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Perception of Expectation States and Teaching Diversity in Higher Education: Insights from a Qualitative Study

Jun Fu

Oklahoma State University

Sue C. Jacobs

Oklahoma State University

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Abstract

There are many benefits from fostering interaction among students of diverse backgrounds in classrooms. To enhance students' potential psycho-social and intellectual development, instructors need to do more than foster group interaction. They need to encourage and teach skills for diverse students to be able to genuinely communicate their differences in knowledge, perspectives, and expectation states. An expectation state is defined as an anticipation of the quality of group members' future task performances and is shaped by socially ascribed characteristics. Researchers who based their studies on Expectation States Theory found ample evidence that expectation states exert multi-level effects on social dynamics, competence beliefs, and outcome perceptions between individuals with different cultural, ethnic, or socio-economic backgrounds. The present study was a qualitative exploration into the perception of expectation states and teaching of diversity in faculty at two higher-education institutions in the south-central United States. The sample consisted of ten faculty members. The methods employed comprised a combination of qualitative techniques. The focus was to identify *how* and *where* the themes of expectation states arose in the teaching and learning of diversity, *what* the attitudes were toward these themes and topics, and *how* these attitudes informed faculty's pedagogy. A thematic analysis of the data collected revealed four main themes: 1) considering broader contextual factors to understand potential challenges in group learning involving diverse learners, 2) recognizing expectation states stemming from socially ascribed attributes, 3) striving to break presumed or preconceived expectations, and 4) incorporating experiential learning strategies towards effective diversity education. The implications of these findings for diversity training and multicultural education are discussed.

Keywords: expectation states theory, diversity, higher education

Perception of Expectation States and Teaching Diversity in Higher Education: Insights from a Qualitative Study

Entry into college represents the start of a critical stage for an individual's cognitive and social development and also a period of transition from late adolescence to adulthood (Newcomb, 1943; Gurin et al., 2002). Higher education creates a context that incorporates diversity, uncertainty, and complexity – a *social milieu* that distinctively differs from an individual's family or community background (Gurin et al., 2002). The unique environment offers ample opportunities for any individual to encounter varied social, political, and cultural experiences, to explore different social roles, and to even experience potential conflicts as a result of diversity within the social context. According to Erikson (1956), such experiences are influential in facilitating individuals' intellectual and cognitive development as they learn to deal with the issues emerged, as well as identity development as they interact with peers from different ethnic, cultural, political, or social roots.

In the higher-education context, it is a series of in-and-out-of-class experiences with peers through which students develop a sense of belonging in the learning community, discover abilities or personal sources of strength, and experience intellectual and personal growth (Pascarella, 1985). Arguably, college classrooms are inherently embedded in diversity; therefore, initiating small-group or cooperative learning activities could enhance intellectual and social development, ideally reflected through improved academic performance. Nonetheless, studies involving an influential perspective in sociological social psychology, Expectation States Theory (EST), provided ample evidence through decades of research that organizing and fostering group processes and cooperative learning is a necessary but not sufficient condition to enhance an individual's learning and development (Correll & Ridgeway, 2003). Sociological social psychology is an area of sociology that examines the way groups and social structures shape individuals -- their perceptions, beliefs, identities, attitudes, emotions, and behaviors -- and how individuals acting together create, maintain, and change social structures (American Sociological Association, 2019). Social psychology is a branch of psychology that investigates how individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are influenced by the actual, imagined, or implied presence of others (Allport, 1985). Scholars in these fields share an interest in describing and explaining social interaction, but their approaches are increasingly distinct (Kalkhoff, 2007). Researchers in sociological social psychology focus on interrelations of social behaviors with the larger social structures, while social psychologists concentrate on how individual-level cognitive and affective factors affect social interaction (Kalkhoff, 2007). EST is especially useful in understanding how individuals' positions in social structures such as status, class, or gender impact their interactions with one another.

