affairs while interviewing my study participants. With the body of literature that exists on this topic, I was intrigued by their responses and perceptions of this requirement for student affairs professionals. I listened carefully to any references to a social justice predisposition that might serve as a motivating factor in their life and work.

This literature review prepared me with a strong and rich contextual background from which to listen, interpret, analyze, and write about this topic. Fried (2002) writes about the "scholarship of integration" which supports the idea that we must give ourselves enough time as professionals to think about new data and figure out how we might integrate it into our profession. I interpreted her message from a personal perspective as a student affairs professional and know that I am often too busy - slammed by the demands of students, backed up with email, dealing with budget reductions, catering to partnerships, sitting in meetings, addressing supervision issues, and learning new technologies - to give always time and thought toward the philosophical or theoretical framework that is supposedly guiding my work. She states,

If we want people to learn about things that matter to them, to create meaning in our own lives using the data they acquire through their studies, we must find ways to integrate the learning processes throughout our institutions and move beyond our historical notions of learning as a phenomenon that occurs primarily in classrooms. (p. 126)

Responding to her challenge, I suggest that this research study could be considered an embodiment of integrated scholarship. The passion and importance of this topic for student affairs professionals, the literature review which highlights important studies on multicultural competence, and the qualitative methods of discovery through phenomenological narrative all work together to provide significant learning for the student affairs profession.

Section 3: Research Design

Within qualitative methodology, I chose to use the method of phenomenology to investigate the development of multicultural competency. This section gives an overview and rationale for the selection of this methodology and method, along with the potential strengths and limitations of the work. These are followed by a review of key concepts, personal disclosure, study participants, data collection and analysis processes, strategies to ensure soundness, protection of human subjects, and anticipated time line of study.

Qualitative Methodology

Research seeks to answer significant questions through a disciplined inquiry process. The question I raised, about how a person develops her/his multicultural competency, suggested the framework for how I responded. Partially I asked this question because I saw the need for multicultural competency in higher education. I also came to this question because I am part of the query myself. I could have asked myself, “How did I develop my multicultural competence?” As the researcher I am invested in the answers. Qualitative research as a methodology supports my voice in my research design. I have a bias and a story of my own. It is my connection to this work. Therefore I chose an interpretive methodology because it holds open a place for my ideas to have significance.

“Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world,” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3). As that observer I wanted to have an outlet for self-expression in the process. Denzin and Lincoln described qualitative research as a set of interpretive activities, with an array of methods contributing to the inquiry process which support a naturalistic perspective and an interpretive understanding of the human experience. I studied human experience through comprehensive listening, observing, and dialoguing with others about their personal journey in developing abilities that enhance and enable their effectiveness in their professional world. Therefore, the interpretive lens through which I viewed my inquiry was a qualitative one.

Qualitative research is about understanding experiences and uncovering themes (L. Gray, personal communication, June 2004). Qualitative research involves analyzing and interpreting interviews in order to discover meaningful patterns that might describe a particular phenomenon (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003). The object of interpretation is to clarify an idea or event that was not meaningful or obvious before (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982). The hallmark of qualitative research is finding meaning in context. Human behavior cannot be understood outside of its context. In my literature review I discussed several studies, designed to answer similar questions, which used surveys and self-assessed measurements and analyzed demographics. Several authors agreed with Howard-Hamilton (2000), who recommended that that measuring multicultural competence needs a qualitative approach to corroborate the results of these employed, quantitative methods (Howard-Hamilton, 2000; Ponterotto, 1998; Pope et al., 2004; Pope-Davis et al., 1994). This study intended to deepen understanding of how a person becomes multiculturally competent. This important question is being asked in contemporary higher education in response to the growing demand to respond more effectively to increasingly diverse student and staff populations. Research informs and expands the professional knowledge base and therefore serves human needs in education (Brown, 1989).

Qualitative inquiry is a participatory and collaborative project between the researcher and the study participants. My study was conducted with a post-positivist paradigm blended with constructivism to create an interpretive framework. Guba (1989) referred to paradigm as a set of belief that guides action. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) put this into perspective by stating that all research is interpretive and that beliefs and feelings about the world are allowed to be part of the process of study. Therefore, the questions the researcher asks are also framed by their interpretation of the answers. Post-positivism suggests that only partial objectivity is possible in research. A post-positivist paradigm explores meaning in a particular situation and interprets for understanding. This acknowledges the subjectivity of the research because the researcher's bias is infused throughout the study (G. Copa, personal communication, March 2005). Constructivism seems to be an extension of post-positivism, claiming that reality is constructed in the

minds of individuals which are shaped by culture. Constructivism engages the researcher and her or his subject in a semi-partnership because both have an interest in understanding an experience and both play a role in constructing the material that will be interpreted. Constructivism seeks to understand by reconstruction with a form of consensus affirming the validity. Due to the nature of my research question, I depended on my study participants for the source of my material; and in my interpretation of the data, I created a consensus by capturing and describing collective themes. What is true for both post-positivist and constructivist paradigms is that they are considered interpretive research.

Limitations of Qualitative Research

There are some limitations to any method of interpretive narrative research. In this study, participants were asked questions about their past life experiences, many of which they answered with a story. Creswell (2002) suggests there is a limitation for the method of data collection inherent in storytelling as a phenomenological method. These limitations have to do with story distortion and authenticity. When doing qualitative or interpretive work there can be an assumption of coherence when stringing together parts of one's life in a narrative format. I had to be aware that the retrospective story alters the original experience; the current interpretation of a past action often does not match the actual event, now that the original motivating energy is no longer present. This can mislead analysis (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982). Another limitation of qualitative methods is that, unlike a positivist world view where concrete results and data are tested and proven, due to the nature of individual lived experience the findings may not have a theoretical meaning that research seeks to uncover (Bredo and Feinberg, 1982).

The limitations of this methodology and paradigm are mirrors of their strengths as well. "Interpretive or qualitative approaches...seem to have more vitality and to generate more whole-hearted belief even though they get much less tangible support" (Bredo & Feinberg, 1982, p. 5). This passage was used when comparing positivist and post-positivist research design in explaining the reluctance of the research community to let go of what they have viewed as an objective exercise. Words these authors used like

“vitality” and “whole-hearted belief” aligned with the desire I had to passionately and energetically approach this query. Yet I was troubled by the question of whether I could formulate my results so they would be useful to the educational community. My intention was to produce something significant to the study of multicultural competence development. I want my research results to be intelligible and meaningful so that others can incorporate what they have learned. Qualitative research can be used for advocacy and result in social change (Creswell, 2002). I hope social change is a potential outcome of my work.

Phenomenological Method

The research method chosen for this study was phenomenology. “What first characterizes phenomenological research is that it always begins in the lifeworld” (Van Manen, 1990, p.7). My research topic is about exploring a person’s life experiences that have shaped and molded their multicultural competencies. The stories about their lives and the recounting of significant experiences serve as data for this project. The retrospective understanding of what these life experiences meant to those who lived them was the sought after meaning and explanation for the phenomenon of their multicultural competencies today. Since I used the natural world as my laboratory, I chose phenomenology as the best fit for my study of lived experience.

Phenomenological research is the study of essences. It aims at gaining a deeper understanding of the nature or meaning of everyday experiences by recording insightful descriptions of how we live (Van Manen, 1990). Crotty (1998) writes about phenomenology as meaning that phenomena are seen by conscious human beings and, if one revisits her or his experience, possibilities of new meanings may emerge or enhance a former meaning. The intentionality of phenomenology is to draw out meaning from lived experience. It is connected to a constructivist view point because individuals construct knowledge from what they already know. Phenomenology asks each individual to question what might be taken for granted.

Phenomenology is about listening to and understanding something about lived experience. It is concerned with wholeness, so the data is gathered primarily by interviews with guided and open-ended questions, yet other artifacts can be incorporated into data gathering, such as environmental surroundings, pictures, and journal writing. Phenomenology is intuitive. “[In] the data of experience, my own thinking, intuiting, reflecting, and judging are regarded as the primary evidences of scientific investigation” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 59). The questions I asked of the study participants gave direction and focus to the meaning sought. The themes that emerged from the narrative of observation and interview give rise to further interests and questions.

Rationale for Choice of Method

I began the research process with a very broad idea of the topic I wanted to study—the concept of diversity. Through the challenges of doctoral study, introspection, reality planning, and class assignments, I began to “winnow” this topic into a more manageable concept of inquiry. I realized that what I wanted to study was people’s ability to affect change in their service to a diverse community. I felt great passion for gaining understanding of this so that I could support the development of more effective relational skills at my institution. In higher education, our missions ask us to seek new ways to help our campuses become more responsive to our increasingly diverse populations of students. The goal of having a staff versatile enough to deal with all students at the institution is no longer addressed by hosting basic cultural diversity trainings. It requires supporting a more fundamental shift in each staff person. Therefore, my choice of phenomenology as a research method offered me the ability to study this issue from an individual’s personal experience. Through phenomenology I was encouraged to hold my passionate interest and be intimately connected with the phenomenon I was studying by understanding that my puzzlement was autobiographical (Moustakas, 1994). This was not a completely subjective exercise. Van Manen (1990) wrote about objectivity meaning that the researcher is oriented to the object and that the researcher “remains true to the object” (p. 20). He suggested that the researcher becomes a guardian and defender of the

true nature of the object so that when I described, interpreted, and presented what I found, I would remain faithful to its truth because of my investment in its enlightenment.

Key Concepts

Epoche describes my statement of connection and personal experience with my research topic. As a researcher I attempted to set aside all preconceived notions about the phenomenon to be studied, so I could remain open to what unfolded with the participants of the study (Creswell, 1998). Through self disclosure I stated my own experiences and bias about this topic. Some of my inspiration for this study was my reflection on my own multicultural make up, which is partially what I attribute to my current and developing level of multicultural competence. I sent a self-disclosure statement to my study participants before we met so I was not compelled to share my personal views and overshadow the recounting of their own experience. I listened with an open mind and willing heart (Moustakas, 1994). “The challenge of the *Epoche* is to be transparent to ourselves, to allow whatever is before us in consciousness to disclose itself so that we may see with new eyes in a naïve and completely open manner” (p.86).

Understanding Lived Experience through interpretation of the researcher is the basis of phenomenology. Lived meaning is the way someone experiences their world in their own terms and perception (Van Manen, 1990). This concept is at the core of what I wanted to study. I wanted to hear how student affairs professional believed and recounted how they cultivated their multicultural competence. I wanted to understand their concept of multicultural competence and their motivation to increase effectiveness in student affairs.

Transcendental phenomenology is both descriptive and interpretive methodology. It is attentive to how things appear by recording them as they occurred, but it must interpret the meaning because the idea is that everything holds meaning either in the moment or in reflection (Van Manen, 1990). Interpretation is a basic act of human thinking, simply living is a constant, interpretive activity (Palmer, 1969). In essence the interview data I recorded will be reworked into a text and then interpreted

Phenomenological research assumes that through dialogue and reflection, the quintessential meaning of the experience will be revealed. Language is the primary symbol system through which meaning is assembled and expressed (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). Clearly, the interview, the subsequent review by participants of transcription, and then the interpretation of the data constituted this idea of dialogue and reflection. My research questions were answered only by initiating this dialogue. I view this inquiry as a partnership between the researcher and participant, so I have adopted the use of the term *co-researcher* (Moustaskas 1994) instead of *study participant*. From this point forward I will refer to my co-researchers when reporting and discussing the data.

The significance of this study is tied to the idea that cultivating multicultural competence is what the literature has suggested should be a proliferating activity in institutions of higher education. Educational professionals, particularly in student affairs, should be constantly working to achieve a level of multicultural competence necessary for the task of promoting a healthy multicultural campus environment. So although this was not a critical theory study, there is an aspect in this research that supports a call to action and movement on the part of institutions. Multicultural competence promotion and development is outreach for social justice.

Co-Researchers were selected by nomination and an informal screening process. Eligible persons fulfilled three criteria; they (a) exhibited a high level of multicultural competence as determined in the nomination process, (b) worked in a student affairs division at a higher education institution, and (c) had a willingness and ability to participate in the study. Nominations were solicited through selected student affairs networks through email. Potential co-researchers were then asked if they were willing to participate in this project over the course of several months, which would require one long interview and for each of them to read over their transcript for accuracy. I had seven co-researchers in this study.

I considered including myself as one of the subjects in the study. Van Manen (1990) suggested that an “ego-logical” starting point for phenomenological research is with the self. He believed that personal life experiences are accessible to researcher in a

way that no one else's could be. He shared, through example, description of a personal lived experience in the experiential terms that would be asked of other study participants, without causal explanations or interpretations of the experience (p. 54). "To be aware of the structure of one's own experience of a phenomenon may provide the researcher with clues for orienting oneself to the phenomenon and thus to all stages of phenomenological research" (p. 57). I ultimately decided to approach my journey to becoming a multicultural person through the process of Epoche where I disclosed my bias and shared my lived experiences that I thought had bearing on my multicultural competence.

Data Collection

I interviewed each co-researcher in a setting where we had completely uninterrupted time together. I asked them to talk about their life in the context of the significant experiences or influences they attributed to their current ability to work well with a multicultural population. I used the questions I developed in the focus and significance chapter of this dissertation:

1. What is your understanding of multicultural competence? Why do you think you were acknowledged by your professional peers as someone who is highly multiculturally competent?
2. Describe the lived experiences you have had personally and professionally, that you believe contributed to the development of your multicultural competence. Please recount any particular events, cultural influences, familial ties, regional background, ethnic/sexual/gender/racial/mobility identity, peer group membership, training and educational practice, or other life situations that you can identify as part of your cumulative growth and development?
3. In what ways do you anticipate continued growth in your competence for dealing with the diverse and dynamic populations of your college, both students and staff?
4. Do you see your position at the college as one that has an opportunity to reach out to the complex diversity of the student body you serve? How do you think your level of multicultural competence contributes to your overall effectiveness as a

student affairs professional? Do you believe that you can have a positive influence on social justice in your college culture and environment?

5. How can you teach others to achieve what you have?

Analysis

The process for analyzing the data was multifaceted. After recording and writing a transcript for each interview, I looked for themes that seemed to be present in both an individual's story and in comparison to other co-researcher interviews. I took the co-researchers' explanations of the experiences they felt contributed to their multicultural competence and categorized them into individual themes that were given equal value. I looked for clusters of meanings within the themes uncovered among all seven co-researchers.

Strategies to Ensure Soundness

In phenomenology, as with all narrative inquiry, a key tool is to make sure that the co-researchers agree on the accuracy of the data. This involved "member checking" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) by having the co-researchers read original transcripts of their interviews and offer any comments they wanted to make. The purpose of sending my personal self disclosure statement was to acknowledge and clarify researcher bias and helped set the tone of the study. The nomination process for co-researcher built in a foundation for triangulation. Huberman and Miles (1994) suggest that triangulation is a kind of convergence like comparing the notes of one researcher with another's observations. They write about it as a mode of inquiry that using multiple sources. By sending out a call for nominations for this study, that included a detailed description and context for multicultural competence, the people who responded with nominees offered their observations and confirmations of multicultural competence in these potential co-researchers.

Strategies for Protections of Human Subjects

This study and research design were approved by the Oregon State University Institutional Research Board (IRB) in late May 2006. The protocol determined and outlined by the IRB guided were carefully followed in this study. This included the confidentiality of the co-researchers, their signed consent, and their ability to decline participation at any point in the study.

Schedule of Research Project

The following was the timeline for the completion of this research study.

Figure 1: Schedule

Dissertation proposal approved by committee	End of February 2006
IRB review and approval	May 2006
Data collection	October –December 2006
Data analysis and interpretation	January- February 2007
Dissertation writing	February-April 2007
Dissertation Defense	April 30 2007

Section 4: Data Results: Description and Analysis

I entered this doctoral program with a burning question about diversity. I refined my inquiry to the more specific area of multicultural competence after being shaped, coached, led, and challenged by professors, literature, scholars in the field, and my own sense of what would be relevant as a result of my research. Completing all the tasks necessary in order to begin the research was a long journey in and of itself, but then going out and interfacing with my co-researchers and being invited into their world of experience was a journey of a lifetime - theirs. It was an incredible honor for me to hold sacred their experiences and to be trusted to recount them in a meaningful way that would forward the cause of multicultural competence, inclusion, equity, and diversity. These words describe an ideal sentiment for an institutional culture that practices total empowerment and fair treatment of everyone.

I embarked on data collection with two overarching dynamics at play - process and content. This is how I believe we can explain almost every situation. The content of the study is the material of co-researchers' lives and their reflection on how they have become multiculturally competent. Each interview was transcribed and sent to the co-researcher for "member checking" to ensure its accuracy. The process was the phenomenological approach I used to analyze what I gathered. This was the best fit for this data since phenomenology's focus is to seek to understand the human experience through the interpretation of lived experiences (Moerer-Urhdahl and Creswell, 2004). I chose to follow one particular track of phenomenology, transcendental phenomenology. Meaning is at the heart of this research method, and the design for data analysis is focused on illuminating the essence of lived experience (Moustakas, 1994). Therefore my data analysis follows a prescription of human research investigation, Transcendental Phenomenology, as outlined and explained by Clark Moustakas (1994).

Process

I followed the ten step research process presented by Moustakas (1994).

Researcher perspective;

Step 1, *Epoche*, makes a statement of predisposition toward the topic in order to open the research interview with an unbiased, receptive presence

Data Organization

Step 2, *Phenomenological Reduction*, is “the task of [describing] in textural language what one sees, in terms of external [events] and the internal act of consciousness,” to discover the relationship between the phenomenon and self (p 90).

Step 3, *Horizontalization*, is a step in determining the invariant constituents. The researcher lists significant statements, giving each statement equal value.

Step 4, *Clustering Invariant Qualities into Themes*, assigns these statements into core themes of experience, determining non-repetitive themes within the data set.

Data Reporting

Step 5, *Individual Textural Description*, uses the themes to construct a description of the textures of the experience for each co-researcher.

Step 6, *Imaginative Variation*, describes the essential structures of the experience by “seeking possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying frames of reference, and approaching with divergent perspectives” (p 97).

Step 7, *Individual Structural Description*, uses the imaginative variation and verbatim examples from the transcribed interview to construct a description that provides a “vivid account of the underlying dynamics” of the experiences (p. 135).

Data Analysis

Step 8, *Composite Textural Description*, generalizes the collective group experience from the individual textural descriptions.

Step 9, *Composite Structural Description*, integrates the collective group sentiments about their lived experiences from the individual structural descriptions.

Step 10, *Textural-Structural Synthesis*, intuitively integrates the essences portrayed in the lived experiences of becoming multiculturally competent.

Co-researcher Selection

I wanted only 7-8 co-researchers nominated for my study. I developed a nomination announcement which was approved by the IRB and I sent it out to doctoral students in Cohort Groups 1 through 13 from Community College Leadership Program at Oregon State University, Members of National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA) through several of their Knowledge Communities (i.e. African American, Asian, Disability Concerns, Women, Men and Masculinity, Latino/a, Indigenous, GLBT, Spirituality and Religion, Community/two year colleges) and through Region V & IV (OR, WA, or Northern CA members), National Council on Student Development Board Members(NCSD), Oregon Women Work! Board, and the Oregon Diversity Institute Board.

I asked for nominees who met four criteria. Nominees:

- (a) were employed in higher education institutions and work or have recently worked in their student affairs division,
- (b) exhibited some form of demonstrated multicultural competence as assessed by their colleagues,
- (c) had been motivated to participate in this study and comfortable having an in-depth interview about their lived experiences that led to their development of multicultural competencies, and
- (d) were adults, with no particular categorical restrictions.

Within seven days I had received back seventeen nominations. I sorted the nominations into four categories: gender, college type (university or community college), faculty or administrator, and location (within one day's drive of southern Oregon). Interestingly, I only had two men nominated for the study initially; therefore I did some additional networking at Oregon Diversity Institute in November 2006 to get more male nominations. All the nominated student affairs professionals appeared to be excellent choices. I reviewed all the potential nominees and tried to ensure that I had a balance of community college and university, and a representative ratio of women to men. The final choices I made about who to include in my study were driven by my fall

work and travel schedule. I interviewed seven co-researchers during the months of October, November, and December. I included my own voice in the study through the Epoche section. Most initial contact was done by email with a follow-up phone call to determine time and place of interview. Using email instead of the phone as an introduction allowed the potential co-researcher time to consider and respond.

