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Tracking and Racialization in Undergraduate Multicultural Requirements
Karan Hustedt

INTRODUCTION

Universities all across the United States require undergraduate students to fulfill a multicultural requirement. Often, many departments within these universities offer courses for students to complete the requisite. Following the regulations implemented by the university as to what constitutes a course that satisfies the goals and objectives of the multicultural department, multiple departments have organized courses that are highly akin. For example, here at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale students can opt to take a class on diversity in the United States with the Black American Studies Department (BAS 215- Black American Experience in a Pluralistic Society) or with the Sociology Department (SOC 215- Race and Ethnic Relations in the United States). The question I propose is, how do students come to be enrolled in the different departments? Furthermore, to what extent are the racial demographics of the course affected by those different factors?

In observation I have noticed that the demographics of these courses at SIUC suggest a polarization of students to, and perhaps from, programs based on race. It seems as though the number of white students in the Sociology course dominates the number of black students. Further, the number of black students in the Black American Studies course dramatically surpasses the number of white students in these courses. I believe the answer to the question presented is a value to sociology. Implications of the purpose and/or success of multicultural requirements, tracking of students, and racialization within the university are in question here.

In order to answer these questions, I am investigating the different groups that may affect the enrollment of students into these multicultural alternatives. These

groups are the students, the advisors, and the departments. Understanding the students' role will involve identifying the reasoning of the particular student enrolling into the course, as well as the role other students have in the decision of the student to take the course. Advisors will be questioned as to the process by which they counsel students to take courses, and the extent to which they inform students of their options. I include the departments in this study to investigate the extent to which the departments actively, or passively, recruit students into their courses. This includes all individuals acting as agents of the department. My methodological approach is to survey each of these groups.

As a Sociology major, minoring in Black American Studies, I have had opportunities to notice these patterns personally. My experiences as a white student in the Black American Studies Department has led me to the questions I plan to investigate in this paper. I have had an advisor attempt to deter me from enrolling in a Black American Studies course because she believed that I might have been the only white student enrolled and, therefore, she thought I would feel uncomfortable. I was further intrigued when I began an Introduction to Black American Studies course and I was the only white student. The professor asked all of us students why we took the course and, most people, excluding myself, claimed they took it because an advisor told them they would likely enjoy it. My attempt is to gain a better understanding of the reasons students enroll in the specific multicultural courses that they do. From that I hope to provide insight and possible reforms that could be made in order to further diversify the courses.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several factors that affect a student's enrollment in any given course. Students obtaining an undergraduate degree are frequently required to fulfill a multicultural course requirement. The multicultural course requirement at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale is designed to give students a better understanding of different cultures. This multicultural course requirement can be fulfilled in a number of different courses offered by many different departments. Sociology 215 and Black American Studies 215 are two of those courses. Fundamentally, they are similar in that the topic of both courses is cultural diversity in the United States, and they are regulated by the university's Core Curriculum guidelines for multicultural requirements. The Core Curriculum is designed to be the foundation of students' education at the university. It requires students to take courses in a variety of areas to ensure that they have a well-rounded education. Some of the requirements included in the Core Curriculum are social science courses, math courses, and hard science courses. In order to gain a better understanding of how students come to be enrolled in the different multicultural courses, this section will examine the relationship between tracking, racialization, and its affect on the purpose and outcomes of desired goals in multicultural courses.

The multicultural education movement emerged out of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Initially, the program sought to decrease the educational gap between white and minority students by providing minority students with an educational environment and pedagogy that would resonate with them more than the

traditional pedagogy (Banks, 1993; Banks, 1995). Over the years scholars have debated about the advantages and disadvantages of multicultural education for students who are not underrepresented in traditional pedagogy (Thomas et al, 1994; Mattai, 1992). Present day educational programs often include some form of multicultural education. In fact, most universities require students to fulfill a multicultural requirement in order to graduate. At least at SIUC, the courses in which students fulfill these requirements seem to be highly segregated. Whether or not the lack of racial diversity in a multicultural course is positive or negative will be addressed later in this chapter. First we must address the factors that lead to this lack of racial diversity.

Tracking, the process by which students are placed into different courses, has changed significantly over time. Initially it was seen as a common, necessary practice in which students were geared to subjects and careers that best suited them. Over time, tracking came to be viewed as negatively impacting minority and low-income students. Schools often denied that tracking existed in their institutions (Oakes & Guiton, 1995). Today, it is generally accepted that tracking does occur (Price, 2002), and although it can have negative effects, when done right, it benefits the students (Brym & Lie, 2005).

Tracking of students occurs at all levels in the educational setting, although the higher up in the educational system one gets, the more autonomy one has. Students in a university generally have some degree of autonomy when deciding which courses they will take. Even when it comes to fulfilling requirements, there are often a number of courses that can be taken to fulfill the requirement. Tracking is not

inherently negative, and can serve functional goals of placing students in courses that meet their interests and academic ability, as much as it can serve to limit opportunities (Brym & Lie, 2005). There are several different systems of tracking, which yield varying degrees of autonomy to the student.

In the 1991 article, “The Organizational Context of Tracking in Schools,” Kilgore outlines four different types of tracking and when they are prevalent. First, there is Arbitrary Tracking, tracking on the basis of factors that have nothing to do with educational abilities or desires. These factors can include race, sex, or socioeconomic status. Arbitrary Tracking exists in educational environments where there are fewer track options, and less knowledge about individual student desires and abilities. In this track, very little autonomy is either allowed or utilized. For example, a student sees an advisor, a person whose job it is to help students decide what courses would be best for them, after putting off registering for classes until many classes have already been filled, and has done little investigation into what available courses interest her. The advisor, knowing little to nothing about the student, quickly determines the assumed best, available course for the student. As the term arbitrary suggests, any number of reasons could result in an advisor determining the ‘best’ course for the student. This could include generalizations due to sex, race, or even the advisor’s stereotypical images of the type of student who waits until the last minute to register.

