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STUDENT PERSONNEL ASSOCIATION



**Journal of the Indiana University
Student Personnel Association**
2011 Edition

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The Journal of the Indiana University Student Personnel Association is published annually by the Indiana University Student Personnel Association with support from the Higher Education & Student Affairs (HESA) Program. The Journal is produced expressly to provide an opportunity for HESA master's students to publish articles pertinent to the field of student affairs. The primary sources of funding for the Journal are alumni donations and support from the students and the HESA department. The important role that each of these contributors has played in the production of this edition is gratefully acknowledged and appreciated.

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Editors' Comments

Mark E. Houlemarde & Tracy L. Teel

The attention to scholarship and research in Higher Education and Student Affairs remains a strong tenant that is espoused through the students and faculty at Indiana University. The Journal of the Indiana University Student Personnel Association continues with this support of the academic mission with the publication of the 2011 edition. We continue with old traditions and expand on new innovations with the move of the IUSPA Journal to an online format. We hope to continue to reach our alumni and associates of the program while broadening our readership to share valuable and innovative research. In succession to our 50th Commemorative Edition previously published, this year also marks the beginning of a new century for the Journal. We offer this collection of articles to carry on the legacy of the Journal.

This year we received an exceptionally high number of submissions and are able to provide readers with a truly eclectic selection of articles. A consistent theme of this year's Journal is to discuss new developments while refining old insights to keep up with the continued diversification of students and faculty in the academy. We begin with an article regarding Gay and Lesbian faculty issues in the professoriate. Second, a new theory is proposed regarding the development of atheist students. Next, the experiences of Muslim students are considered in the residential context, providing valuable insight and original research into the perceptions of these students. Our fourth article offers new considerations for the development of Asian-White students in the framework of multiracial identity development. Providing another look into faculty issues, a narrative of the experiences of Black and Latino faculty at an urban institution is provided. Next, veteran student experiences are researched to offer new perspectives of this student population. Last, the experiences of TRIO students is researched, with the specific focus on White students as temporary minorities.

It has been a pleasure to continue with the rich tradition of the journal and work with the dedicated review board. We also give thanks to our faculty advisor Danielle DeSawall for her continued guidance. Of course, we thank the friends and alumni who have supported the endeavors of the Journal and ensured its success throughout the decades.

Mark Houlemarde earned a Master of Science degree in Higher Education and Student Affairs from Indiana University in 2011. He also holds a Bachelor of Arts in Race & Ethnic Studies from the University of Redlands. While at Indiana University, Bloomington, Mark worked as a Graduate Supervisor for Residential Programs and Services. He also served as a Graduate Assistant for the Groups TRIO program and provided outreach for the office of Sexual Assault Crisis Services.

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Gay and Lesbian Faculty Issues

Matthew Holley

This article attempts to connect the literature regarding queer perspectives of the professoriate. While many universities have taken steps to be welcoming to gay and lesbian individuals, the actual experiences of those within the academy find issues of hostility and marginalization. Consequently, this article examines the work environment and its challenges for gay and lesbian faculty members along with a discussion of the reactionary measures taken by colleges and universities.

Introduction

In recent years, colleges and universities have attempted to create welcoming environments for gays and lesbians. From the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity in non-discriminatory policies to lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) student support services, university leaders have constructed mechanisms to build an inclusive community. However, research within the field shows that the experiences of self-identified gay and lesbian faculty often include issues of heterosexism, homophobia and hostility from peers and other members of the academy (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009; Sears, 2002).

This research is further exacerbated by current events within higher education. For example, on November 10, 2009, Alabama state legislator DuWayne Bridges introduced a bill to prohibit public universities within the state from offering employee benefits to same-sex domestic partners (Beyerle, 2009). This potential legislation is the result of initial conversations at the University of Alabama-Birmingham (UAB) to explore the addition of domestic partner benefits. The university (which houses an extensive medical school and allied health program) believes that such benefits are necessary to attracting and retaining talent. As currently presented, Representative Bridges' bill would

block state appropriations to institutions offering same-sex benefits. These actions articulate just some of the challenging issues for gays and lesbians within higher education and the importance of this topic as it relates to attracting and retaining a diverse faculty.

As a result, the purpose of this literature review is to examine the experiences of this marginalized population. From an analysis of mixed qualitative and quantitative research studies to ethnographic and personal essays, this work will highlight the varied experiences affecting both gay and lesbian faculty. More specifically, this literature review will explore the working environment for LGBT faculty, the consequences of being an openly out faculty member, and the reactionary measures taken by colleges and universities to improve working conditions for gay and lesbian faculty. Finally, this review will conclude with implications for future practice and needs for additional research.

Framework

The sources used in this literature review represent the evolving body of work concerning gay and lesbian faculty. In addition to specific pieces related to higher education, current news items have been identified in support of the research studies. These selections present a variety of

perspectives on workplace conditions for diverse faculty, including, but not limited to, gays and lesbians. In an effort to provide additional insight into the socialization of gays and lesbians into the workplace, research from other professional fields such as law enforcement have been incorporated.

The challenge with any study of gay and lesbian individuals is the fact that sexual orientation is less visible than other differences such as gender and ethnicity. In order to be identified as gay or lesbian, an individual typically declares that he or she is "out." For instance, some gays and lesbians, as Bilimoria and Stewart (2009) suggest with faculty, are not "out" and choose not to disclose their sexual orientation in an effort to be deliberately invisible. The terms "*out*" and "*out of the closet*" typically refer to being open about one's sexual orientation. Furthermore, sexual orientation compounds other areas of diversity (Fukuyama & Ferguson, 2000). In other words, if an individual identifies both as a member of the LGBT community and as a member of an ethnic minority group, it becomes difficult to determine whether or not the experiences he or she is encountering are the result of being gay, an ethnic minority, or a combination of multiple identities.

The Work Environment

A key attribute to retaining diverse faculty is providing a welcoming work environment. Yet, hostility and marginalization from peers and other members of the academy often become barriers to building an inclusive community for gay and lesbian faculty. For example, a recent Indianapolis Star article (McFeely, 2009) reported on comments made by a Purdue University professor that argued the cost for AIDS research and treatment should factor into the national debate over the acceptance of gays and lesbians. In effect, the

professor's comments received criticism from both students and fellow faculty members particularly given the university's recent efforts to support the LGBT community at Purdue University. Given that hostile working conditions can and do exist within the academy, it is important to begin with an understanding of work environment issues specifically for gay and lesbian faculty. The two studies that follow explore the working climate for gay and lesbian faculty in vastly different disciplines – science/engineering and education.

Bilimoria and Stewart (2009) conducted a qualitative study of faculty members in the fields of science and engineering at research universities in an effort to ascertain a qualified perspective of the working environment for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered faculty. Using an open-ended interview protocol, "the research team interviewed fourteen faculty members who identified themselves as lesbian and gay" (p. 88). According to Bilimoria and Stewart, the fourteen interviewees included:

Six participants who were listed publicly as willing to mentor LGBT students, five who were individually known and out to the researchers, one who was recommended by an interviewee, and two who responded to an e-mail sent to an LGBT listserv requesting participation in the study (p. 88).

The nature of the interviews included questions regarding the climate for themselves and other LGBT faculty and their experiences during the faculty recruitment process.

Bilimoria and Stewart's main research finding was that according to the interviewed gay and lesbian faculty "gayness or homosexuality was invisible, and that heterosexuality was routinely assumed"

(2009, p. 89). The researchers speculated that the lack of conversation regarding homosexuality may be the result of the constructs within science-based disciplines. Bilimoria and Stewart (2009) suggest that faculty within these fields are not aware of sexual identity theories and research. In addition to the avoidance of homosexuality, many research participants reported their colleagues “expressed or revealed their discomfort” for LGBT individuals (2009, p. 90). From fellow faculty feeling uneasy about sharing a room with a LGBT colleague at a conference to a department chair encouraging LGBT faculty to not bring their partners to department activities such as picnics and holiday gatherings, individual responses articulated an unsupportive environment.

In comparison to the fields of science and engineering, a study completed by Sears (2002) gathered data from a national sample of lesbian, gay, and bisexual education faculty. A survey instrument was mailed to a list of 821 deans of schools provided by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), colleges and departments of education, and a group of 173 members or former members of the American Educational Research Association (AERA) special interest group on lesbian and gay issues (2002). Sears received 104 completed surveys from education faculty and researchers. Of the sample, 52% were lesbian, 33% were gay men, and 12.5% were bisexual (split evenly between men and women); 15% were “racial minorities” and 57% were members of the AERA special interest group (p. 15). The survey instrument sought to examine how participants viewed their institutional climate as defined as gay-affirming, gay-tolerant, gay-neutral, gay-intolerant, or gay-hostile. For example:

Faculty who self-identified as working within a “gay affirmative”

institution were defined as working within an environment where campus leaders worked in a proactive manner to reduce homophobia and heterosexism through actions such as modifying affirmative action and non-discrimination statements to include sexual orientation, and establishing gay/lesbian studies in curriculum, providing domestic partner benefits, recognizing the accomplishments of its homosexual students, encouraging gay-related scholarship among its faculty, and hiring/admitting other lesbian, gay, and bisexual faculty and students into the university community. A “gay tolerant institution” was conceptualized as support of initiatives undertaken by it student body and faculty, such as offering courses with homosexual content, the adoption of a nondiscrimination statement and accepting memorabilia, such as photographs of one’s significant other in the office... “gay intolerant” institutions were those at sites that did not support pro-gay initiatives in its policies, procedures, curriculum, personnel, or student body. A “gay hostile” institution was one that promoted an anti-gay agenda, including the restriction of homosexuals from its student or faculty bodies and the inclusion of anti-gay connect in the curriculum (pp. 17-18).

More than two-thirds of Sears’ (2002) survey participants viewed their institution as gay-affirmative or tolerant, while less than one-quarter perceived the campus climate as gay-intolerant or hostile. When accounting for institutional type such as public versus private, 30% of public university faculty viewed their campus as intolerant or hostile

as compared to only 6% of private university faculty. In addition, lesbians viewed their institutions as less gay-affirming than homosexual men; although the researcher noted that female participants were more heavily employed at public institutions than their male counterparts (p. 18). In addition to the overall assessment, Sears' survey included individual components of institutional climate in an effort to determine what correlation various elements had on creating an affirming environment. While specific campus interventions and programs will be discussed later, it is important to note though that the highest correlation was between perceived level of "gay-affirmative" and perceived unit support (Sears, 2002). In other words, those gay and lesbian faculty members who rated their campus environment as gay-affirming were more likely to have strong institutional support within their academic discipline. In addition, when Bilimoria and Stewart's research is compared next to Sears', there is a strong suggestion that academic disciplines in the humanities, fine arts and education are more gay-affirming than those in science and other related fields. A comprehensive study involving faculty from a variety of disciplines would be helpful to support such assertions.

Nonetheless, findings in both studies illustrate deeply rooted issues of homophobia and heterosexism. These studies emphasize how the attitudinal responses of one's peers influence the extent to which one perceives his or her environment as welcoming. It is interesting to consider the additional layer of institutional type as it relates to the experiences of those at public institutions versus private. Though, recent events such as the introduction of Representative Bridges' bill and same-sex marriage referendums may help to explain how state and local politics could impact public institutions more so than private.

The Consequences

Feelings of Isolation

The decision to come out as a gay or lesbian faculty member brings with it increased visibility on the campus community. LaSala, Jenkins, Wheeler and Fredriksen-Golden (2008) discuss the risks of being a LGBT faculty member based upon their own personal experiences. In regards to visibility, they note, "Because openly LGBT faculty members are more likely to stand out, they may also be more likely to be scrutinized" (p. 258). Similarly, many gay and lesbian faculty members are more likely to experience issues of isolation. For instance, one of the authors on the LaSala et al. (2008) study recounts how a standing invitation to regular tennis matches with the department chair, dean and chancellor abruptly ended upon his/her decision to come out. This experience can be even more challenging for lesbian and gay faculty in a rural university community.

In an auto-ethnographic piece, D'Augelli (2006) recounts his experience of coming out in State College, Pennsylvania. He writes:

I was then the only known gay faculty member and the only open gay professional in our town. I felt generally supported by my colleagues and friends, yet I needed a gay community to connect to. My search for such a community brought me to a dead-end (p. 204).

In addition, Bilimoria and Stewart's (2009) respondents made comments of "relative isolation" with little to no other gay people with which to connect (p. 92) along with survey results from Taylor & Raeburn (1995) who noted fears with "being too visible on a campus with no other 'out and public' gay or lesbian faculty" (p. 263).

Yet, this notion of isolationism is not unique to gay and lesbian faculty nor is it unique to higher education. Colvin (2008) explored the work environment climate for lesbian and gay people in law enforcement. More specifically, the author surveyed members of the New York City Gay Officers Action League (GOAL), the Law Enforcement Gays and Lesbians International (LEGAL International), and attendees at the 11th Annual International Conference for Gay and Lesbian Criminal Justice Professionals. In Colvin's (2008) findings, many of the participants mentioned that they see themselves as outsiders, concluding that "social isolation and outsiderism may dominate when lesbian and gay officers have disclosed their sexual orientation" (p. 97). These findings support similar research conducted with other diverse groups of faculty. For example, Stanley's (2006) auto-ethnographic study of 27 faculty of color at predominantly white institutions concluded that visibility and invisibility has an effect on issues related to collegiality with fellow faculty and other members of the academy. Once again, the need to feel connected to one's peers within his/her academic unit is shown as being crucial to developing an inclusive community for gay and lesbian faculty.