An expectation state is defined as an anticipation of the quality of group members' future task performances (Szmatka et al., 1997). Expectation states are formed on the basis of specific attributes of group members. They include those qualities reflecting group members' abilities to perform specific tasks (e.g., mathematical skills) as well as their socially ascribed

attributes (e.g., social class). Expectation states function as stable structures that shape the relations of the social actors to each other within their immediate situation. They exert multi-level effects on social dynamics, social equality, competence beliefs, efforts or engagement perceptions, and outcome perceptions between individuals with different cultural, ethnic, or socio-economic backgrounds (Cohen, 1982). For example, Strodbeck et al. (1957) conducted experimental studies of mock juries. They examined the dynamics of social interaction within the jury room and how mock juries arrived at decisions. They found that gender significantly influenced perceived fitness as a juror, selection of jury foremen, and the jury's decision-making process. Men were perceived to be more eloquent and more influential than women, whereas far fewer women were selected as jury foremen. These findings deviated from the ideal that all people are social equals in the jury room. Jurors' expectation states about each other were influenced by legally irrelevant attributes such as gender. The further implication was that juries might be less than impartial in their deliberations.

In this study, we sought to explore faculty's perceptions of their students' expectation states about one another and teaching of diversity at two higher-education institutions in the south-central region of the United States. The focus was to identify *how* and *where* the themes of expectation states arose in the teaching and learning of diversity, *what* the attitudes were toward these themes and topics, and *how* these attitudes and responses reflected and informed faculty's pedagogy.

Theoretical Framework

Expectation States Theory (EST) is a theoretical research program aimed at analyzing the dynamics involved in group processes. EST focuses on decisions made by actors in small group interactions that can lead to various outcomes such as inequalities between people. An expectation state is a judgment about what others are capable of in a task group (Szmataka et al., 1997). Groups where the goal is to complete a task are task-oriented. An example of this is a faculty council. People rely on the verbal and nonverbal information to infer others' competence in group task. Such information often includes gender, ethnicity, religious affiliation, socioeconomic status, organizational rank, and physical attractiveness. Those higher in the social order tend to receive more favorable judgments from others (Berger et al., 1972; Ellis, 1994).

EST uses a meta-theoretical model that conceptualizes a state organizing process providing a framework in which to understand interpersonal processes. This conceptual model includes two key levels: the social framework and the situation of action. The social framework is composed of three types of elements – *cultural elements*, *formal elements*, and *interpersonal elements*. *Cultural elements* are made up of social categories, beliefs, norms, and values. *Formal elements* are formalized and institutional roles, and positions in authority structures (e.g., supervisor vs. employee). *Interpersonal elements* involve communication patterns, sentiments, and influence. *The situation of action* includes the features of the situation in which the social processes occur; such features may include the goals of the actors involved, solving a particular problem or collective task (Correll & Ridgeway, 2003; Knottnerus, 1997).

Out of these conditions, a social process emerges in which the behaviors that occur and the information that is used by actors result in expectation states, which are the stable structures that define the relations of the actors to each other within their immediate situation (Cohen, 1982). The process by which these states become organized is the framework used by EST researchers to formulate principles describing the dynamics that occur in group processes and the consequences of these expectation states (e.g., the effect of individuals' status on their performance expectations) (Berger et al., 1992).

EST purports that social characteristics serve as cues that result in actors forming expectations concerning their own and others' task abilities. Once formed these expectation states shape the power and prestige order of the group, and the group takes on a definitive social structure in terms of activity and influence. For members in a task group, extant research suggests that expectation states about one another eventually create a status hierarchy in which low-status members 1) have less opportunities to participate, 2) receive lower evaluations for their performance, 3) are less influential in group decision-making, and 4) experience a decline in their motivation and performance over time (Fişek et al., 2005; Szmátka et al., 1997). Those lower in social order (e.g., lower socioeconomic status) tend to attain low status in group hierarchy, and vice versa (Berger et al., 1972).

