How to unleash the full power of diversity

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My interest in diversity
What is the “Power of Diversity”? 

It is hardly possible to overrate the value...of placing human beings in contact with persons dissimilar to themselves, and with modes of thought and action unlike those with which they are familiar... Such communication has always been, and is peculiarly in the present age, one of the primary sources of progress.

- John Stuart Mill (1848)
Evidence in Higher Ed.

Consistently positive relationship between diversity experiences and intellectual engagement and academic skills

- Similar gains for black, white, Hispanic, and Asian Americans students

National longitudinal study across 184 colleges and universities (Gurin et al., 2004)
Evidence in Higher Ed.

Interactional diversity (e.g., racial, national, religious) associated with perceived gains in learning outcomes (e.g., intellectual and social skills)

- Similar gains for whites/racial minorities

Longitudinal study of 124 four-year colleges (Hu & Kuh, 2003)
Evidence in Higher Ed.

College experiences with diversity, especially interpersonal interactions across racial lines, positively associated with cognitive development

Meta-analysis 58 effects across 77,029 undergrads (Bowman, 2010)
Evidence in Higher Ed.

More extensive multicultural experience is positively related to increased creativity and cognition.

Review of a series of studies with student participants (Leung et al., 2008)
Empirical work shows that diversity can and does (under the right circumstances) lead to better performance and decision making in groups when information must be processed for success, but…
Laboratory Experiment Paradigm

Key Features:

- Social category diversity
- Informational or opinion diversity
- Individual decision or opinion
- Group discussion occurs
- Measures of individual and group perceptions, behaviors, and performance are captured
Diversity Matters

Controls for individual performance & how well group members know one another
The Full Power of Diversity

The benefit of diversity is not simply that people who are different are bringing different information.

*Everyone changes their behavior in the presence of diversity.*
Diversity Matters

- 174 participants \((M_{age} = 40; \; 61\% \; F, \; 83\% \; W)\)
- Formed mock juries
- Watched a video trial summary

Sommers, 2006
Toosi, Sommers, & Ambady (2012)
## Table 3

*Participant-Level Analyses of Deliberation Content*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measure</th>
<th>Diverse group</th>
<th>All White group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Black participant</td>
<td>White participant</td>
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<tr>
<td>No. of novel case facts raised</td>
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<td>No. of mentions of racism</td>
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*Note.* Values with different subscript letters differ significantly at p ≤ .05; ns = 15 diverse groups and 14 all-White groups, with participants treated as replicates nested within 6-person groups.
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Diversity and Info. Sharing

- Diversity: Side of campus
- Focus: Majority member with a dissenting opinion

Phillips & Loyd, 2006
Majority member’s Affective and Behavioral Response

- **Homogeneous**
- **Diverse**

### Positive and Accepting
- Homogeneous: 8
- Diverse: 7

### % Speaking Time
- Homogeneous: 45
- Diverse: 45

### Confidence
- Homogeneous: 4.6
- Diverse: 4.6

Graphs show the comparison between homogeneous and diverse settings for positive and accepting, speaking time, and confidence.
Diversity Affects Cognitive Processing

- Mere presence affects integrative complexity (Antonio et al., 2004)
  - Whites higher integrative complexity when minority opinion from black student rather than a fellow white student

- Diversity affects processing even prior to interaction (Loyd et al., 2013)
Pre-meeting Elaboration

Pre-meeting Elaboration

Dyadic Performance

Homogeneity Diversity

Homogeneity Diversity

Homogeneity Diversity

Homogeneity Diversity
Pre-meeting Elaboration

![Bar chart showing homogeneity and diversity with agreement and disagreement categories.]
Realizing the full power of diversity

Social category diversity

- Legitimates/promotes expression of different perspectives
- Enhances pre-meeting preparation, information sharing, integrative complexity, perspective taking, creativity, effort

People work harder!

...but people are cognitive misers, they don’t want to work so hard

...and they may not feel satisfied during process
Realizing the full power of diversity

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What’s holding us back?
All differences are not equal

- **Status**
  - **Definition:** Differential prominence and respect afforded to individuals who are members of different social categories (Anderson et al., 2006)
  - **Impact:** Individuals with higher status are expected to demonstrate greater skills and abilities, and are given more opportunities to exert influence in groups (e.g., Ridgeway & Berger, 1986)
The Dilemma

- The high status person is not always the most knowledgeable
Unleashing the full power of diversity

- Seek out different perspectives
- Get comfortable being uncomfortable
  - Be ready to work and make mistakes
- Don’t assume you know who adds value
  - Identify and highlight the contributions each member brings to the team (their “expertise”)
  - Don’t let someone’s “difference” make you miss out on valuable knowledge
Questions?

Thank You!

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