Another system of tracking is labeled Meritocratic Tracking, which is tracking on the basis of previous performance. Meritocratic Tracking occurs when options are more prevalent and student desires and abilities are well known. Although this track

also implies a low degree of autonomy, it does suggest the student contributes to the decision-making process by making her aspirations known to the advisor. In this case, the student and the advisor may likely have had a longer, more open, professional relationship than in the arbitrary track. The advisor knows the courses the student has taken in the past, and knows both the strengths and weaknesses of the student's academic ability. The student is able to explain to the advisor what courses she wants to take, and the advisor is able to tell the student whether or not the courses are appropriate for the student. Of course, this also implies that the advisor has a good understanding of the course content.

A third system is Inclusive Tracking, or tracking that occurs by pulling students into a course or discipline. This occurs where expectation for all students is high, and student demands for specific tracks are low. Rather than occurring within the setting of a college advisor, this is often done by a teacher or a professor from a specific department. Suppose the following scenario: a professor from a relatively small department that is seeking to increase the number of students enrolling in courses encourages several students to take a course within their department. The assumption of the professor is likely to be that the students are all competent, and are able to complete the demands of the course. Inclusive tracking gives the student more opportunity to register for courses, at least within the particular discipline, and also provides the student with additional information about a course.

The final system, Exclusive Tracking, is tracking that pushes students away from a course or discipline. This occurs when overall expectations of students are low and student demand for specific tracks are high. In other words, departments that

are highly sought after often raise the bar on the requirements to be accepted in the program to a level above average, in order to prevent too many students from enrolling. It often becomes the belief that most students would be unable to succeed within a course in the discipline. For instance, if a course becomes highly popular, the department or the professor may opt not to let in any non-majors. Exclusive tracking limits the opportunities for many students, within the particular discipline (Kilgore, 1991).

In the University setting students may be influenced by any one, or all four, of these systems of tracking throughout their college career. Still, when deciding which courses they should take in order to fulfill core curriculum requirements, students have varying degrees of freedom to pick and choose what courses best suit them. Precedent, and sometimes a requirement for certain majors, often has students spending their first year or two fulfilling these requirements. During these initial years, students, both new to the game and bureaucratic procedures of the environment, may tend to rely on the suggestions of college and departmental advisors (Kranes, 1960). However, networks of peers and mentors can quickly become tools students utilize in order to determine which courses they will take. This often gives a student the ability to hear a first-hand account as to what a course or a professor is like; however, it may also limit his/her choices to only those familiar to his/her peer network (Kilgore, 1991).

Professors, advisors, peers, as well as traits unique to the individual may all factor into why a student chooses one course on U.S. race relations rather than another. Academic advisors can have large numbers of students to consult in short

periods of time. This limits the advisors' ability to gain knowledge of students' individual interests, putting them into a situation in which they need to make quick generalizations and assessments of what courses would best fit what students (Kranes, 1960). Advisors often rely on physical attributes, such as race, to quickly assess the most appropriate course for a student (Blau, 2003). Additionally, peer networks are often comprised of individuals from the same racial group (Tatum, 1999), which may inhibit the information a student receives about different courses or professors. Individual choice may also be affected by one's assumptions about Black American Studies Programs. White students may believe that they are unwelcome in Black American Studies programs, and black students may feel that the programs are specifically designed for them. Research suggests that White students are often uneasy about taking a course in a Black American Studies Department, whereas, Black students are more likely to claim that they feel more comfortable in the Black American Studies department than in another department when discussing issues of race (Johnson, 1984; Johnson et al, 2001). When investigating the racial demographics of courses, and the influence of race in tracking and course preferences, the concept of racialization should be addressed.

Racialization occurs as a result of the development of racial categories, and generalizations about people within the racial categories in a society. Once racial categories are developed to the extent that one's race becomes significant to other's understanding of whom one is, then racialization will occur (Omi and Winant, 1986). Racial generalization, in an already racialized society, is not necessarily negative; in fact, it can be both practical and important to acknowledge one's racial category as a

factor in what a person is like (Blum, 2002). However, problems occur when racial categories and generalizations limit opportunities of students by becoming an overwhelming factor in determining what courses best fit the student, regardless of whether or not this is done by the student or others.

Racialization can have a large impact on students' enrollment in particular courses. How much, if any at all, impact this has on student success is debatable. Much research has been done to determine student success in relation to racial demographics of a university; however, findings in the research can be quite variable. Some researchers have found that black students do better in black universities (Davis, 1994). Other researchers have claimed that a lack of diversity in a classroom diminishes the educational efficacy (Terenzini et al, 2001). These studies, however, may be too broad to pertain to the specific goals of multicultural courses. Therefore, in order to know whether or not the multicultural requirements are successful, a thorough examination of multicultural education is necessary.

Within this context, multicultural education can best be examined in four distinct parts. Part one will look at how the proponents of multicultural education define and propose implementation of it. Part two examines the extent to which multicultural requirements adhere to the format presented by the proponents. In part three, the intended goals of the multicultural requirements particular to the university will be outlined. Finally, part four will assess how well the attended goals can be met in courses with limited racial diversity.

There is much debate over what the goals of multicultural education is, and what the best way to implement it may be. Some scholars have suggested that

implementing multicultural education across the curriculum is impractical because of the difficulty in incorporating multicultural education into the pedagogy of some disciplines, such as math or geology (Shaw, 1988). Other scholars insist that multicultural education can and should be implemented throughout academia rather than taught in a specific course (Gibson, 1984). Some see it as a way of leveling the educational playing field among groups by assuring representation of marginalized groups throughout the curricula (Ulichny 1996). Others claim that its significance is teaching students tolerance and cultural awareness (Wills, 1996).

James Banks outlines five dimensions to multicultural education in a 1993 article entitled “Multicultural Education: Historical Development, Dimensions, and Practice.” They are: 1) content integration, 2) the knowledge construction process, 3) prejudice reduction, 4) an equity pedagogy, and 5) an empowering school culture and social structure. Content integration refers to the implementation of an array of cultures and groups as examples to solidify the subject material, by the professor. Knowledge construction is the way in which professors help students become aware of biases and framings prevalent in the subject material as a result of stratification and inequalities in society. Prejudice reduction occurs from students developing a broader understanding of other cultures and groups in order to decrease the extent to which they use negative stereotypes to guide interaction with others. Equity pedagogy refers to an instructor’s multifaceted procedure in order to serve the educational needs of students from a variety of backgrounds. Finally, empowering school culture and social structure considers the overall climate of the school and the ability for individuals from marginalized groups to experience equality within this setting.