Challenges Working with Students

Another challenge for some gay and lesbian faculty involves potential consequences of working with students. In an auto-ethnographic writing, Scott Gust (2007) articulates the fears of a gay faculty member encountering straight male students upon receiving the advice from peers to "look out for the football players and the frat boys" (p. 44). His personal reflections recount introducing the *The Laramie Project*, written by playwright Moises Kaufman, a theatrical piece centered on the weeks that followed the murder of gay student Matthew Shepard,

into an introductory speech communication course at a large, state-funded, Midwestern research university. As it applies to being a gay faculty member introducing the subject of homosexuality into the curriculum, Gust writes, "my personal belief is that, by self-identifying as a queer teacher. I at least get a chance to fight back against the hate, violence, and oppression. I get a chance because I demand that we talk about it" (p. 50). Yet, faculty like Gust risk facing a hostile environment from students. Whether it is direct open hostility or implied (through written coursework or even student activities), gay and lesbian faculty who chose to be out can sometimes face scrutiny not only from peers but also the very students inside their classrooms (2007).

However, not all interaction with students is as potentially threatening for gay and lesbian faculty. In David Wallace's (2002) auto-ethnographic piece, he shares with readers three institutional moments that shape his voice as a gay member of the academy. In particular, Wallace has two students in his entry-level composition class who confide in him about their challenges with scheduling issues that interfere with the school's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgendered, and Ally Alliance's meetings. According to Wallace (2002), he "saw students as young gay men desperately in need of immediate supportive social contact on an overwhelming straight campus" (p. 58). For Wallace and others, the opportunity to serve as a role-model for gay and lesbian students on campus can be a rewarding part of the faculty experience.

Risking Academic Career

A severe consequence for out gay and lesbian faculty is jeopardizing academic success. In other words, the decision to be an out faculty member may prevent opportunities to advance and secure tenure. This can be particularly true for those faculty

whose profiles are raised because of their role as activists for LGBT causes. In a survey collected by Taylor and Raeburn (1995), LGBT sociologists reported higher rates of discrimination for activists than non-activists. In particular, 25% of those identifying as highly activists reported encountering greater bias in the tenure and promotion process, while non-activist candidates reported 16%. Individual respondents cited that discrimination in the tenure process is greater than in the hiring process because the faculty's activist behavior is likely to have been observed before the tenure decision (p. 263). As means to be successful, multiple participants in Taylor and Raeburn's study noted they "toned-down" their gayness or activist behaviors before the tenure process. The authors write, "a man who had been active in the gay and lesbian movement before moving into academia discussed how, before securing tenure, he chose less visible means of participating. 'As soon as I got tenure, I started going back on television again,'" (p. 263).

Participants in Bilimoria and Stewart's (2009) study reinforce the notion of negative career consequences – "two [participants] pointed to specific academic jobs they knew they had not gotten because they were gay" (p. 92). Other findings of gay and lesbian faculty in science and engineering included a colleague attempting to interfere with potential partnerships by outing them, not being invited to recruitment dinners, and not being offered mentoring opportunities (2009). Their results reinforce the notion of being on the outside or being isolated by one's peers.

Tierney's (1993) study at a large, public research, land-grant institution located in a rural-area outside of a major city explored the relationships gay and lesbian faculty had with peer and administrators. One lesbian faculty member responds:

Professionally I would be frightened to be open about my lifestyle. Having a president who does not want to include a sexual orientation clause makes me fearful of being found out. What concerns me most right now is my career. I must protect it (1993, p. 150).

Collectively, the research illustrates a reoccurring theme of fear among gay and lesbian faculty members. For many, the decision to disclose one's sexuality brings too much risk. Yet, university leaders are becoming increasingly aware of such consequences and the need to take action.

Universities React

Universities have recently acknowledged the challenges created for gay and lesbian faculty. Through internal campus assessments or even national research such as the *2010 State of Higher Education for LGBT People* published by the organization Campus Pride, universities leaders are facing challenges in creating a welcoming environment for its LGBT community. The Campus Pride report, a comprehensive study of 5,149 lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and queer (LGBTQQ) students, faculty, staff, and administrators, found members of the LGBTQQ community were significantly less likely to feel comfortable with campus climate than their heterosexual counterparts (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld & Frazer, 2010). In addition, the research team for Campus Pride found that "LGBQ faculty members had more negative perceptions of campus climate than their student and staff counterparts" (Rankin et al., 2010, p. 14). Yet, the initial reaction for university leaders is a change to discriminatory policies and benefits programs.

In a study of work-life policies and benefit programs of ten Midwestern public universities, Munn and Hornsby (2008) set out to determine how gay and lesbian families are treated compared to their heterosexual married counterparts. Their research question was to determine the effects of state and local laws that potentially could impact extending benefits to gay and lesbian staff. Findings of their study illustrate the dramatic influence state laws and referendums can have on promoting an open and welcoming environment for gay and lesbian faculty.

Munn and Hornsby cite a Michigan Court of Appeals ruling on same-sex domestic partner benefits that caused the University of Michigan and Michigan State University to discontinue such benefits (2008). However, both institutions, understanding the need to provide such benefits for the purposes of recruiting and retaining talent, developed benefits for “Other Eligible Individual” or “Other Qualified Adult” in an effort to withstand a constitutional challenge (2008). While the researchers found significant progress in universities providing benefits for domestic partners and children, there continue to be issues of inequities when compared with benefits of heterosexual married couples. Furthermore, Munn and Hornsby believe that heterosexism continues to dominate the university culture by requiring additional steps and tasks such as annual affidavits of domestic partnership and longer insurance waiting periods for gay and lesbian faculty and staff.

The inclusion of sexual orientation into university non-discriminatory policies continues to show growth. As Sears noted in his study, approximately two-thirds of participants noted such inclusion yet only one-fourth noted the mention in affirmative action statements (2002). Six years later in Munn and Hornsby’s study each of the ten public Midwestern universities included

sexual orientation in their non-discriminatory statements (2008).

Beyond policy changes, institutional research concerning the campus climate for LGBT faculty represents a more recent practice. For example, on January 16, 2011, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) Chancellor Charles R. Bantz released the annual *State of Diversity* message. For the first time in its history, IUPUI included survey questions to better understand the concerns of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) campus community. Not surprising, a large percentage of the LGBT faculty, staff, and students indicated they had experienced “negative or disparaging comments, expressions of negative stereotypes, offensive language or humor, sexual comments, feeling isolated or unwelcome, and or being excluded from conversations or events” (p. 9). Such findings suggest that more is needed than just supportive policies to improve conditions for LGBT faculty.

Conclusion

While universities have made strong efforts to create a welcoming environment for gays and lesbians (Munn & Hornsby, 2008; Sears, 2002), the actual experiences of this diverse group include hostility from peers (Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009), issues of isolation (LaSala et al., 2008), and continued heterosexism and homophobia (Wallace, 2002). As a result, universities face losing diverse talent because of the professional risks associated with being a publicly out faculty member (Taylor & Raeburn, 1995). With the ever-evolving public debate on same-sex marriage, further research is necessary to provide a modern day perspective on the issue not only for gay and lesbian faculty members, but also bisexual and transgendered faculty. Furthermore, current research has begun to focus more on

the topic from a human resources perspective (Munn & Hornsby, 2008) and fails to investigate whether or not the presence of such policies is influencing change at the department or unit level, which Sears (2002) suggests is the greatest correlation to a faculty member's perspective of a gay-affirming climate.

In addition to new research concerning the impact of state and local politics on campus policies, further study is needed to determine whether or not faculty socialization initiatives such as peer mentoring can influence a gay-affirming environment. Current literature explores and recommends faculty development programs

related to women and ethnic/racial minority faculty, yet few studies have included gays and lesbians. As a result, research studies focused on specific faculty populations such as women and ethnic minorities should be replicated where possible with LGBT faculty for comparative purposes. By expanding research on gay and lesbian faculty, valuable information is created for university leaders and other members of the academy to utilize in developing policy and faculty development programs. By implementing new programs and practices, universities may ultimately succeed in creating inclusive communities that not only attract but also retain talented LGBT faculty.

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A Theory of Atheist Student Identity Development

Sam Siner

This paper proposes a theory of identity development for the atheist college student. Through examining the parallels between atheist college students and lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) college students as members of a salient, marginalized, and invisible minority group, this paper applies Small's (1998) theory of atheist student faith development to Fassinger's (1998) theory of LGB student identity development. Using this conceptual framework, this paper aims to explain how atheist students develop their individual and group identities.

Faith is important to many college students, affecting how they see themselves and how they interact with others (Seifert, 2007). The dominant faith in the United States is Christianity, and students who identify as Christian have *Christian privilege*, which is the “conscious and subconscious advantages often afforded the Christian faith” (Seifert, 2007, p. 11). Examples of Christian privilege include the university break around Christmas time (but not around the holidays of other faiths), school off on Sunday, chapels prominently placed on college campuses, and ignorance of customs, traditions, and needs of non-Christian students (e.g. not offering kosher food options for Jewish students). As a result of Christian privilege, non-Christian students can feel marginalized, oppressed, and ignored (Seifert, 2007). Since marginalization can lead to suboptimal learning outcomes (Tatum, 2007), the experiences of non-Christian college students must be addressed.

The experiences of certain faith minorities in higher education have been explored in the literature, including Jewish students (Fejgin, 1995; Kushner, 2009; Vilchinsky & Kravetz, 2005) and Muslim students (Asmar, 2005; Speck, 1997). However, the experiences of atheist students have not been widely studied (Goodman & Mueller, 2009a). In brief, atheism refers to a

“lack of belief in the existence of a God or Gods” (Nash, 2003, p. 7). Although the literature on these students is sparse, students with atheist beliefs are a significant population on college campuses. A major national study, *The Spiritual Life of College Students* (HERI, 2004), found that 21% of entering college students do not believe in God. However, atheist students are “invisible, stigmatized, and marginalized” (Goodman & Mueller, 2009a, p. 57), largely because they do not share traditional values of faith. Atheists are often described by other students as “bitter,” “mean-spirited,” “Satanic,” “immoral,” “empty,” or “ignorant” (Nash, 2003, p. 6). Due to this, many atheist students choose not to publicly share their beliefs. As a result, atheist students can be considered an invisible and oppressed population on campuses (Goodman & Mueller, 2009b).

Since students enter college with unique sets of beliefs, goals, identities, and needs, and since universities aim to help all students succeed, it is important for student affairs professionals to work toward a greater understanding of student populations that are not well understood (American Council on Education, 1949). It is particularly important to work toward a greater understanding of student populations that are oppressed. *Oppression* is “those attitudes, behaviors, and pervasive and systematic social arrangements by which

members of one group are exploited and subordinated while members of another group are granted privileges” (Bohmer & Briggs, 1991, p. 155). If students feel that they are put down, ignored, or denied privileges because of their membership in a particular identity group – if they feel that an important aspect of their identity is not being affirmed – then they are less likely to feel comfortable in their living surroundings and learning environments (Tatum, 2007).

To help educators learn how to work effectively with atheist students, a theory of atheist student identity development is needed. This paper will review the current literature on social identity and faith development, draw parallels between atheist and lesbian, gay, bisexual (LGB) identities, and use this framework to apply Small’s (2008) theory of atheist college student faith development to Fassinger’s (1998) theory of LGB identity development. Ultimately, this paper will propose a new theory of atheist student identity development.

Literature Review

Social Identities and Salience

According to Ashforth & Mael (1989), people place themselves and others into social categories, or *social identities*, such as race, gender, faith, and sexual orientation. Social identities, or self-perceptions of belonging to certain groups, help individuals to create order in their social environment and to define themselves in relation to other people (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). For each identity category, an individual may identify with the majority or the minority. For example, for race in the United States, a White person would be in the racial majority while a Black person would be in the racial minority (Bohmer & Briggs, 1991). Individuals identifying with a minority identity status may face issues of oppression (Bohmer & Briggs, 1991).

Each person has multiple identities that exist at the same time, and each may have a majority or minority status. For example, a person might be White, Christian, and male (majority statuses in the U.S.) but also lower-class and gay (minority statuses in the United States) (Jones & McEwen, 2000). In addition, certain identities are more *salient* to an individual, or important to that individual’s core sense of being, while other identities are more peripheral (Jones & McEwen, 2000). According to Jones & McEwen (2000), “lack of salience seemed prevalent among those more privileged identity dimensions” (p. 410), implying that oppressed, marginalized, and minority identity statuses tend to be more salient to an individual. For example, if an individual identifies as Black and male, then the Black (oppressed) identity is likely to be salient while the male (privileged) identity is likely to be less salient.

Just as any minority identity is likely to be more salient, faith identity “may be particularly salient to those students from minority religions that are not valued in the Christian-dominated culture of the United States” (Small, 2008, p. 10). Atheism, therefore, can be considered to be a salient minority faith identity. It is considered part of the minority because it is not Christian, related to faith because it is defined in terms of a belief (or lack of a belief) in God, and an identity because it is part of an overall “life philosophy that provides moral direction” (Goodman & Mueller, 2009a).

Faith Development Theories

Even though atheists comprise 21% of college students (HERI, 2004), specific theories about their identity development are almost non-existent. Despite this deficiency, there are several theories of overall general faith development. One influential scholar in this area was Fowler (1981), who interviewed hundreds of individuals (mostly White, but of many different faiths) to

develop a comprehensive theory of faith development. According to Fowler, *faith* is “an active mode of being and committing, a way of moving into and giving shape to our experiences of life” (p. 16). The theory states that faith development occurs through a series of stages:

1. Intuitive-projective faith (one fixed perception of God).
2. Mythic-literal faith (multiple literal perspectives of God).
3. Synthetic-conventional faith (externally-validated abstract perspectives of God).
4. Individuative-reflective faith (choosing one’s own perspectives of God).
5. Conjunctive faith (increased commitment to one’s perspectives of God and acceptance of other perspectives).
6. Universalizing faith (a deeper, more global conception of God).

