The Psychology of Diversity

Joe Miles
Assistant Professor of Psychology
University of Tennessee, Knoxville
Overview

• Brief overview of diversity and campus climate research

• Discussion of minority stressors contributing to differential experiences of campus climate

• Intergroup dialogue as a means to address intergroup relations and develop better campus climate

• Intergroup dialogue at UTK
Diversity in Higher Education

- **Diversity**: Social differences; differences among people (Blaine, 2010)

- Research shows benefits of diversity (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002)
  - Learning outcomes (e.g., intellectual engagement, motivation, academic skills)
  - Democracy outcomes (e.g., civic engagement, perspective taking)
  - Benefits from both inclusion of multicultural topics in curriculum, but also from interactions among peers across groups

- We need to actively work to increase and make the most of our diversity

- We need to develop a campus climate that promotes diversity and social justice, and that fosters meaningful intergroup interactions.
Campus Climate

• “…part of the institutional context that includes community members’ attitudes, perceptions, behaviors, and expectations around issues of [diversity].”

• “[It is] a multidimensional construct, subject to and shaped by the policies, practices, and behaviors of those within and external to colleges and universities.”

(Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano, & Cuellar, 2008, p. 205)
Campus Climate

• More concretely (Hutchinson, Raymond, & Black, 2008):
  • Faculty Support
  • University Commitment to Diversity
  • Race- and Gender-Based Relations
  • Climate for Diverse Groups
  • Unfair Treatment
  • Experiencing Insensitive Remarks and Materials
  • Fair Treatment
Campus Racial Climate

Harper and Hurtado (2007) found:

- Cross-race consensus on institutional negligence:
  - Students felt there was little support from the institution for engaging in meaningful intergroup interactions
- Race remains largely untalked about
- Racial segregation
- Black students expressed highest dissatisfaction with social environment

- Legacies of racism
- White students overestimate satisfaction of students of color
- Pervasiveness of whiteness (curriculum, space, activities)
- Consciousness of racial issues, but feelings of powerlessness, among staff of color.
- “You’re the first person to ask me about this…”
Campus Climate for LGBT People

A recent survey of over 5,000 students, faculty, staff, and administrators found (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld & Frazer, 2010):

• LGB people were more likely than heterosexuals to report harassment or discrimination

• Transgender and gender non-conforming individuals more likely than cisgender women and men to report harassment or discrimination

• Not surprisingly, then, LGBQ individuals had more negative impressions of campus climate than heterosexual counterparts

• Trans* individuals had more negative impressions of campus climate than cisgender women and men

• LGB and trans* people of color had worse perceptions of campus climate than white LGB and trans* people
Campus Climate for Women

Qualitative study (Vaccaro, 2010) of over 1400 people at a single institution found:

• Women reported institutional sexism

• Women tended to want deeper diversity programming and dialogue

• Men tended to feel that the focus on diversity was either sufficient or too much at this university

• Some men expressed hostility about diversity efforts, and a feeling that they university had a liberal bias
Campus Racial Climate

- Themes in (racial) climate research (Harper & Hurtado, 2007):
  - Perceptions differ based on race
  - Students of color report experiences of racism; racist campus environments
  - There are benefits to campus climates that support cross-race interactions
Contributing Factors: Minority Stressors

- **Minority Stress**: “Excess stress to which individuals from stigmatized social categories are exposed as a result of their social, often a minority, position” (Meyer, 2003, p. 675).

  - Processes associated with minority stress (Meyer, 2003):
    - External, objective stressful events and conditions (e.g., experiences of racism)
    - Expectations of such events and the vigilance this expectation requires
    - Internalization of negative societal attitudes

  - Like other forms of stress, minority stress associated with a wide variety of negative psychological and physical health outcomes
Contributing Factors: Minority Stressors

• Overt forms of oppression:
  • Individual level
  • Cultural level
  • Institutional level

• **Microaggressions**: “The everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, snubs, or insults, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to target persons based solely on their marginalized group membership” (Sue, 2010, p. 3)
  
  • For example:
    • *Colorblindness*: A White person saying “I don’t see color”
    • *Students using the term “gay” to describe someone or something weird or deviant*

• We need to develop critical awareness and knowledge about these stressors and their roles on our campuses
We Need to be Proactive

• A *Null Environment* (Betz, 1989; Freeman, 1979) perpetuates oppressive status quo:

  • “An environment that neither encourages or discourages individuals—it simply ignores them”– this is inherently oppressive (Betz, 1989, p. 137)