Successful multicultural education programs would be able to implement all five of these dimensions. Multicultural education in its ideal would be implemented throughout all courses and in the environment of the educational institution. Clearly, a multicultural course is not, in itself, multicultural education, and the results of a multicultural course and a multicultural education are much different. Research on multicultural education has shown a raise in students' cultural awareness and tolerance (Banks, 1993), yet the research on the effectiveness of multicultural courses does not show an increase in either (Henderson-King & Kaleta, 2000). However, the research on multicultural courses does show that student tolerance does not decrease over the semester, whereas, tolerance does decrease for students not enrolled in multicultural courses (Henderson-King & Kaleta, 2000).

The success of a multicultural course can be rated on the ability to practically implement the course to the model within the limited capacity of the classroom. The first four dimensions outlined by Banks: content integration, the knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction and equity pedagogy, can all be implemented without much alteration from the intended goal. The fifth dimension, empowering school culture and social structure, may be beyond the scope of one course. However, one can manipulate the idea into an empowering class structure.

Multicultural courses attempt to fulfill at least some of the dimensions of multicultural education. At Southern Illinois University in Carbondale the core curriculum establishes two main goals for multicultural courses. They are: 1) "to promote understanding about how heritage influences current traditions and values in both personal and public cultures in the United States, and 2) to educate students

about frames of reference with different domestic cultural groups, including how each group thinks, knows and values” (SIUC Undergraduate Catalog, 2004). These two goals have the potential to recognize all five of the dimensions as appropriated to the individual course. However, the level of diversity among students in a course may have a profound effect on the ability for a course to achieve either of those goals.

According to intercultural communication researchers, educational researchers and social science researchers, (Terenzini et al, 2001; Senior, 1998; Kelly, 1999), the racial or ethnic make-up of a classroom creates a vastly different environment, especially when the intended goal is for students to gain a more diverse cultural awareness, and a better understanding of others. The more diverse the classroom setting is, the greater the ability to examine different cultures as an inclusive group existing within the environment. The less diverse the classroom is, then, the easier it is for different cultures to only be examined as “the other.” By becoming “the other” marginalized groups are often discussed in theoretical and abstract terms, resulting in the reliance on preconceived stereotypes to dominate the understanding of the groups. At the least, this puts underrepresented groups within the classroom into an outsider group. In the most extreme situations, this can set the stage for ethnocentric mindsets in which the dominant group interprets and analyzes the behaviors of the underrepresented groups as deviations from their own cultural norms (Martin & Nakayama, 2000).

The debates over multicultural education in its implementation, goals, target audience, and success are plentiful. Although the SIUC regulations specific to multicultural education do not set any standards or goals regarding racial diversity in

the classroom, broad university policy does promote cultural diversity as an integral part of a well-rounded education (www.siu.edu/~sja/). The debates over the importance of racial diversity in the classroom seem to neglect a very important factor, why students are in courses with little diversity. Did students seek out a racially homogenous classroom because they felt safer discussing racial issues among people of their own race? Did they take a course because of negative perceptions or cultural biases attributed to the discipline? Did an advisor suggest a student should take a course because of the advisors perception of what students of a particular racial category would like, or because it was truly the best course for the student? These are just a few of the questions this study will attempt to answer.

METHODOLOGY

In order to understand what factors affect how students come to be enrolled in the multicultural requirements offered by the different departments, my research examines the role of the student, advisor, and department. I believe that advisors will have the greatest impact on student choices in their first year at the university. I also believe that the research will show that advisors will track students into Sociology 215 or Black American Studies 215 based on the race of the student. As students progress through their academic career, I believe that departments will have a greater chance to pull students into their department, or push students away from their departments. Although race may not be a deciding factor in whom the department decides to include or who they decide to exclude, the student network in the department will likely have one dominant race. I also believe that the further along a

student is in their academic career, the more influence peers and the students' own perceptions will have on the choosing the course. Views about the different departments as well as peer networks will factor into the polarization of black and white students into different courses.

To address my research question and assess the accuracy of my hypothesis, three distinct surveys were administered to three groups. Group 1 consists of students enrolled in Sociology 215 and Black American Studies 215. Students from each course were asked to complete the student survey. Group 2 consists of the two departments Chairs and all available professors, lecturers, and/or graduate students teaching courses in the two departments. Each departmental representative was asked to complete a department survey. Group 3 consists of the college advisors. All of the advisors from each of the eight colleges, as well as the pre-major advisors, at Southern Illinois University in Carbondale were asked to complete an advisor survey.

A pilot study was conducted for each survey to find potential difficulties with questions or wording. Once finished, the results from the pilot study were used to revise the instrument for the study, and then the results were discarded. To distribute the surveys, first I visited two of the three Sociology 215 courses and four of the five Black American Studies 215 courses and asked all the students present in class the day I visited to complete the student survey. No incentives were provided to those who chose to complete the survey. I also sent department surveys via campus mail to each instructor in the departments of Black American Studies and Sociology, and advisor surveys to each advisor. Surveys were resent to instructors and advisors who did not complete the initial survey, in an attempt to retrieve a larger sample.

The advisor survey consist of a number of statements from which advisors rated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with topics such as perceptions of student comfort, racial diversity in the classroom, and advising strategies or procedures. Control variables in the advisor survey included the College in which they advise, Race, and Amount of time per student they spend advising.

The department survey consisted of a number of statements from which teachers in the departments of Black American Studies and Sociology rated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with topics such as racial diversity in the classroom, recruitment, and personal comfort. Control variables in the department survey included Race, Department, and Occupation.

The student survey consist of a number of statements from which students rated the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with topics such as the role of advisement, racial diversity in the classroom, and the importance of peer networks. The surveys also included issues related to individual level factors that predict class choice, such as comfort level, and other reasons students may have chosen to take the course. Control variables in the student survey included Race; Level in School, Sex, and College in which they are enrolled. Appendix A contains a copy of the surveys that were distributed.