Research Questions

Diverse perspectives in group work can potentially boost group learning, but it requires much more effort for everyone to equally benefit from diversity (Homan et al., 2007, p. 1195). As Gurin and her colleagues (2002) noted:

Genuine interaction goes far beyond mere contact and includes learning about difference in background, experience, and perspectives, as well as getting to know one another individually in an intimate enough way to discern common goals and personal qualities (p. 336).

Yet research efforts concerning the inner-group dynamics and processes that potentially shape such genuine learning and communication across individuals from diverse cultural, ethnic, or socioeconomic backgrounds remain limited. EST presents itself as a valuable theoretical lens to analyze the dynamics involved in group processes and patterns of interactions within diverse groups. Yet this major theoretical perspective has rarely been applied to the higher education context, one with an inherent value placed on diversity and cooperative learning.

Research questions arise as to *how* faculty in the higher-education context perceive or interpret students' expectation states and diversity, *what* aspects of diversity are relevant and perhaps inherent to faculty's instructional practice, *how* these aspects manifest, and *how* these insights should be addressed in pedagogy and training. In this study we seek to explore the effects of the faculty's perception of students' expectation states and diversity on instruction and learning, as well as ethnic, social, and/or gender equality issues in the context of higher education. The central research questions are: How do faculty members at the two

higher-education institutions in the south-central region of the U.S. perceive or interpret expectation states and diversity, and what are the aspects of diversity that are relevant and perhaps inherent to faculty's instructional practice?

These central questions lead to two follow-up questions, namely (1) How are the themes and topics manifest in instruction and learning? And (2) How should issues and topics of expectation states and diversity be addressed in pedagogy and faculty training or development?

Method

In this research, we employed a qualitative approach for the following reasons: First, qualitative methods are "interpretative and naturalistic" in nature and especially useful for exploring *how* abstract or broad theoretical concepts manifest in real settings (Gephart, 2004, p. 454-455). Second, through a qualitative design, we were able to collect data with a depth not often readily available from experimental studies which allows more fully understanding the social and cognitive processes embedded in classroom interactions.

Participants and Procedure

Participants were recruited from two higher-education institutions in the south-central region of the U.S. in 2016. The two institutions vary on location (small city and large city) and with different demographic characteristics regarding student population composition. Research announcements were made through listservs (e-mail discussion groups). Interested participants were provided information to contact the primary author. In addition, participants were encouraged to pass on study contact information to others. Overall, 17 individuals indicated interest in participating. To ensure that participants had frequent classroom interactions with students, inclusion criteria required that participants have at least five hours of classroom teaching per week (or one hour per work day). Of those who indicated interest, five potential participants were excluded due to not meeting this requirement. An additional two potential participants failed to schedule in-person interviews with the primary author due to other obligations. Thus, the final total number of participants was 10, consisting of five faculty members at each of the two higher-education institutions. Participants had a mean age of 45.3 ($SD = 11.35$) and included 60.0% females. Their ethnic background was as follows: 50% Caucasian, 30% African-American, 10% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 10% other.

The participants varied on a variety of characteristics including academic discipline, level of education, and years of teaching experience. Their current academic disciplines were as follows: 20% in Nursing, 20% in Psychological Sciences (Counseling Psychology and Educational Psychology), 10% in English, 10% in Sociology, 10% in Business Administration, 10% in Geology, 10% in Mechanical Engineering, and 10% in Biology. In terms of level of education, 70% had a doctoral degree, 20% with a master's degree, and 10% with two master's degrees. The participants' teaching experience ranged from 2 to 29 years. The participants were those who frequently interacted with students of different levels (undergraduate, graduate, or both). For these reasons, the subjects were deemed as being

highly relevant and appropriate for the exploration of the perception regarding expectation states and diversity, and valuable for extending the knowledge and understanding on how themes and topics regarding expectation states and diversity manifested in instruction and learning.