Overall, Fowler described an individual’s progression from accepting blind faith in God, to choosing one’s own view of God, to committing to one’s chosen faith viewpoint and accepting others’ faith viewpoints.

Parks (as cited in Chickering, Dalton, & Stamm, 2006) applied Fowler’s theory of faith development to college students specifically, concentrating on the college student moving from the acceptance of an external definition of faith to the construction of a meaningful internal definition. According to Parks’ theory (as cited in Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton & Renn, 2010), students move from trusting outside authorities, to losing trust in authorities altogether, to engaging in a mature, critical search for knowledge. Along the way, students gain a sense of *inner dependence* as they develop a mature faith identity. Eventually they become *interdependent*,

accepting others of a different faith while remaining true to their own faith. Unlike Fowler, Parks (as cited in Evans et al., 2010) describes not only the developmental trajectory of students’ internal faith development but also the sequence of groups that students choose to identify with during this process. Students progress from identifying with face-to-face communities based on other peoples’ spiritual views, to identifying with diffuse communities while they explore new views, to identifying with distinct mentoring communities that can help them develop their own unique spiritual views. Essentially, college students undergo two simultaneous challenges: figuring out how to define their own faith and figuring out how to identify with a particular faith group.

Thus, as a faith identity, it is reasonable to conclude that atheism can be defined both internally (in a personal context) and externally (in a social context). In addition, atheism can be conceptualized as a salient, marginalized, invisible, minority social identity. It is salient because, as previously shown, it is a marginalized minority identity (Goodman & Mueller, 2009a; Jones & McEwen, 2000). It is invisible because many atheist students choose not to make their atheist identity public, despite the fact that they make up a significant minority of the overall college student population (Goodman & Mueller, 2009b; Higher Education Research Institute, 2004).

Parallels Between Faith and Sexual Orientation

According to Nash (2003) and *The Out Campaign* website (<http://outcampaign.org>) atheist students often have to ‘be in the closet’ with their beliefs for fear of being tormented or proselytized by other students. However, to ‘be in the closet’ is a phrase more commonly used to describe the psychosocial and cultural experience of LGB individuals). This is not just a lexical comparison; faith and

sexual orientation as identities have several important conceptual parallels as well. Like faith, but unlike race or gender, sexual orientation is “not visible to oneself or others” (Fassinger, 1998, p. 15). Also, individuals identifying with the minority statuses of either faith (non-Christian) or sexual orientation (LGB) are oppressed in U.S. society (McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Seifert, 2007). Therefore, just like atheist students, LGB students have a salient, marginalized, invisible, minority social identity. In addition, like atheist students, LGB students develop their identity in both an individual and a group context (Fassinger, 1998).

Fassinger (1998) lays out a well-developed and empirically tested theory on LGB student identity development. This theory has two dimensions – *individual sexual identity* and *group membership identity*. Students develop along both dimensions, separately and not necessarily simultaneously, in four stages. The first stage, *awareness*, is when the student first feels different from other people and realizes that other sexual orientations exist. The second stage, *exploration*, is when the student discovers that he or she has erotic feelings about a person or people of the same sex and tries to figure out how he or she feels about lesbian, gay, and bisexual people as a group. The third stage, *deepening/commitment*, is when the student determines that he or she is certain in the choice of a minority sexual identity and involves himself or herself in the LGB community. The final stage, *internalization/synthesis*, is when the student incorporates his or her minority sexual identity into their overall identity and feels comfortable identifying as LGB in a number of different contexts.

Since atheist students and LGB students have similar and unique identity

characteristics, it is reasonable to hypothesize that these students undergo similar developmental processes. As previously mentioned, there are no theories about how atheist students develop their social identity. However, Small (2008) did create and validate a theory of atheist student *faith* development. Small (2008) proposed the following developmental progression:

- 1 & 2. Unexamined or no belief in a faith, depending on how the student is raised.
3. The process of giving up theistic beliefs and exploring a new belief system.
4. Committing to a new system of atheistic beliefs and finding an atheist community.
5. Lack of egotism.
6. Worldview of synthesis with other human beings not based on faith.

Although Small's (2008) theory explains the development of atheist students' faith rather than their identity, it contains both individual and group development dimensions. It also generally describes a progression of awareness, exploration, commitment, and synthesis. Because of these theoretical parallels and the uniquely similar characteristics of the atheist and LGB identities, Small's (2008) theory can be applied to Fassinger's (1998) theory to address a gap in the literature and create a new theory of atheist student identity development.

Atheist Student Identity Development (ASID) Theory

Operating on the belief that LGB students develop their identities in a similar manner as atheist students, ASID theory replaces aspects of sexual orientation with aspects of faith as illustrated by the literature. Fassinger's (1998) theory and

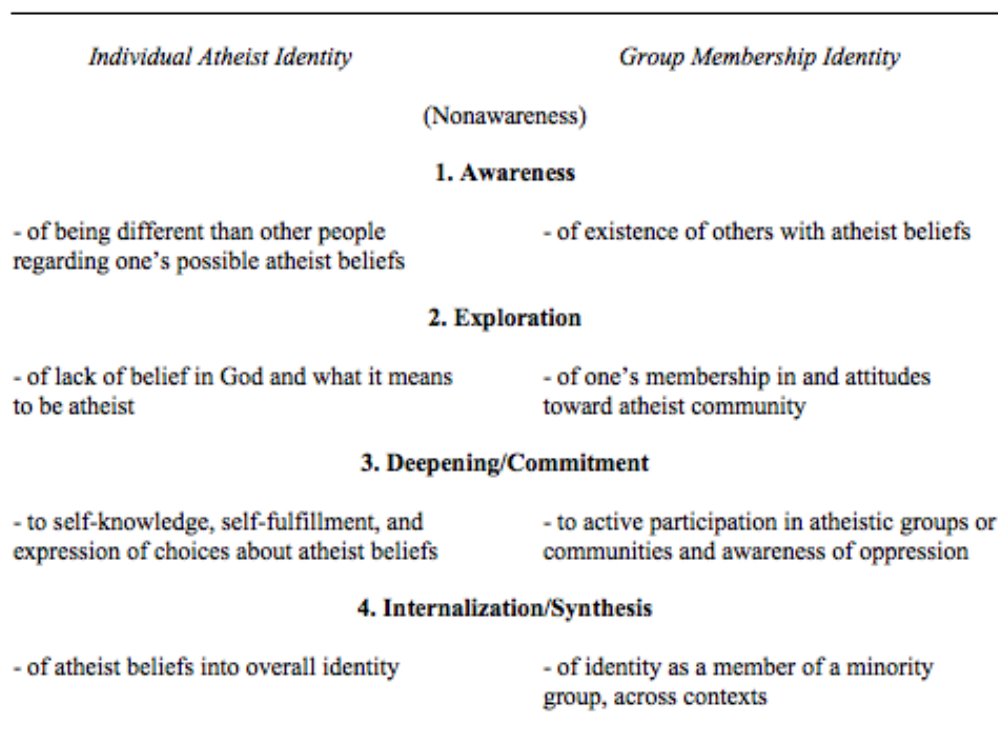


Figure 1. Proposed model of Atheist Student Identity Development (ASID)

Small's (2008) theory will be used as a framework, as well as Nash's (2003) treatise on atheist students. Similar to Fassinger's (1998) theory, ASID theory (Figure 1) has two dimensions – *individual atheist identity* and *group membership identity*.

The first stage, *awareness*, is when the student first begins to recognize that he or she may not believe in a concept of God, that this doubt differentiates him or her from other students, and that other students exist with similar doubts. The individual identity aspect of this stage mirrors part of Small's (2008) third stage, where the student might still adhere to a low level of faith but is beginning to give up theistic beliefs. The group identity aspect is evidenced by Nash (2003), who described students who realize when they come to college that they cannot openly espouse their doubts about faith, but that there are others who may share these beliefs.

The second stage, *exploration*, is when the student discovers that he or she does not believe in God and tries to figure out what that means. This process is portrayed in the end of Small's (2008) third stage, where students give up belief in God and abandon faith. This is also when the student explores his or her membership in and attitudes toward the atheist community, perhaps by attending a meeting of a humanistic or free-thought association on campus (Reisberg, 1998) or by finding it "a meaningful, reassuring experience to converse with like-minded thinkers" (Small, 2008, p. 269).

The third stage, *deepening /commitment*, is when the student develops self-fulfillment and self-knowledge about atheism: a "personally crafted ideology around, including or supporting his/her atheism, likely featuring complex patterns of doubt" (Small, 2008, p. 94). The student is likely to have "active participation in some

sort of rational/non-emotional community” (Small, 2008, p. 94), such as a humanistic group on campus, understand oppression inherent in being a minority, and oppose privilege based on faith (Nash, 2003; Reisberg, 1998).

At this point, atheism can take many ideological forms (Nash, 2003), and the process of awareness, exploration, and commitment is likely to differ based on the form. *Secular humanists*, for example, often become aware of atheist beliefs because they see inconsistencies in teachings on faith or do not perceive the need for a God concept. They explore their beliefs sporadically, they may not value community as highly, and they ultimately come to the conclusion that “we, and we alone, are responsible for ourselves and others” (Nash, 2003, p. 11). *Scientific humanists*, by contrast, often become aware of atheistic beliefs because they find that science can explain natural concepts better than God. They explore their beliefs methodically through science, joining groups such as The Committee for the Scientific Investigation of Claims of the Paranormal. They ultimately come to the conclusion that science and faith are either at odds, incompatible, or complementary (Nash, 2003).

The fourth and final stage, *internalization/synthesis*, is when the student incorporates the atheist identity into the rest of his or her overall identity. This is like Nash’s (2003) description of students who “are not so much opposed to religions as they are determined to live their lives as non-believers... doing good in their own best ways” (p. 12). The student is fully ready to choose when to come out publicly as an atheist. In a group context, the student may embrace “complete, unselfish partnership with all other humans in order to reach a fully achieved life for all” (Small, 2008, p. 94) while consciously identifying as part of a minority atheist group.

Limitations and Further Research

Fassinger’s (1998) model of LGB identity development was empirically validated using samples of lesbians and gay men. Small’s (2008) model of atheist faith development was also empirically validated using focus groups of atheist students. Thus, there is a strong foundation for the ASID theory as it attempts to address a gap in the literature, but the ASID theory itself ultimately deserves further consideration.

Perhaps atheist students differ from LGB students in ways not captured by the parallel identity characteristics previously analyzed. For instance, stereotypes of LGB students may differ from stereotypes of atheist students, meaning that these students may experience oppression in different ways, leading to different developmental trajectories. Also, perhaps the diversity of contexts within higher education mediates differences in atheist student identity development. For example, on campuses without a large population of atheist students, it may be difficult or impossible for atheist students to develop the group aspect of their identity. At religiously-based institutions, atheist students may take a different developmental route than the one proposed in this paper. In addition, the ASID theory does not attempt to address the role that meaning-making plays in the development of a student’s atheist identity. Since the level of meaning-making may moderate the degree to which external influences affect a student’s conception of his or her identity (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007), it could be useful for additional scholarship to integrate meaning-making into the ASID theory.

Researchers in the field of student affairs could investigate many of these topics, as well as assess the validity of the ASID theory by performing mixed-method

longitudinal or cross-sectional research. Regardless of the method, however, it is important that further research in this area

occur. By using the proposed ASID model, universities may have a better understanding of atheist students.

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Muslim Student Experiences in the Residence Halls: A Qualitative Analysis

Ashley Calkins, Adam Callahan, Mark E. Houlemarde, Janet Ikpa, Chelsey Jones, & Christina King

With an increasing Muslim student population on college campuses across the United States it is important to understand the experiences of these students. This study addresses a lack of research about Muslim students on college campuses, specifically in the residence hall environment. Adapting the campus racial climate framework of Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pendersen, and Allen (1998), researchers conducted qualitative interviews with Muslim students about their experiences living in a residence hall. Themes from the data include: pre-residence hall experiences, perceptions of the residence hall physical environment, relationships with roommates, and positive reflections on the residence hall experience. Implications for this study explore the significance of expectations between Muslim and non-Muslim roommates prior to arriving to college and suggests practices in the residence halls that promote the inclusion of Muslim students.

The need to better understand how Muslim students experience college is a growing concern given a number of incidents which may indicate a hostile environment. Amidst the tensions following the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the subsequent War on Terror initiative led by the United States, there has been an increase in reported cases of unfair harassment and discrimination toward Muslim and Muslim American students on college campuses (Ali & Bagheri, 2009). Some Muslim women who choose to veil experience negative stereotypes, such as the misconception that a veil connotes submissiveness and inferiority to men (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003). In addition, multiple studies indicate that it is common for Muslim men to be stereotyped as potential terrorists and be subjected to verbal and physical threats about their appearance and practice of religion (Ali & Bagheri, 2009; Muedini, 2009; Speck, 1997). Additional current affairs have spurred national debate about Muslims and their place in United States society, as exemplified in 2010 by the public backlash over a proposal to construct a Muslim community center near Ground Zero, site of

the September 11, 2001 attacks in New York ("Mistrust and the Mosque", 2010). While higher education professionals should consider how to provide additional support for Muslim students who may feel unwelcome, the growing number of Muslim students in the United States signifies an additional need to further examine their experiences.

