The Benefits of Diversity in Education for Democratic Citizenship

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Submitted for special issue, Journal of Social Issues

September 2, 2002
Abstract

In *The Compelling Need for Diversity in Higher Education* (1999), documenting expert testimony in two law suits brought against the University of Michigan's race-conscious policies in undergraduate and law school admissions, Gurin argued student experiences with racial and ethnic diversity in college have far-ranging and significant educational benefits, rat including preparation for democratic citizenship in the post-college world. We offer a theoretical rationale for the hypothesized effect of experience with racial and ethnic diversity on the development of democratic sentiments among college students. These sentiments and practice with citizenship during college are needed for young people to be effective citizens and leaders in our increasingly heterogeneous society. We present evidence from a longitudinal field study (including a matched control sample) showing that participation as a first-year student in a multicultural education program promotes democratic sentiments and citizenship practice. Confirmatory evidence is provided from a broad longitudinal study of a representative sample of University of Michigan students that also demonstrates outcomes for four groups of students: Whites, African Americans, Latinos(as), and Asian Americans.
The Benefits of Diversity in Education for Democratic Citizenship

The controversies that have surrounded the Supreme Court ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* (Zirkel & Cantor, this issue) apply as well to current debates about the educational value of diversity, and the use of affirmative action to achieve diversity in higher education. One of the controversies concerns the difference between racial desegregation and racial integration, or the difference between mere contact and actual interaction between students of different racial backgrounds (Pettigrew, 1998). In the current debates about the educational role of diversity, some argue that the mere presence on campus of students from varied racial backgrounds, as defined by percentage of minority students on historically white campuses, must be shown to directly foster educational benefits. This argument mirrors the early assertion that mere contact of racially diverse students through school desegregation would be beneficial to all students. Social psychologists, however, knew at the time of *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* that mere contact produces positive outcomes only under certain conditions (Allport, 1954). These conditions—equality in status, existence of common goals, intimacy of interaction—meant that educators needed to create a racially integrated learning environment far beyond simply putting diverse students together in the same classroom. These conditions also help determine when racial/ethnic diversity has educational benefits. Higher education institutions have to create curricular and co-curricular opportunities for students to experience genuine racial integration—to interact in meaningful ways and to learn from each other—if diversity is to have a positive educational impact. The presence of diverse students on a campus is a necessary but certainly not sufficient condition for diversity to work in a positive manner. In this article we stress the importance of actual experience with diversity through cross-racial interaction in classrooms, intergroup dialogues that bring students from diverse backgrounds together to discuss racial issues, and participation in multicultural campus events.

A second controversy that arose from *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas* concerns what kind of benefits may stem from racial integration in education. Many different
outcomes have been studied in the fifty years since the Brown decision; many are analyzed in this volume. Our contribution is to focus on late adolescent development of democratic sentiments that we argue are needed in a pluralistic democracy, and that experience with diversity in higher education should foster at this stage of development.

In *The Compelling Need for Diversity in Higher Education*, a document providing expert testimony in two law suits brought against the University of Michigan’s race-conscious policies in undergraduate and law school admissions, Gurin (1999a) argued that student experiences with racial and ethnic diversity have far-ranging and significant educational benefits, and that the benefits extend to all students, be they students from traditionally underrepresented racial or ethnic groups or not. One such benefit is the impact of diversity on preparation for democratic citizenship in the post-college world. In this paper, we provide a theoretical rationale for the hypothesized effect of diversity on the development of the democratic sentiments that young people will need to be effective citizens and leaders in our increasingly heterogeneous society. We argue that the diversity experiences that college students have are particularly important during this period of emerging adulthood. We also offer empirical evidence showing that participation in a multicultural education program with diverse peers promotes democratic sentiments. The evidence comes from a longitudinal field study of two groups of University of Michigan students: one group that participated in a nationally recognized diversity program, the Program in Intergroup Relations, Conflict and Community (IGRCC), and one (matched sample) that did not participate in the program. Additional confirmatory evidence shows the effects of other student curricular and co-curricular experiences with diversity from a broad longitudinal study of a representative sample of University of Michigan students.

**Civic Education: The State of the Field**

From the time that the founding fathers debated the form that U.S. democracy would take - representational or directly participatory - education has been the key to achieving an effective citizenry. In the compromise they reached involving both representation (the Federalists) and
broad participation (the Jeffersonians), education was the mechanism that was to make broad participation a reasonable basis for democracy. If people could be educated to the obligations of citizenship, the distrust of popular government by the Federalists could be assuaged. Barber (1998) argued that it was Jefferson, certainly no advocate of diversity, who most forcefully argued that citizens are made, not born, and that broad civic participation requires education. "It remained clear to Jefferson to the end of his life that a theory of democracy that is rooted in active participation and continuing consent by each generation of citizens demands a civic pedagogy rooted in the obligation to educate all who would be citizens." (Barber, 1998, p. 169). To be sure, Jefferson was talking about education for those he defined as the body of citizens, and not for the many who were not citizens at the time.

If education is the very foundation of democracy, what do we know about civic education of the young? Social science has given remarkably little attention to the processes, in families, communities, and schools, by which young people become educated to the role of citizen. In an introduction to an issue of the *Journal of Social Issues* addressing this neglect, Flanagan and Sherrod (1998, pp. 477-448) concluded:

for more than two decades, research on the developmental correlates of civic competence or the processes by which children become members of political communities has, to say the least, not been a prominent theme in the social sciences. Only 14 of 1,000 manuscripts published in the most prominent journals on political behavior in the mid-1980s touched on the topic of political socialization (Sears, 1990). Publications on this topic are even more scarce in the developmental science literature.

