ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR FOSTERING FACULTY RACIAL INCLUSION

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If you have come to help, you are wasting your time. If you have come
because your liberation is bound in mine, then let us walk together.

—Lilla Watson, Australian Aboriginal educator

Drawing on autoethnographic narrative reflections, this article explores the experiences of members of the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education and the HBCU Faculty Development Network during the organizations' first joint conference. Using the theory of professional interaction as a framework, we seek to

understand how effectively the organizations manifested their interest in increased racial inclusion and collaboration.

Research suggests that fostering a culture of involvement within organizations provides many benefits, including reduced costs, efficiency, professional development, engagement (Oppermann, 1998), and networking. In particular, joint conferences can save time for participants while promoting learning across race and institutional types.

In an effort to “create, collaborate, and engage,” the Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education (POD) and the HBCU Faculty Development Network (HBCUFDN) held a joint conference. POD president Phyllis Dawkins’s long-term affiliation with the HBCUFDN prompted the collaboration. This chapter explores the effectiveness of the organizations’ joint conference using an autoethnographic approach.

Theoretical Framework

The theory of professional interaction (Davis, Boyer, & Russell, 2011) serves as the framework for this study (Figure 18.1). While the work from which it emerged was centered within the context of faculty mentor and protégé relationships, elements of the same model may inform interaction in the conference environment.

The theory suggests that professional interaction of mentors and junior faculty yields differing outcomes depending on the frequency and type of professional interaction (for example, e-mail versus face-to-face meetings). The degree and frequency of professional interaction are influenced by workload or availability to meet, as well as whether the workplace is perceived as fostering integration or isolation. The type of professional interaction one engages in reflects whether one has mentors or allies and the resulting collegial relationships. These in turn influence the protégés’ overall experiences. Key experiences noted by participants of Davis’s original study on faculty mentoring (from which the featured theory derived) included the degree of collegiality of mentors and coworkers, the quality and quantity of career-enhancing information, the degree of satisfaction, and perceptions of campus climate. The concept of professional interaction, coupled with the concepts of degree, frequency, and interaction will serve as the lens for this work.

Figure 18.1. Theory of Professional Interaction.

Source: Davis, Boyer, and Russell (2011). Reprinted by permission of *Administrative Issues Journal*.

Methods

Employing a narrative, autoethnographic approach, this study uses journaling, reflection, participant observation, and document analysis. Thematic analysis revealed emerging themes, which we discuss as they relate to the featured theoretical framework.

Participants

The featured participants offer a purposeful sample to evaluate the effectiveness of the POD-HBCU joint conference in promoting inclusion and professional interaction across race. Each author participated in the conference. Two of the authors are African American female faculty members

from historically black colleges and universities (HBCU). The other two authors are white males, one of Middle Eastern descent, who hold both faculty and administrative roles at predominantly white institutions (PWIs). In terms of age, three contributors are members of Generation X, and one is a member of the baby boom generation.

Experiences

The following comments highlight the experiences of the authors and their perspectives on the effectiveness of promoting racial inclusion during the featured conference event.

Perspective 1: Deepening Our Liberation

I am white, male, and heterosexual. I have benefited from these social identities and the multiple layers of institutionalized systems of privilege and structural inequality as a member of the academy in the United States for the past twelve years. My whiteness and maleness have afforded me unearned entitlements (McIntosh, 1989) in various situations: a layer of trust that might not have existed if I was a person of color, a nod of approval by other white males for simply entering the room, and immediate solidarity in conversations about football or baseball and other male-dominated sports. These are just surface examples.

Hiring practices, evaluation, promotion, and how cultural capital operates in the academy are other institutionalized forms of unearned privilege I have received based on my race and gender. These entitlements were bestowed on me based on social identities that I did not choose. In other words, societal constructs operating in daily life serve to reinforce the power and privilege of those who benefit from the fact that these social constructs and related power structures exist. On the flip side, racial, gender, and sexually oriented “others” experience oppression, sometimes overt, sometimes covert, based on these social identities. Both the oppressed and the oppressor are dehumanized (Freire, 1973) amid such social realities.

