

Title: Diversity Education is Just Education

Speaker: Calvin Lai, Washington University

Abstract

Diversity education is the teaching of issues related to diversity in instructional contexts. These educational programs vary greatly in approach and scope. Some diversity trainings involve little more than a series of narrated PowerPoint slides. Other educational sessions involve expert instructors who hold intensive workshops that can last for days. Diversity education can also encompass semester-long courses about diversity taught by high school or university-level instructors. While some educational programs merely seek to raise awareness about bias, others aim to empower trainees with the motivations and skills necessary to reduce social inequality. In this session, I will show how conceptualizing diversity education as just another form of education clarifies when diversity education will “work”. Using theory and data, I discuss how straightforward predictions of whether a diversity education program will succeed can be made by examining a diversity training’s educational goals, educational content, teaching practices, and the educational needs of its trainees. Throughout, I will discuss recommendations that diversity education researchers and practitioners can apply *right now* to teach diversity better.

Bio

Dr. Calvin Lai, Ph.D., is an assistant professor of Psychological & Brain Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis. He is also the Chair of the Scientific Advisory Board at Project Implicit, a non-profit for education and research on hidden biases. He studies implicit biases: spontaneous or unconscious mental processes that create a gap between what people value (e.g., racial equality) and what people do (e.g., racial discrimination). This research has focused on developing interventions to mitigate the effects of hidden biases and has included studies on reducing implicit bias, preventing hiring discrimination, mitigating racial inequities in policing, and increasing women’s interest in pursuing careers in science. For his work, he was named a Rising Star by the Association for Psychological Science and received a SAGE Early Career Trajectory Award from the Society of Personality and Social Psychology. Dr. Lai completed his bachelor's at Rutgers University, his PhD in Social Psychology at the University of Virginia, and his post-doctoral training at Harvard University.