Reducing Health Disparities & Promoting Educational Equity in Higher Education: The Role of Health Promotion

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What Is Social Justice?

- Both a process & a goal to achieve:
  - “Full & equal participation of all groups in a society that is mutually shaped to meet their needs”
  - Equitable distribution of resources
- Vision is for all individuals to:
  - Be physically & psychologically safe
  - Be self-determining & interdependent
  - Have sense of own agency & social responsibility toward & with others, community & global society

Source: Adams, Bell & Griffin, 2007
While these are necessary preconditions for social justice, they are insufficient:

- (Demographic) diversity
- Multicultural awareness
- Cross-cultural competence
- Intergroup dialogue & coalition-building
Interplay of Social Justice

- Social & Political Equity
- Income & Wealth Equity
- Educational Equity
- Health Equity
College Enrollment Trends

- Declining pipeline
  - Peak in Fall 2008: 85% of 18-24 year olds had completed high school
  - Decline through 2014-15 for most states, with small increase starting 2015-16

- No racial/ethnic majority
  - Through 2024, White students will decrease, while Asian (38.5%), Black (7.6%) & Hispanic (44.6%) students will increase

- Concept of “traditional student” is eroding
  - Nearly 40% of all students are 25 or older, and this will continue to increase
  - 33.7% think there is “some” or “very good” chance they will need extra time to complete their degree
  - 22.9% think there is “some” or a “very good” chance they will transfer
Increased levels of anxiety, depression & stress
  - Higher demand for amenities & student support
  - Nearly 60% do not meet the SAT benchmark for college readiness, i.e., 1550 = 65% probability of obtaining a first-year GPA of B- or higher
    - 50.7% rated their emotional health as “above average” or “highest 10%” compared to peers – an all-time low
    - 9.5% reported feeling “frequently” depressed

More pragmatic approach to college
  - 86.1% would like to get a better job
  - 82.2% want to learn more about their interests
  - 77.1% want to get training for a specific career
  - 72.8% want to make more money
College Enrollment Trends

- Increased financial challenges for students
  - 50% of first-year students choose a college within 100 miles of home
  - 46.9% chose where to attend due to financial assistance offered
  - 44.9% chose where to attend based upon cost
  - It’s taking longer to complete college
- More wired but less socially connected
  - 58% of students own three or more internet-capable devices
  - For high school seniors, the amount of time spent partying, consuming alcohol & spending time with friends is at an all time-low

Social Determinants of Health

- The conditions in which people are born, grow, work, live & age
- The wider set of forces & systems shaping the conditions of daily life, including economic policies & regulations, development agendas, social norms, social policies & political systems
- Are shaped by the distribution of money, power & resources at global, national, regional & local levels
- Are mostly responsible for health inequities - the unfair & avoidable differences in health status seen within & between countries & communities

Social Determinants of Health

Source: Healthy People 2020
Factors in Student Persistence

Theory of Student Departure & Retention

- Quality of teaching
- Advising/mentoring
- Learning support
- Facilities
- Technology
- Academic resources
- Cultural inclusivity

Academic Integration

Retention or Departure Decision

External Commitments

- Cost of attendance
- Campus life
- Counseling
- Health care
- Social support
- Life events
- Co-curricular choices

Educational & Occupational Goal Commitment

Institutional Commitment

Social Integration

Formal

Academic System

Informal

Social System

Family Background, e.g., mother’s level of education

Individual Skills & Abilities

Socio-Political Advantages & Disadvantages

Pre-University Experiences

Adapted from Vincent Tinto (1975; 1987; 1993)
Factors in Student Persistence

Geometric Model of Student Persistence & Achievement
Adapted from Educational Policy Institute

The Student Experience

Cognitive Factors
- Academic Rigor
- Quality of Learning
- Aptitude
- Content Knowledge
- Study Skills
- Critical Thinking Ability
- Intellectual Curiosity
- Learning Skills
- Open to Diversity & New Ideas
- Time Management
- Academic-Related Extracurricular Activities
- External vs. Internal Locus of Control
- Learning Styles
- Tenacity, Resilience

Institutional Factors
- Recruitment & Admissions
- Curriculum & Instruction
- Financial Aid
- Academic & Student Services
- Campus Climate
- Facilities & Structures
- Safety & Security
- Technology Infrastructure

Social Factors
- Financial Issues
- Educational Legacy
- Attitude Toward Learning
- Religious Background
- Maturity
- Social Coping Skills
- Communication Skills
- Interpersonal Skills
- Cultural Values & Background
- Expectations
- Goal Commitment
- Family Influence
- Peer Influence
- Social Lifestyle
- Experience with Oppression
- Social & Economic Privilege
Theory of Student Involvement

- Three core concepts about students:
  - **Inputs** - demographic characteristics, their background & previous experiences
  - **Environment** - all of the experiences which occur during college
  - **Outcomes** - including knowledge, attitudes, beliefs & values that exist after graduating from college

- Five basic assumptions about involvement:
  - Involvement requires an investment of psychosocial & physical energy
  - Involvement is continuous & amount of energy invested varies by student
  - Aspects of involvement may be qualitative & quantitative
  - What a student gains from being involved (or their development) is directly proportional to the extent to which they were involved (in both aspects of quality & quantity)
  - Academic performance is correlated with student involvement

*Source: Alexander Astin, 1985*
Looking Ahead to Change

- Three key observations
  - Our work is located in an educational institution
  - Health enhances the capacity for learning
  - Health promotion professionals are well-positioned to lead efforts to promote student access/success

- Make three essential shifts:
  - Clinician
  - Educator
  - Provider-Driven
  - Student-Centered
  - Color-Blind
  - Social Justice Agent
An academic focus on health issues, as complex, multi-dimensional public problems of great consequence, has the capacity to improve undergraduate education.

