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Got Privilege?

An Honors Capstone Activity on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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INTRODUCTION

In May 2013, Patrick was a participant in a multiday workshop sponsored by our university's Diversity Action Council. The goal of the workshop, led by off-campus experts commissioned by the university, was to help educate faculty and staff on issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion and to foster conversations on these topics among these members of the university community. The workshop had several positive outcomes, which included facilitating faculty/staff interactions and fostering a sense of university-wide community as participants worked together to explore identity, intersectionality, and other issues related to diversity in the academic setting. Most importantly, the workshop served as the genesis for a class activity that was piloted in the fall 2013 semester.

In that term, Patrick, director of our university's honors program, was to teach an honors section of a course titled "Cultivating Global Citizenship," the primary aim of which was to equip students with ethical tools they would need as informed and engaged citizens in an increasingly global and multi-cultural society. Students in the course would read, discuss, and reflect upon texts by authors such as Kwame Anthony Appiah, Mindy Thompson Fullilove, bell hooks, and Jonathan Kozol. Their conversations with one another would help them explore others' ethical and moral principles even as they worked at developing their own and applying them to today's broad societal issues.

With the May workshop fresh in mind, Patrick decided he would task the students in the course with designing and delivering a workshop of their own, focusing on the same topics as the workshop in which he had recently participated. He saw several potential benefits to the activity:

1. It would challenge the students to put into practice many of the ideas they had discussed in the abstract during the semester.
2. It would offer the students an authentic audience comprising fellow students, university faculty and staff, and stakeholders in the broader community, including leaders of the class's service-learning partners.
3. It would empower the students to create and sustain ongoing conversations on diversity, equity, and inclusion with members of various communities.
4. It would acknowledge the students' agency, asking them to position themselves as leaders and experts in their respective disciplines rather than passive objects on which social forces act.

In December of 2013, the students in that semester's iteration of the course hosted the first of these student-led workshops, attended by roughly twenty students, faculty, staff, and members of the community. For two and a half hours, participants led consciousness-raising exercises and discussions on sensitive issues related to race, religion, gender, and sexuality.

Since that first workshop, eight more honors sections of the course have been taught (five by Patrick and three by Reid), and the students in each of these sections have been required to construct and facilitate a similar workshop with similar goals, each differing from the others depending on the individual interests and expertise of the students in each section. Despite their differences, each workshop has been well-received by participants, and

each group of students has reported considerable gains from taking part in the activity.

We are confident that the workshop activity is a portable one that can be implemented on other campuses with appropriate modification to accommodate local needs. To that end, we provide a brief overview of the literature on practices designed to improve students' understanding of diversity issues; a description of the activity and its logistical details; an examination of the students' reactions; and future plans for the activity on our campus. We are confident that the activity is worth replicating elsewhere, and, given the leadership roles our honors students are likely to play as they graduate from our programs, we recommend the activity as an opportunity for them to practice authentically engaged citizenship.

DIVERSITY EDUCATION: WHAT WORKS AND WHAT DOESN'T

Diversity, inclusion, and equity are all terms requiring what social theorists call "thick descriptions." Although the terms may be in common use, their exact meanings are nuanced and variable from one person to another and from one discourse community to another. Indeed, given scholars' disagreement on definitions for, and interactions among, these and other related ideas (see, for instance, Berrey; Gerteis, Hartmann, and Edgell; Randolph; and Roberson), it is no wonder that students have a hard time coming to grips with them. Students at predominantly white institutions may have an especially hard time with the concept of diversity; white students' limited interaction with members of nonwhite communities may hinder their ability both to engage authentically with racial and ethnic diversity and to understand the perspectives of their nonwhite counterparts. Our own students have described isolation from people of color resulting from home schooling experiences, racially segregated schools, or simply living in the *de facto* segregation of contemporary U.S. society.

The literature on diversity education describes a wide variety of means to help students gain a better understanding of diversity-related issues. From diversity-intensive courses with multicultural themes to service-learning opportunities, various intervention strategies offer students a way to engage with diversity-related issues, often challenging them to critically examine their own racial identities, confront their own biases and prejudices, and learn from and with others different from themselves. Overall, the efficacy of such

strategies is unclear, given the fact that many studies focus on a single institution or, more narrowly still, on a single course or activity, severely limiting the studies' generalizability. Many studies of diversity education strategies are largely anecdotal, offering descriptions of activities with little formal analysis of their effectiveness, and yet other studies suggest that such strategies offer little, if any, effectiveness at improving understanding of diversity.