For the purpose of the research, the authors created a questionnaire that consisted of open-ended questions relating to the perception or the understanding of expectation states and diversity, teaching of relevant topics, and perceived challenges in practice. The primary author organized and conducted semi-structured one-hour in-person interviews on the sampling participants.

Besides interviews, the primary author observed one class session in which each participant served as the instructor. Observation in a naturalistic setting benefited the research team to gain relevant insights about the interactions among the students themselves and the interactions between the students and the instructor in the classroom. Additionally, the authors asked each participant to provide artifacts and documents relevant to research questions for further analyses. Specifically, we asked participants to offer artifacts and documents pertaining to their pedagogical strategies or approaches towards group learning, diversity issues, and multicultural education. Collected artifacts and documents included syllabi used as well as other course materials (e.g., supplementary reading materials) to support or challenge other data sources (interviews and observational data) or to provide a meaningful description of the participant or the setting. For example, if a participant's interview response entailed specific social or behavioral patterns of students, the notes taken by the primary author during classroom observation served as examples, confirmations, or challenging evidence of the events or sentiments as described or perceived by the participant.

In summary, data were from interviews, observation, artifacts, and documents. Multiple data sources were helpful to provide richer description, to address particularities, and to reach more compelling themes (Jick, 1979; Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

Data Analysis

The interviews of the 10 participants were taped and transcribed verbatim by the primary author. All data collected (including interview transcripts, observation field notes, documents, and artifacts) were further analyzed by both authors following through an iterative process of open and axial coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Open coding involves the process of generating categories that reflect the characteristics of the student essays collected. Axial coding involves the process of developing connections between each category and its sub-categories (Pandit, 1996). The primary and second authors each independently reviewed the transcribed data and performed thematic analyses. The main purpose of coding was to identify main categories and subcategories that provide rich descriptions of the participants' perceptions of students' expectation states about one another and how they teach diversity and multicultural issues. During the coding process, both authors periodically met, discussed in-depth, and reviewed the inconsistencies emerged, and attempted to resolve discrepancies and reach consensus in coding. This process was repeated until inter-rater reliability measure kappa reached .85 or greater for each code. Thematic saturation was reached when there

were no new themes identified by either author (Saunders et al., 2018). Based on the conceptual foundations of this study, the authors identified a set of codes, which were eventually collapsed into main themes and sub-themes.

Results

Based on the thematic analyses of classroom observation field notes, interview transcripts, documents and artifacts, four main themes emerged: (1) *broader context*, (2) *expectation states*, (3) *breaking expectations*, and (4) *experiential learning*. Further analyses led to the identification of sub-themes for broader context (institutional context, geographical context, disciplinary context) and experiential learning (classroom integration, real-life experience). See Table 1 for a detailed coding structure with definitions for each main theme and sub-theme.

Table 1.
Themes and Definitions

Theme	Definition
A) Broader Context	Specific contextual factors that the groups operate in seem to make a big difference in the opportunities for meaningful group learning and interactions that occur.
A1) Institutional Context	System of bodies, rules, regulation, policies, procedures and processes that characterize the task environment of a higher-education institution.
A2) Geographical Context	Physical and cultural characteristics of places and environments.
A3) Disciplinary Context	Attributes or features that are embedded in a specific academic discipline or academic field.
B) Expectation States	Confirmation and examples of how expectation states manifest in the learning context involving diverse students.
C) Breaking Expectations	Recognition of the challenges derived from the expectation states in diverse groups.
D) Experiential Learning	Thoughts and ways of incorporating experiential learning into diversity education.
D1) Classroom Integration	Strategies and examples to integrate experiential learning with regard to diversity issues into classrooms.
D2) Real-life Experience	Learning and critical reflection through real-world experiences.

Broader Context

Broader context refers to contextual factors that influence group learning and interactions. Based upon the nature of specific contextual factors, three types of contextual characteristics emerged, each typified by the quoted texts (from interview transcripts, classroom observation field notes, documents and artifacts) followed by explanations detailed below:

Institutional Context

Institutional context refers to the system of bodies, rules, regulation, policies, procedures and processes that characterize the operations of a higher-education institution.

