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COMMENTARY

I-O psychology for everyone: Use of culturally responsive teaching to increase diversity and inclusion in undergraduate classrooms

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Diversity and inclusion is one of the four areas in which Kath's and colleagues' (2021) focal article recommends instructors apply findings from the I-O psychology field to their own teaching practice when teaching undergraduate I-O psychology classes. One suggested large-scale change recommends that instructors engage in culturally responsive teaching practices by becoming diversity experts and allies to diverse people. This commentary builds on their suggestion by giving a more nuanced perspective of culturally responsive teaching practices based on Geneva Gay's (2002) work. Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) practices could make I-O psychology more appealing to a greater number of undergraduate students but, perhaps more importantly, encourage more minority students (otherwise largely underrepresented in I-O psychology) to join the field. Further, CRT exposes students in the majority to a wider array of experiences, which can increase their understanding and affinity toward people from other social groups. In this way, CRT can serve as a tool to teach empathy, which can improve attitudes toward and about people from different social groups (Bouley & Godfrey, 2008).

Culturally responsive teaching

Culturally responsive teaching uses "the cultural characteristics, experiences, and perspectives of ethnically diverse students as conduits for teaching them more effectively" (Gay, 2002, p. 106). Although Gay's article relates to cultural and ethnic diversity, practices could (and should) be expanded to include all students who may otherwise be marginalized: first generation, LGBTQ, international, veterans, and students with disabilities.

One of the five skills required of CRT instructors is to have a solid knowledge base around cultural diversity which includes three core pieces (Gay, 2002). First, instructors must know the values, traditions, communication, learning styles, and how people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds relate to each other. This knowledge is essential because it has implications for classroom strategies and pedagogy. Second, instructors need to know the content written about diverse populations and include this information in instruction. Last, instructors must know about *and use* scholars from diverse backgrounds as exemplars in instruction. Interest is piqued and learning is accomplished when contexts are familiar and students can relate parts of their identities to those they are learning about (Gay, 2002).

Educating all students about diversity and inclusion

Educating all I-O undergraduate psychology students about diversity and inclusion will help them educationally and professionally. For students from marginalized backgrounds, CRT can help

increase feelings of inclusion and belonging, understanding of material, engagement in the classroom, and academic performance (e.g., Chen & Yang, 2017). Further, teaching and learning about diversity and inclusion is important for all students because it creates a familiarity with and tolerance for different perspectives, identities, and experiences. It is important for *all* students to both learn and *experience these concepts firsthand*, not just to enhance their learning experience but to enable them to recreate similar experiences in future professional contexts.

Teaching diversity and inclusion concepts in the classroom helps students think about problems from multiple perspectives and develop cultural intelligence (i.e., the ability and skill to adapt and function effectively in culturally diverse settings; Ang & Van Dyne, 2015). Cultural intelligence—sensitivity to contexts, attention to relevant information, perspective taking to overcome ethnocentrism, and delaying judgement about others (Triandis, 2006)—can manifest in successful workplace relationships across cultures. This is especially important as workforces become increasingly globalized and team-based work moves toward greater diversity (Erez et al., 2013; Gelfand et al., 2017). Team members of leaders who are more inclusive have been found to be more helpful (Randel et al., 2016), and employees who felt they had equal access to opportunities in their work environment subsequently felt more empowered and free to express their identities at work, and they were less likely to leave the organization regardless of their race or gender identity (Chrobot-Mason & Aramovich, 2013). Curriculums that account for cultural differences and foster inclusivity can help prepare all students to become better employees, team members, and leaders.

Changes

All instructors of various I-O psychology courses can build CRT into their curriculum. Building on the feature article's model, we propose small, medium, and large changes to help instructors reach more diverse populations in their I-O psychology courses.

Small changes: pedagogical changes in your classroom

Any number of small changes can be made to classroom instruction to make I-O course content more inclusive, accessible, and engaging. First, instructors must consider instruction and expectations from the student perspective and think about how we might inadvertently isolate students from marginalized backgrounds. Students from cultures with highly defined power distance, for example, may be hesitant to jump into large classroom conversations if put on the spot without warning (Latham & Hill, 2014). Silence in the classroom should not always be taken as a sign of disengagement; it may signal deeper differences in understanding or comfort with the type of engagement encouraged in class. Current assumptions and expectations about what represents "good" classroom behavior or engagement are often built from a perspective that heavily favors the dominant societal culture. As such, the teaching practices built around such assumptions are often biased and can disadvantage some students.

