

How Do Race and Socioeconomic Background Influence Experiences of Good Practices in Undergraduate Education?

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Background

- Existing research focusing on equity in higher education as a question of access.
- Equity of experience -- specifically the experience of vetted good practices in undergraduate education.



Good Practices

- student-faculty contact
- cooperation among students
- active learning
- academic effort/time on task
- prompt feedback to students
- high expectations
- respect for diverse experiences and ways of knowing

(Chickering & Gamson, 1987, 1991, 1999).



Importance of Good Practices

- Good practices relate to desirable higher education outcomes.
 - Graduation rates
 - Cognitive development
 - Educational aspirations
 - Openness to diversity
 - Orientations to learning



Our Research Questions

- Do low SES students experience good practices to the same extent as students from higher SES backgrounds?
- Do students of color experience good practices differently than White students?



Method

National Study of Student Learning

- Sample
 - 18 four-year and 5 two-year colleges & universities (N=2400)
- Data
 - NSSL pre-college survey
 - CSEQ and NSSL follow-up



Variables

- 19 dependent measures distributed across 7 principles of good practice:
 - Student-faculty contact
 - Cooperation among students
 - Active learning / Time on task
 - Prompt feedback
 - High expectations
 - Diverse ways of knowing & learning
 - Quality teaching
- Independent variables:
 - SES –set of dummy variables representing SES quartile (lowest quartile served as the reference category)
 - White– dummy variable, coded 0 for Students of color; 1 for White



Analyses: Stepwise OLS Regression

- Model 1 controlled for:
 - Gender
 - ACT/SAT
 - HS grades and involvement
 - HS work obligations
 - Academic motivation
 - Respondents' dependent children
 - College attended was first choice
 - Plans for a graduate degree
- Model 2 additionally controlled for:
 - On-campus residence
 - Number of credit hours completed
 - Hours worked on- and off-campus for pay
 - Course taking patterns in several areas
 - Institution type



SES Results – Effects of Model 2

Greater exposure to Good Practices

- Most statistically significant effects were found between the highest SES quartile and the lowest quartile (the reference category)
- Students in the highest SES quartile reported greater exposure to the the following good practices than did those in the lowest SES quartile
 - Faculty interest in teaching & student development
 - Course-related interactions with peers
 - Academic effort/involvement
 - Number of textbooks read
 - Number of term papers written
 - Non-course-related interactions with peers
 - Cultural & interpersonal involvement



Race/Ethnicity Results – Effects of Model 2

- White students reported greater exposure to the following good practices than their non-White peers.
 - Quality of non-classroom interactions with faculty
 - Faculty interest in teaching & student development
 - Academic effort/involvement
 - Number of essay exams in courses
 - Using computers for academic work
 - Instructional organization and preparation



Inequities in Experiences – Possible Factors

- It is not institutional differences, the types of courses taken, living on or off campus, and how much a student works.
- Experience (or lack of) may drive behaviors – cultural capital
- Are colleges and universities focusing on the needs of minority and low SES students once they reach campus?



Inequities in Experience – A Cause for Concern

- Our research reaffirms the *Greater Expectations* findings.
- Experiencing good practices contributes to positive learning outcomes and positive development.
- We expect institutions and faculty to universally support the notion that educational experiences should not depend on students' race or SES background.



Taking Action - Research

- We need further research to substantiate and update our findings.
- The Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education , a longitudinal study funded by the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts at Wabash College, will provide a significant opportunity to replicate the present findings with data more reflective of today's postsecondary students and their experiences.



Taking Action – Policies and Practices

- Recognizing and encouraging students in orientation, first-year programs, and advising.
- Encouraging faculty to enhance their teaching.
- Enhancing and implementing programs for students of color and students from low-income backgrounds.



Audience Discussion

- What do you think accounts for these findings?
- What is happening on your campus?
 - Is there an experience gap? What do your NSSE/CSEQ findings show?
 - What perpetuates the gap? How are you trying to close it?
- What policies and practices would you recommend based on the current findings?
- What additional research would you like to see?



Conclusion

- Our commitment to equality and equity cannot end with the acceptance letter. We should strive to ensure equal opportunity for all students throughout their college experience.
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