

# **Integrative Fourfold Teaching Approach for Multicultural Subjects**

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## **Abstract**

This article describes an “Integrative Fourfold Approach” to teaching multiculturalism in secondary and higher educational settings. Four general approaches to teaching multicultural issues are presented, followed by critical reviews from each perspective of the other three approaches. Next, the authors propose a teaching approach that integrates all four of the perspectives. Lastly, four applications of the integrative perspective are described.

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## **Introduction**

Currently in the field of education, there is a great push to focus on diversity and inclusion, with the aim to increase safety for, respect toward, and acceptance of different cultures through teaching cultural competency programs. Ideally, educators would be inclusive through understanding and welcoming differences; however, education has a long history of assimilating persons from different cultures into what is basically a White Euro-American system. Too often “social justice” and

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“diversity and inclusion” have been hijacked to serve this purpose rather than used to challenge our fundamentally “White” educational system and help educators accommodate it to culturally diverse needs and differences. While increasing diversity among student body, faculty, and staff, attempts to better understand people from diverse cultures can potentially be a beginning to changing an oppressive system. Profound positive change in regard to appropriateness and equality requires that teaching approaches, pedagogy, and more relevant curriculum changes take place to accommodate increasingly diverse populations (Patel, 2016). To do so would be a step in a direction to disrupt what are basically white pedagogies that dominate formal education systems in the United States.

In the U.S., k-20 classrooms consist of students who have a wide range of experiences and background culturally, linguistically, racially, and ethnically. Each student who has been embedded in diverse and multi-layered social contexts bring in their own cultural knowledge, unique ways to think and feel, and different ways to handle challenges and engage in help-seeking behavior. In order to tap into all students’ potential and maximize each student’s learning, educators need to develop diverse approaches that draw on invaluable resources of students’ language, culture, history, and relational and communication styles (Gonzalez, Moll, & Ammanti, 2005; Rivet & Krajeik, 2008). Instead of assimilating diverse groups into interactive styles of dominant society, the integrative teaching style attempts to accommodate the educational system to the diverse unique learning needs of students (Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011).

An Indigenous person, the first author of this article, was inspired to create this integral teaching approach by the wisdom found in various tribal medicine wheels. In general, Indigenous medicine wheels have four directions, represented by different signifiers and colors (which vary according to different tribes and sometimes clans). The four directions on the medicine wheels are often associated with critical dimensions of our lived reality, such as: mental, emotional, social, and spiritual. In this paper, the authors have slightly modified these signifiers, though not significantly, to better address the specific needs and conditions of educators (Clarke & Holtslander, 2018).

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### **Problems with Teaching Multicultural Issues**

There have been a variety of criticisms directed at multicultural education. The following critics stem from cognitive, relational, decolonial, and mindfulness perspectives. Sleeter (2012) argued a need for an overall reform in the prevailing pedagogical structure of the

multicultural college courses, describing them as standardized, simplistic, and guilty of promoting distorted understandings of the experiences of diverse populations. She advocated that instructors should focus more on evidence-based information concerning multicultural experiences. Tartwijk, Brok, Veldman, and Wubbels (2009) delineated the challenges of forming a supportive teaching environment when discussing sensitive multicultural topics. Further, their research revealed that the most successful multicultural classes occurred when the instructors did the following: provided clear interactive guidelines and classroom management; covered current critical issues; promoted proactive outlooks surrounding those issues; cultivated positive relationships with their students; and accounted for students' backgrounds when discussing diversity issues. In contrast, Horton-Ikard, Munoz, Thomas-Tate, and Keller-Bell (2009) expressed cynicism about their ability to effectively teach multicultural courses due to the perceived challenges for both instructors and students to truly shed the heavy influences of societal and cultural factors implicitly brought to the classroom. They argue that more attention should be given to helping instructors and students to engage in profound self-reflection and meditation. Some researchers have argued multicultural education has failed to provide a broader, more comprehensive, coherent and challenging pedagogy. Martin (2010) advocates Confluent Education (CE), involving an integration of "cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning, one that reflects the whole student." He reported, in his study that, of 365 students who took a Race, Culture, and Politics (RCP) course, such a holistic approach contributed to fifty-five percent of students scoring significantly higher on attitudinal changes about minority groups.