Recent work on youth political development, which has mostly been carried out with high school youth, shows that youth who participate in volunteer work, organized groups, community service, and political activities are more likely to be active citizens as adults (Flanagan et al., 1998; Youniss & Yates, 1997; Yates & Youniss, 1999). The lasting impact of participation as a youth results from learning the organizational practices that are required in adult
citizen activities and from establishing a civic identity during an opportune moment in the formation of identity (Youniss, McClellan, & Yates, 1997). Civic development is fostered by family values and practices that emphasize social responsibility (Flanagan et al., 1998), by families with higher education and income (Flanagan & Tucker, 1999), and by school climates that encourage expression of opinion and identification with the school (Flanagan et al., 1998).

With the growing recognition that emerging adulthood involves developmental processes that are somewhat different from those in adolescence itself (Arnett, 2000), there is a special need for research on civic education in the post-high school years, and especially in higher educational institutions. These institutions provide the moratorium from permanent adult commitments that Erikson (1946, 1956) argued many years ago is needed in identity development.

Of course, there is a large body of literature on the impact of college, including its impact on aspects of student development that relate to civic identity. A major review of college impact studies carried out by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) showed that higher education fosters altruistic, humanitarian, and civic values, as well as greater tolerance and principled reasoning in judging moral issues (for different view, see Jackman & Muha, 1984). The weight of the evidence suggests that a statistically significant, if modest, part of the broad-based changes in attitudes, values, and moral reasoning occurring during college can be attributed to the college experience and is not simply a reflection of trends in the larger society (Terenzini, 1994). Research on college students has revealed little, however, about the processes and educational experiences in college that promote civic values, commitments, and capacities. The work presented here focuses on that gap in the literature.

**Democratic Education and Diversity: Compatible or Not Compatible?**

How do diversity experiences affect the process of learning to become citizens? We contend that students who interact with diverse students in classrooms and in the broad campus environment will be more motivated and better able to participate in a heterogeneous and complex society. In *Democratic Education in an Age of Difference*, Guarasci and Cornwell
(1997) claim that "community and democratic citizenship are strengthened when undergraduates understand and experience social connections with those outside of their often parochial ‘autobiographies,’ and when they experience the way their lives are necessarily shaped by others" (Preface, xiii).

The congeniality of democracy and diversity, however, is not self-evident. Neither representational nor participatory conceptions of democracy deal with the issues raised by multicultural educators, namely the cultural dimensions of citizenship and the central tension of modern social life – the tension between unity and diversity (Parker, 1996, p. 104). Critics of the kind of multicultural education worry that a focus on identities based on race, ethnicity, gender, class or other social categorizations are inimical to the unity needed for democracy. Critics of democratic citizenship education that ignores these small publics in an exclusive emphasis on a single unity worry that young people will be ill-prepared to be citizens and leaders of an increasingly ethnically and racially diverse nation.

A thoughtful commentator on these issues, Parker (1997, p. 12) writes:

Multicultural educators have too often worked for inclusion without attending sufficiently to the character of the public space in which inclusion is sought; democratic citizenship educators, meanwhile, have too often skirted social and cultural diversity, thereby presuming a public space that does not actually exist.

This tension between diversity and unity, however politically charged it is in contemporary United States, is not new. Saxonhouse in Fear of Diversity (1992) described how the pre-Socratic playwrights, Plato and Aristotle, dealt with the fear that "differences bring on chaos and thus demand that the world be put into an orderly pattern." Plato, Saxonhouse says, envisioned a city in which unity and harmony would be based on the shared characteristics of a homogeneous citizenry (though even he warned against striving for too much unity). It was Aristotle, Saxonhouse (1992, p. 235) argued, who was able to overcome the fear and welcome the diverse:
Aristotle embraces diversity as the others had not. The typologies that fill almost every page of Aristotle's Politics show him uniting and separating, finding underlying unity and significant differences.

Aristotle advanced a political theory in which unity could be achieved through differences, and contended that democracy based on such a unity would more likely thrive than one based on homogeneity. What makes democracy work, according to Aristotle, is equality among citizens who are peers (admittedly only free men at the time, not women and not slaves), who hold diverse perspectives, and whose relationships are governed by freedom and rules of civil discourse. It is a multiplicity of perspectives and discourse over conflict, and not unanimity, that helps democracy thrive (Pitkin & Shumer, 1982).

These conditions are very similar to what sociologist Coser (1975) called complex social structures. They are social situations that are discontinuous or discrepant with our past lives in which we encounter many rather than few people, some of whom are unfamiliar to us, hold different kinds of expectations of us, and challenge us to think or act in new ways. People and relationships change rather than remain stable in complex social structures and this produces unpredictability. These qualities – multiplicity, unpredictability, and unfamiliarity – require people to pay attention to the social situation and foster what Coser calls an outward orientation. She showed that people who function in complex social structures develop a deeper understanding of the social world and are better able to function as effective citizens.

Theories of cognitive growth also emphasize discontinuity and discrepancy. Many different cognitive-developmental theories agree that cognitive growth is instigated by discontinuity, termed disequilibrium by Piaget (1971, 1975, 1985). Drawing on these theories, developmental psychologist Ruble (1994) offered a model that ties developmental change to transitions, such as going to college. Transitions are significant moments for development because they present new situations about which individuals have little knowledge and in which they will experience uncertainty. The early phase of a transition, what Ruble calls the phase of
construction, is especially important. People have to seek information in order to make sense of the new situation. Under these conditions individuals likely will undergo cognitive growth (unless they are able to retreat to a familiar world). Applied to the experience in higher education, Ruble's model gives special importance to the first year of college, as this is the critical period of construction. In this period, classroom and social relationships that challenge rather than replicate the ideas and experiences students bring with them from their home environments are especially important in fostering cognitive growth.