Among the studies that do assert the effectiveness of diversity-related workshops, Pascarella et al. claim that "participation in a racial or cultural awareness workshop . . . had significant net positive effects on openness to diversity/challenge" by the end of a student's first year of college (185). A few years later in 2001, a similar study by Whitt et al., in which Pascarella was a co-researcher, showed similar effects on second- and third-year students, with the authors noting that "such workshops cannot come 'too late' in a student's college career and that, whether previous experiences were negative or positive, subsequent workshops can have a positive effect" (191–92). A study performed on students at the University of Michigan in 2002 demonstrated gains in various learning outcomes, including "active thinking," "intellectual engagement and motivation," and "academic skills" (Gurin et al. 347). These gains were seen in all students engaging in "diversity experiences." For white students "the largest effects came from campus-facilitated diversity activities, namely classroom diversity and multicultural events, and inter-group dialogues held on campus" (352). White students also saw consistent gains in various "democracy outcomes," including "compatibility of difference and democracy," "perspective-taking," and "racial/cultural engagement" (347); students of other races saw less consistent gains (353).

Perhaps the most comprehensive overview of educational strategies is offered by Engberg, whose 2004 meta-analysis gives not only a taxonomy of these strategies but also a careful review of their effectiveness as reported in fifty studies. Engberg distinguishes four categories of intervention strategies, namely "multicultural course interventions," "diversity workshop and training interventions," "peer-facilitated interventions," and "service interventions" (481). He considers each category in turn, further classifying the studies falling under a given category depending on whether the studies employ quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods in their analysis. Overall, Engberg notes that while most studies suggest the positive effects of diversity-related programming at reducing racial bias, "in the majority of cases [of intervention studies], their limitations cast doubt on the evidentiary weight of the findings" (502). Indeed, scholarship on service learning, for example, suggests that this

particular high-impact practice, if not properly structured and reflected upon, can reinforce students' stereotypes (see Baldwin, Buchanan, and Rudisill; Borden; and Butin for further discussion of this phenomenon).

Our activity at the University of North Carolina (UNC) Asheville is notable in that, when considered in conjunction with the service-learning-designated course which it culminates, it exemplifies all four of the categories of intervention Engberg articulates. Furthermore, in the way that the workshop activity offers a bridge between the students' engagement with diversity issues in class and the involvement of members of the broader university community, it echoes the pedagogical strategies employed by Pence and Fields, whose senior sociology majors deliver the results of their ethnographic research in the community to students in introductory sociology courses.

THE WORKSHOP ACTIVITY

Though the workshop itself does not take place until the last class meeting of the semester, preparation takes place throughout the term. We notify the students of the workshop's assignment on the first day of class. Though little time is directly devoted to the assignment during the first half of the term, we encourage students to take note of topics, concepts, and examples they encounter in readings and discussions that may later prove helpful in designing their workshop.

Roughly halfway through the semester, the students begin to plan the workshop more intentionally. Around this time, we typically devote one class period to preparation, granting the students that period to lay out a rough schedule for the workshop, form subcommittees charged with specific tasks, and brainstorm an initial list of invitees. Our goals for the class in this initial session are to develop a statement of purpose for the workshop, to begin to think about its structure, and to assign the various roles necessary to complete the work. We have found that allowing students to have the space to explore this planning without the instructor present can free them to be more creative and potentially more critical. For instance, a recent class decided, in response to our university's garnering first place in the 2016 list of "Impact Schools" published by *The Princeton Review*, to challenge the true extent of the institution's impact, suggesting practices that might improve our school's positive influence on its community. Had the instructor, as a perceived proxy of the university, been present for this initial conversation, the class would probably have been hesitant to challenge the institution in this way.

After the initial planning, a good deal of work is done on the workshop outside of class as the various subcommittees prepare their individual workshop components on their own time. In the meantime, we assist the students in reaching out to the communities they wish to invite. We encourage the students to carefully think through whom they want to invite as a way of thinking about what they want to do. Many of the invited participants are change agents on campus or in the wider community, so the workshop really is an assembly of creative resources, with the participants being the greatest of these.

Roughly a week from the end of the semester, we devote another class period to the assignment, granting students the chance to develop materials for their workshop components, run through their workshop activities with one another, work with their instructors to troubleshoot potential difficulties, and get feedback from one another on their work. This meeting serves as a check on the programming the students have planned, addressing key questions:

- Does it address diversity, equity, and inclusion in meaningful and appropriate ways?
- Is it accessible to the audience the students have invited to take part?
- Is it logistically feasible, given the workshop's time constraints?
- Does it take into consideration the needs of the audience in, for instance, the variety of the presentations?
- Given the schedule, will the audience be hungry and need or want food?