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### **Overview of the Integral Teaching Approach and Definitions**

There are as many effective ways of addressing multicultural issues (or any class, for that matter) as there are instructors, but most teaching approaches fall within certain broad overlapping categories; these include (1) cognitive processing, (2) relational interaction, (3) decolonial critique, and (4) mindfulness. In reality, any given instructor's teaching approach cannot be so clearly confined to one of the foregoing categories, but many instructors have a primary teaching approach that may be linked more closely to one of these categories than to others. We will discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each approach and then propose an integrative approach that may prove to be enriching.

The Cognitive Approach focuses on transmitting knowledge through didactic and teacher-centered manners. The instructors' role is primarily conveying scholarly information to students and assisting students

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to develop evidence-based knowledge claims and arguments. The Relational Approach emphasizes inter-subjective emotional relationships between the teacher and students, and students and students, which facilitate developing in-depth understanding and complex thinking. All class members' comments and opinions are equally valued, and legitimately contribute to form intersubjective cultural networks. The Decolonialization Approach challenges the basic assumptions that hold up societal structure, knowledge base, and power dynamics. It challenges the societal institutions that are imbued with racism, oppression and white supremacy. Instructors who foreground the decolonialization approach deliberately provide space for students to challenge their own assumptions, assumptions of white supremacist society, and actions that can mitigate identified issues. Lastly, the Mindsight Approach searches for undetectable, yet the most fundamental levels of understanding of concerning their own opinions. Mindfulness is also a practice in education to aid students developing awareness and understanding about the interconnected reality and worth of all people.

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### **Cognitive Approach**

The cognitive teaching approach entails instructors working to effectively transmit information and knowledge. The instructor is likely open to new ways of conveying knowledge about the subject, but instructor/student interaction is essentially didactic and controlled by the instructor. While the instructor and the students may occasionally interact tangentially, the primary structure involves the instructor expertly providing scholarly information. The instructor, due to their presumed expertise, has the last word on covered topics, and discussion is utilized sparingly only as it assists the students in accurately and satisfactorily assimilating the information, not as a joint search for what is meaningful.

The cognitive approach is founded on the assumptions of the constitutive nature of reality proposed by positivist science and logical empiricism. The basic view proposed by positivists is that the only sort of knowledge that is possible is obtained by means of observation and controlled experiment. Ayer (1940) argued for clarifying the vague language of discourse and believed that much philosophic discourse consists in nonfactual grandiose generalizations. Logical empiricists continued the positivist line of argument contending that all reliable human knowledge is limited to sense experiences, while ordinary beliefs are false, though convenient. Consequently, discourse is most connected with reality when it is conducted with a scientific attitude; that is, related to factual knowledge that can be verified with sensory data and can be logically analyzed with precise language (Russell, 1956).

The underlying assumption of this approach is that a pre-existing reality can be mapped by experts armed with the latest methods of empirical inquiry. Limitations of methods, gaps in knowledge, and controversies between theories are reported and discussed when necessary. Scientific methodology involves rigorous testing, experimentation, and critical thought. The purpose of education is to furnish students with current data, information, and ideas about objects of knowledge. Successful students recite this validated information correctly (or answer correctly on exams) and such information will enable them to perform their future roles more effectively. Additionally, critical examination of current ideas and hypotheses based on emerging from data analysis is encouraged.

The instructor in this classroom is typically the resource for information and the guiding facilitator of discourse. Such an arrangement provides a comfortable environment for some students, especially those who may have been conditioned in earlier courses to study other subjects by accumulating information from experts, rather than engaging in subjective reflection and intersubjective interaction. The students are able to possess a measure of relative certainty about the valid and useful information they receive, substantiated and demonstrated by the work of research experts in their respective fields and continually updated to reflect current research. Research has made sense out of a morass of phenomena by carefully gathering data, organizing it effectively, and interpreting it with methods that are substantiated by evidence. In a strictly controlled “cognitive” classroom, a-priori ideas offered without evidence are viewed as indefensible. Feelings expressed uncoupled with reason and supportive data are viewed as insubstantial.