The University of Michigan's racial and ethnic composition presents discrepancy and discontinuity from the pre-college backgrounds of most of its students. At the time (during the 1990s) that the research reported here was conducted, approximately 90 percent of the White students and 50 percent of the African American students attending the university had grown up in neighborhoods and attended high schools that were racially/ethnically homogenous.

Because of its discrepancy from their past experiences, racial and ethnic diversity offers students at the University of Michigan (and many other institutions that draw largely from racially/ethnically segregated locations) an opportunity for cognitive growth and preparation for citizenship. What actually happens for students from this opportunity depends on the institution's creative use of the discrepancy between the experiences that they bring to college and the experiences that they have in college. The impact of racial and ethnic diversity on student outcomes, and the congeniality of diversity and democracy, are contingent on what institutions do to create educational programs that bring diverse students together in meaningful and civil discourse to learn from each other.

**Democracy and Diversity at Work: The Intergroup Relations, Conflict, and Community Program**

One such program at the University of Michigan is the Intergroup Relations, Conflict and Community Program (IGRCC), offers a curricular program for first-year students that incorporates five conditions that these theories suggest are important for making diversity and democracy compatible: the presence of diverse others; discontinuity from pre-college
Benefits of Diversity

experiences; equality among peers; discussion under rules of civil discourse; and normalization and negotiation of conflict. Program participants in the study presented here came from diverse backgrounds. Slightly over a quarter were students of color; a third were men; and, thirty percent grew up in states other than Michigan. For nearly all of the students, this amount of diversity was quite discrepant with their pre-college backgrounds. The design of the first course that students take in the program, in addition to lectures, readings, and papers, includes participation in intergroup dialogues. These groups bring together students from two different identity groups that have had a history of disagreement over group-relevant experiences and policy issues (Zuñiga & Nagda, 1993). The groups are led by two trained co-facilitators, usually upper-division or graduate students. These groups are comprised of between twelve to fourteen students with roughly an equal number of students from each of two identity groups. Examples include people of color and White people; women and men; African Americans and Jews; gay men, lesbians, bisexuals and heterosexuals; Anglos and Latinos. Students indicate demographic information about themselves and in which intergroup dialogue they would like to participate. Program coordinators assign students to specific groups based on their choices as well as keeping the groups balanced. For seven weeks, these groups engage in weekly two-hour discussions about policy issues that could divide the groups and individuals within the groups.

In the beginning of the groups, students commit themselves to clear ground rules for civil discourse to guide their discussion. They examine commonalities and differences between and within groups. They read about and discuss theories of conflict and its impact on intergroup relationships. They engage in intergroup communication processes and practice skills to negotiate conflicts. They identify collaborative actions that the two groups could take by forming an intergroup alliance or coalition, though they do not actually carry out the action (see Zuñiga, Nagda & Sevig, 2002, for more detailed description).

The intergroup dialogues engage students in talking in a truly public way that is needed for a diverse democracy to work. They learn neither to ignore group differences, which many
students tend to do in the service of individualism or color-blindness, nor to privilege differences as an end in themselves. Barber (1989) described public talk as entailing: listening no less than speaking; affective as well as cognitive work; drawing people into the world of participation and action; and expressing ideas publicly rather than merely holding them privately.

Conflict is the core of democratic discourse in these groups, just as it was in Aristotle's conception of the polity. Because the intergroup dialogues emphasize between-group and within-group differences, the students constantly are made aware of conflict and its varied sources. The IGRCC Program contends that teaching students to recognize intergroup and intragroup conflict, and helping them develop skills for negotiating conflicts, are crucial for making diversity and democracy compatible. Gay (1997), an educator who has written insightfully about the relationship between multicultural and democratic education, emphasized that students are prepared for citizen roles in a diverse, democratic community only when education fulfills two imperatives. First, effective education must bring forward multiple viewpoints upon the analysis of social issues. Second, it must use pedagogical strategies that allow students to have face-to-face encounters and opportunities to practice skills of conflict resolution. Furthermore, Johnson and Johnson (2000) claimed that prejudice and discrimination are optimally reduced when students can participate in cooperative communities that embrace a constructive approach to conflict and that teach civic values. The IGRCC is explicitly designed to do this. At its best, the Program provides an educational laboratory for:

- a wholly different ideal of the democratic community in which both difference and connection can be held together yet understood to be at times necessarily separate, paradoxical, and in contradiction to one another (Guarasci & Cornwell, 1997. p. 3).

**Hypotheses**

We hypothesized that participation in this diversity program would help students learn sentiments and skills that will be needed in a plural democracy. Specifically, we predicted that first-year students who took the initial course in the Intergroup Relations, Conflict,
Community Program, compared to a matched sample of non-participants, would as seniors show greater: perspective-taking; understanding that difference need not be divisive; perception of commonalities in values between their own and other groups; mutuality in learning about their own and other groups; interest in politics; participation in campus politics; commitment to civic participation after college; and acceptance of conflict as a normal part of social life.

We further hypothesized that the senior year differences between participants and non-participants reflect a true effect of IGRCC. We were able to test this in two ways: controlling selectivity through matching non-participants and participants on background factors; and where we had identical or comparable measures in both the first and senior years, using the first-year measures as controls in comparing participants and the matched students as seniors.

