

**Essential Competencies for Diversity Trainers:
Making A Difference with Students**

Theoretical Foundations

Debra Griffith
San Jose State University

Thomas C. Segar
University of Maryland, College Park

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Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory

(Kolb, 1985)

Kolb's experiential learning theory provides insights to learning and individual cognitive development. Kolb's experiential learning theory classifies learners into four categories: *Converger*, *Diverger*, *Assimilator*, or *Accommodator*.

Convergers prefer dealing with technical tasks and problems and doing things rather than dealing with social and interpersonal issues. *Divergers* are feeling-oriented, interested in people, and emphasize concrete experiences and reflective observations. An *Assimilator* uses inductive reasoning, is less focused on people, and more concerned with judging ideas by theoretical precision rather than by practical value. *Accommodators* prefer concrete experiences, doing things, completing tasks, and being involved in new experiences.

A person's learning style is the means and conditions by which she or he processes information and acquires knowledge best. Educators can maximize learning by understanding the best way an individual receives information and then modifying teaching methods and environments accordingly.

EXPLANATION OF TYPES OF LEARNERS

The **Converger's** dominant learning abilities are *Abstract Conceptualization (AC)* and *Active Experimentation (AE)*. This person's greatest strength lies in the practical application of ideas. This person's knowledge is organized in such a way that through hypothetical-deductive reasoning this person can focus it on specific problems. Research on this style of learning shows that **Convergers** are relatively unemotional, preferring to deal with things rather than people.

The **Diverger** has the opposite learning strengths of the *Converger*. This person is best at *Concrete Experience (CE)* and *Reflective Observation (RO)*. This person's greatest strength lies in imaginative ability. This person excels in the ability to view concrete situations from many perspectives. The word "**Diverger**" is fitting because a person with this style performs better in situations that call for generation of ideas such as a "brainstorming" idea session.

The **Assimilator's** dominant learning abilities are *Abstract Conceptualization (AC)* and *Reflective Observation (RO)*. This person's greatest strength lies in the ability to create theoretical models. This person excels in inductive reasoning and in assimilating disparate observations into an integrated explanation. This person, like the *Converger*, is less interested in people and more concerned with abstract concepts, but is less concerned with the practical use of theories. For this person it is more important that a theory be logically sound and precise; in a situation where a theory or plan does not fit the "facts," the **Assimilator** would be likely to disregard or re-examine the facts.

The **Accommodator** has the opposite learning strengths of the *Assimilator*. This person is best at *Concrete Experience (CE)* and *Active Experimentation (AE)*. This person's greatest strength lies in doing things, in carrying out plans and experiments, and involving oneself in new experiences. This person tends to be more of a risk-taker than people with the other three learning styles. In situation where a theory of plan does not fit the "facts," this person will most likely discard the plan or theory. The **Accommodator** is at ease with people but is sometimes seen as impatient and "pushy."

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Phinney's Model of Ethnic Identity Development

(Phinney, 1990)

Stage 1: Diffusion-Foreclosure

"I have not explored any of my feelings about my ethnicity. In fact, I may not even have any feelings or attitudes about my ethnicity. Why would you even ask?"

Feeling: Ambivalence

Stage 2: Moratorium

"Oh my goodness! I do have some feelings and attitudes about my ethnicity. That incident on my floor/What he said to me/What I experienced in class has influenced my realization of this. Who am I?"

Feelings: Hostility and/or shame

Stage 3: Identity Achievement

"I know who I am and I embrace my ethnicity. I feel pretty good about myself and proud of my ethnicity."

Feelings: Pride and acceptance

Helm's White Identity Development Model

(Helms, 1990)

Phase 1: Abandonment of Racism

Status 1: Contact

"Oh goodness, there are non-White people in the world. These non-White people are treated and experience the world just like me. Am I White? I never really thought about it."

Status 2: Disintegration

"Wait a minute, I thought, 'freedom and justice for all...', and 'all men are created equal' was meant for everyone? I just don't want to think about this and I'll avoid any and all conflict. How do I deal with all of this?"

Status 3: Reintegration

"I am entitled to White privilege. You know, all those 'people' are just alike. It is just like you see on the news and in the newspaper. Those are not stereotypes, that's just the truth. 'They' need to change, not me."