Education has benefited enormously because of its grounding in Positivist philosophy and Logical Empiricism. It has offered students a plenitude of knowledge gleaned from rigorous scientific studies for most subject areas, including Multicultural studies. Such knowledge has helped to dispel dogmas previously accepted as truth, and liberated us from limited and contradictory ideologies, theories, and approaches that lacked foundations based on strong evidence (Maki & Syman, 1997). Furthermore, in classes dealing with multicultural issues, empirical evidences can be used to support or counter emotional assertions made during discussions. The cognitive teaching approach allows the instructor to challenge the students to support their arguments rationally and with evidence derived from research. When teaching from this perspective, declarations about multicultural issues which are founded exclusively on subjective and inter-subjective experience, social activist and critical race theories, or meditative awareness emerging from mindfulness are not deemed sufficiently supported.

### Relational Critique

Teaching that only involves a mono-logical reporting of bare, observational data without creating conditions that facilitate subjective and intersubjective realities is lacking in relevance for students. Li Rao and Tse (2012) report that significant numbers of educators do not think cognitive styles of instruction are always the most effective ways of teaching certain topics, especially multicultural topics. They argue that a cognitive style of teaching is not always appropriate nor is it effective for students who were not raised in a non-white culture.

All comments, objective data or subjective expressions, delivered by an instructor are constructed in part by intersubjective cultural networks because they are communicated through language that is symbolic and cultural. Habermas wrote that the “success of a speech act [depends on] the hearer not only understand[ing] the meaning of the sentence uttered but actually enter[ing] into the relationship intended by the speaker” (1979, p. 59). He also maintained, “The limits of theories . . . are built up from accumulated evidence,” but they are “constructed, and progressively reconstructed, in the context of conditions pertaining to the nature of argumentation” (Habermas, as cited in Held, 1980, p. 340). Multicultural classes cannot afford to degenerate into mono-logical instructional dispensations of empiricist data. Intersubjective, contextual, and constructivist knowledges are crucial parts of the constitutive nature of multiculturalism.

### Decolonialization Critique

Instructors of multicultural topics should be aware of how their mode of communication impacts human relationships in and out of the classroom. Unconscious power relations are embedded in any dialogue and are conspicuous in teacher/student relationships (Freire, 2000). If unacknowledged, they lead to an anxiety of influence that distorts self-reflection and communication. In order to provide a framework of openness for student development in the realms of both communicative competence and individual development, instructors must work to eradicate dialogic barriers. While working to maintain an openness in communication may be challenging, arresting another’s journey toward subjective meaning with one’s incontestable data and opinions is a greater potential violation. Individual students/teacher relations are a microcosm for larger hierarchical societal relations and impact future socio-economic-political relationships that students will have in their homes, workplaces, and with ethnic and racial differences.

Dewey saw dangers he associated with limiting teaching primarily to

dispensing scientific facts to students : “It is taught as a finished product, with little regard either to the ways in which it was originally built up or to changes that will surely occur in the future” (Dewey, 1938, p. 19). Full awareness requires deep self-reflection and inter-subjective interaction, as well as empirical investigation, with a teleological perspective about one’s role in society. Empirical data is a vital part of the quest to understand reality when it is integrated into holistic, inclusive, interpretive and sociological/cultural contexts. Tuck and McKenzie (2015) argue that all research findings are context bound, entangled in place and temporality, and are shaped by concept references that are never objective, neutral or universal and can invalidate, even erase marginalized groups’ values and eventually ethnic communities’ structures.

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### **Mindsight Critique**

Accumulating information does not necessarily result in changing our attitudes and the way we live our lives and interact with others. Feenberg (2005) writes that the technological biased consciousness oversimplifies and compartmentalizes our interaction with the world. Students may learn a great deal of information which is crucial, but if it is not integrated into their daily experience it lacks vitality. One of the potential problems with cognitive approaches is that there may be no attempts to nurture emotional centeredness and awareness of interconnectedness in the classroom. Such neglect may result in egoistic, combative arguments, and a failure in holistic integration of information.

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### **Relational Teaching Approach**

Helms (1989) and Sue and Sue (2008) contend that multicultural courses should be taught dialogically which entails teaching characterized by inter-subjective relationships between people. Greene (1995) wrote, “When teaching engages the relational, that is the emotive, intuitive and imaginative influences, cognition itself becomes inter-subjective.” Instructors ascribing to this teaching approach relate to students on a more personal level and invite students to respond to the subject matter more subjectively, encouraging them to put what they have learned in their own words and to offer opinions about the subject matter. Learning is a matter of processing information, sometimes incorrectly, but working through subject matter in a discursive interaction toward more profound clarity and understanding (Freire, 2000). When students’ comments are encouraged and respected, students may engage in sifting through and grafting new perspectives onto their own that may be more on a level they can comprehend, preparing them for ever more complex thinking.