In his most recent section of the course, Reid allowed the students yet more class time for planning, granting the students roughly one class per week for the last few weeks of the semester. The class schedule of three weekly meetings and a slightly lightened reading list made more frequent planning sessions possible.

Students may elect to meet with the instructors outside of class once or twice more as we help them further refine their programming. We cannot stress enough the value of a “dry run.” Often students think they know what they will say, but until they say it, they don't. Moreover, students often underestimate the amount of time a particular activity or discussion will take. We have had some success in encouraging students to practice their program outside of class, and such practice has been evident in the workshops of those sections that have made this effort.

Finally, the day of the workshop arrives. At this stage the instructors take seats in the audience and let the students run the show. Exactly what form the show takes depends on the students' academic expertise and interests, life experiences, and personal identities. Past iterations of the workshop have treated a wide range of topics, employing an equally wide range of tactics.

The students typically address various dimensions of diversity, broadly addressing issues related to race and ethnicity, religion, gender and sexuality, socioeconomic status, and disability status. The workshops tend to move from the general to the particular, beginning with large-scale issues, like power structures, intersectionality, and systemic racism, and moving toward issues affecting persons as individuals, like stereotype threat and microaggressions. The workshops also tend to move from a problem-oriented to a solution-oriented perspective. After all, the students spend the majority of the semester immersing themselves in social problems that often manifest on a national, if not global, scale, e.g., inequities in public education, food insecurity, mass incarceration, and urban gentrification. These problems, complex as they are, can have a paralyzing and disempowering effect on students, and by the semester's end they are eager to propose solutions.

Frequently students begin with icebreaking exercises intended to acquaint participants with their own and others' identities. These exercises help participants open up to one another and grow comfortable sharing their views on the delicate subjects with which other workshop activities will deal. Students often rely on other standard workshop components like privilege walks, role-play sessions, and student-facilitated discussions based on course readings that have included Alexander, Appiah, Chambers, Freire, Fullilove, Gottlieb and Joshi, hooks, Johnson, Kincaid, Kozol, Ladson-Billings, Rushdie, Moses and Cobb, West, and other sources like McIntosh and Gates and Yacovone.

The students' creativity generally enables them to go far beyond the usual basic elements. Workshop leaders often employ manipulatives and visual aids like the Genderbread person (Killermann) and the identity wheel (Johnson 15). They have also produced companion materials that have included video shorts showcasing fictional encounters with microaggressions and a zine with articles, art, and literature on diversity themes. This last piece—the students titled it “Got Privilege?”—offered various perspectives on the way that the privileges accorded to various persons—on the basis, for instance, of race, sex, and gender—have a negative impact on our society. The student leaders of one of the spring 2015 workshops offered a “safe space.” Located in a nearby classroom, this space, featuring calming craft materials, soothing

music, and soft lighting, served as a retreat for participants who might feel anxiety or trauma during any portion of the workshop itself. Students in one of the spring 2016 workshops hosted a poster session during which workshop participants toured a small display of posters on topics related to social justice.

The activity's flexibility permits yet broader innovation in the workshop structure. A recent class turned the workshop into a forum in which guest speakers addressed the current realities of racial inequity within the local community while students, faculty, and staff discussed what the university is currently doing or can do in the future to address these issues. This group of students put together a poster session to showcase their various research projects. Our community partners eagerly expressed a desire to take and display these posters, recognizing them as educational tools with usefulness beyond the workshop.

STUDENT RESPONSE

Given the deep engagement with diversity issues that the planning and execution of the workshop entails, we would expect the workshop activity to have a considerable impact on students' understanding of these issues, and we have tried to explore that impact in student surveys. So far 140 students have taken part in the design and delivery of one of the diversity workshops, but only 23 of these students (16.4%) have responded to a survey, delivered as a Google Form, on their experience with the workshop activity. The low response rate is unsurprising given that completion of the survey is not compulsory and most students are asked to take it within days of graduation when they have other things on their minds.

Some survey items asked students to gauge the workshop's effectiveness in terms of its impact on them, with questions like the following:

- To what extent did you feel empowered by the leadership roles the workshop challenged you to assume?
- To what extent did you feel ownership of the ideas you brought to life in the workshop?

Other items asked the students about the workshop's execution:

- Did it run smoothly?
- Did it succeed in putting the course's central ideas into practice?

Still others questioned the workshop's premise:

- Were the topics on which students chose to present relevant and important?
- Were you to teach a similar class, would you assign the workshop activity yourself?