Figure 2: Co-researcher Demographics

NAME	IDENTIFIED GENDER	TYPE OF INSTITUTION	ETHNICITY	SEXUAL ORIENTATION	AGE(yrs) RANGE
Nia	F	University	African American	Not specified	50-60
Lita	F	Community College	Caucasian	Heterosexual	40-50
Shanidar	F	Community College	Mixed Race: African Am./Caucas.	Heterosexual	30-40
Maggie	F	Community College	Caucasian	Lesbian	50-60
Likes-To-Go	M	University/Comm. College	Native American	Heterosexual	50-60
Socorro	F	University	Latina	Not specified	20-30
Chief Joseph	M	Community College/Univ.	Caucasian	Heterosexual	50-60

Interviews

For each interview I followed a specific regimen of preparation. Once I had confirmed date, time, and meeting place I sent the co-researchers four files: Introduction to my study, Self-Disclosure statement, IRB Consent Form, and Questions with a brief explanation about research on lived experiences. I purchased a thank you card and a Reiki-charged candle with a sentiment expressed on it for each co-researcher, so I could leave them with a gift at the end of the interview. I will talk more about the intention of the candles when I introduce each co-researcher.

At the beginning of the interviews with Nia, Maggie, Socorro, and Chief Joseph I asked permission to set up an altar to the four directions and explained why this was important to me and the meaning I attach to each direction. For one interview, there was literally no room to lay out my altar. Likes-To-Go is Native American and his office was full of artifacts and symbols of the four directions, so I just lit a candle. For the interviews with Shanidar and Lita, I was traveling and attending a conference and had unintentionally forgotten my basket of altar objects. For those two interviews I did an internal orientation in my mind to set intention for the sharing that was to transpire and verbally I expressed my gratitude, respect, and honor for what we were about to embark upon together. Moustakas (1994) mentioned the solemnity of this connection with co-researchers and suggests taking a moment together to acknowledge the profound connection and process we, the researchers, are about to begin. Aside from the interviews with Shanidar and Lita, I carried my altar basket and my recording equipment into each interview. As I set up the equipment and the altar I explained that because the focus and intention of this interview was for me to listen to their stories and reflections about their life and because I held this information in confidentiality, I would protect them from identification by using pseudonyms that they would select for themselves. I told them I was using phenomenology as my method, and that I sought to hear and understand the lived experiences they believed contributed or had an effect on their journey to becoming multiculturally competent. I went on to talk about how the opportunity to meet with them was an honor and a privilege and that I believed this exchange to be a sacred trust. Asking the four directions to come in, witness, and enclose us with their energy is one way to set the tone for an honest and open exchange.

The East. I introduced the East by explaining that it is the symbol of our innocence, our childlike wonder, and our beginnings. It is the place where we were the most connected to the wonder of the world without bias and our past life. It is like the sunrise, associated with the color yellow and the element of air.

For artifacts I laid out an abalone shell with a sage or cedar stick that I lit with permission for purification, along with a feather from a barn owl.

The South. I explained that the South is the symbol of our youth and early adulthood. It is the place where we come into our passion as the fires of our soul lights up and becomes dramatic and real. This time sets the tone for the rest of our life. It is like high noon, associated with the color red and the element of fire.

For artifacts I placed several candles and lit them with permission.

The West. I shared that the West is the symbol of our mature adulthood. It is the place where we reach an equilibrium about who we are, the work we are called to do, and when we can offer our gifts and achievements to the planet. This time period is our vast expansive horizon where possibilities are limitless; we only need to realize them and to take action. It is like the late afternoon or evening and is associated with the color blue and the element of water.

For artifacts I placed a bowl filled with salt water.

The North. Next, I explained that the North is the symbol of our elders and ancestors. It is the place where we come into our crone or elder status, when we are reflective of life and have deep wisdom to share. It is the place of our ancestors-those who have crossed over to the other side. It is like midnight until the right before the dawn, the spirit and dream time, associated with the color white and the element of the earth.

For artifacts I placed several rocks, granite from the Alps, a large piece of obsidian for reflection, and a multifaceted quartz crystal. I also placed a small framed photograph of my father who has been deceased for 33 years.

The Zenith. Lastly, I acknowledged the Zenith for the heavens above and for ethereal thoughts to permeate our consciousness, and the Nadir as the molten core of our mother earth to ground us in reality and to always remember from whence we came.

After this introduction to our session I tested the tape to ensure proper recording. I asked if the co-researchers had read my personal self disclosure statement. If they had not read it, I gave them a brief synopsis of what it said. I would then ask them to begin by telling me why they thought they had been nominated by a colleague to be in this study. This was often the last time I spoke for more than one or two sentences during the entire interview.

During the interviews I did not have to ask my exact list of five questions. Instead I would listen to their stories, take notes on specific points I might ask them to elaborate on if they did not get to them on their own. In several interviews I had to specifically ask the co-researchers to give me a brief explanation about where they were born and their family configuration, and/or their route to their position in student affairs. However, I found that in most interviews this information came out on its own. The only question I found myself consistently needing to ask toward the end of the interview was “How does one teach others what you have achieved in your multicultural competence?”

The interviews themselves took from one hour and thirty minutes to two hours and thirty minutes. I let the interviews run as long as the conversation was rich and the co-researcher still had more to say. I transcribed two of the seven interviews using a voice recognition software, “Dragon Naturally Speaking”. This software was not time efficient due to the multiple errors in recognizing words and constant retyping corrections. So I hired two people to transcribe the remaining five interviews. Both transcriptionists signed an agreement to confidentiality and trustworthiness with the data. When reviewing the transcriptions I replaced names with pseudonyms and changed college and staff names where appropriate. I sent each co-researcher a copy of their interview transcription via email and gave them two weeks to return with any corrections and to verify accuracy of content and intention. This was my primary form of data verification called “member checking”.

Epoche

This following narrative about my own multicultural background is my response to the concept of *Epoche*, which describes my connection and personal experience with my research topic. In my early ruminations about multicultural competence, I realized that my own knowledge, skills, and awareness have been developed along my journey as I have added to my life experience. What I learned early on, as I found my voice and power as an adult and then a professional, is that I want to contribute to social justice by direct advocacy, by education of the whole, and coaching the personal development of the individual. I believe that my life experience and diverse adventures combine with my belief that the “personal is political” to contribute to my development as multiculturally competent individual. Although I see my competence on a continuum, I believe my passion and dedication for bringing equity and social justice into education by creating access and support for non traditional students keeps me growing and learning more as my life experience continues to expand. As I identified and reflected on my relationship with this topic, I wanted to explore others’ experience and reflection on how and why they develop multicultural competence.

I am a multicultural individual who has had an interesting life journey so far. I have had many unique, wonderful, and difficult experiences that have given me a variety of multicultural perspectives. I can speak like I am from New York, even though I am from New Jersey, fool Parisian’s into thinking I am French, and be asked for directions in Firenze, Italia and actually give them back in Italian. I have hitchhiked from Los Angeles to Fairbanks and back. As a child I attended school in Japan and made friends before I spoke the language. I learned survival Japanese and ate whole grilled fish for lunch. I studied the world through my first discipline of Geography, soaked in a 2000 year old Roman bath, saw Mount McKinley on a clear day, sailed in the Caribbean, and speared fish in Tokyo bay. I have been the only (half) white person on a train, gotten lost in a foreign city with my two young kids in tow, and met people who opened their hearts and homes to me as a traveler. I have studied overseas.

I am a feminist. I am an academic. I am an earth mother. I have birthed my three children at home. I claim the intimacy of my 25-year marriage. I have lived off the land, made my own clothes, supported myself by my leather craft, built a sweat lodge, and lived communally. I can dance in a performance, dance with wild abandon at a rock concert, and dance in my living room with my ten year old daughter. I have panhandled to eat, received welfare to feed my family, and sold valuables to support destructive habits. I can play my clarinet, tile a sunroom floor, and drive a forklift. I have gotten a standing ovation for giving speeches in large auditoriums. I have received scholarships to go to school, worked as member on political campaigns, and raised money for children in Afghanistan. I was asked for an interview by Rolling Stone magazine for separating my Cub Scout troop from the Boy Scouts of American organization due to their discriminating policies. I have been gainfully employed for 23 years.

I have attended three state universities, two private colleges (one Ivy League), a marine biology institute, Oxford University, and been an OSU Beaver three separate times. I have majored in Liberal Arts, Geology, Forestry, Women's Studies, Geography, Education, and Native American Studies. I have taught in the Counseling Department, in Human Development, Humanities, International Studies, Social Science, Women's Studies, and in Firenze, Italia. I have run programs for single parents, displaced homemakers, domestic violence and sexual assault victims, recovering addicts, Latino/a immigrants, people on probation, the homeless, at-risk teens, and dislocated workers. I have worked for gender equity, imperatives to eliminate racism, sexism, and homophobia, and multiple environmental causes.

I have clapped at the entrance of a Buddhist temple after washing my hands and lighting incense next to my 80-year-old Obachama (grandmother). I have attended European masses and accepted the holy sacrament while chanting in Latin. I have been a hoopa holder at a Jewish wedding. I love to facilitate women's ritual. I have been to church, been in forest cathedrals with the goddess, communed with druids in the hills, been a Bahai, and been a Dead Head. I am legal to marry people in the state of Oregon.

I had a loving calm father whose origin was French, Scottish, and English. He was fair minded, well liked, politically astute, probably an alcoholic, and a brilliant

mathematician (he proved one of Einstein's theories wrong). He abandoned me when I was 14 because he died. I have an emotional, unpredictable, fiercely passionate, and funny Japanese mother who almost killed me out of anger (figuratively) several times when I was an adolescent. I have an older sister who I see once every two years, whose twin daughters were raised neither Christian or Jewish, yet both were a choice. I have a step-father who disowned his daughter -my step sister-because she married a Nigerian. I grew up across the street from my Japanese uncle and his family while he worked in New York City as the Vice President of Finance of Mitsubishi International. I have long-lost Canadian cousins. I did not see my partner's mother for almost 10 years before she died. I have friends from when I was two, twelve, eighteen, and onward. My partner has a chronic illness and I miss who he was, sometimes. I have a close nuclear family that supports each other in our anticipated and occasionally unexpected crisis.

I am a multicultural person. I have been doing diversity work in educational institutions but am not convinced at methods that bring forth productive results. I continually question how to create a fertile learning environment. People need to feel free to be who they are, represent what is important to them, and not live in fear of reprisal. I have been reduced to tears and also been totally elated when participating in this work but the *how* of how to do it has been elusive to me. I have asked myself, what the secret is to a successful diversity initiative that is comprehensive in its scope, audience, and impact. I have asked myself: Why do I feel compelled to do this work? What is it about me that resonates so deeply with this cause for equality and difference? I realize that my awareness has emerged from my multicultural background. I attribute my sensitivities, my passions, my anger, and my commitment to diversity to my life experiences which have put me in contact with other cultures-some exotic cultures and some sub-cultures. I want to understand what bring others to a similar framework. I want to understand how others have developed their knowledge, skills, and awareness in dealing with people they come into contact with. Ultimately, I believe that once people understand how multicultural they truly are, it opens them up to the compassion, empathy, and openness necessary to respectfully deal with others who come from divergent, foreign, and unfamiliar backgrounds.

Horizontalization of themes, Individual Textual and Structural Descriptions

Following the format of data analysis as outlined by Moustakas (1994), phenomenological reduction leads to the third step of the process, “horizontalization”. Moustakas describes the horizon as a grounding of the phenomenon which gives it a distinct character. Horizontalization is about identifying what he terms “invariant constituents” in the data. These invariant constituents are the core themes of experience and are derived from significant statements made by the co-researchers. They might be repeated several times in a data set. To follow the process of horizontalization I read each data set (transcript) carefully and identified statements my seven co-researchers made that would provide information and understanding about their experiences, then assigned a theme to key statements and either repeated this theme or identified new themes throughout their transcript. I identified between 21 and 46 themes in each interview data set. These descriptive themes attempt to reflect the emotional content in the statements to which they were attached. The next part of this process is called “Clustering Invariant Qualities into Themes”. This step involved reviewing and sorting all the themes identified in each data set and collating them into similar categories. All the individual themes from seven data sets were eventually clustered into fourteen theme categories (See Appendix D). These theme categories are listed below.

1. Personal Humility: Understanding of Self
2. Inspired by Others: Mentors and Role Models
3. I’ll be for differences until difference no longer make a difference
4. Religious Foundations and Spiritual Guidance
5. Seven Generations Forward: Listening to Elder Wisdom
6. Understanding Oppression: Personal Experience Facilitates Skill Development
7. Commitment to Social Justice for All
8. Eloquent Educational Philosophy for Inclusion, Empowerment, Respect, Being a Learner
9. Authentic and Transformational Leadership Philosophy
10. Students As Teachers: What We Learn Directly From Them

11. What The Face Of Intelligence Looks Like: Issues of Race, Gender, Sexual Orientation, (Dis)Ability, and Class
12. Leadership is Key: What is Needed on an Institutional level
13. Operating Framework: Multicultural Work is Mainstream
14. Students Affairs as the First Line of Communication, the Back Door, and the Space In-between

The next step was to write an individual textural description of each co-researcher. From the thematic analysis I described samples of experiences to give an overview of each co-researcher. A figure with individual themes is inserted after each individual textural description in this text. They represent non-repetitive, non-overlapping significant statements. They are intended to provide a basis of how these co-researchers reflected on themselves and their personal and professional development. I asked them questions about why they thought they were considered multiculturally competent by others, what life experiences they believed had an effect on their development, and how they take action in their lives to promote this concept in others. These themes are symbolic of the horizon of ideas and its textural quality, and hopefully they will spark a connection in others' self awareness and personal reflection.

After completing the horizontalization of themes, I wrote a structural description of each co-researcher. This process utilized component of data analysis named "Imaginative Variation" by Moustakas, which used intentionality and intuitive-reflection to describe the essential dynamics of her/his experience. Intentionality refers to consciousness and the internal experience of being conscious of something. Intuitive-reflection is defined as bringing clarity to what seems common at first but is transformed into greater meaning with intuitive thinking (Moustakas, 1994). The structural description reflects of the emotional content held by the co-researchers' in their retrospective on the lived experiences they believe contributed to their multicultural competence development. This is an attempt to share qualities that illuminate co-researchers' feelings, thoughts, and sentiments about their life journeys and evolution of multicultural competence.

What follows is an accounting of the data for each co-researcher where first I provide an individual textural description, next a list of the themes that illustrate the essences of their lived experiences, and followed by an individual structural description. I have presented these descriptions of the co-researchers in the order of the interviews.

Co-Researcher #1: Nia

Individual textural description. Nia is a 56-year-old African American woman, who holds a high level position as Assistant Vice Provost in the Office of Institutional Equity and Diversity at a four-year university in the northwest. She has a master's degree in Psychology and a J.D. Law degree. She has worked in higher education for more than twenty years in various aspects of student affairs. Although Nia originally received her law degree intending to practice law, after a short period of time and several difficult legal cases, she decided to forego a career in law and headed into student affairs. She first worked in higher education and student affairs as an admissions counselor, then as Director of Admissions at a historically black college in the Midwest. She has also held management positions in a variety of universities such as: TRiO Upward Bound, Office of Multicultural Affairs, Office of Graduate Minority Affairs, Affirmative Action and Faculty Development before landing her current position. She conducts trainings in diversity awareness and cultural competence on her campus and in the community. Nia also does public speaking with a motivational message about diversity.

Nia grew up "black and female" in the Pacific Northwest during a time period where she and her family were not allowed to live within the city boundary but in an area created and named for the African American steel workers and their families. Her interview focused around early life experiences and self-awareness of gifts which later translated into her professional choices. She talked a lot about what it was like to be one of twelve African American children in a school of 2600. Her stories about her parents and their intentions to raise four well spoken and worldly daughters were entertaining and rich with content about what sets the stage for a child who had multiple challenges facing her in the pre-civil rights era in which she was born, "You're negro, you're a woman, and

you really don't count for a great deal" was the message she received from the society around her. She spoke fondly of the wisdom of her parents and the message they delivered that children need to know not only "who they are but whose they are." She fondly recounted a travel odyssey of her family which revealed insight to the uniqueness of her childhood experiences. Nia's hallmark trait throughout her childhood was her ability to get along with everyone and anyone... "I was like the glue." This is a reflection of her intuitive multicultural competence. She grew up black and successful in a region where she was, and still is, a significant minority. She chose her name, Nia, which is a Swahili word for purpose.

She discussed her experiences with the law from the perspective of being a law student and as a trainer of state police. Contained in these lived experiences are harsh examples of the reality of racial profiling for African Americans. As she began to talk about the professional side of higher education, Nia began to share the wisdom gained from her experience of advocating for and raising the status for minorities, affirmative action, and multicultural affairs. It is in this passage of her interview that she shared the common assumptions we make about "who belongs where". In her role as a leader she speaks to understanding power dynamics and confronting classism and racism. She is one of the early leaders in the diversity movement in higher education. What she offers to this study is well versed reflection on the need and practice of multicultural competence, equity, and social justice.

Personal energy from Nia was full of warmth and wisdom, with a colorful edge. Her interview was rich with philosophical leanings, truth and reality, story telling laced with moral and meaning. Her style was enhanced by her calm demeanor yet powerful presence. I gave her a Reiki candle for courage. Her words titled the theme "What the Face of Intelligence Looks Like."

Figure 3: Nia's Interview Themes

Who You Are and Whose You Are	Wherever You Are-That's Home
Being the Glue	Oppression and Racism/ Powerful Impression
Growing Up Black and Female	Recognizing My Gift to Advocate
Elder wisdom	Diversity Work Sparked
Symbolic Interaction Changes Minds	Early Leadership/Maturing Leadership
Developing Your Voice/ Power of Voice	Advocacy and Support from Others
Parental Influence	Taking Your Place
Going Back to Our Roots	Affirmative Action Misunderstood/Misused
How Will You Use Your Privilege?	Religious Stratification
Laying Down the Challenge	Cultural Suspicion
Globalization Awareness	What the Face of Intelligence Looks Like
Multicultural Competence Essence	Chameleon Theory
Exposure to Other Worlds	Education as the Hope for the Race
Understanding Others	Running From the Law
Education = Options	Multicultural Competence Teaching
Understanding Power Dynamics	Students Affairs is the First Line of Communication
Cultural Competence vs. Multicultural Competence	Assumptions and Burdens for People of Color

Individual structural description. Nia had an ingrained sense of self from an early age. This was an intention of her parents who early on left the south as African Americans and moved to a northwest city where they were a significant minority. However, what they gave to their four daughters was a structured life so their children could learn to navigate a world, difficult for their race, in the early 50's and 60's. They guided their children with wisdom, strength, and will. When talking about her childhood, Nia kept giving examples of how she learned from her parents that more than knowing "who you were", you needed to know "whose you were, and from whence you came."

My parents thought it was important for us[children] to have a sense of ourselves, larger than life, because we were always going to be "on" and people [were] always going to be attracted to us, because of our gift to engage other people, to speak to their hearts and heads. I didn't really understand it at the time.

To this end her parents persisted in cultivating young and intelligent minds by asking their daughters to read, memorize, recite, and interpret poetry. In this exercise their

daughters found their voice, learned to speak English without a provincial dialect, and connected with the inspired thoughts and sentiments of literary geniuses, who were mostly African American.

Nia clearly believe her life chances were increased by her careful upbringing. She speaks eloquently today and with great appreciation for the insight of her parents. She talks about growing up black and female but without any trace of victim-hood, despite her understanding of root causes of oppression and prejudice. She recounted a summer experience when on their way home from a month long visit to extended family on the east coast, her family was threatened by some racists at a diner in South Dakota. In this incident she saw her father unable to protect them and torn with the conflicting emotions, "I remember the tears in my father's eyes. Both in anger at having been made to feel impotent because he couldn't stand up for his family, and with the understanding that he had to be circumspect lest he put us in harm's way." The restaurant staff came to their defense and her interpretation of this was that "They had a sense of us as Negroes. We had a sense of ourselves as being all that and a bag of chips...I remember implicitly that you stood up for people who couldn't stand up for themselves."

