



INTRODUCING MULTICULTURALISM AND DIVERSITY INTO THE FASHION CLASSROOM

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This paper will discuss ways in which an entry-level fashion class was transformed to take a more culturally diverse approach to the subject matter.

Objectives. The objectives of the transformation were two-fold: (a) to create a "welcome" environment for all students and (b) to celebrate the diversity of fashion consumers.

Implementation of the strategy. The first transformation was made to the text and content of the syllabus itself. Second, transformation was made to the course subject matter. For example, through week-long class activities, we examined the American ideal of beauty. One particular in-class activity examined several non-traditional fashion magazines (e.g., *Girl*, *Mode*, *Essence*, and *Latina*). Students answered questions concerning the magazines; contents and findings were discussed. Many students found articles and ads addressing the positive portrayal of plus-size women in the media.

Outcome of the strategy. Based on the in-class discussions, it was apparent that the topics evoked critical thinking on the part of the students. In the course evaluation, many students mentioned the diversity activities as their favorite part of the course.

Plans for continuous improvement. The transformation of this course will continue with more diversity issues being introduced. One specific assignment planned is to have a student interview someone from a different ethnicity than him/herself concerning his/her fashion interests and behaviors.