Inclusion:

Reducing Polarization by Supporting Constructive Controversy

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要　旨

　超自由主義の波と，それに追随するソーシャルメディアとメディアバブルによって，社会は今，より一層，政治とイデオロギーにおいて分断されている。教育者は，これらの影響に対する免疫がないため，彼らの著作物や授業内での偏見や衝突を排除するよう注意を払う必要がある。挑発的な話題を，その場に不適切という理由で単純に避けることは，生徒から社会生活に必要なスキルを学ぶ機会を奪うことになる。コンストラクティブコントロバーシーのプログラムは，周囲の状況を学ぶことに結びつき，それによって，教師と学生が共に目の前の問題に立ち向かう手段を得ることとなり，生徒は，挑発的で攻撃的になり得る事柄へも，敬意を持って論を唱えることが出来るようになる。つまり，攻撃の種になる可能性を持っているという理由でそれを制限するのではなく，議論することによって，より現実的で刺激的な教育材料を使うことも可能になるのである。

　最近のエバーグリーン大学での論争が示すような，文化の盗用，セーフスペース，トリガーワード，超自由主義など現在の傾向や，ライオネル・シュライバーのスピーチ「フィクション　アンド　アイデンティティ　ポリティクス」への社会的な反感を考慮すると，真にインクルーシブな環境の必要性のために，コンストラクティブ　コントロバーシーの形態を使い，礼儀正しく構成された対話を通じて，今後議論されることになるだろう。

Abstract

With a surge in hyper-liberalism and accompanying social media and media bubbles, society is becoming increasingly more polarized in politics and ideology. Educators are not immune from these influences and must take care to identify and integrate bias and conflict in their content and classrooms. Simply avoiding challenging topics because they are deemed inappropriate deprives students of the opportunity to learn and acquire skills necessary for life in society. Integrating a constructive controversy program into learning environments provides both teachers and students with an avenue to address emerging conflict and preparing students with skills that respectfully address challenging, and potentially offensive content, thus not limiting them due to the possibility of causing offence, and in doing so, allowing for the use of more realistic and stimulating educational materials. Referencing current trends of cultural appropriation, safe spaces, and identity politics, as evidenced by the recent conflict at Evergreen State College, and the backlash to the "Fiction and Identity Politics" speech given by Lionel Shriver, a case will be made for the need to support more truly inclusive environments through structured and respectful dialogue in a constructive controversy format.

Keywords: identity politics, inclusion, constructive controversy, media bubbles, polarization, privilege

Introduction

This paper will be presented in two distinct sections. The first section will consider the increasing political polarization of society, the influence this polarization has on university life and research, and some of the variables that could contribute to this polarized culture. The various interpretations of inclusion will be examined as well. Reference will be made to a keynote speech entitled "Fiction and Identity Politics", made by the American writer, Lionel Shriver, at the 2016 Brisbane Writers Festival, and the subsequent backlash to her comments. In addition, a number of incidences that have occurred at universities will be presented for analysis. To complete this section, there will be a review of the approach that the University of Chicago is taking to the issues of identity politics, safe spaces, trigger words and other factors associated with the concept of inclusion and identity politics.

After identifying the academically stifling nature of identity politics in the first section, a case will be made for the use of constructive controversy to provoke productive communication, and reconnect the increasingly polarized social and academic environment. As the internet is providing an environment ripe for the development of social media bubbles and the resulting echo chambers of thought, educational programs must use great care to support communication skills and promote honest, respectful inquiry into conflicting and even offensive ideas.

The trend of identity politics that began in the United States has now stretched around the globe to the U.K., Europe, Australia, and even Japan, with individuals embracing identity and culture in the interest of freedom and inclusion. It should also be noted that with this movement very positive advancement has been made in the equal treatment of all individuals with regard to race, sexuality, or gender orientation.

Privilege

In Lionel Shriver's keynote speech at the Brisbane Writers Festival, she said, "in the latest ethos, which has spun well beyond college campuses in short order, any tradition, any experience, any costume, any way of doing and saying things, that is associated with a minority or disadvantaged group is ring-fenced: look-but-don't-touch. Those who embrace a vast range of "identities"—ethnicities, nationalities, races, sexual and gender

categories, classes of economic under-privilege and disability—are now encouraged to be possessive of their experience and to regard other people's attempts to participate in their lives and traditions, either actively or imaginatively, as a form of theft" (Shriver, 2016).

