

Ideologies and Advantages of Diversity in Higher Education

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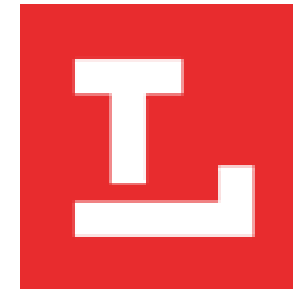
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Introduction

- History shows that people of diverse backgrounds and races built this nation. However, despite the declaration that all human beings were created equal, and regardless of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments, the nation has been characterized by de facto and de jure laws, policies and practices that fostered discrimination and segregation on the basis of race, ethnicity, and gender.
- In the education sector, as in other areas, these vices were maintained and perpetuated by laws, policies and practices aimed at reducing or totally preventing racial diversity in schools and institutions of higher education.
- Fortunately, Civil Rights advocates were relentless in their strenuous struggles to ensure the passage of the Civil Rights Act. Title VI of that act prohibits private and public institutions which receive federal funds from discriminatory policies and practices that violate the tenants of the Equal Protection Clause.
- Similarly, in major cases (e.g., Grutter v. Bollinger and Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin) the U. S. Supreme Court, reversing itself from the 1857 Dred Scott decision, held that racial diversity of students was a compelling state interest.

The problem and today's discussion

- Despite laws and Supreme Court rulings, ideologies have been advanced to subvert the advocacy for diversity in higher education.
- This presentation addresses a number of these ideologies because it helps when teachers and administrators understand the arguments buried in ideologies intended to circumvent policies and practices that promote diversity.
- Directly and indirectly, the aim of such ideologies is to perpetuate White supremacy and buttress institutionalized racism.
- In addition, the presentation will touch briefly some of the advantages of diversity in higher education. (The presentation pulls heavily from the work of Burke, Smith, & Mayorga-Gallo, 2017.)

Diversity Ideologies

- Burke et al (2017) argue, “Diversity ideology is used to maintain whiteness—a set of power relations that socially, politically, and historically privilege those identified as white and conversely, disadvantage others—in multiracial spaces. Diversity ideology helps whites move between valuing diversity and maintaining a lack of support for policies that would bring those values to fruition” (p. 890).

1. Colorblind Ideology

- A dominant mode of thinking
- Maintains that differences in opportunities between the races are not due to past and present patterns of racial discrimination. Allegedly, this is because, in a post-Civil Rights era, everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed.
- If there are racial inequalities or persistent patterns of differences in outcomes seemingly due to race, such differences are actually due to culture, natural occurrences, or “a little bit” of residual racism that exist among prejudiced individuals.
- In other words, systems and institutions bear no culpability for racial inequality. Rather, blame is shifted to cultural practices and individual behaviors for racial inequality.
- This ideology therefore “serves to prop up the existing racial hierarchy, where whites dominate” (Burke et al., 2017).

2. Diversity as Acceptance

- With this ideology, diversity is not only accepted but also characterized as a celebration of differences.
- In that celebration however, power asymmetries are ignored and racial inequality denied.
- Therefore, as this ideology ignores inequitable power distribution and racial inequality, it is a medium for maintaining the existing racial hierarchy and a tool of oppression for the powerful (Burke et al, 2017).

3. Diversity as Commodity

- This ideology also allows whites to celebrate the presence of people of color and other “minorities” in their midst. They celebrate because “nonwhites teach them something, help them become well rounded, and enrich their lives.”
- In other words, people of color are viewed as “tools to enhance the lives of whites” but in that process, Whites do not have to be concerned about structural disadvantages and racial inequalities people of color face.
- Put differently, with diversity as commodity, nonwhites are not treated as people. They are treated as “objects that serve to benefit, entertain, or color the lives of whites.” more →