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A sole preoccupation with factual information and research reinforces a non-reflective technocratic consciousness and potentially impairs in-depth understanding of meaning as well as inter-subjective relationships (Habermas, 1962/2001). Habermas argues that many students may become focused on the extension of technical control rather than complex understandings. In the extreme form, some students will simply want a class in which they learn information that will be on a test. In contrast, effective dialogical teaching is not only the transmission of ready-made knowledge in an objective, scholarly cognitive fashion but also involves situating it in affective relationships. Helms argues that (1989) cultural identity development always includes affective as well as cognitive experiences.

Holistic development involves relationships with others and with the information studied. Fraser and Walberg (2005) state, "Not only has past research consistently replicated the advantages of positive teacher-student relationships in terms of promoting improved student outcomes, but positive teacher-student relationships also are worthwhile process goals of education" (p. 103). Learning environments where the teacher was viewed as "closer" or more "friendly" or more "understanding" were rated as superior to those where teachers were more "distant" (Fraser & Walberg, 2005). In a dialogical teaching situation, a student acquires multicultural knowledge by using it in relation to the teacher and other students. An emphasis on discourse rather than cognitive transference is a means of practicing communication skills that can enhance knowledge and cross-cultural interactions.

Gadamer (1960/1989) argues that it is self-delusional for an instructor to believe they can offer objective ideas untarnished by the cultures in which they participate. For Gadamer, there are never detached observers, nor is there a conversant who possesses and offers purely objective evidence during a dialogue. Each party enters the dialogue situation with a framework of concepts, beliefs, and standards which is largely a product of culture and personal prejudices. There is no independent ground to offer evidence. Integral to authentic communication is inter-subjective mutuality of reciprocal understanding, shared knowledge, mutual trust, and accord with one another. Yeung (2013) and his colleagues found that traditional white students respond well and actually increase their sensitivity and connectivity to diverse others by participating in inter-subjective, constructivist, "dialogue"-styled classrooms (Yeung, Spanierman, & Landrum-Brown, 2013).

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#### **Cognitive Critique**

Overactive feelings can cloud clear rational thinking and even



interfere with genuine connections with others. By encouraging the full expression of feelings in dialogues about multicultural issues, instructors may be subjecting students to unresolved fears and anger from which they have little control, opening the door for some students to project their unconscious issues onto other students. One of the dangers of teaching multicultural issues is that instructors may at times find themselves working with discussants' chaotic unresolved emotions. Classrooms can quickly turn into group counseling sessions, which is unethical in classroom sessions (APA, 2017). While emotions are an integral part of multicultural classroom experience, teachers are not in environments conducive to therapy.

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### **Decolonialization Critique**

While the dialogic approach to teaching challenges authoritarian, top down hierarchy, and reflects a more democratic theory, its foregrounding of personal and inter-personal emotional connections may lead to a relative post-modern outlook that may lack a strong foundation from which to engage in actions to promote concrete transformation. Relational teaching approaches are launched from a fractured foundation that may suggest that all worldviews are arbitrary tastes. Patel (2016) exposes the empathetic feelings for the oppressed without intentionality as ultimately supporting the ongoing project of coloniality. Tuck and Yang (2012) call such and often overly emotional perspective that claims as "the move to innocence" which may care but lacks content and consequently intentional engagement and ultimately supports the ontological de-humanization of the marginalized peoples. The relational teaching approach may actually frustrate substantive attempts for inter-relationships. Focusing too much on feelings, some students may have only a superficial understanding of the structures within an oppressive system that contribute to oppressed groups' precarious and dehumanizing financial, medical, and educational predicaments.