While figures on the exact size of the Muslim population are difficult to determine, it is agreed amongst scholars that they are a growing segment of the population across the United States (Ali & Bagheri, 2010). From 1990 to 2000 the number of Muslim adults in the United States nearly doubled from 527,000 to 1,104,000 (Kosmin, Mayer & Keysar, 2001). However, estimates vary widely, and others (GhaneaBassiri, 2010; Sirin & Fine, 2008) estimate that anywhere from two to eight million Muslims currently live in the United States. Despite the increases in the population, little remains known about Muslim students' perceptions and daily experiences of their college environment, particularly within residence halls.

While residence halls serve as home for many students, experiences and perceptions of the environment vary depending on the student and the climate. A Muslim student's perception of the residence hall climate is determined by a number of factors, including ethnicity, culture, and religion. Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pendersen, and Allen (1998) provide a framework for studying diversity on campus that considers a student's multidimensional identity to provide a common framework for understanding campus racial climate. For the purposes of this study a multidimensional approach was adapted to Hurtado et al's campus climate framework to study the experiences of Muslim students in the residence hall.

Given increases in discrimination amongst Muslim students and the rise of the Muslim population, this study explores the interplay of students' culture, religion, and ethnicity in the residence hall environment. Adapting the campus racial climate framework, Muslim students were interviewed to discuss their experiences within their living environment at a predominantly white institution in the Midwest. Participants shared important aspects of their pre-residence experiences, perceptions of difference amongst non-Muslim peers, relationships with roommates, and frustrations tied to their religious and cultural practices with physical components of the residence hall. Implications for this study explore the significance of expectations between Muslim and non-Muslim roommates prior to arriving to college and suggests practices in the residence halls that promote the inclusion of Muslim students.

Literature Review

Muslim College Students

Islam is currently the second largest religion in the world and one of the fastest growing religions in the United States (Ali,

Liu, & Humedian, 2004; Curtis, 2009; Eck, 2001; Ruthven, 2006). Ali and Bagheri (2010) suggest that the population of Muslim students on United States college campuses also reflects this drastic increase. Islam is a monotheistic religion informed through the teachings of Prophet Muhammad and the writings of the Qur'an, and followers of Islam are called Muslims. The Muslim American population is incredibly diverse, comprised of people representing a wide array of cultures and ethnicities (Ruthven, 2006). Moreover, there is also a wide range of beliefs in followers' interpretation of the Islamic religion. Muslim college and university students also embody this diversity of backgrounds and experiences.

Literature on Muslim students is limited and little research has focused directly on their residence hall experiences in the United States. According to Muslim Students Association National, an organization connecting Muslim students across college campuses, there are approximately 75,000 Muslim students currently enrolled in United States colleges and universities (MSA National, n.d.). For some young Muslim Americans, Islam is little more than the religion of their parents (Peek, 2005). For others, Islam is central to their concept of self and plays a large role in their interpersonal relationships (Sirin & Fine, 2008).

The September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade center and the Pentagon were a defining moment for the current generation of Muslim American college youth (Peek, 2005; Ruthven, 2006). In the years since the attacks, Muslim Americans have become the focus of public debate and many have been victims of discrimination and harassment. Nacos and Torres-Reyna (2007) found that stereotypes in the media have negatively influenced American perceptions of Muslim Americans. According to Shammas (2009), Muslim students on community college

campuses reported statistically higher incidences of perceived discrimination than their non-Muslim peers. Furthermore, Peek (2003) reported that students living in New York City in the months after September 11 faced outward anger and harassment.

Sirin and Fine (2008) used mixed methods to research the identities and experiences of Muslim American youth which included college aged participants. According to the results of their survey, 88% of the college age participants reported at least one act of discrimination because they were Muslim. In the second part of their study, they employed focus groups with youth in which all of the participants reported feeling like outsiders in the larger American society. The college age women in their study saw it as their duty to educate others when confronted with misconceptions or discrimination, while the men tended to internalize these interactions. Both men and women reported widespread instances of profiling, particularly in airports. Though this study focused on youth in particular, the findings from participants helps portray the context for college student experiences.

A few notable studies have specifically examined how Muslim students experience the collegiate academic environment. Much of this research has underscored the importance of including religious identity in campus definitions of diversity and highlights the impact that Muslim students' religious affiliation has on their experiences. For example, Cole and Ahmadi (2003) focus on the perspective of Muslim women who veil within the larger campus environment. In a more recent study, Cole and Ahmadi (2010) used data from the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) survey comparing Christian, Jewish, and Muslim students to find that the religious identity of Muslim students has an impact on the experiences they have in college. Results indicate that while Muslim students were more involved in diversity

related activities than their Jewish peers, they were less satisfied with their overall educational experience. Cole and Ahmadi (2010) suggest further research is needed to better understand such findings and note the importance of considering religion in expanding the scope of diversity beyond race. Additionally, Seggi and Austin (2010) researched how female Muslim college students in Turkey were developmentally influenced by a federal law prohibiting veiling. In their study they found that a headscarf ban appeared to hinder the identity development of these women and caused them to question their worth and place in society, as well as their commitment to their religion.

Residence Halls

On college campuses, the residence hall environment plays an important role in the student experience. Kuh, Douglas, Lund, Ramin, and Gyurnek (1994) found that students living in the residence halls were more engaged than their off-campus counterparts. In addition, residence hall environments influenced students' feeling of comfort, connectedness, and acceptance (Astin, 1973; Bliming, 1993; Kuh, 2000). College administrators believe this environment fosters a more meaningful collegiate experience; therefore many institutions require all first-year students to live in the residence halls (Vasquez & Rohrer, 2006).

Students from diverse backgrounds co-mingle in the residence halls, giving them opportunities for social discourse and communication with people whose backgrounds are different from their own. As a result of frequent student-to-student interaction, the residence hall environment can be a valuable space for teaching students to respect other's personal beliefs, practices of religion, culture, and values (Vasquez & Rohrer, 2006). Since students are

instrumental in educating their peers (Cote & Levine, 1997), the interactions within residence halls serve as prime opportunities for educating students about diversity beyond what they might be exposed to within the confines of the classroom (Cheng, 2004; Schroeder & Jackson, 1987).

Despite these benefits, living in the residence halls has been found to increase racial, ethnic, and cultural tension and lead to discrimination toward students from underrepresented backgrounds (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Johnson, 2003). Research suggests that even within the same institution, students identifying with a minority race experience a different campus climate than their White counterparts (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000). Johnson (2003) explored racial tension and discrimination in the residence halls and found that residence hall students from minority groups perceive the racial climate of residence halls differently and experience discrimination at higher rates than students in the majority. These occurrences of discrimination can have a significant impact on a student's experience, including the amount of time spent in the residence hall and their overall satisfaction with residence hall life.

Given the previously cited research about minority students on college campuses and the increased tensions faced by Muslim students within the higher education environment, Muslim students may face difficulty in the residence halls. As a minority group within many residence halls, Muslim students may encounter students who have had little interaction with their religion and/or culture. If the residence hall environment does not support students in their beliefs or practices, they may feel unwelcome or targeted (Hurtado et al., 1998). For Muslims these practices could include veiling and prayer. In addition, Ali and Bagheri (2010) found that Muslim students are more likely than Jewish or

Christian students to have a roommate of a different race or ethnicity and that having a roommate from a different faith impacts their residential life experience. Furthermore, compared to their Jewish and Christian peers, Muslim students are more likely to socialize with someone of a different race or ethnicity. Muslim students may have diverse social experiences in the residence hall; therefore, the need to better understand these experiences of these students is a central focus of this study.

Understanding Campus Climates for Diversity

To better understand the campus climate for racial and ethnic diversity, Hurtado et al.'s (1998) framework includes four interwoven dimensions that are used to analyze the campus climate, including institutional context, structural diversity, and psychological and behavioral dimensions. The first dimension looks at the institutional context and the exclusionary nature of higher education in discriminating against certain groups. The second dimension looks at the impact of structural diversity on a campus, including the impact of homogeneous environments on certain populations, such as the impact of the environment at Predominantly White Institutions on students of color. The third dimension of climate involves individuals' psychological "views of group relations, institutional responses to diversity, perceptions of discrimination or racial conflict, and attitudes toward those from other racial/ethnic backgrounds than one's own" (Hurtado et al., 2008, p. 289). The fourth dimension of the framework is the behavioral dimension, at the crux of which lie reports of general social interactions, intra-group interactions, and interactions between students of different backgrounds.

Together, these four dimensions represent the complex forces that shape individual perspectives and experiences of

racial and ethnic groups that have been historically underrepresented in higher education. This framework serves as a crucial lens through which this study is approached. Specifically, this framework informs the interview questions and analyses of participant responses.

Methods

Site and Sample

Participants in this study were students at a large public research institution in the Midwest. The institution had an undergraduate enrollment slightly above 32,000 in the 2009-2010 academic year, less than 10% of whom were international students. Approximately 12% of the undergraduate student body was comprised of domestic minority students. Roughly 10,000 students lived in on-campus residence halls at this institution. First year students are required to live on campus and have a roommate unless granted an exception. The number of Muslim students at the institution of study was unable to be determined, as the university does not officially track religious affiliation.

For this study, a total of four participants were selected using convenience sampling of the target population: undergraduate Muslim students who lived in the residence halls within the past or current academic year. Convenience sampling allows researchers to focus recruitment efforts on a specific segment of the population (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). The main recruitment effort entailed emails sent to multiple student organizations that serve primarily undergraduate Muslim students. The largest student organization contacted had 100 members on their email listserv and 50-60 active members. Findings reflect the diverse backgrounds and experiences of the four interview participants. Participants included two domestic African American females, one

domestic South Asian American female, and one international South Asian male. Two of the participants were underclassmen and two of the participants were upperclassmen.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews and joint interviews of approximately one hour in length were held with self-identified Muslim students. One member of the research team asked interview questions while a second member of the team provided note-taking support. All interviews were audio recorded with participants' consent. Pseudonyms were selected by the participants and used to protect their identity in coding. Participants were asked semi-structured questions about their experiences as Muslim students living in the residence halls. These questions were designed utilizing an adaptation of Hurtado et al.'s (1998) framework for analyzing climate for racial and ethnic diversity on college campuses, centering on the behavioral and psychological domains.

The adaptation further emphasizes religious, ethnic and cultural identities to better understand how Muslim students experience the residence hall environment. We conceived Muslim student perceptions of their religion and culture as a lens through which students view and interpret their experience and interactions. In order to better illustrate these experiences, we chose to focus on the psychological and behavioral dimensions of Hurtado et al.'s framework. The behavioral dimension was utilized to examine student descriptions of actual interactions among students with different backgrounds in the residence halls. The psychological dimension was employed as a way for understanding student perceptions of discrimination and general attitudes of peers from different backgrounds. This adapted framework was used to develop the interview protocol. Question topics were designed along the two dimensions of

Hurtado et al.'s framework, with questions centering on feelings of worry and comfort, and how their Muslim identity interacted with those perceptions. Our findings were driven by participant responses that provided us with insight into their experiences in the residence hall.

In the data analysis process, a modified version of grounded theory was used (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). This provided a conceptual guide to examine the student experience while still allowing for flexibility to develop findings grounded in the rich experiences of the students. From the data collected, axial codes were developed to be consistent with interviewee comments relating to the psychological and behavioral dimensions. After coding the transcriptions, relevant themes emerged from our interview data. These themes included participants' pre-residence hall experiences, the impact of the residence hall physical environment, participants' relationships with roommates, and participants' positive reflections on residence hall experience.

Limitations

This study has a few limitations. First, a small number of students participated in this study which limited the scope of student experience that we could utilize to develop our findings. As researchers, we experienced difficulty in recruiting participants, presumably because Muslim students constitute a low percentage of the student population. Utilizing convenience sampling can be a limitation due to the limited scope that a random sample may yield. Second, our participants' diverse backgrounds and experiences in terms of ethnicity, race, gender, and country of origin impact their Muslim identities and made it difficult to find common themes across their experiences. A third limitation is the possibility of researcher bias, which may have influenced our findings. No one on the research team

identifies as Muslim; therefore, our interpretations of participants' experiences may be inconsistent with the students' own understandings. An attempt was made to minimize these biases through conducting background research that helped us better understand the Muslim student population.

Findings

Participants discussed a wide range of experiences viewed through the perspective of their Muslim identity. Themes from the data include: pre-residence hall experiences, perceptions of the residence hall physical environment, relationships with roommates, and positive reflections on the residence hall experience. The way in which our participants viewed their environment illuminates aspects of the climate for Muslim students in the residence halls at this institution.

"I was just really worried in the summer": Pre-Residence Hall Experiences

In our interviews, participants shared anxieties about their transition into residence halls. Participants were nervous about moving into the residence halls and concerned about how they would be perceived by others because of their Muslim identity. Here, James expresses concern as an international student about how he would be perceived as a Muslim by other United States students:

When I was about to come here, I was a little worried because of the prevailing stereotypical way of thinking that you see in the television...You see that you can be in trouble if you do something which people think should not be done especially because you are a Muslim.

This comment reflects James' belief that others would view his actions in a biased way because he was Muslim. His pre-college perception of American intolerance toward Muslims made him fearful of coming to college in the United States.