As a critical multicultural educator for the past six years and intercultural educator for the past twelve years in several major research universities in the United States, I have had to do much deconstruction of my own identity while modeling that it is acceptable to deconstruct one’s identity to understand how power, privilege, and oppression operate—what I call a pedagogy of vulnerability. Having worked mostly in teacher

education for the past ten years, the majority of my students have been white and female, a demographic that matches national trends. The pedagogy of vulnerability that I model when doing a privileged and underprivileged audit, similar to the activity Johnson (2006) described, opens space for critical engagement in examining how social identities operate in schools to privilege some at the exclusion of others—part of my definition of structural violence.

As a new faculty developer, this was my first year attending the POD conference. I was delighted to find out that it was cosponsored by both POD and HBCUFDN, given my dedication to racial inclusion, equality, and equity based on my work in critical multicultural education. It was also appealing to me that the conference was held in Atlanta, a city rich with African American history, featuring the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, a place I have wanted to understand more since visiting the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis. Given the history of open racial segregation in the South and of the silent racism of the North where I grew up, I anticipated palpable racial tension in Atlanta—the kind I experienced as a white male living and working in inner-city St. Louis for two years. Yet I also expected that racial tension to be different at a conference with academics.

My observations and experience of the joint conference were mostly positive. The plenary by James A. Anderson gave me insight into thinking like a chancellor and what solid, transparent leadership can do for a university. I overheard a few conference attendees disagreeing with some of the main messages conveyed by other speakers at the conference. My session, “Experiential White Privilege: Teaching for Social Justice Beyond Student Resistance,” was well attended by over twenty colleagues, mostly white and female. Rich dialogue surrounding systems of privilege and power and the promise and pitfalls of experiential activities for bringing those systems to consciousness at predominantly white institutions filled the room. Yet one person who was African American indicated being tired of such activities based on experiences being the only person of color in classrooms at PWIs.

When I tallied my business cards on return, I received more cards from other white faculty developers. When I reflect on substantive conversations I had at the actual conference, most were with other white males. When observing lunchroom seating behaviors and tables for Jody Lynn Merriday’s provocative and engaging jazz performance on Saturday evening, I noticed self-segregation according to race. I wondered if topical themes at various tables around various conference themes would have

promoted more racial integration and inclusion rather than the sitting by familiar people.

Did this joint conference promote the racial inclusion desired? Racial inclusion is a long-term project given the history of deculturalization, displacement, enslavement, marginalization, and exploitation experienced by Native Americans, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans in our country (Spring, 2010). No one could rightly expect one joint conference to change that history of institutionalized and social racism. One must hold a true commitment to these issues if we are to disrupt the institutionalized policy and practice of deculturalization embedded in schooling systems—systems historically established to serve the dominant, elite groups of people and their interests in societies around the world.

If we are to establish deep racial inclusion in the United States, premised by reconciliation and efforts toward a sustainable peace, we must be in it for the long haul (Kohl & Kohl, 1990). The three pillars that sustain white dominance—the assumption of rightness, the luxury of ignorance, and the legacy of privilege (Johnson, 2006)—are deeply engrained in the hegemonic collective conscious, commonsense notions of social realities (Buttigeig, 1992), as well as institutional, social, and civilization structures of inequality (Scheurich & Young, 1997). Dominance paradigms are formidable obstacles to overcome and operate along multiple social identities, including race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, geographic origin, and language. According to Allport's (1954) contact hypothesis, groups must have equal status, common goals, and shared forging of norms in order to improve relationships among various groups.

I am sure much thought was invested in the organization of this year's POD-HBCU conference. I wonder if these conceptually simple yet complex practices were consciously embedded in the organizational process. Did we achieve the goals of racial inclusion toward diversity affirmation? We surely took important first steps. As mentioned previously, I am a white male who has benefited from structural inequality and systems of privilege, yet I can identify with exclusion experiences by historically marginalized groups. Johnson (2006) described the paradox of privilege as the experience of not necessarily feeling privileged, yet benefiting from how social identities operate within wider spheres of society and how cultural power operates therein. I am a first-generation college graduate and come from rather humble farming roots with a low socioeconomic background. With that said, I stand in solidarity with other historically marginalized groups of people whose liberation is bound in mine.

If we are to rehumanize the academy by adding diverse voices and bringing equity to a system that has benefited elite groups throughout history, we must recognize deep division and the nested historical contexts that created that division. We must also work toward common ground, civil rights, and human rights for all people on our planet because our liberation is bound together.

