

Teaching Diversity: Challenges and Complexities, Identities and Integrity

Edited by William M. Timpson
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and Raymond Yang

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Teaching about Diversity Issues in Natural Resources and Outdoor Recreation Courses: Challenges and Complexities

Nina S. Roberts

Introduction

The field of natural resource management has grown to encompass not only environmental sciences such as forestry, biology, and ecology. It also has broadened to include human dimensions of resource use, including the need to both understand and affect people's knowledge of and behavior toward natural resources and their management. In order to prepare the best-trained professionals, our curriculum typically requires students to take specialized courses in areas relating to natural sciences as well as the social and political sciences. Increasingly, it is being recognized that students trained in natural resource management, including recreation resources, should be exposed to the principles of multiple-use, competing land uses, political science, economics, business management, ecology, biology, environmental law, environmental ethics, social psychology, and communication strategies (Robinson, Pfister, Shultis, and Safford 1997).

Ideally, management of our natural resources, such as parks, protected areas, and open space, involves many voices in creating agendas for policy, planning, and outdoor programming or interpretive activities. People of various racial and ethnic backgrounds are becoming a fast-growing and significant proportion of the population (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000), yet the voices of ethnic minorities have not been heard enough. It is imperative that this change. Curriculum change, then, should be fundamental; it should also be compelling and, above all, practical.

My primary goal in this chapter is to focus on the importance of race, ethnicity and culture, and, in a less extensive way, gender for

teaching natural resource management and outdoor recreation courses. However, I will not address all the forms that human *difference* can take and the issues associated with each. In this chapter, I will share my own experiences and strategies for maintaining the integrity of the curriculum (e.g., principles and best practices of recreation resource management) while moving toward a more comprehensive curriculum that employs more aspects of diversity. Additionally, I provide relevant references for making a connection between diversity and the world of natural resource management.

I am convinced that changes in society require broader approaches, since students will face a changing workplace and more diverse groups of outdoor recreation program participants. Moreover, many possibilities currently exist for addressing diversity issues in natural resource management and outdoor recreation classes. Most students seem to be open to diversity content, yet a small proportion often display some sort of resistance. As the instructor, and as a woman of color in a mostly white environment, I have found that diversity content can affect the emotions of other students and undermine my own safety and comfort. This creates an added challenge for me given my own background and experiences.

Personal Identity and Exposé

To better understand my arguments here, it may be helpful for me to describe who I am and what I bring to this field and the classroom. I am a woman of color who has been involved in the field of parks, recreation, and natural resource management for twenty years. I have developed intense passion for my work and for the young people I have taught in varying capacities. I believe it is important to note that I bring a multi-racial perspective to my teaching from a unique cultural heritage. My father is a white man whose ancestors are from England and Switzerland. My mother, on the other hand, is quite a mix. That is, my maternal great grandmother was from Madras, East India, while my great grandfather was Native American—Cherokee. My maternal grandfather is from the West Indies (St. Lucia). As a prodigy of this uncommon ancestry, my skin color is light chocolate brown; I have dark brown eyes and curly brown hair. When I was growing up, it seemed like everyone but me fit into a neat cultural box where they had a label to call their own.

I have never met an individual yet who can figure out what I am. And, as with my teaching, I always encourage people to ask rather than assume. Some think that I am Black, while others approach

me talking in Spanish thinking I must be of some Hispanic descent. Some believe I “must” be a mix of some sort and often ask, “What are you anyway?” It is my awareness of who I am that allows me to assess, question, and, at times, challenge many of the assumptions my students commonly make about other people based only on how they look. Additionally, while I understand the oppression that faces ethnic-minority females, I also recognize the privileges associated with my middle-class position in society. My advanced education adds another degree of privilege in my life, and all that contributes to shaping my personal and professional “filters.”

When I received my master’s degree from the University of Maryland, I was immediately given the opportunity to join the staff as an “adjunct faculty” member. A couple of years later I was also contracted as adjunct faculty at George Mason University in northern Virginia. I have been active professionally on boards and committees as well. Having high energy, I was told by friends and colleagues that I would make a great contribution to higher education as a professor. Many encouraged me to continue my education for a Ph.D. Now, as a doctoral candidate at a predominantly white, middle-to-upper-class, conservative institution, the opportunity to be an instructor is available to me. As I have gotten to know other professionals and practitioners over the years, I have quickly discovered that I am one of a very few ethnic minorities teaching and doing scholarly work in this field.

My own experiences have not fit the most widely cited biracial identity development model (i.e., Poston 1990). This model does, however, provide the closest framework to help explain my personal growth and changes through life. I began the journey to understand these contradictions between theory and experience many years ago, and this has guided much of my work ever since. As a classroom instructor and social scientist, I want to explore how diversity fits into my teaching and my work as a scholar, and how this can contribute to a positive classroom climate.