Our participants expressed other common concerns about starting college life including relationship with roommates, community dynamics, room size, and bathrooms. Prior to coming to campus, Sonya made the decision to live in a mixed gender honors community. Sonya discussed many issues about veiling in the presence of men which made her hesitant to be on a mixed gender floor but ultimately felt satisfied with her decision since there are no all-female honors floors at the university. Sonya said, "I'm on an honors floor, and I wouldn't have been there unless it was an honors floor, and that makes the biggest of difference. I could have decided to go somewhere else, so you know...it's like our choice." Despite the added challenges of being a Muslim woman living on a co-ed floor (discussed further in the following section), Sonya felt that the academic and social benefits of living in an honors community made it worth working through those challenges. To overcome these challenges, Sonya reported becoming involved with student organizations not associated with the residence hall.

Some participants had specific pre-college experiences that helped alleviate anxieties. Both Sally and Sonya discussed how their experiences in a pre-college transition program provided the opportunity to better understand what to expect of residence hall life by interacting with current students. From her experience in a pre-college mentor program, Sally knew what to expect when living in the residence hall: "I think because I did the shadow program and I got to see rooms, even though it wasn't the room I was placed in, I had a pretty good idea of what it would look like." Sonya describes

her pre-college experience with a current student mentor:

They paired me with a mentor who is a junior this year...so before I actually moved in I sent her a hundred e-mails and a hundred text messages asking her up to the detail of what is the shower like, how many stalls are there in the bathrooms, and she was able to tell me. Because of that I knew what I needed, so moving in was nice.

Sonya and Sally's experiences interacting with peers gave them a better understanding of the residence hall experience before they arrived on campus. These experiences gave them the ability to recognize some of the challenges they were going to face upon their arrival in the residence hall.

"I did the little peek out the door and ran down the hall": Residence Hall Physical Environment

Our participants described many interactions with Muslim and non-Muslim students in their hall that impacted their perceptions of its physical spaces (e.g., bathrooms, hallways, and personal rooms). In particular, female participants spoke in detail about their experiences adjusting to public restrooms on their co-ed floors. All three female participants wore headscarves their freshman year and felt inconvenienced by the physical arrangement of the showers. Reflecting on her experience, Kayla said, "You weren't supposed to see my hair, so I had to run into my room when there was a guy on the floor. When I got out of the shower it was very awkward and weird." Kayla notes that these challenges were typical of the floor environment:

Everyone has their boyfriends and lives and you can't expect them - because you're a certain religion or you want something a certain way for everybody on your floor - to follow suit. So I did the little peek out the door thing and ran down the hall.

Similarly, Sonya also had challenges with using the bathrooms on her co-ed floor, stating that she frequently thought about the inconveniences of bathroom structure:

When we use the bathroom we have to clean ourselves with water. We have a little pail, it looks like a watering can. I just keep that in the bathroom. The first couple days I would take it and bring it back in case people would freak out and throw it away and I needed it.

These comments illustrate strategies these women utilized to adjust their daily behavior when the residence hall did not meet their needs. According to Islamic tradition in some cultures, the *lota*, or small watering can, is used for cleansing after using the restroom. Sonya felt that it was convenient to leave the *lota* in the bathroom, but worried that her peers on the floor would not understand the use and religious significance of the *lota* and would discard it. Her worries suggest fear that others would be insensitive about her religious practices. Further, Sonya and Sally's comments suggest their recognition that the physical space of the residence halls were not accommodating to some Muslim women's needs. These women were very conscious of their physical environment and had to adjust their routine to meet their needs.

Our participants also experienced challenges related to the layout of their rooms. Sonya highlighted that Muslim students are often forced to make sacrifices in the residence halls if they have a

roommate. Sonya asked, "How important is it that you be able to pray when you want? Well, based on that you will make any sacrifice... I did request a single room purely for religious reasons." In reference to living in a single room, Kayla said, "I think that [having a single room] made it a lot easier for me living by myself and praying, wearing my scarf, things like that." Kayla said that living in a single room made it easier for her practice her religion.

However, other participants discussed various hurdles when requesting a single room. Sally discussed the financial implications of requesting a single room to better accommodate her religious needs:

Based on the fact that I was Muslim, or I was different, I feel like that's kind of hard coming to the realization that you have to pay for the fact that, literally and figuratively, you have to pay for the fact that you're different.

In this comment, Sally suggested that the residence life department did not consider specific religious needs in room assignments and rates. Subsequently, Sally questioned the residence life department's commitment to diversity, saying, "I come to [this university] and they push...from a marketing perspective that 'we're a place for everybody.'" Sally's comments indicate her belief that the institution could be doing more to make the housing accessible and affordable for people with different needs.

"It's frustrating when people assume": Perceptions of Difference

Participants emphasized how other students in the residence halls made them feel different and heightened their awareness of their Muslim identity. James stated that other residents "used to ask me questions, you know, 'Where are you from?' and 'Are you a Muslim or not?'" James perceived that

other residents lacked experience with Muslims, which compounded his feelings of alienation on his floor, stating, "I don't blame them or blame their ignorance but I think that they were never really exposed to [Muslims]." Due to James' religious beliefs, he also mentioned feeling uncomfortable with his roommate's alcohol usage, which may have further highlighted James' feelings of difference.

In addition to questions about their religion, culture, and background, some participants felt like they were stared at and treated differently by other residents because of their Muslim identity. Sally expressed irritation at the assumptions other residents initially made about her, stating, "It's frustrating when people assume that I won't want to go someplace or do something [because I'm Muslim]." Sally's peers assumed that she would not want to participate in activities because her religious beliefs might forbid certain activities. Sally's comments suggest that these experiences led to feelings of social isolation.

This social isolation existed in different forms as participants shared their experiences explaining their Muslim identity to peers. Sonya was comfortable answering any questions regarding her Muslim identity and preferred that peers ask questions rather than make assumptions:

If someone asks me a question, I'll answer. Freshman year in high school this one guy was very annoying and ignorant and everything. He'd say whatever he wanted like is Osama Bin Laden your uncle? Instead of getting mad I'd just answer, of course not. And then he's like do you wear that in the shower (referring to my headscarf)? Those kinds of questions I welcome because

honestly I'd rather people ask than assume.

Sonya's high school experience displays how she has developed strategies for dealing with interpersonal issues and bias related to her identity. Kayla was also comfortable answering questions, but held a slightly different perspective:

People always want to know, do you really pray five times a day? Why do you do that? Where do you do it? I mean, I don't mind the questions but I just want to make sure people aren't so amazed by it that they still realize they should respect it.

Kayla's comments reflect a desire for others to respect her religious practices without demeaning them. Alternatively, Sally mentioned that she often grew tired of answering certain questions about her Muslim identity. Sally discussed the perception that Muslims should look a certain way and be from a certain place. As a Hispanic and African American Muslim, Sally mentioned that she had to not only answer questions about her religion, but also explain why she does not "look Muslim." In addition, Sally mentioned that she was reluctant to continually educate her non-Muslim peers, stating, "You don't always want to be the Wikipedia in the room." These varying perceptions demonstrate the diversity of backgrounds and experiences held by Muslim American college students and sheds light on how students prefer to address questions of difference.

Despite the challenges participants experienced living in the residence halls, each participant also reported finding more support within the residence hall than they expected. James found that his concern about American attitudes toward Muslims did not always prove to be accurate. He shared, "It is

definitely not as hostile or unwelcoming as I predicted.” James made many friends in his residence hall, had a good relationship with his Resident Assistant (RA), and took an active role in floor activities and governance. Kayla echoed James’ sentiments, saying that she enjoyed interacting with the people living in her residence hall: “It’s so crazy because the people in the residence halls were people that were more genuinely inquisitive - they really just wanted to know. Get to know me and what I was about.” Both Kayla and James found peers they could interact with on their floors.

**“She would freak out if she sees me praying”:
Relationship with Roommate**

Each participant discussed experiences with their roommates. Sonya, a domestic student, contacted her roommate before she moved into the residence hall to discuss how they would share the room: “I needed to know if she was going to be uptight about my habits that I was going to have especially because of being Muslim.” Sonya “talked about almost everything” with her roommate before she arrived, especially boundaries with the opposite sex: “I had to be like in case you do have a boyfriend you have to realize you can’t just bring him in the room whenever you want. Staying overnight is just obviously out of the question.” Sonya also felt comfortable asserting her expectations and let her roommate know that she would not tolerate alcohol and drugs in the room. Likewise, Sonya was pleasantly surprised at her roommate’s response: “It was fine and she’s really relaxed. It’s more than I could ask for.”

Sally described her experience with her roommate as not being as pleasant as Sonya’s. Sally did not discuss living situations with her roommate before arriving on campus and she voiced this may have caused some conflict. Sally felt that her roommate, who was Jewish, had an unconventional sleep

schedule and stayed up too late, disrupting Sally’s daily life. Sally felt communicating about these issues prior to move-in would have alleviated some of the conflict; instead, Sally let the conflict go unaddressed for fear that she would not find support on the floor:

In the back of my mind the entire time I just kept thinking if anything happens or if a fight ever breaks out, I’m afraid that no one is going to be on my side because I’m the Muslim kid and there’s way more Jews here than there are Muslims.

Sally felt that as a religious minority on the floor, she could not address these issues with her roommate because her roommate was Jewish. Though Judaism and Islam are both minority religions on campus, Sally’s perception of the relatively high concentration of Jewish students magnified her feelings of alienation on her floor. This indicates that Sally felt that she would be unsupported by her peers because she was a religious minority amongst a perceived religious majority of Jews on the floor.

James, an international student, did not have the opportunity to speak to his roommate before moving into the residence halls, leaving boundaries undecided. As their relationship as roommates progressed, James’ roommate engaged in activities that he viewed as “highly condemned sins.” James implies that his roommate’s behavior caused him great discomfort and was incompatible with his religious values: “In our religion and in our culture, such exposure to women is not called for.” James went on to elaborate how he confronted his roommate about these activities:

So what I did was I told him that this is a thing that I cannot let it happen in front of me, so whenever you have to do such a

thing, you have to tell me beforehand so that I leave and you can do whatever you want... This was the turning point of our relationship as well, with that particular roommate, because he took it the wrong way.

Although James did not feel comfortable disclosing what specifically occurred in this instance, James was offended and felt disrespected by his roommate's behavior and took action to educate his roommate and change the situation. Like James, other participants also felt that they were responsible for educating their roommates about their Muslim identity and needs.

Discussion

The experiences of the students we spoke with have direct implications for the understanding of residence hall climate as it pertains to cultural and religious diversity, specifically concerning Muslim identity. We found that participants expressed concerns in both the psychological and behavioral dimensions (Hurtado, et al., 1998) of campus climate. In our findings, we found these dimensions to be highly interwoven, as one behavior or interaction would lead to a perception, and vice versa. Therefore, we decided to discuss the findings using these dimensions as a guideline without distinctly delineating between the two.

Hurtado et al.'s definition of the behavioral and psychological dimensions of campus diversity climate consists of multiple aspects, including actual and perceived interactions across diverse groups of people and the nature of those relationships. Our participants' perceptions of life in their residence halls were frequently illustrated through interactions with roommates. One of the emergent findings in our data is that interactions with peers play a large role in shaping the participant's perception of the

residence hall climate. Students' perception of intergroup relations on campus hinges largely on their perception of the quality of the interactions across group differences. As suggested by her comments, Sonya had a positive interaction with her roommate and may have been more likely to view the nature of relations between Muslims and non-Muslims in the residence hall as positive, while Sally may have had a different perspective due to her challenging relationship with her first roommate. James may have seen the institution as somewhat hostile toward Muslims due to the cultural ignorance he perceived in his peers.

Most of the students in our study reported positive interactions with the RA working on their floors. James had a positive experience with his RA, who was one of the first people he interacted with upon his arrival at the residence hall, which may have mitigated some of James' preconceptions of the university climate. Similarly, Sonya noted positive experiences with her RA, feeling comfortable asking questions and seeking support. These positive behavioral interactions reflect a supportive residence hall environment for these Muslim students. This has implications for the overall institutional culture as these two students may be more likely to perceive the institution as supportive to their needs if they have a positive interaction with a university representative.

One key finding involves the psychological perceptions of support from the institution. In contrast to positive behavioral interactions, Sally discussed how she felt the residence life division did not adequately support diverse students by highlighting the fact that if a Muslim student wanted a private room for religiously based reasons, he or she would be charged twice the amount to have a single room. From a diverse climate perspective, Sally's psychological perception would influence her

understanding of how the institution responds to diversity. Hurtado, et al. (1998) state: "Institutions should do all they can to ensure that students perceive the institutional climate as fair and just" (p. 291). It is Sally's perception that a Muslim student having to pay for a single room to accommodate religious practices is unfair. While it may be unlikely that discounted single room rates could be offered solely based on religious needs, residence hall departments should be aware of the added financial burdens some students incur for religious reasons by seeking to accommodate them accordingly or providing specific support to help them navigate the new environment. Housing departments could consider including a question about cultural or religious needs on residence hall room applications. This could give staff a better understanding of how to support these students or help departments place students in more accommodating environments.

Implications for Practice and Research

Findings suggest multiple implications for housing and residence life professionals. First, the role of peer interactions before arriving at college is critical. Each female participant reported apprehension before arriving on campus. In addition to the apprehension that most students have when beginning their college experience, participants shared heightened anxiety and fears related to their cultural differences and religious identity. Colleges should work to promote outreach among incoming student populations to address the diverse needs of students. For example, peer-mentoring programs could provide students with a connection to campus before they arrive. As cited by Hurtado et al. (1998), students from diverse backgrounds interpret campus climate and environment differently; therefore, a process in which incoming

students ask questions of peers may help students transition to college.

