

Wahlstrom Lecture: Diversity and the Liberal Arts

Marie Walker, May 3, 2018

I want to thank the college for awarding me the privilege to speak as the Wahlstrom lecturer. I was surprised and delighted, in part because of the company I will now be keeping, but also because I deeply care about the liberal arts. Thank you, President Bergman and Provost Kelly, for having me here.

What is diversity?

I've come here today to speak as a social psychologist, teaching for 20 years at a liberal arts college, sometimes on the topic of diversity. One way to define diversity is *difference*. A simple, comprehensible definition that encompasses many interpretations of diversity. In my Psychology of Diversity class, my students show great affinity for this definition. However, we all know that diversity is interpreted as more than difference, especially in the U.S. Diversity is a divisive red flag for some, a political tool, an unreachable utopia, an exciting prospect for learning, or even a lived experience of alienation. For many of us, it's an interaction with the ideas, cultures and physical presence of social groups that are different from us. Back in 2005, I was selected to be a member of the President's Committee on Diversity, created by then Gustavus President, Jim Peterson, similar to the President's Council on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, that President Bergman has created for Gustavus. We spent the full first two of our meetings together, trying to agree on a definition of diversity! When we have a specific goal in mind, for example, diversifying our student body or our faculty, we often recognize the complexities of satisfying multiple shareholders and end up choosing simplicity in our definition: for example, Black and White. I'll be looking at research and events that involve many different social groups, but when we live and work in the U.S. sometimes we fall back on simpler definitions of diversity.

Access to a liberal arts education

I believe that the liberal arts education more directly has benefited White, upper or middle-class Americans than any other ethnic or socioeconomic group. In some ways, it seems that we (and I fall into that category) are the beneficiaries, and under the cloak of the liberal arts, we learn about those who are outside our realm of everyday experience. But, human curiosity and love of learning is shared by many who don't have the opportunity to pursue a liberal arts education.

I didn't attend a liberal arts institution as an undergraduate. As a Canadian, there were not the number of such institutions in Canada as there are in the U.S. Post-secondary education in Canada is mostly public and relatively inexpensive. I honestly didn't know what a liberal arts education was when I entered university, so in retrospect, it's interesting for me to realize that I inadvertently created one for myself. As a curious 18-year-old, I was fascinated by psychology, had studied 2 languages (French and German) and pursued another, Russian, in my first year at college. I haunted the library and looked up all I could find on Jung and his collective unconscious, Timothy Leary and the effects of LSD on the brain, Jack Kerouac and his eclectic take on life. I moved my focus from Russian language to Russian literature, pursued an art certification and volunteered at our local provincial psychiatric hospital, all while pursuing an undergraduate degree. I took 6 months off from school and travelled on the cheap to Europe, working in London and Paris, to finance my 6 months abroad. What I am attempting to say is that even if a student doesn't have access to a liberal arts education, with the accompanying study abroad and community-based learning opportunities, they actively may be pursuing such an education in another manner. I think about Rap or Hip-Hop artists, who may have had no access to the liberal arts, but can tell you everything about American history (what is written and what is missing) and the art, music, literature, politics and psychology that are impacting their daily lives. Sometimes students pursue liberal arts leanings in their work and hobbies because they can't afford an education that isn't directly aimed at finding a specific job or that has a high price tag. Or maybe they come from a family that can't even dream about the liberal arts because they only think of higher education as a ticket out of poverty.

I teach a course on Self and Identity and a First Term Seminar called Life Stories. Creating a personal narrative is one method that I teach my students to help them generate meaning and purpose in their world and I've realized that telling my own story helps me to understand my calling at a liberal arts college. Although I am not an individual from a Historically Underrepresented Group, I understand that the myriad of opportunities characterized in a liberal arts education should not be the sole privilege of White students. Perhaps touching on my own story leading to my career as a liberal arts professor can help you see the benefit of the liberal arts for diverse persons and the benefit of diversity for the liberal arts. My father was an animal behaviorist – a psychologist- and although he died when I was a baby, our home was filled with books on psychology, biology and evolution. My mother was a high school business teacher, very business savvy and politically-oriented, in her spare time. Because of my mom, I was probably one of the few 7-year-old Canadian children exposed to televised coverage of the U.S. Nixon pre-impeachment proceedings. I believe children absorb the happenings in their environment. Mine was enriched more than some, but the death of my father may have made me especially motivated to learn about his world. Perhaps loss, deprivation and adversity makes one look hard for answers, to create meaning and navigate one's personal narrative. Research that ties childhood conflict and depression to creativity, would seem to suggest such a possibility (Koestner et al., 1999; Walker et al., 1995).