Perspective 2: Steps Toward Promoting Inclusion

I am a new member of POD and have worked at an HBCU for about a year and a half. During the first presidential session at the POD-HBCU conference, I felt honored to witness organizational history as Phyllis Dawkins, a black female, served as leader at the first joint conference between the two organizations. Dawkins used Wordle to share participant ideas for how the two organizations might collaborate. Some suggestions included joint publications, conference presentations, and learning opportunities. These would move future joint conferences to greater integration.

However, determining racial integration at the conference sessions was challenging, as race is not an indicator of one's institutional affiliation (for example, whites work at HBCUs and vice versa). Few African Americans attended the sessions I participated in with the exception of the session, "Experiential White Privilege: Teaching for Social Justice Beyond Student Resistance," and a roundtable on creating rubrics. Only one African American attended my session on faculty writing groups. I noted this observation in the absence of ascriptive diversity in the following journal entries:

In most of today's session's, again either I was the only person of African descent in the room or there was one lone "other." Sometimes the other lone minority was Asian or appeared Latino. Is the conference integrated or are we simply holding two separate conferences in the same building?

Today I held my session on faculty writing groups. The session was marked as a POD-HBCU session. To my surprise, only two minorities filled a room of over thirty individuals. One was an African American woman and the other was an Asian woman. I am surprised that the turnout was not more diverse.

It is challenging to learn from each other with little genuine engagement. This suggests a need for more meaningful interracial interaction for future joint conferences.

POD does a good job of promoting inclusion through its diversity travel awards. The award is presented at a ceremony where recipients meet various members of POD. I found this to be a welcoming introduction to the organization. However, I find commitment to promoting organizational inclusion an avenue for more diverse participation. A potential POD-HBCU network committee might not only work on joint conferences but develop other joint activities such as cosponsored teleconferences for members or publications.

Perspective 3: Becoming More Mindful About Inclusion—Making the Professional Personal

After eighteen years of living in New York City, my family and I moved and “went suburban.” We drive a car, keep up a home and garden, and enjoy the lush trees of Connecticut. But at the 2011 POD-HBCU joint conference, I realized how badly I missed interacting with more visibly diverse people. During sessions and conversations, I saw no more attention to racial inclusion than in my seven previous years of POD conferences. I also saw my own role in a series of racial microincidents, the need for me to keep learning how to be a better ally if I am to facilitate the professional development of others, and pathways that might make such work on ourselves more likely at joint conferences in the future.

JUMPY REACTIONS TO RACE. When I showed up to volunteer at POD’s registration desk, I was pointed to a door to let myself in behind the desk. I walked over to a black woman sitting near it to introduce myself before walking past her. A couple of white folks behind the desk quickly spoke up. “Oh no . . . not there! There . . .,” pointing me to the door past her and adding, “That’s for the HBCUs.” My white colleagues may well have thought I was lost and confused. But I wanted to acknowledge this lone black woman before I walked by her to join them. Later the speed of their reaction struck me when I said good-bye to the same black woman. She smiled at me kindly and looked me in the eye knowingly. I said to her, “That was funny earlier about the door,” and she chuckled with me.

One way to view this and other race-related episodes is to work on cultivating the mindfulness of my reactions, particularly emotional responses. A recent review of research on mindfulness (Hölzel et al., 2011) shows that “emotional regulation” includes reappraisal of one’s reactions and exposure, or deliberately staying with whatever reaction presents itself to eventually change it. That often means going toward discomfort, such as wondering whether I should be more sensitive to

racial differences, should see beyond them, or both. Most fascinating, however, is the possibility of extinction, in which I work not to remove my initial reaction but to either develop a new memory or reconsolidate the old memory with new contextual associations (Hölzel et al., 2011). That is, I reappraise my racial reactions, add a new memory of pride, at noticing the black woman and deliberately trying to interact or even simply make eye contact. At the same time, I may help myself attain a race-blind equal-mindedness as I learn to approach people the same way no matter their race. Then, when some people of color do not respond well to my approach, I can reconsolidate my old memory of that being race-derived with a new memory of that simply being a personality difference.

RACE OR PERSONALITY? Throughout the conference, I oscillated between wondering whether my actions were racist and feeling good that I acted as an ally. I gave myself credit for not just gravitating toward sameness, whether sameness of personality or race. For example, I made extra efforts to acknowledge a wide variety of people: from food service staff to colleagues of either conference. I enjoyed doing so. Mind you, this is where my sensitivity to personality differences can be my undoing, as I often think I am open and like to share personally. But I am often not as open, ironically, to when the other might prefer to simply stick to business or be more private. I struggle to respect that personality difference, although it is quite reasonable to prefer more formality or less personal sharing. I often ascribe the difference to a racial difference when it is just as likely simply a personality difference.

