

T. Scott Bledsoe, PsyD, Maria A. Pacino, EdD, MLS,
and Susan R. Warren, PhD

Abstract: College campuses are ideal settings to promote learning about cultural diversity (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). By engaging the campus community in dialogue about topics such as microaggressions and hate crimes, universities can gain strong footholds on effectively tackling the topic of cultural diversity (Zuniga, Lopez & Ford, 2012). This article provides: (a) a rationale for addressing issues of diversity; (b) the advantages of using videos and personal narratives for fostering dialogue about cultural differences, and (c) a framework for promoting cultural proficiency and institutional viability and vitality. Through reflective discussions across the institution, students, staff, faculty, and administrators can gain insights about the richly diverse, yet complex world in which we live.

Key Words: Video narratives, Dialogue, College campuses

TACKLING DIVERSITY: A FRAMEWORK FOR USING VIDEO NARRATIVES TO PROMOTE DIALOGUE ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

INTRODUCTION

The topic of cultural diversity represents a critical source of dialogue across college campuses in the United States. As university demographics become increasingly diverse (Kingkade, 2015; Mason, 2014), it is imperative that this issue is discussed among faculty, staff and students. Many institutions provide seminars, workshops, webinars, and other resources for taking this conversation to a deeper level, and yet effective discourse on the topic is often considered challenging and even divisive (Harper, 2018). Though global assertions offer the potential for accord (e.g., Kennedy's unifying statement that "We all breathe the same air, we all cherish our children's futures" (John F. Kennedy, n.d.)), tempers flare when topics – such as immigration, racial inequality and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) rights – become more explicit. One solution for inviting open discussion is to use short videotaped chronicles that directly address themes of diversity.

The act of storytelling has been an integral tool for shaping discussions throughout history (Foote, 2015). In the age of social media and real-time discourse, personal narratives are frequently disseminated through sound bites and film. By establishing an instant and

personal video connection, the subject can speak directly to the listener in a way that may feel more intimate than the written word alone. On college campuses, brief but well-constructed films featuring personal narratives about diversity can provide important perspectives on topics such as cultural awareness, microaggressions, and intolerance (Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solorzano, 2009). The content of these digitally-produced messages, when presented in a non-threatening environment, creates the potential for effectively promoting deep dialogue and learning. This paper provides a rationale for engaging in dialogue on diversity-related issues, advantages of video-based narratives as curriculum in classrooms and professional development at the university level, and a framework for promoting cultural proficiency and institutional vitality. The terms colleges and universities are used interchangeably throughout the paper.

Rationale for Tackling the Complexity of Cultural Diversity

As the United States becomes increasingly diverse, so do college campuses. Majority white, middle class to affluent student bodies are no longer the norm as students from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds, religions, sexual identities, and socio-economic status fill the classrooms (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2016). While the literature on higher education espouses the value of a diverse college campus for all, tensions exist when institutions of higher education become diverse. These tensions often result in increases in racial incidents and hate crimes on campus and reflect the mood of society in general (Bauer-Wolf, 2017).

T. Scott Bledsoe, PsyD, is Associate Professor, Department of Graduate Psychology, at Azusa Pacific University. Maria A. Pacino, EdD, MLS, is Professor, University Libraries, at Azusa Pacific University. Susan R. Warren, Ph.D., is Professor and Director of Diversity Programs at Azusa Pacific University.

Public forums and media broadcasts about cultural diversity are regularly showcased in a highly dramatic fashion (e.g., breaking news vignettes featuring angry protesters), causing listeners to experience a range of emotions and strong opinions. Such feelings may trigger anti-immigrant sentiment, hate crimes, scapegoating of marginalized groups, and religious intolerance. Ultimately, this may lead to endorsement of nationalism at the expense of global understanding of cultural differences (Hatewatch Staff, 2017).

