Use the words: Race vs Diversity

- We tend to adhere “to an unwritten code of silence regarding racism, mostly to avoid making others feel uncomfortable” (Harper, 2012, p. 23).
- Engage in “deeper examinations and more honest conversations about racism and racist institutional norms” (p. 24).
Definitions

- Racially Minoritized – instead of racial minorities – is used “to amplify the fact that certain groups acquire minority status through the beliefs and social processes enacted by other groups who place them in a position of the “minority” or “other” (Dowd & Bensimon, p. 8).
  - The problem: practices/policies are organized in ways that encourage the use difference to include or exclude, reward or punish, credit or discredit, elevate or oppress, value or devalue, leave alone or harass. (Johnson, 2006)

In/equality vs in/equity

- *Inequality* refers primarily to the condition of being unequal, and it tends to relate to things that can be expressed in numbers.
- *Inequity* is a close synonym of *injustice* and *unfairness*, so it usually relates to more qualitative matters.
  - Equity is a standard for judging whether a state of affairs is just or unjust (Dowd & Bensimon, p. 9)
  - In/equities are connected to historical and political understandings of racial stratification and require explicit attention to structural inequality and institutionalized racism (McNair et al., p. 6)
  - For example, one might say that income inequality results from inequity in society
Levels of Inequity

**Individual**
- Individual attitudes and behaviors

**Organizational**
- Established rules, policies, practices of an organization, department, institution; can be regarded as the way of doing business

Institutional structures, policies, and practices “operate to pass on and reinforce historic patterns of privilege and disadvantage” (in Dowd & Bensimon, p. 3)

**Structural**
- Self-sustaining processes that occur within fields and between systems, i.e. education, employment, law

Adapted from U.S. Commission on Civil Rights’ “the problem: discrimination” (1981)

Cognitive Frames

- “The ‘rules or reasoning’ that govern how individuals interpret situations and how they design and implement their actions” (Bensimon, 2005, p. 100).
- Our ‘mental maps’ can make visible some patterns of unequal outcomes, but can also “function as cognitive blinders in that whatever is out of frame may be imperceptible” (p. 101).
- These frames represent “implicit sense-making” to help us interpret “why things are as they are” (p. 101); and
- Reveal underlying assumptions about what gives rise to marginalization, attrition, under-achievement
Cognitive Frame: Deficit Minded

- Differences in educational outcomes (i.e. for “minoritized” students, such as lower rates of retention or degree completion), are typically attributed to cultural stereotypes, inadequate socialization, or lack of motivation and initiative on the part of the students
- Lack of preparation for college or failure to achieve success in college is attributed to deficiencies within individuals or groups

Bensimon, 2005

Deficit-Minded: At-risk individuals

- Images: “academically under-prepared,” “disadvantaged,” “negatively affected,” “under-performing,” “at-risk,” “needy,” “lacking skills,” and “isolated”
- Achievement gaps rooted in deficit thinking; places onus of redress on those who are affected; individuals are failing to achieve
- Racially minoritized individuals are viewed as at-risk before and after entering the university, and dependent on the university for access to and success in higher education, as well as for safety and support.

(Iverson, 2007, 2019; McNair et al., 2020)
Cognitive Frame: Diversity Minded

- Attuned to demographic differences
  - Manhattanville is a diverse community
- Diversity is viewed as an institutional characteristic that promotes learning outcomes and better prepares students for an increasingly diverse workforce and society. (p. 101)
- Focus on intercultural understanding, inter-group (i.e. inter-racial) contact
- Recognition and affirmation programs
- Less cognizant of unequal outcomes & inequities

Bensimon, 2005

Diversity Minded: Affirming Individuals

- Calls for diverse persons to be “valued,” “welcomed,” “appreciated,” “recognized,” “honored,” “respected,” “included,” and “celebrated.”
- Create “diversity-friendly environment” “that is welcoming and supportive of all people” adding that a “climate for success” contains “an affirmation of each individual's intrinsic value” and demands that “the campus must be more welcoming of difference”
- Fails to interrogate how whiteness is embedded in community, inclusion, excellence, collegiality, professionalism