The surveys have been analyzed using cross tabs and frequencies. Some questions were reverse coded so that on the 1-5 scale 5 ranked the most supportive for diversity. The answers were then coded as either agree or disagree. Responses of “3” have been interpreted to be a less favorable position for diversity, and have been grouped accordingly. This makes the findings less clear. The results have been

compared in a triangulated approach connecting the result of the surveys from the three groups to the reason for course enrollment. By utilizing surveys from the different groups, the study will be able to heighten its value, obtaining a general overview of the multifaceted explanations that result in student course selection.

ANALYSIS

Student surveys were distributed to 108 students in 2 sections of SOC 215. The response rate was 94.4%, with 102 students completing the survey. 99 students from four sections of BAS 215 were also asked to take the survey. The response rate for the Black American studies courses was 93.9%, with 93 students completing the survey. The department surveys were distributed to 14 teachers in Sociology department, 11 of them completed the survey resulting in a response rate of 78.6%. 5 teachers from the Black American Studies department were sent surveys. The response rate from the Black American Studies department was 80.0% with 4 people completing the survey. The advisor survey was distributed to 37 advisors from 8 colleges & the pre-major department. The response rate was 56.8% with 21 advisors responding. The racial demographic of the samples are listed below in Tables 1-3.

There are no statistics currently available that provide a racial distribution of advisors, so it is not possible to determine whether or not the advisor sample is racially representative of the university. The departments of Black American Studies and Sociology are not representative of the university either by students or by teachers. Both departments are over-representative of African-American professors, in Fall of 2002 4% of the university's professors were African-American, and students, in Fall of 2003 12% of the university's undergraduates were African-

American, in comparison to the campus population. The Black American Studies course is profoundly dominated by black students and professors. The Sociology course is a much closer representative sample than the Black American Studies course but, nonetheless, is overly representative of Black students and professors. It is therefore difficult to conclude that there is a homogenization effect occurring among students in the Sociology 215 course.

When completing the survey, students were asked to select one of three racial categories: Black/African American, White, or Other. Students who selected the other category were asked to specify their race. Table 3 shows the self-reporting racial categories of students. There were not enough students who selected the other category that could be grouped and recoded into a more specific racial category. Student responses were diverse, so the other category includes student from a variety of racial backgrounds including: Latino/a, Asian, Asian-American, Native American, Biracial, and Arabic. Only 16 students from the entire sample of 189, or 8.5% selected this category. Students in the Other category were much more likely to be enrolled in the Sociology 215 course, 13 of the 16 were enrolled in Sociology 215, than the Black American Studies course which had only 3 students that selected the Other category.

Table 4 has been added to illustrate the level in school difference between the students enrolled in Black American Studies 215 and Sociology 215. It shows that students in Black American Studies 215 are predominately freshman whereas students enrolled in Sociology 215 are much more likely to be juniors and seniors. Table 5 shows that this trend holds true across the different racial groups regardless of course

enrollment. Black students are much more likely to be freshman than White students. Although the majority of White students are freshman, they are much more spread out among the different classes. Students from other racial categories are few in number and hard to analyze as trends rather than coincidences, but more spread out than Black students anyway.

TABLE 1, Advisors: N= 21

Black/ African American	White	Other
2 (9.5%)	19 (90.5%)	0 (0%)

TABLE 2, Departments: BAS: N=4, SOC: N=11

	Black/ African American	White	Other
BAS	4 (100%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
SOC	2 (18.2%)	8 (72.7%)	1 (9.1%)

TABLE 3, Students: BAS: N=91, SOC: N= 102

	Black/ African American	White	Other
BAS	83 (92.2%)	4 (4.4%)	3 (3.3%)
SOC	20 (20.0%)	67 (67.0%)	13 (13.0%)

TABLE 4, Students: BAS: N=91, SOC: N= 102

	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
BAS	71 (77.2%)	14 (15.2%)	5 (5.4%)	2 (2.2%)
SOC	44 (43.6%)	27 (26.7%)	12 (11.9%)	18 (17.8%)

TABLE 5, Students: Black/ African American: N=103, White: N= 71, Other: N= 16

	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
Black/ African American	76 (73.8%)	17 (16.5%)	4 (3.9%)	6 (5.8%)
White	30 (42.3%)	18 (25.4%)	12 (16.9%)	11 (15.5%)
Other	6 (37.5%)	6 (37.5%)	1 (6.3%)	3 (18.8)

Results from the Advisor Survey

The main question for the advisors was to find out whether or not they were steering students to or from Black American Studies 215 and Sociology 215 based on race.

The number of students that advisors saw each semester ranged from 10 to 1,650 with a median number of 350 students. The amount of time advisors spent with each student during the semester ranged from 15 minutes to 100 minutes with a median amount of 40 minutes. It is hard to assess the ability of advisors to determine what courses would be best for what students in the amount of time allotted. The amount of time advisors spent with each student varied dramatically by the number of students each advisor estimated seeing per semester. Students within smaller colleges were allotted more time than those in the larger colleges.

With a median of 40 minutes per student each semester, advisors must be quick to determine what courses are best. The advisor must do this time and time again, an average of 350 times. The sample size was too small to retrieve any statistically significant findings, but the data does suggest that tracking is occurring, at least among the advisors who responded to the survey.

Few advisors reported that students already knew what courses they wanted to take when they visit (question 1) but nearly half of the advisors reported that they believed they could guess what the student wanted (question 2). Advisors overwhelmingly believe that Black students will be more comfortable in Black American Studies than other students (question 6) and over half of them believe that Black American Studies will be better for them than Sociology (Question 7). Over 70% of advisors reported believing that White students would not be comfortable in a Black American Studies course (question 5). These beliefs are impacting the direction the advisors are steering students, noticeable in statements 3 and 4, where the majority of students advisors are enrolling in Black American Studies are black and less than 40 % of advisors have even suggested to a white student that he or she take a Black American Studies course. However, most advisors did not report active discouragement of Black American Studies and Sociology.

