

**Pitt, Richard and Josh Packard. 2012. "Activating Diversity: The Impact of Student Race on Contributions to Course Discussions." *The Sociological Quarterly* 53:295-320.**

**PRIMARY ARGUMENT:** The authors argue that Black and White students make different contributions to class discussions and that formal interactional diversity, not just structural diversity, is necessary for the educational benefits and advantages of a diverse campus to be gained.

**IMPORTANT DEFINED CONCEPTS:**

- Structural Diversity: It is when the student body is diverse numerically and proportionally.
- Curricular/Classroom Diversity: The result of formal attempts by colleges and universities to help students engage in or learn about diverse experiences by requiring them to take courses (e.g, the DEI requirement) that focus on diverse experiences.
- In/formal Interactional Diversity: Diversity that is a function of student opportunity to encounter and engage with individuals and groups who are different. Informal interactions occur in dorms, student interactions, and other places, while formal interactions happen in class discussions.

**PRIMARY FINDINGS:**

1. Students, regardless of race, were significantly more likely to deal with intersections between race and social institutions than they were to bring up intersections with class, gender, or sexual orientation.
2. White students were found to be more likely to contribute to discussions regarding intersections such as social institutions (ex. religion) v. race/ethnicity and demographic categories (ex. race or gender) v. religion as a social institution.
3. White students were more likely than black ones to introduce their second hand experiences with race or racism into the course discussion.
4. Black students were much more likely to describe their own experiences with race and to express some emotion about it than their white peers. Eighty-one percent of the posts describing a personal experience with race were written by black authors.

**KEY QUOTE:** "...the formal interactions that take place in a course discussion offer the most potential for educators to extract the benefits of structural diversity on college campuses... findings show that black and white students engage course material in different ways, providing us with a means to begin understanding what is taking place in the "black box" of student course interactions" (315).

**QUESTION:** Is diversity as important in professional settings as it is in academic settings? How can we promote diversity outside of the classroom and in more professional settings?