Negative viewpoints about culture can lead to scapegoating or blaming other groups for a range of social and economic problems (Steele, Stuckler, McKee & Pollock, 2014). These groups often become marginalized, dehumanized, and deemed unworthy of basic rights such as equal protection under the law. Such groups include African Americans, who repeatedly fall victim to racial profiling (Wilson & Wilson, 2014); LGBTQ populations, whose members suffer discrimination based on sexual identity (Asakura & Craig, 2014); and Muslims who frequently are the targets of religious intolerance, particularly since 9/11 (Livengood & Stodolska, 2004). In addition to overt discrimination, some groups also experience microaggressions, which are subtly delivered as verbal and nonverbal racial insults (Sue, et al., 2007). Climate studies of college campuses reveal countless examples of both macroaggressions such as racial slurs being written on students' cars or dormitory doors and microaggressions in the classrooms where students are called on to be the representatives of their race (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Yosso, et al., 2009).

The causes of anti-immigration attitudes, hate crimes, scapegoating of marginalized groups, and religious intolerance often involve multiple explanations and factors. White privilege, defined as the advantages of Caucasians over persons of color in the workforce and in the ability to gain opportunities across numerous areas (Collins & Jun, 2017), may be a factor. Nationalism may also contribute to negative attitudes, with the expectation that all immigrants to the United States will culturally assimilate or disregard their country-of-origin backgrounds in favor of adapting a narrow value-based framework representing mainstream American culture (Hatewatch Staff, 2017). Additionally, racial insensitivity, prejudice, and overt discrimination are frequently rooted in feelings of fear of *the other*. Education about these issues is crucial in order to promote equity across the racial spectrum. Research indicates that dialogue is an effective means for growth in cultural competency (Zuniga, Lopez & Ford, 2012); however, conversations about culture should be addressed through sensitive examination rather than demands for ideological change (Solomon, Portelli, Daniel, & Campbell 2005).

Leaders must address the topic of diversity at the college level by engaging all members of the community in dialogue to explore the complexities of culture from a variety of perspectives. Narratives can be powerful when used to bring together individuals with opposing viewpoints and engage them in conversation to experience new perspectives. This paper reveals the story of a university that used video narratives to foster diversity-centered dialogue and increase the value of differences across the institution. A framework outlines the steps necessary to achieve success.

The Power of Personal Video Narratives to Create and Enhance Dialogue

Oral tradition and storytelling are an integral aspect of cultural history (Foote, 2015) and can reach large audiences through the sharing of personal experiences. Considering that everyone has stories to tell, personal narratives engage the listener in a process of "altering the arc" of life stories (Sedun & Skillen, 2015, p. 102) in a way that enhances the learning process. This influences the lives of both teller and listener, with the latter hearing and gaining new perspective while the former appreciates the story's impact on the other each time it is retold. Tales told at the dinner table, by campfire, or in stadiums filled with thousands of people have the potential for building connections necessary for further discussions on diversity (Zuniga, Lopez & Ford, 2012).

Personal visual narratives serve as unique stories that can effectively educate audiences in numerous ways. The viewer utilizes multiple intelligences while watching, including core intelligences (verbal/linguistic), emotional intelligence, and learning across the left and right hemispheres of the brain (Berk, 2009). Although watching television is generally considered a passive act, viewing video-based stories, also called digital storytelling (Lal, Donnelly & Shin, 2015; Robin, 2008), provides the framework for active learning when the content is engaging for the viewer. Video narratives have the power to enhance learning about diversity issues in the classroom (Clements & Jones, 2008) and stimulate students "to become creative storytellers through the traditional processes of selecting a topic, conducting some research, writing a script, and developing an interesting story" (Robin, p. 222).

Educational theorists explain learning in the context of multimedia use in classrooms. Meyer (2009) proclaims that, "Multimedia learning is learning from words and pictures. ... [L]earners can better understand an explanation when it is presented in words and pictures. ... Meaningful learning outcomes depend on the cognitive activity of the learner during learning" (p.3). He further identifies three metaphors of multimedia learning: response strengthening, information acquisition, and knowledge construction. Berk (2009) affirms Meyer's multimedia learning theory and enumerates some potential learning outcomes of using videos and other multimedia in teaching and learning. This includes getting the learners' attention and generating interest in the topic; fostering creativity and deeper learning; facilitating collaboration among students; and encouraging self-reflection, empathy, and relationship building.

