

Perception is Reality

An Assessment of Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs Practitioners

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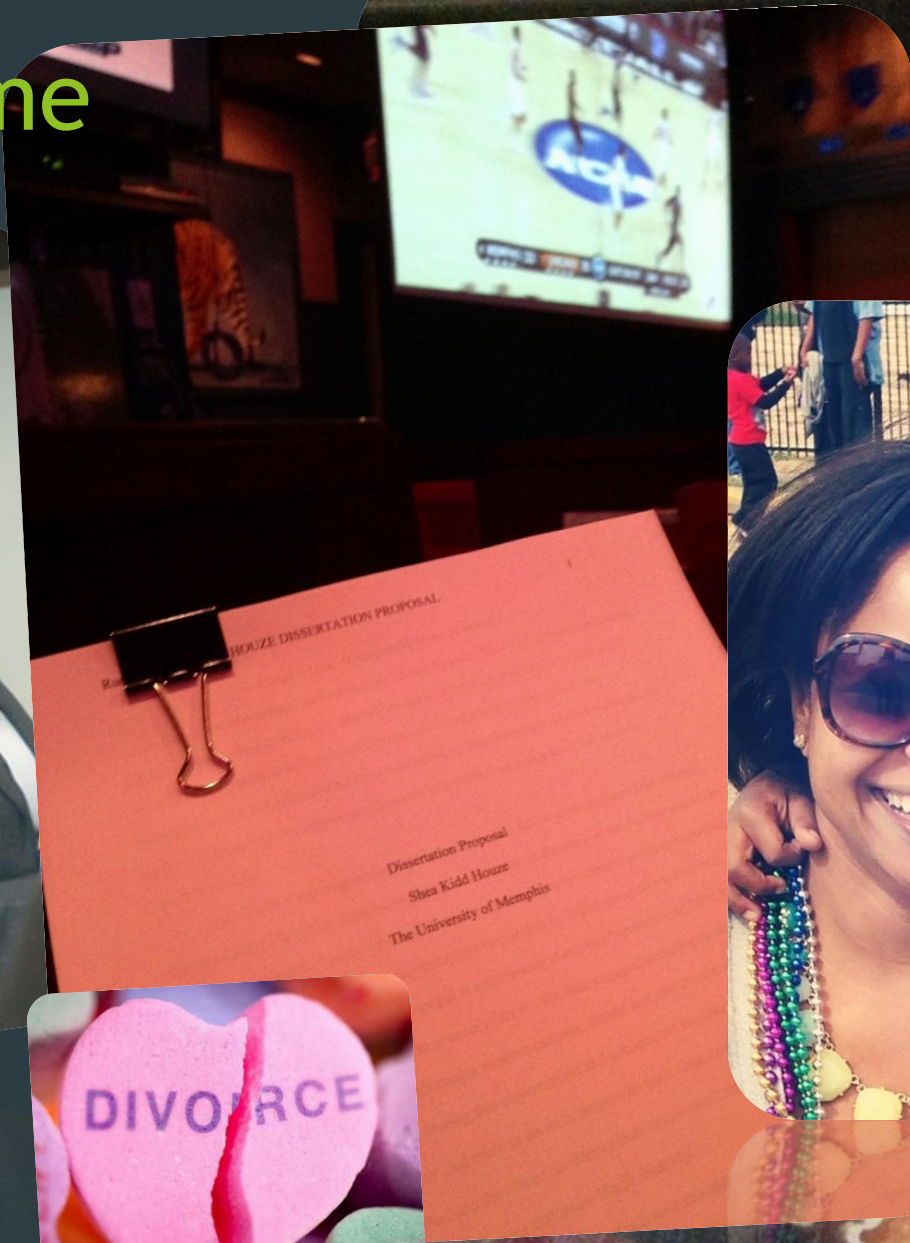
Presentation Overview

- ▶ Learning Outcomes
- ▶ Multicultural Competence Operationalized
- ▶ Contextualization of the Study
- ▶ Questions, Reactions, and Discussion
- ▶ Application and Conclusion

Learning Outcomes

- ▶ Understand Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller's multicultural competence framework
- ▶ Apply the multicultural competence framework to all aspects of student affairs practice specifically as it relates to helping and advising
- ▶ Apply research findings to issues related to inclusion on college campuses
- ▶ Acknowledge potential incongruences between personal perceptions and student perceptions of multicultural competence

About me



Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

- ▶ Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller's (2004) Multicultural Competence Framework
- ▶ Schlossberg's (1989) Marginality and Mattering
- ▶ Strange & Banning's (2001) Campus Ecology Framework
- ▶ Yosso's (2005) Deficit Discourse
- ▶ Critical Race Theoretical Lens

Multicultural Competence Context

- ▶ Rooted in counseling and psychology
- ▶ Discussed due to increased diversity at institutions of higher education
- ▶ “Hot topic” given instances of incivility, ignorance, and intolerance
- ▶ Accessibility ≠ persistence to graduation
- ▶ Deficit driven paradigms blame the student or her/his background
- ▶ Research infers that multicultural competence is a key element in creating an inclusive environment, and inclusive environments contribute to retention and graduation

Multicultural Competence

What does it mean to you?