There were times when, despite her parents' attempt to protect the children from discrimination, others worked hard to prevent Nia's success and public acknowledgements. She connected two situations where this happened, both times when she was elected as a leader.

There were parents who were undone that these black kids were running everything. Since there were so few of us it meant, of course, that white kids were voting for us because we just couldn't win with only the black vote. The white parents were outraged and talked to the vice principal, H.B.; I will never forget her name. She said she wouldn't stand for any of this nonsense. The kids voted for these [black] kids and that was how it was going to be...That dynamic played itself out from high school to 30 years later when I went to law school when the commencement speaker was chosen by the class. I was nominated and there were several faculty members who were outdone by this...They had to vote three times because [the faculty] didn't like the outcome of each vote...The other candidate's advisor told him that he didn't think women and particularly people of color, African Americans especially, had no business being in law school because we were too emotional. First of all as women and

secondly, we couldn't be neutral about situations because of our racial experience.

Nia, who seems so self assured and accomplished in her professional life, was able to explicitly connect her early and humble beginnings in the pre-civil rights era, the skills and character development promoted by her parents and the external oppression she felt as the fuel for her passion to her direction in her professional life. In the interview she admitted to times of being overwhelmed by the perennial racial inequality and mindless tactics in a poignant legal case that caused her to walk away from the profession.

After law school she had several trials that opened her eyes to the injustice in the courts system.

Everybody black was in chains and jail suits and the joke going around the courtroom was, "How can you tell who the defendant is?" The answer was, "the black man in a suit," because disproportionately it was true. No one looked like me who wasn't a defendant. That was profound to me. It was overwhelming.

She went on to recount a case that her law firm handled in which a black man was killed by the police, while acting heroically to save people from an armed robbery in a convenience store, because he was assumed to be the culprit.

[Because they could only charge for a negligent homicide]...we settled out of court, and he was still dead, and [his children] have no father. This was profoundly outrageous to me. I didn't want to acknowledge that there was a limited amount of effect that I was going to have on truth and justice.

Nia's stories were rich in detail and meaning. Clearly she is an empowered African American woman who has devoted her professional life to counter the racial prejudice she observed and experienced as a child and adult. Her insight to the tools she was given by her parents describes her early multicultural competence development. They required her to be an astute student, well-read, and an accomplished speaker. They propelled her into situations where she was a small minority in both school, church, and travels, and she learned to negotiate in all kinds cultures who she was, by remembering "whose she was and from whence she came."

Co-researcher #2: Lita

Individual textural description. Lita asked that the person who nominated her for the study also give her a pseudonym. Lita's namesake was a brilliant educator, a school teacher who was kind, smart, had Midwest sensibilities, and was always open to something new, just like the Lita in this study. This Lita was born in Canada and had dual citizenship until age 18 when she chose to become an American citizen so she could vote in the country she was calling home. She is a white woman who will turn 50 this year. She went to a private undergraduate liberal arts college in the northwest in the mid 70's. She worked hard to get college done in three years for her parents' financial sake. After a few years in the business world which she didn't like, she explored going to graduate school to become a teacher or counselor. In order to get some writing classes out of the way, she enrolled in a community college. As a student worker she began working in the disability services office where she became an advocate for students who were getting their social security benefits cut during the Reagan era cutbacks in social programming. "The whole social justice thing kicked in for me in the early 80's when I began working with students with disabilities and the whole Section 504 was very new and colleges were trying to figure out what to do with it." Her commitment to access and equity in education was born and developed within the community college system.

Lita moved through several community colleges in the Pacific Northwest in increasingly responsible leadership roles. Her first professional role was as Coordinator for Disability Services offices at two colleges, and then she became Associate Dean of Advising and Counseling, then Dean of Student Development Services, and then Vice President of Students. She is currently the Vice President of Instruction and Student Services at a community college in the Midwest. She received her Educational Doctorate in the mid-'90's. Lita's steady upward climb in leadership is an excellent example of authentic and earned leadership.

Figure 4: Lita's Interview Themes

Personal Belief Structure	Multicultural Skill Identification
Educational Philosophy	Cultural Shift Support
Humility	Policy Influence
Parental Influence	Diversity Initiatives & Assessment
Disability Within Family	Assembling a Team of Support
Parents As Role Models	Community Caring
Assassination Era: Kennedy & King	Physical Adjustment
Educational Background	Student Retention
Social Justice Originates in Professional Advocacy	Student Services Assessment
Counseling Background	Student Services Cultural Shift
Regional Sense of Place: Difference in Values	Student Development Philosophy
Religious Awareness	Leadership Influence
Positional Power	Students as Teachers
Professional Experience	Undergraduate College Promoted Awareness
Philosophical Difference	Mentors
Innovation Attraction and Practice	Experiential Learning as Key to Multicultural Competence

As our interview unfolded her wisdom, reflection, and educational philosophy were alive and apparent. I found myself taking notes beyond the interview questions just to capture her ideas and learn from her experience. Her sensibilities around student development, issues of diversity, and multiculturalism were all grounded in a very grassroots experience. As her responsibilities grew beyond students with disabilities, she gained insight into other diversity challenges and barriers, such as race and sexual orientation. She used her influence and positional power to do something about access, safety, and support issues by creating the first diversity committee at her college in the mid-90's. "As we began, it was interesting to watch how we ran into different types of barriers related to hiring practices and programs for either ethnic minority or women's programs."

When interviewing Lita, I knew I was in the presence of greatness. This woman leader holds tremendous integrity in aligning her actions with the vision of her college which she has influenced in a positive way. She talked about moving to a new region, and

as I listened to her perceptions of a Midwestern mindset and how to work with it in resourceful and constructive ways, it gave me great insight to her multicultural competence. I gave her a Reiki candle for wisdom. Her commitment to students is crystal clear and it is her words that inspired the theme “Students as Teachers.”

Individual structural description. Lita is a consummate professional who is keenly adept at using her positional power, her ability to inspire and collaborate, and her expert sense of how to innovate within a system to address the promotion of social justice in community colleges. “I’m in higher education because I truly believe that education, as much education as you want, is the basic right of every single person. I believe that education is a means to a better life...people should have the ability to self-actualize. This is a very individual goal for people.” Lita’s educational background provided the backdrop for her progressive foundation. Her undergraduate college was a religiously affiliated institution that provided her with a strong liberal arts education that encouraged critical thinking and free thought in an atmosphere of social justice awareness. Her graduate education in counseling contributed to her empathic connections to others with “unconditional regard” and learning that challenged personal bias by identification with a code of ethics. Her first paid job at a college was in a student disability office and it was there that her advocacy experience became active.

I went through that period of time in the early 80’s, when there were a lot of cutbacks in social programming. I remember having students come in to my office with letters from social security administration stating that they were no longer disabled and these were people who were in wheelchairs that really could not work full-time work. And so the whole social justice thing sort of kicked in for me in the early 80’s when I began working with students with disabilities, and of course 504 was very new. Colleges were trying to figure out what the heck they were going to do. In doing that, at that point in my career, I truly was an advocate, but I also was a teacher. I was a teacher because you’re dealing with fear and you’re dealing with the unknown, you’re dealing with anxiety, and you’re dealing with, well, “Why do I have to provide this particular accommodation for this person?”

When Lita became a Dean for Student Affairs she had to represent student issues to the administration. As a leader in higher education, she remains committed to listening to students, advocating for their voice to be heard, and making sure their needs are a part of the agenda for student affairs.

There was a time where we had a student organization for gay and lesbian students, and they wanted to call it the Queer Student Alliance. My response to this was that when I grew up “queer” was a very bad word. You did not call anyone queer. That was, like a very, very derogatory word. [So I talked to the advisor and] I went down and I talked to the students, and I thought, “I can do this.” But...my parents brought me up to never use derogatory language against other people. So it was really hard for me at the time. Of course, now...I can handle this term just fine, so the students did a good job [educating me]. But what happened was our president could not deal with it...And finally, at one point, I just went to him and I said, you know what, this isn’t about you. This isn’t about me, this is about our students, and what they’re comfortable with, what their culture says is acceptable, and the way it’s going to be. He never liked it. But they got to keep their new name.

Lita’s multicultural competency was tested when she left the northwest and moved to a mid-western state where she had to read and lead a new culture. She caught on quite quickly. Assessing the subtleties of culture she used words like “interesting and fascinating” as she described the diversity issues present in her new home territory. What impressed me about her leadership style was that she worked on systemic changes at her large college incorporating diversity, inclusion, community input, globalization, civic engagement, and progressive hiring practices, diversify part time faculty, developing resources, aligning allies, and working with a comprehensive vision.

When I start thinking about it, we’ve been able to make a difference. It’s a cultural shift, and a cultural shift is not about activities, it’s about what’s in your heart, it’s about your values, and so even though we’ve done the activities piece, we still have a long way to go in relationship to changing the culture and cultural expectations. But we’re working on it and people are thinking about it now, and they are beginning to understand the importance of it and they are seeing different faces in their classes than they have ever seen before.

The significance of Lita’s early opportunities to bring on new initiatives for equality remains a pattern in her life. She understands the process and continues to use

her leadership in community college to address her vision for social justice through education. In the recounting of experiences that Lita has had with staff and students who were advocating for special populations, I was struck by her continuous empathy and curiosity about new issues and her creative commitment to address the inequity head on with action, advocacy, and philosophy.

Co-researcher #3: Shanidar

Individual textual description. Shanidar is a relatively young professional in student services. She works at a community college in the Pacific Northwest and has recently been promoted from Student Activities Coordinator to Director of Multicultural Services and Student Development. I was expecting someone from an Asian background from her name but when I met her I was surprised to greet an African American/Caucasian woman. She told me a great deal about her multicultural family heritage which seems to have contributed to her multicultural competence. Factors, such as growing up in Hawaii (thus her Japanese name), being the only black student in her junior high, having twelve siblings who are mostly mixed race, and marrying a man who is also mixed race, have definitely influenced her multicultural competence. Much of her early awareness of racial and gender status was negotiated by familial attitudes, particularly from her father. Growing up, she had to deal with her internalized racism and her struggle for racial identity, as well as argue her worth as a woman. Shanidar is in her mid-thirties and is one of the two co-researchers born after the Civil Rights Movement. Her pathway into student services came directly from her experiences as a student during a time when many college professionals were grappling with perceived inequities around affirmative action.

Due to her racial status she was supported and helped by an Educational Opportunities Program (EOP) advisor who believed in her despite her struggles to stay in school. After several long breaks and transferring to a second college, she received her bachelor's degree in Communication. She referenced some very uncomfortable situations at her second university in southern California where she was pointed to as the reason some "white student with a higher G.P.A. isn't sitting in this class." The lack of supportive and/or intervening response on the part of her professor fueled her frustration about equity and access. "I didn't have the tools at the time to understand affirmative action. I didn't know if I was admitted because of my color. So not only was I oppressed in that moment, I was also silenced in my response." Shanidar chose a graduate program in Student Development at a large northwestern university. It was an "ah ha" moment when she was searching for a graduate degree and she realized that she could become a student services professional like her EOP counselor, and help to create the healthy and welcoming student experiences she had not had.

Shanidar's candor and unabashed recounting of her family configuration, her racial identity development, her perspective from being part of a minority in educational institutions, her commitment and creativity in supporting diverse students, and her ability to develop tools to confront oppression where it still lies in institutions was refreshing and delightful. Her feelings about social justice philosophy differ from the most of the other co-researcher because she comes from an era where her social rights as a mixed race person were established. She was not part of the Civil Rights and social change movement when it was most active and painful. She comes to this work with a natural acceptance, compelling curiosity, and lightness about entitlement of rights and responsibilities. I gave her a Reike candle for peace. She offers the theme "Multicultural Work is Mainstream."

Figure 5: Shanidar's Interview Themes

Awareness Example	Student Experience Impacts Professional Choice
Not Meeting Students Where They Are At	Multicultural Family
Willingness to Learn	Oppression Because of Affirmative Action
Personal Connection to Student Experience	Do I Really Belong Here?
Multicultural Competence Skill Identification	Needing Tools
White Women Multicultural Lens	Women's Studies Opened Up My Eyes
Tokenism Trap	Discovering Student Affairs
Islander Attitude	Discovering Alignment with Community College
Experience as a Minority	Mentor
Family History Non Traditional	Critical Moments Strategy
Black Attitude towards White Women	Achieving Critical Mass
Mixed Race Confusion	Administrative Shift Composition
Racial Identification- Political Alignment	Gender Attitudes- Sexism from Parents
Internalized Racism	Professional Decision to Work with Underprivileged Students
Regional Upbringing Different Than Current Culture	Getting Multicultural Competence into the Classroom

Individual structural description. Shanidar brought to this study an honest and refreshing response to the current status of education today. She is a post-civil rights baby and my sense is that she grew up with some safety and entitlement around her mixed racial heritage that others, 10-15 years older than her, did not. This did not exclude her from feeling oppression and discrimination particularly in educational institutions, however, she dealt with a different set of diversity and equality measures that had been developed to support minority populations. She cited examples of being in class where she felt and heard the resentment of white classmates that she was sitting in an unearned seat because she was African American. The unfair, unwelcoming treatment she received as an undergraduate spurred her determination as a young professional to work for diversity and equity in higher education.

I want to create and shape the college experience I had always wanted and I never got...I have been the advisor to the Black Student Union which I always wanted to join in college but never did, because I didn't fit in (laughter). But now I feel like I am part of the "in" group.

She referenced her struggle with internalized racism and sexism due to her African American father's strong views on race and his attitude that white women are submissive. These conflicting references made it hard for her to understand her racial identity. "Hair was huge, growing up I relaxed my hair [for years]. I had so much internalized racism. My dad would line up [my siblings and me] according to skin color, light to dark." Up until college she just thought, "I'm black", but through women's studies courses in college she began to understand and empathize with her white mother's oppression. "People would say 'What are you?' and I'd say I'm black but my mom is white. My girlfriend and I have a joke that we are going to write a book titled *My Mom is White but I ain't*." She now acknowledges her biracial heritage but sides politically with causes that support people of color.

Shanidar learned to move between worlds within her family. Professionally she is using her experiences with students to continue developing multicultural competence.

I had a couple of advising situations with students where I thought I was not very multiculturally competent or sensitive in that session with that student. What I was doing was steering them on a path with my own lens. [For example] I had a first-generation Latina student and her family really wanted her to be a nurse.... [Her parents] did not see any other reason why you would want to go to college, if not to get a good job. They knew that in the nursing field you always have a job; it's secure and you can earn a good living. She'd tried it and it just wasn't for her. She [had an idea] that she wanted to go into teaching. So we had this whole conversation and I gave her what I thought was good advice. I said, "This is your life, maybe you could talk to your parents and help them understand, maybe you can show them a little bit of what you are doing in your education classes." After that was done I thought I might not have given her the right advice. This was weeks later. I started thinking I was encouraging her to go against her family and culturally for her, her family, her language. Research tells us, that the priority scale for different ethnic groups can shift, so for me, I was giving her the classic... White middle-class approach. And I just felt kind of disappointed in myself. So I was excited when I went to a workshop and started thinking about, "What am I doing in sessions with students? How am I advising them?" Because I know it's really about 20% of the academics and 80% about other issues affecting their schooling. I started thinking I have to be really aware of this and develop and work on and sharpen my skills. I know I have been, but I can't be lazy and lean back into what I'm used to. I really want to hear students.

Shanidar has an honest and direct response to her colleagues who are learning how to bring multicultural work into the mainstream. She sees herself as a learner and seeks education to continue to temper her knowledge, awareness, and skills.

During her years in women's studies, she was quick to notice that the subject was often an exploration of white women without regard to women of color. She saw how this holds true in her professional dealings with white women who have privilege and are really learning how to be an ally.

I remember in women's studies, reading Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*. Everyone was so enthralled with the book, but my take on it was this book is for a certain class level and a certain race. I couldn't see my grandma Jewel, who was a maid in a hospital for 40 years, and who, on her one day off [each week] would clean white people's houses. I couldn't see her reflecting on, with her third-grade education, what it would be like to have a room of her own. It was conversations like this that helped me to vent and explore my identity.... A couple of years ago, [I heard] a speaker who... talked about "50 ways that white people benefit just by being white, with unearned benefits." She said what brought her to this work was reading a journal written by an African American scholar about black women, and they were talking about their work experience. There was a sentence that said "White women are oppressive to work with." I remember thinking "Wow, that is so much my experience." To me, there is a multicultural lens that white women bring to our work, which is a very passive aggressive, "Let's everyone be nice and get along, but [when] I have some concerns,"... I have a much more direct way of communicating.

Shanidar comes to the workplace in an era where there is "an awareness level, a recognition that at work or on-campus, people bring their whole selves." She talks about how people not only bring their experiences from the past but incorporate what is happening right now in the present. It is the acceptance and expectation of the whole person that Shanidar relates to multicultural competence.

Co-researcher #4: Maggie

Individual Textural Description. Maggie is a white woman committed to the safety and education of women and children. Influenced by her early professional experiences working with children who had been sexually abused and women who were victims of domestic and sexual violence, Maggie re-directed her dedication to women in a single parent and displaced homemaker program at a community college in a rural community in the Pacific Northwest. Her role as director and instructor in this transition program has given her a constructive outlet to promote the cause of equity and social justice. Maggie is the daughter of two parents who went to seminary, but her mother was never ordained because women weren't allowed to in her time. She is clear that their parental influence laid the groundwork for her own social justice belief system.

She is 53 and this places her in early adolescence during the 60's Civil Rights Movement. She recounted the significant experience of marching with members from her father's church in a public demonstration of support and grief right after Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. "My eyes were wide open, it was a deep, core emotional experience, and I was soaking it in. Although I didn't understand the depths of what people were feeling, I certainly understood despair and emotion. I understood that assassination was very wrong and we were there in support." She also talked about an early experience of being a victim of sexual assault and how she came to understand and combat this phenomenon with the right use of language - calling it what it was - and how this connected to multicultural work.

Maggie is a lesbian who married her partner, despite the fact that her family church was unable or unwilling to sanctify their union. Coming from a family that has three generations of Presbyterian preachers, she grew up listening intently to the people around her who were biblical scholars and interpreted scripture beyond basic moral guidelines, seeking to understand scripture on a deep philosophical level. I could hear how this set the tone for Maggie's life work and reflective nature. She, herself, attended seminary to complete a Master of Arts in Values and she wrote her thesis on domestic and sexual violence. The thrust of her current work with women in education is about

helping them directly face and describe abuses they have suffered. She believes this is part of the healing and preventative process.

Of all of the topics of abuse, sexual abuse is the hardest to talk about. Because we can't talk about sex very well as a culture, we talk about sexual abuse of children even less. It's a horrifying element that should not be part of any of our lives. Let's take that one on, and if we can learn to find language to talk and address that topic, maybe we can chip away at some of these others.

Maggie has chosen to work in a community college to give voice and new language to women who want to make change in their lives. Maggie is all about education and creating safety as a path to empowerment.

Maggie has experienced oppression and sabotage because she is a lesbian and the step mother of children of color. Her perspective on multicultural competence and its significance in student affairs is clearly connected to her personal experience of not being able to be fully herself or "out" in certain situations, because homophobia exists in the minds of many of the families and students in her work. I found Maggie to have incredible depth in her reflection on and understanding of what social justice is, and I have great respect for the risks she has taken and the injustice she has suffered to promote social change. I gave her a Reike candle for courage. "I'll be for Differences until Differences No Longer Make Any Difference" is the theme to which her words gave voice.

Individual structural description. Maggie brought to this study a depth of understanding and reflection of self, starting with her complete humility at being seen by a colleague as multiculturally competent. "How can I, as one person and one life experience, know all there is to be competent in representing all the multiplicity of who we are? That's, I think, what I am in awe of." Maggie comes at fighting and understanding oppression from all sides. She was influenced in her early years by her liberal and religious parents who set the tone for her social justice commitment in her adulthood. "I was really lucky. My parents are both people who believe in social justice and so that flair for trying to make the world a better place has been something I've lived

with all my life... The other thing is that we were ‘cherished’ children. And I think that makes a huge difference.”