The use of videos in teaching and learning, including professional development, is pedagogically effective and promotes cognitive flexibility and active learning while fostering productive, meaningful, and engaging classroom discussions (Mendoza, Caranto & David 2015). Videos and digital media can be used in professional development to "develop pedagogical knowledge and support reflective practice" (Woodward & Machado, 2017, p. 49). Additionally, "Online video's versatility, accessibility, breadth of content and up-to-date materials afford both instructors and students opportunities to shape and contribute to course content and increase student engagement" (Sherer & Shea, 2011, p. 58).

Digital storytelling and personal narratives through short videos are highly effective in engaging students, staff,

and faculty in dialogue about issues of diversity, equity, and social justice (Grant & Bolin, 2016). Listening to the lived stories of others evokes conversations around ethical and moral responsibilities and allows the participants to develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions for promoting cognitive and affective engagement with diverse others. These opportunities for dialogue and learning can take place in a classroom or in any other setting, formal or informal, across campus.

Video Narratives: A Framework for Tackling Diversity

A faculty member at a private university in Southern California developed a video-based program, *The Diversity Mosaic Experience* (DME), to provide a unique opportunity for fostering dialogue about diversity and enhancing cultural proficiency of faculty, staff, and students. Joined by other faculty, the team created a conceptual framework for the project that is informed by Smith's model for addressing diversity on college campuses (2009). It is hoped that this framework will be used by other institutions to promote awareness of diversity on campus and in workshops and online environments.

1. Developing Video Narratives Based on Assessment of Institutional Climate

Cultivating a positive climate and nurturing intergroup relations are crucial to institutional viability and vitality (Smith, 2009). At the university where the DME project was developed, a climate study was administered to all constituents by the Higher Education Research Institute of the University of California at Los Angeles which explored perceptions of diversity across campus (Ramirez & Zimmerman, 2016). Feedback from the study suggested some occurrences of microaggressions and macroaggressions and a lack of respect for culturally diverse groups on campus. To address these issues, the DME coordinators sought students, faculty, and staff who were willing to discuss their views and expertise on these themes. After consulting with the Chief Diversity Officer/Vice President and members of other diversity-based centers on campus, eleven persons were identified, and all agreed to share their narratives on film.

To create and produce the videos, a HD (high definition) camera was used to capture videotaped stories of participants. Video editing software was selected based on ease of use and quality output and locations for filming included available offices and outdoor settings. Once completed, the videos were stored in Google Drive folders and then uploaded to YouTube. All participants signed release forms to allow distribution to video-sharing web-

sites. Additionally, guidelines for narrative presentation were used to ensure effective storytelling in the DME films. They included maintaining the perspective of the author, providing a question to be answered by the end of the narrative, enhancing the storyline with emotional content, using the storyteller's voice to personalize content, and utilizing short video clips to maintain audience attention (Robin, 2008).

The DME videos average three to five minutes in length and are saved in an MP4 file format. The collection includes an African American administrator who shared a microaggression experience at a clothing store where she was followed throughout her visit by a security guard who likely assumed she would shoplift, the university president who expounded on the changes he had seen in campus diversity since taking on his leadership role, a dean who shared about his journey from unawareness to enlightenment about the privilege he experienced as a white male, and a wheelchair-bound student who offered his perspective on meeting the specific needs of disabled students at the university. A sample video can be accessed at the following link: <https://youtu.be/ZjHJZM-HYX0>.

To enhance the capacity for dialogue, two learning tools were developed for each video. First, each film features a statement or question upon which viewers can reflect and discuss after watching. For example, the following statement appears at the conclusion of the video on microaggressions: "Share a time when you either witnessed or experienced a microaggression." A second learning tool for professional development involves supplementary discussion resources, which are featured in Google Drive folders and are discussed in the following section.

All finalized DME videos were uploaded to the main university web page, organized by specific categories for easy access (e.g., "Microaggressions" and "First Generation Students") and featured in YouTube playlists. Due to sensitivity of content, the videos are password-protected, and visitors are prompted to provide a university login to obtain access. The website also features a direct link to discussion resources, along with other diversity materials available at the university. Also included on the DME web page is a Mission Statement delineating the goals of the program:

The Diversity Mosaic Experience (DME) showcases videos of personal narratives that are designed to develop a deep discourse on diversity. The DME educates students, faculty, and staff about diversity, equity, and inclusion by engaging a variety of perspectives, fostering faith, and embracing active listening in a spirit of humility.