  • We need to counteract socialization of negative or harmful messages

• We need to think about:
  • Where do I fit in?
  • Knowledge/critical awareness can be liberating (Freire, 1970); de-pathologizing
We Need to be Proactive

• We need interventions that will:

• Focusing on strengths (e.g., bicultural competence – David, Okazaki, Saw, 2009; “crisis competence” – Friend, 1990)

• Build relationships across groups; prepare students with skills to communicate productively through conflict

• Develop a critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) about social issues and social systems (and one’s positions within these systems)

• Develop the capacities and commitments to work individually and together toward social justice
We Need to be Proactive

• We need interventions that will:

  • Focusing on strengths (e.g., bicultural competence – David, Okazaki, Saw, 2009; “crisis competence” – Friend, 1990)

  • Build relationships across groups; prepare students with skills to communicate productively through conflict

  • Provide opportunities for meaningful engagement about social issues (including privilege and oppression); develop a critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) about social issues and social systems (and one’s positions within these systems)

  • Develop the capacities and commitments to work individually and together toward social justice
Build relationships across groups; prepare students with skills to communicate productively through conflict
Building Relationships across Groups

- Allport’s (1954) **Contact Hypothesis**: Intergroup contact can reduce prejudice under certain conditions:
  1. Equal status in the contact situation
  2. Common goals
  3. Interdependence
  4. Support of some law, custom, authority
  5. Friendship potential (Pettigrew, 1988)

- A large body of research supports contact hypothesis (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006; Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011)
  - Contact generalizes to entire outgroup (not just those with whom one has contact), and even other outgroups
  - Affect mediates the effect: Reduced anxiety; increased empathy
Dialogue

• Alternative to conventional discussion/“debate culture” (Flick, 1998)
• Goal is development of shared meaning (Bohm, 1996)
• Developing understanding of other from other’s perspective; does not necessitate agreement (Bohm, 1996)
• Not psychotherapy; “sociotherapy” (Bohm, 1996)
Dialogue in Practice

- Relax; Listen deeply, calmly with respectful curiosity, without criticizing
- Become aware of *and suspend* judgments
- Become aware when we are planning our rebuttal when someone else is speaking
- Become aware of our intentions

Flick (1998)
Dialogue in Practice

- “Help me to understand…”
- “Tell me more about that”
- Ask clarifying questions
- Inquire how person arrived at her or his perspective
- Listen more than talking
- Check for understanding: “What I hear is…”
- Ask open-ended questions
  - “What?” “How?”
  - (Not “Why?”)

Flick (1998)
Develop a critical consciousness (Freire, 1970) about social issues
Developing a Critical Consciousness

- Draw on critical multicultural education

  - *Critical* implies, “a conscientious effort to examine how individual and group life are meaningfully connected to group identity, and how those identities exist in structures of stratification that afford members of different groups privileges and disadvantages, resulting in continued group-based inequalities” (Sorensen, Nagda, Gurin, & Maxwell, 2009, p. 14).

  - Critical multicultural education moves students beyond a mere appreciation of diversity, and “holds central the analysis of social inequalities and the role members of both privileged and disadvantaged groups can take in creating change” (Zúñiga et al., 2007, p. 7).

  - Becoming aware of overt and covert forms of oppression at multiple levels
Develop the capacities and commitments to work individually and together toward social justice
Not Just Diversity, Social Justice

- More than celebrating “diversity” or “multiculturalism”
- Equitable distribution of resources and risks
- All individuals are physically and psychologically safe and secure
- All individuals are self-determining and interdependent -- feeling both sense of personal agency and responsibility to one another
- Full and equal participation of all members of society, regardless of ability status, age, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, race, religion, sexual orientation, social class, or veteran status
- Necessitates systemic/institutional lens

(Bell, 2010; Fouad, Gerstein, & Toporek, 2006)
Intergroup Dialogue
Intergroup Dialogue

• University of Michigan’s Program on Intergroup Relations
  • [http://www.igr.umich.edu/](http://www.igr.umich.edu/)

• Brings together individuals from social identity groups with a history of tension or conflict
  • Examples:
    • People of color and White people
    • LGBT people and heterosexual people
    • Women and Men
Intergroup Dialogue

• Design elements:
  • Creates opportunities for sustained communication across groups and differences
  • Adds affective component to cognitive learning (Khuri, 2004; Zúñiga et al., 2007)
  • Balance of process and content (group as a social microcosm, Yalom & Lesczc, 2005)
Critical Dialogic Model