The assets of a good undergraduate education, properly directed, have the capacity to promote health and prevent disease.

Continuum of the Role of Health in Higher Education

Physical education and personal hygiene

Fee-for-service or segregated fee funded medical/mental health care

Basic consumer need or individual right

Student development activity

Academic support service

Tool for building community and engaging students

Essential to fulfilling the mission of institutions of higher education

Color-Blind to Social Justice Agent

PARADIGM SHIFTS

Striving for equality → Striving for equity
Identifying at-risk individuals → Acknowledging the system is “broken”
Learning about “other cultures” → Dismantling systems of entitlement, power & privilege
“Color blindness” → Critical self-examination
Celebrating diversity → Advocating for systemic change
Focusing on intent → Focusing on impact

Adapted from: Paul Gorski, EdChange.org, 2010
Why Is Social Justice So Elusive?

- Large numbers of well-intentioned privileged individuals are not aware of their advantages/entitlements or the hurtful/harmful impacts they generate
  - Intersection of identities makes privilege hard to see
  - We claim individual or group identity when it best serves us
- Unconscious bias is a powerful determinant of human actions & communications
  - Take Harvard University’s Implicit Association Test at https://implicit.harvard.edu/
  - Modern-day oppression is more likely to manifest as micro-aggressions rather than explicit transgressions
- Our internal language & paradigms for analysis have been socialized to inhibit transformative change
- Difficult to be liberated from the cycle of socialization

Source: Southern Poverty Law Center, 2015; Harvard University Project Implicit, 2015; Harro, 2000 & 2010
THE DANGER OF THE “SINGLE STORY” -

- Natural tendency to rely on single stories to define reality
- Single stories may be true, but they are incomplete
- Where the story begins is important
- Those in power can control which story is told & suppress others
- Social change requires that multiple stories are told & heard

Seven Languages of Transformation

1. From complaint to commitment
2. From blame (others) to personal responsibility
3. From New Year’s resolutions to competing commitments
4. From the truths that hold us (or big assumptions) to the assumptions we hold
5. From prizes & (indirect, non-specific) praising to ongoing regard
6. From rules & policies to public agreement (or individual to organizational Integrity)
7. From constructive criticism (behavioral change) to deconstructive criticism (mutual learning)

Source: Kegan & Lahey, 2001
The quality of mind & spirit that enables one to face up to ethical dilemmas & moral wrongdoings firmly & confidently, without flinching or retreating.

Differs from physical courage in that:

- Addresses intangible versus tangible matters
- Risk is inherent in success rather than from failure
- Can be practiced by anyone regardless of age, gender, physical ability or surroundings

Source: Institute for Global Ethics, 2001

Source: Rushworth Kidder, Moral Courage, 2005
### Title IX As Social Justice Work

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<tr>
<th><strong>TRADITIONAL PARADIGM</strong></th>
<th><strong>SOCIAL JUSTICE PARADIGM</strong></th>
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<td>Focuses primarily on individual responsibility (usually that of the victim, as well as that of the bystander)</td>
<td>Focuses on individual actions <em>plus</em> systemic/cultural factors, institutional policies, political context &amp; their interrelationship</td>
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<td>Agency of the perpetrator is largely invisible or unacknowledged</td>
<td>Agency of the perpetrator &amp; the system that supports his/her actions is named &amp; made transparent</td>
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<td>Does not acknowledge the salience of identity, power &amp; privilege in human interactions</td>
<td>Intersections of identity, power &amp; privilege are essential to understanding &amp; deconstructing interpersonal dynamics</td>
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<td>Violence &amp; its “prevention” are defined from the perspective of &amp; controlled by the dominant group</td>
<td>The “single story” is challenged &amp; understandings of violence are complex &amp; informed by many counter narratives</td>
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<td>Peer health educators implement programming</td>
<td>Peer health leaders are embedded in existing social groups</td>
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<td>Prevention work tends to occur in isolation; efforts are fragmented &amp; inconsistent</td>
<td>Prevention work is embedded across multiple entities working collaboratively to build &amp; sustain community capacity</td>
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<td>Focuses almost exclusively on transactional effectiveness</td>
<td>Focuses on transformational <em>and</em> transactional impact</td>
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<td>Is an overlay on the institution’s existing practices, programs, policies &amp; procedures</td>
<td>Infiltrates &amp; disrupts the systems, structures, culture &amp; core values of the institution</td>
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<td>Sustained as long as “the champion” is present</td>
<td>Sustainable over time, with many champions</td>
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<td>Requires care &amp; competence</td>
<td>Requires care, competence <em>and</em> courage</td>
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• “There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives.” - Audre Lorde
• “We must not allow ourselves to become like the system we oppose.” - Archbishop Desmond Tutu
• “When will our consciences grow so tender that we will act to prevent human misery rather than avenge it?” - Eleanor Roosevelt
• “Washing one’s hands of the conflict between the powerful and the powerless means to side with the powerful, not to be neutral.” - Paulo Freire