Figure 1. A Video-Based Framework for Tackling Diversity



2. Using Video Narratives to Foster Dialogue around Diversity Issues

Smith's diversity framework (2009) emphasizes the importance of quality education and resources for students to function effectively in a diverse society. Providing appropriate resources is also important for faculty, staff, and administrators to promote dialogue and seek inclusive excellence. A group of faculty experts on diversity and curriculum created discussion resources for each video to assist those using the narratives as classroom and professional development tools. These ancillary resources were based on the 4-A Learning Sequence, a highly effective learning model which engages the learner through additional questions, text, videos, and written prompts (The 4-A Learning Sequence, n.d.). The model centers on:

1. **Anchoring** the learner by accessing prior knowledge,
2. **Adding** new content,
3. **Applying** the newly learned content to real-life situations, and
4. Taking **Away** - connecting the knowledge gained to promote future learning.

As an example, the discussion resource for the aforementioned video on microaggressions includes ideas for group dialogue and a link to a video by an expert on the topic. Aided by a tutorial video for step-by-step use, instructors and facilitators are encouraged to utilize discussion resources as prompts to stimulate critical thinking in classrooms and workshops.

Once the DME videos and discussion resources were completed, workshops were designed to prepare faculty and staff to utilize these resources in classrooms and for professional development. At the beginning of each presentation, participants received a handout on creating safe spaces for conversations about diversity including ground rules for discussion and encouragement of multiple viewpoints and opinions. Next, the facilitator presented five videos which showcased a broad range of diversity issues (e.g., microaggressions, immigrations stories including those of DACA recipients, power and privilege, and disability and chronic illness). Throughout each presentation, care was taken to address all comments and questions. Participants were encouraged to use the DME website to view more videos, enhance their understanding of diversity, and obtain ideas for utilizing the resources for classrooms and workshops. Evaluations invited participant feedback and revealed highly favorable comments as well as the need for further training about diversity on campus. The videos were designed for use as curricular tools at both the undergraduate and graduate levels in academic classrooms, professional development seminars for Diversity Ambassadors (described below), formal and informal faculty and staff meetings, and in other locations (e.g., dormitories) where small groups of individuals can assemble to learn more.

3. Promoting Cultural Proficiency for Institutional Viability and Vitality

Successful viability and vitality of university campuses depend on "the people, resources, and expertise to fulfill its mission as it relates to diversity (Smith, 2009, p. 65)." To accomplish this, it is important for educators to become culturally proficient, including understanding policies

and practices that impact culture on campus. DME videos continue to be developed – over 80 at the time of this writing – and a category for Third Culture Kids (TCKs) was recently added to address the stories of students who grew up in cultures different from that of their parents, and the unique challenges they face in university settings. The following are key recommendations for promoting and sustaining institutional viability around diversity.

Develop a network to promote and sustain the program. The DME originated as a project initiated by a Diversity Ambassador within the Center for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusive Excellence. The Diversity Ambassador Program is a network of over two hundred voluntary faculty and staff, committed to creating climates of inclusive excellence. They are trained in cultural proficiency with the goal of providing professional development throughout the university. Diversity Ambassadors are encouraged to utilize the DME and promote diversity activities in classrooms and workshop settings.

Garner support from institutional leaders and diversity experts. During the beginning phase of the project, the DME coordinator reached out to several constituents to obtain expertise about effectively utilizing the DME program at the university. Feedback was obtained from the president and provost as well as faculty serving in the Departments of Higher Education, Art and Design, Media Services, and University Relations. An expert in video editing helped to design a preview of the program (<https://youtu.be/yGltsus98og>), and fellow Diversity Ambassadors aided in the writing of discussion resources for each video. As the project gained support, plans were made for a premiere gala to further promote the DME program. A think tank advisory group made up of Diversity Ambassadors developed a plan for marketing the event which included creating a theme, obtaining collaborative support, and recruiting students for setup. The campus-wide 90-minute event featured an in-depth interview with the president of the university, the showing of three DME videos, and guidelines for using the discussion resources in classrooms and workshops. Over 150 administrators, faculty, staff, and students attended and participated in the premiere.