- Four stage model
  1. Coming together; forming relationships
  2. Dialoguing about commonalities and differences – including experiences with privilege and oppression
  3. Dialoguing about “hot topics”
  4. Alliance building and social action planning

- Shift over a period of weeks from:
  - Lower to higher risk
  - Focus on individual to focus on institutions and systems

(e.g., Zúñiga et al., 2007)
Critical Dialogic Model

- Research supports positive outcomes of IGD participation (e.g., Gurin et al., 2013):
  - Affective positivity (positive emotions and positive interactions with others)
  - Cognitive involvement (liking for complex thinking, analytical thinking about society, consideration of multiple perspectives, and identity involvement – thinking and learning about one’s identity)
  - Structural understanding of intergroup inequality
  - Intergroup empathy
  - Intergroup collaboration and action

- Dessel et al. (2010):
  - Reduced stereotyping
  - Increased perspective taking/empathy
  - Improved communication
  - Increased capacity to engage in civic action
  - Increased knowledge/awareness of social issues (critical consciousness)
Intergroup Dialogue at UTK
Intergroup Dialogue at UTK

- Since 2012, we have co-facilitated 24 IGD groups as part of PSYC 435: Multicultural Psychology

- Topics:
  - 6 groups on religion and spirituality
  - 5 groups on social class
  - 5 groups on race and ethnicity
  - 4 groups on gender
  - 4 groups on sexual orientation

- 202 undergraduate students have participated

- 34 graduate student co-facilitators (some have co-facilitated multiple groups)
Intergroup Dialogue at UTK

• PSYC 435: Multicultural Psychology (IGD participants):
  • Objectives:
    • Developing “multicultural competence” (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992)
      • Culturally-relevant knowledge (e.g., knowledge of one’s own cultural identity, knowledge of the cultures of others)
      • Skills (e.g., self-reflection, perspective-taking, intergroup communication)
      • Attitudes (e.g., reduction in prejudicial attitudes and intolerance, pride in one’s own culture, belief that discrimination is unjust, intergroup interactions enhance quality of life)
    (e.g., Howard-Hamilton, Richardson, & Shuford, 1998; Howard-Hamilton, Cuyjet, & Cooper, 2011).

• PSYC 675: Advanced Group Methods (IGD leaders):
  • Objectives:
    • Developing “multicultural competence” (Sue, Arredondo, & McDavis, 1992)
    • Further developing skills as group facilitator
Intergroup Dialogue at UTK

- Class meets Tuesday/Thursday across the semester

- Starting about half-way into the semester, group meets as a whole class on Tuesday, and in a smaller (7-10 student) IGD group on Thursday

- Used U. of Michigan critical dialogic, four-stage model

- Goals:
  - Develop relationships across groups/skills in intergroup communication (i.e., dialogue)
  - Develop critical consciousness (e.g., knowledge of socialization, social construction of identities, systems of privilege and oppression, awareness of one’s own experiences and position within hierarchical systems)
  - Develop commitment to social justice
Typical Session Outline

- Introduction and check-in
- Common language and organizers
- Structured learning activity (e.g., caucus groups, fishbowls)
- Collective reflection and dialogue on learning from the activity
- Dialogue about the dialogue: Collective reflection on learning from the entire session (e.g., “How can we all work together to take the dialogue deeper in the upcoming sessions? Are there particular dynamics or tensions that affected our ability to dialogue fully?”)
- Check-outs and transitions

(Gurin et al., 2013)
Example Session Outline

• Introduction and check-in: Share what you have been reflecting on since last session

• Common language and organizers: Harro’s *Cycle of Socialization*
Figure 5.1 The Cycle of Socialization

**CYCLE OF SOCIALIZATION**

**FIRST SOCIALIZATION**
We are socialized by people we love and trust, and taught to play our roles and follow rules. They shape our self-concepts and self-perceptions as well as how we see others. They shape our dreams, our values, our expectations, and our future roles.

**THE BEGINNING**
We are born into a world with the mechanics of oppression already in place. We have no consciousness, no choice, no blame, no guilt. There is no information or limited information or misinformation about social identity and power. Bias, stereotyping, prejudices, habits, tradition, and a history of oppression already exist. We inherit them without our permission.

**THE CORE**
What keeps us in the cycle:
- Ignorance
- Intimidation
- Compliance
- Corruption
- Fear

**THE CONTINUATION**
We do nothing and the cycle continues.
- We choose not to make waves.
- We live with or promote the status quo.
- We fail to challenge, question, or think about what's wrong with this picture.