The IGRCC Study

Method

This is a longitudinal field study in which two groups of students were surveyed at time of entrance to the University, and surveyed again at the end of the term when the participants took the initial course, and four years later in their senior year. The two groups of students are those who elected the first course in the Program and a control sample of non-participants matched for gender, race/ethnicity, in-state v. out-of-state pre-college residency, and campus residency. The control students were drawn from a larger, comprehensive study of the class that entered the University of Michigan in 1990 (the Michigan Study; see Gurin, G, 1992). All of the course participants were also part of the Michigan Study sample, which meant that all students had baseline measures that enabled us to control for selectivity in several analyses below. Altogether 174 students, 87 participants and 87 non-participants, were in the first-year study. In the senior year, students were mailed two questionnaires, one from the IGRCC program and the second from the Michigan Study. Eighty one percent of the sample (140 students) completed at least one of the surveys in their senior year; 70 percent (122 students) completed both senior year surveys. The data analyzed here come primarily from the two senior year surveys, with some responses
from the entrance survey used as controls for selectivity.

**Measures**

**Perspective-taking:** As a way of assessing students' disposition toward democratic sentiments, we used four items from Davis' (1983) perspective taking/empathy scale. An example is “I find it difficult to see things from the ‘other person’s’ point of view.” The response scale ranges from 1 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me). Responses to this particular item were reversed so that a high score across the four items represents higher perspective taking. Perspective-taking was measured at entrance and four years later. (Cronbach’s α: pre-test = .62, post-test = .68; M=3.80, SD=.70)

**Non-divisiveness of difference:** This is an index comprised of four items written for the Michigan Student Study to assess how divisive students believe the emphasis on diversity at the University of Michigan is. An example is: “The University’s emphasis on diversity fosters more intergroup division than understanding.” The response scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). All four of the items were phrased to reflect the conservative critique of diversity, that an emphasis on diversity fosters division. Responses were reversed in this analysis so that a high score on the index indicates belief that difference is not inevitably divisive. (Cronbach’s α: post-test only = .83; M=2.61, SD=.64).

**Perception of commonalities in values across groups.** This concept was measured by items from the Michigan Student Study. Commonality of values was described in the questionnaire as: “People often feel that some groups in our society share many common values, while other groups have few common values. For each of the groups listed below (African Americans, Asian Americans, Hispanics/Latinos, Native Americans, and White Americans), please indicate how their values and your group’s values are similar or different.” The index summing across these judgments of commonality with groups other than one’s own ranges from 1 (much more different than similar) to 4 (much more similar than different). Commonalities in
Benefits of Diversity

values were measured at entrance and four years later (Cronbach’s $\alpha$: pre-test = .84, post-test = .86; $M=2.60$, $SD=.74$).

**Mutuality in learning about own and other groups:** This is measured by agreement/disagreement with statements about one’s own group, and with statements about groups other than one’s own. These statements were presented at different places in the questionnaire so that students would consider their own and other groups as independently as possible. The response scale for each statement ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The statements about one’s own groups include: “Since coming to college, I have gained greater knowledge of my racial/ethnic group’s contributions to American society” ($M=2.47$, $SD=.86$), and “I have thought more about my memberships in different groups” ($M=3.10$, $SD=.69$). The statements about other groups are: “Since coming to college, I have enjoyed learning about the experiences and perspectives of other groups” ($M=3.38$, $SD=.59$), and “I have learned a great deal about other racial/ethnic groups and their contributions to American society” ($M=2.86$, $SD=.73$). These items are analyzed separately.

**Acceptance of conflict as a normal part of social life.** This concept was measured by asking students to evaluate conflict. Each was measured by responses to four statements. Factor analysis revealed two factors, a positive evaluation factor and a negative one. An example of positive evaluation is: “Conflict and disagreements in classroom discussion enrich the learning process.” An example of negative evaluation is: “The best thing is to avoid conflict.” The response scale ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 4 (strongly disagree). High scores represent high positive and high negative evaluations of conflict. Factor analysis of the eight statements confirmed separate factors for the positive and negative statements. (Cronbach’s $\alpha$ for the positive index: post-test only = .70, $M=3.21$, $SD=.42$; for the negative index: post-test only = .64, $M=1.92$, $SD=.49$).

**Interest in politics:** This is measured by agreement/disagreement with four statements,
such as: "I do not enjoy getting into discussions about political issues," and "I do not try hard to keep up with current events." The response scale for each statement ranges from 1 (strongly agree) to 7 (strongly disagree). High scores indicated high interest in politics. (Cronbach's $\alpha = .67, M = 5.11, SD = 1.18$).

**Participation in campus politics.** This is a single item asking seniors how involved they had been during their years in college in campus political activities. The response scale ranges from 1 (not at all involved) to 4 (substantially involved), ($M=1.24, SD=.58$)

**Participation in community service.** This is a single item asking seniors how involved they had been during their years in college in community services activities on campus or off-campus, such activities as Big Brother/Big Sister, Project SERVE. The response scale ranges from 1 (not at all involved) to 4 (substantially involved), ($M = 2.36, SD=1.10$)

**Commitment to post-college civic participation.** This was measured by asking students how important the following post-college activities would be: "influencing the political structure;" "helping my group or community;" "helping to promote racial/ethnic understanding." The response scale ranges from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (crucially important). (Cronbach's $\alpha = .61, M=2.41, SD=.68$).