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Phase II: Defining a Nonracist White Identity

Status 5: Immersion-Emersion

"We need to change, not them. Those stereotypes are not accurate after all. Are there others out there like me? Hey, it's not cool to make those racist jokes."

Status 6: Autonomy

"I am both proud of being White and I am a supportive agent for change and equality for all races and cultures. We need to act locally and think globally."

Cross's Five Stages of Black Racial Identity Development

(Cross, 1992)

Stage 1: Pre-encounter [Feelings: Ambivalence or Shame]

"I'm Black, but that does not mean too much to me in my life." OR "I'm Black, but I'm not proud of it or anything – I don't really want to think about it."

Stage 2: Encounter [Feelings: Anger and Anxiety]

"This past semester in my African-American history class I learned so much about how my people have both contributed to this country and suffered trying to achieve their 'inalienable rights'. Why did I have to wait until coming to college to learn this instead of learning it in my previous thirteen years of schooling?"

Stage 3: Immersion/Emersion [Feelings: Rage and Pride]

"I really don't want to have much to do with my non-Black friends right now – I hate all White people. I feel guilty for having bought into the misinformation I was taught about my heritage before now. However, I'm also very proud of who I am and about the legacy of my people. I know I am angry now, but I am still growing and learning."

Stage 4: Internalization [Feelings: Secure and Calm]

"I now realize that I can be very proud of being Black, and still like White people. Looking back a year ago when I told off that White professor for being a racist, I don't think I would have yelled if that were today. I would have still been bothered and would have confronted her. However, today I would have been more calm, and my words well chosen, yet powerful."

Stage 5: Internalization-Commitment [Feelings: Resolution and Empowered]

"I'm going to join the local chapter of the NAACP and the school newspaper so that 'I' can join a larger 'we' and thus make positive change on our campus."

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Cass's Model of Homosexual Identity Formation
(Cass, 1984)

Stage 1: Identity Confusion

"I am just slightly aware that I may be a lesbian and this makes me nervous. I want to find out more about what this means."

Stage 2: Identity Comparison

"I think I may be gay and I am not sure how I can deal with this. How will I deal with the isolation this may mean for me? Maybe I will just make this 'whole thing' stop and find that *river in Egypt*."

Stage 3: Identity Tolerance

"I am probably a lesbian and I want to find others like me so that I do not feel so alone. My interactions may determine whether I stay in or come out of the closet."

Stage 4: Identity Acceptance

"I am gay, and I accept it and will selectively let others know that I am gay. I am making friends with other gay and lesbian people."

Stage 5: Identity Pride

"I am gay, and I'm proud and I don't care what anyone else thinks about it! I really want to spend less time with straight people for now."

Stage 6: Identity Synthesis

"I am a lesbian, but there are also many other aspects of me as well. I have friends who are both gay, lesbian, and heterosexual."

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The Four Steps To Supporting Diversity In The Classroom (Segar, 2003)

Step 1: Awareness

Awareness involves recognizing that various identities and ways of being exist that are different than your own. This also means that others who are different than you may experience life in ways that you do not.

- Our Gender
- Our Age
- Our Race and/or Ethnicity
- Our Sexual Orientation
- Our Religion
- Our Socioeconomic Class
- Our Ability
- Our Citizenship

Becoming AWARE requires you to consider your own identity and the identity of others

- Which of your identities is a part of your daily consciousness?
- Which of your identities is not a part of your daily consciousness?
- Which restrict or negatively impact opportunities?
- Which broaden or enhance opportunities of provide you with benefits or privileges? In what ways?

Step 2: Appreciation

Appreciation means not only knowing that various identities and ways of being exist, but also valuing them, learning from them, and being glad that they are present.

Step 3: Acceptance

Acceptance comes when we remove all judgment and say, "You are just fine the way you are and I welcome you as a member of this community and consider your contribution to be just as important as everyone else's."

Step 4: Advocacy

Advocacy requires Awareness, Appreciation, and Acceptance. "I have learned what it means for you to be you (because I have taken the time to know you) and I respect who you are. More importantly, I use my power to speak up for you in situations where you may not have a voice."

Questions to ponder:

- How will you respect the various identities that show up in your classroom?
- In what ways do you communicate appreciation and acceptance to students?
- When may you be able to advocate for students in the classroom?
- What contributes to a welcoming and supportive learning environment?

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