

# Race and Higher Education: Rethinking Pedagogy in Diverse College Classrooms

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# Presentation Overview

- *How might we rethink our pedagogy in increasingly diverse learning environments?*
- *How can we create learning environments that respect and care for the souls of our students?*



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# Race and Pedagogy Assumptions

- **Race matters, Identity matters, Context matters.**
- **Any individual perception is reality.**
- **Good intentions do not guarantee progressive results.**
- **Promoting inclusive classrooms requires self-awareness, courage, and continuous commitment.**
- **Experts and tool kits are impractical – there is no “one size fits all.”**
- **We will raise more questions than answers.**
- **We can always do better.**



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# Inclusive Pedagogy: Definition

- The purposeful embodiment of inclusive pedagogical practices toward multiple student identity groups (Milem, 2007).
- A focus on student intellectual and social development. Pedagogically, it means offering the best possible course of study for the context in which the education is offered.
- The development and utilization of educational resources to enhance student learning.

# Inclusive Pedagogy...

- Recognizes the cultural differences diverse learners bring to the educational experience and how those cultural differences enhance the teaching and learning environment.
- Creates welcoming classroom environments that engage all of its diversity in the pursuit of individual and collaborative learning.
- Establishes an environment that challenges each student to achieve academically at high levels and contribute to learning and knowledge development (AAC&U, 2005).

# Why Promote Inclusive Teaching?

- Disconnect between diversity and educational excellence
- Demographic shifts on campus:
  - increasingly diverse cohorts of students
    - changing profile of the workforce
- Shifting social policies and laws
- Persistent social and educational inequities
- Institutional history and legacy
- Leveraging diversity has educational benefits

# Benefits of Inclusive Teaching

- Academic outcomes
  - Educational aspirations, self-confidence, critical thinking, & problem solving abilities.
- Diversity outcomes
  - Enhances perspectives and experiences, improves cultural awareness, fosters creativity, & innovation.
- Civic outcomes
  - Higher levels of civic engagement, creates informed citizens, strengthens commitment to equity, & justice.

# Inclusive Teaching



What challenges, concerns, or barriers do you have related to teaching a diverse student population and creating an inclusive classroom?