Connect with outside organizations to promote diversity issues. To promote equity and social justice, connections were made with organizations outside of the university. DME presentations were made at the National Conference on Race & Ethnicity in American Higher Education (NCORE) and the Council for Christian Colleges & Universities (CCCU) Diversity Conference, which were designed to provide diversity education for colleges and universities. Additional resources were utilized from other organizations dedicated to social justice work including the Southern Poverty Law Center, the Anti-Defamation League, and National Association of Multicultural Education (NAME).

CONCLUSION

Problems that occur at universities tend to reflect society at large. As global fears about race, immigration, and ethnicity increase, it is important for colleges and universities to promote authentic dialogue that offers multiple viewpoints about cultural diversity and its impact on society. One way to facilitate this conversation is through programs such as the DME which showcase workshops

featuring digitally produced narratives about diversity. When presented in safe environments, personal stories create a powerful backdrop for meaningful discussions.

The framework for addressing narrative-based presentations follows a three-step process. First, attitudes should be evaluated in order to assess the diversity needs of the campus. Videos should then be created that reflect these attitudes and needs, and a presentation format should be designed in a way that enhances authentic discussion. For the second step, training should be provided to faculty and staff about cultural diversity to promote effective learning about this topic. The videos should represent topics and problems that occur on campus (e.g., microaggressions) so that students and participants can address them directly. Finally, educators should stay current with up-to-date resources and networks, and present their findings at conferences such as NCORE and NAME.

Hurtful political rhetoric and conflicting ideologies are painful reminders of the difficult path in front of us. But despite the obstacles, tangible outcomes are possible. College environments can be fertile ground for multi-layered conversations about cultural diversity and video narratives provide unique viewpoints to stimulate learning. As members of the community gain valuable knowledge, they share insights with others and potentially influence society for the better. Therefore, using video narratives to promote dialogue around diversity issues enhances the viability and vitality of the institution – an approach that is definitely worth tackling.

REFERENCES

Asakura, K. & Craig, S. L. (2014). "It gets better" ...but how? Exploring resilience development in the accounts of LGBTQ adults. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment*, 24, 253-266.

Bauer-Wolf, J. (2017). A September of racist incidents. Inside Higher Ed. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/09/22/racist-incident-colleges-abound-academic-year-begins>.

Berk, R. A. (2009). Multimedia teaching with video clips: TV, movies, YouTube, and mtvU in the college classroom. *International Journal of Technology in Teaching and Learning*, 5(1): 1-21.

Clements, P. & Jones, J. (2008). *The diversity training handbook: A practical guide to understanding and changing attitudes* (3d ed.). Kogan Page.

Collins, C. S. & Jun, A. (2017). *White out: Understanding white privilege and dominance in the modern age*. New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Foote, L.S. (2015). Re-storying life as a means of critical reflection: The power of narrative learning. *Christian Higher Education*, 14(3), 116-126.

Gonzalez, E. L. F., Lewis, C. T., Slayback-Berry D. & Yost, R. W. (May 2016). Classroom use of narrative and documentary film leads to an enhanced understanding of cultural diversity and ethics in science. *Bioscene* 42(1): 39-42.

Grant, N. S. & Bolin, B. L. (2016). Digital storytelling: A method for engaging students and increasing cultural competency. *Journal of Effective Teaching*. 16(3): 44-61.

Harper, S. R., (2018, January 22). Webinar presented at the Presidential Symposium on Racial Justice in Higher Education, USC, Los Angeles, CA.

Harper, S. R. & Hurtado, S. (2007, December). Nine themes in campus racial climates and implication for institutional transformation. *New Directions for Student Services*, 7(120), 7-24.