Along with identity politics has come a realization of privilege, and the accompanying understanding that certain individuals in society are born into more privileged roles than others. The most prominent of these privilege positions includes people who are born with white skin. Individuals born with white skin, regardless of geographic location, economic or educational background benefit from the privilege of being white skinned. Aside from recognizing the problem of determining how white is white skin, and the definition of racism that can be understood as holding a negative bias toward an individual due to the colour of their skin, this paper will not address the concept of white privilege itself.

Cultural appropriation

The Oxford Dictionary defines cultural appropriation as the "unacknowledged or inappropriate adoption of the customs, practices, ideas, etc. of one people or society by members of another and typically more dominant people or society".

The use of aspects of a cultural other than your own, without authorization, is seen as the appropriation of culture. Cultural appropriation can be claimed in incidences of the misuse of any aspect of a culture by an outsider to that culture, including, but not limited to clothing, music, art, food, and language. For the purposes of this paper, two essential variables of cultural appropriation must be identified. The first variable is how to accurately make a determination of the misuse of culture that is acceptable to if not all, but at least a majority of the individuals that claim said culture. A second variable in this definition of cultural appropriation is who, or which group has the authority to grant permission for the use of an aspect of culture.

Considering the hierarchy of identity politics, each individual's identity gives them a varying degree of power, which is largely dependant upon the individuals involved in a negotiation at any given time. Which individual can consider themselves a pure representative of an identity, or mixture of identities?

Identity politics are interpreted through a somewhat Marxist filter that shows every

relationship being based on power, and for an individual or a group to have power, another individual or group must have lost power, a dynamic which is often referred to as a zero-sum game. Considering the millions of identities that could be claimed, coupled with relationships determined by power, or lack of power, it is inevitable that a hierarchy of privilege, or perhaps seen from an alternate view, a hierarchy of victimhood will occur. The top position in the hierarchy of privilege is widely seen as being held by caucasian, English speaking, heterosexual males. The opposite end of the spectrum appears to be continuously evolving due to expanding definitions of privilege.

A recent incident in the U.K. demonstrates the potential problems in the framework of a world of privilege. The case involves two individuals active in the LGBT community, Peter Tatchell and Fran Cowling. Mr. Tatchell is a long-term advocate for gay rights, and human rights in general. In her position as the National Union of Students LGBT Officer, Fran Cowling refused to participate in a debate with Peter Tatchell. Her reason for refusing to debate was that in the previous year Mr. Tatchell had signed an open letter against the action of no-platforming. No-platforming being the recent tactic of blocking speakers whose content is deemed inappropriate, from getting to the stage to speak. For one group, no-platforming is a legitimate form of protest, but for the opposing group, no-platforming is an active restriction of free speech. Ms. Cowling was against joining the debate because she felt that by opposing no-platforming, Mr. Tatchell was endorsing transphobia and racism. For many observers, accusing Mr. Tatchell of transphobia and racism was incongruent with his over 50 year history of actively campaigning for human rights. Yet for many of Ms. Cowling's supporters, Tatchell was in a privileged position due to his experience, and his sexual preference, and it was felt that he abused that privilege (Faye, 2016).

This privilege-victim-blaming cycle is not sustainable, as one moment's victim becomes another's privileged nemesis. Taken to the logical conclusion, all individuals, with the exception of the absolutely least privileged, will find themselves in a relationship that demands that they themselves recognize their own privilege.

Inclusion, not exclusion

Inclusion is currently a very popular topic, although perhaps there have been a number of different interpretations of it's meaning. Increasingly, inclusion has come to mean

including minorities, or more accurately, minorities that do not offend any of the previously included members or groups. Dr. Haidt (Kennedy, 2017) somewhat ironically observes that taking into account the current hyper-liberal trends in academia, the conservative right is consistently finding themselves in a hostile intellectual climate, being marginalized, and it being made clear to them that they do not belong. These hostile environments, marginalization and exclusion, are some of the situations that inclusion is meant to resolve. Does inclusion only include those who the dominant group determines to be includable? True inclusion would mean including all individuals and groups, regardless of their viewpoints, offensive or not.

In Lionel Shriver's speech at the Brisbane writers festival, she spoke about her idea that identity is not simply being a member of a larger minority group (Shriver, 2016). Each person is an individual, with an individual identity that may not be shared by any other person in the larger group. Ms. Shriver proposed that, "… as people, we should be seeking to push beyond the constraining categories into which we have been arbitrarily dropped by birth. If we embrace narrow group-based identities too fiercely, we cling to the very cages in which others would seek to trap us. We pigeonhole ourselves. We limit our own notion of who we are, and in presenting ourselves as one of a membership, a representative of our type, an ambassador of an amalgam, we ask not to be seen" (Shriver, 2016). Unfortunately, instead of releasing ourselves from the constraints of narrow group-based identities, we have created a society in which a speaker or writer is judged on their ability, acceptability, legitimacy, etc. by a perception of their cultural background, history, skin color, sexual preference, gender identity, and self-reported or public experience, and perhaps not on their actual attributes.

