Diversity in the Classroom: Building Bridges and Breaking Barriers

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Presenter

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Objectives

- To discuss how **diversity informs** an equitable, multicultural, learning environment
- To discuss the impact of **stereotyping** in the educational setting
Directions

Don’t read the words, say the colors quickly in which they are printed.
Although we see both the color and the meaning of each word, **experience has taught us** to pay more attention to the meaning.

James R. Stroop called this the “interference effect.”
What Do You See?

My Perceptual Lens
ACTIVITY
What Did You Experience?
Diversity Defined

Diversity is the mosaic of people who bring a variety of backgrounds, styles, perspectives, values and beliefs as assets to the groups and organizations with which they interact.
Inclusion Defined

Inclusion describes the active, intentional, and ongoing engagement with diversity—in people, in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities.
Multicultural Education
(Defined)

A progressive approach for transforming education that holistically critiques and addresses current shortcomings, failings, and discriminatory practices in education.
# Distinction Between EEO, Affirmative Action and Diversity & Inclusion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Equal Employment Opportunity</th>
<th>Affirmative Action</th>
<th>Diversity &amp; Inclusion</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The enforcement of statutes to prevent employment discrimination</td>
<td>The effort to achieve parity through outreach and eliminating barriers in hiring and admissions</td>
<td>Leveraging differences (in the classroom) to achieve better results and greater learning</td>
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Primary and Secondary Dimensions of Diversity

- Age
- Gender
- Disability
- Race
- Ethnic Heritage
- Sexual Orientation
- Military Experience
- Work Experience
- Socioeconomic Status
- Religion
- First Language
- Geographic Location
- Education
- Work/thinking Style
- Family Status
- Communication Style
- Size/Weight
- Work/thinking Style
Why?

People always resist change. What prevents them from seeing, accepting & understanding new and/or different ideas?
All Communication is Filtered Through Our Cultural Perspective

- Age
- National origin
- Race
- Sexual orientation
- Religion
- Disability
- Gender
- Education
- Work role/experience
- Personality
- Customs
- Size/Weight
- Geographic location
- Functional discipline
- Languages used
- Values
- Communication style
- Work Style
- Learning style
- Economic status
- Family situation
- Military experience
- Philosophical perspective
Understanding Diversity

- Remove or Change Our Cultural Perspective
- Be Willing To Learn That No One Fits Into a Particular Framework

**Challenges**

- Stereotype Threat - disrupted performance when faced with negative stereotype
- Privilege - special advantage enjoyed by an individual, group, or class
- Implicit Bias - processing of information in ways that leads to biased judgments _ teacher or student
- Minority Tax - unfair use of minority (or women) in groups as the only representative of *their groups*
  
  Corollary: expectations that minorities (or women) will join particular causes
What We Know - Race

• There are differences between and among groups of people.

• Race is a socially constructed attribute that is a social phenomenon.

• Racism is a system of privileged discourses and discriminatory institutional practices, which acts upon our individual perceptions of reality.

(Making Race Visible: Literacy Research for Cultural Understanding, 2003)
Importance of socioeconomic class to the Teacher and Student
  o Need to work while going to college
  o More focused on immediate career goals
  o Digital divide/Books

Intimidation factor
  o Teacher or Student Perception
  o Need to level the playing field by ensuring preparation for each level of the major

Barrier for Mentoring and Community

Effect of course offerings and curriculum choices

Importance of Taking Advantage of Outreach Opportunities
What We Know – Intercultural Communications

• Used to describe the wide range of communication problems that naturally appear within an organization made up of individuals from different religious, social, ethnic, and educational backgrounds. Intercultural communication is sometimes used synonymously with cross-cultural communication.

• In this sense it seeks to understand how people from different countries and cultures act, communicate and perceive the world around them.
What We Know – About Our Institutions

- Cultural differences influence the teaching-learning process.
- Institutions, like society, advantage some groups more than others.
- Schools adhere to a color-blind paradigm.
A paradigm is a set of rules & regulations (some of which are unwritten) that establish boundaries and tells you how to be successful within the boundaries.

Joel Arthur Barker, *Future Edge*
• Paradigms act as filters

• Things that agree with your paradigm you accept.

• Things that disagree with it you reject, ignore or distort to fit your existing paradigm.

• Paradigm dramatically affects our judgment and decision-making by influencing our perceptions.
Multicultural Education

- The underlying goal of multicultural education is to affect social change (transformation).
- The transformation of self;
- The transformation of institutions, teaching and learning; and
- The transformation of society.
Best Practices

- Many best practices help all students.
  - Announcements should be in writing and verbally stated.
  - Clear instructions and expectations on assignments, tests, etc.
  - Avoid use of red-green for color coding on the whiteboard.
  - Use of class web site for class materials and announcements.
  - Call the student by name as they may not be able to see you or read your body language.

- Expectations for the course should not change for students.
Strategies: Disabled Students

• Whenever possible work with the student and the disabled student services office BEFORE the term.
  – Try to have the text selected in advance of the term (in case a non-print version needs to be acquired)
  – Use accessible media (e.g. captioned videos, documents)
  – Set up of lab computer/software to work with assistive technology (e.g. screen reader, adjustable desk)
  – Test/Lab practicum accommodations may require extra time or alternative means of recording answers

• Most accommodations are inexpensive and take little time to do.

• DO NOT ask the student about their disability, focus on the accommodation

• Department and course websites should be accessible.
• Reflect and identify a paradigm that you currently hold that will be problematic for you in working with students that are different from you.

As a TA, what strategies will you use to adjust the identified paradigm to work effectively in a multicultural setting with a diverse student?
Helping Diversity as a TA - Things you may control

- Be aware of diversity teaching tips
- Be aware of your students if you're teaching a lab
- Know what to do if a student appears to be struggling
- There are more types of diversity than the ones you can see physically
- Grade fairly. Put extra effort into grading fairly, especially if you are new to grading.
- Be willing to get advice from faculty members!
Questions

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