(cont.) Diversity as Commodity

- allows whites to be lauded as antiracist for appreciating the different perspectives of people of color without considering the underlying structures that lead them to have these “different” perspectives and experiences than whites. For example,
 - “in employment settings, a diverse workforce is embraced symbolically as a marketable commodity.”
 - In neighborhood and educational settings, the value of diversity is often framed in terms of the enhancement people of color bring to the lives of their white neighbors and colleagues.”
- Hence, based on these benefits, “(represented by people of color and other underrepresented minorities), diversity becomes another good in the market that whites can consume to fulfill their individual desires and make themselves more attractive in the marketplace.
- In that marketplace, while Whites seem to emphasize inclusivity and broad acceptance, emphasizing such an ideology of diversity becomes a tool and a new way of maintaining white supremacy and status.
- ***This leaves little or no room for power sharing or any emphasis on equity.***

more →

(cont.) Diversity as Commodity

Put succinctly:

- “Diversity as commodity frames whites’ desires to be near or in the presence of racial minorities as positive, but it (1) obscures the power asymmetry that exists in these interactions, (2) avoids the fact that whiteness is seen as the norm in multiracial spaces, (3) sidesteps the underlying racial structure that leads to nonwhites having wholly different ‘experiences’ and ‘perspectives,’ and (4) supports the narrative that views whites’ desires and values as universally beneficial” (Burke et al, 2017).
- Hence, it is said, “diversity is for white people.”

4. Diversity as Intent

- This ideology requires whites to have intentions of being inclusive with little or no emphasis on results.
- With this ideology, therefore, “firms, universities, organizations, and individuals—however well intentioned—use the language of diversity to signal a commitment to principles of justice and equality” without focusing on creating systemic change with equitable results.
- Stated differently, this ideology is another means of sustaining “a system of structural inequity because equitable results are not required.” This is what’s seen in strategic plans, corporate handbooks, and policy guidelines that accentuate a need to promote diversity with no effort to foster systemic and structural changes for justice, power sharing, and racial equality.

5. Diversity as Liability

- This ideology focuses on the shortcomings of diversity. For example, diversity is seen as “incompatible with other values, such as meritocracy.”
- Burke et al (2017) argue that, in emphasizing this ideology, “Whites use their political, economic, and social prowess to make whiteness the norm in multiracial spaces. In this way, liability is framed in contrast with racial comfort, not just meritocracy.”
- On one hand, the ideology emphasizes love of diversity while on the other, it stresses a “need to control diverse spaces and people of color for the sake of comfort, fairness, and high standards.”
- For example, some students see diversity as a liability in that the presence of students of color on campus makes them uncomfortable because of the expectation that they must interact with such students.
- In other instances, this ideology “protects whiteness because whites can resort to notions of meritocracy (based on measures that structurally advantage them), fairness, and colorblind ideals.”
- Furthermore, this ideology stresses that, without regulation, diversity will create as many problems as it solves. This is therefore a form of social closure. Another scholar characterized this as a “process of subordination whereby one group monopolizes advantages by closing off opportunities to another group of outsiders beneath it which it determines as inferior and ineligible” (Murphy, 1988, p. 8).

In sum

- Colorblindness, acceptance, commodity, intent, and liability are ideologies employed (although sometimes not articulated) to circumvent advocacies for promoting and perpetuating diversity through power sharing, racial equality, and equal opportunity. It is realized that, in covering these ideologies briefly, “Whites” are generalized.
- Of course, there are exceptions but the focus here is on systemic and institutionalized racism fostered and maintained by the powers that be.

Advantages to Diversity

Note:

- Due to time constraint, these advantages were not summarized or discussed at length; rather, they were cut and pasted from the literature with little editing.
- These are far from exhausting the list of advantages of diversity in higher education and other sectors.

1. Estimates indicate that before 2050, racial and ethnic minorities will be in the majority in the United States. It therefore behooves universities to provide diverse role models for an increasingly diverse population (Crichlow, 2017).
2. Diversity is good for all students. They will be much better prepared to face a multicultural world when exposed to diverse individuals and perspectives in the classroom (Paloma, 2014, Cited in Crichlow, 2017).