**Participation in the IGRCC Program.** Four questions asked of the seniors validate the substantive content of the (independent) variable – participation in the IGRCC Program. "Since coming to college, I have become more aware of societal problems," "I have gained a good understanding of intergroup relations," "I have learned to identity the central issues in intergroup relations," and "I have learned that society's institutions have an important role in intergroup life." The response scale ranges from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). (Cronbach $\alpha = .72, M= 3.20, SD=.45$).

**Analyses**

The predictions are tested by $t$-tests, assessing difference in means on these measures.
between the participants and control students at the end of the 4th year. For those measures where we also had entrance scores, regressions were run using the pre-test measure and a dummy variable of participation/non-participation as predictors. These regressions control for the possible role of selectivity into the IGRCC program. Other controls were achieved through matching the participants and control students on gender, race/ethnicity, in/out state pre-college residence, and campus residence hall.

Results

Senior Year Differences between Participants and Control Students

Participation in IGRCC Program. Comparison of the participant and control students shows that the IGRCC program had achieved its goals of helping students understand the historical and contemporary patterns of intergroup relationships in the United States. Even four years after having taken the IGRCC course, the participants agreed with these statements significantly more frequently than did the control students (participants $M=3.65$, $SD=.39$, controls $M=3.36$, $SD=.45$, $p<.000$). Even though the control students had learned about these matters while in college, the IGRCC students felt that they had learned more about intergroup relations.

Predicted Effects. Nearly all of the predicted relationships between program participation and democratic sentiments as well as civic participation during college were supported by the comparisons of participants and control students as seniors (see Table 1).

The participants as seniors, compared to the matched control students, more frequently expressed sentiments that are needed among citizens and leaders of a diverse democracy. They showed significantly greater motivation to take the perspective of others. They less often evaluated the University’s emphasis on diversity as producing divisiveness between groups, and in fact showed greater mutuality in their involvements with their own groups and with other groups. During the college years they had thought more about their own group memberships but they had also enjoyed learning about the experiences and perspectives of other groups more than the control students had. They also reported having learned more about other racial/ethnic groups
and their contributions to American society. They expressed a greater sense of commonality in values about work and family with groups other than their own. In all of these ways, the IGRCC had fostered an appreciation of both group differences and commonalities. Finally, they had normalized the role of conflict in social life to a greater extent than had the control students. They had significantly more positive views of conflict, as well as significantly less negative views.

Specifically on civic engagement, Table 1 further indicates that the participants were more interested in politics and also had participated more frequently in campus political activities. However, they had not taken part more frequently in community service activities during college. With respect to the importance they placed on post-college civic activities, the participants were more committed to helping their group or community and helping to promote racial/ethnic understanding, although this proved to be the result of selectivity rather than an effect of the program (see below). They did not differ from the control students in the importance they placed on influencing the political structure, something neither group valued as much as the other two kinds of post-college civic activities.

Controls for Possible Selectivity

Can we be confident that the differences that are revealed at the senior year between participants and non-participants actually result from earlier participation in the program? It is possible that students who participated in IGRCC entered college predisposed by their orientations at the time to take the perspectives of others; analyze conflict as a normal aspect of life; perceive commonality between their own and other groups and be open to learning about other groups; accept differences as congenial to unity; and embrace civic engagement through interest in politics and actual participation in politics? If that were true, the effects of IGRCC that we have delineated might result from these predispositions and not from the program itself.

Our matching procedure controlled several sources of possible selectivity (gender, race/ethnicity, in/out state pre-college residence, and college residence hall). In addition, for eight of the senior questions (representing three concepts – perspective taking, perception of
commonality in values, and commitment to post-college civic participation), it was possible to control for identical measures taken at the time students entered the University of Michigan four years earlier. Even after controlling for first year scores as covariates in analysis of variance, the participants as seniors had significantly higher scores than did the matched controls on the measure of perspective taking ($F=4.34, p=.01$). Program participation had, therefore, increased the students’ commitment to perspective-taking. Similarly, the program also increased their sense of commonality in work and family values with groups other than their own. After controlling for how much commonality the students had felt toward these groups when they entered college, the results show that the participants, as compared to the matched controls, judged themselves more similar in values to non-membership groups ($F=6.82, p=.01$). This analysis showed, however, that students who participated in the IGRCC program were already more disposed than the control students when they entered college toward post-college civic participation. Once their initial motivation to help their group or community and to promote racial/ethnic understanding was controlled, participation in the program had no effect, neither increasing nor decreasing these post-college civic commitments.

Finally, for four other senior measures (representing mutuality of own and other groups), we were able to use a related, though not identical, baseline measure to control for possible selectivity. At time of entrance students were asked how important various possible college experiences were to them personally. A high importance placed on two of these, “Learning about cultures different from my own,” and “Getting to know people from backgrounds different from my own,” might have predisposed students to take part in the IGRCC and might account for the apparent effect of the program on their involvement with their own and other groups as seniors. However, this proved not to be the case. After controlling for an index of these two first-year measures, the participants as seniors scored significantly higher than the controls on enjoying learning about the experiences and perspectives of other groups ($F=8.6, p=.01$), thinking about memberships in various groups ($F=8.7, p=.01$), and learning a great deal about other racial/ethnic
groups and their contributions to American society ($F=6.8, p=.01$). Neither the predisposition measure nor program participation was significantly related to learning a great deal about the contributions of one's own group(s).

A limitation of the study is that we did not have pre-measures for all of the senior measures of democracy sentiments and civic activities. The analyses in which we were able to adjust for either identical or relevant entrance measures provides reasonable assurance, however, that the differences we found between participants and matched controls as seniors were genuine effects of the program and not merely the result of selectivity.