**RESULTS**
This socialization leads to bad outcomes for those with and without power:
- Misperceptions, dissidence, alienation, stress, coercion.
- Inequality, anger, guilt, hate, self-hatred, self-destructive behaviors, violence, crime, and internalization of patterns of power for the future.

**ENFORCEMENTS**
A system of rewards and punishments keeps us playing by the rules.
- Those who stay in line are sanctioned, while those who don't are punished, persecuted, stigmatized, or victimized by discrimination.

**DIRECTION FOR CHANGE – MOVEMENT TOWARD LIBERATION**
Something makes us begin to think, to challenge, to question the system.
- We begin to see that something is wrong with this picture.

© BOBBIE HARRO, 2004; Revised, 2008
Example Session Outline

- Introduction and check-in: Share what you have been reflecting on since last session
- Common language and organizers: Harro’s *Cycle of Socialization*
- Structured learning activity: Family tree
- Collective reflection and dialogue on learning from the activity
- Dialogue about the dialogue: Collective reflection on learning from the entire session (e.g., “How can we all work together to take the dialogue deeper in the upcoming sessions? Are there particular dynamics or tensions that affected our ability to dialogue fully?”)
- Check-outs and transitions

(Gurin et al., 2013)
Example Session Outline

• Introduction and check-in: Share one insight you had from the assigned reading

• Common language and organizers: McIntosch’s *White Privilege: Unpacking the invisible Knapsack*
1. I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
2. If I should need to move, I can be pretty sure of renting or purchasing housing in an area which I can afford and in which I would want to live.
3. I can be pretty sure that my neighbors in such a location will be neutral or pleasant to me.
4. I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
5. I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
6. When I am told about our national heritage or about “civilization,” I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
7. I can be sure that my children will be given curricular materials that testify to the existence of their race.
Example Session Outline

• Introduction and check-in: Share one insight you had from the assigned reading

• Common language and organizers: Mcintosh’s *White Privilege: Unpacking the invisible Knapsack*

• Structured learning activity: “Jelly bean activity”

• Collective reflection and dialogue on learning from the activity

• Dialogue about the dialogue: Collective reflection on learning from the entire session (e.g., “How can we all work together to take the dialogue deeper in the upcoming sessions? Are there particular dynamics or tensions that affected our ability to dialogue fully?”

• Check-outs and transitions

(Gurin et al., 2013)
Intergroup Dialogue at UTK

• Is it working? (Muller & Miles, 2015)

  • We have found significant (positive) changes in:
    • Empathic perspective taking (Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy; Wang et al., 2003)
    • “Blindness” to racial privilege and to institutional discrimination (Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale; Neville, Lilly, Duran, Lee, & Browne, 2000)

  • But no changes in:
    • Attitudes toward diversity (Miville-Guzman Universality Diversity Scale – Short Form; Fuertes et al., 2000; Openness to Diversity/Challenge Scale; Pascarella, et al., 1996)
    • Blindness to blatant racial issues (Color-Blind Racial Attitudes Scale; CoBRAS; Neville et al., 2000)
Intergroup Dialogue at UTK

• What is happening? (Miles et al., 2015)
  • Increases in ratings of engagement, decreases in ratings of avoidance, and no significant change in ratings of conflict – Group Climate Questionnaire – Short Form, MacKenzie, 1983)
  • Positive changes in empathic perspective taking and colorblind racial attitudes were associated with engagement
Intergroup Dialogue at UTK

- What is happening? (Miles et al., 2015)
  - Increases in ratings of engagement, decreases in ratings of avoidance happen at same time as participants are experiencing more negative and fewer positive emotions

*Note.* Time (i.e., session) has been grand mean centered such that “0” represents the middle session.
Negative Affect Over Time

Positive Affect Over Time

Depth Over Time

Smoothness Over Time

Note. Time (i.e., session) has been grand mean centered such that “0” represents the middle session.
Intergroup Dialogue at UTK

• Qualitative Data: Critical Incidents:

  • After each session, we ask both the group members and co-facilitators to respond to the following in writing:

    • “What was the most important thing that happened in your most recent intergroup dialogue session? Why was this important to you?”
Building Skills