“But I’ve Always Done It This Way”

One very important consideration for me in designing my curriculum and ensuring a positive classroom climate is the disequilibrium that people often experience when they face the reality and pervasiveness of social oppression, regardless of the discipline. For students and professors who are used to doing things a certain way and who have a certain attitude about how things “ought to be,” having diversity content in the curriculum can create a state of disequi-

librium. For example, according to Adams, Bell, and Griffin (1997), students may be thrown off balance by discussions of what oppression is and how it affects people. Invariably this calls into question deeply held assumptions these students might have. For me, that is when profound change can occur. When a stagnant classroom is shocked out of complacency by discussions that involve diversity (e.g., inequality of social groups), intense learning can result. To illustrate, social groups evolve from common histories, cultures, and traditions, so that our understanding of what it means to be female or male, lesbian or heterosexual, Latino or Black, for example, makes sense to us or has significance to our lives depending on our social context. Therefore, a certain degree of instability can be upsetting or even terrifying if students experience disagreements and begin to realize that previous ways of thinking about natural resource management or principles of outdoor recreation programming no longer seem adequate.

The experiences of particular social groups, such as Latino and gay or Black and female, are extremely important to understanding nontraditional means of managing parks and other natural resources. In other words, without this diversity and within homogeneous groups, people can more easily analyze policies, explore the history of outdoor education, or examine principles of recreation programming that support a particular vantage point of their group (e.g., white male). When this occurs, oppression results and multiple perspectives get lost. In the classroom, it is essential that students recognize the stereotypes and prejudices we learn about various “targeted” groups (e.g., ethnic minorities, gays, lower-class people) that develop as part of our socialization process or upbringing. Too often, program leaders and park managers neglect the need for change or open-mindedness.

What is learned at the individual level then, is reinforced by institutional and societal structures of privilege and disenfranchisement. Stereotyping and prejudice may occur no matter what the setting. Too often, “difference” also means inequality. That is, according to Lustig and Koester (1999), all people do not have equal opportunities; some feel empowered while others are systematically devalued. Receptivity and responsiveness to students’ needs, both collectively and individually, become critical.

When natural resource and related courses are taught in a way that omits the history, experience, and cultures of ethnic minorities, women, or people with disabilities, learning is limited. Without “new” knowledge, it is unlikely that students will be able to understand other people’s experiences or what their outdoor recreation

interests are. Too often, culture- or gender-specific ideas are omitted, e.g., that Latinos differ widely in their recreation patterns.

As affirmed by Banks (2001), this *construction of knowledge* must be implemented by teachers in a way that helps students understand first how knowledge is created and second how it is influenced by the racial/ethnic, cultural and social-class positions of individuals and groups. Many European American instructors in the field of natural resources are unaware of how their personal experiences and positions within society influence the knowledge they produce. Teaching traditional content, or omitting diversity concepts, is often justified with “we’ve always done it that way.” Students, however, must understand, even within natural resource management, how cultural assumptions and stereotypical frames of reference influence the curriculum content developed by their instructors. By moving beyond traditional content, basic assumptions can be challenged and students informed about seeing concepts, issues, themes, and problems from diverse ethnic, gender, and other cultural perspectives. Each group of students, then, brings their own perspectives about the changes in course content that must occur.

Many of the concepts relating to cultural assumptions and prejudices can permeate an entire campus and influence other aspects of social life. For example, Henley, Powell, and Poats (1992) discuss several issues adversely affecting campuses across the country: racial tensions (and in some cases violence); lack of culturally enriching activities and/or cultural awareness; feelings of isolation and perception of insensitivity to the needs of underrepresented groups; lack of faculty involvement as role models and mentors with students of color; and accusations of “political correctness” (4). Unfortunately, these problems never improve when there is the general feeling that “that’s just the way it is,” with little effort made to change.

Although we, as instructors, like to believe campus life has changed and that we embrace diversity better, many of the difficult issues continue to exist. In many areas, I think diversity is still left out because of this “we’ve always done it that way” attitude (i.e., maintaining the status quo). Regardless of course content, tensions based on differences can carry over into the classroom and become “problems” (e.g., discomfort, conflict, misunderstanding, and exploitation) if not attended to with care and concern. However, if a diversity of opinions is defined as a *problem*, I do not think it can be “solved.” In other words, diversity becomes a problem for some classroom instructors only when it is interpreted as obstructing “the way things should be.” In reality, any notion of the way things

“ought to be” only reflects some set of preconceived abstractions and not any concrete “truth.”

Scientific research has elevated our understanding of ecosystems within park wilderness, and the human dimensions of natural resource management have begun to provide an increased knowledge of land uses and recreational preferences. Yet, with respect to education or recreation in the outdoors, the dominant group (i.e., European American students and instructors) may believe that *all* people share the same interests, and to some extent, a common experience. The truth is that white people cannot really know the experiences of ethnic minorities (Ngan-Ling Chow, Wilkinson, and Baca Zinn 1996; Stanfield and Dennis 1993). In contrast, ethnic minorities are typically very well informed about the white experience because that is considered the “norm” (e.g., wilderness values) (Rodriguez and Roberts 2001). By using a normative reference to *wilderness values*, the context relates to a romantic ideal of preserving nature and admiring the scenic wonders, whereas cultural connotations often relate more to sustenance, for example, the Native American heritage of living off the land.

My own multicultural perspective, personal experiences, and marginalized status (as a female and an ethnic minority) allow me to address diversity issues in a direct way in my classroom. It also may be that I am able to do this with a degree of comfort that some of my white male colleagues in natural resources lack, perhaps finding these issues too complex. Instead, they continue to teach content in ways with which they are more comfortable.