Second, discussion of expectations between roommates before and during college is an important part of creating a residence hall space that is welcoming to student needs. Muslim students with roommates expressed concern about religious and cultural practices that may have been different than those of their roommates. One participant, Sonya, was very straightforward about her needs and expressed her concerns to her roommate before coming to college. James experienced some conflict and discomfort with a roommate's use of alcohol and his roommate's female guest, which he stated was culturally forbidden to him. Residential life staff members should encourage mutually derived expectations from roommates and promote discussion that allows space for cultural differences to be expressed and shared.

Lastly, colleges should review their uses of residence hall spaces. Colleges should assess the physical facilities within the residence hall to better meet students' cultural and religious needs. Students cited numerous housing concerns including the design and location of the restrooms. One possibility for residence life departments is to consider exploring special interest communities that serve both physical space needs and provide opportunities for themed programming. At Georgetown University, the Office of Residence Life created a Muslim Student Living Learning community. Muslim students at Georgetown University requested a Muslim-friendly living learning community because, among other things, living close to members of the opposite sex and sharing bathrooms with them was against their fundamental beliefs (Crooker, 1998). This community serves both Muslim and non-Muslim students in creating a supportive climate within the residence hall, and

encourages participants to educate faculty, students, and staff (Georgetown University, 2010).

Future research should explore the satisfaction of Muslim students within the residence hall. Findings indicate that when Muslim students reflect on their experience within the residence hall, they express satisfaction, particularly with their peer relationships. Furthermore, the students in the study were pleased with their interactions with their RAs. However, there were no explicit connections between participants' satisfaction and the content of any policies or procedures from the residence life department. Finally, while some participants highlighted the importance of professional and student-staff members in housing, this was not adequately explored in our study.

Research has suggested that Muslims constitute the most ethnically and racially diverse religious group in the United States (Kosmin, Mayer, & Keysar, 2010). Therefore, future studies must work to incorporate the different perspectives that Muslims have and explore the effects of various intersections of Muslim identity including, but not limited to, gender, race, and ethnicity. The differences between experiences of domestic and international students must also be further highlighted, as national origin appeared to be an important factor in this study as well as in previous research (Cole & Ahmadi, 2003).

Conclusion

This research adds to the discussion not only on Muslim students but also on the experience of racial and ethnic minority students and their experience of climate within residence halls. More specifically, our findings discuss an area previously unexplored in providing qualitative data on the experiences of Muslim students in the residence hall context. This research

supports the argument made by Cole and Ahmadi (2010) that being Muslim does have an impact on the kinds of experiences that students have while in college, but seeks to further explore the nuances of student perceptions and experiences. Furthermore, our research suggests that Muslim students perceive the residence hall climate differently than their non-Muslim peers, as aspects of their culture and religion directly shape how they interact with peers and use facilities.

The climate within the residence halls influences the experience of Muslim student residents and their perception of the overall campus climate. Higher numbers of Muslim students are enrolling on United States college campuses while concurrently facing increasing islamophobic bias and discrimination and an overall ignorance to actual Muslim practices and values. In order to best support Muslim students in this environment, it is important for student affairs professionals to educate themselves about the needs of the individuals and this community. Residence life professionals can work to help Muslim students create positive experiences within the residence hall environment based on improved communication and understanding of difference. Through an integral understanding of the residence life experience, practitioners can create climates where Muslim students feel valued in their community, encouraging positive growth and development.

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Multiracial Identity Development: Understanding Choice of Racial Identity in Asian-White College Students

Ashley Viager

Asian-White individuals will have greater representation in higher education student populations in coming years, and student affairs professionals must learn how these students make meaning of their racial identities in order to best serve the needs of this group. Analyzing Poston's (1990) and Root's (2003) theories of multiracial identity development, this paper examines the experiences unique to this population to demonstrate that Asian-White individuals have the ability to choose from multiple racial identity outcomes.

In 2000, the United States government conducted a census in which multiracial individuals could self-identify with more than one racial category. Multiracial individuals are those whose parents are of two or more different and distinct federally recognized racial groups (Chapman-Huls, 2009). Previously, multiracial individuals had not been formally recognized in the United States. Instead, multiracial individuals who had one White parent were primarily classified according to their parent of color (Zack, 2001). This system of racial classification, also known as “hypodescent,” originated in the eighteenth century as a way to “maintain White racial purity and to deny mixed race people access to privilege,” (Renn, 2004, p. 4) and reinforced rigid categories of race. The 2000 census formally challenged these previous notions of essentialist racial categories by recognizing those who blurred the boundaries.

One of the main purposes in the revision of the census was to reflect the growing prevalence of interracial marriage in American society (Perlmann & Waters, 2002). The multiracial population is one of the fastest growing minority groups in the United States (Shih & Sanchez, 2009), and by the year 2050, one in five Americans could self-identify as multiracial (Farley, 2001). Of any racial minority group in the United States, Asians, both native and U.S. born,

register one of the highest rates of marriages outside their race, and marriages to Whites are the most prevalent (Lee & Bean, 2004; Qian, 1997). This growing trend means the population of young mixed race Asian Americans, specifically those who claim Asian and White descent, will increase (Min, 2006). As a result, Asian-White individuals will have significantly greater representation in higher education in the coming years. Because the Asian-White student population is growing, student affairs professionals must learn how these students make meaning of their racial identities. While few studies have explored the racial identity formation specific to Asian-White individuals (Khanna, 2004), current research on multiracial identity development can help student affairs professionals understand the Asian-White experience.

Acceptance or rejection from a racial group can significantly impact how a multiracial student chooses to identify. Multiracial identity theories rely on the notion that individuals “must make choices about their racial identification, navigate validation or invalidation around their choice, and resolve their in-between status while traveling pathways shaped by acceptance and/or denial” (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). Multiracial students often feel caught between their racial components, unable to fully identify with White students or with monoracial students of color (Renn,

1998). It is important to note, however, that multiracial students experience varying levels of dissonance based on factors that impact the way they identify, and current multiracial identity development models are too general to be applied to any one specific multiracial subpopulation. Asian-White individuals share similar experiences that make their process of racial identity development different from any other multiracial group, thus necessitating a theory that outlines the Asian-White racial identity developmental process. This paper will examine Poston's (1990) and Root's (2003) multiracial identity development theories to provide an overview of how various factors influence the racial identity outcomes of multiracial individuals. These theories will then be integrated with current literature regarding the experiences of Asian and Asian-White groups in American society to provide an understanding of the fluidity in racial identity choice for Asian-White individuals.

Literature Review

In the literature, theorists have debated about the endpoint of successful multiracial identity formation. Poston (1990) based his theory on the argument that existing racial identity development models inadequately reflect the experiences of multiracial individuals. While racial identity models suggest that the endpoint of development is the successful formation of a monoracial identity, Poston (1990) argues that the developmental goal for multiracial individuals is to form an integrated identity in which all racial components are valued.

Poston's linear model of multiracial identity development is comprised of five stages. In the first stage, *personal identity*, young individuals tend to have a sense of self that is fairly independent of race or ethnicity; however, once individuals reach the second stage, *choice of group orientation*, they feel pressure to choose a racial or ethnic identity, usually of either the majority or minority group (Poston, 1990). Renn (2008) argues that this stage is highly influenced by personal and environmental factors. Poston's (1990) second stage may be a time of crisis and isolation, and multiracial individuals often choose an identity based on their experiences with prejudice, rejection, feelings of alienation, or pressure from family, peers, and social groups. The third stage, *enmeshment/denial*, is characterized by feelings of confusion or disloyalty for choosing to identify with the ethnicity of one parent but not the other, and in order to progress to the fourth stage, *appreciation*, individuals must learn to appreciate both parental cultures (Poston, 1990). By the final stage, *integration*, individuals develop a secure and integrated multiracial identity in which all racial identities are valued (Poston, 1990).

While the developmental goal of Poston's (1990) linear model is to form an integrated multiracial identity, Root's (2003) model proposes multiple racial identity outcomes. Unlike Poston, Root (2003) believes identity development does not reflect a linear stage process and that a successful racial identity can be situational and changing. Root's (2003) model is based on a notion that "allows for understanding the environments and experiences that shape

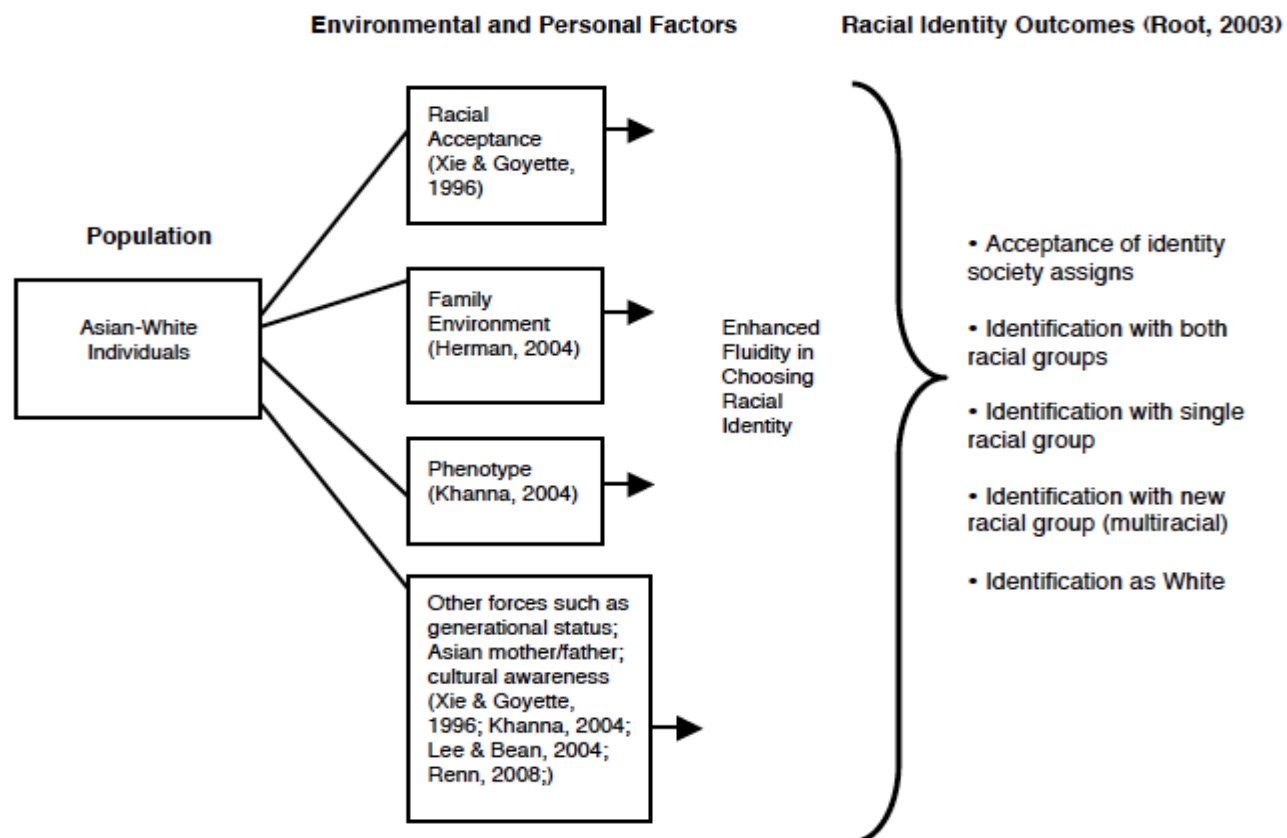


Figure 1. Proposed model of Asian-White identity development. This figure represents the proposed identity formation process for Asian-White mixed race individuals.

conventional monoracial identities, racially simultaneous identities, or multiracial identities” (Root, 2003). Therefore, multiracial individuals cannot be limited to one racial identity outcome, such as Poston’s integrated identity, but can identify in many different ways.

Instead of proposing a series of stages, Root (2003) presents five strategies for resolving the tensions of biracial identity that occur as a result of environmental and personal factors such as societal racism and internalized oppression. Root proposes five potential racial identity outcomes for multiracial individuals: acceptance of the identity society assigns, identification with a mixed identity (as proposed by Poston’s model), identification with a single racial group, identification as a new racial group,

and choosing a white identity (2003). In the first outcome, external factors, such as family and societal forces, determine how a multiracial individual identifies (Root, 2003; as cited in Renn, 2008). An individual may be able to achieve the second outcome and identify with both racial groups if he or she has the ability to maintain this identity despite resistance from others (Root, 2003). In third outcome, identification with a single racial group, an individual actively chooses to identify with one racial group, independent of external pressures (Root, 2003). Individuals may achieve the fourth outcome if they choose to claim a distinct multiracial identity, thus developing their own reference group instead of integrating or fractionating their racial identities (Root, 2003). Finally, Root (2003) argues that those who identify

as White often experience isolation and emotional detachment to both racial groups, and, as a result, identify as White as the default option.

Although Poston and Root disagree on the endpoint of multiracial identity development, they both recognize the impact of societal racism on identity formation. Asian-White individuals experience levels of discrimination and acceptance that are different from other multiracial groups, which significantly impacts the way they progress from Poston's choice of group orientation stage and navigate the enmeshment/denial stage toward self-identification. Together, Poston's and Root's models inform a new understanding of multiracial identity development. Using these models as a framework, the author has created a new model (see Figure 1) that specifically reflects the identity development of Asian-White individuals.

Asian-White Identity Development

Multiracial individuals are often perceived as a conflicted group whose identity development is characterized by "dissonance associated with belonging to neither the majority nor minority racial group" (Grove, 1990, p. 618). This phenomenon is reflected previous to and within the enmeshment/denial stage of Poston's (1990) model, which asserts that individuals, typically adolescents, may feel anger, shame, and self-hatred because they have difficulty identifying and need to resolve feelings of isolation in order to developmentally progress (as cited in Renn, 2008). While some Asian-White individuals certainly do experience Poston's enmeshment/denial stage and have difficulty feeling accepted within their chosen racial identities, many Asian-White individuals do not necessarily experience the racial dissonance as outlined in Poston's model.