According to my experience, it is also somewhat influenced by the broader context...I found often that I got from the undergraduate classes is that... I get things like "You know, you are the first faculty member I ever meet that makes me sit with people that I don't know, or people that are different from me." So the experience for many students, or at least had been as recently as five years ago: they never interact with anybody differently in class; in class they just sit next to their friends. ~ Participant #3, female, Caucasian

The participant directed attention towards institutional climate regarding the ways faculty organized student groups or facilitated group work in undergraduate classes: relatively little effort had been paid to organize students into groups such that they were given the opportunities to interact with peers with different backgrounds or perspectives.

Geographical Context

Geographical context refers to the physical and cultural characteristics of places and environments.

We have some challenges in nursing education that our goal is that students in our programs should, the ratio should match the people/populations that they serve. We have a high number of Native American patients but we don't have a high number of Native American students. Same context in parts of city X -- we have a high number of African Americans, but we don't have a high number of African American students in our program. So when it comes to diversity, our program is dominantly, generically Caucasian -- are the ones that we get at the university level. ~ Participant #6, female, Caucasian

In light of the demographic composition in the city (as well as in the state), a critical need existed for nursing practitioners to serve this diverse population with increased culturally appropriate knowledge, skills, and resources. The participant recognized the discrepancies between the ethnic composition of the student body of the academic program (as well as the institution) and that of the general population of patients in the city (as well as in the state).

Disciplinary Context

Disciplinary context refers to attributes or features that are embedded in a specific academic discipline or academic field.

It is a key concept that we teach in nursing school about cultural sensitivity and cultural awareness. And it addresses, well, it is about patient right. We address cultural beliefs – specifically were religious beliefs, whatever

influences their whole view of themselves as a person. We have a course, there is a course called human experience, and we teach the student the major world religion and what their beliefs and how that will impact their view of health, because different religions and different cultures define health differently. Some cultures define it as the absence of illness; some defines it as wellness. I mean, it's their respect. You know, when it comes to the thoughts and beliefs about dying, cultures are very different. So it is critically important, it's one of our key values that we teach students that we should have utter respect (for others' cultural beliefs). ~ Participant #5, female, Caucasian

The participant recognized that nursing education in principle values cultural awareness and cultural sensitivity. The formal curriculum adopted by the participant's nursing program integrated elements for preparing culturally competent nurses.

Expectation States

EST argues that social characteristics serve as cues that result in individuals forming expectations concerning their own and others' task abilities. Once these expectation states are formed they shape the power and prestige order of the group, and the group takes on a definitive social structure in terms of activity and influence (Correll & Ridgeway, 2003). A status characteristic is defined as any attribute around which beliefs and expectations about others are organized (Berger et al., 1972).

There are two types of status characteristics: *specific* and *diffused*. *Specific status characteristics* are expectations regarding how someone will act or perform to a specific situation or a specific task, such as an individual's mechanical ability, verbal ability, artistic ability, or mathematical ability (Berger et al., 1980). *Diffuse status characteristics* are more general and include an individual's intelligence or overall competence, and also include social evaluations of honor, respect, and esteem, often associated with such characteristics as ethnicity, gender, physical attractiveness, occupation, and education (Berger et al., 1972; Berger et al., 1980).

Analyses of transcribed data suggested that expectation states impacted group learning and interactions among group members in the classrooms. For example, examination of the classroom observation field notes suggested that there was a consistent pattern associated with most of the students of the opposite gender or of a different background compared to the majority of the students in that classroom.

The male student (with beard, in a black hoodie, wearing a red cap) seems to be often quiet or less engaging compared to other female students at the table. ~ Class observation of Participant #10, male, African American

The minority non-traditional female student appears to be relatively less engaged or quiet throughout the entire class period. ~ Class observation of Participant #7, female, other ethnicity

Yet both students appeared much more interactive or communicative toward the instructor.