As an example, Timpson and Bendel-Simso (1996) write about teaching as both “a science and an art.” Their position is that successful teaching demands two essential ingredients: (1) your commitment as an instructor to gain certain skills, and (2) your ability to integrate these skills with your own personal style. The *science* of teaching includes the underlying theories, facts, and tactics that underlie effective instruction and facilitate learning, while the *art* reflects your own gifts. Clearly, an instructor’s capability to achieve this will vary with her or his background and experiences. For me, combining science and art in pedagogy helps me to define who I am, who my students might be, and what we can learn together. It is also important that I take into consideration the differences among my students, that is, their backgrounds, motivations, needs, preparations for class, knowledge level, and individual learning styles. Just because some instructors have “always” taught a certain way with which they are comfortable does not mean it is the only way or the best way. Thinking about the art and science of teaching as well as

my students' backgrounds and needs challenges me to explore new possibilities.

Teaching and Learning: Connection with the Outdoors

When structuring learning experiences around natural resources, environmental education, and outdoor recreation opportunities, I find it critical that I sharpen my ability to make certain adjustments that are based on student assumptions and expectations. For instance, my classrooms are usually quite homogeneous, composed primarily of students who are European American. Accordingly, I find that the topic of ethnicity and culture can be sensitive and confusing at times. I often sense discomfort and/or lack of awareness when students respond to discussion or readings with "...but we're all the same so why does it matter?" or "I treat everyone as equals so this doesn't pertain to me." I know I must be sensitive to students' comments and questions. However, I also feel the need to respond in a way that broadens their thinking and puts them on the edge of their comfort zone. When a white student says "people of color can do anything they want to, if they just try hard enough" or "I think men are just biologically more adapted to being outdoor leaders than women," I want to invite students to step onto that edge. One way I respond is to open the classroom doors but insist on respectful dialogue as they talk about their beliefs. I also provide the freedom for other students (e.g., allies or those who "get it") to join in the discussion and provide new information—for example, more depth about the concept of oppression and its effect on participation in the outdoors. I encourage students to view this type of discussion as "food for thought" rather than attempts to change individual students on the spot. As reported by Adams, Bell, and Griffin (1997), few can focus or learn when they feel defensive or criticized.

I know I must provide a safe environment for all students, regardless of their "awareness" or knowledge. I have to help them think critically and be open-minded about the attitudes and experiences of ethnic minorities and other underrepresented groups. Also noted by Blazey and James (1994), we can teach "with" diversity by maintaining a focus on inclusive language, inclusive content and topics, and an inclusive teaching style.

Regardless of where a student falls on the diversity awareness continuum, I want him or her to know that his or her perceptions, curiosities, and feelings all have a place in my classroom. I try to be encouraging, allowing students to express themselves fully. I validate their experiences, whatever their background, while challeng-

ing them to think “outside the box.” No matter what their contributions, even if their assumptions reflect structures of domination (e.g., racial or gender privilege), I try to honor their comments and questions about course materials, readings, or interactions in class. My students all need to know they have a voice in our classes. Although I never have been in a classroom when a blatantly racist comment was stated, I try to be alert to those comments that surface in more subtle or covert ways, and identify how these contributions can be learning opportunities for everyone and exercises in truth-telling.

Whether stated consciously or implied subconsciously, a racist comment or stereotypical perception based on gender is something I also need to challenge without using personal attack or a condescending reply. Students are encouraged to engage with one another, to challenge each other’s remarks and questions in a way that supports learning. Again, I find it critical to balance this inclusive style with my responsibility to have students examine the costs of maintaining their personal perspectives if they are closed to viewpoints of other people or to diverse cultures generally. As a teacher, I must invite comments (verbal or written) while challenging, and halting, any oppression that may surface, then try to offer creative alternatives. I do not discourage honest opinions when physical safety is not threatened. Rather, I provide a forum for students to talk about the psychological threat some people may feel (e.g., diminished or offended) when their sense of justice is being violated. One approach I use is to get students engaged in dyads (i.e., one-on-one conversations for a selected period of time) to share with their partners a situation when they remember being on the edge of their comfort zone because of something negative that another individual had said or done to them. I want them to reflect on how they felt and reacted.

Although personal identity development and concepts of privilege may be rare in a class on outdoor recreation programming or social aspects of natural resource management, they are still important. For me, that is part of the challenge. I want to help students begin to appreciate how situations can be understood from different perspectives. I want to help them appreciate how their own assumptions, observations, and interpretations are influenced by their social identity and ethnic background (see Gross-Davis 1993).

I have found that the most interesting descriptions about ethnic-minority involvement in outdoor recreation as well as perceptions about natural resources generally are those that take into account the viewpoint of each student. In some respects, this student self-awareness becomes more important if some useful understanding of diversity is to emerge at all. My own optimism about students

understanding themselves first is key. However, if I let certain viewpoints go unchallenged, stereotypes can be negatively reinforced (e.g., some ethnic minorities do not participate in wilderness activities because “it’s a white thing”). Self-awareness in students does not automatically produce growth as potential leaders or even acceptance of other people. One way to facilitate this is for me to step in if students seem to be ignoring the perspectives of others. Gross-Davis (1993) suggests that intervention may be an effective means of making it clear that an instructor values all comments.