Creating a diverse environment for whom: How does a story fit with the American Dream?

The liberal arts allow us different perspectives on our beliefs and disciplines. When we divide people up by different social categories (ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, ability, gender) we also see differences in perspective. In 1965, the African American writer and activist James Baldwin discussed whether, "the measure of our enlightenment, or at least our politeness, has some effect on the world" (Baldwin, 1965). He commented on Bobby Kennedy's prediction that we might have a Black president in forty years. I listened to Baldwin's recorded comments and thought, probably as many Whites do, how prescient for Kennedy to predict this happening within three years of its occurrence. But Baldwin saw only White privilege in Kennedy's comments – a man who Baldwin thought was on the road to the presidency with very little

experience. Baldwin said Blacks in Harlem laughed with “bitterness and scorn” at what he called an outlandish statement by Bobby Kennedy. James Baldwin commented further about Whites’ perspective on a Black president, “in 40 years, if you’re good, we may let you become president.” A quote is viewed as inspiring from one perspective, perhaps based on the master narrative of living the American Dream, yet interpreted from another perspective as, ‘you belong where White people have put you.’

And for whom is that American Dream achievable? For some in our country, being born in the U.S. isn’t enough to be viewed as American. Cheryan and Monin (2005) showed people photos of African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanic Americans and White Americans. Photos of White Americans were seen by participants as being more American than all the other groups, but Asian Americans were seen as the least American. Such a belief leaves Asian Americans, and often Latinos, exposed to microaggressions such as being asked, “Where did you come from” or “You speak good English.” At Gustavus, our students from Historically Underrepresented Groups are leaders on our campus by virtue of being here, in this White homogeneous setting or Predominately White institution (PWI). That our students of color sometimes stumble should be expected rather than frowned upon.

Astrophysicist, Dr. Jedidah Isler wrote an opinion piece in the NY times (2016) on the Fisher v. University of Texas affirmative action case in which a young White student saw the university’s use of race-based admission policies as limiting her ability to be admitted. When oral arguments were heard for the Supreme Court case, Chief Justice John Roberts asked, “What unique perspective does a minority student bring to a physics class?” and “I’m just wondering what the benefits of diversity are in that situation.” These are questions posited by the White majority and, according to Isler, questions that embody White privilege. We look at diversity as an added educational benefit for the White students who attend a liberal arts college. When do we ask the question, “what unique perspective does a White student bring to a physics class.” In Isler’s words, Black students “do not function primarily to enrich the learning experience of White students. Black students come to the physics classroom for the same reason White

students do; they love physics and want to know more.” Why do students of color have to justify their presence by showing what they ADD to the classroom? For the student of color, diversity representation on a liberal arts college is not LESS important than balancing the budget or building a new stadium – it is essential. It becomes obvious we should add diverse student representation to a liberal arts college when a student chooses to sit at the front of the classroom, not to see the professor better, but rather to avoid being reminded that he or she is the sole student of color in the classroom. Enriching diversity on campus, from the perspective of minority students, is like providing oxygen to breath.

As teacher who is a member of the majority culture, it is sometimes difficult to recognize that what had been the norm for me when I was younger is now recognized by our students as sexist, racist, or heterosexist. Inadvertently, faculty may be committing microaggressions. Students at Reed College in a first-year required humanities course, protested the playing of Steve Martin’s comedy song and video, “King Tut” denouncing it as racist (Bodenner, 2017). What was considered funny by many 40 years ago, just isn’t acceptable to our liberal arts students today. How many of you remember the Simpsons fondly? Do you recall the Kwik Mart owner, Apu, whose dialogue is communicated with a heavy South Asian American accent by White actor, Hank Azaria (Ito, November 2017)? As our own, Amy Seham, professor in theater and dance at Gustavus has noted in her 2001 book on improv comedy, comedy often engages racist, sexist and heterosexist material to get laughs. The problem is that something that was perceived as funny and acceptable to one generation is recognized as discrimination by subsequent generations. I imagine to some of us, such criticism is viewed as a personal attack on one’s memory and identity when experienced by someone who grew up with the stereotyped characters. Hank Azaria said at first, he was “shocked” when heard Apu’s voice was offensive, but has said since that his “eyes have been opened.” I wonder if the impact of characters such as Apu are connected to the fact that Nina Davuluri, Miss America 2014, an American born woman of South Asian descent, is not seen by Twitter account owners as American enough to win the competition (Weisman, 2013). For some, she has no right to the American Dream.