Figure 6: Maggie’s Interview Themes

Humility	Fundamental Beliefs
Inspired By Others	Working Myself Out of a Job
Concept of Multicultural Competence	Coached Awareness
Philosophical Vision	Diversity Martyr
Gender Inequity	Community Profile
Religious Foundations- Early Experience	Power and Oppression
Class Consciousness	Threatened
Exposure to All Kinds	Hate Crime
Social Justice Belief and Understanding	Sabotage as a Tactic of Oppression
Experience of Inequity Due to Being a Lesbian	Vindication
Parental Influence	Support from Others
Internal Religious Conflict	Understanding Oppression
Mentor	Almost Seminary
Social Movement Engagement	Fear of Reprisal
Association with People of Color	Allies
Racist Myth Development	Challenging Ideas
Work with Domestic and Sexual Violence	Training
Social Climate around Issues	Forging Onward
Multicultural Competence Skill Identification	Deep Connection with Social Justice, Social Action
Creating Safety among Individuals and Groups to	Personal Loss & Death
Express and Be	
Family Tragedy	Education Innovation
Victim Offender Evolution...Question	Educational Philosophy
Formal Education	Challenging Authority
When Martin Luther King Jr. Died- Era of	Wrongfully Accused - Potential Discrimination of
Socialization	Sexual Orientation

Maggie talked a lot about her childhood impressions of religion and spirituality and how these wove the web of her life philosophy. “I was really surrounded by Biblical scholars, people who looked at the big picture rather than just ‘how does this text relate to today?’ I sort of snuck into a lot of those conversations and that was allowed.” Her parents also were involved during the Civil Rights Movement, and so she was, at a very early age, marching in solidarity with African Americans seeking equality. Her parents moved their family a lot because her father, a Presbyterian minister, would take on small churches with a diverse population, not your traditional (white, middle class, Anglo-Saxon) congregation.

[My dad] would invest in community building and he would bolster up a community and then about the time they were doing OK then he would leave. So he would pull in people that were kind of outcasts. So we had a lot of people that were not mainstream folks, and so that’s one of the reasons that they were only small community churches because we weren’t pulling in the big, the wealthy populations.

This was the beginning of her class consciousness and her ability to see the differences in social stratification.

Her level of contemplation and truth seeking continued throughout her formal and informal education. She talked about an author who opened up to her a new dimension on power and privilege.

I was taught to be tolerant, compassionate, understanding, and benevolent. Suzanne Pharr says that *equality*, which is also something I believed in, is more than tolerance, understanding, compassion, and benevolence. Because that still comes from a place of superiority and that there’s something *wrong* with somebody else and that’s why you can understand them. There’s something that must be overcome and that’s why you tolerate them. Equality is something vastly different than those really wonderful values that I was raised with. And that was startling to me. It was kind of like, “OK, if I’m compassionate and tolerant and working for justice, it still doesn’t mean that I understand shared power.” It’s not the same. Taking care of somebody else isn’t the same as seeing them as equal in this world, and that’s where I wanted to walk.

Maggie illustrated her understanding of this reckoning many times over in her professional life. She has worked in the domestic violence and sexual assault movement

which aimed to empower the victims. She worked to help children who had been victims of sexual abuse find ways to claim victory back over their lives. Currently she is the director of an entry program for displaced homemakers and single parents. All of these activities work from an empowerment model. “If I can intentionally create safety, and we ground ourselves in being safe with one another, we can talk about really hard things in [our] lives. My belief is that you’re not going to need me someday, so I don’t want you to be reliant on me. I want you to build your own reliance.”

As a victim of a hate crime, Maggie experienced first hand sabotage as a tactic of oppression. She talked with painful recollection about an extremely stressful incident in the state office where she worked, where she believed she was wrongfully accused of something due to her sexual orientation. She described the paranoia that happens when someone seems to be covertly acting out of spite and targeting a person due to a judgment of their morality by damaging her professional reputation and tied to her sexual orientation. In this situation she found that she had the support of others who were willing to take a stand on her behalf and advocate for her and her partner. “I started to understand the difference between individual and institutional power. We had many individuals calling the state office [where we were accused of wrong doing] on our behalf.” She had one important ally which is an example of what happens in diversity work.

Probably the most vocal supporter was a woman defined today as the matriarch of the Jewish population in our county. We had this conversation that was like; ‘I’ll speak up against anti-Semitism and you speak up against homophobia’, and we aligned that way. I think that was something that was really important to both of us.

Maggie impressed me with how she integrated the experience of negative energy attached to the tough public exposure of her sexuality. Despite this setback she was determined to continue on with her work in social justice.

I think it made it me stronger personally. It’s on that whole continuum of oppressions and how horrible things can be. We had support and our families were pretty horrified by it, but they were supportive of us, and that’s really important. There are a lot of people who walk oppression alone and don’t have the support of family or friends [which] was really important [to me]....Those are the people who are more courageous than I’ll ever be because it’s important for me to have somebody believe in me.

And I think that takes me right back to childhood. My parents *believed* in me so I kind of expect people to be *believers* in each other. The world would be a better place. So it was hard to be criticized for something I didn't do. It was just used against me. It's hard, that's how oppression is.

Maggie's contemplation about how life experience helps in creating meaningful work is a foundation in her multicultural competence. "I believe that we're going to get to a place that is vastly different from where we are now and I'll never experience it in this life." She embodies many aspects of multicultural competence, particularly in her examination of how social context, power, and systems of oppression are felt and experienced in the real world. Her integrity and commitment to social justice through action is commendable and appreciated.

Co-researcher #5: Likes-To-Go

Individual textural description. Likes-To-Go is a Native American scholar who is strong on oral tradition and captivating in his story telling and allegorical teaching. When asked about where his multicultural competence originated, he went immediately into a story about his Indian grandfather "who had a reputation for saying that he never met a stranger and my mom says I have that same capacity." Likes-To-Go's ease and ability with people of all walks in life is evident in the crowd that engulfs him whenever he is in public. Likes-To-Go is half Native American and half dark Dutch. He is 57 years old and is a professor at a small university in the northwest. Prior to this academic appointment, he worked as a career counselor and diversity facilitator for a community college.

Although he is a faculty member now his foundation is in student services. He talked about coming full circle because he first went to a community college to be retrained after a motorcycle accident prevented him from continuing his career as a truck driver. There he met up with the dean of student services who embraced and supported him until he transferred to a four year university in Alaska. When he completed his master's degree in Community Psychology, he applied at his original community college and was hired by the same dean. His commitment to students is strong. One of his greatest contributions to students was when he began the first diversity initiative, a

community cultural diversity task force, at his community college. This action was inspired when he attended a state wide conference when the diversity movement was just beginning during the mid 90's.

In his role as a professor, Likes-To-Go still does work in student affairs with the Native American Student Union, International and Multicultural Student Unions, and as a Diversity Trainer for staff and students. His work is steeped in promoting cross cultural understanding by acknowledging and bringing to the forefront the diverse student body at his university. He worked for eight years on developing and finally implementing the first formalized training by the State Department of Education on an Indian Education Plan to have K-20 compliance with this plan. His work is multifaceted in terms of systems development around Native American issues, direct instruction to students in a non-traditional educational delivery format and sheparding of student activities. These activities include a summer camp for Indian children to keep them interested in learning, encourage them to graduate from high school, and inspire them to go to college. Likes-To-Go has a magnanimous attitude about his work because he believes he is finally living his dream. He reflected on some of his early struggles in bringing forth diversity awareness in the way he knew best, by oral tradition, story telling, and ritual. He remembered the harsh criticism he received by peers who didn't want to hear the "same old stuff at every in-service, we're doing it, get off of it, leave it alone, let it be...." He discussed the issue of tokenism when he chaired the diversity committee along with the only Black Woman at the college. They were the only people of color around the table. He remembered the "lip service" administrators gave to diversity training and activities but the emptiness of their true commitment. In taking his rightful place as a Native American scholar at his university, he feels he now has legitimate authority to press forward issues of social justice and multicultural competence. He is home.

As a Native American, Likes-To-Go connected almost every aspect of his being to his family and the lessons learned from their experiences. His stories and teaching spanned the "seven generations" wisdom of his people. His consistent reference to who has come before him and the work set out for him to help his children and his children's children was evident in almost every response. Likes-To-Go's gregarious nature,

enchancing stories, historical perspective, and ideas of the civilized superiority of indigenous cultures helped me to understand another world perspective. I gave him a Reike candle for confidence. “Seven Generations and Elder Wisdom” is the theme inspired by Likes-To-Go, which came forth with an unchallenged, grounded truth.

Figure 7: Likes-To-Go’s Interview Themes

Honoring & Justifying Different Academic	My Father was a Racist
Ancestral Sanction	Belonging to a Card Carrying Minority
Multicultural Competency Identification	Mentor Magic
How Multicultural Competence Looks or Fits	All My Relations
Deep Truth/ Cellular Truth	Native American Ways
Universal Family- We are all the Same	Elder Wisdom / Family Authority
Transcending Boundaries	Traditions or Teaching in a Different Voice
Finding Similarities	Family History
Cultural Connections/ Shared Experiences	Multicultural Me
Oppression through the Ages	Campus Climate
Family Ties / Seven Generations	Strategies to Teach Multicultural Competence
Connection to the Whole: Seven Generations	Multicultural Awareness in Teaching
Equality- We Are All Human	Institutional Racism
Power of Language	Diverse Representation
Racial Oppression and its Blow to Identity	Civilized Superiority of Indigenous Cultures
Spirit is Everywhere	Social Justice Definition on the Continuum
Cultural Borrowing/ Mix Up/ Keep it Clear	Teaching Tolerance by Participation & Inclusion
Social Justice by Inclusion	Web of Life Interconnectedness
Observation of a Master	Four Times....Four Questions
What’s in a Name? (Name changes to hide ethnic origin)	Cycles of Life
	Exposure and Observation

Individual structural description. Likes-To-Go wove a tale that brought in the spirit world through the beliefs of the Native Americans. His commitment to the oral tradition is a skill that he has mastered and wants to promulgate in students.

I am working very, very hard in our academic realm [university and teaching and learning center] to actively do research on qualitative measuring devices that we're developing to demonstrate retained knowledge through the use only of language and use of the oral tradition. All the core courses for our Native Studies program here at the university are taught in the oral tradition.

This was an important portal to his story as he unraveled his family history that he knew so well. He attributed much of his learning to one of his first teachers, his grandfather, who was a Native American man and mason in Oklahoma in the 20's. He talked about the compromises to his heritage, all the false names he had to use in order to work, and the oppression that has had a lasting effect on his people. Likes-To-Go, as the youngest child in a multigenerational family, had the benefit of spending time with his grandfather during his elder's reflective years.

He, he told me to "look not to the color of the skin but instead to the color of the heart" of each person that I came to. Because there was good and bad in every race and the only way you were ever going to know was to look at the color of the heart and how it was that they interacted with you and the people around you. He also gave me four questions that have guided, very much, the living of my life. The first is "Am I happy in the way that I am living my life?" The second is "How do others speak of me when I have left their presence?" The third is "How do I speak of others when they have left my presence?" The fourth is "What am I doing to lessen the confusion of the world?" I haven't always been the best at listening and heeding the advice but he told me that "When you get ready to make a decision, you imagine me or your grandma or your other grandma or your aunties that you love so much or your mom, standing right beside you and when you make that decision, are they going to be able to hold their head up and look at you with straight eyes or are they going to have to avert their eyes and look to the ground?"

Likes-To-Go calls this "Ancestral Sanction" and he connected this to the Native American Seven Generation Philosophy. "Because as Indian people, we're not supposed to bring shame on our family, we're supposed to bring honor on our family. It becomes [our] responsibility to add to the honor on that name as [we] go through life."

Likes-To-Go synthesized multicultural competency into one word-empathy. Practicing this brings value to the human element and if we can all accept our humanness then we realize that we are all one.

I ask students all the time, “How many of you were born of woman with the aide of man? How many of you, if you cut your finger, it hurts? What color is that that comes to the surface there? What’s in that red blood?,” and we go down to cells. When we go to cells we go to RNA, DNA and we talk about traditional, natural relationship, and traditional knowledge, ancient memory, medulla oblongata, and the reptilian brain. For Native American people, that’s the repository for ancient memory that all of the wisdom of our ancestors since beginning time resides within us, down through time. It’s in our cells. Not just hair color, eye color and good nose features, but all of the wisdom of our ancestors are inside our body, it’s inside the cells in our body. So when we hear a truth, an inherent truth from those ancient times, sometimes we’ll get goose bumps, which are little people telling us, “You’ve just heard an elemental truth.”

As long as we’re living, our heart is making a vibration within our body. The drum does that to people. It brings that out in them. It awakens something elemental in them. For us we say the drum being the heartbeat, it reminds us of the first sound we ever heard, the sound of our mother’s heart beating. If we can go to that elemental of a place, that basic of a place with those of the family of the two-legged, red, yellow, black and white, then we find that we have very little disruptive material in between true communication. If you can get right down to the heartbeat of something with someone, all of the rest of the stuff, the societal stuff that’s in the way, disappears, and you go right to the very basic. So if we look at that and we look at that we’re all born of woman or all breathe in the air, we’ve all got a heartbeat, we’re all going to follow that same cycle, then really how different are we? We break it right down. How different are we? We’re only different because we choose to see and make that difference palpable.

Likes-To-Go illustrated to me a different way of looking at others from a cultural standpoint that is based on an integrated spirituality, not religion.

In an introduction to the social constructs of native society, [spirit] has to be a part of the academic discussion. We have to be very careful in saying, “This is not an act of conversion. This is an act of *inclusion* to demonstrate to you and instruct to you the societal structure of Native American people.” We cannot look at it without the inclusion of the spirit because everything in our entire world centers around the spiritual connection of the individual to their higher power, and their relationship to everything

else that lives. That's it in a nutshell. That's our whole philosophy. My old Lakota dad used to say, (oh he had the most wonderful voice) "You know, if there is too much mystery attached to it, it usually is not ours." Our ways are very simple and yet there's been so much stereotypical influence on the mystical American Indian having supernatural powers and abilities.

One of the responsibilities the Native American community has placed on our society is to make our decisions by looking ahead seven generations from now.

We talk about what service in the Native community mean. That's the definition of "warrior." [It] means in service to the people, even to the giving of one's life. So that what you do, you do for the benefit and well being of the people of the community and that community isn't just the people but it's the entire web of life because we're taught and raised, and our philosophy says that we are a part of the greater "whole", that everything is interconnected and interrelated, and so what I do today affects the web of life [forward] seven generations.

Likes-To-Go was full of elaborate stories that all came around to his guiding philosophy that he will not judge people based on the color of their skin, but consider only what they do on a job, or how they conduct themselves in the community, or how they take care of their family. Likes-To-Go has carried on this elder wisdom he learned from his grandfather.

Co-researcher #6: Socorro

Individual Textural Description. Socorro is a young professional, age 29, who is well educated and accomplished. Nahuatl, a Mayan dialect, was her first language. Spanish quickly followed, as she was raised until adolescence in Mexico City. She learned English in the United States, and she studied Japanese in college. She is someone who has an amazing capacity to apply herself to the learning process. She has a diploma from a high school in the Los Angeles area, a Bachelors of Science degree in Gerontology and Human Development from a western state university, and a masters degree in Higher Education Student Affairs from a state university in New England. She was raised by a single mother with one precious sibling, a brother who is 12 years her junior. She literally came to this county packed inside a suitcase at the age of 12. The

three of them lived with her grandparents, who were in the states picking fruit. She was able to get residency and college financial aid since her grandparents were granted amnesty and her mother became a citizen. I asked her about important influences while she was growing up. She talked about a difficult childhood living with parents who both suffered from mental illness which led to having an unstructured and sometimes violent edge in her family. She spoke lovingly of her grandmother who was a stable role model, a woman who worked from pre-dawn to midnight, and someone who taught her about life, persistence, and work. Socorro has not been back to Mexico because legally it has been a challenge for her to become a US citizen, especially after the 9/11 incident.

Currently she is Director of Student Activities and Leadership Programs at an urban university in the northwest. This is her second job in higher education, her first being Associate Director of Student Activities at a private liberal arts college in California. As a student affairs professional, she was one of two co-researchers in this study who were under the age of 35, both of whom hold graduate degrees with a student affairs concentration. Her comments about her experience as a person of color in a primarily white graduate program were telling in that while one professor taught about white privilege, her syllabus and reading reflected only the perspective of a white person and not people of color. Socorro and two non-white classmates struggled with the topic. "...as I looked at the question, there was no possible way for me to answer that because I'm not white, and I've not experienced my life in that way." This reflects Socorro's assertive and well defined identity as a Latina woman who is educated, professionally accomplished, and working in a field where she has passion, experience, and a desire to make a difference. Her keen sense of students at her campus was astute when she discussed how students of color are embedded in programs, not just in multicultural activities. She described the college's remarkable support of the GLBT population by having genderless rest rooms and how her office responded by making maps to them. Her awareness of what of making all activities and events accessible to all students comes from her experience of living in two worlds. As a bicultural professional, it became second nature to her to view issues and events from multiple perspectives. "I made a strong commitment to really look for places that didn't have [that] perspective...I was

one of four people of color who worked at the college, and I decided that that's the kind of place that needs my perspective. I am not going to do it in an aggressive way, but I will certainly come to the table and help others build multicultural competency."

Socorro has a deep sense of who she is and her role in education at this time. Her carefully sequenced educational and professional tracks are admirable and hopeful for the world of student affairs. She has never forgotten her humble beginnings and even now that she is settled in the northwest, she still connects with her younger brother as a second mother and caregiver. But her most poignant recollection was about how she knew in high school that it would be up to her to take care of her brother and the advice she got from others was to get an education in order to get a good job. "He is probably the number one reason that I got an education, because I knew in order to provide for him I would have to get an education, because in the U.S. that translates into money." Socorro came to this country at a young and intelligent age. She quickly learned what moves someone ahead in this new society. Her deep contemplation and integration of diversity work was evident in the interview. I gave her a Reike candle for peace. She inspired one theme by her comments on helping low-income first-generation white students when she pointed out that she believes "Class Trumps Color".

Figure 8: Socorro's Interview Themes

Educational Philosophy	Open to Learning
Immigrated in a Suitcase	World is Flat
Multicultural Competence Identification	Passion as the Role Model
Mentor Magic	Sharing Information Dialogue
Covert Bias: What's in a Name?	Diversity in Action
Multicultural Competence: Strategies of Support	Controversy with Civility
Diversity Embedded	Recognizing Multicultural Competence Potential
White Privilege Overrides Even in Cultural	Social Justice VS Multicultural Competence (US
Pluralism Class	Style)
Moving an Agenda Forward	Family Influence - Elder Wisdom
When Class Trumps Color	Commitment to Family as Motivation
Letting Others Make Choices	

Individual structural description. Socorro holds a keen awareness and sensitivity for a person's social positioning. As a Latina woman, she has no detectable accent, yet she has experienced what she referred to as "covert bias" not so much in the campus community but in the broader one. "I was very much aware that my name raised a lot of flags whenever I paid for something." Part of her ability to keenly identify issues of privilege and class has been the result of being in graduate school at a time when looking at white privilege was part of the curriculum. In her situation, though, it almost backfired; she shared an experience when the professor was trying to teach to the concept of multicultural competence. In attempting to help her class understand their white privilege as it would pertain to their practice, the teacher overlooked the fact that there were three students of color in the room.

At the start, the majority of the time was spent on white privilege, and unpacking the white knapsack, white privilege, and white dominance. So the three of us, kind of dealt with it a little bit and started to think, "OK, well that's good, because the majority of the cohort is white, and so it's good and it's good for us to know and have some common language about it." About the second week in, we received a paper that we had to take back and kind of write on a topic, and kind of got pretty frustrated with the topic because it dealt around white privilege and how do you as a white person do x, y, and z....So the three of us got together, decided to go to the professor and say, "We're really struggling in this class, because it's really not being taught for us. The audience is white, and that's great, and that's probably very much needed, however in our experience, we are suffering. We're not learning, or we're not getting out of this class what we need to get out of it, because [we] are different."