During the course of any given semester, many European American students in my class hold onto a “melting pot” ideology through which ethnic differences are shed and opportunities for education, job training, recreation, and public policy are available to all people. I must admit that I become annoyed by the attitudes of these students, even angry at times, because presently opportunities are *not* available to everyone. As an instructor, I know I must channel my frustration, uphold my professionalism and ethics, and maintain my desire for being inclusive. At the same time, I try to respond honestly, expressing my own displeasure when they are unable to grasp someone else’s “truth” (i.e., different views). I must also refocus my efforts to increase student knowledge about the persistent gap between the dominant culture and ethnic minority group members for access to resources and opportunities.

Some people believe that racial and ethnic differences are among the most enduring and potentially divisive factions within our society (e.g., Johnson 2001; Salett and Koslow 1994). Certain research in the natural resources field indicates that class differences are of equal concern (see Arnold and Shinew 1998; DeLuca and Demo 2001). Yet, in my experience, ethnicity and culture are the primary variables that make it challenging to build safe and trusting relationships. While we all have the potential to change our socio-economic class position, ethnicity is associated with the physical self and impossible to change. Johnson (2001), for example, notes that “the cultural assumption of white racial dominance can override any class advantage a person of color might have” (27). In my classes, this often leads to discussions about privilege and power. Yet, talking about these aspects of life is not something people do easily. My aim, therefore, is to help these future outdoor leaders and resource managers address these real-world challenges.

I also continue to find it very interesting that my own credibility may be questioned when attempting to teach students about managing forests and parks and what it takes to be an *effective* outdoor leader. For instance, the tradition of the outdoors as a white male

domain often raises questions about my role as a female, minority instructor. How can I possibly know what I am talking about? To be both an ethnic minority and a woman generally places me outside the power structure of what students are used to. I sometimes feel compelled to clarify my identity and validate my educational background as well as defend twenty years of experience in this field. My survival in both the outdoor environment and the classroom environment has been a bicultural experience, simultaneously socialized in two separate cultures yet able to draw experience and value from each.

Furthermore, as an educator with a feminist philosophy, I support values that deeply affect my classroom instruction in a way that is attentive to relationships and equity. Buried in some of these students' young minds, however, may be some imagined, idealized or socially ingrained definition of what it means to be a feminist. For me, feminism means drawing on facets of my life and doing the difficult work of being genuine and trustworthy with my students, honoring the complexity of my own life as well as being conscientious about adding their experiences into the dialogue. Part of my intent is to build upon a multicultural viewpoint that challenges the status quo, finds common ground while honoring differences, and develops the self-esteem and confidence of my students so that they can better live their own lives. One technique I use in the classroom to help accomplish these goals has students keeping a journal as part of their semester assignment. This typically includes reactions and reflections from class discussions, occasional responses to assigned readings, and any other experiences or opinions they wish to share. I collect these randomly throughout the academic term and find time to meet with students individually as needed.

As I continue to work with students in natural resources and review the current research, several additional and related questions regarding teaching and learning also have troubled me: How can ethnic minorities enjoy our national parks in ways that are consistent with their cultural views and values? How can educational institutions help develop and nurture ethnic-minority students as future leaders and our white students as allies? How can research more adequately reflect and account for the experiences of ethnic minorities in the outdoors? It seems to me that this is all part of a dynamic system in perpetual motion.

Complex and Intricate Connections with Nature

Too often, the outdoors is considered the domain of European Americans. There is a common misperception that many ethnic mi-

norities simply lack interest in nature and outdoor recreation. I also encounter stereotypes that “minorities can’t afford it” or “they don’t have the transportation to get there.” The issue of access inevitably surfaces as a constraint to broaden public enjoyment of natural environments beyond urban borders. In contrast, many whites typically view parks as places for solitude or as sanctuaries from urban stress. Many ethnic minorities, on the other hand, report less enthusiasm or even negative attitudes about parks and wilderness because these places often are reminders of their historical subjugation and oppression (Ewert, Chavez, and Magill 1993; Johnson, Bowker, English, and Worthen 1997; Meeker, Woods, and Lucas 1973). For example, Native Americans have long battled with Congress to maintain their traditional access to and use of natural resources on reservations or other public lands across the country. It also has been argued that the “collective impressions” of African Americans about slavery, sharecropping, and lynching may contribute to their own lack of interest in and appreciation for natural resource recreation (Johnson 1998). More complete analyses about these issues are often missing from our textbooks and class discussions.

There are many topics within natural resource management, outdoor recreation, and environmental education for which we can discuss relevant aspects of diversity in the classroom. Possibilities include understanding issues of ecosystem management; sustainable use and biological monitoring of flora and fauna; visitor effects connected with crowding; conflict; motivation; satisfaction (e.g., benefits of participation), and risk management. Critics like Field (1996) insist that, since scientists and managers within land management agencies have largely been European American males, the academic community’s analysis of trends related to people and resource management has often been limited.

In most instances, I think that my white male colleagues who are teaching students about outdoor programming and natural resource management lack the background and knowledge to adequately address related issues involving diversity. Too often, then, these aspects are left out of our students’ education or merely touched upon as a minor detail. Attention to the changing demographics in this country is only one, albeit fundamental, reason for building understanding about the influence of race, ethnicity, and culture, both in outdoor experiences and in public involvement in protection of our parks and protected areas.