After giving her speech at the Brisbane Writers Festival, Lionel Shriver experienced a strong negative response. She was told that her ideas had deeply offended some people and the organizers of the event promptly removed the text of her speech from the festival's home page. Ironically, her speech had quite logically addressed the restrictions and influence that identity politics were having on creativity and freedom of expression in the arts, but has itself been censored.

In the United Kingdom, Tom Bennet, a headteacher from Glasgow was chosen by the Department of Education to improve behavioral standards in the national schools. Mr. Bennet found that many students were graduating from school with very sheltered views that did not equip them for the reality of life in society. A life which often includes

interacting with people holding very divisive views. Bennet observed that an unfortunate truth is that there are still homophobic and sexist views in our society. On the topic of students entering university Mr. Bennet stated, " No wonder they are seeking safe spaces, because they can't handle the truth". As an alternative to safe spaces, he proposed creating 'healthy spaces' where young students can be exposed to controversial views, and be taught how to argue against them. "Teachers should be more proactive at encouraging discussion in the classroom and at confronting pupils with views they may find offensive to teach them how to disagree with others rather than shun debate" (Espinoza, 2016).

Safe spaces

There is no denying that there are toxic environments that have create a need for safe spaces; which the Merriam-Webster dictionary describes as, "a place (as on a college campus) intended to be free of bias, conflict, criticism, or potentially threatening actions, ideas, or conversations. An obvious problem with safe spaces is that without making significant changes in society, the number of spaces will, by necessity be exponentially increasing as individuals find more difference that can be interpreted as threatening. Changing society is a noble pursuit, but quite likely not something that will occur quickly, and there will probably always be some racist, sexist, or bigoted people in any population. Considering this, adopting Mr. Bennet's idea of 'healthy spaces' that expose students to controversial views in a more controlled, safer environment seems to be a practical evolution.

  All of the incidents and beliefs documented above are considered to be left, or liberal leaning views and increasingly, individuals questioning or opposing these beliefs are identified as right, or conservative leaning. Questions such as those raised in this paper, can, in this binary environment, be seen not as academic inquiry, but as an attack on a belief system. One of the unintended consequences of the socializing of the internet is the media bubbles that social media algorithms create. Within these bubbles individuals get repeated exposure to views which are determined to be similar to their own, and perhaps more importantly, decreased exposure to thoughts that might contradict their worldview. Individuals are influenced by confirmation bias to select information that reinforces their worldview, and in doing so move further into a political monoculture.

  In addition to the influences of social media algorithms and confirmation bias,

individuals may reinforce these thoughts by judging others with an attribution bias. When a person feels positively toward another, attribution bias leads them to interpret anything that they say or do in a positive light. Conversely, if an individual feels negatively toward someone, attribution bias will lead them to interpret anything that they say or do in a negative light. When communicating in an online environment, single words can identify an individual to be a member of one group or another, and the influences of attribution bias can either positively or negatively influence their feelings for the relationship.

This process of political purification is occurring both on and off university campuses as individuals align themselves with others holding the same values. Individuals finding companionship with others holding shared interests and values is not new, but the move toward polarization, and the tendency of groups to create taboo thoughts and words that cannot be addressed for fear of losing membership in the group is becoming more pronounced. As these ideologies develop, they become increasingly tribal and sacred, with the sacred being defended with an almost religious intensity. Regarding the ideologies with those intensifying aspects creating further barriers to understanding, it is even more critical for educators to understand that nothing can be sacred, if the goal is for communities of varied individuals to function healthily (Kennedy, 2017).

In Ohio at the Oberlin College there was an incident involving the serving of sushi in the university cafeteria. The students felt that the sushi had not been authentically prepared and was appropriated from the Japanese culture; therefore, serving it was disrespectful to Japanese people (Moyer, 2015). Oberlin College students has also demanded safe spaces for students who identify as Africana (Dent, 2016). In the University of California, Los Angeles, members of the Afrikan Student Union have demanded an Afrika Diaspora floor. This area has been requested because it was felt that Black students did not have spaces where they feel safe and comfortable (Dent, 2016). One of the more controversial incidents has occurred at Evergreen State College. The school had traditionally held a Day of Absence during which students of colour would not attend classes so other students and faculty could experience what it might be like without them. In 2017, the organizers chose to reverse the Day of Absence, and ask all white students and faculty to voluntarily leave the campus for the day. Professor Bret Weinstein, who is white skinned, chose to stay on campus and work because he did not agree with the activity. He was labeled a racist by the students, and forced to leave the campus.

