ENGAGE STUDENTS’ DIVERSITY TO ENHANCE STUDENTS’ LEARNING

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WHAT COUNTS AS DIVERSITY?

First-generation orientation
gender citizen
ethnicity age
Social Race
ancestry identity marital
status Class sexual
sex disabilities
COLLEGE STUDENT DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES 1976 TO 2011

White Students 84% to 61%

Latinx (4% to 14%)
Asian/Pacific Islander (2% to 6%)
Black (10% to 15%)
American Indian/Alaska Native (.7% to .9%)

FROM STRUCTURAL DIVERSITY TO THE EDUCATIONAL BENEFITS OF DIVERSITY

• PROMOTES CROSS-RACIAL UNDERSTANDING AND REDUCES PREJUDICE
• IMPROVES COGNITIVE ABILITIES, CRITICAL THINKING, AND SELF-CONFIDENCE
• PROMOTES CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND SKILLS NEEDED FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND LEADERSHIP
• IMPROVES CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS IN TERMS OF DISCUSSIONS AND ENGAGEMENT
• PROMOTE SUBJECT-MATTER LEARNING (CASTILLO-MONTOYA, 2018; FORTHCOMING)

AERA 2015 Amicus Brief
C. Wright Mills defines sociological imagination as... this means sociological imagination is being able to relate troubles to issues.

What happens if you don’t pay your loans?

If you don’t pay your loans, you default. Yes, then the government has to pay it. But who makes up the government? We do. The ramifications if people can’t pay the loan is that it influences other decisions they make like when to get married, where to have a wedding, whether to have kids. This all impacts the economy. Now the personal problem is a social problem.

How many of you struggle with your weight?

Why do you think so many Americans are overweight?

Fast Food

Why do people eat fast food?

Because we don’t have time.

Lack of exercise

Individual poor diets

Yes. Why else?

Lack of exercise

big portions

Yes. Why else?

Lack of exercise

We do

Yes, other problems with U.S. foods: processed foods, soda, and the use of high fructose corn syrup

What are some of the personal problems you think are social problems?

Fast Food

If your parents are working all the time then you don’t have food made when you get home and you need to eat Oodles of Noodles. If they don’t have the money to buy organic food, then you eat processed food.

Yes, you are using your sociological imagination now.
STUDENTS’ FUNDS OF KNOWLEDGE

• The skills, abilities, ideas, practices, and ways of knowing accumulated and internalized from everyday life (González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005)

• Get to know our students’ Funds of Knowledge—What do they already know from their lived experiences?
• Make their Funds of Knowledge visible to yourself (and themselves)
• Leverage those Funds to help students connect with the subject matter
TEACHING PRACTICES

• Engage them in approaching the problem like a ...
• Draw on their lived experiences
• Use plenty of examples to reach diverse students and learners
• Use a variety of approaches (text, films, fieldwork, experiments, etc.)
• Reconnect to their lives (How is this relevant to them in everyday life?)
LEARNING TO IMPROVE

• Math professor: “finding a way to frame for students why and how math connects to diversity... and dealing with pushback along the way from students who only want to focus on the procedural math.”

• Chemical Engineering Professor: “without doing it in a ‘diversity day.’”

• Business Professor: “connect it to the curriculum”

• Mechanical Engineering Professor: a “way to connect students to career and society” by helping the students see engineering as “saving lives... not just making money for Dow Jones.”
LEARNING TO IMPROVE

• Racial diversity is increasing
• YOU the educator must activate it in your classrooms
• Draw on students’ funds of knowledge
• Learn together