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### **Mindsight Critique**

The mindsight perspective agrees with the relational perspective in its promotion of personal interactive experiences, which is requisite to transformative learning, but contends that this is only a fragment of a holistic learning experience. Students may be unstable in their emotions and their insight may be limited and distorted accordingly. It is crucial to detach oneself enough from one's feelings to analyze what one has said in an objective way. Furthermore, when some students become violent in their emotional expression, or on the other hand, put on an armor to

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protect themselves from emotion, their intellectual receptivity is blocked. Emotional deregulations actually breed alienation among students. Interrupting unhealthy interactions with “pauses” (Shahjahan, 2014; Robbins & Hong, 2013) can contribute to more profound learning and less competitive interaction.

The Mindsight approach to teaching stresses a non-competitive interdependency and directs students to find commonalities that allows for non-polarizing productive conversations about difficult topics such as racism and sexism. While constructive argumentation can lead to insights, all too often persons during arguments label persons who disagree with them and characterize them negatively. An instructor who values the mindsight approach tries to facilitate students to engage in profound self-reflection and harmonious interaction that acknowledges the interconnectedness of everyone in class.

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### **Decolonizing Teaching Approach**

The production of all knowledge is entangled in larger socio-political contexts. Further, the generalizability and objectivity of the theories and information taught is limited and biased by the positionality of the sources and the presenter. Even larger projects that glorify themselves with labels like “diversity and inclusion,” “equity and opportunity” typically operate in a theoretical frame of liberal humanism that uncritically accepts racialized structures and systems. Cacho (2012) argues that most social justice perspectives and approaches actually strive for the successful assimilation of oppressed groups of people rather than transforming the oppressive racist systems (Cacho, 2012). For instance, when teaching about violence in Black communities or poverty in Native American communities, discussions may be conducted with unintentional anti-Black and anti-Native American frameworks when dire statistics are presented in ways that do not take into account the strengths and needs of the oppressed people, the unique logics in these communities, long histories of accumulated suffering and oppression, continued discrimination and prejudice, varying values and beliefs and the their unique epistemologies and ontologies. Too often, these larger frameworks are not sufficiently interrogated in multi-cultural discussions, and opportunities to resist them are not provided (Tuck & McKensie, 2015).

Summerville (2013) criticizes the failed efforts of white teacher preparation for multicultural classroom settings. He argues that white teachers tend to be trained by white educators which contributes to their entering into the field of education ill prepared to deal with multicultural students, topics, and issues. Sheets (2000) argues that teachers in general are, “culturally disadvantaged, experientially limited, and often

linguistically deficient in both preparing and teaching the nation's recipients of this knowledge and service (p.19)". Brandon (2003) argues, "To play fair, then, requires that white teachers recognize when their classroom practices assume assimilation into the dominant culture and their actions exclude the contributions of diverse individuals and groups (p.31)". Furthermore, as Thurston (2004) writes that much less than working to dramatically alter educational environments to accommodate diverse students, "schools often do not help to resolve racial conflicts and tensions (p. 166)". He continues arguing that to think that we are ahead in adequately preparing white educators for multicultural classrooms is misinformed, and perhaps delusional.

It is the responsibility of the instructors to facilitate students in developing curiosity and a critical mindset about multicultural issues and knowledges and to examine their own assumptions concerning multicultural relations, assumptions that underlie Western theories methods of research inquiry, and epistemologies taught in educational programs. Because these issues do not automatically emerge in classroom discussions, instructors must be willing to ask difficult and probing question to facilitate students' explorations into Western white assumptions and to look at pernicious prejudices and assumptions that may undergird their personal outlooks about race and ethnicity.

Even if students acquire heightened awareness about colonizing structures and systems without direct engagement in their communities to address the dehumanization of oppressed people, students are vulnerable to becoming impotent armchair activists. Some educational programs emphasize the importance of community-based treatment and the manipulation of social conditions associated with risk and resilience, and advocacy for vulnerable segments of society (Bemak & Chung, 2008; Burnett, Oyemade-Bailey, & Toldson, 2006). Currently, many American Psychological Association (APA) doctoral programs and American Counseling Association (ACA) programs are assessed on the extent to which their programs engage with their communities (Rebecca Toporek, 2005; 2006) and act as change agents (Roger Worthington, 2010). These focuses have brought an action or behavioral dimension into classrooms and educational programs.