The professor addressed their concerns with a shadow syllabus and final exam.

It was a little bit of a struggle, because our white cohort felt very like, "Is it us? Did we oppress you? What happened? We want you guys in our class." We really got to talk about what it was like for the first time, being a student of color in a predominately white institution, because that's not something that gets discussed a lot in undergraduate education [at least in my undergraduate experience].

This experience had a profound effect on Socorro's work as a professional in multicultural affairs. She became committed to making sure diverse points of

view were considered and not to make assumptions about the perceptions people make about color and whiteness.

As her consciousness about color continued to dominate her experience while she lived in predominantly white regions, she was taught by a mentor who was an African American woman.

You guys can complain that you have it hard here because it's predominately white, but everywhere in the world you're going to encounter that and if you continue to stay in the United States and work, most universities are predominately white so either (a) you learn to work with it and essentially suck it up and deal, and do the hard work, or (b) you need to find a university where people are going to be just like you, and is that the kind of place you want to work?

Her goal is to have diversity "embedded" not culled out.

I always tell folks that all of our students of color aren't just concentrated in multicultural groups. They are embedded everywhere, like the president of pre-dental is Columbian, student government president is open and out lesbian, students with disabilities are involved everywhere. I've not worked at a school where our student groups are so intentional about being accessible. This could probably be attributed to my bicultural experience, living in two worlds, which [was] awakened because I lived in Colorado and Vermont.

Socorro's first job out of graduate school was at a privileged private college where she worked with students of color who came from upper class families. This took her by surprise because she couldn't connect with the racial minority experience of her students. It was more an issue of class that divided the student population.

I think often times class is really the issue and not so much color. I think it's starting to get to that point. I came from nothing, and I saw it play out, when I worked at a private institution, that class was really the equalizer, or class was what made a huge difference. I often, interestingly enough, found myself advocating for white students who were first generation and didn't have access because the students of color who were at those institutions had come from very extremely wealthy families, so it was a little bit of a split personality for me. Class has a lot to do with everything I believe.

In working with students she often found herself in unexpected and fascinating conversations. The kinds of discussions she expected to have with students of color at her college, actually occurred with white, first generation, low income students.

The students of color at this institution [had] almost never thought of themselves as a person of color, so it was like, “Oh, I’m black, and what does that mean? I’ve not hung around other black students, or black people tell me I’m not really black because I [or my parents] have so much money.” At the same time, [I would] have conversations with white students that I’d normally found myself having or would have typically thought to have had with students of color.

Socorro realized that although the struggles are the same, that class was the common denominator. Socorro’s views on multicultural competence development and its importance to student affairs are significant because they reflect the change in graduate school preparation curriculum to include teaching this concept. She also was an example of changing student demographics in colleges and universities around the country.

Co-researcher #7: Chief Joseph

Individual textural description. Chief Joseph is a 52 year old white male with an appreciation for and perspective of feminist leadership. He is currently Dean of Student Services at a community college in the northwest. He held a similar role at a neighboring community college and also worked in the university system in residence halls at two state schools. His undergraduate degree was at a religiously affiliated school, and for a time he considered going to seminary. Instead, he entered a master’s program in student services. He eventually got his doctorate at a state university in education. Chief Joseph also worked in a human services agency. His heightened perception of women’s leadership styles seems to come from his years of being a practiced observer of effective leadership. His insights and comments about the evolution of women’s leadership spanned the last three decades. He couched them in the historical infrastructure of higher education which was devised to serve white men hundreds of years ago. “It’s relatively unchanged, and there are things, from policies to the time classes are scheduled, to the way forms are printed, to the lack of language, that we don’t even realize create a

disadvantage for certain groups of people who are not Anglo or majority culture.” His forthright views about the importance of mentors, recognizing institutional racism, understanding white privilege, and servant-leadership, were articulate and reflective of years of contemplation and experience. In his role as Dean of Student Services at one college and in his work with residential halls, he has taught many leadership classes.

Figure 9: Chief Joseph’s Interview Themes

Humility	Differences between 2 & 4 Year Schools
We are the Champions (Student Affairs)	My Dad Was a Racist and an Alcoholic
MH Woes (When a college goes bad)	Choices Made as a Child & Youth
Educational Background	Youthful Awakening for Social Justice
Almost Seminary	Servant Leadership
Mentors	Moral Disagreement with the Church
Undergraduate College Promoted Openness	Mission of Student Affairs
Institutional Racism	Spiritual Path Connects to Origins of Thought
Student House (Parent in Locus) as Good Training Ground	Educational, Professional Philosophy & Servant Leadership
Multicultural Competence Skill Identification	Response to Inequity
Diversity Debate: Student Led	Institutional Resistance
Need Advocacy from the Top	Leadership is Key
Reasons Multicultural Competence Begins in Student Affairs	Sniffing out Multicultural Competence in a Candidate
Old Leadership Low on Compassion	Hiring Practices to Ensure Multicultural Competence
Shifting Styles from Male to Female Leadership	Operationalizing the Concept
Lesbian Leadership	Linking Multicultural Competence to Values
Watch Where the Money Goes	Training Methods to Transform the Institution
Women’s Leadership Psyche & Patterns	Teaching Values to Student Affairs Students
Understanding White Privilege	Curiosity Moves us Past Fear
Leadership Buy-In	Link between Cognitive and Affective
Dynamic of Board & President	Leadership Philosophy
Role of Institutional Structure	Life Philosophy
We are the Underdog (Student Affairs: Misunderstood & Undervalued)	Higher Education Roles in Setting Tone and Future for Multicultural Competence

“The question about leadership is what is really going to provide someone with the ability to foster, become a champion, take from the cognitive and actually get it on the table with the use of resources and commitment, the issue of multicultural competence in an institution?” When asked about the origins of his social justice perspective and mission, he gave his one and only pause in the interview, because he didn’t know. He connected it to his participation in Methodist youth groups in high schools. The Methodist doctrines and attitudes about people who were different, particularly gays, lesbians, bisexual, transgendered, did not resonate with him. “This isn’t how I feel. The church is saying that’s evil and a sin but I thought that I didn’t want to be a part of that.” This is when he found student affairs as a place where he could extend his caring to all kinds of people, shepherd their development, and be true in alignment with his values. His spiritual quest to understand his passion for social justice and combating oppression reflects the expansive leader he is today.

What was most outstanding about Chief Joseph and what befits his name was his absolute certainty of what he believed in. He was clear about what he would not tolerate or live with in an institution. He could articulate his appreciation and dissect what he believes is needed for effective leadership in the new millennium. He called for a more widespread model of women’s leadership, which is a topic he has studied and observed. I gave him a Reike candle for wisdom. His powerful and unchallenged statement that “Leadership is Key” is a sentiment that is echoed in several interviews, however it was Chief Joseph’s clarity and words that named this theme.

Individual structural description. Chief Joseph is a man who delivered a passionate critique of systems in higher education that don’t serve student access and success well. His sentiments have developed after working in this system for a long time. He shared an in-depth perspective on diversity. His diatribe on college leadership stems from a variety of experiences he has had working with resistant and uninformed administrations. In addition, his experience with the marginalization of student affairs, fuels his critique.

The champions [for diversity], I think, on most campuses, are student affairs people. Unless there is somebody else in the faculty or the upper level administration, [supporting diversity initiatives] they are going to have a tough time being successful because student affairs has always taken a back seat to other budgetary areas... [Sometimes the attitude is like] “Well, if we have to pay attention to this, but we really don’t want to because it’s kind of a pain, let’s give it to student affairs.” There are even people who perceive that student affairs isn’t an honest-to-goodness profession. I think that’s why we are frustrated with our experiences on how colleges and universities have attempted to try to institute diversity or multicultural competency or whatever their focus was at the time.

Chief Joseph had many stories about challenges he’s had in creating a campus diversity committee without financial resources or changing priorities in upper levels of administration.

As a student of leadership himself, he talked about his views on the current status of the majority of leaders in higher education.

The people who are in their fifties to seventies right now suck at leadership. They’re horrendous. There is this incredible void of compassion and servant-leadership by this group of people who are my age, grew up post WW II, and... have not had to want much. (This is a categorical statement, I know; but I think I’m right.) They never had the fear of being hungry, of not having any shelter. My folks grew up during the depression, and they were poor, my mother still saves the tin foil that she bakes the potatoes in and reuses it. So I see my peers out there that are in leadership positions. They’re totally focused on themselves, and they have their agenda that they’re going to get done. Their model of leadership training, I think, if they’ve ever done any leadership training, comes from the real standard private sector stuff. Oh there’s some stuff that was reasonable years ago, top quality management, TQM, or something like that, but there’s a huge lack, I think, of integrity and morality, compassion, and people with a servant leadership mentality in people my age group. That’s the age group born in the 1940’s to 1960’s.

Chief Joseph talked a lot about compassion and the need for a different kind of leadership in this day and age. These mostly male leaders, he describes, were socialized during a time when a strong, “conquering” mentality was strong in the world. “There’s that white male kind of culture in leadership that is counter to another set of values, which is inclusiveness, social justice, fairness, equity.” He describes the term *servant*

leadership as “helping other people do what’s important to them, or achieve their goals, or support them to be successful in whatever [they chose].”

However, he very poignantly suggests that what the world needs now is to be saved and nurtured and that women know how to do this better than men. The difficult question for him to answer was how he knows this and why he feels so strongly about servant leadership.

I’ve always done what I’ve done because I’ve had some sort of, and I can’t understand it, inner drive about servant leadership. So I’m really struggling with what do I do? Here’s what I think needs to happen; I think there need to be more women in leadership in higher ed, there need to be more people with different abilities, more minorities, people with different religions, more gay/lesbian, there needs to be a lot more of that going on. I’m an old, fat, bald, white guy, what do I do to foster that? What do I do to make that happen?

Coming from his education in student development theory and its ready application to residential life, Chief Joseph has learned what works well with students of all backgrounds.

For multicultural competency I think there are systems in place that preclude, or make it very difficult for some of these things to be successful, but things that help are a system of values around inclusiveness, around compassion, around the student development point of view (take each student where they’re at), around servant leadership, around collaboration, which for me has allowed me to be open and to learn about other people. That’s where I think I got a lot of my multicultural competence, was just being around other people.

Chief Joseph had some definite ideas on how to create an environment where multicultural competence is actively being developed in staff and students. He thinks one can impact others’ multicultural competence with training. But for him the bigger question is how to transform the institution.

I taught leadership class every term at [that college] while I was there. And you know there’s theory in nature and nurture. People can be taught to be leaders or people can’t be taught. But I think that really the question is ‘What’s really going to provide the ability for somebody to foster, to become a champion, to take from the cognitive and actually get it out onto the table with the use of resources and commitment to the issue of multicultural competence in an institution?’ It’s about leadership. So the

next level is “Then how do you move people? How do you identify the faculty, or the dean, or the person applying for president, or whatever, [who] are at the next level?” They not only get it, they not only know it cognitively, and they know it affectively. It has made a link with their values system. There are many people that never link multicultural competency with their values system...How do you find people who go down here [to the heart] and not only say, “I understand it,” but “I need to support them to be able to do that because that’s what’s important for them to be able to succeed at this institution, and I understand why, but I also believe and want to institutionalize.” How do you find people who can link it with their values, and then really provide that passionate leadership to operationalize it?

We talked about a working definition of multicultural competency involving curiosity and he made an immediate connection to leadership.

[Y]ou know why people can be curious? It’s people who are not afraid. People who are fear based aren’t very curious, because they’re afraid of what they don’t know and the pain of what they know is less than the pain of what they don’t know. Or the pain of the fear of going there is greater than the pain of staying in what’s going on. I was really lucky and I think people I know that are successful in some of this stuff were lucky enough to have had mentors, [like I did] who helped [me] understand that everybody is afraid, but you need to move past the fear. Of course I’m going to be afraid; everybody’s afraid. Fear is important. It keeps you alive, but there are many administrators or many people in higher ed that are really afraid, so their natural curiosity gets stifled. How do you help people feel safe enough in a higher ed environment so that they can be curious?

Chief Joseph has been studying higher education administration for most of his career and his doctorate is in educational leadership. He fervently believes that leadership is the key in promoting social justice through the support of staff development in multicultural competence and diversity initiatives. He presented some compelling arguments about the lack of compassionate leadership in higher education today. “It makes me believe that helping all students, especially students who have been disadvantaged, is a way for me to move towards achieving that or living in resonance with that value.” As a leader-in-transition himself, he borders on burn-out, contemplates his cumulative experience, and continues to seek passionate application of his values for social justice.

This concludes the individual textural descriptions, the list of themes derived through the processes of horizontalization, invariant constituents, and imaginative variation, and individual structural descriptions. The next processes moved into data analysis which involved combining these textural and structural descriptions to connect and deepen the learning from these lived experiences.

Composite Textural and Structural Description using Imaginative Variation

Data analysis begins with the composite textural description as a collective representation of the commonalities of the co-researchers experiences. Imaginative variation was employed and through the utilization of imagination the phenomenon was approached from different perspectives and possible meaning was sought. Imaginative Variation offered the researcher license to determine the structural themes that emerged through textural experience. This part of the phenomenological reduction process assumes that there are countless possibilities to connect essences and meanings to experiences, not one single truth (Moustakas, 1994). The purpose was to uncover the underlying and precipitating factors that promoted the development of the multicultural competence, the knowledge, awareness, and skills, necessary to be effective with a diverse set of people. Following the composite textural description the analysis then moved to a composite structural description of how multicultural competence developed within each of this particular group of co-researchers. Essentially, the composite structural description suggested common perceptions of “how” this group of co-researchers experienced similar situations or the “what”, composite textural description of the experiences.

Composite Textural Description

Reflecting on life long development to describe how people come to be who they are in relation to others requires a complicated and multilayered recounting of their personal history. The co-researchers in my study all seemed to converge on some

common shared experiences that they could identify as having an impact on their development of multicultural competence as professionals.

Each co-researcher spent time talking about her/his family of origin. They discussed the way they were raised and who were the primary influences in their upbringing, were discussed as some of their earliest conscious beginnings for their current professional demeanor. Four of the co-researchers were people of color and, clearly, growing up as a minority had an impact on their world view toward other people. Two of these co-researchers came from families that addressed their racial heritage with pride and with direct intention to prepare them to face the world and the discrimination they were sure to combat. Another had to deal with lots of oppression and hardship due to her immigrant status while growing up. The fourth co-researcher had internalized racism caused because she was mixed race and her a mother and father identified with different cultural backgrounds and racial identities. All three white co-researchers had family experiences that impacted their awareness of others. One had a grandfather who was disabled, another had a father who was not only racist but an alcoholic, and the third had parents who were steeped in civil rights and social justice work so her exposure to the oppression of others came early. Family, for all of the co-researchers, provided them with experiences and attitudes that they interacted with all their lives, either embracing or rejecting what their parents modeled for them. Not everyone was accepted and cared for unconditionally, not everyone was guided with spirituality and religion, but everyone had a version of how their world view was framed by love from their families-of-origin. Each co-researcher could identify aspects of how their parents were a help and a hindrance to their personal development.

The era in which they came of age delineated the group into two camps, those who witnessed the social unrest of the 60's and those who came of age after the Civil Rights Movement had infiltrated the legal system and impacted acceptable public attitudes towards race, ability, and sexual orientation. Legislation like American's with Disabilities Act (ADA), Affirmative Action, Civil Union Laws, and Immigration laws had an influence on these co-researchers' lives and work. Depending on when they were born, these laws had and continue to have an impact on their lives. I noticed that younger

co-researchers grew up with a greater sense of entitlement about their rightful place in society and didn't have the same quality of fighting spirit that the older co-researchers had, who were aware and watching, some participating in, the tumultuous action of the late 1960's and 70's.

Obviously, racial identity and sexual orientation had an impact on several of the co-researchers due to the personal oppression that they experienced many times over in the course of their lives. However, race and sexual orientation had an equally potent role with the two white middle class co-researchers in their awareness and role as allies. Their perceptions of oppression were keenly developed due to the advocacy work they had both done with students and staff in higher education.

Each co-researcher related one or more personal experience in an educational setting that spurred their awareness of diversity and supported their development of multicultural competence. For several, their undergraduate experience had a profound effect on how they viewed the world guiding their development of critical thinking skills, social consciousness, and service orientation. One co-researcher talked extensively about her secondary school experiences as leaving a lasting impression on her. It taught her to stand up for the truth and challenge the status quo when something was just plain wrong. Several co-researchers recounted uncomfortable experiences in college where their minority status was singled out, which then fueled the co-researchers to lead future advocacy efforts. Every co-researcher is now employed as a professional at a higher education institution and each one discussed, at length, their role in promoting diversity and multiculturalism and in advocating for social justice.

All seven co-researchers hold leadership roles in their current positions and many talked about their leadership development either chronologically, through their resume of experience, or by their innate leadership traits that were identified earlier in their development and which continue to guide them in their professional lives. It is a question of which came first, the leader or the positional role. Each co-researcher revealed many characteristics of her/his leadership philosophy and characteristics throughout the interview. They eloquently described their vision of diversity and equality and their commitment to an educational system that is responsive and nurturing to all kinds of

students. Each of them also elaborated on their strategies for success, their experiences of failed initiatives, how they prioritize resources to support diversity work, and the professional development they not only seek for themselves but also offer to their staff to increase everyone's multicultural competence. Several co-researchers also told horror stories of misguided and prejudiced leadership that they had to battle and their assessment of an institution's integrity. Finally, all the co-researchers are currently employed in a student affairs division or actively involved in collaborating with student affairs at their college.

Composite Structural Description

Similar textural experiences shared by all the co-researchers' lead to the underlying dynamics and qualities that account for how feelings and thoughts result.

The understanding of oppression either personally or vicariously, combined with a graduate degree and positional power, fuels the mind, body, and spirits of this group of co-researchers. Their passion for their work was instinctive and they had a conscious intention to work for social justice and equity in their institutions and, by extension, through the cultivation of their students, the whole planet. Each co-researcher seemed to hold the sanctity of life as similar to assuring access to higher education for everyone. Their enthusiasm to meet this philosophically driven goal was contagious. Their responses illustrated a level of thoughtfulness that was inspiring and sometimes distracting to the core questions of this study, because it became intriguing to know more about the strategies they employ in their institutions to assure a sustained and welcoming home for each person in their college. Their work to guide and lead diversity efforts comes from a deep place inside their souls that believes in truth and justice. Seeing or feeling the damage of discrimination and oppression had a profound effect on each co-researcher, and in their personal and professional development they made a decision to combat all forms of oppression they had the power to change.

Not every person talked about her/his spiritual belief system, but all of them held a belief in their virtue and goodness which kept them going because it gave them a sense of fulfillment. Their multicultural competency was activated from a deep place in their

emotional being, which continued to spark their commitment to work effectively with all people. The co-researchers' awareness of social injustice in society or from personal discrimination motivated them to consciously work for social change. All of them found refuge and support for this potential in higher education. Each person saw her/his role in higher education as an agent for change, not only for students, but also within the system. Many of them have met resistance from others for their efforts, either in public or covertly, but amazingly it didn't deter any of them. For several co-researchers their commitment to diversity and social justice meant conflicts would ensue, for others it meant leaving a job because leaders in their institution were not aligned with their values and, in one case, even the mission of the college.

Particularly among the older co-researchers, there was sometimes a sense of being weary of fighting the good fight, because, no matter how long or hard they have been at this work, there is still so much unconsciousness in their institutions, both with their students and staff. For the younger co-researchers there was a particular freshness and excitement of where their careers might lead them now that they were walking down the track of multicultural awareness. All of the co-researchers held leadership positions and each one talked about unique contributions they brought to their institutions: training and educational experiences for staff and students, culturally derived pedagogical methods, financial resources to fund diversity initiatives, and support for student organizations that were internally driven by empowered students. They have helped to create systems of organization that help to place student affairs in the forefront of the institution because of the work they do to promote multicultural competence. They understand their division's mission of "caring for the whole student".