The Michigan Student Study

The IGRCC was designed explicitly as a field study of diversity and democracy. Other educational activities have also been created to help students make educational use of Michigan’s ethnic and racial diversity. These activities share certain features of the IGRCC, although they are not part of a coherent undergraduate program. We were interested in whether or not these other educational activities have similar effects to the IGRCC in fostering democratic sentiments among undergraduates.

One activity, participation in intergroup dialogue, is closely aligned with and actually grew out of the IGRCC Program. On the Michigan campus, intergroup dialogues are offered within courses beyond those that are offered in the IGRCC, and also within various campus organizations. They always meet over time, although the time varies from one month to ten weeks depending on the particular course or campus organization. A second activity is participation in campus-wide educational events about the cultures, histories, and politics of various groups in American society. These events expose students to knowledge about race and ethnicity in settings that draw highly diverse audiences. A third is exposure to knowledge about race and ethnicity in formal classrooms. All undergraduates in the College of Literature, Sciences, and the Arts are required to take at least one course before graduating that covers theories and research on race/ethnicity in American society. The Race and Ethnicity requirement
(or sometimes called the diversity requirement) reflects the University's strong commitment to use its racial and ethnic diversity in an explicitly educational manner.

A value of examining the impact of these activities, although they were not part of a unified program, is that the Michigan Student Study (MSS) includes a large enough number of students to analyze data from four race/ethnic groups (African American, Asian American, Latino, and White) separately. Thus, the MSS allows us to see if diversity activities have similar outcomes in all groups. The number of students in the IGRCC study was too small to allow analyses of separate groups.

Method

As indicated earlier, both the participants and the control students in the IGRCC were part of the larger, comprehensive study of the class that entered the University of Michigan in 1990 (the Michigan Study, see Gurin, G, 1992). This makes it possible to explore the extent to which the effects of the IGRCC apply to other diversity experiences that a broader longitudinal sample of students had during the four years of college.

The Michigan Student Study is a longitudinal study that followed students from first year to senior year. The data analyzed here comes from students who were measured in the senior year: European American students \(n=1129\), African Americans \(n=187\), Latino(a)s \(n=88\), and Asian Americans \(n=266\).

Measures

Experience with Diversity: The survey instrument that was given to the students as seniors included reports of their experiences with diversity. A measure of experience with classroom diversity consisted of two questions. Students were asked how much exposure they had in classes to information and activities devoted to understanding other racial/ethnic groups and interracial/ethnic relationships. They were also asked if they had taken a course that had an important impact on their views of racial/ethnic diversity and multiculturalism. A second measure assesses the number of five annually-held multicultural events (Hispanic Heritage
Month, Native American Month, Pow-Wow, Asian American Awareness Week, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Symposium) the student had attended during the four years of college. A third asked if the student had participated in an intergroup dialogue.

These indicators of experience with diversity in classrooms, multicultural events, and dialogues seem to capture fairly well the important features of the IGRCC Program. Accordingly, we formed a summary measure of curricular and co-curricular diversity experiences for the students in the Michigan Student Study.

Democratic Sentiments: With only two exceptions, the same measures of democratic sentiments already described for the IGRCC study were available in the Michigan Student Study dataset as well. The two that were not available in the broader MSS sample are attitudes toward conflict and interest in politics.

Analyses

The relationship of this diversity experience measure to democratic sentiments and civic activities was analyzed separately for White, African American, Asian American, and Latino(a) students, using multiple regression in which initial position on outcome measures was controlled, when available. Gender and in/out state pre-college residence were also controlled so as to make the analysis parallel to the analysis of the IGRCC program.

Results

Table 2 shows the relationships between having had these diversity experiences and measures of democracy sentiments and citizen participation for each of the four groups of students. Several conclusions can be drawn from this analysis.

First, the broader campus study clearly supports what we learned about the impact of IGRCC Program. Across the four groups, there is evidence of a fairly consistent effect of having been exposed to knowledge about racial/ethnic groups and to interaction with students from varied backgrounds in classrooms, events, and intergroup dialogues.
For White students, the index of these diversity experiences was significantly related to perspective taking and also to a sense of commonality in values with African Americans and Latinos, even after adjusting for entrance measures of these same sentiments. It was also significantly related to having learned about both other groups' and own group's contributions to American society, and to actual participation in the activities of both their own groups and of other cultural groups. This effect held even after adjusting for motivation to learn about other backgrounds and cultures that the students expressed when they entered college—a motivation that might have predisposed them to take part in diversity activities while in college. Furthermore, White students who had experienced diversity in classrooms, events and intergroup dialogues more often than other students who had not experienced such diversity contended that difference is not inevitably divisive but instead can be congenial to democracy. They had been more engaged in citizenship during college, in community service and in campus political activities. They were not more active in student government, however. Across all of these measures, for these students, curricular and co-curricular diversity experiences provided preparation for citizenship in a pluralistic society.

For the three groups of color, Table 2 shows that these experiences were also influential in citizenship preparation. Nearly all of the predicted relationships were statistically reliable. One exception is the lack of relationship between this diversity index and perspective taking for the three groups of color. However, as noted in Table 2, there was a significant relationship for African American students between perspective taking and participation in dialogue groups, as well as participation in multicultural events. Thus, the aspect of the diversity experience index that most directly asks students to consider the perspectives of members of other groups did show the expected relationship between diversity and perspective taking for African American students (although not for Asian American or Latino students).