Advantages to Diversity, cont.

3. There are multiple benefits that accrue from increasing number of professors of color. Among other reasons, such faculty members play vital roles in the enrollment, retention, achievement, and graduation of students of color. Equally, it includes "the necessity for the full and unfettered participation in American society, by all of its members, if this nation is to survive economically, socially, and spiritually" (Daufin, 2001).
4. It has been reported that the most persistent and statistically significant predictor of enrollment and graduation of Black graduate students is the presence of Black faculty. The obvious implications are that an increase in the presence of Black faculty is critical, but unless barriers are removed, conditions improved, and concerted actions taken, the production of Black faculty will continue to worsen (Daufin, 2001).
5. The presence of Black academicians involved in research and development is important for a number of reasons, but four critical reasons are as follows: (a) to advance scholarship in general, as well as to focus research on minorities and the disadvantaged; (b) to provide necessary support for Black and other minority colleagues; (c) to increase the number of Black scholars in the field; and (d) through research and development efforts, to have a significant effect on policy and programs that may enhance students' educational attainment and academic development (Daufin, 2001).

Advantages to Diversity, cont.

6. Research has pointed out the essential roles of Black faculty. Among others, it is pointed out that such faculty value service-related activities (e.g., mentoring students). They also are instrumental in graduating doctoral students of color (Parsons et al, 2018).
7. Advantages of African American faculty at predominantly White institutions include the importance of African American faculty in adding diversity to the teaching faculty; the value of teaching courses from multiple perspectives; the need to conduct research in a culturally sensitive and appropriate manner; and, the importance of serving as role models, mentors, and advocates for African American students (Phelps, 1995)
8. The presence of Black faculty on campuses is inextricably linked to the recruitment, enrollment, persistence, retention, and graduation of Black students. Black faculty serve as role-models and mentors, thereby helping to insure the successful matriculation of Black students. Unfortunately, Black professors are more likely at higher risk for non-success in the tenure and promotion process, in part, because of institutional racism and role expectations demanded in many white colleges and universities (Spigner, 1990).

Advantages to Diversity, cont.

9. The recruitment and retention of faculty members of color in higher education is paramount to the future of our nation's colleges and universities (Stanley, 2007).
10. The integration of diverse people into K-12 schools, the workplace, and higher education helps address some of the history and legacy of racism. Integration, however, is not limited to the redress of past and present ills. Inclusion benefits all students. Diversity will help American citizens be prepared to compete in the multicultural settings of the future (Garrison-Wade et al, 2012).
11. The academy often fails to value the diversity of faculty of color but the presence of diverse faculty provides added value to institutions of higher education. Faculty of color help promote the success of students of color in higher education by providing much needed role models who can help encourage loftier career goals and improved academic performance. In addition, faculty of color offer diverse perspectives to the academy's knowledge base and research focus (Garrison-Wade et al, 2012).

Conclusion

- Over the past decade, educational researchers have noted the positive influences that African American professors have on African American students in PWIs, as well as the positive social and academic effects that having a diverse faculty has on all students.
- Despite these positive effects and the fact that about 13% of the US population is African American (United States Census Bureau, 2013), in 2011, African American faculty comprised less than 6% of fulltime faculty members in US higher education institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2012).
- Moreover, African American female professors have been underrepresented more in PWIs than African American male professors (Jones et al, 2015).
- Research also shows that retention rates are dismal because of issues of isolation, marginalization, non-promotion, among others.

For small group discussions:

1. What ideologies do you recognize as operating in your school or other places? (diversity, colorblind, acceptance, commodity, intent, liability)
2. What acknowledgement of advantages do you recognize as being used in your school or other places? (recruitment, enrollment, persistence, retention, and graduation; service/engagement; research)
3. If there's a gap, what are next steps to challenge and change? Is it effective to discuss ideology, or does that have to evolve through practices?

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