Identity: It's complicated. How is identity related to educational attainment?

To look at me and listen to me speak, you probably think I'm not much different than any other individual who might have come from a liberal arts background. I've often thought that's where the power of my persuasiveness on diversity issues could come in. As a member of the majority culture in the U.S., I look and sound like a member of the majority, but I often feel like an outsider. I'm an immigrant and have lived in places where I felt I shouldn't speak my own language. My political beliefs don't fit any of those of my neighbors, especially my views on universal healthcare, as a left-leaning Canadian turned American. But, I am not a member of a visible ethnic minority group. I am heterosexual and able-bodied and can choose not to reveal the different perspectives that I hold. Unless I am a woman walking into a male-dominated lab, definitely a lived experience for many on this campus, I fit in at least according to visible presence. Sometimes though, what we see, what we think we see, doesn't do justice to the intersectionality of individuals' lived identities.

Intersectionality, as Cole (2009) defines it is "multiple categories of identity, difference and disadvantage." We may think we can identify what our students of minority status need and want, but could be falling prey to the homogeneity effect, that means seeing an ingroup as highly varied and members of outgroups as very similar to each other. I could imagine that at a liberal arts college a White professor, such as myself, would think a Latina coming from a southwestern state would worry about how she might fit in at a liberal arts college in Minnesota. Or she might be concerned whether she'd have friends with whom she felt comfortable, whether she could bear the winter weather, or whether she feels stereotyped as less competent than White students by her teachers. We might think these are beliefs of all Latino students from Texas or California attending school in Minnesota. But in reality, she is fearful, not because of these factors that seem obvious to a White professor, but because her family is very conservative in its political and religious beliefs and she understands that students on our campus are quite liberal. This intersection of ethnic, religious and political identities is not recognized when all we see is White and non-White, straight and non-straight, or Christian

and non-Christian. And I emphasize NON, because that is often how Whites, such as me, see the world. And in this way, we define members of social groups, by what is lacking. That's how we compile data, this is how I have researched diversity; those are the comparisons we make, but the subtleties are lost for both groups. Often for Whites, heterogeneity of our ingroup is recognized, but we don't recognize that the student from a historically underrepresented group, as a result of low SES, may have to work 30 hour weeks and even while away at college may be the main caregiver to siblings or a grandparent. Such a student may come to Gustavus and never feel like she or he fits in because multiple identities are deemed too hard to quantify.

A liberal arts college is a place where you explore your identity, your history, and alternate perspectives on the world. It's a place where you learn about art, biology and philosophy in the same semester or even the same course. However, many of the individuals studied in these areas are White men. That's nothing new to many people working in higher education but how does one envision one's self in those areas if nobody articulates, for example, that an Asian American woman made a scientific breakthrough or a deaf male was the founder of an artistic movement. Through a liberal arts education, students are given the opportunity to engage in identity exploration, to experience emerging adulthood, to understand vocation – privileges that otherwise would exist mainly for the majority culture (Arnett, 2004). Many high school students cannot envision such a transformative college experience because it is a privilege meted out on the basis of identities associated with class, gender, sexuality and culture. How can a transgender student who has been victimized all through high school imagine a world of the liberal arts when he or she is just struggling to survive? And while a liberal arts campus is a beneficial place to learn about and address one's identity, how does such a process take place for Historically Underrepresented Students or others for whom emerging adulthood is more restricted.

I think about my father who was the son of a working class Scottish immigrant tool and die maker, who, for whatever, reason decided he wanted a college education. I imagine he was a curious, motivated learner, the type of student we love to see in a liberal arts institution.