Each of the items summarized in Table 1 offered students a four-point scale of “Disagree strongly” (1), “Disagree a little” (2), “Agree a little” (3), and “Agree strongly” (4). One student was responsible for the lone “disagree” rating on the three items for which there was a single such rating. When given the chance to offer feedback on the workshop activity, this student elaborated on the following concerns:

TABLE 1. STUDENTS' SENSE OF THE WORKSHOP'S EFFECTIVENESS

Item Description	<i>n</i> , Disagree ("strongly" = 1 or "a little" = 2)	<i>n</i> , Agree ("strongly" = 4 or "a little" = 3)	Mean, <i>n</i> = 23
I felt empowered by helping to plan or lead the workshop.	3	20	3.26
Student workshop leaders were able to effectively put the ideas learned in the course into practice.	1	22	3.39
Workshop participants gained a better understanding of ideas related to diversity, equity, and inclusion	1	22	3.30
The topics workshops dealt with were relevant to my life outside of school	0	23	3.74
As a workshop leader or planner, I gained a sense of ownership of the ideas the workshop dealt with.	3	20	3.35
The workshop ran more smoothly than I thought it was going to beforehand.	0	23	3.43
If I were to teach a class which dealt with topics related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, I would find it beneficial to include the workshop assignment.	6	17	3.04
The topics the workshop dealt with were important ones.	0	23	3.87

There were too many people to plan for the amount of time that we had. At times during the planning I felt we couldn't get too much into detail because there were over 15 strong leaders who wanted to put in their input. It would have been more beneficial if there was either someone (a professor or a student leader) who was in charge of leadership and direction rather than trying to have everyone in the class be equally involved. I also would have done the workshop at a different time, a lot of people were overly stressed about finals and being so close to graduation that they didn't have time to take it so seriously.

This student was not the only one to report a negative experience with the activity. Other students who viewed the activity more favorably overall reported similar concerns. In the words of one student,

[T]his workshop took place at the very end of the last semester of every student's final year as a graduating senior. Honors students are nearly categorically overcommitted, driven, high-achieving people, and not one of us had time to do this workshop justice. . . . The end of the semester of an Honors student's senior year is the absolute worst time to have this presentation.

The timing of the activity wasn't the only issue the students identified. Other common concerns were the amount of in-class time allotted for workshop preparation and the amount of guidance given by the instructor. One student tersely suggested "Required, scheduled rehearsals. At least two." Another student said that "if we'd had some guidance or training in how to plan a workshop, or how to speak publicly about sensitive issues, it might have been helpful. Just one class session devoted to discussion of workshops people had been to in the past or had organized, and what worked and what didn't, would have been beneficial." The only other issue that came up as often concerned the structure of the workshop itself: several students reported wishing that there had been more interaction between workshop facilitators and participants. One student said, "The only way I think we could have made it more effective is with better group discussions," and another suggested that "if the leaders would be able to come up with more engaging activities, instead of lectures, I believe it would be a more fun learning experience for the audience."

Table 2 summarizes students' suggestions in response to the survey question "What changes might you have made to the workshop assignment to make it more effective?" The second column indicates the number of students

making a comment grouped under each given category, out of the twenty students who responded to this question.

Despite these concerns, the responses summarized in Table 1 demonstrate that the activity was well received, and students freely reported many positive outcomes. The benefit most commonly reported was the chance the workshop offered students to reflect on ideas discussed in class and to synthesize these ideas for a new audience. One student's remarks were typical: "It was also helpful to plan a project which culminated all the topics we had learned throughout the course into one hands-on activity. Thinking critically about the subjects in a different manner helped me understand them even better."

Students also frequently mentioned benefits related to collaboration with their peers during the planning and implementation of the workshop: "I also appreciated hearing each member's approach to making our topic presentable and meaningful to the audience." Students also mentioned developing leadership skills through their work on the activity. Students specifically mentioned getting better at conducting discussions, becoming empowered as campus leaders, and gaining real-world experience: "Honors students had a trial-by-fire introduction to how it works in the real world when your boss throws a project at you and tells you to do it with almost no instruction."