Textural-Structural Synthesis

This final step in data analysis integrates the composite textural and composite structural descriptions, suggesting a synthesis of meanings and essences of the collective lived experience of developing multicultural competency in one's lifetime. Here I will describe the collective themes that emerged as common to the co-researchers'

experiences. Not every co-researcher had an individual theme fall into each cluster category but if there were four or more co-researchers who contributed to a category, then it became one of the fourteen themes. These collective themes seemed to fit into three core realms; Personal, Professional, and Structural. Not every theme was illustrated in each co-researcher's individual textural or structural description due to the volume of material and intent to focus on different aspects from each interview. However, I did cluster all the individual themes into these fourteen common themes in order to preserve the integrity of the holistic responses I heard from each co-researcher.

Personal Realm

In essence, seven themes characterized the personal dimension of developing multicultural competence.

Personal humility: understanding of self. Humility was a universal theme in the co-researchers of this study. None of these people self-selected themselves. Their names came to me via their colleagues who had first-hand experience observing and working with them. Within the first ten minutes of three interviews, the majority of co-researchers expressed their surprise at being nominated with a modest sentiment. There was a common understanding that her/his multicultural competence could only be measured on a continuum and that she/he would probably never be completely multiculturally competent.

I am still sort of overwhelmed by the idea that I am somebody who has multicultural competence because I say that on an incredible continuum of understanding, and although I'm proud of what I know and what I've gone through to gather that together [through] all the experiences that are there, I just feel like I'm baby steps into the world. (Maggie Interview, 2006)

As we progressed into the interview, nonetheless, the depth of their understanding and experience of multicultural competence was profound. They were humble and unassuming, yet powerful in their commitment and belief of the connection with all the people they serve. For some, they launched directly into what they believed was the

origination point of their awareness of multicultural competence, often in connection to their family upbringing or significant role models. Others simply expressed a level of self-effacement about this selection process. Humility came out in other ways as well during the interviews; co-researchers gave examples of vulnerable points in their lives, their passion and belief in equality and social justice, and experiences where they had to go to really fight for, almost martyr themselves, on a particular issue pertinent to diversity and equality. Another repeated illustration of co-researcher humility was that they still identified as learners and expressed that they still had a long way to go in their increased development of multicultural competence.

Inspired by others: mentors and role models. Part of how one assesses another's multicultural competence is by their awareness of others. Five co-researchers explicitly talked about someone in their lives who made a tremendous impact on them in the form of teaching, advocacy, coaching or counseling, and/or unconditional support. I heard about inspiration gained from experiences that co-researchers had witnessed in their families, workplace, and motivational leaders. "One of the greatest people I've ever met told me... 'to be chief of all the people, one has to understand *all* the people'. I've always taken that to be very true words" (Likes-To-Go Interview, 2006). Several co-researchers referenced important speeches they had heard or books they had read. I was amazed at how often several co-researchers were able to recite the exact phrases they had memorized and repeat for comfort and renewed purpose. I also heard co-researchers talk about how the teams of people they had worked with, or volunteered with, had an impact on their lives, because they were drawn together with others to make a change toward greater equality, access, or social justice. These co-researchers were inspired by the sentiments of love, respect, truth, and empowerment that others shared with them.

I'll be for differences until difference no longer makes a difference. Each co-researcher told stories of how they had experienced diversity in action, either from an initiative they were personally involved in or from one that they watched others perform. They shared the opinion that it is important to put one's values on the line and be willing

to act on one's beliefs. This involves self-awareness, personal growth, a willingness to take risks, and support from others. "[I] understood that [I] had an obligation to make a difference so I think that [was a] kind of diversity work before it was called *diversity*. [It] was about bringing people together who would not be the in-crowd and didn't have a voice" (Nia Interview, 2006). I also heard examples of how people dealt with conflict and confrontation in order to stand behind their beliefs by learning how to navigate in situations where they needed to fit in first in order to make their point. They were willing to explore and process controversy with civility and help develop power and clarity of one's own voice. Compassion, empathy, justice, and commitment were the underpinning of the co-researchers' commitment to diversity work.

Religious foundation and spiritual guidance. Five co-researchers chose to weave their spirituality into their reflections on how they have come to be multiculturally competent. This came in the form of religious institutions, such as the church and religiously affiliated colleges, and also cultural spiritual practices.

When I first started at [college] every year our Phi Theta Kappa induction was on Monday night in September during Yom Kippur, and I finally said 'We can't do this anymore. What if we have students who are Jewish? They can't attend this ceremony, neither can their families, and neither can our faculty. But it wasn't in their universe to think about that sort of thing.(Lita Interview, 2006)

Although none of them talked about being currently engaged in organized religion, several talked about the effect religion had on them while they were growing up, particularly in sparking their concern for social justice. Three co-researchers directly related their college experiences to the development of a spiritual foundation, because they felt carefully guided to understand others, and developed pro-active compassionate agendas as a result of their learning, which allowed them to engage as productive citizens and leaders. For those that brought it up, there was an evolution in their religious experiences from a place of guidance in partnership with parents, to becoming self actualized spiritual beings that operated from a frame of reference that has a spiritual quality to it but without a specific prescription for what that looks like. The Native American co-researcher could not separate the spiritual from the cognitive. His eloquent

descriptions were like an intricately woven cloth where the warp and the weft were spirit and practice just like the complementary colors, patterns, and textures of a blanket.

Seven generations forward: listening to elder wisdom. Every co-researcher in this study spent significant time talking about their family upbringing. This was enhanced by characteristics of how they were raised, places they have lived, and contrasts they could see in other cultures and lifestyles. Many people talked back into their family tree and identified their roots by the countries and cultural norms that they could relate as major influences of who they are.

So my family has had an influence in terms...of how I live my life and skills I've learned about how to be with people and how to live...very clean, very detailed,, very minimalist...But probably what had the [greatest] influence was the birth of my younger brother. He is the number one reason that I got an education...I thought, if I want my younger brother to not have the childhood experiences that I had, we need money. (Socorro Interview, 2006)

Two co-researchers rebelled against racist family members by being the opposite and this caused tension within their family. Families of origin had a huge effect on each co-researcher, whether or not they contained elements that could be described as multicultural, immigrant, minority, middle class, religious, sexist, racist, homophobic, mentally ill, disabled, tragic, working class, or wise. What was profound to me was how they could identify the quality and put it in the perspective of its influence on their development, with respect, reflection, and accountability. Although the term “seven generations” was only used by two co-researchers, each person talked about their work in education as helping to build a healthier future for individuals, nations, and the whole planet.

Understanding oppression: personal experience facilitates skills development. The co-researchers ranged from having experienced oppression directly to having the intimate experience of being an ally to a person or group who had been exploited. The significance is that this level of personal experience facilitates multicultural competence. Co-researchers talked about racial discrimination from life threatening experiences to

uncomfortable social situations. One co-researcher was a victim of a hate crime and recounted a tale of sabotage as a tactic of oppression. One co-researcher talked about the pain his family felt when all his elders told stories of being stripped of their native culture in boarding schools and the pain and shame of assimilation.

Inner cities have troubles, yeah, and the poor south, rural areas and stuff, but they don't have the same kind of poverty: intellectual, [oppression], and spiritual poverty in these reservations. [This was the] impact of the boarding school experience on Indian people [and] the exclusion of us from our history and from any participation in the development of this country. (Likes-To-Go Interview, 2006)

Another co-researcher felt the legal ramifications of her people struggling with challenges of immigration. Many talked about the inequities they felt in their own educational experiences as directly influencing their current work in advocating for a more welcoming environment in our institutions. Clearly, the recognition of power and oppression was a refined skill for everyone in this group of co-researchers.

Commitment to social justice for all. Every co-researcher weighed in with their beliefs and attitudes toward social justice. In some ways there was a blurring of terms when they talked about social justice and multicultural competence. One co-researcher saw them as separate and distinct, social justice being about human rights and taking action, while multicultural competence is about a critical skill set needed to work with all students and staff. As explored earlier, everyone in the study was impacted by the Civil Rights Movement, either as a vital connection in their youth or as a recipient of legislation that has attempted to modify social behavior by creating parameters of practice in institutions.

[One quote that was] meaningful to me and helped to change my thinking is by Eduardo Galliano. He says "Dominant power tells us that tomorrow will be the same as today". That's what I don't want. But that's the truth as he captured it and it presses me forward...[Life] can be so much richer than that, we're so much better than that. (Maggie Interview, 2006)

This theme originates in the personal realm but crosses over into the professional realm. Every co-researcher had a deep and profound internal

commitment that they could verbalize about working to combat oppression in their professional role. For some co-researchers this meant leaving positions or careers that included working for diversity and equity because, in reality, the system or current administration put up barriers so that they could not be successful or effective.

Professional Realm

In essence four themes characterized the professional dimension of developing multicultural competence.

Eloquent educational philosophy for inclusion, empowerment, respect, and being a learner. All co-researchers were able to articulate an educational philosophy that contained inclusion, empowerment, respect for diversity, and being a learner themselves. I was impressed by the sophistication of each co-researcher's vision of the beliefs that fuel their work in education. Every co-researcher articulated a commitment to access to education for all students, along with an understanding of what it takes to retain students once they are enrolled. The co-researchers' educational philosophies were developed by their own personal experience, formal education, literature and professional development, educational trends and forecasts, and a willingness to continue to learn. Several co-researchers clarified the differences between two and four year schools, pointing out how the presence of residence halls creates a critical imperative to have a multiculturally competent staff to be effective in caring for students living away from home for the first time. Others talked thoughtfully about pedagogical methods needing to be changed from the traditional "teacher as the expert" to embrace different educational theories and practices around student learning and engagement. A central theme for everyone was education as a great equalizer in American society. "It was very clear that education was the antidote to prison for African Americans [at risk in the legal system]...Education was always seen as...the hope for the race, no question...Education gives you options" (Nia Interview, 2007). While several co-researchers denounced any naiveté on how this really

works, they still felt it was a reasonable hope and worthwhile venture to achieve economic success, increase life chances and social mobility, and to empower oneself with knowledge and experience.

Authentic and transformational leadership philosophy. Every co-researcher was an authentic leader. They all held positions of power that gave them legitimate leadership authority over specific areas of their college. Some were more seasoned than others, but all of them came from a place of self-knowledge and a right use of power and operated from fundamental beliefs about their responsibility to others. I would also label each of them as a transformative leader. They use their visions and philosophies to move forward agendas that promoted diversity and equity in ways that were appropriate to their colleges, students, and staff. When doing diversity work on the concept of being an ally, one co-researcher asked herself and others

When I say we all have privilege, I'm not going to question whether you have privilege. I am just going to ask "How will you use your privilege? You have the capacity to influence and change where I can't speak. Are you going to flex your courage muscle and speak on behalf of those who can't?" (Nia Interview, 2006)

This basic understanding seemed to permeate each co-researcher's reflection on the role they intended to play around developing multicultural competence within their institution. This seemed like a tangible aspect of every co-researcher. There was a connection with a deep and almost cellular truth, that this work was non-negotiable for each person. They were in it for the long haul, for seven generations ahead of now, as one co-researcher put it "working to put myself out of a job" (Maggie Interview, 2006). Even in instances of philosophical differences, the integrity of their leadership decisions were solid.

Embracing students as teachers: what we learn from them. There were many stories about working with students. These co-researchers all work in student service or student affairs divisions, although some of them are in leadership positions and do not have a high volume of student interface. However, all of them have had student-intensive

positions at some point in their careers. One reasonable expectation of a student affairs professional is their regard for student opinion, care for student needs, and intention to guide students' development. "I think my connection with students is that a student can come and tell me [anything]...There's not much a student can say to me that I haven't been able to relate to. I hope they feel safe, talking to me about what is happening to them. (Shanidar Interview, 2006). Several of the co-researchers referred to student development theory as shaping the type of activities and services their college supported. What seemed most important is that all of the co-researchers really had a good sense of who their students were, the range and diversity that would impact enrollment and retention, and a genuine appreciation and curiosity for what a diverse student body brings to an institution. I heard stories of how students were supported in their self advocacy, their original initiatives, and their challenging of the status quo and authority at their institutions. Appropriately, students were at the heart of these co-researchers' purposeful work; everything radiates from caring for the student.

What the face of intelligence looks like: issues of race, gender, sexual orientation, (dis)ability, and class. This was a powerful theme on a professional level for every co-researcher. It represents the experiences they have had personally and with students that dispel any stereotypes or myths that suggest that social stratification according to class, race, genders, sexual orientation, or ability, is an accurate reflection of potential, capability, intelligence, or success. "There's a presumption about [who] is capable based upon those with whom you've studied, those with whom you've engaged. Ask yourself, how many non-white people were in your undergraduate program?" (Nia Interview, 2007). Their experiences as minorities, or as an ally for a minority population, helped them to understand social injustice, often by an experience of discrimination. In their professional roles they all work against discrimination and injustice. I heard talk about the "assumptions and burdens for people of color" (Nia Interview, 2006), "belonging to card carrying minority" (Likes-To-Go, Interview, 2006), tokenism, internalized racism, gender inequity, gender attitudes, lesbian leadership, racist myth development, institutional racism, immigrating in a suitcase, victim/offender confusion, physical

adjustment, understanding white privilege, class consciousness, and “civilized superiority of indigenous cultures” (Likes-To-Go Interview, 2006).

There was no lack of breadth in describing discrimination of self and students. However, what was significant is that each co-researcher accepted her/his role to help educate their colleagues, staff and faculty, at their institutions. Several co-researchers addressed the issue that on most campuses there is still not a critical mass of staff and faculty who reflect the diverse backgrounds of students. They attribute this to an aging white professoriate and traditional hiring practices. Limited candidate pools exist because many minority students are still challenged by financial and academic access to college. An even deeper consequence of this lack of mirroring between the teachers and students is the assumption made about learning styles and classroom format and engagement. One final and significant sub theme is how “Class trumps color” (Socorro Interview, 2006) in many situations. This presents a challenge to “traditional” diversity efforts which began with a focus on race and gender and have relatively recently embraced sexual orientation and (dis)ability. Federal TRiO grants provide assistance to first generation, low income students but these grants do not actively encourage advocacy for class issues. Given funding streams, regional variation, and economic and political climate, I ponder how class could become more mainstream in diversity efforts on its own, not tied to race or gender.

Structural/Institutional Realm

In essence three themes characterized the structural dimension of developing multicultural competence.

Leadership is key: what is needed on an institutional level. Several co-researchers focused on the importance of having top administrators on board to promote diversity, equity, and therefore support the development of multicultural competence in all ranks of the college. This involves operatives such as an institutional mission, as it is realized

through budget allocation, human resource practice, proactive professional development of staff, and support of multicultural student activities.

The question is about leadership and that is what's really going to provide the ability for someone to foster, to become a champion, to take from the cognitive, and actually get it out onto the table with the use of resources and commitment, the issue of multicultural competence in an institution. (Chief Joseph Interview 2007).

Several co-researchers went deeper to describe how college administrative leadership's support, or lack of support, for diversity initiatives can have a significant effect on campus climate, power dynamics, positional power, and setting the tone for future efforts. Some co-researchers told stories of when the administration acted with multicultural competence in setting the tone, deciding on policy, and visioning toward the future. Others told painful tales of what can happen in an institution where the top leadership is not supportive or attached to promoting multicultural competence, particularly when there seems to be a change in priorities when there is shift in administrators. Many of the success stories came from co-researchers who were in high level administrative positions and work hard to support diversity on campus.. One reality is that this work is sometimes met with resistance and although we ask ourselves and others to increase our competence when working with students and colleagues, not everyone wants the same thing. Having top level leadership delivering a consistent message about the need for the whole institution to participate, learn, and grow is essential for progress to be widespread and not just in pockets around the organization.

Operating framework: multicultural work is mainstream. One co-researcher talked about how one of her advisors in graduate school tried to deter her from going into multicultural work because he saw it as a sideline to the core of student affairs. Her quick response was to say "Multicultural work is the mainstream" (Shanidar Interview, 2007). Co-researchers' demonstrated understanding of multicultural competence was recognizable in a variety of ways, by the strategies of support, training, consciousness raising, teaching, learning, and cultural sharing. "Looking back on my graduate program, [multicultural competence] should have been woven into the program, instead of just

saying, take this multicultural perspectives class. It has to be part of the core, then it can branch out” (Shanidar Interview, 2007). Co-researchers sometimes had a favorite effective strategy with students and another with staff, and most had a bag of tricks filled with experiences that intend to build multicultural competence. The co-researchers intention is to operationalize the concept so that it becomes more of a stated professional goal of all staff once they understand the essence of the concept. There is not one approach to achieve this shared vision however; the interviews were rich with diverse examples, best practices, and learning from mistakes. The resiliency in the movement to achieve equity in diversity is quite powerful.

Students affairs is the first line of communication, the back door, and the space in-between: All but one co-researcher was a student affairs professional currently but he (Likes-To-Go) had had significant long-term experience prior to his current faculty position. Everyone demonstrated fluency with the mission of student affairs, and several specifically referred to student development theories. What seemed to be universal is the agreement that student affairs has the most comprehensive relationship with students. This is because student affairs assists students in everything but the direct classroom instruction connected to their program of study. “With student services, these [multicultural] competencies are critical because the people we are dealing with have profound influence in determining how [students] experience this life...[We] have to mirror understanding beyond [ourselves] (Nia Interview, 2007). This supports the need for multiculturally competent staff, not only to recruit and enroll students, but to retain them as well. Several co-researchers talked about why they chose to study for a career in student affairs because they believed they could express their human values in this profession. This is a common belief of people who work in student affairs. This division has the potential to create relationships with students and colleagues that are high-touch and high-engagement through the design of services and programs that are inclusive and community-centered which is a demonstration of multicultural competence in student affairs.

Summary of Data Analysis

Overall this data analysis was aided by the combination of rich content from the interview narratives and the process-design of phenomenological reduction from the work of Clark Moustakas (1994). The material from the interviews was voluminous and might have been difficult to synthesize without the guidance from Moustakas's adaptation of the Van Kaam Method and examples of phenomenological reduction by Moerer-Urdahl and Creswell (2004), and Blodgett-McDeavitt (1997).

Contemplating and formulating the Epoche was a profound experience for me as the researcher. To reach back into my life and reflect on lived experiences that contributed to my cumulative multicultural perspectives was a meaningful exercise in self-awareness. It was an excellent grounding before the interviews began. The Epoche prepared me to anticipate the depth and breadth I would be hearing from my co-researchers.

The process of working with the data to uncover invariant themes prior to actual report write-up was an in-depth and thought-provoking exercise that ensured my familiarization with the content of the lived experiences of the co-researchers. As I mined the data during the horizontalization of themes exercise, each co-researcher's rendition of their lived experiences began to take individual shape in the form of her or his essential learning and unique perspective on multicultural competence. I was amazed at the collection of essences each co-researcher offered to the questions of this research study.

As I wrote the individual textural descriptions, I understood my privilege in visiting with these awesome human beings whose accomplishments I admired. Therefore, it became paramount that I capture the life highlights of each co-researcher and present them in a way that honored her or his personal and professional stories. When I wrote the individual structural descriptions, I worked diligently to select evocative excerpts from the interview to illustrate and bring each voice into the text of this dissertation so that others would benefit as I did from the tale of the co-researchers journeys toward multicultural competence.

Developing the composite textural and structural descriptions gave me an opportunity to create a common ground for all the co-researchers' lived experiences and to respectfully infuse these parallels with emotion, spirit, truth, wisdom, and hope. Finally, as I conducted the final textural-structural synthesis, it was liberating to merge the heart of the co-researchers' lived experiences into essential themes that are recognizable and can generate ideas and awareness for personal, professional, and institutional development of multicultural competency.

Section 5: Discussion and Implications

Exploring the journey of developing multicultural competence in seven student affairs professionals was a fascinating and rich experience for me as the researcher. I came to this study with a query as to how one develops multicultural competence in order to better serve and relate to students and staff who have diverse backgrounds. I finished with a sense of awe and appreciation about how the intricacies of lived experiences can be put into a learning context by intention. Admirably I saw each co-researcher as an intuitive, resilient, purposeful, and powerful leader practicing their multicultural competence with a commitment to diversity and equity in their institutions and in our society today.