Breaking Expectations

Breaking expectations refers to recognition of the challenges derived from the expectation states in diverse groups, as illustrated by the following excerpts from transcribed data:

It is very important to put them into contact with people whom they haven't been into contact before, to break the expectancies. The other part is to have some base knowledge; because especially in a place like Y state, students have not been exposed to a lot. ~ Participant #2, male, Asian/Pacific Islander

The participant emphasized the critical need to break preconceived expectations, which often stem from socially ascribed characteristics (e.g., gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status). The participant hoped to promote mutual understanding among students with different backgrounds and perspectives.

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning refers to the thoughts and ways of incorporating experiential learning into diversity education. Particularly, 2 types of experiential learning experiences emerged, each typified by the quoted texts followed by explanations listed below:

Classroom Integration

Classroom integration refers to the strategies and examples to integrate experiential learning with regard to diversity issues into classrooms.

So I asked "how do you integrate diversity in your classes?" ... He immediately gave an example of a new fast route or something that built from Atlanta to Athens and how it was and there is no way that a geographer can't look at how this disrupted the communities and the communities that were most disrupted were the low SES and Black communities. ~ Participant #1, female, Caucasian

The participant offered a concrete example to integrate experiential learning with regard to diversity issues into classrooms. This example demonstrated *how* to facilitate the identification of the cultural diversity among people in different communities through the study of places, natural resources and people's livelihoods.

Real-life Experience

Real-life experience refers to the learning and critical reflection through real-world experiences. For example, a participant described a real-life experience that had enabled her to develop new ways of thinking regarding diversity issues:

We drove back through Z state, and we went into a restaurant and it was a big chain restaurant that we have here. We were the only two Caucasian people in the restaurant, we could not get waited on; we were not served. Oh, yes, we were just like, "Okay, what a great experience for us to experience." because this is what certain groups of people in the world experience every day. We just don't; it's very rare. So I thought it was a fantastic experience that happened to us...I don't know if you can simulate something like that in the educational setting. ~ Participant #6, female, Caucasian

Discussion

Previous studies provided evidence that beliefs or attitudes valuing diversity are needed for groups consisting of diverse members to "harvest the benefits of diversity" (Homan et al., 2007, p. 1190). In the higher-education context, it is vital for educators to direct attention towards not only cooperative learning among diverse learners, but also *how* to create opportunities for diverse learners to interact and engage with one another in meaningful and authentic ways, or *when* and *how* the group learning experience transfers to individual performance and growth. So far, however, qualitative inquiries that examine potential factors influencing the within-group interactions among diverse learners in the higher-education context remain sparse. This study makes such an attempt from the theoretical lens of Expectation States Theory (EST).

Extant research investigating the potential impact of expectation states in the learning context has largely relied upon laboratory and field experiments (Cohen 1982, 1994; Cohen & Lotan, 1995; Cohen & Roper, 1972; Dembo & McAuliffe, 1987; Miller et al., 1985; Webb & Farivar, 1994). For example, Cohen and Roper (1972) conducted a series of experiments to understand the impact of ethnicity on group interaction. The researchers organized 19 four-person groups of teen boys. Each group consisted of two African American and two Caucasian boys. They were matched on age, height, socioeconomic status, and attitude towards learning. During a group task, in 14 out of the 19 groups, at least one Caucasian boy was among the top two most active members of each group. And the most active member across all groups was Caucasian, and had 95% of his ideas accepted by the group. On the contrary, African American boys had to demonstrate exceptional ability in a skill to gain equal power and influence in their groups. This research showed that a diffuse status characteristic, ethnicity, was associated with inequalities in group interaction. Experiments conducted in controlled conditions may help researchers to identify the effects of a status characteristic on group interaction. But a critical issue has arisen as individuals may vary on not just one, but many status characteristics (Cohen 1982, 1994; Cohen & Lotan, 1995). Such experimental approach seems not applicable in K-12 and college classroom settings, as student population has become increasingly diverse. For example, a student may be associated with one less desirable status characteristic (e.g., ethnic minority) and a set of more desirable status characteristics (e.g., high socioeconomic status, high parental education level), while another student may be associated with one more desirable status characteristic (e.g., ethnic majority)