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### **Cognitive Critique**

Deep learning never takes place when one is absorbed in clinging tenaciously to ideologies without support from scientific data. Critical Race Theories from which this Decolonialization derives, is primarily a collection of theoretical concepts and definitions largely unsupported by empirical studies. Instructors speaking from this ultimately rigid

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ideological perspective may be filled with an emotion and passion which occludes them from direct genuine empathy for real human beings. The “empathy” is often principle based rather than based on research data and reason. Instead of transforming the world for the better, the students who swallow these encapsulated theories find themselves imprisoned in this ideological false identity that many people perceive as inauthentic. Banks and Banks (1997) describe how individuals often subsume their thinking into a consensus with a group they identify with, effectively reinforcing attitudes that have no valid knowledge base. Such oppositional/binary mentality ignores the possible in-between spaces of dynamic interchange between and among self and other. Consequently, a we/others perspective only serves to alienate people that otherwise might have united in causes that might have led to positive transformation.

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#### **Relational Critique**

There is an irony about the lives of social activists. While they may challenge conventionality, the united front they form in order to have the power to bring about social transformation may give birth to a new kind of conformity, spawning an airtight politically correct way of thinking to which all “caring people” are pressured to adhere. This is dangerous from a relational perspective, as conformity replaces authentic relationships. In an authentic relationship, persons may band together and work together against oppression, but they do not lose their unique and differing feelings and perspectives.

When discussing multicultural issues, students will inevitably feel pressured to either be among those who are supportive of oppressed groups or to remain true to paradigms that are often conspicuously linked with “whiteness.” The reluctance to question the new paradigm on both sides of the argument makes honest interaction and potential productive relationships impossible. Inevitably, the class turns into a war between the exemplars of social change and those who feel they are guardians of the intact realized order. Consequently, the dialogic awareness of free interaction is not achieved. Most people are resistant to social activists who judge them for not feeling enough anger about whatever the multi-cultural issue might be. Feeling must arise from the free verdict of the heart.

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#### **Mindsight Critique**

The social activist persona can become problematic and limiting. It does not allow for holistic growth nor authentic feelings; instead, it insulates and acts like a shell of armor against antithetical ideas

and as an uncritical devourer of ideologically congruent perspectives. When social activists fail to engage in mindfulness, they may think of themselves as being responsible for converting other people to their worldview, and when the persons do not change their viewpoints, because they lack a non-judgmental mindsight, they may negatively label them. Consequently, in classrooms, students in the shell of a social activist persona may engage in knee-jerk reactions that alienate other students. They may divide other students and professors into simple categories, accepting or rejecting them accordingly. In contrast to this perspective, Bateson (1972) argued that instead of fostering separation by simplifying choices within the rigid, either/or framework, we should explore ways of thinking and being in our connectedness and complexity, which will grant new possibilities of thinking.

The mindsight perspective begins with the notion that we are not isolated separate beings but interconnected and inter-related in multiple ways and activating mindsight through meditation and mindfulness exercises will lessen tendencies to rush to judge others. Substantial paradigm shifts can occur when we know that we are one and that our knowledge of our ultimate inter-connectedness guides our efforts to bring about change.

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### **Mindsight Teaching Approach**

Dan Siegel (2012) writes, “Mindsight is a kind of focused attention that allows us to see the internal working of our own minds. It helps us to be aware of our mental processes without being swept away by them...to move beyond reactive emotional loops we all have a tendency a tendency to get trapped in (p. xi)”. The mindsight teaching approach is based on mindfulness which has been practiced by Zen Buddhists and Christian mystics in the form of meditation and contemplation for thousands of years (Lynch, Chapman, Rosenthal, Kuo, & Linehan, 2006).

Stress and anxiety are common emotional responses but can be detrimental to learning when they are experienced chronically (Wilson & Conyers, 2013). Mindfulness reduces emotional distress (Kiken & Shook, 2012). High stress levels sometimes characterize multi-cultural discussions in classrooms. Using mindsight strategies in when engaging in multicultural discussions may help students learn more effectively by providing students with concrete strategies for regulating their stress and intense emotions. For example, practicing mindful movements such as yoga can be used for reducing symptoms of anxiety (Zoogman et al, 2019). These results can be explained by looking at the impact that participating in a mindfulness intervention has on the human brain, specifically how the brain processes emotional experiences. Practicing

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mindfulness can physically alter the way the brain processes emotional experiences such as anxiety (Shanok et al. 2019). Practicing mindfulness help students engage in multicultural education discussions with fewer symptoms of anxiety.

