

GOUCHER

—college—

Center for the Advancement of Scholarship & Teaching (CAST)
presents

Diversifying Content 101

August 2017



Content

Today's focus!

Practice

Is adding diverse content worth the effort?

- Yes. Diverse content can act as counter-stereotyping that reduces bias.
- Many benefits have been shown from students taking courses as part of their diversity requirement for graduation...

Reduces prejudice

- Students who don't take a diversity course become less tolerant of others (over the course of a semester) compared to those that do (Henderson-King and Kaleta, 1995 p.156)
- Chang (2002) compared pre-diversity course and post-diversity course cohorts (week 1 and week 14). Students in week 14 had more favorable view of -and less prejudice against- people who are black.
- Unfortunately, the change does not persist across multiple semesters (Hogan & Mallot, 2005).

Increases awareness

- In psychology, diversity course participants of all races had greater awareness of White privilege and racism. They also grew in their support for affirmative action by the end of the term. White participants also expressed greater White guilt (Case, 2007).

Enhances self development

- Students who have taken diversity courses and have had positive interactions with diverse peers have higher scores in academic self-confidence, social agency, and critical thinking disposition (Laird, 2005)

May have cognitive benefits

Taking a single diversity course may have short term gains in critical thinking (Hurtado, 2001; Tsui, 1999; Laird, 2005)

But conflicting data exists as to whether these hold up in longitudinal studies (Bowman 2009; Hurtado, Mayhew, & Engberg, 2003).

Meta-analyses

- Bowman (2010) showed that college diversity experiences (including taking diversity courses) are significantly and positively related to cognitive development, but the effect size is small for single course experiences or workshops. Interactions with racial diversity had a larger effect size.
- Denson (2009) differentiated diversity interventions as categorically including “enlightenment” (i.e., learning about diverse groups through academic content) and “intergroup contact” where learning presumably occurs through personal relationships. Interventions that contained only an enlightenment component were significantly more impactful if they included intergroup contact.

How do we help positive impacts grow and persist?

One way we can try is to enrich curriculum and experiences outside a single diversity course.

Steps we can take (probably in this order):

1. Re-examine your content
 - Authors, protagonists, key theorists, perspectives: are they largely white, male, cis-gender, European?
2. Enrich your content with diversity (brainstorm exercise today)
3. Facilitate personal (but not interpersonal) connection to new content
4. Employ pedagogical techniques that build intergroup relationships and engage diverse students
5. Promote interpersonal interactions around new content

Today's focus!

Cohn & Mullenix (2007) suggest a diversity-rich curriculum:

- 1. Includes other voices** - writings, speeches, dialogues, films that originate from people of different social identities, cultural backgrounds, genders and disabilities
- 2. Communicates interconnectedness**- the development of a sense that we are connected to others beyond our immediate experience and geographic area
- 3. Values diversity and equity** - embeds information and techniques designed to impart a sense of why diversity and equity are important
- 4. Promotes transformative thinking** - challenges traditional views and assumptions; encourages new ways of thinking; and re-conceptualizes the field in light of new knowledge, scholarship, and ways of thinking

Today's focus!

Faculty Brainstorm

- What are your major problem areas where you feel like diversifying the content will be most difficult?
- Can we brainstorm solutions together?

Faculty Brainstorm (Aug2017)

Problem areas faculty want help with:

- historical figures are all white western men
- My preferred content happens to be by white people about white people
- Western constructs are the tools of my discipline
- Texts are written for a white, American audience.

Ideas generated by our group:

- Acknowledge power/lack of representation; problematize the text you are using
 - Provide an action step: "as we use chapter 3 over the next two weeks, identify bias or lack of diversity. We will form a class letter to send to the publisher"
- Seek out less known authors, or see if your field has a resource of lesser known contributors that were overshadowed by the canonical authors .
- Ask students to visualize an alternative future if different voices had been heard (or envision how an art piece would be different, etc.).
- Add modern, diverse contributors to your field (critics of the historical figures or those extended the work of historical figures)
- Choose films, authors, artists from diverse backgrounds and familiarize ourselves with their history/intention and cultural framework.
- Choose examples/content that connects to social issues of relevance



Closing thoughts from Aug2017 meeting:

- Diversifying content is only the beginning
- Power structures should be acknowledged at a minimum, and hopefully discussed
- Interpersonal interactions with people unlike ourselves is a critical piece to developing more lasting gains- so group discussion, group work, and project-based learning will be critical pieces to add in the future.
- Additional workshops on inclusive pedagogy (beyond adding content) will be forthcoming!

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