(Iverson, 2007, 2019; McNair et al., 2020)
Cognitive Frame: Equity Minded

- Focus on the institutional practices that produce unequal outcomes, the manifestation of institutionalized racism, and how to change institutions to produce equitable educational outcomes
- Inequalities exist within a historical, political, structural context
- Reveal underlying assumptions about what contributes to or produces the inequities (i.e. marginalization of minoritized individuals)

(Bensimon, 2005; McNair et al., 2020)

Equity–Minded

- Critically examine policies, practices, systems through a lens that questions why inequities exist.
- Explicit attention to structural disparities and institutional racism (and intersections with other –isms)
- Reveal equity (not achievement) gaps
- Illuminate how race (whiteness, institutional racism) is operating in everyday practices, i.e. hiring, program reviews, strategic planning, data reporting, syllabi, website content...
Example: women & advancement

- **Deficit minded**: Women do not have some of the skills needed to advance as leaders in the org. We should institute programs and mentoring to help women develop the professional skills needed.
- **Diversity minded**: We have women leaders at multiple levels of the org. We must recognize and celebrate their achievements.
- **Equity-minded**: The org. is gendered. Some leadership characteristics are privileged/rewarded (i.e. competitive, assertive, autonomy) over others (i.e. caring, relational). Criteria begin to be questioned.

Example: Race & Achievement Gap

- **Deficit minded**: Racial minorities are under-prepared. We institute bridge programs and remediation to ‘help them’ develop the skills needed to succeed.
- **Diversity minded**: We will recognize, welcome, and celebrate achievements/difference; diversify co/curriculum; focus on representation.
- **Equity-minded**: The org. is racialized. Racial privilege/whiteness is the standard against which “others” are measured (i.e. graduation rates). Data are disaggregated to reveal inequities & criteria begin to be questioned.
Becoming Equity-Minded

- individuals who are more cognizant that exclusionary practices, institutional racism, and power asymmetries impact opportunities and outcomes for Black and Latina/o students. *Equity-minded individuals attribute unequal outcomes ... to institution-based dysfunctions*, while deficit-minded individuals construe unequal outcomes as originating from student characteristics. Thus equity-minded individuals reflect on their own and their colleagues' role in and responsibility for student success (Bensimon, 2005; McNair et al., 2020).

Doing Equity-Minded Work

- “...enable people to develop the critical analytical tools necessary to understand oppression and their own socialization within oppressive systems, and to develop a sense of agency and capacity to interrupt and change oppressive patterns and behaviors in themselves and in the institutions and communities of which they are a part” (Bell, 2007, p. 2).
What gets measured, gets done

- By disaggregating data, institutions are able to locate the most critical equity gaps
  - **Awareness**: Engage in self-assessment (i.e. programmatic, departmental, institutional) to provide a clear and unambiguous picture of inequities
  - **Interpretation**: Analyze and interpret the meaning of the inequities
  - **Action**: Develop strategic actions to achieve equity in educational outcomes based on data, not assumptions

Making in/equity visible

- Disaggregate data (institutional, programmatic, course-level) by race/ethnicity, i.e. grades, enrollment, majors, involvement, scholarships, internships, course-level success rates
- If African American students comprise 8% of student population, then do they comprise 8% of all programs, e.g., Honors enrollment, student gov’t, RAs, conduct cases, tutoring, writing support?
- What strategic plans/action steps are needed to correct inequities?
Equity Thinking

- What cognitive frames are visible (or not) in your work?
- In what ways can equity thinking be encouraged (institutionalized)?
- How might you/we reframe your work?
- In what ways might we shift cognitive frames from deficit and diversity toward equity?
- What kinds of structures and processes might produce individual and collective learning to bring about equity thinking?

Bensimon, 2005, p. 104

Taking Equity Action

- Where and when might there be “right moments” and opportunities for taking equity action?
  - Beginnings, mid-points, and endings
- How do you determine when to wait and analyze, versus taking action?
  - What are the steps that can be taken along the way toward equity?
- What challenges exist to ‘leading at the right moment’?
References