To take another example, in the fitness center, a black male using weights gave me a nod, a relative rarity generally among lifters or even gym users generally in my experience. I liked the personal acknowledgment from a person of color. I often do not get that acknowledgment from white colleagues. But again, might the difference have been more to his simply being more friendly, regardless of his race?

A term used by diversity scholars, *intersectionality*, captures some of the interplay of many dimensions of my experience (Banks, Iuzzini, & Pliner, 2011; Collins, 1998; Ouellett, 2011). While much diversity research usefully focuses on “single aspects of social identity” (Ouellett, 2011, p. 5), such as race, class, or gender alone, a more integrative “intersectional” analysis aims to “acknowledge the powerful interplay of the *many* aspects of social identity” (p. 5). I have multiple identities that influence me. First, I was born in Istanbul to the children of Armenian genocide survivors. I was bullied weekly throughout grade school for

having a different name, dressing differently, and generally not fitting in. So I have long felt an affinity for what it is like to be marginalized on multiple fronts, while at the same time enjoying the privileges of “passing” as white in many contexts.

HOW DO WE PROMOTE BETTER INCLUSION? I would like to think I use plenty of inclusive practices in my courses on the philosophy of education and environmental justice, between my use of discussion, displaying student comments on screen, and continuing exchanges online outside class. However, in one midsemester assessment, my students asked me to rely on dialogue less heavily, offer more directive guidance, and suggest conceptual connections rather than rely so heavily on the connections they make. This challenges me to stretch beyond my own comfort zone and, ironically, forces me to get beyond a false dichotomy I hold in my mind: I keep assuming that for me to direct the connections would not get them to think, because they would hear it from me rather than generate the ideas themselves. But perhaps I can both offer ideas and invite dialogue, making connections myself and inviting theirs. Another way to practice inclusion, then, is to vary teaching modes and, ideally, even include student critique in one’s changes.

Changing the mode of not just our teaching but the meeting structures at a future joint conference could directly promote inclusion of different backgrounds and learning styles. Pework could help too, such as if a plenary provided an overview of powerful insights about racial inclusion conversations. For instance, people often understandably fear inclusion conversations will come down to either, “Who me? I’m not racist,” or “Darn, I’m so racist.” But when those feelings arise, we can move from dichotomous “either racist or not” thinking to seeing race as a continuum that includes not just actions but thoughts. In one of the most helpful readings I have found on race, Heinze (2008) shows that our students experience a similar struggle, and it helps if we ask questions that let people reframe their prior assumptions themselves.

Several sessions into a course on multicultural psychology, Heinze showed students a film depicting a white male expressing “tacitly racist thoughts which elicited much disdain among the men of color in the group” (p. 5). After discussing it, he asked his students, “What is racism?” Responses reflected typical images of white supremacists. He then asked “if only behavior defines a racist” (p. 5). After most students answered no, he drew a continuum of responses (see Figure 18.2). He then asked students whether they thought the male in the film

Figure 18.2. Racism as a Continuum: Emphasis on Thoughts as Well as Behaviors.

Source: Heinze (2008). Reprinted by permission of Ramapo College of New Orleans.

"perceived himself to be on the racism continuum both before and after the group experience captured in the film" (p. 5). In using such a continuum, Heinze exposed students "to a non-dualistic/dichotomous way of thinking" (p. 5). I teach exactly such relational worldviews myself, yet I fall prey to my own dichotomous labels regarding race repeatedly.

Using a future joint conference for such conversations could help people "develop emotional comfort in dealing with race and racism," one of eight key ways Sue (2010) recommends for educators "to become effective facilitators of difficult dialogues." He argues:

Attaining comfort means practice outside of the classroom [and] lived experience in interacting with people or groups different from the teacher. It requires experience in dialoguing with people who differ from the teacher in terms of race, culture, and ethnicity. It ultimately means the teacher must be proactive in placing himself or herself in "uncomfortable" and new situations" [pp. 251–252].

For instance, if every plenary or keynote included the briefest interactive moment, people could be asked to write privately, then pair and share at tables on questions like, "How has the joint conference helped you understand inclusion in your practice?" and, "What would help you develop your practice regarding inclusion even more?" The more frequently participants discuss personal assumptions, the more we might explore how such thoughts bear on our practice in faculty development. I know that writing this narrative has helped me—despite the fact that my need to learn and change continues to grow.