More specifically, research is still in the early stages of knowing how an individual’s ethnic and cultural background affects her or

his recreational experiences in a national park. We have made considerable and noteworthy progress since the 1960s in our understanding, yet this field still has a long way to go (e.g., Allison 1988; Floyd 1999; Johnson et. al. 1997; Rodriguez and Roberts 2001). Researchers, for example, have learned about ethnic patterns of recreation, preferences for participation, and styles or “modes” of participation. Regardless, there is still a lack of understanding about the role ethnic and cultural identity plays in the creation, maintenance, and expression of outdoor recreation experiences. Additionally, we need to know how the study of ethnicity and culture in natural resource contexts can make contributions to what is known about ethnicity and culture more generally. Such gaps and questions continue to constrain managers who are trying to provide a quality recreation experience for all visitors as well as manage the natural resources within their jurisdictions (Carr and Williams 1993; Floyd 1999).

Most natural resource students are studying to become park managers, leaders, and decision makers within various environmental and natural resource careers. This is why the challenge is so great. I try to bring a much-needed multifaceted perspective to the classroom. For example, I find that getting students to understand the *meaning* or significance of participation for an individual or a group is at times an overwhelming challenge. By and large, white people struggle to comprehend what it means to be “stared at,” to be uncomfortable or feel unwelcome in a national park or forest. As people of color, on the other hand, we are too often reminded of our minority status, even in wildland areas.

In order to help students better understand this notion of minority status when in the wilderness, I pose two questions: (1) what additional knowledge is needed? and (2) what additional readings or materials are needed? I attempt to address diversity and culture in an *emerging* way. That is, I strive to address broader issues of social change and to challenge students to be intentional with their personal and professional actions regarding equity, economic justice, environmental harmony, and nonviolent conflict. I attempt to raise awareness and increase their knowledge through hands-on community experiences, guest speakers, and structured discussion groups organized around supplemental reading and role modeling.

Since the majority of natural resource instructors are European Americans, as are most students majoring in this field, I began to understand why some students look to me for help in understanding how ethnic minorities might experience the outdoors.

There are some complex questions for which I do not have easy answers because I have no direct personal experience or have not seen any useful research on that particular subject. For instance, I have been asked if minority group members with differing levels of acculturation also differ in their perception of discrimination in outdoor recreation areas. Gordon (1964, cited in Gramann 1996) has theorized that greater cultural assimilation will lead to reduced levels of perceived discrimination. It is clear to me that more work is needed in this area. We need to address more multifaceted questions, such as those relating to the interaction effects of race, class, and gender on outdoor recreation choices (Shinew, Floyd, McGuire and Noe 1995; Rodriguez and Roberts 2001).

As instructors, we also will need to address these missing links of race, class, and gender course readings if students are to understand the context of history. As an ethnic-minority instructor filled with passion for the outdoors, I understand the role of different values and beliefs in shaping students' perceptions. I also try to create linkages. For example, I often assign multiple readings throughout a semester to provide a historical context for understanding the similarities between our nation's treatment of Blacks and Native Americans (e.g., Taylor 1989; McDonald and McAvoy 1997).

Among some tribes of Africa and within some Native American communities, nature itself is thought to be sacred, and humans participate in that sacredness according to their degree of integration with natural processes. In their early work, Meeker et al. (1973) explain the need for Blacks and Native Americans to see themselves in, and not separate from, natural settings where they can seek spiritual relief. Alternatively, many European settlers seized public lands and wilderness areas as places of refuge from the "evils of civilization" in urban areas. Over time, "the red man" and "the black man" began to develop very different views of wilderness than those sentiments common among individuals of European descent. Referring to Blacks and Native Americans, Meeker et al. (1973, 5) point out that "for the past few centuries, both groups have learned in pain that their association with the land is a source of misery and humiliation, not of peace or fulfillment."

Various ethnic minorities also have concentrated on natural areas as a focus in their struggles for social and environmental justice and for political power (e.g., Ewert et al. 1993; Kaplan and Talbot 1988; Taylor 1989). While all people have some connection to the natural environment, how relevant and meaningful that relationship is raises different questions. Native American cultures, for example, often emphasize relationships of mutual respect, reciprocity, and

caring for the earth. Yet the national parks often are known as places of humiliation for them because of their suffering and loss of land and traditional lifestyle (McDonald and McAvoy 1997; Meeker et al. 1973). The all too visible absence of meaningful education about Native cultures provided to visitors to the parks has caused mistrust and conflict.

In the classroom, these historical “facts” can be taught whether or not students like what they hear. These kinds of lessons can be difficult for anyone who does not have the knowledge, skill, ability, and/or willingness to process this kind of complex, emotionally charged issue. A first impulse may be to ignore the facts rather than engage in possibly contentious discussions. One of my goals is to bring a bit of order and coherence to students’ perceptions about history, to provide some insight into the ethnic minority experience, and provide examples relevant for outdoor recreation and visitation to national parks. Specifically, I try to achieve this by using a variety of approaches—lecture, writing assignments, small and large discussion groups, guest speakers, and student interviews with community leaders from diverse backgrounds.

Breaking the Mold

In the field of natural resource management and outdoor recreation, while the study of race/ethnicity has been going on for the past thirty years, it is still relatively new in its depth and breadth (Rodriguez and Roberts 2001). However, research also continues to highlight theories that are based on traditional racial categories (Ewert 1996; Floyd 1998). As indicated earlier, I myself do not fit into any of the neat little racial or ethnic boxes as stratified on forms pertaining to demographics. That makes for an added challenge to my teaching. Because my ethnic background is not compartmentalized into any such “box,” I find it difficult to relate to certain historical contexts (e.g., the relationship of African Americans to slavery) or recreational preferences based on cultural values (e.g., Hispanic kinship and extended families). Nonetheless, I am comfortable in discussing the issue of representation and visibility of ethnic minorities in natural resources from a broad perspective.