Of course, there are many variables in all of these instances, and nothing can be

as simple as it is portrayed in the media, but it is the political, racial, sex, and gender polarization that is creating environments that are conducive to these conflicts. It is important to note that the universities that are actively supporting the actions of identity politics are not the majority, but they often appear so from the media coverage.

Considering data obtained by the 2016 Freshman Survey conducted by the University of California at Los Angeles' Higher Education Research Institute, colleges are experiencing more political polarization than they have had in over forty years. First-time, full-time first year students were asked to indicate their political views on a scale from far left, liberal, middle of the road, conservative, and far right and 2016 recorded 42.3 percent of participants self-identified as middle of the road politically. This was the lowest percentage for middle of the road since this survey first began, decades ago. The share of female students who identified as liberal or far left was 41.1 percent, and the share of men identifying as liberal or far left was 28.9 (Rampell, 2017).

University of Chicago

In contrast to increasing number of universities that are instituting policies to protect students from uncomfortable thoughts or situations, the University of Chicago has made a public declaration that there will be no requirement for safe spaces or trigger warnings in the university environment. When discussing the current climate of intolerance for unpopular points of view on college with Douglas Belkin of The Wall Street Journal, the University of Chicago president, Robert Zimmer, commented, "The main thing one always needs to keep in mind to contextualize all of these issues is the overarching purpose of universities. The purpose is to be a place that gives the most empowering education to students and creates an environment for the most imaginative and challenging work of faculty. Confrontation of multiple ideas and ideas that are different from one's own is critical to this" (Belkin, 2017). Mr. Zimmer goes on to emphasize the importance of not allowing any kind of suppression of speech, or limiting of discourse due to discomfort at universities. "the nature of educating people to be flexible, imaginative, integrative, analytical and having the capacity for understanding, creating argument and syntheses has been and continues to be an extremely important function, as is the research mission" (Belkin, 2017).

In an interview with the Ideas program of the Canadian Broadcasting Company,

Professor Jonathon Haidt explains how a phobophobic academic environment will lead to inaccurate research results. Professor Haidt's research showed that ratio of professors in the psychology field who self-identify as liberal to those who self-identify as conservative ranged from two-to-one to four-to-one for most of the 2oth century, with the ratio increasing to seven-to-one after 1995, and a dramatically different, seventeen-to-one in the latest data from 2015. With the current high ratio of liberal minded professors and student body, when researchers propose a hypothesis that makes people on the left uncomfortable, they run a risk of being perceived as racist or sexist. This politically influenced bias will produce incomplete, inaccurate, and substandard results. By avoiding potentially risky outcomes, and only an incomplete range of thoughts being welcome in the community, the dominant viewpoint will not be challenged (Haidt, 2017).

Regardless of an individual's position on the issues of identity politics, privilege, cultural appropriation, microaggressions, and no-platforming, it is clear that society is increasingly taking a polarized view, and a great deal of this thought is coming out of university environments. It would be both academically and socially beneficial to provide the skills for students, professors, and citizens to more fully engage in an open learning environment with access to wildly differing opinions.

For every acknowledgement of social injustice, it is prudent to make efforts to protect the individuals involved, and create systems that will guide society in a direction in which the protections are no longer necessary. The author is in no way opposed to these systems of protection, but also believes in the necessity of true discussion with all parties involved, and not just blind acceptance of the dominant view.

Constructive Controversy

"Constructive controversy exists when one person's ideas, information, conclusions, theories, and opinions are incompatible with those of another, and the two seek to reach an agreement that reflects their best reasoned judgement" (Johnson and Johnson, 2007).

Bringing constructive controversy to the classroom environment introduces a framework that can successfully reduce polarization and adequately question dominant viewpoints to provide a more balanced and receptive environment for alternate ideas that may not otherwise be given sufficient consideration. This structure of constructive controversy provides the flexibility to adapt to any learning environment, and promote

learning from all sides of an issue. The two elements essential to successful learning are conflict and cooperation.

Conflict can be an immensely powerful tool if it is handled safely and with good intention. Unfortunately, many people maintain a belief that conflict is to be avoided at all costs because of its enormous capacity for damage. Perhaps a more accurate appraisal of conflict would bestow it with an enormous capacity for change. In both good or bad conflict, change will undoubtedly occur, but "by avoiding conflicts, individuals miss out on valuable opportunities to capture and emotionally involve themselves and others in the situation and enhance their creativity, productivity, and learning" (Johnson, 2015, p. 7).