Framing the Study with the Literature on Multicultural Competence

Ebbers and Henry (1990) were among the first to call for cultural competence in student affairs. They began the ongoing inquiry of how to approach the education of student affairs professionals to become multiculturally competent. The authors suggested that although most student affairs programs promote cultural awareness, the new challenge was to help students gain a deeper self-awareness. They wanted to figure out how graduate programs could integrate the knowledge, skills, and awareness in the curriculum so that upcoming student affairs professionals would be able to help others from diverse populations and experience. Pope-Davis, Reynolds, and Dings (1994) connected this query to their study on measuring multicultural competencies in doctoral counseling students. These authors saw that formal education could increase knowledge and skills but suggested that further research needed to be conducted to determine what influenced awareness.

The studies reviewed in “Who is Multiculturally Competent and Why” suggest that measurements of knowledge, skills, and abilities were unable to explain all dimensions of this multicultural competence. I contend that this is because the complexity of human interpretation cannot be quantified. Several studies and articles (King & Howard-Hamilton, 2003; Ponterotto, 1998; Pope-Davis et al., 1994; Pope

(1995), Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004) in the literature review suggested that qualitative analysis of multicultural skill development is needed to increase understanding so that a more effective curriculum on this proficiency can be developed in graduate programs for student affairs professionals. Martin (2005) in her recent dissertation study recommended that further research could explore variables that explain diversity awareness apart from a professional setting, specifically looking at attitudes from family and other relationships that might have had an impact on multicultural competence development. I agree with the suggestions of these prominent scholars that a qualitative study of multicultural competence is needed. In conducting this research study, I thought the complexity and depth of human experience shared with me would very difficult to quantify in a survey or self assessment instrument and equally difficult to predict by a person's characteristics.

There were several authors who guided my way through phenomenology. My first connection was when I found wisdom in the concept of finding the essence in "lived experience" when I read Max Van Manen (1990). He wrote about phenomenological reflection and extraction as a way to create a direct and meaningful connection with an experience. He emphasized that "Meaning is multi-dimensional and multi-layered" (p.78). I was captivated by his interpretation of Merleau-Ponty (1973) as he used poetic descriptions about a phenomenological project that "tries an incantive, evocative speaking of a primal telling where we aim to involve the voice in an original singing of the world" (p.13).

Sitting with my stack of transcripts, I looked to Harry Wolcott (1994) for guidance in how to describe, analyze, and interpret my data. His research advice was so accessible in a voice that transcended academic-speak into the plain words that matched my data. He said that researchers need to be storytellers, and it is our job to reconstruct the data and describe it so that the reader can visualize the stories we want to examine and learn from. For analysis he asks the researcher to find the common threads and extract themes that connect these stories. He suggests that part of the skill in data analysis is figuring out what stories are important to tell and combine that with a systematic process to be convincing. Finally he attacks interpretation by forcing the-so what-

question. He reinforces the idea that research is a disciplined, systematic inquiry process where we organize our thoughts and increase our understanding. Yet a researcher is charged with expanding past existing borders of knowledge found in the data, telling in order to find broader implications and relevance. He says “We do it to be profound....Our interpretations are our claims to the independent creation of new knowledge. Arrogant work indeed” (p.258).

Finding the right method to process my data brought me back to Clark Moustakas (1994) because he had captured my attention when he described transcendental phenomenology with the words intentionality and intuition. Intentionality refers to the internal experience of being conscious of something. He includes important background factors that we develop through our awareness of pleasure, judgment, and hope. He talks about things becoming clear through an intuitive-thinking process, and how experience is transformed from a common experience into clarity through intuitive reflection.

While my co-researchers were reconstructing the context of earlier life experiences, these times came alive with new meaning. Understanding the retrospective aspect of phenomenology I focused on an article about phenomenology by Ken Kempner (1992), where he supported phenomenology as an interpretative method of qualitative research, because truth that is identified within a cultural context is relative. He commented that in order to understand people’s behavior we must consider the historical and cultural contexts which are necessary for interpreting the underlying meaning for this behavior.

Kempner (1992) recognized the passion that exists in research and wrote that “how we conduct our research, construct knowledge, and interpret reality is found deeply embedded within us” (p. 76). I agreed with what he wrote about the researcher and this had an effect on my approach to the Epoche. It was important to self disclose my biases to my co-researchers so that I could “bracket” my personal enthusiasm for this query. I think this step put aside any conversational dialogue and kept the interviews focused on the co-researcher. I was able to share my keen interest in multicultural competency without influencing the co-researcher’s stories and experiences as told to me in the

interviews. These writings on phenomenology as a qualitative method affirmed my choice for this research study.

Finding co-researchers for this study was remarkably easy through professional networks and email communication. Conducting interviews was a peak academic, professional, and personal experience. As a doctoral student, I spent years preparing myself for this phase of my program. To listen, engage, ask questions, and discuss philosophy and theory with my co-researchers was my reward.

Implications

This study's intention was to discover how people developed their multicultural competency by examining their lived experiences and determining what commonalities in their experiences might shed light on how to increase multicultural competency in student affairs professionals. In the world of student affairs in higher education there is an expectation that people will rely on human relation skills. Professionals are expected to increase their levels of multicultural competence, to do their work, and to be effective in guiding and serving students. (Burkard et al., 2005; Kocarek et al., 2001; McEwen & Roper, 1994; Ponterotto et al., 1994; Pope et al., 2004; Rhoads & Black, 1995; Sue, 2001; Tomlinson-Clarke, 2000). The co-researchers' multicultural competence was gauged by two things, the Morales definition (2003) and Pope and Reynolds grid of characteristics (1997). Morales's definition, on page 13 of this dissertation, identifies six areas of multicultural competence: awareness of difference, cultural self-awareness, awareness of social context, cultural knowledge, cultural curiosity, commitment to social justice. Pope and Reynolds offer a more specific guideline of for identifying characteristics of a Multiculturally Competent Student Affairs Practitioner, using a three part matrix of knowledge, skills, and awareness (Table 2.2, p.16). All of the co-researchers in this study exemplified the six qualities as outlined by Morales and could be evaluated as having advanced capability in the Pope and Reynolds matrix.

As summarized in Section 4, the data themes were categorized into personal, professional, and institutional realms. These contain implications for professional

development through in-service training, graduate education, hiring practices, service and program design, leadership and educational philosophy, and strategic planning. Sometime it was challenging to focus only on the co-researchers' lived experiences in the interview because when she/he began to talk about effective diversity strategies tried in the workplace it was easy to get off-track from the journey of developing multicultural competence. The last question in each interview was "How can others be taught to achieve what you have achieved in being multiculturally competent?" This question provided the right time and opportunity to talk about how to support the multicultural competence development of staff and students.

In this study, there was a strong emphasis on description followed by an extensive, prescriptive process of analysis. Implications are an interpretation of the data. Many of the implications outlined in this section are a collection of the responses shared and explored by the researcher and the co-researchers. However, opportunity for deeper interpretation exists for the reader. There are three categories of interpretation parallel to the data analysis.

Figure 10: Implications for Developing Multicultural Competence

Personal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Begin with personal awareness and move outward • Build on empathic awareness from recounting personal experiences
Professional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a shared vision of multicultural competent service delivery among staff • Motivate increasing multicultural competency with an understanding of changing demographics of students, staff, and community • Assist staff and students who are not multiculturally competent by role modeling, attentive supervision, communication training, mentoring, and evaluation.
Institutional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adopt universal hiring practices that assess a candidates multicultural competence • Evaluate institutional integrity by assessing whether the mission of student affairs includes support for diversity and equity and is matched by policy and practice.

Personal Awareness Implications

I believe the key to multicultural competence development in any professional or graduate student education is to begin with personal awareness and work outward from there. Everyone is a multicultural being. The question is, “How do we teach students to see themselves as multicultural beings and how they can interact with the past to bring forward awareness into the future?” In my years of diversity work, I have run across many people who believe they have no cultural background except what they call “American”. I have challenged that statement by asking people to go beyond their surface level assumptions about what they called American culture. What I have found once people start to elucidate more about themselves, noting simple things, like their regional upbringing, sibling positions, tragedies that have befallen their families, or communities, or stories about their grandparents, is that they begin to take more ownership of their unique and multicultural background. It is from the realization that they can refer to themselves as “multi” cultural that they begin to develop a stronger empathy for the individuals they serve in the workplace. From there we can explore the breakdown of large group stereotypes and recognize that each person as an individual with a distinct history that brought them to the moment they are in right now.

Most people have moments in their lives when they have been oppressed or discriminated against. It may not have been because they are part of a minority, but because of a situation in their lives that seemed very unfair. Working with this emotional recollection of their “lived experience” and extrapolating what it might be like for people who live with oppression in a multitude of ways in today’s society opens the door to being able to talk about root causes of oppression and power, with an emotional frame of reference. In gathering data for this study, I found that each of the co-researchers had unique stories that led them to a deep empathic acknowledgment of their own individual challenges and struggles. Developing empathy from a place of personal experience presents an opportunity to learn and understand systems of privilege and oppression. This understanding can lead them to the concept of becoming an ally to a disenfranchised group or individual.

Professional Practice Implications

This study implies that there are ways in which student affairs professionals can plan and work in a multicultural framework. Student affairs must develop and adopt a shared vision and mission for serving all students with a multiculturally competent staff. A shared vision and philosophy is an important foundation for alignment of staff as a group to guide their work. This requires a commitment to serve current and potential students with quality customer service, with programs designed to recruit and retain students, and with student success defining the agenda. This could mean incorporating student input into aspects of planning or clearly identifying the liaison between student affairs administration and student leadership. Knowing the demographics of students and potential students is crucial. In order to be more effective in dealing with diverse student populations, staff must be given opportunities to understand and explore the challenges and barriers that students experience as groups or individuals. This requires dialogue and training within the college.

Communication skill training ought to be ongoing and professional within each division. It is important that a supervisor provide for communication skill improvement whether in a class, or an in-service type setting or staff meetings. It is important to give staff new information, practice, chances to learn from role models, and feedback as encouragement for their progress. Evaluating effective communication on annual evaluations, particularly in regard to multicultural competency is something that can be incorporated in all areas of supervision.

If someone is identified as lacking necessary multicultural competence to be effective in their service, then it is important to actively assist this staff person or student to increase their personal awareness and to provide them with by role models, attentive supervision, communication training, mentoring, and periodic evaluation.

Structural Processes and Institutional Integrity Implications

Leadership committed to increasing multicultural competence in the institution must exist within student affairs and but to be really effective this mission must be adopted by the executive leadership of the institution as well. This means that the governing body, including with the President or Chief Executive Officer, need to operate and make decisions with a guiding set of principles that address diversity and equity and require, of themselves and others, individual development of multicultural competency. This edict has implications in human resources and with supervision and management practices.

The co-researchers spoke of instances where the leadership of an institution was willing to take a proactive stance toward hiring a diverse workforce. If the college has a goal of having a more multiculturally competent staff and faculty, then somewhat common questions about diversity organizational experiences could be complemented by questions about personal attitudes, lived experiences, awareness, knowledge and skills as actual measures of multicultural competence. There are the many practices supported and guided by affirmative action and equal employment opportunity laws; however, I noted that there was a wide range of practice in the individual institutions of higher education discussed by the co-researchers. Some of the co-researchers, who came from colleges that were highly committed to having a more diverse workforce, were able to elaborate on some of the intentional diversity practices conducted in hiring new staff.

With Federal funding programs such as Pell Grants, Perkins Vocational Act, and TRiO , there is government support for helping create greater access to college for low income first generation, and other special populations. These types of large grants ostensibly work to increase student diversity. However, they do not generally support staff development in multicultural competence or advocacy for diversity awareness. Coupled with grant and legislative support colleges have incorporated diversity and equity for all students into their missions.

Several co-researchers had stories that illustrated how a mission statement that includes diversity can be ignored when the leadership is not philosophically aligned with

this principle. There is a trend in higher education today to hire diversity and/or equity coordinators (Gose, 2006). At first this seems to be a movement in the right direction to ensure diversity infiltrating an institution at every level, from hiring faculty to student recruitment and retention, yet skepticism of this trend also exists. In Gose's article, from the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (Sept. 2006), he questioned whether creating a diversity position with high rank represented a true tide of change or whether it is more of a public-relations act to appease minority student and faculty complaints. It would be interesting to explore whether these positions advocate for multicultural competence in staff ranks.

Limitations of the Method of Study

Phenomenology seeks to describe the quality of lived experience by describing the expression of lived experience (Van Manen, 1990). Using the Moustakas (1994) modification of the Van Kaam Method for data analysis within his transcendental phenomenological framework, I sought to answer how the "what" (textural) and "how" (structural) of lived experiences were related to the development of multicultural competence in student affairs professionals. It allowed me to develop somewhat objective "essences" by integrating the common heart of co-researchers' experiences. I moved from their specific statements and stories to individual themes and, finally, to aggregated essences or themes. However, even though there were a small number of co-researchers interviewed, the data gathered was rich and lengthy, and there seemed to be inexhaustible essences to track and report in the analysis. The size and scope of this study limited what was reasonable to report. There was more data to be mined for essences to understand of multicultural competence development.

Another limitation of a study such as this was not being able to interview a broader representation of student affairs professionals. I made choices based on availability, strove for balance between university and community college practitioners, and tried to find men and women to represent student affairs personnel. When it came to trying to obtain a diverse ethnic, age, regional, sexual orientation, (dis)ability sample, it

seemed impossible to include all major categories of people because as evidenced by this study, each person is multiculturally unique.

With qualitative research methods the intention is not to generalize any conclusions or make broad sweeping recommendations. One must extrapolate the learning carefully from this study. Phenomenology doesn't propose to prove or demonstrate or make empirical generalizations, instead the intention of this phenomenological study was to describe and analyze the lived experience of these individual co-researchers as they reflected on the meaning of their experiences. My role as researcher was to analyze and summarize by weaving a shared tapestry of these experiences and reflections.

This study focused on multicultural competence in student affairs professionals. By limiting the parameters of the co-researchers with student affairs experience, this study may not seem to speak to the needs or curiosity of other higher education staff. While parts of the analysis and implications sections consistently refer to student affairs, there is certainly learning contained for instructional and college services staff. It is my belief that the universal truths contained in this study's co-researcher lived experiences can and should be accessible to anyone working in a learning institution.

Conclusion

I spent many years participating, organizing, and leading diversity trainings. At a certain point I began to think that the development of multicultural competence was not an external process, but instead, one that was deeply internalized based on someone's life experiences and perceptions of their own diversity. I questioned my colleagues and students about their personal histories to help them understand their own rich heritage and possibly connect this attitudes and awareness at school or work. Particularly with students who might disregard their life experiences because of shame and fear of judgment, I had to coach them on culling out important lessons so they would be able to identify and apply these in their education and career search. In my own early exploration of multicultural competence, I retraced my lived experiences that I thought generated my

attitudes and perceptions about diversity. I concluded that I have a facility with people from diverse backgrounds because of my multicultural background. One of my hallmark traits has been my effective and creative work with non-majority populations. As I refined my research topic and determined that I wanted to explore how other people's lived experiences had an impact on who they are today, I chose phenomenology as my research method because it offered a process and philosophy for in-depth exploration of lived experiences. I aligned myself with transcendental phenomenology because this kind of interpretation supported my assertion that the "how" leads to the "why" of personal and professional development.

This research study sought to answer two questions: (a) How do student affairs professionals cultivate their own multicultural competence, and (b) Does this learning come from professional training or education experience? The co-researchers in this study developed multicultural competence on three levels. In the personal realm, without exception, they were fueled by internal motivation for self improvement, which they often described as a sort of karmic response to their own life experiences. In the professional realm, co-researchers referenced educational programs, work experience, and positional leadership as contributing to their ongoing development and application of multicultural competency within student affairs. As leaders themselves they were accountable for how multicultural competency was promoted under their supervision. In the structural realm these co-researchers were astute in their acknowledgement of the role institutional structure and key leadership can play to manipulate internal systems that support or decimate a culture that supports developing multicultural competency among staff and students.

Listing the personal, professional, and structural/institutional implications was somewhat anticlimactic after the excitement and unique recounting of the study data based on the lived experiences of multiculturally competent, student affairs professionals. By approaching these two study questions through understanding the meaning of the co-researchers' lived experience, the breadth and depth for what initially seem to be predictable influences came alive with an emotional force. What I learned in this study is

that at the core of multicultural competence are sophisticated intuition, profound respect, honorable values, philosophical vision, and passion for change.

Future studies

There are several research studies that could grow out of this dissertation in areas such as human resources, training and education, and leadership development.

To study human resources one might develop a set of questions for employment interviews from the findings in this study based on the three realms personal, professional and institutional. These carefully constructed questions would help assess a potential candidate's multicultural competency assuming this is a desired quality in new staff and faculty. Research could then study whether there is an impact from hiring a more multiculturally competent staff by tracking diverse student and staff recruitment and retention in a longitudinal study. The key to this set of questions would get to the heart of one's self-awareness of their own cultural heritage, to get a sense of their curiosity about others, and to assess their commitment to social justice with examples of action and advocacy.

Student affairs professional graduate preparation programs could incorporate human development coursework specifically focused on reflective self-awareness of one's cultural background as suggested in this study's findings. There is a body of research that is already assessing the effectiveness of existing curriculum, therefore future research could compare and contrast the level of multicultural competency in students based on new coursework and learning outcomes.

This research study focused on student affairs professionals, all leaders at some level of their institutions. Future research could assess the multicultural competence of executive leaders at colleges and determine if student affairs experience holds any bearing on their skills, knowledge, and awareness. This may predict whether an institution will make progress toward increasing and sustaining diversity among staff and students.

Summary of Significance of Study

In the introduction I proposed five potential ways this in-depth investigation would enlighten understanding about multicultural competency in student affairs practitioners in order to achieve a campus climate of social justice, equality, and diversity for all students and staff (pp. 6-10). I want to reflect on the extent to which these points were addressed by the data gathered and analyzed.

Adding a qualitative perspective to the assessment of multicultural competencies. Existing research in this field had identified gaps in the qualitative perspective on how to teach and infuse multicultural competence into graduate preparation programs and other forms of staff development. In this study data was collected from the group of co-researchers and was then moved through a process of analysis that revealed fourteen common themes that related to the personal, professional, and institutional realms. What the data analysis indicates is that a deep personal awareness of one's own multicultural background and experiences holds the key for developing awareness and empathy in working with diverse students and staff. Through the stories of lived experiences, the co-researchers in this study revealed their personal evolution of compassion, skill building, advocacy, and leadership—"in living color."

Illuminating the role of student affairs in shaping holistic student development. Only one co-researcher directly referenced student development theory, yet all of them touched on core student development philosophies such as: listening to student concerns, seeing students as teachers, and allowing student ideas and issues to drive the responsive programs, services, and activities of student affairs. Discussion of the role of student affairs (per se) in holistic student development was not as prominent in the interviews as I initially expected. Based on abundant literature that connects multicultural competence with student affairs I approached this research thinking these were inextricably linked in educational settings. It was easy to see a connection in this study where all the co-researchers had professional student affairs experience. However, the findings indicated

that the whole institution needs to support efforts to increase the multicultural competency of all staff systemically, particularly the leadership. To holistically develop all students, diverse and majority, collaborative efforts are essential as evidenced by the stories told by the co-researchers.

Effective ways to support the development of multicultural competence in graduate programs for student affairs professionals. Based on the recommendations from prior studies and articles references in the literature review, there is a need to incorporate specific coursework and practicum experiences into student affairs graduate programs. One intention of this study was to identify and organize themes that could provide a basis for curriculum planning and teaching strategies to achieve this outcome. In a graduate program the key to truly assisting students in developing their multicultural competence is to provide them with learning opportunities for personal awareness and transformation by allowing them to explore their own multicultural background in a safe environment. In this research study, a deep understanding of self was the foundation for each co-researchers' multicultural competence development. Therefore, this study suggests that the most effective learning needs to focus on personal reflection and retrospection.

Student affairs scholarship that provides direction for professional development. This study was intended to determine how student affairs practices can be transformed into scholarship that guides new directions for professional development. Student affairs is often looked to for leadership in supporting a college mission that promotes diversity, equity, and social justice. Because of this student affairs is in a position to inform the other parts of the institution, particularly instruction, about how to develop multicultural competence in staff and faculty. By interviewing seven co-researchers who work in student affairs, I uncovered data that offered specific, yet rich, examples of how they each developed their multicultural competence. The results of this study could be used to incorporate new ways to ensure educational professionals are consciously increasing their multicultural competence.