Tweaking pedagogy to include more multiculturally sensitive practices at key points in the learning process (i.e., input, elaboration, and application) can also increase CRT (Hammond, 2015). Instructors can engage student input (and thereby interest) through methods such as pair and share, call and response, and asking provoking questions (Hammond, 2015). Having students elaborate on content and connect it with existing funds of knowledge helps deepen understanding (Subero et al., 2015). Applying the information through activities that require writing (e.g., "storyifying," spoken word poetry), using graphics (e.g., infographics, art), or assigning long-term projects help solidify learning (Hammond, 2015). Jabbar and Hardaker (2013) examined CRT practices at the college level through use of in-class self-reflections, targeted case studies, and broadened questions with business students from diverse backgrounds and religions. They found that self-reflections allowed students to self-disclose and provided the opportunity for instructors

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to know students on a deeper level. Further, case studies that reflected the representation of the students fostered a deeper connection with the material, and expanding questions to include how various diverse populations might be affected increased relatability and critical thinking (Jabbar & Hardaker, 2013).

Feedback is quintessential to learning and perhaps the most widely used pedagogical tool in every instructor's toolbox. Feedback should always be instructive, specific, timely, and supportive (Hammond, 2015). However, to be culturally responsive, feedback must also maintain high standards, offer assurance that the student is capable, and provide actionable steps. Such feedback builds self-efficacy through reframing misconceptions and builds on areas of competence (Hammond, 2015). Holding high expectations for student performance will build intellectual capacity and critical thinking skills, often underdeveloped in students from underserved communities (Vang, 2005).

Medium changes: tweaks in content

Medium-sized changes draw directly from Gay's (2002) requirements for CRT. Namely, we recommend building and teaching a solid knowledge base about diverse populations and including diverse scholars in instruction. Instructors can modify the content and structure of courses and apply examples to more diverse populations. For instance, when discussing primary theories and models in class, instructors can present research on how these theoretical or empirical models may function differently for individuals based on demographic characteristics. For example, when discussing training modalities and effectiveness, instructors can present data on how different types of trainings may be biased against certain people (Brooks & Clunis, 2007), or one could discuss how leadership theories, such as leadership categorization theory, can help to explain race differences seen in organizational leadership (Rosette et al., 2008).

Similarly, instructors can develop assignments or in-class activities that allow students to generate ideas about how certain theories may better explain employee behavior or outcomes for one group versus other groups. For instance, one may ask how and why different theories of employee motivation may be more (or less) effective in explaining behavior for employees with marginalized identities compared with those in the majority. In this way, instructors are able to build in diversity and inclusion throughout a course as opposed to discussing it as a siloed topic for one or two class periods. This will allow students to better understand content in terms of not only the utility but also the potential limitations in explaining employee outcomes for some groups. This also pushes students to engage in critical thinking about the content and learn to dissect the research in a way that provides a more inclusive understanding of how processes operate effectively or ineffectively depending on individual and group differences.

In addition, instructors can provide course material developed from a more diverse group of experts. Instructors can expand content to explicitly include discussions of minorities' contributions and theoretical perspectives from the vantage point of minorities. An example is to include a discussion of the work of Charles Clinton Spaulding, who can be considered the founding father of Black management. A discussion of Spaulding's work and other Black leaders are discussed in Prieto and Phipps's (2019) book *African American Management History*. Another example is to discuss the scholarship and applied work of James Outtz, the first Black SIOP president-elect (2016), as well as the work of other racial minorities and women.

When providing material from scholars from traditionally underrepresented groups, instructors can provide background information on the author that includes demographic representation. Similarly, providing background information on all authors discussed can be a powerful tool that paints a fairly homogenous picture for both the students and instructors. Pointing this out and discussing the implications of homogeneity of those who are considered the great thinkers of I-O psychology is another powerful way to introduce a discussion on the implications of the work discussed for all employees.

