

Research Briefs: Examining the Role of Facilitated Conflict on Student Learning Outcomes in a Diversity Education Course

March 2013

Georgia Southern University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/research-briefs>



Part of the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Georgia Southern University, "Research Briefs: Examining the Role of Facilitated Conflict on Student Learning Outcomes in a Diversity Education Course" (2013). *Research Briefs*. 18.

<https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/research-briefs/18>

This article is brought to you for free and open access by the Education, College of- Publications at Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. It has been accepted for inclusion in Research Briefs by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons@Georgia Southern. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@georgiasouthern.edu.



RESEARCH BRIEFS

March 2013

Georgia Southern College of Education

Examining the Role of Facilitated Conflict on Student Learning Outcomes in a Diversity Education Course

Author

Sabrina Ross, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Curriculum, Foundations and Reading

Abstract

Building on the Piagetian concept of disequilibrium (i.e., cognitive conflict) and empirical research documenting relationships between cognitive conflict and transformative learning, this article explores the influence of facilitated conflict (i.e., intentional efforts by the instructor to help students reflect on and work through the intergroup conflict they experienced in the course) on the learning outcomes of female students enrolled in an exploratory diversity education course. Various forms of student writing including free-writing exercises and reflective papers were used in addition to two survey response questions to identify sources of cognitive conflict and assess student learning outcomes. Findings revealed that strategies of working through conflict like small and large group discussions were helpful to students. Student reflective papers and survey responses indicated that working through intergroup conflicts in the course encouraged support for working together for social justice.

Practical Application

The present study extends research connecting educational theory to classroom praxis through its focus on relationships between the theoretically grounded concept of cognitive conflict and transformative learning. In any course where students encounter differences and are afforded opportunities to critically reflect on those differences, the concept of cognitive conflict can be engaged in ways that encourage student learning. In this study, the resolution of cognitive conflict was directed towards social justice outcomes and, in doing so, Piaget's theory of cognitive development became a useful tool in the service of transformative learning.

Citation

Ross, S. (2013). Examining the role of facilitated conflict on student learning outcomes in a diversity education course. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 7 (1), 1 – 18.

For more information, contact Dr. Sabrina Ross (sross@georgiasouthern.edu)

TO LEARN MORE ABOUT GEORGIA SOUTHERN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION, VISIT,
coe.georgiasouthern.edu/