Ironically, conflicts become more frequent when the individuals involved truly care about the issue or outcome. Identity is certainly an example of something that can invoke a very passionate response, and correspondingly intense conflict. Of course, it is always the individual's choice whether or not they use their energy to draw positive or negative results from the conflict.

The actions that we take can essentially be broken down into three distinct groups. A person may choose to take an action with the intent of decreasing the success of others, increase the success of others, or have absolutely no effect on the success of other people. These groups correspond with the three categories of one of social psychology's dominant theories, social interdependence. Positive interdependence, or cooperation, represents an understanding that goals can be reached only when cooperating individuals also reach their goals. Competition, or negative interdependence, covers the perception that goals can only be reached if the individual with whom they are in competition with fails to reach their goals. No interdependence, or individualistic effort, defines a perception that achieving one's goals has no relation to whether or not others fail or succeed (Johnson, 2015). Constructive controversy is framed on the perception of positive interdependence. Addressing controversy with an adversarial argument approach will not lead to a constructive outcome without first transforming the argument to a collaborative approach with parties cooperating to argue both for and against all available ideas, positions, and conclusions.

Choosing to cooperate, and tie our fate to that of another, coupled with a conflicting element, is the transformational force of constructive controversy. For most people, their first instinct is to cooperate, and it is only after they have stopped to consider a situation

that their actions become more selfish (Axelrod, 2016). In social cognitive theory, cooperation involves aspects of modeling, coaching, and scaffolding. An individual learns, teaches information to another, and they work together in cooperation. Of course, cooperation can work against constructive controversy if the individuals involved choose to cooperate to maintain polarly opposed groups and value cooperation inside the group over all else. Successful cooperation always involves a great deal of conflict. Conflict is necessary for all individuals and groups working together to develop a shared goal, and path to that goal (Johnson, 2015). If viewed in a positive light, all of the conflict that people are experiencing and feeling in the previously mentioned university environments could be extremely constructive, if it were possible to get participants to work together cooperatively. Harnessing the cognitive conflict found when an individual is confronted with ideas that do not mesh with information that they already possess, is the driving energy behind constructive controversy.

The structure-process-outcome theory explains that the structure of any situation will determine the process by which individuals interact, and the process by which individuals interact determines the outcome of the interaction (Watson & Johnson, 1972).

Building a constructive controversy structure, there can be a cooperative environment with shared goals of the best answer, and the best path by which to achieve the best answer. The structure involves establishing two opposing groups, not unlike that of a traditional debate. These two groups research and prepare positions with the understood goal of presenting and advocating for that position. The two sides then critically evaluate and argue against each other's positions. Once both sides are satisfied with the presentation and defense of their positions, the groups reverse positions, and adopt the materials of the opposing side while arguing for their new position. Throughout this process, no position should be left unchallenged and accepted without analysis. By accepting this advocacy-based-inquiry procedure information from all positions can be synthesized and integrated into the final best possible answer. In this single process, participants become researchers, advocates, students, teachers, and synthesizers. The initial cognitive dissonance and uncertainty gives way to a search for new information and an epistemic curiosity (Johnson, 2015).

Care must be taken to not allow the participants to fall into the structure of concurrence seeking.

The concurrence seeking structure begins with a similar method to constructive

controversy. In a cooperative environment, participants are encouraged to research and prepare their positions which are then presented and advocated for. Following the defense of the positions, a majority position will emerge. The majority members then pressure the minority to accept the majority position without a complete critical analysis of all possibilities. Concurrence occurs, but not without individuals experiencing conflict between their private beliefs and their public acceptance.

In a recent open letter, twenty-eight Ivy League scholars addressed their concerns about the damaging nature of succumbing to dominant opinions without thorough and open-minded consideration. Within the body of the letter in which they gave the simple advice to think for yourself, they wrote, "So don't be tyrannized by public opinion. Don't get trapped in an echo chamber. Whether you in the end reject or embrace a view, make sure you decide where you stand by critically assessing the arguments for the competing positions (Bloom et al., 2017).

The moment when someone experiences entirely new ideas or beliefs, is the moment when they choose to react to the instinct of preservation of equilibrium and reduction of dissonance by responding defensively, or the individual can embrace the dissonance of cognitive conflict and push forward with curiosity and questions. Considering the words of the English economist and philosopher, John Stuart Mill, "Since the general or prevailing opinion on any subject is rarely or never the whole truth, it is only by the collision of adverse opinion that the remainder of the truth has any chance of being supplied", it is clear that constructive controversy is a valuable path to the remainder of truth.

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