Imagine, as he did, that you make your way through high school and graduate with honors. You do so well that the bank manager where you work part-time immediately wants to hire you for a full-time position. This is my father's story and my working class, immigrant grandparents were so proud of him. Then my father told his parents, I want to get a bachelor's degree, which they didn't understand, but they supported their college-bound son, although not financially. And when he graduated with a science degree and was hired to work as a chemist, his parents were absolutely thrilled. But my father decided to pursue a Masters in psychology, of all things, and was accepted to a PhD program at Brown University. At this point his parents could no longer understand why he wanted to do what he did. I think those limitations are what make it hard for some students to recognize the benefits of the liberal arts. When your family sees no benefit of education beyond providing a good job and healthy life, it makes it difficult for a young person to justify pursuing education as a means to quench a thirst for knowledge. I think of my mother who decided to become the first person in her family of 5 children to go to college, a family that had emigrated from Romania by ship with her as a 6-week old baby. She tells me the story of how she wanted so badly to attend college but, her mother, my grandmother, saw no benefit to her of education and wanted her to focus on finding a husband, rather than on studies. And so, my mom pursued her dream for college on her own and at her own expense. The limitations put on her because of her gender led to her stopping her education after a year to become married and work to support her husband through college. The struggle to reconcile the expectations of family and one's dreams is not new.

The impact of stereotypes and societal expectations on academic achievement

However, according to Syed, Azmitia and Cooper (2011), many parents of color who have had few educational opportunities motivate their children with their high expectations using less visible strategies than White middle-class parents might. They make financial sacrifices and verbally encourage their children to succeed so they won't have the limited life options that they have encountered. A bigger struggle for underrepresented students may be with the low expectations that colleges and educators have for their success. Syed et al. explain that educational organizations often misattribute the reasons for college under preparedness in

historically underrepresented and low-income students, blaming their parents and factors “rooted in social class,” ignoring the contribution of under resourced elementary and secondary schools. In their review of the literature, they relate the conclusions of a 2008 federal science education panel that suggested historically underrepresented students, who may be less prepared academically for college than some White middle-class students due to underfunded elementary and high school education, avoid a challenging liberal arts education and attend lower-tier or two-year colleges. In other words, it’s not just families that affect students’ college choices but our societal expectations that serve as obstacles.

A significant barrier to success for African American students and women, regardless of ethnicity, is stereotype threat which is the concern of personifying a stereotype relevant to one’s social group leading to academic underperformance (Steele, 1997). This concern is greatest for those who are strongly identified with a domain, such as high-achieving African Americans and scientifically-identified women. For example, when African American students are told a difficult test is diagnostic of ability (an IQ test), they underperform compared to White students on a difficult task. When that same task is described as non-diagnostic, African American students perform on par with White students. Just having students identify their race on an academic test, such as the SAT, creates the same underperformance effect for African Americans.

According to work by Claude Steele (1997), remediation or “being brought up to speed” is not an effective strategy for encouraging learning in minority students. His evidence-based, longitudinal programs indicate that we should (a) provide academic challenges for at risk students, (b) create optimistic student/teacher relationships by providing both critical feedback and optimism about potential and (c), stress that intelligence is malleable and not innate. An emphasis that one’s intelligence is fixed appears to promote stereotype threat.

Steele (1988, 2010) has also examined the impact of self-affirmation on changing one’s world view and responding effectively to challenge. Many historically underrepresented students or

students from underprivileged backgrounds come to a liberal arts college feeling like outsiders and one or two early academic or social setbacks can lead to an interpretation that they are in over their heads. Self-affirmation, through reflecting on one's cherished values as a method of changing personal narratives, is a powerful tool for creating positive change in the learning trajectory of such students. Cohen, Garcia, Purdie-Vaughns, Apfel and Brzustoski (2009) had students write about valued areas in their lives outside of academics where they were successful. This intervention led to significant increases in grades and less likelihood of being placed on a remedial track than those in a control group and the effect was strongest in African American students who were struggling academically. Presumably, infusing one's life with positive affirmation disengages self-defeating thoughts about not fitting in academically at school.