Here I can draw on a useful reference by Thornton (1996). He notes how “racial differences are given cultural explanations without obvious measures of experience or attitudes” (104). He proclaims that, although “race” is a valuable organizer of life—a measure of our worth in the eyes of society and where we fit into the

hierarchy of societal preferences and opportunities—it does not automatically determine with whom one feels the closest bonds. In fact, the author contends, these “bonds” are not predetermined, no matter what we may believe. From a sample of published literature on this issue (e.g., Banks 2001; Lustig and Koester 1999; Salett and Koslow 1994), I can see that most people from a specific lineage feel a special affinity to that heritage. Without a particular (singular) lineage, I have been able to freely cross a number of racial and ethnic boundaries throughout my life.

Some students, however, either doubt my ability to mix easily with different racial groups or become quite curious about what this must require. Since I was born multi-racial, I have the chance to try viewing different ethnic landscapes (in the U.S.) from the wondrous yet troubling perspective of an *insider/outsider*. From this vantage point, I have come to believe that there are certain aspects of an ethnic minority’s experience that are difficult, if not impossible, for a member of the dominant group (European American) to grasp and articulate (Baca Zinn 1979). The unique advantage I have as a “minority” scholar is that I am less apt to experience distrust, hostility, or exclusion when interacting with other ethnic minority groups. Clearly, there are still nuances, cultural norms and in-group behaviors that I may not understand. Still, I am usually able to gain acceptance into several ethnic minority communities by virtue of my mixed-race background, distinct appearance, and what I believe is a high degree of intercultural competence.

I also can relate to a degree of “aloneness” from being in the wilderness as one of few, if any, visibly identified minorities. That experience, however, is somewhat bimodal for me. On one hand, I do not feel *alone*, although I am always aware that there’s nobody out here who looks like me. On the other hand, I feel extremely comfortable outdoors, and that allows me to both enjoy the tranquility of nature as well as wear my “educator” hat.

Through my own multicultural lens, I am best able to tell students about the meaning of the outdoors. Principles that derive from a *socio-cultural* approach in the literature (Ewert et. al. 1993; Sasidharan 2002) provide a broad framework for describing the association between ethnicity and culture and the meanings individuals and groups regularly ascribe to natural resources.

Where to from Here?

First, the changing demographics of our population are forcing us to rethink our attitudes about ethnicity and education. According

to Ramirez (1996), not only will friction probably increase between ethnic minorities and whites, but conflicts also may arise between minority groups themselves until they learn to balance their conflicting claims. Second, because of the limitations of thinking about racial categories on forms, we need to focus on how we can best empower ethnic minorities through increased representation as well as the development of new paradigms. Racial and ethnic identity matters too much to be ignored through a color-blind approach that negates the fact that race and ethnicity (like gender and class) *do* matter in shaping ideas, attitudes, and opportunities (Banks 2001; Ngan-Ling Chow et al. 1996). Students must learn how and why such limitations could impact their lives.

For me, building in multicultural perspectives on different experiences is an important part of how I structure learning in my classes. I encourage my students to develop their ability to articulate their ideas, take responsibility for their opinions, and acknowledge how different people can see nature from different vantage points. What I want students in my classes to understand is this: When people acknowledge their vested interests and their biases as part of a dialogue, the playing field becomes more level. Rather than taking a European American, dominant viewpoint as universal, we can recognize multiple perspectives as valid. For example, it is primarily whites who are visitors to wilderness areas, creators of outdoor equipment and gear, and owners of outdoor-based retail stores (Cordell, Green, and Stephens 2000; ORCA 2000). I guess it is no wonder why many people from other ethnic backgrounds perceive the outdoors as places for white people. However, we do have to note that the socio-economic status of some minority groups is improving (U.S. Bureau of the Census 2000). Their disposable income will, accordingly, continue to rise, leveling the playing field. Nonetheless, in the absence of effective marketing strategies by the outdoor industry to ethnic-minority populations, differences will continue to exist.

In the section of my class that addresses human dimensions of natural resource management, I like to discuss these issues and invite different perspectives. I want to encourage dialogue and constructive debate. For example, discussions in my classes can get heated between those who support waiving national park entrance fees for Native Americans with a tribal identification card and those who believe the interests of all visitors in protecting the park and providing quality services would be better served by all people paying the entrance fee. Both sides tend to be convinced of the legitimacy of their particular perspectives.

Closing Thoughts

As an instructor, I find that the process of shifting perspectives and making personal values and beliefs explicit requires substantial emotional and intellectual flexibility on my part. An added challenge is for me to remain grounded and balanced, with an internal compass, if you will. Working with issues of diversity will always require personal direction and an act of imagination on my part, followed by a great deal of courage and perseverance. To me, this is exactly what is required of all of us, whether in academia or in the general society. How else can I teach my students to respect each other even when they disagree? How can I convey that certain comments or attitudes are not okay? How else can I bring the richness of my own varied perspective to bear on issues that ultimately concern all of us?