…The members of my group dialogue started off being reserved and gave little personal information. As the session progressed we became more comfortable around each other and began to share personal opinions. I believe that the leaders of the group dialogue played a huge role in making us feel comfortable and safe to open up. We played an ice breaker and set ground rules that must be enforced during all dialogue sessions. The establishment of ground rules was the most important part of last week’s intergroup dialogue. Some of our rules included respecting others’ beliefs, think before you react, do not attack another member, and ask questions if you do not understand someone’s perspective. The ground rules made everyone feel free to express their beliefs without being judged or ridiculed. The ground rules were important to me because I sometimes feel insecure speaking my perspectives in our large class. I know that there are extremely opinionated individuals in our class and I do not want to be attacked in front of everyone. I already feel comfortable and relaxed in my dialogue group and I know I will be able to actively participate in our discussions because of the environment we have established.
Building Relationships

The most important thing to happen during our group dialogue would be when we went around the room and we introduced ourselves and then explained the meaning behind our own names. What surprised me was the fact that everyone had their own individual stories about their names and origins from where their name came from. Sometimes we can take our names for granted, such as the meanings and history behind them and it was really refreshing and uplifting to hear people talk about something that is seemingly ordinary and make it unique and special to themselves. It was important because it put emotion and a human experience behind each person and name that I learned about. Instead of sitting in a room with strangers, I felt as though I had been let in on something personal to each person, bringing the group as a whole closer and allowing for genuine and honest discourse.
Developing Critical Consciousness

The most important thing that happened for me was the cultural chest activity. Each member of my group had to bring in 3 objects that represented their race and/or ethnicity. We also were instructed to decorate the outside with words or pictures that described how we felt that other people saw us. Through sharing our cultural chests, we each got to learn more about others in the group. It was interesting to see the objects that individuals brought and why they were significant to their identity. I really enjoyed this activity because it forced me to think deeply about myself. I feel that I never actually sat down and thought about what defines me and what aspects of my life display my race and ethnicity because it seems like my race and ethnicity are innate and I am just myself. After this activity, I look at people and myself differently. We all have family histories and certain things that are unique to our backgrounds. These qualities are what makes us diverse and you can’t tell a person’s race and ethnicity just by looking at them alone. For example, I was surprised to see that some members of my group were of German descent. This fact made me realize that we are all more similar than we think. Overall, I gained a lot from this intergroup dialogue session. It was important for me because I believe that when you take the time to learn about others, you also get the opportunity to learn more about yourself and I feel that this activity helped facilitate this learning experience.
Developing Critical Consciousness

The most important occurrence was the shift brought on by our facilitators. In past sessions, the dialogues were marked solely with encouraging remarks made by our facilitators. However, in this session, the facilitators challenged members not only to elaborate, but also to really examine core issues. One such example occurred when two members were sharing the results of a paired exercise. Both were uncomfortable referencing the other's socioeconomic background, and normally this would have been passed over. However, the facilitator made it a point to really draw each individual out on why they felt uncomfortable and really drew the entire group into a thoughtful discussion on the point. I think I learned more from this exchange than I had in others since it really challenged me to think critically about why I had certain views on referencing others' socioeconomic backgrounds.
Developing Critical Consciousness

The most important occurrence was the shift brought on by our facilitators. In past sessions, the dialogues were marked solely with encouraging remarks made by our facilitators. However, in this session, the facilitators challenged members not only to elaborate, but also to really examine core issues. One such example occurred when two members were sharing the results of a paired exercise. Both were uncomfortable referencing the other's socioeconomic background, and normally this would have been passed over. However, the facilitator made it a point to really draw each individual out on why they felt uncomfortable and really drew the entire group into a thoughtful discussion on the point. I think I learned more from this exchange than I had in others since it really challenged me to think critically about why I had certain views on referencing others' socioeconomic backgrounds.
Developing Commitment to Social Justice

It definitely highlights more of a need for it [engaging in social justice work] and again gives me more self-efficacy so now I feel more comfortable going into another agency or talking with people in the community because I’ve done it before.
Developing Commitment to Social Justice

I guess that awareness piece comes up for me again um because I find myself like in personal situations where like I can’t shake it. (laughs) I’m still hyperaware of things, it also makes me more likely in my personal life to intervene like if I were just a group member I don’t think that, just once and that was my only experience with social justice stuff, I don’t think I would feel as inclined to intervene publicly but, but now I do, so…
Conclusions and Moving Forward

Intergroup dialogue can be a meaningful way to bring individuals together at our UT campuses.

Quantitative evidence for increased perspective-taking and increases in critical awareness of racial privilege and institutional discrimination associated with IGD at UTK

Qualitative evidence for building relationships, developing critical consciousness, developing skills and commitment to work toward social justice

We need to continue to find ways to facilitate meaningful intergroup interactions around issues related to diversity.