TABLE 6, Advisor Perception of Students, and Steering To and From BAS & SOC,
N=21

	% of Advisor that Agree
1. Students Already Know What They Want When They Come to Advisor	14.3%
2. Advisor Can Guess What Student Wants	47.6%
3. Majority of Students Advisor enrolled in BAS are Black Students	85.7%
4. Advisor Has Suggested White Students take BAS	38.1%
5. White Students not Comfortable in BAS	71.4%
6. Black Students more Comfortable in BAS than other Students	76.2%
7. BAS better for Black students than SOC	52.4%
8. Discourage BAS	9.5%
9. Discourage SOC	14.3%

Results from the Department Survey

The questions for the department were much different than those of the advisors. Since multicultural education can take many different forms and the target audience for specialized programs like Black American Studies have ranged from inclusive to exclusive it was important to find the extent to which teachers found racial diversity important. Department surveys have been divided into two main categories and two different tables. Table 7 looks at the extent to which teachers and departments are recruiting students into their discipline for the purpose of racially diversifying their courses and Table 8 examines the extent to which teachers believe

racial demographics affect the classroom- among students as well as among themselves.

Table 7 clearly shows that teachers from both departments agree that efforts are being made to racially diversify the classroom. This importantly establishes that the overwhelming ideology and practice in both departments privileges racial diversity, dispelling the idea that either of these departments is racially exclusive in nature. Interestingly, statements 3 and 5 suggest that there is a difference in who they say is making the effort to diversify the class, where Black American Studies teachers say they personally are, and Sociology teachers are claiming that the department is. This is possibly due to the structure of the departments. Many of the faculty from the Black American Studies department are joint appointed faculty, so most of the racial diversity in Black American Studies courses are a result of cross-listings in multiple departments, hence putting a greater burden on Black American Studies faculty to engage in recruitment efforts.

TABLE 7, Teacher and Department efforts to Diversify, BAS: N= 4, SOC: N=11

	1. I Recruit Students to take courses in my Department	2.I Inform Students of Other courses in Our Department	3. I Seek Strategies to Make My Courses More Racially Diverse	4. Department Recruits White Students	5. Department Recruits Black Students
BAS % Agree	75%	100.0%	75.0%	25%	25%
SOC % Agree	63.6%	81.8%	27.3%	18.2%	72.7%

Table 8 shows that majority of teachers in both departments believe that racial diversity in the classroom is beneficial (Question 4) and impacts the knowledge students gain from the course (Question 5). Sociology teachers were more likely to feel more comfortable if students were the same race as them (Question 3) or the same race as each other (Question 2). Further, almost half of the sociology faculty and graduate assistants reported believing that discussion runs more smoothly if students are of the same race. I think this may be because of personal insecurities in holding an expert or authority position in racial discussions coupled with individual uneasiness about discussing race. Of course, a larger sample is necessary to find if this assumption has any validity, but student data in Table 9 and 10 discussed below, gives some indication that it may be accurate.

All of the teachers in Sociology who said they felt more comfortable if students were the same race as they were, were white. Perhaps some of the increase in comfort lies in the ability or willingness to avoid discussion. Obviously, teachers would be unable to avoid the discussion and may therefore be more likely to feel uncomfortable.

TABLE 8, Teacher Perception of the Effect of Racial Demographics on the Classroom, BAS: N= 4, SOC: N= 11

	BAS % Agree	SOC % Agree
1. Discussion Runs More Smoothly if Students Mostly of the Same Race	25%	45.5%
2. I am more Comfortable if Students are mostly the Same Race as Each Other	0%	18.2%
3. I am more Comfortable if Students are Mostly the Same Race as Me	0%	27.3%
4. Students With a Diverse Racial Background Beneficial When Discussing Racial Issues	100%	81.8%
5. Racial Demographics Have an Effect on Knowledge Gained by Students	75.0%	90.9%

Results from Student Surveys

Questions regarding the students were much more in depth in this study. In order to figure out why students took the courses they did to fulfill their multicultural requirements I looked at how personal factors of students affect decisions to enroll in a particular course. I also looked at the extent to which other groups factored into students' decisions. Table 9 looks at the students' feelings about both racial diversity and about the departments of Black American Studies and Sociology, comparing students enrolled in BAS 215 and SOC 215. Table 10 examines the students' feelings by race, and is included to show that the trends are not exclusive to the students in the specific courses but general differences exist in the racial categories.

From Table 9 we see that the majority of students are more comfortable among students of their race. A large percentage of students in both Black American Studies 215 and Sociology 215 state that they would avoid discussion of racial issues if they were the only person of their race. This is noticeably higher for sociology students, where nearly half of them state they would avoid discussion compared to an approximate third of Black American Studies students. The other interesting trend in this table is the comparison between students in the two classes about the departments. Over forty percent of Sociology 215 students believe they would feel uncomfortable in a Black American Studies course, and a third of those students stated that they would never take a Black American Studies course. This finding among Sociology students implies a high amount of self steering away from the Black American Studies department. Just slightly more than twenty-one percent of Black American studies students, on the other hand, stated that they would feel uncomfortable in a Sociology course. Further, more *Sociology* students (16.7%) stated they would never take a Sociology course than Black American Studies students (16.3%). On a side note, I believe this finding indicates that students currently enrolled in the courses interpreted the statements to read “I would never take a Sociology/Black American Studies course, *again*” since obviously, they did take a course in the department. Table 9 clearly shows a trend among Sociology students to opt away from Black American Studies courses, but does not show the same for Black American Studies students toward Sociology.

Table 10 looks at the same statements but compares them by racial category

rather than by course. Although the table maintains that Black students are more likely to state that they are more comfortable with people of their race, they are the least likely to avoid discussion or courses in either department. They are also least likely to state that they would feel uncomfortable in either department. In comparison to Black students, White and Other students were less likely to say they were more comfortable with people of their own race. However, among students in the Other category, nearly double the percentage of Black students stated they would avoid discussion of racial issues if they were the only person of their race. This percentage of students more than triples when comparing White students to Black Students.

