Assisting students in the college experience: Multiple Dimensions of Identity

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Blossom Barrett
Assisting students in the college experience:

**MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS OF IDENTITY**

Charlie Runyan & Blossom Barrett
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Presentation Overview

- Importance of this topic
- Learning outcomes
- The Cycle of Socialization in identity formation and activity
- The Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity and activity
- Discussion on best practices
Learning Outcomes

 Reconceptualize identity development to be more inclusive of differences within and across identity categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, nationality, class, ability and religion.
 Learn strategies to enhance the quality of the learning environment within and across these identity categories.
Learning Outcomes

- Explore with colleagues the way in which we can effectively create or build multiracial/multiple identity communities while also supporting students individually.

- Learn methods to integrate research, practice, self reflection and professional development to best serve students and our profession.
Why is this important?

- The US population continues to grow both in size and diversity.
  - By 2050, the US Census Bureau projects there will be no one racial/ethnic majority.
- More of the US population identifies as multicultural.
  - In the 2010 census, 9 million people reported more than one race/ethnicity. Multiracial individuals in the US make up 3% of the total population.
- Globalization has forced American students to reflect and evaluate their identities in an ever growing and changing world.
What does this mean for us as educators?

- Increase in diversity leads to a more complex society and thus more complex high schools and college campuses.
- The undergraduate experience is a time when students negotiate with and explore their identities.
- We as educators need to reexamine how we work with students and promote our universities to meet the challenges of our growing and complex society.
UNDERSTANDING CONSTRUCTS OF SOCIAL IDENTITY
Cycle of Socialization

Socialized—taught on a personal level by parents, relatives, teachers, people we love and trust—shapers of expectations, norms, values, roles, rules, models of ways to be, sources of dreams

Fear
Ignorance
Confusion
Insecurity

Resulting in:
Dissonance, silence, anger, dehumanization, guilt, collusion, ignorance, self-hatred, stress, lack of reality, violence, horizontal violence, inconsistency, crime, internalization of patterns of power

Institutions
- Churches
- Schools
- Television
- Legal System
- Mental Health
- Medicine
- Businesses

Culture:
- Practices
- Lyrics
- Language
- Media
- Patterns of thought

Lens of Socialization and Teaching
- Reinforced/bombarded with messages from:
- Enforced
- Sanctioned
- Stigmatized
- Rewards and Punishments
- Privilege
- Persecution
- Discrimination
- Empowerment

Lens of Experience
- Change
- Raise consciousness
- Interrupt
- Educate
- Take a stand
- Question
- Reframe

Do nothing
Don't make waves
Promote status quo

Lens of Identity
- Born into world with mechanics in place
- No blame, no consciousness
- No guilt, no choice
- Limited information
- No information
- Misinformation
- Biases
- Stereotypes
- Prejudices
- History
- Habit
- Tradition

Enforced/bombarded with messages from:
- Churches
- Schools
- Television
- Legal System
- Mental Health
- Medicine
- Businesses

On conscious and unconscious levels

Privilege
Persecution
Discrimination
Empowerment

Rewards and Punishments
Enforced
Sanctioned
Stigmatized

Language
Media
Patterns of thought

Practices
Lyrics

Institutions:
- Churches
- Schools
- Television
- Legal System
- Mental Health
- Medicine
- Businesses
Definitions for Activity

- **Target Group:** Social identity groups that are disenfranchised and exploited