Hatewatch Staff (2017). White nationalist flyering on American college campuses. Montgomery, AL: Southern Poverty Law Center. <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2017/10/17/white-nationalist-flyering-american-college-campuses>

John F. Kennedy. (n.d.). BrainyQuote.com. Retrieved August 15 from BrainyQuote.com Web site: <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/j/johnfkenn490506.html>.

Kingkade, T. (2015). Decade of change for college students: Less religious, more diverse and lonely. Retrieved 7/24/16 from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/07/college-10-years-changes_n_7201460.html.

Lal, S., Donnelly, C., & Shin, J. (2015). Digital storytelling: An innovative tool for practice, education, and research. *Occupational Therapy in Health Care*, 29(1), 54-62.

Livengood, J. & Stodolska, M. (2004). The effects of discrimination and constraints negotiation on leisure behavior of American Muslims in the post-September 11 America. *Journal of Leisure Research*, 36, 183-208.

Mason, K. C. (August, 2014). As student bodies get more diverse, colleges rethink services. Retrieved 7-24-16 from <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/one-size-wont-fit-rethinking-campus-growing-diversity/>.

Mendoza, G. L. L., Caranto, L. C. & David, J. J. T. (2015). Effectiveness of video presentation to students' learning. *International Journal of Learning Science*. 5(2): 81-86.

Meyer, R. (2009). *Multimedia learning*. New York, N.Y.: Cambridge University Press.

Robin, B.R. (2008). Digital storytelling: A powerful technology tool for the 21st century classroom. *Theory into Practice*, 47, 220-228.

Sedun, A.K. & Skillen, M.G. (2015). The breath of life: The power of narrative. *English Journal*, 104 (5), 102-105.

Ramirez, J. J. & Zimmerman, H. (2016, July). 2016 Diverse learning environments. *Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA*. Retrieved from <https://www.heri.ucla.edu/briefs/DLE/DLE-2016-Brief.pdf>

Sherer, P. & Shea, T. (2011). Using online video to support student learning. *College Teaching*, 59: 56-59.

Smith, D.G. (2009). *Diversity's promise for higher education*. Baltimore, M.D.: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Solomon, R.P, Portelli, J.P., Daniel, B-J, & Campbell, A. (2005). The discourse of denial: How white teacher candidates construct race, racism and 'white privilege.' *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 8(2), 147-169.

Steele, S., Stuckler, D., McKee, M. & Pollock, A.M. (2014). The immigration bill: Extending charging regimes and scapegoating the vulnerable will pose risks to public health. *Journal of the Royal Society of Medicine*, 107(4), 132-133.

Sue, D. W., Capodilupo, C. M., Torino, G. C., Bucceri, J. M., Holder, A. M, Nadal, K. L., & Esquilin, M. (2007, May-Jun), Racial microaggressions in everyday life: Implications for clinical practice. *American Psychologist*, 62(4), 271-286.

The 4-A Learning Sequence (n.d.) In [globallearningpartners.com](http://www.globallearningpartners.com/downloads/resources/The_4As_Template.pdf). Retrieved April 30, 2014, from http://www.globallearningpartners.com/downloads/resources/The_4As_Template.pdf

U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics (2016). *Digest of Education Statistics, 2014* (NCES 2016-006), Chapter 2. <http://nces.ed.gov/fastfacts/display.asp?id=84>.

Wilson, C.P. & Wilson, S.A. (2014). Are we there yet? Perceptive roles of African American police officers in small agency settings. *The Western Journal of Black Studies*, 38(2), 123-133.

Woodward, R. & Machado, E. (2017). Using video in urban elementary professional development to support digital media arts integration. *Journal of Digital Learning in Teacher Education* 33(2): 49-57.

Yosso, T., Smith, W., Ceja, M. & Solorzano, D. (2009). Critical race theory, racial microaggressions, and campus racial climate for Latina/o undergraduates. *Harvard Educational Review: December*, (7)4, 659-691.

Zuniga, X., Lopez, G. E. & Ford, K. A. (2012). Intergroup dialogue: Critical conversations about difference, social identities, and social justice: Guest editors' introduction. *Equity & Excellence in Education*, (45)1, 1-13.

Copyright of Journal of Cultural Diversity is the property of Tucker Publications, Inc. and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.