At core, I believe my greatest success in structuring learning experiences for students on issues concerning ethnic minorities in the outdoors has come from face-to-face interactions. I want students in my classes to learn the importance of socio-demographic changes and then to help build inclusive communities. I hope this will be an emergent part of their professional lives and not just an afterthought. Students must learn that the benefits of nature reflect an ongoing venture, not just an outcome, and that they may be experienced differently by people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

Teaching is unquestionably both a science and an art. However, addressing multiple perspectives requires awareness about complex issues and solid skills for interacting across differences. My own multiple identities and roles in higher education continue to evolve. I am an objective social scientist who also brings a multi-racial perspective to the classroom. I have transformed feelings that once were rooted in anxiety into creativity and productivity. My visibility and minority status are inseparable, ever present, and always apparent to me and to my colleagues. Negotiating for power among different belief systems is not a new experience for me or other minority instructors and scholars. I will continue to critically evaluate current research and challenge it. I can only hope the discussion of diversity in my field is undertaken prudently and with due respect for the great issues at stake.

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William M. Timpson

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After finishing my bachelors degree in American History at Harvard University in 1968, I spent four years teaching junior and senior high school students in inner-city Cleveland. I moved on to complete a doctorate in Education Psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Since 1976 I have taught at Colorado State University (CSU), although a four year leave of absence allowed me two years as Director of the Center for Teaching at University of California, Santa Cruz, and two more years at the Tertiary Education Institute at the University of Queensland in Brisbane, Australia. At CSU, I have routinely taught courses on diversity and have infused diversity content into my other courses. I also direct the Center for Teaching and Learning on this campus, where I attempt to support needed instructional improvements and innovations.

Silvia Sara Canetto

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I was born and raised in Italy, and after gaining a doctorate in Experimental Psychology at the University of Padova, I spent four years in Jerusalem, where I received a second graduate degree in General Psychology. In 1981, I came to the U.S. to pursue a third degree, in Clinical Psychology, at Northwestern University Medical School. Since 1991, I have been on the faculty at CSU, where I have taught "Psychology of Gender," "Psychology of Women," "Life-Span Developmental Psychology," and "Diversity Issues in Counseling." In 1997, my work on gender and culture in suicidal behavior was honored with the Shneidman Research Award of the American Association of Suicidology. In 1998, I was elected member of the International Academy for Suicide Research. More recently, I was elected Fellow of the Society for the Psychology of Women, as well as Fellow of the Division of International Psychology of the American Psychological Association. I have published over eighty articles and chapters and edited three books. This is my first contribution to a book on teaching.

Evelinn A. Borrayo

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I was born in Guatemala City and moved with my family to the U.S. when I was eight years old. I learned English as an elementary school student in Los Angeles. After returning to Guatemala for high school, I won a

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I grew up in Hawaii, where my grandparents had once emigrated to work on the sugar plantations. I received an education in developmental psychology and have since studied infants, elementary-age children, and at-risk youths. My research has dealt with abusive families, juveniles in adult prisons, and college-age minority students' adaptation to the challenges of university life. I have taught on six campuses, including Cornell University, the University of Georgia, Northern Illinois University, the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the University of Hawaii. I am currently professor of Human Development and Psychology at CSU. I would like to thank Jill Kreutzer for her helpful comments after reading drafts of my chapter.

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After completing my bachelors and masters degrees in Speech Communication at California State University-Fresno in 1990 and 1992, I moved to the Northwest and completed a doctorate at the University of Washington-Seattle in 1997. Prior to the defense of my dissertation, I was offered a position at CSU's Department of Speech Communication to begin in August of 1997. At the outset, I found that being part of an ethnic and sexual minority, and teaching Interpersonal and Cultural Communication in a smaller city like Fort Collins, would present both challenges and opportunities. Five years later I still find this to be true.

James H. Banning

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I was born and raised in rural Kansas. I received a doctorate in Clinical Psychology from the University of Colorado-Boulder in the midst of the anti-war and civil rights movements. Participation in these efforts helped me realize the important role that systems play in human affairs. In the early seventies, I redirected my career from a being psychotherapist to one in university administration, and I spent nearly ten years as Vice-President for Student Affairs at Colorado State. Currently, as an environmental psychologist, I am a professor in the School of Education, teaching qualitative research, environmental psychology, and campus ecology courses.

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Upon completion of my BA in English Literature and Music at Lawrence University, I taught social studies and music to junior high school students for four years. During that time I also began working on my masters degree in History and Literature of Religions at Northwestern University. In 1962 I received a Fulbright fellowship to study at Banaras Hindu University in India. Subsequently I studied at Vidyodaya University in Sri Lanka and the University of Bombay, and after receiving my doctorate I continued to travel, study, and teach at a number of universities: the University of Shiraz, Iran; Kansai Gaidai University in Osaka, Japan; and within the U.S., at Harvard, Pittsburgh, and Tennessee.

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I attended college and worked in Upward Bound at the University of New Hampshire at Durham, where I received a BA in Psychology. After graduation I spent several years in an Indian Education program and became very focused on social justice issues and government policy. After receiving a JD from the University of Colorado in Boulder, I became a lobbyist for a small, Indian-owned corporation. A former director of a Children's Advocacy Center, I worked to develop such facilities in Indian Country and Native Alaskan communities, and I continue to support tribal initiatives in the Colorado area. I am currently an Assistant Professor at CSU, where I have joint appointments in the School of Social Work and the Center for Applied Studies in American Ethnicity.