A mindsight perspective is also synonymous with achieving an awareness of ourselves and our inter-relationships that transcends merely acquiring more information, empathizing with others' feelings, or a comprehension of the structure and action needed to resist oppressive systems. A primary goal of multicultural studies should be to facilitate the process of methodical deep self-reflection to penetrate surface meanings that often manifest themselves as deformations in communication interactions and social institutions (Helms,1989). Through contemplative self-reflections students may be able to appreciate and accept differences and arrive at a universal awareness of the worth of all people and to understand the deep interconnections between humans and non-humans. Mindsight involves the nonjudgmental observation of one's thought processes to their conclusions, which subsequently leads to a de-identification from one's personal opinions. One maintains openness, capable of constant negotiation. Mindfulness promotes positive reappraisal of emotional experiences (Gardland, Gaylord, & Park, 2009). Positive reappraisal is a way of achieving distance from emotional phenomena regardless of emotional valence.

Lastly, the mindsight approach advocated here involves an attainment of awareness of our interconnections in reality. Heidegger (1962) describes a spiraling concept of self, which dynamically evolves as it stretches toward its "widest orbit" with others in the world. Thinking and feelings expand, growing ever more complex, diverse, and interconnected. Heidegger argued that the continued contrivance of a rigidly intact, unchanging self contributes to disconnection from others. Mindfulness helps to situate multicultural discussions beyond mere political and cultural domains, reducing them to material relations, fleeting emotions, cognitive knowledge or into a fragmented diversity.

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#### **Cognitive Critique**

Spiritual wisdom can be problematic because persons professing it often disregard any empirical evidence that challenges their views. Mindsight, which is an element of spirituality, is typically relegated to inner subjective experience, much of which is not currently verifiable through empirical investigation. When intuition and invisible realities are valued as highly as reason and sensory observation, it is simply unacceptable. At this point, there is not enough research to make mindfulness a major part of our education curriculums. Language such

as “unitary experience” and “interconnection” are concepts too vague for validating and generalizing to actualize in classrooms. Students and teachers who base their arguments on spiritual intuitions lack the solid foundation of concrete objective reality from which to demonstrate and support their ideas. Unless intuitive insights can be subjected to feedback loops of evidence and reason, which provide checks and balances, biases cannot be evaluated. When one acts upon these biases there is a greater likelihood for potentially destructive initiatives.

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### **Relational Critique**

The Relational teaching approach is founded on the premise that emotional intelligence should be respected and nurtured. Regulated emotion can contribute to greater awareness of situations and can enhance memory, facilitating retention of information learned in classroom situations (Lynch et. al., 2006, Linehan, 1993). On the other hand, while Mindsight approaches help students to become aware of problematic emotions rather than allowing themselves to be dominated by them, there is the danger of over-regulating our emotions. Many successful students in college and graduate colleges have likely learned to exercise a degree of control over their lives, including regulating their emotions, which may contribute to their success in school. Therefore, in teaching students to be aware of their emotions, instructors should take care not to inadvertently encourage their repression. Regulated emotional interactions can enhance learning as well as cohesion in a classroom.

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### **Decolonialization Critique**

Social activists have always been the most formidable critics of spiritual contemplative traditions. The contemplative and meditative religious traditions from which mindfulness originated teach renunciation of our illusory world. Mindsight teachings of meditative detachment retains the lineaments of renunciation, which cuts people off from ourselves as change agents. Encouraging mindfulness in a classroom might be interpreted in a way that leads students to become absorbed in their inner or spiritual worlds, becoming less engaged in working to alleviate the suffering of the world.

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### **Integration of the Four Elements of the Integrative Model**

Limiting one’s teaching to one of the preceding approaches can potentially inadequately address students varying learning approaches as well as limit the breadth and depth at which the multicultural subjects

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being presented. Appropriately integrating different combinations of the four approaches described above may address these issues. To briefly summarize: knowledge acquisition lacks relevance until it manifests itself in the occurrence of inter-subjective discourse. Inter-subjective interactions in multicultural classes that are uninformed by research studies and theory are devoid of substantive content. Integrating the Decolonizing approach with the above approaches allows for a more complicated and profound exploration of the oppressive systemic influences that we may unconsciously adhere to. We must deeply consider how we have been socialized to fit into social institutions and how we rationalize our own role in the sufferings of minority groups. The Mindsight approach promotes a detachment from our feelings and thoughts to allow for objective considerations of our feelings and thoughts. Considering overall meanings about not just the cognitive, affective, and political domains of life but about interpretations about life as a totality.