According to Tatum (2007), "Whiteness" is a source of privilege in society. Although Asian-Americans do not have access to white privilege, they occupy a unique societal position as minorities in which, although they are subject to racial discrimination and prejudice, they have "achieved social status on par with the White majority" (Barringer, Gardner, & Levin, 1993, as cited in Xie & Goyette, 1996, p.5). Compared to other minority groups, the social distance between Whites and Asian-Americans is relatively reduced, leaving many Asian-White individuals to transcend racial boundaries and experience little to no resistance in how they choose to identify (Xie & Goyette, 1996). As a result, Poston's linear stage theory cannot be universally representative of Asian-White identity formation. Instead, the diverse experiences of Asian-White individuals present the opportunity for many of them to fluidly explore the multiple racial identities that Root's (1990) model presents.

Asian-White individuals may feel less restriction in their racial identity formation due to the increasing racial acceptance toward Asian Americans. Literature regarding racial attitudes consistently demonstrates that "Whites' racial prejudice against Asian-Americans is lower than against blacks *[sic]* and Hispanics" (Xie & Goyette, 1996, p. 10). This highly accepted minority status may be reflected in the growing number of Asian-White intermarriages (Xie & Goyette, 1996). The increase of Asian-White intermarriages and the subsequent multiracial population suggest that racial boundaries between these groups are more fluid and that racial prejudice is less salient (Lee and Bean, 2004). Not only are Asian multiracial individuals more accepted than other multiracial groups, but "Asian-White individuals may ... be the most acceptable of the Asian mixtures to the Asian and White communities" (Hall &

Turner, 2001). It is evident that Asian-White individuals will experience high levels of social acceptance as they belong to arguably the most privileged racial categories, which, as Xie and Goyette (1996) posit, allows Asian-White individuals more freedom to choose a racial identity.

Family environment also plays a role in how Asian-White individuals come to identify themselves (Herman, 2004), as one of Root's (1998) racial identity outcomes can result from multiracial individuals accepting the identity their parents assign. Therefore, it is critical to examine how parents choose to identify their Asian-White children. In one study, 41% of Asian/White couples identified their children as Asian (Xie & Goyette, 1996), while approximately 50% of Asian/White couples in another study identified their children as White (Lee & Bean, 2004). Some parents admit that they stress the importance of a White rather than Asian identity while rearing their children (Grove, 1990), which would explain the high numbers of White identification for Asian-White children. Xie and Goyette (1996) discovered that the racial identification of these children by their parents can be somewhat arbitrary; for instance, when forced to choose a single-race category on a registration form, parents may flip a coin or rotate racial categories over time. The arbitrary and fluid nature of parental racial identification of Asian-White children demonstrates that these multiracial individuals are not limited to one racial identity.

Physical appearance, or phenotype, is another factor that significantly impacts Asian-White identity formation. Because racial identity is formed through social interaction, others' reactions toward a multiracial individual's physical appearance will impact how that individual chooses to identify (Khanna, 2004). Some Asian-White individuals are easily categorized based on their phenotype. Khanna (2004) discovered

that those who look solely Asian based on facial characteristics often identify most strongly as Asian; however, their racial identities are subject to change based on their acceptance into the minority group. Asian-White individuals often feel most racially marginalized in environments that are exclusively Asian because they do not feel that they are accepted as "real Asians" (Grove, 1990, p. 624). Spickard (1989) believes ethnic Asians coming from traditional backgrounds often do not accept Asian-White individuals into their communities. When presented with such struggles, Asian-White individuals, due to the privileged status of Asian-Americans, can explore other racial identities to discover where they "fit in."

Many multiracial individuals are racially ambiguous (Brunsma & Rockquemore, 2001). For some Asian-White individuals, this means that it may be difficult for others to categorize them into a single racial category. According to Grove's (1990) study, this freedom can be a positive experience for Asian-White subjects. One participant stated, "Most people can't categorize me and it's given me freedom to float between groups and get around people's expectations more easily," and another said, "You can't be quite identified ... it frees you to make your own identity" (Grove, 1990, p. 623).

While arguably important factors, family dynamics and phenotype are only two of the many forces that influence how Asian-White individuals self-identify. The Asian-White experience is diverse, and, therefore, these multiracial individuals will identify in different ways. Harris and Sim (2002) found that Asian-White individuals are equally likely to self-identify as Asian or White, and growing numbers of Asian-White individuals report that they identify as multiracial (Lee & Bean, 2004). Although it is important to remember that multiracial identity is

situational (Root, 2003) and can change based on environmental and personal factors, this information validates the notion that racial boundaries are less restrictive for Asian-White individuals, thus allowing them to choose among multiple racial identity outcomes.

Implications for Student Affairs Practice

Going to college may be the first time Asian-White students question their racial identity. According to a study conducted by Grove (1990), it was discovered that 82% of the Asian-White participants first began questioning their racial identities while at college. In order for Asian-White students to explore their racial identities, it is crucial that they feel free to select among different identity-based spaces and peer groups on campus (Renn, 1998). To provide Asian-White college students with institutional support, student affairs professionals should consider establishing multiracial student organizations as a way to help multiracial students explore different identities and “find identity-based spaces that suit them” (Renn, 1998). Because the proposed theory suggests that Asian-White students have the ability to transcend strict racial boundaries, it is also crucial that student affairs professionals, when working with these students, do not assume how they racially identify. Making such an assumption could potentially do harm to the student by reaffirming an identity that society had previously assigned, which could restrict the student’s confidence to explore other racial identities. Student affairs professionals must be cognizant of the many factors that can influence an Asian-White student’s multiracial identity development and understand its dynamic nature. Furthermore, student affairs professionals must be intentional when working with these students by understanding that Asian-White students

have different needs from those of monoracial students. In order for Asian-White students to experience a supportive environment, they should feel that they are not limited in choosing a monoracial identity (White or Asian) but, instead, have other options as well.

Based on current research and this proposed theory, it is clear that the racial identity outcomes within the incoming Asian-White student population may vary; however, further research must be done to investigate how the college environment may reinforce or alter how these students identify. Scholars should consider a longitudinal study of Asian-White students from various sizes and types of higher education that tracks their racial identification over four years. In such a study it would be important to first determine how each student racially identifies to support the theory that Asian-White individuals can choose from Root’s (2003) multiple racial identity outcomes. Researchers studying Asian-White college students who experience racial dissonance should consider what environmental factors play a role, such as the existence or absence of a multiracial student group, institutional support, and diversity within the student population. This research would help identify the types of college environments, as well as various external factors, that influence the ability of Asian-White college students to feel that they have the freedom to choose a racial identity.

The college experience can significantly impact the way an individual becomes aware of his or her racial identity and the way it operates in society (Renn, 2000). Asian-White students may feel as if they must choose between associating with the dominant, White community or their minority group (Renn, 1998), or they may feel that their chosen identity is consistently rejected by others in their environment (Rockquemore & Laszloffy, 2005). Therefore,

Asian-White individuals should be allowed to explore their racial identity from a “safe place” where their race is not a salient issue and they can feel free to choose their own identity (Grove, 1990). In a higher education

context, it is important for student affairs professionals to create this “safe place” to ensure that Asian-White students feel encouraged throughout the racial exploration process.

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Narratives of Black and Latino Faculty at a Midwestern Research University

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Scholars have asserted that the diversification of college faculty is an essential part of preparing students to be citizens in a multicultural society (Cole & Barber, 2003). Nonetheless, colleges and universities have been slow to respond to the growing needs of students and have not always been responsive to the changing environment (Birnbaum, 1988). Based on a qualitative study of ten faculty members at a Midwestern research university (MRU), this article provides a descriptive analysis of the experiences of Black and Latino faculty. Analyzed through a critical race theory framework, there were four emergent themes in the findings: faculty time allocation, faculty member support, campus cultural climate, and faculty impact on student experience. The paper concludes with implications for Black and Latino student engagement and suggestions for higher education policy and practice.

Increased access to higher education has diversified the student body on college campuses (Berdahl, Altbach, & Gumpert, 2005). Total enrollment in US higher education is expected to exceed seventeen million by 2012 (Gerald & Hussar, 2002). These students represent the diverse age ranges, ethnicities, and socio-economic backgrounds of today's higher education landscape. Higher education plays a significant role in providing these students with the tools to thrive in the increasingly diverse world (Umbach, 2006). Scholars have asserted that the diversification of college faculty is an essential part of preparing students to be citizens in a multicultural society (Cole & Barber, 2003). Nonetheless, colleges and universities have been slow to respond to the growing needs of students (Birnbaum, 1988). While enrollment keeps increasing, inequities persist (Geiger, 2005). Despite the growing increase of diversity in the United States, increases in faculty diversity have been negligible in the past thirty years (Perna, 2001; Umbach, 2006). In the academy's efforts to improve diversity, it is essential to increase the representation and success of faculty of color.

According to Blackburn, Wenzel, and Bieber (1994), "higher education institutions,

as well as national research centers, need to focus on the experiences of faculty of color if we hope to understand the work environments needed to support creative talents" (p. 280). Typically, administrators assemble diversity councils and diversity plans to address issues surrounding campus climate and retention for students and faculty of color (Iverson, 2007). Recommendations and initiatives proliferate, however equity and inclusion within institutions is still lacking. Senior level administrators espouse commitments to diversity and multiculturalism without engaging in visible action for a more inclusive racial environment. One reason for apathy concerning faculty of color is a lack of research that articulates the impact of faculty of color on undergraduate students (Umbach, 2006). Furthermore, the realities of race are usually only disclosed and addressed when disconcerting findings from an external constituent are made public (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). This warrants investigation into the experiences of faculty of color.

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of faculty at a large predominately white Midwestern institution using a critical race theory (CRT) framework. The implementation of CRT as an analytic

framework confronts preconceived ideas on race and reinforces that scholars and practitioners must be mindful of those who experience racism, sexism, and classism to counter the dominant dialogues in educational arenas (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002). CRT can shed light on forms of racial inequality in policy and practice. The marginalization of faculty of color at predominately White institutions (PWIs) is a critical issue in the current higher education landscape (Fries-Britt & Kelly, 2005); therefore, the characteristics of a CRT lens helps to make sense of the stories investigated. Additionally, CRT contests the belief that the White racial experience is the typical standard for improvement and achievement in higher education (Ladson-Billings, 1998). This study seeks to add to the contemporary literature on faculty of color by using the CRT perspective to focus on silences and exclusions, in turn giving voice to those that are underrepresented.

The narratives in this study can provide insight for faculty and administrators at PWIs on how to create a racially inclusive campus environment. These perspectives come from interviews with ten Black and Latino faculty and from a comprehensive analysis of data presented in the literature. Two studies in particular on the experiences of faculty of color at PWIs in the Midwest revealed the disheartening sentiments of the faculty (Flowers, Wilson, & González, 2008; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999). The research presented in this article is warranted because Midwestern Research University (MRU) created a diversity initiative that sought to improve the overall campus climate. Five years after the creation of this initiative, MRU still struggles to create a welcoming campus environment for faculty of color. A careful analysis of the data presented reveals the personal and professional ramifications of the arguably chilly campus climate.

The literature review offers an overview of two key issues raised in the literature. The unique and multifaceted experiences of faculty of color are presented, followed by research concerning the role of faculty of color on the engagement of Black and Latino students. Subsequently the methodology, the theoretical framework, and the data analysis are discussed. The salient themes from the narratives are presented; and lastly, implications and suggestions for further study and institutional change are offered.

Literature Review

Faculty of Color in Academe

Faculty members experience their careers through a lens of competing demands, characterized by the need to simultaneously balance multiple professional responsibilities. Consequently, the experiences of being a faculty member has been described as one mired in stress (Laden & Hagedorn, 2000). Recent literature (Baez, 2000; Diggs, Garrison-Wade, Estrada & Galindo, 2009; Laden & Hagedorn, 2000; Stanley, 2006) has suggested that while faculty share some common experiences irrespective of race, there are significant differences which contribute to the historical scarcity of faculty of color in the academy. For example, literature has revealed the differences in levels of stress and job satisfaction experienced by faculty of color in comparison to their White peers. Laden and Hagedorn (2000) proffered that faculty from underrepresented racial and ethnic backgrounds are disproportionately affected by stress which negatively impacts job satisfaction. Three components that are essential to describing the less than satisfactory experiences of faculty of color are discrimination, promotion and tenure, and isolation.

Discrimination.

Stanley (2006) suggested that “the wounds of covert and overt racism, sexism, xenophobia, and homophobia run deep for many faculty of color. Discrimination cuts across many areas of the academy such as teaching, research, service, and overall experiences with the campus community” (p. 705). Laden and Hagedorn (2000) found that faculty of color are introduced into the academy without full membership; they state that “to date, faculty of color are expected to enter the academy and adapt themselves to the majority culture and norms that dominate their institutional workplaces” (p. 64). Astin, Antonio, Cress, and Astin (1997) asserted that faculty of color continue to experience discrimination in their institutions, such as seeing their scholarship undervalued if it concerns race. Moreover, discrimination and the promotion process created substantial differences in stress levels between White faculty and faculty of color (Astin, et al., 1997)

Promotion and tenure.

