Campuses and Viewpoint Diversity: Why It Matters and How to Foster It
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Plan
• Part 1
  • Is there a problem with a lack of viewpoint diversity on campus?
  • Part 2
    • What do we do about it?

Part 1
• Is there a problem with a lack of viewpoint diversity on campuses?

Is there a problem with a lack of viewpoint diversity on campus?
• What do we mean by viewpoint diversity?
  • Having a wide range of political perspectives represented
  • Usually refers to non-progressive voices
• 2006 and 2017 data show that about 60% professors are left of center
  • Distribution shifted to the left
  • Variation by discipline

Is there a problem with a lack of viewpoint diversity on campus?
• What do we mean by viewpoint diversity?
  • Having a wide range of political perspectives represented
  • Usually refers to non-progressive voices
• 2006 and 2017 data show that about 6% professors are left
  • Distribution to the left
  • Variation by discipline
• Political diversity matters, but it's not everything!
Is there a problem with a lack of viewpoint diversity on campus?

- What do we mean by viewpoint diversity?
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  - Usually refers to non-progressive voices
- No self-censorship by political orientation

Is there a problem with a lack of viewpoint diversity on campus?

- What do we mean by viewpoint diversity?
- Having a wide range of political perspectives represented
  - Usually refers to non-progressive voices
- No self-censorship along political orientation
- What percent self-censor?
  - 2019 survey:
    - 32% reluctant to give their views on politics
    - More Republican students than Democrats
  - Important, but even without self-censorship, there's still a problem!

Is there a problem with a lack of viewpoint diversity on campus?

- What do we mean by viewpoint diversity?
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- Recognizing variation in how people think about identity

Criticizing Ideas

- Certain ideas treated as though they're above criticism
- Some should be!
  - Earth is spheroid
  - Earth revolves around the sun
  - Water turns to ice at 32 degrees Fahrenheit
  - Others?
Criticizing Ideas

- Certain ideas treated as though they’re above criticism
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  - Water turns to ice at 30 degrees Fahrenheit
  - Others?
    - What about colorblind racism, microaggressions, white privilege?

Case study: Colorblind racism

Two questions
1. Can students describe it?
2. Are students able to critique it?

Upshot

- Ideas are meant to be criticized
- Not revered or placed in a china cabinet

Part 1

- Summary
  - Lack of viewpoint has four components
    - Diversity of political orientations
    - Minimizing self-censorship
    - Recognizing variation in how we think about identity
    - Criticizing ideas
Part 2

Now what?
Reframe the discussion

Shift the conversation with:
1. Students
2. Instructors
3. Administrators and staff

How do we reframe the discussion?

Humility and curiosity

Distinction between facts and beliefs
- Blurry line between the two shapes our feelings towards others

- Examples:
  - What percent of men would commit sexual assault if they knew they could get away with it?
  - What percent of white U.S. adults are racist?

- These don’t have factual answers:
  - What percent of men would commit sexual assault if they knew they could get away with it?
  - What percent of white U.S. adults are racist?

How do we reframe the discussion?

- Humility
- Curiosity
- Frank conversations
- Intent
- Sensitivity

Thank you!

For more information about my work, please go to:
www.diverseperspectivesconsulting.com

Link to “Beyond Bigots and Snowflakes” video series is there, as is a link to my co-authored book “Unassailable Ideas: How Unwritten Rules and Social Media Shape Discourse in American Higher Education”

Please help spread the word!