A second small, but powerful intervention that can short circuit a negative personal narrative surrounding school performance, is having students read interviews conducted on older student role models, who describe their own struggles with learning and fitting in in their first year (Walton & Cohen, 2011). Being told that everyone stumbles a little, but life will get better is a surprisingly simple intervention. Black and White students at a predominantly White college, applied these lessons learned from older students by writing and delivering a speech of their altered personal college story in front of a video camera. Compared to a control group, this intervention was effective in helping Black students study more, achieve good grades, and feel that they fit in. Rewriting one's story by reinterpreting setbacks is a powerful narrative tool that may be successful, in part because individuals becomes more self-compassionate, like students who tells themselves, "I am not a failure, I am a learner, I am like everyone else starting his or her first year at college." Additional evidence from research by Breines and Chen (2012) demonstrates that inducing a self-compassionate perspective leads us to become more motivated to correct our weaknesses and prepare more for a difficult test after failure.

Organizational fairness in the liberal arts environment

How can we make the liberal arts more individualized and accessible for everyone? Meaning, how do we create an environment in the liberal arts that is supportive of underrepresented students and employees? Starbucks was recently in the news for the arrest of 2 African American men at a store in Philadelphia (Heid, 2018). The manager had called the police because these 2 men were waiting to order until a friend arrived and the manager ascribed criminality to their actions. Starbucks, in response to this bias incident, plans to close down operations and provide racial bias training for approximately 175,000 employees on May 29, 2018. Will this work? That is an important question when corporate America spends billions each year on diversity training (Paluck & Green, 2009) and one that has been researched by social psychologists. Unfortunately, many diversity trainings are ineffective or worse, actually increase negative attitudes towards different groups (Moss-Racusin et al., 2014). Paluck and Green (2009) examined 985 prejudice reduction interventions; of those studies, only 72% were published, two thirds were not experimental and only 38% of those studies employed a control condition, essential to assigning causality. Regardless of the efficacy of Starbucks' actions, while watching network coverage of this event, I was struck by the fact that a White CEO who was interviewed was just that, White. He hired and trained the people below him, they hired and trained those subordinate to them, etc., all the way to the White manager that reported those 2 men to the police. Definitely, we need to initiate effective diversity training, but what are we doing to hire or promote individuals from historically underrepresented groups to positions in which they will serve as a role models and mentors. In November 2015, in response to student protests, fueled in part by the Black Lives Matter movement, Yale's president promised \$50 million to address faculty diversity; Brown's president promised \$100 million toward an Inclusivity Plan (Stanley-Becker, 2015; Friedersdorf, 2015).

Money spent this way already appears to be bearing fruit in faculty hiring at these two institutions, but if we look at upper level administrators we see very few faces that aren't White. We need to be aware that the organizational structure of an institution can impact fairness. Dobbin, Kalev and Kelly (2007) show us that although diversity trainings and diversity networking programs are less effective strategies for increasing management diversity,

mentoring programs, creating the role of chief diversity officer or taskforces responsible for diversity “show strong positive effects” on management diversity. We should be aware, however, that in studies conducted by Kaiser, Major, Jurcevic, Dover, Brady and Shapiro (2013), college policies or diversity structures put in place to protect underrepresented groups can actually function to help White Americans turn a blind eye to discrimination or label minority group members as complainers. In their study, the presence of sexual harassment policies and diversity workshops in organizations led higher status groups (White males) to view their institutions as fair environments even when discrimination and underrepresentation were made obvious to them. That illusion of fairness implied by having what were perceived as fair policies in place, made those same higher status groups be dismissive of the possibility of discrimination in their own institutions.

We can't be a representative and effective educational institution if our demographics don't reflect greater society. Even with 20% diversity in our students, classes of 15 are likely to have only 3 visible minority students. As the demographics of the liberal arts college change, we will contend with a different problem, the threat to the status quo experienced by White students and employees as our college campuses change. Craig and Richeson (2014) conducted a study on Whites' responses to changing U.S. demographics by telling them that by 2050, 50% of the U.S. population would be comprised of racial or ethnic minority groups. Compared to a control condition, Whites exposed to the demographic change information preferred interacting with other Whites more than Latinos, African Americans and Asian Americans. They also had more negative attitudes to those groups and expressed more pro-White bias. Changing demographics in our country make us especially vulnerable to bias and less concerned about inclusivity.

The value of the liberal arts in teaching about diversity through in-depth methods that engage student awareness

We can support and encourage diversity through both the process and outcomes of our work with liberal arts students. I want to present some data collected by my students in a Psychology of Diversity class in 2013 and 2016. These are community-based research projects that allow

majority students to learn empathy and feel effective and Historically Underrepresented Students to illustrate their knowledge and create change. These community-based research projects are intended to create a sense of purpose for students that is directly related to creating a more fair and diverse campus community.