Perspective 4: Engage and Collaborate

The joint conference was a collaborative endeavor signifying a commitment to diversity and recognizing the central role that it plays in faculty, professional, and organizational development. I believe the conference was successful in promoting diversity and engagement.

While racial diversity was evident in terms of the attendance of Caucasians, African Americans, and Asian Americans, it was also present in terms of international perspectives, as well as institutional size. Participants from large PWIs attended sessions given by faculty from comparatively small HBCUs and vice versa. These afforded interaction among a diverse group of people, enriching the overall experience and adding depth to presentations and to the conference. However, at shared meals, attendees self-segregated by organizational membership. POD members outnumbered HBCUFDN members by seven to one. So although the segregation was often by color, it may have been a matter of organizational affiliation. Joint presentations demonstrated that both groups can collaborate and work well together. POD member Sandra McGuire, nationally known for her work in metacognition and the improvement of student learning, joined with Michael Wilson of Dillard University, the main presenter. In his presentation, he integrated metacognitive learning strategies with cultural and generationally specific learning strategies in an African world studies course. This presentation demonstrated diversity in several ways: gender, age, university size, and expertise. Among the audience in many presentations by POD members were many HBCUFDN members. Business cards and e-mail addresses were shared to continue discussions, share resources, and develop collaborations.

ENGAGE. What was clear is the commitment of both groups to develop faculty who will serve students more effectively and will engage students so that permanent learning may occur. I was able to engage with colleagues from various colleges and share insights with them as well as gain insights from them.

COLLABORATE. From my observation, several members of the HBCUFDN are POD members. I would like to see POD members from PWIs have dual membership also. In this way, the connections begun at this conference would widen to form a stronger network or bridge between the two organizations. The benefits of continued joint conferences between POD and the HBCU Network abound. They include

quality research, joint publications, the opportunities for shared resources, grantsmanship, opportunities to continue sharing innovative ideas on teaching and faculty development, and the development of a diverse group of scholars in professional development. Such collaboration would lead to improved cross-racial and cross-cultural understanding, thus breaking down racial and cultural stereotypes that exist in higher education.

Findings

This work suggests that hierarchical relationships centered on majority helping minority groups may result in further racial divides. Yet understanding how our liberation is bound together in a common struggle to actualize our humanity for both the oppressed and the oppressor is pivotal to rehumanizing the academy and academic organizations seeking to promote change. Of particular interest is the difference in participant observations related to their views of cross-race interaction. Three of the four authors noted the limited racial inclusion experienced and observed during the conference. Examples include a white male's comment on mainly receiving business cards from other whites and a black female's observation of few black and brown faces at sessions she attended. Such findings point to the need to seek more effective means of promoting cross-race professional collaborations. The low levels of racial integration and engagement witnessed by three of the authors suggests a limited degree of cross-racial professional interaction during the joint conference. And this influenced the frequency and degree of interaction as indicated by the three authors' observation of instances of racial isolation or low cross-race integration, lack of racial engagement, limited cross-race opportunities for collegiality, and information sharing for white male participants of this study.

The primary theme that emerged relating to practice centered on fostering greater racial integration for conference participants. Effective employment of this suggestion promises to improve the level of cross-race professional interaction. Transferring professional benefits of conferences into actual practice must be considered (Bredeson & Scribner, 2000). In particular, racial inclusion efforts need to be strategic to be effective during future joint ventures. These may involve cross-race networking, semistructured exchange, critical discussion, and collaborative problem solving (Dailey-Hebert, Donnelly, & Mandernach, 2010). Future work in this area might compare the findings of this study to conference survey data and interview participants of both organizations.

Implications

The findings of this work point to the importance of continued inquiry into the area of racial inclusion in higher education for faculty and hold implications at both micro- and macrolevels. While this work focused on two organizations' efforts to promote racial inclusion through a joint conference, similar efforts might be made on individual campuses using cross-institutional research and teaching collaboration. Such inclusive initiatives may center on race, gender, or institutional types (for example, PWI and minority-serving institution partnerships). An example of this is the National Center for Professional and Research Ethics, a collaboration between the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Howard University. Promoting such inclusion in academic work promises to yield greater cross-group understanding and intellectual innovation.

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