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Another way to do this is to ensure that diverse examples are used. For instance, if videos are used to illustrate different points, think about using videos that highlight racial minorities or other traditionally marginalized groups. A final way to do this is to invite guest speakers from different social identity groups to come speak to the class. In each of these illustrations, instructors do not necessarily need to explicitly discuss diversity for the change to be effective. Simply providing exposure to a diverse set of experts can be beneficial in breaking down prototypes of what a typical or ideal I-O psychologist looks like. Indeed, if students are only primarily explicitly exposed to demographic information about the founders of I-O (the majority of whom were White men) and the content presented tends to be biased (even unconsciously) toward White and male cultures, then students may unconsciously develop prototypes of who works in the field of I-O psychology that can perpetuate bias of who should pursue a career in this field. This exposure may be particularly beneficial for minority students because it can also serve as a mechanism to provide role models for students who belong to underrepresented groups. Indeed, seeing role models who are similar to themselves can show students the possibilities of successfully navigating a career in the field (for a review, see Ruggs & Hebl, 2012).

Large changes: personal reflection

Be a "warm demander" (Kleinfeld, 1975)—an instructor who cares enough to hold high academic standards of all students and requires students to meet them while commanding respect and fostering a positive and safe learning environment. This is a lofty goal that requires that we know our students *and ourselves*.

Kath and colleagues (2021) classified "get to know the student and yourself" as a small change, but we beg to differ. Self-knowledge is what undergirds our instruction and has enormous implications for the classroom experience. Knowing ourselves takes time and effort, and it may require that we confront aspects of ourselves that cause discomfort. It means learning about our privilege and positionality and relearning how to relate to others who are different than ourselves by adopting a new lens. We must devote time to read works by luminaries such as Robin DiAngelo (2018, *White Fragility*), Ibram X. Kendi (2019, *How to Be an Antiracist*), and Richard Milner (2016, *Rac(e)ing to Class*), and others and then examine our beliefs and our practices. This type of work has the potential to move us toward culturally responsive teaching by increasing our empathy and compelling us to exercise compassion and flexibility when working with students in higher education who may be under pressures that we never had to endure (Jabbar & Hardacker, 2013). Indeed, true self-reflection is usually the hardest work. But, with it, comes the greatest gains.

For those of us with voice and decision-making power within our departments, we can also engage in doing the work to increase diversity within our department to reach a wider swath of classrooms. This can be done by examining the current undergraduate curriculum and teaching practices of faculty within the department to determine how diversity and inclusion are currently being incorporated in classrooms and pushing to make it something that we require our faculty begin to incorporate in all courses. Again, this can come in the form of increasing inclusive teaching strategies as well as changing the content of what is taught. Departments can also support professional development opportunities to help faculty increase CRT practices.

Culturally responsive teaching (CRT) in online instruction

We would be remiss if we omitted a discussion of online instruction given recent historical events. Online instruction presents unique challenges and an area for growth as instructors gain awareness and understanding of cultural differences among students (Rogers et al., 2007; Tapanes et al., 2009) and how these may manifest in online instruction. Cultural differences can influence student expectations as well as teaching and learning expectations (Rogers et al., 2007). For

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instance, students' culturally imbued tolerance for ambiguity or expectations for the level of course structure may conflict with their expectations about participating in intensive discussions (Tapanes et al., 2009). Instructors need to be mindful of how students from different cultures and backgrounds use language and interpret symbols (Rogers et al., 2007) and how they interpret feedback (Hyland, 2013) and visual icons (Knight et al., 2009). Additionally, instructors should consider different ability levels and ways that students may access course materials. Taking time to learn and use universal design (UD) strategies that make the learning environment accessible and understandable to all students is important. Examples of beneficial UD strategies include providing class notes and audio versions of readings and providing transcripts and closed captioning for audio and video materials. To be truly inclusive, we need to consider CRT in all contexts and learning environments.

Conclusion

Diversity and inclusion should not be considered tangential to I-O psychology in terms of a content area or practiced behaviors. Rather, increasing diversity and fostering inclusion are central to building smarter workplaces, which is the goal of I-O psychology. As such, instructors should make a more concerted effort of infusing our classrooms with diversity and inclusive practices by engaging in culturally responsive teaching. The increase of CRT in I-O psychology classrooms helps us develop more well-rounded and tolerant students who will enter the labor market. It also helps us attract a more diverse pool of talented students to the field of I-O psychology, which will only make our science better.

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