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How Students View Diversity in Their Education: A Qualitative Examination

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Abstract

In this study, we examined students' open responses to questions regarding their opinions about diversity on their college campus. Here, we report on responses about age, religion, and political views in the classroom and outside the classroom.

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How Students View Diversity in Their Education: A Qualitative Examination

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In this study, we examined students' open responses to questions regarding their opinions about diversity on their college campus. Here, we report on responses about age, religion, and political views in the classroom and outside the classroom.

Group	In the Classroom															Outside the Classroom																								
	Age					Religion					Political Views					Effect on Life After College					Age					Religion					Political Views					Effect on Life After College				
Topic of Question	+	-	N	M	D	+	-	N	M	D	+	-	N	M	D	+	-	N	M	D	+	-	N	M	D	+	-	N	M	D	+	-	N	M	D	+	-	N	M	D
% of Responses Coded as*	43.1	1	32.4	3.9	14.7	13.7	2	55.9	3.9	18.6	19.6	3.9	54.9	0	15.7	32.4	1	49	2.9	11.8	40.2	0	36.3	2.9	12.7	21.6	2	54.9	0	12.7	13.7	3.9	63.7	0	11.8	29.4	1	54.9	1	9.8
Everyone	43.1	1	32.4	3.9	14.7	13.7	2	55.9	3.9	18.6	19.6	3.9	54.9	0	15.7	32.4	1	49	2.9	11.8	40.2	0	36.3	2.9	12.7	21.6	2	54.9	0	12.7	13.7	3.9	63.7	0	11.8	29.4	1	54.9	1	9.8
European American	43.5	1.4	33.3	5.8	10.1	13	1.4	55.1	4.3	18.8	18.8	4.3	58	0	13	33.3	0	50.7	2.9	10.1	37.7	0	40.6	2.9	10.1	18.8	1.4	59.4	0	10.1	15.9	4.3	65.2	0	7.2	27.5	0	62.3	0	7.2
Non-European American	42.4	0	30.3	0	24.2	15.2	3	57.6	3	18.2	21.2	3	48.5	0	21.2	30.3	3	45.5	3	15.2	45.5	0	27.3	3	18.2	27.3	3	45.5	0	18.2	9.1	3	60.6	0	21.2	33.3	3	39.4	3	15.2
Male	40	1.4	35.7	4.3	14.3	12.9	2.9	58.6	2.9	15.7	18.6	2.9	57.1	0	15.7	27.1	1.4	55.7	1.4	11.4	37.1	0	41.4	2.9	10	20	2.9	55.7	0	10	7.1	2.9	68.6	0	12.9	25.7	1.4	57.1	0	11.4
Female	50	0	25	3.1	15.6	15.6	0	50	6.3	25	21.9	6.3	50	0	15.6	43.8	0	34.4	6.3	12.5	46.9	0	25	3.1	18.8	25	0	53.1	0	18.8	28.1	6.3	53.1	0	9.4	37.5	0	50	3.1	6.3

* + = positive, - = negative, N = neutral, M = mixed, D = disagreement among coders

Introduction

How is diversity valued on college campuses

Educators and Administrators value it based on the initiatives they enact and courses offered

Does that valuation also apply to students?

In this presentation we focus on how students view three types of diversity

in the classroom
outside the classroom
and how both will affect their life after college

How do students view diversity related to age, religion, and political views?

Other types of diversity (e.g. race & sex/gender) yielded less candid responses, although they are reflected in the life after college responses about diversity in general.

Methods

Participants

- 102 General Psychology students at a small university in the Southwest.
- Most participants (66%) were of European descent
- Most participants were male (68%)

Questionnaire

- participants completed a single questionnaire that asked for basic demographic information and for responses to open-ended questions about diversity and their education

Coding

- the 1st, 3rd, and 4th authors rated all responses about diversity as positive, negative, neutral, or mixed
- Due to the low number of coders, any item without agreement from all coders was categorized as "disagreement among coders"

Results

Students reported a range of positive, neutral, and negative reactions to diversity

Specifics breakdowns of responses are in the above table

Discussion

This research provides insight into how students value and perceive the diversity around them in the university environment. It highlights the different perspectives of those with different cultural identities. The most intriguing result is the consistent view that exposure to diversity is a neutral experience.

One clear limitation is that this study was described as a study on diversity when students were invited to volunteer. The higher than normal rate of non-European American participants may be due to that, and there is a high likelihood that there is a difference between those who chose to participate in this study and those who chose other options. Additionally, the less useful responses to items about gender and race likely represent either immature views of diversity and/or higher levels of guarded attitudes about those topics.