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### **Classroom Applications**

It is not within the scope of this article to offer an intricate integral pedagogical rubric as a guide in discussing multicultural issues or even to offer a wide array of relevant classroom activities. But it is hoped that by utilizing the fourfold integral approach described above, instructor' imaginations can be released to expand the way they teach their courses. The following paragraphs contain a few integrative teaching approaches and activities that have been successful when covering multicultural subjects in our courses.

Teachers may begin with an assignment for students to do library research on a given multicultural subject. To include a relational element, instead of having students investigate the topic individually, the investigative process, the writing of the paper, and its presentation might be conducted in groups of three or four. In the discussion section of the paper, students might discuss the cultural and political implications of the information they have gathered. Then students might write a page about the process of working together interdependently. Lastly, after each presentation, a few minutes of a teacher led mindfulness meditation about the meaning of the information of the assignment had for them and then have students self-disclose about it.

But sometimes an activity specifically designed to facilitate students to connect and feel validated can be helpful. A circle of five to ten students might be formed with one student sitting in the center. Each student, going around the circle, might compliment or encourage the student in the middle. They might recall a comment in class that helped



them understand or that might have challenged them in a good way. A cognitive element may be added to the activity by having the teacher quote from research about how cohesiveness in a classroom contributes to accelerated learning. Students may discuss how acknowledging unique strengths and providing space to actualize them may lead to improved outcomes in social action projects. At the end of the activity, students may discuss any mindful considerations they engaged in about how they were to best compliment students in the middle of the circle.

Providing opportunities to participate in activist projects helps students move from the contemplative to the behavioral domain. A few of the activities arranged for our students included: attending Tibetan Buddhist ceremonies, dinner with the monks and then distributing literature about the political injustices in Tibet; distributing canned goods during Christmas time; and providing a meal for the homeless in our city on Thanksgiving day. Others have included not only participating in Native American sweat ceremonies but helping to chop wood and gather rocks for the sweat group's future ceremonies. Another activity involved participation in a weekend immersion experience at Heifer Ranch, where students approximated living experience of persons living in poverty-stricken areas of the world. Studies about the conditions of the persons living in the regions can be reviewed as well as studies about the value of immersion experiences raising social consciousness for students. In all the above activities, students presented research in small groups to the class about the activity. Students had to work through a variety of feelings, both personal and interpersonal as they participated in the activities. Process groups were set up, with required attendance, in regard for each of the above activities. Classroom discussions after each activity revealed that students felt that as they broke out of their safe cultural boundaries, they felt that they had assumed greater responsibility as global citizens.

While mindsight activities certainly characterize the extra-curricular activities listed above, students may engage in various meditation activities in class as well. Meditations can be completed in short blocks of time that may lead to more mindful speaking and living. Some may include focusing the mind on an object while others might involve learning to detach from feelings and thoughts in order to objectively consider them, and others may entail contemplating global issues and even the interdependence of all living things. Mindfulness exercises such as group meditations have been associated with facilitating groups achieving greater emotional resonance and empathy for each other (Siegel, 2010). Social activists have long recognized the value of mindful interactions between comrades in deliberate decision making (Freire, 2000).

To conclude, many instructors have experienced the stress of leading

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difficult discussions about multicultural issues. The writers of this article do not pretend to have concocted the perfect formula to teach these topics successfully, but it is hoped that the above intellectual reflections about a fourfold integrated approach have expanded educators' perspectives. Further, it has been the intention of the authors to address the issue of students needing different teaching approaches to address their unique learning styles.

Worth mentioning, is that we have presented this model as a debate panel at three university education schools and at several program departments. Each time it was a major success in terms of professors becoming intensely engaged in and having fun during the reflections about which approach they were most closely identified with. We do not know the extent that it may have affected their teaching approaches, but with the current emphasis on diversity and inclusion, we hope that teachers will consider reflection upon the subjects of this paper worthwhile.

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