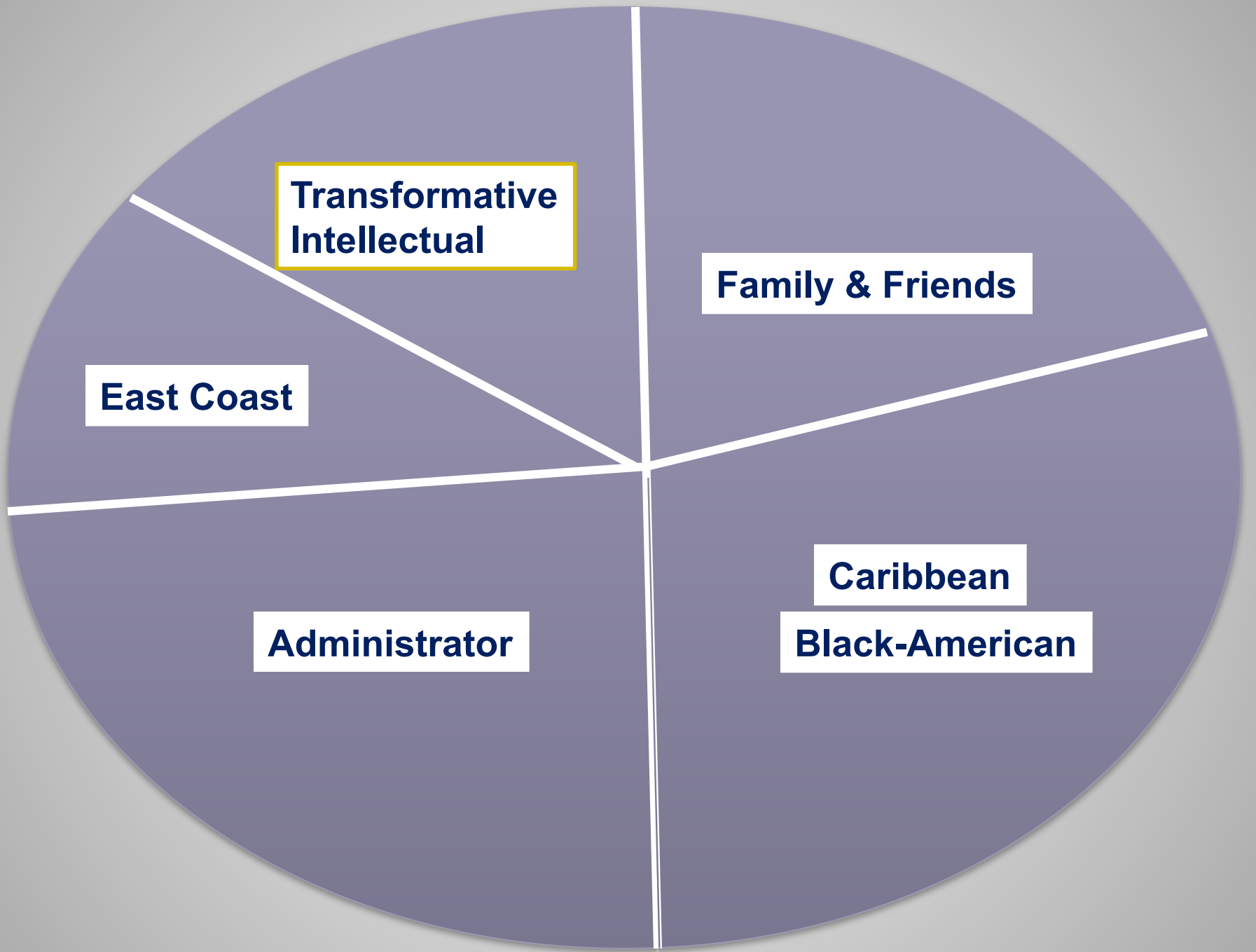


# Inclusive Pedagogy and Identity

- ▶ Are you what you teach?
- ▶ What aspects of your identity are most important to you?
- ▶ What aspects of your identity would students perceive as important and related to who you are?
- ▶ How, if at all, might the important aspects of your identity inform/influence the way you teach?

# Social Identity Pie Chart

- Draw a circle & create a pie chart.
- List 5 aspects of your identity that are most important to you.
- Draw each slice in proportion to how important each aspect of your identity is to you.
- Choose one social identity aspect as your most important.
- Think of an example of how that aspect of your identity might influence your teaching style.
- In groups of 3s or 4s share your pie chart.



**Transformative  
Intellectual**

**Family & Friends**

**East Coast**

**Caribbean**

**Administrator**

**Black-American**

# Inclusive Teaching and Identity

- **Achieved Identity**

Salient characteristics we identify ourselves with.

- **Ascribed Identity**

Characteristics others perceive as salient and  
assign to us.

- **Identities at the Intersections**

Our identities operate collectively opposed to  
independently.

# Race in the Classroom: Challenges

- Identity can complicate the teaching and learning environment.
- Teaching to students with different levels of identity salience and challenging resistance.
- Balancing the needs of majority and minority students.
- Avoiding stereotypes and generalizations (academic & behavioral stereotypes).
- Engaging students as individuals and not as native informants.
- Creating identity safe learning environments.



# Challenges for Race-Conscious Students of Color in PWIs...

- The Threats in the Air
- Climate of struggle
- Experiences with discrimination
- Interfacing with campus cultures and value systems
- The pressure to be exemplary
- Encounters with western ideologies and deficit based or racially charged content
- Interactions with faculty who avoid the significance of diversity
- Engaging in self-presentation (or preservation) & identity management

# Inclusive Teaching Checklist

- How, if at all, has diversity been integrated into your course?
- Have you considered content, readings, lectures, discussion topics, perspectives, examples, case studies, problems, and stories? Is the content balanced in its portrayal of diverse groups?
- Are there multiple ways to access course materials and engage in learning that accounts for the range of learning styles that may be present in your class?
- Have you assembled a range of instructional activities and assignments that offer multiple opportunities for assessing student progress?
- Is your course designed in a manner that facilitates the development of an inclusive learning community? Will you establish ground-rules and solicit feedback related to how students are experiencing the learning environment?

# Inclusive Teaching Checklist

- Does your syllabus signal to students that diverse perspectives are welcomed; that accommodations can be made; and that acts of intolerance and disrespect will not be permitted? Do you have a diversity and disability statement on your course syllabus?
- Have you anticipated and prepared for how students may respond to potentially charged topics or situations that may emerge in your class?
- Have you created opportunities to get know your students on a personal and individual basis?
- Finally, have you created a vision for promoting inclusive excellence in your classroom? Do you have sense of what teaching inclusively would feel like and look like?



# Inclusive Pedagogy: Implications

- Diversity Matters
- Relationships Matter
- Interrupting Prejudice Matters
- Institutional Context Matters
- Excellence Matters
- Institutional Support Matters

# Inclusive Pedagogy and the Search for Paradise

The academy is not paradise. But learning is a place where paradise can be created. The classroom, with all its limitations, remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labor for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades, an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom. (hooks, 1994)