Interestingly, although students in the Other category were much more likely to be enrolled in the Sociology course, the percentage of students in this category who claimed they would be uncomfortable in a Black American Studies course (question 3) was identical to the number of students who claimed they would be uncomfortable in a Sociology course (question 4). Another interesting finding is that, although only by a small margin, Black students were more likely to say they would feel uncomfortable in a Black American Studies course than a Sociology course. This is particularly interesting in connection to the advisor survey in which over half of advisor respondents agreed with the statement that Black American Studies courses would be better for Black Students than Sociology courses (Table 6, Question 7). The largest difference regarding comfort level in the different departments was among White students where 28.2% of them said they would feel uncomfortable in a Black American Studies course compared to 7% of them stating they would feel uncomfortable in a Sociology course. Interestingly, compared with the advisor

survey in which 71.4% of advisors reported believing that White students would feel uncomfortable in a Black American Studies course (Table 6 Question 5), only 28.2% of White students reported believing that they would feel uncomfortable. Students from all three racial categories were more likely to say they would never take a Black American Studies course than a Sociology course. The largest percentage of students stating they would not take a Black American Studies course was in the Other category, 12.5%. However, the biggest difference between the two statements was among White students, in which 11.3% said they would never take a Black American Studies course compared to only 2.8% of them stating they would never take a Sociology course.

TABLE 9, Student Standpoint on Racial Diversity and Departments, BAS: N= 91, SOC: N= 102

	1. More Comfortable With People of my Race	2. Avoid Discussion if Only Person of My Race	3. Feel Uncomfortable in BAS Class	4. Feel Uncomfortable in SOC Class	5. Would Never Take a Course in BAS	6. Would Never Take a Course in SOC
BAS % Agree	80.6%	32.3%	10.8%	21.5%	7.5%	16.3%
SOC % Agree	71.6%	47.1%	40.2%	18.6%	33.3%	16.7%

TABLE 10, Student Standpoint on Racial Diversity and Departments, Black/African American: N= 102, White: N= 71, Other: N=16

	1. More Comfortable With People of my Race	2. Avoid Discussion if Only Person of My Race	3. Feel Uncomfortable in BAS Class	4. Feel Uncomfortable in SOC Class	5. Would Never Take a Course in BAS	6. Would Never Take a Course in SOC
Black	58.3%	9.7%	7.8%	5.8%	4.9%	1.0%
White	45.1%	33.8%	28.2%	7.0%	11.3%	2.8%
Other	25.0%	18.8%	18.8%	18.8%	12.5%	6.7%

Table 11 asks students about other factors affecting student decisions to take a specific course and shows that students in SOC 215 are more likely to take the course because it was required or because it fit into their schedule and BAS 215 students were slightly less likely to be given a list of choices by advisors. The difference, though, is among Black students in Sociology 215. 73.7% of Black students enrolled in SOC 215 were given a list of choices by their advisors as compared to only 61.2% of White students. In other words, black students who were given a list of choices by their advisors were less likely to be in Black American Studies 215. This supports findings that advisors steer toward rather than away from.

TABLE 11, Other Personal Factors Affecting Student Decisions to Take Course,
 BAS: N= 91, SOC: N= 102

	1. I Took This Course Because it is Required	2. I Took this Course Because it Fit My Schedule	3. I am Aware that BAS & SOC Offer a Course to Fulfill Requirement	4. Advisor Gave Me a List of Choices When I Enrolled
BAS % Agree	44.0%	41.9%	54.5%	62.4%
SOC % Agree	54.9%	59.4%	55.9%	69.9

Table 12 examines the extent to which other individuals or groups are affecting students' decisions. Students enrolled in Black American Studies 215 are likely to consult college advisors (Question 1) and their families (Question 4) before enrolling in a course. Black American Studies students were also more likely to have taken the course because an advisor recommended it (Question 7), indicating that the Black American Studies students are not just more likely to solicit the advice of college advisors, but they are more likely to take it. Sociology 215 students are slightly more likely to consult their department advisors than Black American studies students and much more likely to consult their friends. This may be an indication of the level in school difference between the two groups since 77.2% of Black American Studies students are freshman, and 30% of Sociology students are Juniors and Seniors. This finding mirrors the findings in the literature review by showing that students early in their career tend to rely more heavily on the word of advisors.

Interestingly, however, is that although students in Sociology 215 are more likely to consult their friends, Black American Studies 215 students are much more

likely to have heard good comments about the course or the teacher from their friends. I believe this may be a result of peer networks among current and potential Black American Studies students in which unsolicited information is common enough that they did not need to ask. To further elaborate on this finding, Table 13 contains questions 3, 6, and 7 from Table 12 and examines the findings by race within the Sociology 215 course. Unfortunately, the number of White and Other student in the Black American Studies 215 course were too small to examine.

The Table shows that this trend exists among Black students in the Sociology course as well, and suggests that it is the peer networks among Black students that create this trend. This also indicates that Black students are forming peer networks much sooner in their academic career than White students since the difference exists even though White students are more likely to be further along than Black students in their academic career (Table 5). Since students from the Other category are actually from many different racial groups and are so small in number, it would be unwise to form any generalization about the peer networks among these students.

TABLE 12, Individuals or Groups that Affect Student Decisions, BAS: N=91, SOC: N= 102

	BAS % Agree	SOC % Agree
1. Consult College Advisor	84.9%	71.6%
2. Consult Department Advisor	65.2%	69.3%
3. Consult Friends	25.8%	43.1%
4. Consult Family	35.9%	22.5%
5. Heard Good Comments About Professor From Friends	36.6%	20.8%
6. Heard Good Comments About Class From Friends	47.3%	30.4%
7. Took Course Because Advisor Recommended	53.8%	42.6%
8. Professor from this Department Recommended in other class	6.5%	6.0%

TABLE 13, Individuals or Groups that Affect Student Decisions Among Sociology 215 Students By Racial Category, Black/ African American: N=20, White: N= 66, Other: N=13

	Black Students	White Students	Other Students
1. Consult Friends	35.0%	44.8%	46.2%
2. Heard Good Comments About Professor From Friends	30.0%	18.2%	15.4%
3. Heard Good Comments About Class From Friends	40.0%	26.9%	30.8%

Table 14 shows the extent to which students in Black American Studies 215 and Sociology 215 rate these groups as important or very important in their course decisions. Here again, with exception of the department advisors, more Black

American Studies students place importance on these groups than sociology students. This further indicates that it is a result of unsolicited advice within the peer networks of Black American Studies students that lessens their likelihood to consult their friends, since they are more likely to hold their friends' opinion as important or very important. The most significant difference is the percentage of students in Black American Studies 215 who rate their family as important (68.8%) as compared to the number of Sociology 215 students (48%).