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I grew up in Cleveland's inner-city, and were it not for a high school coach who believed in me academically as well as athletically, I never would have accepted the football scholarship that began my academic journey. Having completed a bachelors and masters in English, I began teaching at Macomb County Community College outside Detroit, and over the next thirty years I taught at seven different community colleges, most of them in major urban centers. I see the community college as the most egalitarian higher education institution in the United States, and it was specifically to develop the doctoral program in community college leadership that I joined CSU in 1995.

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I have been training counselors for the past fifteen years. I am a licensed professional counselor and I've had a private counseling practice for ten years. Before that, I was a school counselor and music teacher. I received

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After receiving my PhD in philosophy in 1984 from the University of Rochester, I taught for a year and then returned to graduate studies in the Department of Germanic Languages and Literature at the University of Cincinnati. I have taught philosophy courses that encourage students' exploration of voice and plurality in ethics, aesthetics, epistemology, and the philosophy of religion. I have become increasingly aware of a wealth of material that remains largely unexplored in my own areas of research, and I bring some of that to my students in the form of newly discovered or republished documents representing historically marginalized or unusual voices.

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Director, Resources for Disabled Students;
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I received a BA in psychology in 1973 from Wayne State University in Detroit and a Masters in rehabilitation counseling from the University of Northern Colorado in 1976. I was hired by the State of Colorado as a rehabilitation counselor in 1978. In 1980, I was hired to direct the Resources for Disabled Students department at CSU. More than two-thirds of these students have learning disabilities, and the emphasis of the office embraces attitudinal access and advocacy as well as physical access and accommodation. My course focuses on the interdependency between individuals with disabilities and those who provide support.

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After completion of my BA in Business Education from Southern University I taught for four years in the inner-city schools of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, during which time I completed a masters program in Education Administration. In 2001, I completed a PhD in Education Leadership at CSU while working as Department Chair and faculty member of the Computer Information Systems department at Front Range Community College. Currently, I am an Assistant Professor in the School of Education where I teach in the areas of Education Technology and Multiculturalism.

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After graduating from Illinois State University with a BA in Special Education, I spent nine years in public school settings on the southern out-

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Angela Paccione

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I grew up in the South Bronx, New York. As a child, my love of learning competed for a while with my love of basketball, until both found their fulfillment at Stanford University. I was among the first to receive a full athletic scholarship to Stanford, where I graduated with departmental honors in Political Science. I played professional basketball for a couple years before returning to school to earn my teaching certificate. While pursuing a masters degree in Educational Administration, I was recruited to CSU to enter the PhD program and to work with a teacher preparation program. In 1998 I earned my PhD and was hired by CSU. I have been working as an Assistant Professor with teacher preparation for the past five years.

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I completed my BA at Bridgewater State College in Massachusetts and my Masters Degree at the University of Maryland-College Park. For eight years afterwards I was a park manager and adjunct faculty member at the University of Maryland-College Park and George Mason University. I have been a research associate for the Student Conservation Association (SCA), I have served as Assistant Director of SCA's national urban and diversity programs, and I have participated in leadership training through the National Outdoor Leadership School, Woodswomen, Project Adventure, Pro-Image, Washington Women Outdoors, and the SCA. Currently, I am completing my PhD in Recreation Resource Management at CSU and working for the National Park Service as an Education and Outreach Specialist.

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I completed the bachelors program in Sociology and Political Science at Metropolitan State College in Denver in 1976. In 1979, I completed a masters program in Social Work at the University of Denver, and shortly thereafter moved to the Mid-Atlantic region, where I consulted on projects related to rural health care delivery for young Latino women. After beginning my academic career at Southwest Missouri State University, I completed a doctorate in Social Work in 1986 at the University of Pennsylvania. I have taught in the School of Social Work at CSU since 1985 and have long

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After completing an undergraduate degree at Vanderbilt and a masters degree in Education at The George Washington University, I taught students with special needs in the Washington, DC area. Currently I am helping to prepare secondary teachers across content areas. My courses address methods, standards and assessment, diversity and communication, classroom management, foundations, special education, and literacy. When asked to teach "Diversity and Communication" I was concerned, because faculty of color had traditionally taught the course. I wondered what I might have to offer my students. My chapter in this book is a reflection on my experience.

Irene S. Vernon

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I received a BA in Native American Studies from the University of California at Berkeley. After receiving an MA in History at the University of New Mexico, I returned to UCB, where I received my PhD in Ethnic Studies. My area of specialization is Native American, Ethnic, and Multicultural Studies, and I have taught courses on various aspects of Native life including religion, law, history, literature, and economic development. As the Director of the Center for Applied Study in American Ethnicity (CASAE), I work toward deepening appreciation of our various ethnic traditions, the patterns of interaction among groups, and the nature of problems that arise from the abuses and misunderstandings about ethnic identities.

Request PDF | On Jan 1, 2003, William M. Timpson and others published Teaching diversity: Challenges, complexities, identity and integrity | Find, read and cite all the research you need on ResearchGate.Â Cultural diversity in secondary and postsecondary agricultural education programs lags behind recent demographic shifts in the general U.S. population. An examination of the literature provides inquiries into the need for teaching of multicultural awareness and reducing the achievement gap between students of various cultures. This research sought to summarize current concern levels secondary preâ€service teachers have toward teaching in a multicultural classroom.