Finally, the broader study illuminates some subtlety in the impact of diversity experiences on perceived commonalities with other groups. It shows that diversity experiences
increased the sense of commonality that White students perceived with both African American and Latino students, whereas diversity experiences were not significantly related to the expression of commonality with White students by the three groups of color. Because the sample size in the IGRCC study was too small to distinguish the sense of commonality different groups of students felt with particular other groups, the differential impact of experience with diversity on White students and students of color could not be discerned. It is important to note, however, that these results from the broader study do not show a statistically significant negative relationship between diversity experiences of groups of color on their sense of commonality with White students, as some critics of multicultural education contend frequently happens. The broader Michigan Student study also shows consistent relationships for all groups between diversity experiences and involvement in their own groups, while the IGRCC study showed mixed results about this relationship. It should be remembered, however, that the number of students in the IGRCC study was too small to separate ethnic and racial groups, and thus we should probably be guided by the extremely consistent results from the Michigan Student study.

Overall, there is considerable similarity between the results of the IGRCC study and the study of diversity experiences in the broader Michigan sample. It might be asked if the similarity in results is produced by including IGRCC participant and control students in both sets of analyses. This is not the case. We analyzed the broader campus data with and without the participants and control students in the IGRCC study, and found no differences in the results of the two analyses. That would be expected, of course, since the IGRCC students were a small proportion of the sample in the broader study.

Discussion

Both studies demonstrate that diversity and democracy are congenial. The students who had participated in the IGRCC, a program that was designed for students to examine racial and ethnic relationships, both historically and in contemporary society, and to engage in intergroup dialogue under rules of civil discourse, were more interested (compared to a matched sample) in
politics, more actively engaged in campus politics, more committed to understanding the
perspectives of other people, more aware of their commonalities with students from different
backgrounds, more involved in learning about and participating in the activities of their own
groups and other groups in society, and in various ways more accepting of difference and
conflict. The broader Michigan Student study showed that where identical measures were
available in it and the IGRCC study, similar effects were found. It also showed that these effects,
as preparation for citizenship, were nearly identical for students from four different racial and
ethnic groups.

We use the term \textit{effects} in these conclusions because in many instances it was possible to
control for selectivity by using identical measures of the outcomes that were collected when the
students first entered college. In all instances except one (importance placed on post-college
civic activities, IGRCC study) where it was possible to control for the student's initial position on
the outcome measures, the difference between the participants and controls (in the IGRCC study),
and the relationship between amount of diversity experience and outcomes (in the MSS study),
was statistically reliable. We can be assured that these differences did not reflect merely a
tendency of certain kinds of students to participate in the IGRCC program or in other diversity
experiences on the Michigan campus.

These studies support the observation drawn by William Bowen (1977), then President of
Princeton University, that a great deal of learning occurs:

through interactions among students of both sexes; of different races, religions, and
backgrounds; who come from cities and rural areas, from various states and countries;
who have a wide variety of interests, talents, and perspectives; and who are able, directly
or indirectly to learn from their differences and to stimulate one another to reexamine
even their most deeply held assumptions about themselves and their world.

For this to happen, however, institutions of higher education have to go beyond simply
increasing enrollment of student of different racial and ethnic backgrounds; they must also attend
to both the quality of campus racial climate and actual interactions among diverse students. As Gurin (1999b, p. 41) conveyed in her testimony in support of Affirmative Action, the onus is on higher education institutions:

to make college campuses authentic public places, where students from different backgrounds can take part in conversations and share experiences that help them develop an understanding of the perspectives of other people. Formal classroom activities and interactions with diverse peers in the informal college environment must prompt students to think in pluralistic and complex ways, and to encourage them to become committed to life-long civic action. Otherwise, many students will retreat from the opportunities offered by a diverse campus to find settings within their institutions that are familiar and that replicate their home environments.

The congeniality of diversity and democracy that is revealed in these two studies directly counters the fears of many critics of multicultural education. Many of those critics worry that a focus on diversity will encourage a simple version of identity politics, one in which members of different ethnic groups respond to multiculturalism by heightening their own group identities at the expense of interest in other people outside of the identity group. For this reason, they charge that multiculturalism will divide Americans and threaten the amount of unity that is needed for the survival of democracy. These fears do not find support in the analyses of the impact of the IGRCC program and of other diversity curricular and co-curricular activities. On the contrary, the students who had the most experience with multicultural education and the most interaction with diverse peers were more, not less, committed to understanding the perspectives of others. They were also the most aware of commonalities across groups. They had been more active in their own groups, it is true, but they were also more active in other groups as well. They also showed greater interest in learning about both their own groups and other groups in society. They more often rejected the idea that a focus on groups is inevitably divisive. In all of these ways, they show that diversity and democracy can be mutually reinforcing when education in formal and
informal settings actually makes use of diversity for student learning. Educational experiences that are designed to learn about racial and ethnic diversity and commonality fostered sentiments that are greatly needed in a pluralistic democracy. Our students as citizens will need to understand people from different cultural groups, find common ground with them, deal with differences and conflict without threatening the democratic order, enjoy social engagement across cultural groups, and practice civic engagement.

The broader campus study also counters the belief among some commentators on higher education that experience with racial and ethnic diversity has a different impact on White students and students of color. There is very little evidence in the broader campus study that supports that belief. To the contrary, the results were very similar for the different groups of students. We conclude that, for students as color as well as for European American students, curricular and co-curricular experiences with diversity were associated with mutuality in intergroup relationships, not group divisions. And those experiences, through their effects on both democratic sentiments and civic participation, offered an important training ground for their post-college lives as public citizens.