and several less desirable status characteristics (e.g., low socioeconomic status, low parental education level). The complexity of classroom or school settings has made it challenging if not impossible to create control conditions for experimental studies (Cohen 1982, 1994). There has been a growing need for research reflecting normal classroom interactions and conditions through alternative methodologies (Cohen 1982, 1994). As the existing research based upon EST is situated within sociological social psychology, there are currently no established measures to capture relevant constructs (i.e., expectation states), which limit the potential for researchers to analyze any possible relationships between expectation states and students' learning processes.

We were able to generate results that are understandable and experientially credible, not only to the participants of this study but also to others (e.g., faculty at other institutions) (Maxwell, 2012). Results from this qualitative research reveals much more thorough understanding on faculty's perception of expectation states and diversity issues in the learning context. Particularly, the theme expectation states (Theme B, Table 1) indicates that socially ascribed characteristics (i.e., diffuse status characteristics such as gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic status) influence within-group interactions and group learning. This theme corroborates the findings from EST literature. Prior studies have demonstrated that status cues determine who has influence in groups even when there is no connection between the task and the characteristic. For example, Torrance (1954) found that influence among air crews resulted from air force rank, even when rank had little to do with the task at hand.

This study suggests that the impacts of expectation states on learners' participation and group interaction are real. To create equitable patterns of group interaction, instructors need to step up beyond offering group learning activities. It is critical for faculty to engage learners in challenging the preconceived expectations about one another (Theme C, Table 1). Furthermore, a viable approach could be incorporating experiential learning strategies into the classroom (Theme D, Table 1). This is supported by previous research in that an experiential approach has a compelling influence on learners' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors during diversity education (Smith, 2011).

The themes identified by this study can inform ways to develop measures of expectation states in the future. Specifically, these themes provide nuanced understanding on the content and meaning of expectation states interpreted by the participants. Future pilot studies may incorporate these themes into focus-group interviews for developing measures of expectation states (Gelbach & Brinkworth, 2011). Note that this research was conducted within the specific institutional and geographical context (Theme A, Table 1). Further research is needed for identifying new themes in other institutional, geographical, and cultural contexts (e.g., conducting research at a historically black institution, or in a politically more liberal state, or in a more collectivistic cultural context).

The findings have implications for diversity education and training. Most diversity training programs and initiatives emphasize enhancing the awareness of the stereotypes regarding differential groups that others belong to (e.g., ethnic groups) and adjusting perceptions about other groups (Karp & Sammour, 2000). It is worth noting that if we are to teach students about diversity or cultural competence, then we need to consider *how* faculty or educators are trained and mentored in this area. This study suggests the importance to

initiate an open dialogue regarding the potential benefits and challenges involved in the social processes of diverse groups, and to potentially incorporate experiential learning strategies into diversity education.

A limitation of this study is that sexual identity was not included in the demographic questions for participants. Our participants were from two higher-education institutions located in a south-central state in the United States. In a politically highly conservative state, the majority of the faculty at these two institutions were inclined to not disclose or openly express their sexual identities. For participant recruitment purposes, sexual identity was not explored in this study. Future research should also examine how faculty's sexual identities may impact their views of diversity issues and their pedagogical approaches in the higher-education settings. Another limitation of this study is the limited number of participants, given the inclusion criteria necessary to ensure a representative sample of participants. Also, there may be a level of self-selection bias in the sample because the participants who chose to participate in this study perhaps were more open to dialogues on diversity and sharing their beliefs. Therefore, the results should be interpreted with caution. The present study explored mainly faculty's perspectives regarding expectation states issues in diverse groups. It will be informative to investigate diverse students' perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs regarding those individual and situational factors that potentially impact group learning processes.

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