TABLE 2. STUDENTS' SUGGESTIONS FOR CHANGE
(NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 20)

Student Suggestion	Number of Students Offering Suggestion	Percentage of Respondents Offering Suggestion
Change the timing of the workshop	5	25.0%
More interactive workshop structure	4	20.0%
More time in class devoted to preparation	4	20.0%
More guidance in designing the workshop	4	20.0%
More structure to the assignment	2	10.0%
Need to engage different audiences	2	10.0%
More stringent requirements for participation	1	5.0%
Firmer grounding the course texts	1	5.0%
Help dealing with the amount of information	1	5.0%
Better management of workshop invitations	1	5.0%
Involve more persons of color in workshop planning	1	5.0%

Eighteen students responded to the question “What aspects of the workshop assignment and the workshop itself do you feel were most beneficial to you?” The benefits students indicated are recorded in Table 3. Most students did not mention diversity, equity, and inclusion explicitly in their comments, but their frequent references to the course material, in which the concepts played a central role, suggest that the workshop activity had a positive effect on their understanding of and engagement with these ideas. The few comments that made explicit reference to diversity issues suggest a profound impact on some students. One student, in particular, was helped to gain a greater awareness of his own privilege and its implications for his interactions with others:

Being confronted with big scary ideas like systemic discrimination and then being asked to explain it to a large crowd of people who may have never heard of it or even know how it works—this is not an experience people will have, and it makes it so that I have to dig deeper into what I’ve been readily prepared to accept and ask some serious questions about it. . . . I keep thinking about the implications

TABLE 3. STUDENT-REPORTED BENEFITS (NUMBER OF RESPONDENTS = 18)

Benefit	Number of Students Reporting Benefit	Percentage of Respondents Reporting Benefit
Reflecting on course work and ideas	7	38.9%
Collaborating with peers	5	27.8%
Gaining leadership skills	4	22.2%
Gaining organizational skills	4	22.2%
Engaging an authentic audience	3	16.7%
Collaborating with guest speakers	3	16.7%
Gaining new perspectives	2	11.1%
Engaging with the broader community off campus	2	11.1%
Building community on campus	1	5.6%
Developing greater awareness of one’s own identity	1	5.6%
Developing a useful learning technique	1	5.6%

of being a straight, white male everywhere I go. My responsibilities in this project demonstrated to me that at some root level, everything about cultivating global citizenship is interconnected.

Such interconnectedness is evident even in the workshop's typical audience. In every version of the workshop, community members (both the campus community and the wider community, including service learning partners, guest speakers, students' co-workers, and internship supervisors) have participated. This participation has helped connect faculty with other faculty and with community partners, establishing connections that might not otherwise have been made. Results include aligning faculty scholarship with the needs of area non-profits, sharing resources, and generating enthusiasm in the knowledge that others are working to address similar ends. The networking opportunities alone have resonated across the community.

THE FUTURE

The workshop activity appears to be successful at helping participating students gain a greater understanding of diversity issues, yet we suspect it has only begun to realize its potential for providing similar benefits to much wider audiences. The workshop activity might, for instance, serve as a common assignment for all of the university's interdisciplinary capstone courses. We have had conversations with the campus coordinator for senior capstone courses about the possibility of piloting a non-honors version, and although it would face certain obstacles, e.g., typically greater class sizes and less motivated students, the activity might grant a large portion of the campus community an ongoing opportunity to engage in conversation on critical social issues.

However, there is work yet to be done within our honors program as well. So far, only the two of us have made use of the workshop activity because one or the other of us has taught nearly every honors section of the capstone course for the past four years. Given steady increases in demand for the course over that time period, we have needed to find more faculty members who are interested in teaching it. One new teacher, though, plans to assign the activity in both the honors section and the first non-honors section of the course during this academic year. Looking ahead, this colleague noted:

I am planning on assigning the workshop in the fall for several reasons.
 1) If it's not broke, don't fix it! 2) I think it's a very important experience for students to be given the opportunity to design a workshop

not just for other students, but for the community. The majority of projects that students are asked to design in/for their classes tend to be for presentation to peers (understandably so). For students to be given the responsibility of applying what they have learned in terms of presentation, leading discussion, etc., to a larger audience, especially an off-campus audience, is important. . . . [T]he only thing I think I might do differently is the workshop theme. Given my background [in international aid and development], I really do like the theme of Cultivating Citizenship. Thinking while I am typing, I might plan to put it to the students to choose between the two themes.

We have also had conversations about our activity with other campus organizations concerned with diversity, including the Center for Diversity Education (CDE). This organization maintains a number of resources on diversity issues, including exhibits, road shows, and a lending library, all of which are made available not only to members of the UNC Asheville community but to citizens throughout Western North Carolina. The executive director, who has attended more than one of our classes' workshops, has shown interest in making our students' activity a model for more regular student-led workshops on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Several members of the university's Diversity Action Council have also attended our classes' workshops and have been impressed with what they have seen.

Given its widespread acclaim, we suspect that the workshop activity has a bright future on our campus and in the broader community of which it is an integral part. Our honors program is thus serving as an incubator of innovation, and, as Portnoy and others have argued, an important role of honors is to provide testing grounds for experimental or speculative projects that can later be adapted to a non-honors environment.

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