Table 15 indicates that this trend holds true among black students as well as students in the Other category. Furthermore, White students were least likely to consider the opinions or advice from members of every one of these categories as important or very important.

TABLE 14, Percentage of Students Reporting Importance of Individuals or Group Affecting Student Decisions, BAS: N= 91, SOC N= 102

	1. College Advisors	2. Department Advisors	3. Friends	4. Family
BAS % Important or Very Important	87.1%	71.0%	67.7%	68.8%
SOC % Important or Very Important	81.2%	73.3%	56.4%	48.0%

TABLE 15, Percentage of Students Reporting Individuals or Groups as Important or Very Important in Student's Decisions, Black: N= 102, White: N=71, Other=16

	1. College Advisors	2. Department Advisors	3. Friends	4. Family
Black	85.4%	72.8%	68.0%	68.0%
White	80.3%	69.0%	53.5%	43.7%
Other	86.7%	81.3%	68.8%	66.7%

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to find out why students come to be enrolled in the different courses they take to fulfill their multicultural requirements at the University. The multifaceted approach I have utilized examines the roles of advisors, students, and departments in student choices. The influence that each of these groups has is apparent in the literature and in the findings revealed in this particular study. This conclusion will discuss the role of each of these groups individually and then bring them together to assess the affect of each group on student decisions.

This study found that advisors are serving to limit racial diversity in multicultural courses at the University. This occurs predominately by steering Black students into the Black American Studies 215 course. Steering students away from courses by advisors does occur occasionally. Advisors reported that they were more likely to steer students away from Sociology 215 than Black American Studies 215. From the advisor survey, we can see that there is some degree of arbitrary tracking of students by advisors, in that they use racial characteristics to determine which courses they feel are best for students. This may be fairly functional for advisors, however,

since student surveys, especially among non-black students suggest that students are personally opting away from particular courses on the basis of both comfort and individual ideas about the different departments. With time constraints and student trends, suggesting Black American Studies 215 to mostly Black students could be a practical approach for advisors. However, in cross comparison of advisor and student surveys, we can see that advisors are overgeneralizing the extent to which White students are not comfortable with Black American Studies or would refuse to take it. Even more so, advisors seem to be overgeneralizing the extent to which Black students should take Black American Studies 215 or should not take Sociology 215. The question then becomes, is it the advisors responsibility to try to racially diversify the courses? If so, to what extent should they go, given time restrictions, to do so? Furthermore, how successful would advisors be in their efforts?

From the department surveys we can see that most teachers feel that racial diversity is important in the classroom. Additionally, the majority of teachers from both departments indicate some degree of personal responsibility to diversity. Although Sociology teachers claim that it is the department that is recruiting Black students rather than themselves, the majority of Sociology teachers do inform students of other courses in their department that they can take and state that they recruit students. The successes of the departments to diversify are questionable. Obviously the Black American Studies course is highly racially homogenous. The Sociology courses are more diverse, but it does not appear to be as a result of department influence. Very few students stated they took the course they did because of the advice of another professor. The differences in the structure of the department may

play a more significant role in the process of racially diversifying the classroom, especially in regards to recruitment. There is clearly a different approach to recruiting for the purpose of racially diversifying the courses by the departments. The department survey failed to uncover specific tactics by the teachers and/or departments, but further investigation may reveal whether or not specific strategies or tactics are more successful than others.

Differences between the two departments' teacher comfort-levels may be a direct result of the racial demographics of the two courses. The study found very few White students in the Black American Studies 215 course a total of 4 out of 91. On the other hand, 20 out of 102 Sociology 215 students were Black students. The results from Table 10 show that White students are much more likely than Black Students to avoid discussion on race if they are the only student of their race in the class. With a much lower level of racial diversity in the classroom and a tendency for White students to avoid discussion, it is likely that the Black American Studies course is less confrontational than the sociology course, at least pertaining to student conflicts. Which parallels the teacher perceptions of discussion outlined in Table 8 question 1 in which nearly half of sociology teachers feel that discussion runs more smoothly if students are of the same race but only a quarter of Black American Studies teachers concurred with the statement.

Student surveys showed that most students did take the course in which they remained the dominant race. Black Students were most likely to be steered into a course, Black American Studies 215, but were also more likely to be open to taking a course in either department. Black Students enrolled in Sociology were more likely

to have been given a list of choices when enrolling in the course than Black students in Black American Studies and more than White students in Sociology. Further investigation into why these particular Black students were given a list of choices may further elaborate on the nature of tracking at the university.

I had initially hypothesized that students would become less reliant on advisors and more reliant on peers as they progressed through their academic careers. The sample was not large enough to analyze the variables by level in school within the racial categories so the progression of group importance is difficult to ascertain. There is a distinct difference between the peer networks among Black students in comparison to White students. The peer network among Black students seems to have significant impact upon the course that students take. It would be interesting to examine how information about courses or teachers flows through the Black peer network at the University. This could be very helpful in developing strategies for further diversifying the courses, especially regarding the Black American Studies 215 course.

If our intended goal is for students to gain a more diverse cultural awareness, and a better understanding of others, then it might be necessary to seek out strategies that would promote a more culturally diverse environment in these courses. For most of us it is easy to see the benefit. The more diverse the classroom setting is, the greater the ability to examine different cultures as an inclusive group existing within the environment. It is also easy to see the possible negative consequence of lacking racial diversity. The less diverse the classroom is, the easier it is for different cultures to only be examined as marginalized groups, discussed in theoretical and abstract

terms, resulting in the reliance of preconceived stereotypes to dominate the understanding of the groups. In either case, the racial or ethnic make-up of a classroom creates a vastly different environment; this study displays a polarization of students to and from their multicultural course requirements based on race. Further research could be done to examine the ability of the multicultural courses at the University to meet the outlined goals. Additionally, it may be interesting to see if students become any more comfortable around people of different races after they have completed the course.