In 2013, after consulting with multiple departments on campus, my students created surveys and collected data on the experiences of first and second year Gustavus students from Racially Underrepresented Groups as they negotiated the admissions process and settled into life at a liberal arts college. The data collection was solicited by the Gustavus Admission department to better understand the needs of diverse students accepted to Gustavus and was a follow-up to data collection conducted by my Psychology of Diversity class two years previously. That Gustavus Admission was looking for this information was inspiring for my students.

Looking at these findings, intersectionality comes strongly into play for first and second year students of diverse backgrounds attending Gustavus. Our sample size was 89 with 60% of those from Racially Underrepresented Student groups (RUS). Almost 50% of the RUS were first generation college students compared to 19% of White students. All of the White students listed English as their first language, whereas only 50% of Racially Underrepresented Students did. And, 90% of White students identified as Christian, compared to 45% of the RUS. Thus, in this sample, we have students with visible minority status, many of whom are attending school in a second language, are the first in their family to negotiate the college experience and may have a different religion from the majority of the students. Add into this mix that twice as many RUS come from out of state than White students and half as many come from small towns (population under 25,000) than White students. The lived experiences of our Racially Underrepresented Students are significantly different from those of their White peers and impact both their academic and social experiences. It is no wonder that we see 69% of RUS stating that diversity on campus is important or very important to them, compared to 29% of our White students.

In 2016, my Psychology of Diversity students engaged in a community-based research project for which they surveyed 55 White and Racially Underrepresented students at Gustavus (Belschner, Hoverstad, Martinez, Schulze & Xiong, 2016). Their goal was to understand and provide advice on increasing the retention rates of Racially Underrepresented Students at Gustavus. Similar to findings in the 2013 research project, RUS were more likely than White students to speak more than one language. They also were more likely to make use of academic enhancement opportunities and join activities related to diversity. White students, on the other hand, were more likely to use the Counseling Center than RUS and feel satisfied with college efforts to create an inclusive environment. Some responses by White students were troubling with regards to diversity at Gustavus. Students said, “Stop obsessing over diversity; Everyone is unique; Why do you need to force diversity?” Evidence that RUS were aware of these sentiments comes from former Hmong and Latino students who left Gustavus without completing their degree. One of those students stated, “Orientation was especially difficult because everyone was White in the social hall groups. It is hard to make friends with White students because they don’t interact with you which makes you feel excluded from the group. I don’t know if Gustavus will change when it comes to its student body because some students made it clear that they are not interested in diversity” (C.V., personal communication, March 2, 2016, as cited in Belschner et al, 2016).

As the astrophysicist Jedidah Isler suggests, students from Historically Underrepresented groups are looking for the chance to excel, to better themselves. The fear of ostracism, social rejection and isolation often is outweighed by the aspiration for a good education. Students who have taken care of their 6 siblings, who have lived with their families out of cars, who enter this campus often feel as if they are part of a quota and expect that same expectation to be mirrored in the eyes of their White peers. One of my students said to me, I don’t want to be perceived as that “stupid Black girl” who puts her hand up and talks too much in the classroom.

Evidence based ways to approach diversity promotion

As I stated earlier, most diversity training programs don't work (Moss-Racusin et al., 2014), while some even reinforce or exacerbate the negative attitudes that some individuals have towards diversity programs. As Gustavus looks to increase intercultural awareness and reduce bias amongst students and employees, we should note the components of effective diversity interventions. After examining the field (Moss-Racusin et al., 2014), social psychological experts in diversity intervention efficacy tell us (a) we should use only treatments that state the specific mechanisms creating change and stem from current theory. If a model is not well validated, it doesn't matter who has used it previously touting its success. (b) Participants in diversity training need to engage with the content of the course in multiple ways, be tested on that content and engage in discussion with other participants. Being the passive recipient of a film or lecture will have no effect. (c) Intervention facilitators must avoid blaming workshop participants for the state of diversity on campus through recognition that even targets of bias show bias towards their own ingroups. Critical or mandatory diversity trainings aren't effective. Finally, (d) we can start by conducting longitudinal assessment studies with rigorous evaluation of their efficacy. When we finish an intervention, we should look for increases in awareness surrounding diversity issues, decreases in self-report and implicit bias and behavioral intentions to act on diversity issues.