Multiple Meanings of MC



- ▶ Involves an appreciation of differences with regard to race, gender, sexuality, religion, age and culture
- ▶ Requires an acknowledgement of racism before one can fully be multiculturally competent
- ▶ Multicultural competence and the premise of multiculturalism at-large is a way to dilute controversial issues such as institutional racism

Multicultural Competence

“The awareness, knowledge, and skills needed to work with others who are culturally different from self in meaningful, relevant, and productive ways” (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004, p. 13).

But, what does *that* mean?

- ▶ AWARENESS - “values, attitudes, and assumptions” that are needed to work with students of diverse backgrounds
- ▶ KNOWLEDGE - familiarity and understanding of the content related to various cultures
- ▶ SKILLS - the synthesis and applications of both awareness and knowledge

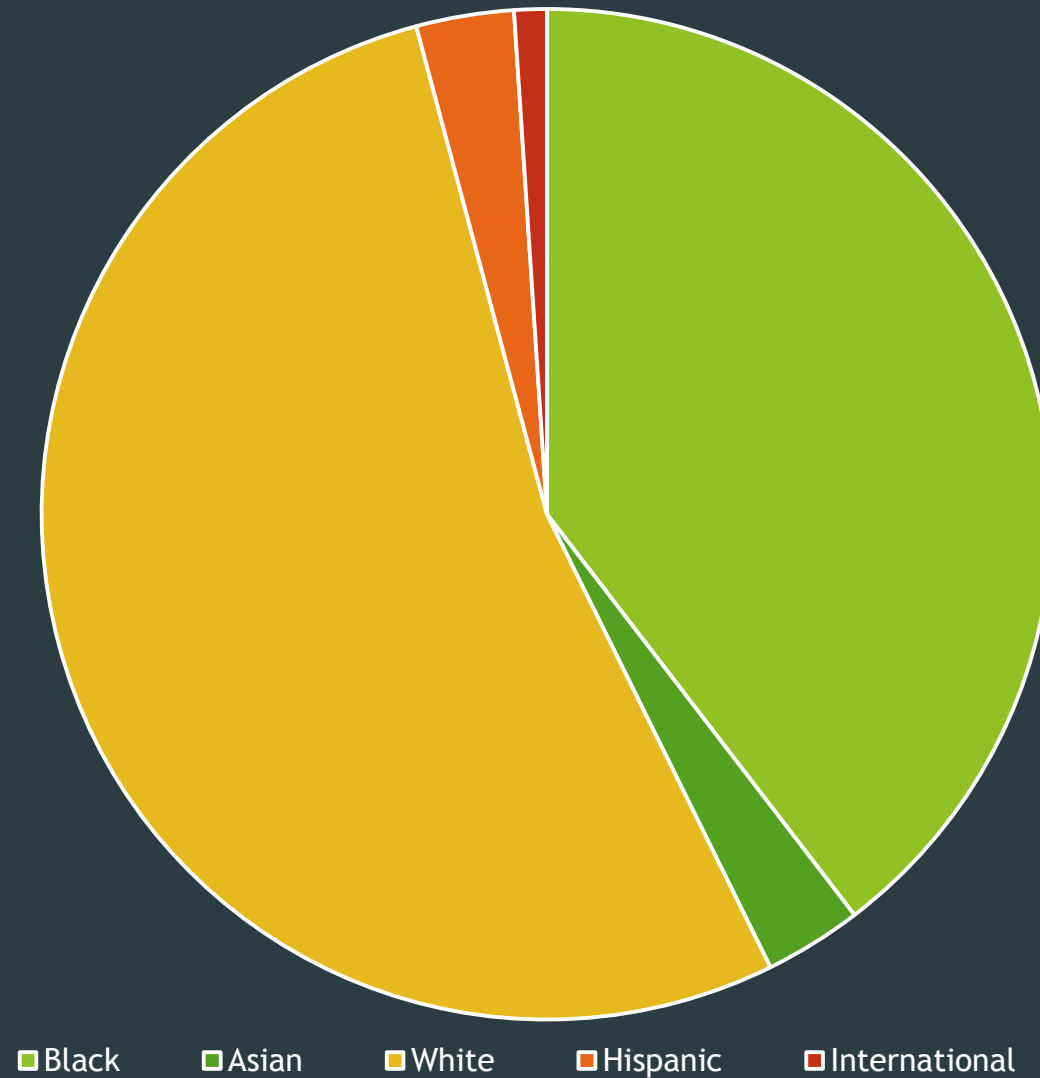
“Central to those skills is the ability to communicate across cultures and understand how culture influences the content...”

(Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004, p. 15).

Study Background

- ▶ Middle Southern University (pseudonym)
- ▶ Approximately 17,000 undergraduate students
- ▶ Primarily non-residential
- ▶ Public research institution
- ▶ Metropolitan setting

Racial Demographics



The Study

- ▶ Instrument: Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs-Preliminary 2 (MCSA-P2) Scale (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004)
- ▶ Interested the following:
 - ▶ Self-perceptions of multicultural competence (staff)
 - ▶ How students view practitioners' levels of MC
 - ▶ Any disconnects and/or incongruences
 - ▶ Similarities perceptions of MC

Findings (Staff) | Highs & Lows

HIGHS

- ▶ Understanding that racial identity plays into individuals and their experiences
- ▶ Acknowledgement that everyone is negatively affected by racism
- ▶ Acknowledgement of the existence of White privilege in society
- ▶ Recognition of the inequities in primary and secondary schools and its reinforcement of racial hegemony

Findings (Staff) | Highs & Lows

LOWS

- ▶ A set plan to increase knowledge and awareness related to multicultural issues.
- ▶ The ability to synthesize multicultural research to guide student affairs practice.
- ▶ Participation in workshops in order to learn about racial groups other than their own.
- ▶ The ability to discuss the limitations of student development theories as they apply to students of color.

Findings (Students)

HIGHS

- ▶ Acceptance by student affairs professionals at MSU.
- ▶ A belief that student affairs staff's racial and/or ethnic heritage influences their world view, values, and assumptions.
- ▶ Professionals within the division of student affairs foster an environment that promotes persistence.
- ▶ Student affairs staff members understand that racial identity can affect individuals and their experiences.
- ▶ Student affairs departments organize programs/events to meet the diverse needs of students.

Findings (Students)

LOWS

- ▶ Student affairs professionals are aware of their limitations in working with students who are racially different from them and can readily specify these limitations
- ▶ Believe that student affairs professionals understand that White privilege exists in society
- ▶ Believe that student affairs professionals acknowledge that being born a person of color presents certain challenges that White people do not have to face.
- ▶ Student affairs professionals are aware of their biases and prejudices.
- ▶ Can recall a personal interaction with a student affairs staff member where racial dynamics played a significant role.

The Disconnects

- ▶ Acknowledgement of the existence of White privilege in society
- ▶ Being born a person of color presents certain challenges that White people do not have to face.
- ▶ Student affairs professionals are aware of their limitations in working with students who are racially different from them and can readily specify these limitations

Students

Staff



More Findings & Conclusions

- ▶ Professionals' years of experience positively correlated with multicultural competence to a point
- ▶ Race was not statistically significant to MC
- ▶ Age 36-40 reported highest levels of multicultural competence, but overall, age did not have a significant relationship
- ▶ Staff's perception of multicultural competence was higher than students' perception
- ▶ Students' perceptions decreased with experience

SO WHAT?

- ▶ What does this mean to you?
- ▶ How has this played out on your campus?
- ▶ What barriers do you face as an individual regarding this topic?
- ▶ What successes have you experienced by using Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller's or another multicultural competence framework

Implications & Ideas

- ▶ Multicultural competence taskforce
- ▶ Internal assessments and reporting
- ▶ Self-efficacy training for student employees
- ▶ MC training for orientation leaders, tour guides, and student recruiters
- ▶ Spring Break Challenge
- ▶ EBI Campus Climate Instrument
- ▶ Civility Campaign
- ▶ Mix it Up Days

Implications & Ideas

- ▶ Familiarize and re-familiarize ourselves with MC literature
- ▶ This greatest area for improvement is within the “knowledge” category
- ▶ Self-reflection is the first step
- ▶ Develop deeper understanding of student development theories while understanding each student and staff person’s individual stories
- ▶ Future research: Qualitative methodologies

Conclusions and Takeaways

- ▶ Student *and* staff perceptions can hinder the experience.
- ▶ We are often reactive.
- ▶ What are our blind spots as professionals?
- ▶ Who is your accountability partner?
- ▶ Who are the “challenging” students, colleagues, or issues?
- ▶ How are we supporting, complementing, and collaboratively working with multicultural affairs departments?

Thank you for coming!

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Please provide
your feedback!

