Opening New Doors to PLA for Underserved Minorities
Presenters

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Overview

• PLA and Race: The Story of a Missed Opportunity?
• Racial Stratification in US Higher Education
• Micro-intervention: PLA and the Color of Learning
• Macro-Intervention: Estranging PLA for Equity by Design
Educational Inequality in the US

- 6 Year Bachelor’s Degree Grad. Rates, First Time Full Time, IPEDS 2013
  - 63% 40% 52%

- Ed. Attainment, Associate or Higher, 25 years and older, CPS 2013
  - 42% 31% 22%
Prior Learning Assessment (PLA) is a process for evaluating knowledge and skills in order to award college credit for learning from:

- On-the-job learning
- Corporate training
- Independent study, such as MOOCs
- Military service
- Volunteer service
Fueling the Race (2010)

PLA saves students time and money, but does it make a difference in getting to a degree?

A look at 48 institutions and more than 62,000 adult student records
Degree Completion with PLA Credit – 2010 Study

PLA students are 2½ times more likely to persist to graduation.

http://www.cael.org/pdfs/PLA_Fueling-the-Race
PLA Take-Up Rate – 2010 Study

American Indian/Alaska Native (n=469)
- Did not earn PLA credit: 29%
- Earned PLA Credit: 71%

Asian/Pacific Islander (n=1,344)
- Did not earn PLA credit: 40%
- Earned PLA Credit: 60%

Black non-Hispanic (n=7,852)
- Did not earn PLA credit: 24%
- Earned PLA Credit: 76%

Hispanic (n=8,109)
- Did not earn PLA credit: 15%
- Earned PLA Credit: 85%

White non-Hispanic (n=24,599)
- Did not earn PLA credit: 33%
- Earned PLA Credit: 67%
Random Access Study (2014)

What is the Latino student experience with PLA?
The Findings
Latino students used PLA as successfully as other groups

For Latino students, participation in PLA depends less on ethnicity and more upon the specific institutional approach to PLA.
Overall PLA Take-up Rate, by ethnicity

1. 35%
2. 15%
3. 42%
PLA Take-up rate by ethnicity after grouping institutions

- Small Divisions (n=1,054):
  - All Students: 37%
  - Latino: 49%
  - Non-Latino: 35%

- Adult Oriented (n=16,239):
  - All Students: 67%
  - Latino: 69%
  - Non-Latino: 67%

- Associate Degree (n=15,647):
  - All Students: 2%
  - Latino: 2%
  - Non-Latino: 1%
Latino students were more likely to earn PLA credit in the area of foreign language but were not limited to only foreign language PLA credit
Percent of PLA students earning credit for foreign language across institutional categories

- **All Students**: 7%, 28%
- **Small Divisions**: 17%, 30%
- **Adult Oriented**: 6%, 23%
- **Associate Degree**: 63%, 66%, 59%

Legend:
- Black: All Students
- Orange: Latino
- Red: Non-Latino
Prevalence of foreign language PLA credit-earning by students with any PLA credit, by ethnicity

- **Latino**
  - Foreign language credit only: 14%
  - Foreign language plus other area of study: 15%
  - No foreign language: 70%

- **Non-Latino**
  - Foreign language credit only: 2%
  - Foreign language plus other area of study: 3%
  - No foreign language: 95%
Latino students found PLA to be empowering and validating

“I went from being someone not college educated to being successful. It changed the way I thought about myself. I have abilities, or I wouldn’t be where I am.”
Current PLA marketing strategies may not always hit their mark

“It’s just not talked about”
First generation college students may need additional help with PLA
Currently, discriminatory sorting occurs through structures and practices that are so thoroughly institutionalized that they seem normal until we ask why racial inequities in outcomes are occurring so routinely and prevalently

Dowd and Bensimon (2015)

The post secondary system is more and more complicit as a passive agent in the systematic reproduction of white racial privilege across generations

(Carnevale and Strohl 2013)
Entrenched and Growing Racial Segregation

Access to Institutions Programs and Practices

Future Earnings

Wealth Gap

Rethinking the “Achievement Gap”

Student Loan Debt
The “Self-Worth Tax”: Racial Micro-Aggressions in Higher Education

- Invalidating
- Demeaning
- Need for Academic Capital
- Color Blindness
- Deficit Discourses
- Silencing
A Bigger Rock, A Steeper Hill: Toward a Model for Equitable PLA Practice

Nothing could be as unjust as an attempt to achieve equity through sameness

Noddings (1999); Cited by Bensimon and Dowd (2015)
Our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another…..

in hearing one another’s voices……

in recognizing one another’s presence
Investigating the subjugated knowledge of subordinate groups requires more ingenuity than that needed to examine the standpoint and thought of dominant groups

Collins (2000)
Opening up PLA: Epistemologies of People of Color and Yosso’s Community Wealth model (2005)
Women of Color Standpoint: Epistemologies and Conceptual Tools

Self Definition

Self Valuation

Mobilizing Outsider Within

Creation of Cultural Spaces
A (Brief) Celebration and a Caveat

- https://youtu.be/xMRcRlbCTd0

*our pool of learning is broad and deep and wide*
From Micro Practice to Macro System: Equity as a Core Value for PLA

Representational Equity
Resource Equity
Equity Mindedness
CUE’s Five Principles for Creating Equity by Design

1. Clarity in language, goals and measures
2. Equity mindedness should be guiding paradigm for language and action
3. Equitable practice and polices are designed to accommodate differences in students learning contexts--not to treat all students the same
4. Enacting equity requires a continual process of learning, disaggregating data and questioning assumptions about relevance and effectiveness
5. Equity must be enacted as a pervasive and system wide principle
Activity: Practicing Equity

Assessment in an Equity Framework requires “intentional critical deconstruction of structures, polices, practices, norms and values presumed to be race neutral”

America's Unmet Promise (2015)

Assessment that is attentive to Epistemic Justice requires a commitment to an iterative, rigorous process of self estrangement

Medina (2013)
These questions which have engaged so many have troubled all of my work. How to be both free and situated; how to convert a racist house into a race specific yet non racist home. How to enunciate race while depriving it of its lethal cling?

References

Carnevale A and Jeff Strohl (July 2013). Separate and unequal: How higher education reinforces the intergenerational reproduction of White privilege. Georgetown University: Center on Education and the Workforce

Collins, Patricia Hill (2000). *Black Feminist Thought* [Kindle e-reader]