Ways we are already promoting understanding of diversity with our liberal arts students

Gustavus is engaged in many learning activities that are documented as reducing conflict, inducing empathy and increasing perspective taking (Paluck & Green, 2009). We are making a concerted attempt to integrate diversity into the liberal arts through our teaching methodology and our student activities. Introduced by Aronson (1978), cooperative learning or when our students learn and teach one another, is an element employed in group projects, student-led initiatives, such as Building Bridges and proposed in our new curriculum's problem-based learning. Our "Reading in Common" program for first year students introduces them to new perspectives on living one's life, creating change or interacting with others. Reading books such "Between the World and Me" (Coates, 2015) or "Where am I Wearing? Where am I eating" (Timmerman, 2012) communicate positive social norms, perspective taking and empathy

(Cameron & Rutland, 2006). Encouraging students to attend documentary films on campus or in our classrooms can impact our students through narrative persuasion and perspective taking. Many of us have introduced wellbeing practices such as mindfulness meditation into our classrooms and through campus activities, such practices are encouraged. Through reduction of stress and anxiety, lovingkindness meditation has been demonstrated as an effective method to reduce prejudice and discrimination (Kang, Gray & Dovidio, 2013). And finally, attending classes on diversity and global awareness or holding open forums on bias incidents that have occurred on campus allow our students to discuss controversial topics related to diversity with guidance from teachers and facilitators. Students interaction opportunities in these contexts have positive benefits through minority influence and attitude polarization (Paluck & Green, 2009). Our college's focus on these practices in and outside of the classroom creates hope for change.

An interesting recent finding in the social psychological research connects experience with the liberal arts with increasing comfort with ethnic diversity. A liberal arts education helps students to explore their own values and create a sense of purpose in life, a useful direction that supports social justice and community building. Research by Burrow, Stanley, Sumner, and Hill (2014) shows that White adults who feel they possess a sense of purpose and accompanying active plans to carry out their goals, express more comfort in living in diverse communities. Experimentally manipulating a sense of purpose by having individuals reflect on purpose and its role in their life, leads to greater willingness to live in a diverse community. We know that changing demographics in our country make Whites less open to interacting with those from diverse backgrounds. At a liberal arts college, our focus on creating life purpose or "making our lives count" can be an essential piece of changing individual perspectives on the world.

The liberal arts should be about examining different places and perspectives for answers. They should be about divergent thinking, not trying to come up with the only answer. I think our students who attend liberal arts colleges such as Gustavus come here because they are good athletes, curious students, talented musicians, dramatists and talented in any number of roles. I

am inclined to think that they started their liberal arts education before they were admitted to Gustavus.

I think back to that Rap artist I alluded to at the beginning of my talk, the one who never dreamed of a liberal arts education despite being a gifted and hard-working student, growing up without opportunity. Such students don't always have mentors who understood their perspective, or teachers who might see beyond a kid who skipped school. I think about Kendrick Lamar, a modern-day renaissance man with a sensitive soul and phenomenal music and literary talent who grew up in Compton, California surrounded by gang culture. Kendrick Lamar "made history in April 2018 when he won a Pulitzer Prize for music for DAMN., making him not only the first person to win a Pulitzer for a hip-hop album, but also the first artist to win the prize for music that isn't classical or jazz ("Kendrick Lamar", 2018)." One juror on the selection committee stated that we have attempted to "assertively think and listen more expansively, with more open ears" (Coscarelli, 2018). I'm very inspired by seeing an award such as this granted in a music genre that has influenced so many young people and to awarded an individual that embodies so many values in the liberal arts, not the least of which is Lamar's openness to discussing and learning about his experiences with mental illness. You know where I learned the story of Kendrick Lamar. A student in my First Term Seminar wrote about Lamar's life story for a narrative writing assignment. I asked my students to write about someone they admired, someone who had overcome challenges to change his or her own narrative, someone who had a different perspective on life from their own. This White, male, hockey player from Minnesota was inspired to poetic eloquence by Lamar's music. There are students out there who aspire to a liberal arts education and won't access it or succeed here without our support. There are students who want to interact with and share their life journey with peers from social groups different from their own. Let's help find and support those students in their transformational journey through the liberal arts.

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