THE FUTURE OF DIVERSITY RESEARCH

Proceedings

NATIONAL CENTER FOR INSTITUTIONAL DIVERSITY
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
The National Center for Institutional Diversity (NCID) seeks to strengthen and integrate research about diversity, equity and inclusion in education and society, and to promote its effective use in addressing contemporary issues. They promote cross-disciplinary scholarship by engaging in its direct production, supporting the work of others, and disseminating promising findings from affiliated scholars, faculty, and graduate students. The NCID develops leaders and promotes effective leadership programs that make use of diversity related research.
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INTRODUCTION

Since its inception, we at the National Center for Institutional Diversity (NCID) have worked to build a network of scholars researching issues of diversity, the network itself diverse in discipline, rank, research interests, identity, and geography. As the voices of underrepresented groups in the United States and across the world have continued to crescendo in the battle for equity and inclusion, the members of our Diversity Scholars Network are uniquely positioned to provide the scholarship and expertise to shape the future of public policy that will allow silenced populations to fully participate and thrive in our multicultural world.

But, just as there exist serious barriers to participation for underrepresented populations, higher education has yet to fully develop the support mechanisms and venues to conduct and disseminate diversity research. While the scholars exist — leaders, pioneers, and activists — how can we broaden access to the tools of diversity research?

BACKGROUND

In May of 2016, the NCID hosted the first convening of our Diversity Scholars Network, a radical effort to collapse disciplinary barriers and bring together scholars from across the world committed to diversity-related research. “The Future of Diversity Research” sought to widen the avenues for the creation, circulation, and celebration of diversity research so that the faculty of our future can represent the principles and communities that will lead the next generation.

GOALS

The event proceeded with five interrelated goals:

1. Build stronger connections with and among diversity scholars and develop a community for future collaboration;
2. Share and workshop cutting-edge, multidisciplinary diversity-oriented research for progress individually, societally, and in the field;
3. Gain professional support from experts in academia, philanthropy, public scholarship, and publishing;
4. Discuss barriers and opportunities for diversity scholars and, where appropriate, faculty of color in the academy; and
5. Explore the possibilities and promises for diversity scholarship beyond the walls of the academy.

In the following sections, we summarize examples of revolutionary and progressive diversity scholarship from our Network and highlight the knowledge we’ve developed for how we can advance diversity scholarship. We hope this convening will set the stage for developing collaborations across institutional and disciplinary lines while strengthening the ability of our scholars to advance their careers and research.
What is “Diversity Research”? 

Throughout the convening, we revisited the concept of “diversity research” – Who performs it? Who does it benefit? What is being studied? - in order to shape our future scholarship. At its core, diversity research is an interdisciplinary pursuit of knowledge meant to understand the adversities and advancement of disadvantaged populations, with a particular emphasis in engaging our communities of study in self-growth and reflection. Just as our scholars range in identities and interests, the approaches and implications of this research are also diverse. But all diversity research and scholars share a common goal: advancing equity and inclusion throughout our society.
better outcomes for DEI initiatives. The directors argued that policies must be created, examined, and enacted in context while the consequences of subtext must be explored at both the individual and community levels. While the historically exclusionary system of higher education has created both structural and cultural biases, Dr. Burkhardt and Mr. Ortega posit that a close examination of subtext can help diversity scholarship to escape from the boundaries encapsulating the academy.

NCID Workshop #4: Using Mindfulness and Contemplative Practices to Establish and Maintain a Focus on Diversity

Lenwood Heyman noted the heavy weight of diversity scholarship, originating from the enormous barriers to the work and advancement of faculty and the communities they study. From the University of Michigan – Flint’s School of Public Health and Health Studies, Dr. Heyman identified mindfulness techniques to equip diversity scholars with the awareness, centering, and presence necessary to navigate the complexity of the academy and communities where our faculty work. Drawing upon mindfulness exercises ranging from “Best Possible Self” to “Goal Visualization”, Dr. Heyman introduced techniques that can be used in the classroom and the field to help faculty build resilience as they dismantle oppression.

Keynote: The Power of the Past: Understanding Cross-Class Marriages

Hailing from Duke University’s Department of Sociology, Jessi Streib studies how social class is represented and recreated in everyday life. Drawing from her book, “The Power of the Past: Understanding Cross-Class Marriages”, Dr. Streib’s keynote presentation explored the institution of marriage and how diversity scholarship can emerge from invisible sources. While Dr. Streib examined white, upper-class, heterosexual marriages, she found powerful sensibilities that dictated how individuals examined questions ranging from leisure to discipline to finance, showing that “the class does not come out of the person after the person comes out of the class”. Noting that respondents often had more in common with those with whom they chose to surrounded themselves, Dr. Streib accentuated the importance of examining diversity within the monolithic identities we often examine, while noting the increasing weight of class in an era of growing economic inequality.

Dr. Carol Schneider

In one of her last public appearances as the president of the American Association of Colleges and Universities, Dr. Carol Schneider spoke of the importance and impact that diversity research has had in shaping modern higher education. As a major advocate for inclusive education and a leader in diversifying the faculty, Dr. Schneider was able to speak to both the present successes and the future challenges in being an underrepresented student or faculty member, conducting diversity research in difficult climates, and using diversity research to inform practices that balance equity and inclusion.
ADVANCING RESEARCH

“Making Research Work”

Our Diversity Scholars Network is committed to the creation and dissemination of research to inform practice that will lead to a more equitable and inclusive society, but the sensitive nature of diversity research means it’s not always clear how to communicate this work outside of academia. Through a series of workshops, senior faculty, administrators, and policy experts worked with our Diversity Scholars to understand how to make diversity research accessible, impactful, and public.

Transforming Understandings

Through a panel discussion by members of the Diversity Scholars Network, the NCID introduced our first collaborative research project made entirely by the Network: “Transforming Understandings of Diversity in Higher Education”, available through Stylus Publishing. The NCID brought together junior and senior faculty members from across the country and across disciplines to discuss how demography, democracy, and discourse interrelate with diversity and how these issues impact society and higher education. This inaugural text marks the beginning of our efforts to aggregate the multi-faceted subjects of “diversity research” and will be the foundation for future collaborations between our Diversity Scholars.

Diversifying the Faculty

Partnering with the American Association of Colleges and Universities, the NCID announced the upcoming publication of the second edition of “Diversifying the Faculty: A Guidebook for Search Committees”. The first edition, published in 2002, was one of the foundational texts that leaders in higher education used while attempting to recruit and support more diverse faculty in the 21st century. The latest edition will provide even greater detail and research on how to substantially expanded resources on supporting perform inclusive and equitable faculty searches with diverse faculty as they grow their careers.

Check out the National Center for Institutional Diversity’s Youtube channel for footage of the event.
Connect and Engage

The NCID is committed to building opportunities for our scholars to collaborate, showcase their work, and advance diversity-related scholarship. Staying connected with the NCID and with the Diversity Scholars Network will help our scholars learn about the latest efforts and knowledge in diversity research and help strengthen our Network’s ability to advance their own research and the value of diversity research across institutions and disciplines. The NCID uses various channels to develop and engage with our Network through social media, and we encourage you to join the conversation on these channels so you can continue being a part of the effort to advance the future of diversity research.
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