Finally, this research extends previous research on high-school youth by focusing on education for civic engagement as young people transition into adulthood through the college years. It is limited, however, in what it tells about the impact of education on the actual civic engagement of adults because neither study followed college graduates into their post-college lives. A study currently underway is now following up the graduates who took part in these two studies as adults eight years out of college.
References


Table 1

Democratic Sentiments and Civic Activities: Means for Course Participants and Control Students in the Fourth Year of College

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Participant M</th>
<th>Control M</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Democratic Sentiments</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perspective-taking</td>
<td>3.91 (.66)</td>
<td>3.71* (.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-divisiveness of difference</td>
<td>2.71 (.57)</td>
<td>2.51* (.68)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived commonality with other groups</td>
<td>2.79 (.85)</td>
<td>2.44*** (.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive evaluations of conflict</td>
<td>3.34 (.36)</td>
<td>3.09*** (.43)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative evaluations of conflict</td>
<td>1.85 (.43)</td>
<td>1.99* (.54)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mutuality in learning about own and other groups:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyed learning about experiences of other groups</td>
<td>3.56 (.50)</td>
<td>3.20*** (.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thought more about my memberships in different groups</td>
<td>3.31 (.53)</td>
<td>2.91*** (.75)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learned about other groups and contributions to society</td>
<td>3.05 (.65)</td>
<td>2.68*** (.75)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gained knowledge of my group’s contributions to society</td>
<td>2.58 (.84)</td>
<td>2.38 (.87)</td>
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<td><strong>Civic Activities during College</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in politics</td>
<td>5.29 (1.12)</td>
<td>4.94*** (1.23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participation in campus politics</td>
<td>1.34 (.72)</td>
<td>1.14* (.39)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participation in community service</td>
<td>2.49 (1.16)</td>
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<td><strong>Civic Activities Anticipated Post-College</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping my group or community</td>
<td>4.06 (.90)</td>
<td>3.78** (.90)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping to promote racial/ethnic understanding</td>
<td>3.43 (1.01)</td>
<td>3.16* (1.10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Influencing political structure</td>
<td>2.79 (.99)</td>
<td>2.70 (87)</td>
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</table>

*Note.* Standard deviations presented in parentheses.
Table 2

Regression analysis of the effects of diversity experiences on democratic sentiments and civic activities of college seniors (Michigan Student Study)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perspective Taking</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>SE B</th>
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<tr>
<td>Whites ($R^2=.280$)</td>
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<td>.031</td>
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<td>African Americans ($R^2=.186$)</td>
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<td>.065</td>
<td>.108</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Americans ($R^2=.273$)</td>
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<td>.019</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino(a)s ($R^2=.143$)</td>
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<td>.129</td>
<td>.007</td>
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Sense of commonality white students feel with groups of color

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<th>B</th>
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<th>Beta</th>
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<tr>
<td>With African Americans ($R^2=.093$)</td>
<td>.296</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.288 ****</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Asian Americans ($R^2=.051$)</td>
<td>.091</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With Latino(a)s ($R^2=.079$)</td>
<td>.176</td>
<td>.071</td>
<td>.094 **</td>
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</table>

Sense of commonality students of color feel with white students

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>B</th>
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<th>Beta</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African Americans ($R^2=.018$)</td>
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<td>.221</td>
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<td>Asian Americans ($R^2=.059$)</td>
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<td>Latino(a)s ($R^2=.125$)</td>
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<td>.314</td>
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Mutuality: Participate in own group activities

<table>
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<td>.020</td>
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<td>African Americans ($R^2=.076$)</td>
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<td>Asian Americans ($R^2=.077$)</td>
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<td>Latino(a)s ($R^2=.146$)</td>
<td>.509</td>
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<td>.382 ***</td>
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### Benefits of Diversity

**Mutuality: Participate in other group's activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>$R^2$</th>
<th>Coefficient</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>p-value</th>
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<td>Whites ($R^2=.061$)</td>
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<td>.312 ****</td>
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<td>Asian Americans ($R^2=.053$)</td>
<td>.251</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latino(a)s ($R^2=.130$)</td>
<td>.445</td>
<td>.126</td>
<td>.361 ***</td>
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**Mutuality: Learned about own group's contributions**

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<th>Coefficient</th>
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**Mutuality: Learned about other group's contributions**

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<tr>
<td>Latino(a)s ($R^2=.133$)</td>
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<td>.151</td>
<td>.364 ***</td>
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**Non-divisiveness**

<table>
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<td>Asian Americans ($R^2=.031$)</td>
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<td>.098</td>
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Political Participation: Student Government

<table>
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<tr>
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Political Participation: Campus political activities

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<tr>
<td>African Americans ($R^2=.034$)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian Americans ($R^2=.125$)</td>
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Political Participation: Community Service

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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>African Americans ($R^2=.029$)</td>
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<td>.110</td>
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<td>Asian Americans ($R^2=.094$)</td>
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<td>.455</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latino(a)s ($R^2=.020$)</td>
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<td>.209</td>
<td>.157</td>
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</table>

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Note. The analyses of perspective taking and sense of commonality with members of other groups included pre-measures of these outcomes taken when the students entered college. The analysis of mutuality included the same pre-measure of motivation to learn about people from different backgrounds and cultures that was used in the IGRCC study. These pre-measures were used as controls in the analyses of these outcomes, and thus these analyses provide a reasonable assessment of effects.
The effects of dialogue and multicultural events, without classroom exposure, are statistically reliable for African American students. The relationship between perspective taking and an index with just those two diversity experiences has a \( B \) of .233, \( SE \) \( B \) of .101, and a \( Beta \) of .223*. 

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* Significance levels: \( p < .05 \) (\*), \( p < .01 \) (\**), \( p < .001 \) (\***).