In order to create a more racially diverse atmosphere student perceptions about the different departments need to change and students need to be further informed of their options when fulfilling their multicultural requirements. Advisors will also need to alter their view of which courses are better for students based upon racial characteristics.

Appendix A:

Survey for Students

Circle which course you are completing the survey for: A. SOC 215 B. BAS 215

Please provide the following information

1. Race:
 - A. Black/African American
 - B. White
 - C. Other, Please specify _____
2. Sex:
 - A. Female
 - B. Male
3. Level in School:
 - A. Freshman
 - B. Sophomore
 - C. Junior
 - D. Senior
4. Number of semesters you have completed at SIUC? _____
5. Number of courses in Sociology you have taken? _____
6. Number of courses in Black American Studies you have taken? _____
7. Number of courses with this instructor you have taken? _____
8. Grade you expect out of the course? _____
9. College in which you are enrolled
 - A. College of Agriculture
 - B. College of Applied Science and Arts
 - C. College of Business and Administration
 - D. College of Education and Human Services
 - E. College of Engineering
 - F. College of Liberal Arts
 - H. College of Mass Communication and Media Arts
 - I. College of Science
 - J. Pre-major
 - K. Unsure
10. If unsure, what is your major? _____

On a Scale of 1 to 5, 1 being Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 being Disagree (D), 3 being neither agree nor disagree (N), 4 being Agree (A), and 5 being Strongly Agree (SA) rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. I consult an advisor from my college before enrolling in a core curriculum course.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I consult an advisor from my department before enrolling in a core curriculum course.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I consult my friends before enrolling in courses.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I consult my family before enrolling in courses.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I took this course because it is required.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I took this course because I am interested in the subject material.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I took this course because it fit into my schedule.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I heard good comments about the professor of this course from my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I heard good comments about this course from my friends.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I took this course because an advisor recommended it.	1	2	3	4	5
11. A professor from another course I had in this department recommended this course.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I am aware that both the Black American Studies Department and the Sociology Department offer courses that fulfill the multicultural requirement.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I believe I would feel uncomfortable in a Black American Studies course.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I believe I would feel uncomfortable in a Sociology course.	1	2	3	4	5

Survey for Department

Circle which department you teach for: A. SOC B. BAS

1. Race:

- A. Black/African American
- B. White
- C. Other, please specify _____

2. Sex:

- A. Female
- B. Male

3. Occupation/Position in the department:

- A. Professor
- B. Lecturer
- C. Graduate student, teaching a course

4. How many years have you taught at SIUC? _____

5. How many times have you taught SOC 215? _____

6. How many times have you taught BAS 215? _____

On a Scale of 1 to 5, 1 being Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 being Disagree (D), 3 being neither agree nor disagree (N), 4 being Agree (A), and 5 being Strongly Agree (SA) rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements:

	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. I actively recruit students to take courses in my department.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I teach lower level courses (100-200 level) often.	1	2	3	4	5
3. When I teach a lower level course, I inform the students about other courses they might find interesting in our department.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I teach predominately to students of my own race.	1	2	3	4	5

	SD	D	N	A	SA
5. I find that discussions on racial issues run more smoothly in courses where the students are mostly of the same race.	1	2	3	4	5
6. I am more comfortable teaching courses in which the students are mostly of the same race as each other.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I am more comfortable teaching courses in which the students are mostly of the same race as me.	1	2	3	4	5
8. Our department makes an extra effort to recruit students to our department who are white.	1	2	3	4	5
9. Our department makes an extra effort to recruit students to our department who are black.	1	2	3	4	5
11. Having a classroom of students with diverse racial backgrounds is highly beneficial when discussing racial issues.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I actively seek out strategies in order to make my classrooms more racially diverse.	1	2	3	4	5
13. It requires no effort on my part to make my classrooms racially diverse.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I believe that the racial demographics of a course on racial issues have no effect on the knowledge that students gain in that course.	1	2	3	4	5

Survey for the College Advisors

1. Race:

- A. Black/African American
- B. White
- C. Other, Please specify _____

2. Sex:

- A. Female
- B. male

3. College in which you are an advisor:

- A. College of Agriculture
- B. College of Applied Science and Arts
- C. College of Business and Administration
- D. College of Education and Human Services
- E. College of Engineering
- F. College of Liberal Arts
- H. College of Mass Communication and Media Arts
- I. College of Science
- J. Pre-major

1. Approximately how many students do you advise each semester? _____
2. Of those students, approximately how many are 1st year students? _____
3. Approximately, how many of the students you advise in a given semester are you already familiar with? _____
4. On average, how much time do you spend advising an individual student in a semester? _____

On a Scale of 1 to 5, 1 being Strongly Disagree (SD), 2 being Disagree (D), 3 being neither agree nor disagree (N), 4 being Agree (A), and 5 being Strongly Agree (SA), rate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.

	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. Students generally know what courses they want to take before coming to my office.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Of the students who do not know, I am usually able to guess what courses they will likely find interesting.	1	2	3	4	5

	SD	D	N	A	SA
3. I often try to get students to enroll in required courses that are offered in the college in which I advise.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I have suggested to some students that they fulfill a core curriculum requirement in the department of Sociology.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I have suggested to some students that they fulfill a core curriculum requirement in the department of Black American Studies.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My college recommends specific courses for our majors fulfilling university requirements.	1	2	3	4	5
7. A majority of the students I have enrolled in a Black American Studies course are Black students.	1	2	3	4	5
8. White students generally do not feel comfortable enrolling in a Black American Studies course.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I believe that a Black American Studies course on U.S. Diversity, will resonate better with a Black student than a Sociology course on U.S. Diversity will.	1	2	3	4	5
10. I often suggest white students take a Black American Studies course to fulfill their core curriculum requirement.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I was not aware that the Black American Studies Department offered a course that could fulfill the multicultural requirement for students.	1	2	3	4	5
12. I was not aware that the Sociology Department offered a course that could fulfill the multicultural requirement for students.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I sometimes discourage students from taking a core course in Black American Studies.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I sometimes discourage students from taking a core courses in sociology.	1	2	3	4	5

15. Black students generally feel more comfortable taking a Black American Studies Course than students from other races.

SD	D	N	A	SA
1	2	3	4	5

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