- **Agent Group:** Social identity groups that hold unearned privileged in society
Matrix of Oppression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Identity Categories</th>
<th>Privileged Social Groups</th>
<th>Border Social Groups</th>
<th>Targeted Social Groups</th>
<th>Ism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>White People</td>
<td>Biracial People</td>
<td>Asian, Black, Latino, Native People</td>
<td>Racism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Bio Men</td>
<td>Transsexual, Intersex People</td>
<td>Bio Women</td>
<td>Sexism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Gender Conforming Bio Men And Women</td>
<td>Gender Ambiguous Bio Men and Women</td>
<td>Transgender, Genderqueer, Intersex People</td>
<td>Transgender Oppression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Heterosexual People</td>
<td>Bisexual People</td>
<td>Lesbians, Gay Men</td>
<td>Heterosexism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Rich, Upper Class People</td>
<td>Middle Class People</td>
<td>Working Class, Poor People</td>
<td>Classism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability/Disability</td>
<td>Temporarily Abled-Bodied People</td>
<td>People with Temporary Disabilities</td>
<td>People with Disabilities</td>
<td>Ableism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Protestants</td>
<td>Roman Catholic (historically)</td>
<td>Jews, Muslims, Hindus</td>
<td>Religious Oppression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Adults</td>
<td>Young Adults</td>
<td>Elders, Young People</td>
<td>Ageism/Adultism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Charlie’s Social ID Grid

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>List of social group identities</th>
<th>My social identities</th>
<th>Social status for this identity</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Intersections, comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Racial identity</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Agent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sex</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Agent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Masculine</td>
<td>Agent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexual Orientation</td>
<td>Gay</td>
<td>Target</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Target</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ability/Disability</td>
<td>Able bodied</td>
<td>Agent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(birth-now)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>Target?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Agent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other?</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Agent</td>
<td></td>
<td>Save for Later</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Questions to Ponder

- Which one do you have the earliest memory of?
- Which one has the strongest effect on your work with students?
- Which one has the strongest affect on how students perceive you?
- Which one has an effect on your decision making?
UNDERSTANDING MULTIPLE DIMENSIONS OF IDENTITY
Voices from Students

Outing myself as a gay man was only the first step in reconciling myself as an out person of color. I was still struggling with my Indian ethnic identity, with all its definitions of what a "real man" should be and with the realities of my life as a gay man. Sometimes I felt I had to choose which minority mask to wear depending on who I was with or what I was doing. There never seemed to be a meeting ground for these two parts of my identity. But I wanted the assembled freshmen to know that I experienced my life at college through the filter of all my identities. I wasn't a gay man, or an Indian man. I was a gay Indian. Nothing could disconnect that.

--Suman
I was raised by my White mother and White stepfather in a ‘Caucasian World.” I never met my father who is Black and Cuban. I know I am Hispanic, Black and White. But now that I am exploring colleges, I keep receiving information about the Black and Latino Cultural Centers on campus, and I don’t know where I will fit in. I feel like I am being branded something I am not. Blacks think I am Black. Hispanics think I am Hispanic. Honestly, I don’t identify with either bucket wholeheartedly – Caucasian, Black or Hispanic.

-- Jennifer
Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity

- The Core
- Social Identities
- Relationship of social identities to the core and identity salience
- Contextual Influences
Blossom’s Model

- Race
- Class
- Gender
- Age
- Sexual Orientation
- Ability/Disability
- Religion

CORE

Independent
Caring
Determine/Suborned
Responsible

CORE
Lets Talk at the table...

- What was challenging for you as you completed your MMDI template? What new insights do you have about your own identity?

- How does your own depiction of your multiple dimensions of identity dovetail with how you think others perceive you? How does your depiction differ from how you think others perceive you? In what ways?

- How might the MMDI be applied to your practice? (e.g., a program designed with a specific population in mind; an advising or counseling session). What considerations need to be made when applying the MMDI to practice?
Discussion

What does this have to do with college, again?

- How might the MMDI be applied to your practice? (e.g., a program designed with a specific population in mind; an advising or counseling session). What considerations need to be made when applying the MMDI to practice?
What to Know More?

- Social Justice Training
  - Social Justice Training Institute 2012

- Student Development in College (Book)

- Organizations
  - www.sjti.org/

- Progressive Examples
  - Intercultural model OSU & Maryland
References


Thank You!

Any Questions?

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