Personal background as the foundation for multicultural competence. One of the principal findings in this study is that the foundation for intentional multicultural competence development is a deep, retrospective understanding of personal history and multicultural background. It has been my experience and inspiration for this study that adopting the perspective of “I am a multicultural being” is a powerful learning tool for opening up attitudes and empathic connection to diversity. It is not important that someone have a tremendously diverse or non-dominant cultural background. What is important is that people be guided to see their background as unique and multifaceted and to identify key experiences that will promote an advanced level of empathy, compassion, understanding, and curiosity in others, and to inspire the willingness to advocate for diversity and equity. Personal awareness of one’s own multicultural background is the foundation for developing multicultural competence.

Personal Outcomes from Research Study

In Moustakas’ (1994) outline of Phenomenological Data Analysis, he suggested that a researcher relate their study to personal outcomes.

Completing this dissertation study has been an incredible experience for me personally. When I was studying research methods I read Max Van Manen for the first time, and I felt as if I had found a soul mate who understood my characteristic exploration and deep engagement with others’ lives and stories. I have often thought that if I had chosen another life path I would have hosted an interview show, *woman-as-interviewer*, that would experience success like many other talk-show hosts, not for the glamour or celebrities they uncork, but because I know how to get to the heart of a person’s experience and find ways to appreciate and honor her/his authentic self. This has been a hallmark trait of mine since I was a young child, and it has followed me throughout my adult life and played out in numerous ways.

The roles and positions I have held in student affairs have involved working with people who are in school to know themselves better so they can reframe their lives with career and educational goals. As an instructor and advisor I have explored with students, what life experiences they’ve had by finding out what motivates them, what lessons they

have learned, and what skills they possess. My experience with special populations has given me the privilege to work with an amazing diversity of students and committed staff.

As I dug deep and searched for a method to guide my data collection and analysis, I latched on to Clark Moustakas's (1994) framework of transcendental phenomenology. His explanation of this method was filled with phrases such as "to be completely open, receptive, and naïve... [with] emphasis on intuition, imagination, and universal structures...dynamics that underlay experience" (p. 22). As I read more, he listed "perceptions, feelings, thoughts, and sensual awarenesses" (p. 22) and indeed, this is the world in which I live. In his words, I felt his sensitivity and connection would guide me through what I considered to be a sacred foundation of trust while I listened for meaning and interpreted others lived experiences. These two contemporary authors instilled in me a deep understanding of phenomenology and its application to what I wanted to study.

The process of meeting and interviewing each of my study co-researchers was mutually captivating. I believe that because I began each interview by acknowledging the sacredness of our exchange with the four-directions ritual and acknowledging their contribution to something greater than themselves in this research project, we were surrounded in an atmosphere of intense reflection, retrospection, and exploration of essential truths. I think my co-researchers felt appreciated and honored for what they gave and experienced our exchange as enjoyable, meaningful, and captivating. I chose the label co-researcher instead of participant to acknowledge their engagement with the study. This portion of my research study was a peak life experience.

In qualitative research I could approach my study with a hypothesis in mind. However, phenomenological processes emphasize keeping an open mind during data collection and early analysis so that my own epistemological relationship with my topic would not interfere with interpretation of my co-researchers lived experiences. The process of contemplating and writing the *Epoche* portion, where I self disclosed my bias and perceptions about multicultural competence, was a way for me to claim what I thought I knew already. Then I had to be patient through the data analysis to see if this resonated with the essential truths that emerged. I found a great deal of common ground

with my study co-researchers and had I interviewed myself, as part of the study, I know my life stories would have generated individual themes that would have been easily congregated with the other themes in my data analysis. So what does this mean? For me, in some ways it means I wrote about what I already knew. I had a sense going into this study that what I would find was that the truth about multicultural competence began with deep personal awareness. I was reminded of this while working with the data from my interview with Likes-To-Go when he said:

Ancient memory of the wisdom of our ancestors since beginning time resides within us... It's in our cells. Not just hair color, eye color and good nose features, but all of the wisdom of our ancestors are inside our body... So when we hear a truth, an inherent truth from those ancient times, sometimes we'll get goose bumps... [that] let us know... "You've just heard an elemental truth"... and your body wisdom [and] your body knowledge recognizes the truth of what was just said, so the cells get excited. They are invigorated through vibration of what was said. So vibration goes to the human elemental tone within each one [of us], each of us has a vibration. As long as we're living, our heart is making that vibration within our body.

One of my professors gave each member of my cohort a poem on our last day of class, I reflected on these words during every stage of writing up my research.

Writing is the process one follows to learn what is already known deep within:

it sharpens the spirit,

disciplines the mind and leads to solutions.

In the spaces between words and solitude observe what happens

when words and silence meet.

Words matter.

Pay Attention.

Write to learn what you know.

(Maryanne Radmacher, 2000)

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Request for Nomination for Research Study: The Journey of Developing Multicultural Competence: A Phenomenological Exploration of Lived Experience in Student Affairs Professionals

This is a dissertation research study. The purpose is to explore the development of multicultural competence in lived experience in Student Affairs Professionals. I am seeking to understand what the significant influences are for a student affairs professional in their personal and professional development that lead to a recognizable level of multicultural competence.

This study will attempt to gain a qualitative understanding of how and why a student affairs professional has developed their multicultural competence. I will give you the working definition of multicultural competence that I am using in my study.

A multiculturally competent person is aware of and knowledgeable about cultural differences, their own cultural identity, and the history and contemporary struggles of marginalized groups. They balance this awareness and knowledge with continuous empathy and curiosity. They also examine how social context, power, and systems of privilege and oppression influence and constitute their own worldview, and relationships. This whole process is grounded in a commitment to social justice that seeks action, empowerment, and social transformation. (Hernandez, 2003)

Your help is needed. In student affairs, professionals may be considered more effective in their service to students if they have a high level of multicultural competence. We are studying this concept in student affairs because of the role it plays in holistic student development and to increase the opportunity for scholarship that provides direction for professional development. Up until this time, there is little qualitative research done in this field that describes how someone becomes increasingly multiculturally competent. Most of the work up until now has been from a quantitative, self-assessment standpoint. **Therefore I am seeking a nomination from you of one or two student affairs professionals whom you are aware have demonstrated their multicultural competence when working with students or other staff. If you want to nominate yourself, please provide all the information requested below.**

This is a phenomenological study which is research that studies essences of lived experience. It is about listening to and understanding lived experience. As a method it is concerned with wholeness so that the data is gathered primarily by interviews with guided and open-ended questions. The participant characteristics I seek are:

- Professionals employed in a higher education institution and who work or have recently worked in their student affairs division.

- They will have exhibited some form of demonstrated multiculturally competence as assessed by their colleagues.
- Participant will need to be motivated to participate in this study and who feel comfortable having an in-depth interview about their lived experiences that led to their development of multicultural competencies.
- The project is not restricted by any particular categorical characteristics, e.g., gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, etc., however, all participants will be adults.
- Due to financial and time restrictions, I am most interested in participants who live within a day's drive from Southern Oregon. It is possible to interview someone from outside this area in the event that we can arrange to meet at a professional conference this fall/winter.

Given this brief description and any questions you may have, would you please consider recommending potential participants and write me a brief statement about why you think they would be well suited for this study? Do I have your permission to use your name as the nominator when contacting potential participants? You can send this all to me via email.

Please provide the following information for the person(s) you wish to nominate:

- Name of Nominee
- Job Title
- Institution or previous institution
- Brief summary of why you perceive them as multiculturally competent
- Contact information for the person being nominated (email address and phone #)
- Name of someone else who can serve as a reference for this nominee

Please include **your** name, title, phone and email address.

Thank you for your help. Your willingness to take time to support this study is greatly appreciated. I intend to gather my research this fall (2006) so your thoughtful and rapid response would be excellent. If you would like to collaborate on this topic in other ways, I would be happy to discuss ideas with you.

Sincerely,

Serena

Serena Ota St. Clair
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Appendix B

Interview Questions for Dissertation Study:

The Journey of Developing Multicultural Competence: A Phenomenological Exploration of Lived Experience in Student Affairs Professionals

Serena Ota St. Clair

1. What is your understanding of multicultural competence? Why do you think you were acknowledged by your professional peers as someone who is highly multiculturally competent?
2. Describe the lived experiences you have had personally and professionally, that you believe contributed to the development of your multicultural competence. Please recount any particular events, cultural influences, familial ties, regional background, ethnic/sexual/gender/racial/mobility identity, peer group membership, training and educational practice, or other life situations that you can identify as part of your cumulative growth and development?
3. In what ways do you anticipate continued growth in your competence for dealing with the diverse and dynamic populations of your college, both students and staff?
4. Do you see your position at the college as one that has an opportunity to reach out to the complex diversity of the student body you serve? How do you think your level of multicultural competence contributes to your overall effectiveness as a

student affairs professional? Do you believe that you can have a positive influence on social justice in your college culture and environment?.

5. How can others be taught to achieve what you've achieved?

Thoughts on Interviewing about Lived Experience

Adapted from Van Manen (1990): *Researching Lived Experience*.
State University of New York Press.

How to produce a lived-experience description:

1. Need to describe the experience as one lived through it. Avoid causal explanations, generalization, or abstract interpretations.
2. Describe the experience from the inside, almost like a state of mind: the feelings, the mood, the emotions..
3. Focus on a particular example or incident of the object of the experience: describe specific events, an adventure, or a happening.
4. Focus on an example of the experience which stands out for its vividness, or as it was the first time.
5. Attend to how the body feels, how things smelled, how they sounded, etc.
6. Avoid trying to beautify your account with fancy phrases.

“It is not of great concern whether a certain experience actually happened in exactly that way. We are less concerned with the factual accuracy of an account than with the plausibility of an account and whether it is true to our living sense of it.” -Van Manen.

Appendix C:

Serena Ota St. Clair: OSU Doctoral Student

Personal disclosure: researcher bias

I am a multicultural person. What this means to me is that I embrace and acknowledge the many influences and experiences of my life that give me a breadth and depth in my worldview. I have been doing diversity work in educational institutions and have not seen what brings forth productive results. I have continually questioned how to create a fertile learning environment people where can feel free to be who they are, represent what is important to them, and not live in fear of reprisal. I have been reduced to tears and also been totally elated when participating in this work but still the “how” of how-to-do-it is elusive to me. I have asked myself, what is the secret to a successful diversity initiative that is comprehensive in its scope, audience, and impact? I have asked myself: why do I feel compelled to do this work? What is it about me that resonates so deeply with this cause for equality and difference? I have realized that my awareness has emerged from my multicultural background. I attribute my sensitivities, my passions, my anger, and my commitment to diversity to my life experiences which put me in contact with other cultures, some exotic, some sub-cultures. I want to understand what bring others to a similar framework. I want to understand how others have developed their knowledge, skills, and awareness in dealing with people they come into contact with. Ultimately, I believe that once someone understands how multicultural they truly are, it opens them up to the compassion, empathy, and openness to respectfully deal with others who come from divergent, foreign, unrelated backgrounds.

APPENDIX D:

Grand Scheme of Interview Themes:
Individual Themes

1. Personal Humility: Understanding of Self (M,CJ,L)
 - Who you are and whose you are (N)
 - Being the glue (N)
 - Recognizing my gift to advocate (N)
 - Passion as the role model (S)
 - My student experience leads me to professional choice (Sh)
 - Multicultural me (LtG)
 - Awareness example (Sh)
 - Diversity Martyr (M)
 - Wrongfully accused (M)
2. Inspired By Others: Mentor Significance (M, LtG,S,Sh,L)
 - Coached awareness: (M)
 - Support from others (M)
 - Achieving critical mass (Sh)
 - Cultural shift (L)
 - Assembling a team of support (L)
 - Observation of a master (LtG)
 - Letting others make choices (S)
 - Advocacy and support from others (N)
 - Allies (M)
3. Leadership is Key: Institutional level
 - Higher education role in setting tone for future of multicultural competence (CJ)
 - Need advocacy from the top (CJ)
 - Administrative shift composition (Sh)
 - When a college goes bad (CJ)
 - Undergraduate college promoted openness (CJ, L)
 - Hiring practices to ensure multicultural competence (CJ)
 - Sniffing out multicultural competence in a candidate (CJ)
 - Institutional Resistance (CJ)
 - Servant Leadership (CJ)
 - Dynamic of board and president (CJ)
 - Leadership buy-in (CJ)
 - Role of institutional structure (CJ)
 - Watch where the money goes (CJ)
 - Old style leadership-low on compassion (CJ)

- Leadership Influence (L)
 - Positional power (L)
 - Campus climate (LtG)
 - Understanding power dynamics (N)
 - Early leadership-maturing leadership (N)
4. Multicultural Work is Mainstream. (Sh)
- Getting multicultural competence into the classroom (Sh)
 - Multicultural skill development (L-CJ-S-Sh)
 - Linking multicultural competence to values (CJ)
 - Operationalizing the concept (CJ)
 - Experiential learning as key to multicultural competence (L)
 - How multicultural competence looks or fits (LtG)
 - Cultural connections/shared experiences (LtG)
 - Strategies to teach multicultural competence (LtG)
 - Cultural borrowing/mix it up/keep it clear (LtG)
 - Exposure and observation (LtG)
 - Recognizing multicultural competence potential (S)
 - Strategies of support (S)
 - Cultural competence vs. multicultural competence (N)
 - Not meeting students where they are at (Sh)
 - Multicultural competence in teaching (N)
5. Educational Philosophy: A MUST (M-L-T)
- Challenging ideas (M)
 - Formal education (M)
 - Willingness to learn (Sh-S)
 - Needing tools (Sh)
 - Educational background (CJ)
 - Curiosity moves us pasts fear (CJ)
 - Training methods to transform the institution (CJ)
 - Educational + Professional philosophy = Servant Leadership (CJ)
 - Differences between 2 & 4 year schools (CJ)
 - Honoring & Justifying different academic traditions or teaching in a different voice (LtG)
 - World is Flat (S)
 - Education as the hope for the race (N)
 - Globalization Awareness (N)
 - Education = Options (N)
 - Innovation Attraction and Practice (L)
6. Student Affairs Is The First Line of Communication (N)
- Student development philosophy (L)
 - Discovering student affairs (Sh)

- Discovering alignment with community college (Sh)
 - Reasons multicultural competence begins in student affairs (CJ)
 - We are the Underdog (student affairs: misunderstood and undervalued (CJ)
 - We are the champions. (CJ)
 - Student housing (parent in locus) as good training ground (CJ)
 - Teaching values to student affairs students (CJ)
 - Mission of student affairs (CJ)
 - Student services assessment (L)
 - Counseling background (L)
 - Student services cultural shift (L)
7. I'll be for differences until difference no longer make a difference: (M)
- Diversity In Action. (S)
 - Diversity worked sparked (N)
 - Diversity Initiatives and assessment (L)
 - Controversy with civility (S)
 - Diversity embedded (S)
 - Chameleon theory (N)
 - Developing your voice/power of voice (N)
 - Wherever you are-that's home (N)
8. Religious Foundations (Build Character)
- Religious Foundations –early experience (M)
 - Spiritual path connects to origins of thought (CJ)
 - Almost seminary (M) (CJ)
 - Internal religious conflict (M)
 - Moral disagreement with the church (CJ-M)
 - Transcending Boundaries (LtG)
 - Spirit is everywhere (LtG)
 - Religious Awareness (L)
 - Web of life interconnectedness (LtG)
 - Native American Ways (LtG)
 - All my relations (LtG)
 - Religious stratification (N)
9. Leadership Philosophy and Practice: Individual Level
- Well seasoned Leadership philosophy (CJ)
 - Laying down the challenge (N)
 - Philosophical Vision (M)
 - Philosophical Difference (M)
 - Fundamental Beliefs (M)
 - Working myself out of a job (M)
 - Forging onward (M)

- Life philosophy (CJ)
- Link between cognitive and affective (CJ)
- Personal belief structure (L)
- Policy Influence (L)
- Educational background (L)
- Professional experience (L)
- Deep truth/cellular truth (LtG)
- Four times/Four questions (LtG)
- Equality-We are all Human (LtG)
- Moving an agenda forward (S)
- How will you use your privilege (N)
- Personal loss & death (M)
- Community Caring (L)

10. Seven Generations: Parental & Elder Influence: Parents, Generational, Regional Upbringing

- Connection to the Whole/Seven Generations (N) (LtG)
- Going back to our roots (N)
- Parental Influence (N) (M)
- Elder Wisdom (N) (S) (LtG)
- Ancestral Sanction (LtG)
- Family Authority (LtG)
- Cycles of Life (LtG)
- Universal Family (LtG)
- Parents as Role Models (L)
- Family Tragedy (M)
- Regional Upbringing different than current culture (Sh) (L)
- Islander Imagination (Sh)
- Multicultural Family (Sh)
- Choices made as a child & youth (CJ)
- My dad was a racist and an alcoholic (CJ) (LtG)
- Parental influence (M, L)
- Disability within family (L)
- Religious awareness (L)
- Community Profile (M)

11. Students As Teachers: What We Learned Directly From Them

- Diverse representation (LtG)
- Student retention (L)
- Diversity debate: student led (CJ)
- Experience as a minority (Sh)
- Association with people of color (M)

- Experience of inequity due to being a lesbian (M)
- Challenging authority (M)
- Fear of reprisal (M)
- Students as teachers (L)
- Creating safety among individuals and groups to express and be (M)
- Exposure to all kinds (M)
- Finding similarities (LtG)
- Sharing information dialogue (S)
- Symbolic interaction changes minds (N)
- Understanding others (N)

12. Understanding Oppression: Personal Experience Facilitates Skill Development

- Power and Oppression (M)
- Hate crime (M)
- Critical moments strategy (Sh)
- Oppression because of Affirmative action (Sh)
- Do I really belong here? (Sh)
- Sabotage as a tactic of oppression (M)
- Threatened (M)
- Racial oppression and it's blow to identity (LtG)
- Power of language (LtG)
- What's in a name? (LtG-S)
- Oppression through the ages (LtG)
- Covert Bias (S)
- Oppression & Racism/powerful impression (N)
- Affirmative action/misunderstood & misused (N-Sh)
- Vindication (M)
- Cultural Suspicion (N)

13. What The Face Of Intelligence Looks Like: Issues of Race, Gender, Sexual Orientation, (Dis)Ability, and Class

- Assumptions and burdens for people of color (N)
- Growing up black and female (N)
- Immigrated in a suitcase (S)
- Belonging to a card carrying minority (LtG)
- Institutional Racism (LtG) (CJ)
- Response to Inequity (CJ)
- Racist Myth development (M)
- Mixed Race Confusion (Sh)
- White women multicultural lens (Sh)
- Tokenism trap (Sh)
- Internalized racism (Sh)
- Racial Identification & Political Alignment (Sh)
- Gender Inequity (M)

- Women's leadership Psyche & patterns (CJ)
- Work with domestic and sexual violence (M)
- Victim Offender evolution question (M)
- Gender attitudes-sexism from parents (Sh)
- Women's Studies opened my eyes (Sh)
- Lesbian Leadership (CJ)
- Shifting styles from male to female leadership (CJ)
- Black attitude toward white women (Sh)
- Physical adjustment (L)
- Understanding white privilege (CJ)
- White privilege overrides even in cultural pluralism class (S)
- Class Consciousness (M)
- When Class trumps color (S)
- Civilized superiority of indigenous cultures (LtG)

14. Social Justice For All: Advocacy and Justice as Underpinning of Work

- Social Justice definition on the continuum (LtG)
- Social Justice by Inclusion (LtG)
- Social Justice originates in professional advocacy (L)
- Social Justice belief and understanding (M)
- Social Movement engagement (M)
- Social Climate around issues (M)
- Deep connection with social justice-social action (M)
- When MLK Jr. died- Era of socialization (M)
- Youthful awakening for social justice (CJ)
- Assassination era: Kennedy & King (L)
- Social Justice VS multicultural competence (S)
- Professional decision to work with underprivileged students (Sh)
- Running from the Law (N)