According to the November 2010 *Employees of Postsecondary Institutions* report from the National Center for Educational Statistics, the percentage of Black and Latino professors with tenure at degree granting institutions was respectively 5% and 4% (Knapp, Kelly-Reid, & Ginder, 2010). Advancement within the ranks of the professoriate tends to be a phenomenon that is taxing on many faculty members as they pursue tenure (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). While the factors most often considered in the granting of tenure are research, teaching and service, Tierney and Bensimon (1996) suggested that members of the faculty are socialized to believe that teaching and service are not of great value, while research is essential to job security. This common perception presents additional hurdles to tenure that faculty of color must overcome (Diggs et al., 2009). These obstacles are

typically manifested in the balance of competing professional obligations of this population of faculty. Laden & Hagedorn state, “the longer road to tenure may be in part due to large amount of time faculty of color report spending in advising and mentoring students of color, serving on institutional committees or participating in community services” (p.59). The fact that Blacks and Latinos are more concentrated at lower levels of the professoriate bolsters that contention (Nieves-Squires, 1991).

Isolation.

Although studies related to the experiences of faculty of color have spanned at least the last 10 years, study findings have remained similar; faculty of color note the occupational stress associated with being one of few and the feeling of isolation which can result from being left out of the informal networks in their respective departments (Stanley, 2006; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999). According to one study, faculty of color mediate feelings of alienation by seeking comfort in the interaction with students of color (Turner & Myers, 2000). Such interaction is an essential precursor for the engagement of Black and Latino students with their collegiate experiences.

Impact/Outcomes of Faculty Interaction on Student Engagement

The work that faculty do is inextricably connected to the success of students (Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). According to Pascarella, Terenzini, and Hibel (1978), “One important facet of the college experience is the nature of the social or interpersonal environment” (p. 450). Equally important is the nature of the interaction with the faculty in that environment. Pascarella et al. (1978) found that increased faculty interaction may have a significant impact on academic achievement and motivation of students. Inspired by this study, several years later

researchers Endo and Harpel (1982) alluded to a dearth of research on the effects of an environmental variable of increased student-faculty interaction on myriad student outcomes. These scholars further suggested that increased faculty interactions have been found to impact students' ways of thinking, problem-solving and critical-thinking skills, and career goals. More recent studies have revealed that faculty interaction is strongly linked with student learning, engagement, and retention (Tinto, 2005; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005).

Impact of Black and Latino faculty on Black and Latino students.

Research has shown that the campus racial climate has a profound impact on the success and outcomes of students, especially students of color (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). This climate is influenced in part by the efforts of faculty of color. Scholarly literature has consistently found that the presence of race adds a dimension to student development and subsequent engagement. Harper and Quaye (2009) observe the use of diversity, equity, and inclusiveness as buzzwords in mission statements of many institutions of higher learning; however, the lack of formal engagement plans focusing on students from diverse backgrounds illuminates the contradiction between those mission statements and what actually takes place on campus. The environment of PWIs can impede the adjustment of students who belong to ethnic minority backgrounds. Consequently, these students may become less engaged in their college experiences, which can ultimately negatively impact their academic success (Harper & Quaye, 2009). The lack of same race/ethnicity faculty and culturally responsive pedagogy are among the obstacles that these students face (Quaye, Poon-Tambascia, & Talesh, 2009). The presence of Black and Latino faculty in classrooms can help to address those

obstacles faced by Black and Latino students. Cole and Barber (2003) suggest that faculty of color create welcoming and supportive environments for students of color. The scholars further contend that the presence of faculty of color positively influences academic achievement and career aspirations of students of color (Cole & Barber, 2003). Umbach's (2006) study offered empirical evidence that indicated faculty of color more frequently engage students in practices that result in greater learning among undergraduates. Thus, an examination of the literature demonstrates the positive, substantial impact that faculty of color have on student learning and involvement.

Campus Climate

The site for this study was a Midwestern research university (MRU). Earlier studies of Black and Latino faculty at this university captured many of their struggles and concerns that resulted from an unsupportive and at times hostile, campus climate (Flowers, Wilson, & González, 2008), but did not focus on the ways in which the campus climate for faculty of color impacts the experience and outcomes of students of color. Even in light of this research, the campus climate for diversity remains stagnant. The university publishes an annual *State of Diversity* report which informs the university community on the institution's performance related to several diversity indicators as assessed by the university's Diversity Committee. In the report, the Diversity Committee assigns each diversity indicator one of the seven scores utilized by the scoring rubric. Indicator scores range from the indicator being achieved to unacceptable progress. According to the report, the diversity indicator for campus climate showed that performance levels toward that goal are unacceptable. The report explains that minority staff reported isolation, offensive humor, and feeling discouraged.

Critical Race Theory Framework

As a conceptual and methodological framework, CRT has its foundation in legal studies, but it has since been used as a lens to comprehend policies, practices, and experiences within the realm of higher education. Ladson-Billings (1998) asked, “What is critical theory and what’s it doing in a nice field like education?” The research team for this study sought to show the role CRT has in the context of higher education and how it can inform practice and policy to foster an environment conducive to the success of Black and Latino students.

Solórzano and Yosso (2001) describe CRT in education as recognizing the existence racism comprised of ideas such as colorblindness, objectivity, and race neutrality. CRT scholars facilitate the discourse on race, racism, and power in a manner that advocates for social justice strategies to reduce systems of oppression while concurrently empowering the oppressed (Solórzano & Yosso, 2001). A major cornerstone of CRT and the foundation of this study is the validation of people of color. Accordingly, this ideology views participants as the experts in their own lives. As a result of the participants’ lived experiences they possess the knowledge that allows them to participate in the discourse on race and racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). Understandings of the participants’ racial realities are revealed through counter-storytelling.

Counter-stories are grounded in actual lived experiences. Storytelling is a compelling means for constructing meaning and dispelling myths (Delgado, 1989). CRT scholars use counter-storytelling to shed light on race neutral dialogue to uncover how white privilege functions within an ideological framework to reinforce marginalization. Solórzano and Yosso (2002), describe counter-storytelling as “a method of

telling the stories of those people whose experiences are not often told” including people of color, women, gay, and the poor (p. 26). Narratives of the privileged majority silence the experiences of the oppressed; counter-stories rival the narratives of the majority. The aforementioned themes in the literature such as campus climate, the challenges of tenure and promotion, and experiences related to teaching provide a backdrop for the counter-stories of this study’s participants.

Methodology

The purpose of this study is to provide a descriptive analysis of the campus experiences of Black and Latino faculty members. Guba and Lincoln (1994) assert that qualitative inquiry, when consisting of interviews, provides researchers an opportunity to explore a problem through the voice and experiences of the participants. As this study’s primary goal is to give a voice to the experience of Black and Latino faculty and their perceptions of Black and Latino student experiences, qualitative inquiry seemed most appropriate.

Through the vocalized perceptions of the faculty, the research team, comprised of three Black men, one Black woman, one Latino woman and one White woman, explored how Black and Latino faculty experiences may impact the experiences of Black and Latino undergraduate students. This study was a qualitative inquiry of a purposeful sample of individual, semi-structured interviews with ten faculty members who self-identified as Black or Latino. Three faculty members were Black men, and four identified as Black women, with one of those professors additionally identifying as having Latino ethnicity. Additionally, two professors identified as Latina women. No participating faculty members identified as Latino

men. Within this sample, one faculty member held a clinical position, two were non-tenure track lecturers, three were tenure-track, and the other four were tenured faculty members. The faculty members in this study represent five disciplines across the university.

Individual interviews were conducted and were digitally recorded and transcribed; the initial codes were created from the themes in the interview protocol questions. The data were subsequently interpreted through a summarization of emergent themes.

Critical race theory (CRT) served as the theoretical and methodological framework for this study. CRT examines the relationship between race, racism and power in the greater society and the ways in which this hierarchy is evidenced within institutions of higher education (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). One of the tenets of CRT is recognizing the importance of experiential knowledge of people of color; it emphasizes the need to give them a voice with counter-storytelling of their family history and other lived experiences (Yosso, Smith, Ceja & Solórzano, 2009). Through a critical race theory lens, this study sought to validate the knowledge of faculty of color at MRU surrounding ideas of race and power through the narration of their personal experience.

Findings and Discussion

The results of this study suggest that the experiences of faculty of color have an impact on the experiences of Black and Latino students. Findings from this study contribute to the literature on faculty of color, campus climates, critical race theory, and Black and Latino student engagement. The findings are presented in the following order: a common approach to time allocation, support as a faculty member, experience of the campus climate, and faculty impact on student experience.

A Common Approach to Time Allocation

Promotion and tenure on the college campus has often been said to consider research, teaching and service; however it does not appear that they are considered equally. Faculty members discussed institutional expectations related to time allocation, both explicit and perceived. While most agreed the institution explicitly conveys the idea that research, service, and teaching should hold equal time commitments, we found that the faculty perceived a different expectation. Becca, a Black, female tenure-track professor, stated that “it’s supposed to be 33 1/3, 33 1/3, 33 1/3, research, teaching and service. But be clear--99 1/3 of it should be research. And that’s just the way it is.”

Faculty members found that while their passion for their work as academics often led to service inspired by their ethnic or racial identity, equal value was not given to those experiences, especially in consideration of promotion and tenure. Becca further elaborates, “When it comes down to promotion and tenure, they are counting the number of publications. That’s what they’re looking at. So I would say a significant amount of that time is spent, spinning my wheels, writing.” Similarly, Sylvia noted, “I get criticized because I do too much service, but that is part of what I have to do.” As a result of this undervaluing of personal identity, the faculty in our study have attempted to integrate their passion for service with their need to do research. Sylvia, a Latina lecturer, explained, “Sometimes I try to integrate service with the teaching or research and teaching and that’s why I decided to make my home [a local] community school.” Eryka, a Black female tenured professor, adds, “I can’t speak for all faculty members of color, but certainly if you have that deep value system...that pervasive idea of purpose, service and giving back to your community,

you can't help but look at those intersections."

Support as a Faculty Member

In addition to the allotment of their time, faculty members considered institutional customs that impacted their understanding of the support offered from institutional administration, school or department chairs, as well as their peers. When asked about institutional support, the faculty members interviewed discussed levels of taxation felt by faculty of color as well as the retention of this population and the perceived intentions of senior administrators. Kwame, a Black male clinical professor, posited "I think they [university administrators] make an attempt, but not a priority" when referring to his perception of their support for faculty of color. Another faculty member felt similarly about support at the institutional level. Catrina, a Black female tenured professor, suggests:

Because when we look at data and statistics and things like that, we're not really moving forward. We might be, I think, the Chancellor can be very exhilarated by a slight increase, like in students of color, but... we know that whatever changes have been incremental and it hasn't put the kind of profound force that is necessary for us to move forward.

Faculty also reported mixed levels of support from departmental and school leadership. Eryka stated, "We [departments] spend a lot of money to make sure they [faculty of color] come...why not spend the time to make sure they stay?" She further discussed a positive understanding of department chairs:

Good department chairs help you to make that decision [to not serve on every

diversity committee]. Fantastic department chairs say 'I will protect you, and you won't have to make that decision.' Good fantastic department chairs, that want to keep you won't saddle you, or overwork you with all those extra committees. They say 'I will protect his or her time'.

Though study participants had much to say about the role of the institution and the department in offering support, the most commonly talked about idea when considering support for faculty of color came in the form of peer support. There were several instances when peer support seemed to be the most important aspect of perceived support for faculty members. On several occasions, the level of peer support seemed uncertain. Henry, a Black male senior lecturer, shared that "it tends to feel a little lonely," while Jorge, a Black male tenure-track professor, suggested a need to investigate colleagues' motives: "But you know, there's some Black faculty over there [in the school of business] that I want to know, so I'm gonna approach them and see how they act." While both of these faculty members reported a feeling of isolation within their departments on campus, one had already devised a plan to counteract this isolation and interact with colleagues across campus who may share similar experiences.

When further reflecting on her experience and sense of support, Gwendolyn, a Black female tenured professor with Latino ethnicity, questioned her persistence at the institution:

Talking about all this makes me wonder why I'm still here. I hate to put it down to economics, but you know, we are in a recession and, I tried to sell my home but it's not as much as the original price so...

The questions of why faculty of color remain at an institution and how the institution, department leaders, and faculty peers impact their experiences are central to the topic of support for faculty of color.

Visibility of Black and Latino Faculty

The absence of Black and Latino faculty within US college and university classrooms reinforces stereotypes that African Americans and Latinos cannot or do not thrive in higher education (Smith, 2004). Furthermore, it hinders an institution's endeavors to recruit and retain faculty of color (Witt, 1990) and constrains the amount of same-race mentors for students of color, which is critical to their success (Patton & Catching, 2009). Patton and Catching (2009) contend that the dearth of these scholars within the tenured ranks inhibits their ability to be engaged with relevant arenas that advocate for the development of institutional policies regarding diversity and equity on campus. Black and Latino faculty are 'hyper-visible' when their existence is sought to be the diversity voice, nevertheless they are invisible amidst the largely White professoriate (Turner & Myers, 2000). Black and Latino faculty also think they must work twice as hard as White colleagues, which in turn creates stress and pressure (Smith & Witt 1996).

Experience of the Campus Climate

While the experiences of Black and Latino faculty were at the core of the exploration of this study, the campus climate for diversity was more prominent than expected. It appears that faculty understanding of the mission of an urban institution and perceptions of the MRU's commitment to that mission is the crux of conflict for faculty of color regarding campus cultural climate. Catrina reflected on her initial and continued impressions of the university mission:

I took seriously the idea of an urban mission and [the school] also has an urban mission. I would imagine that other schools within the university have a similar mission, so very much a part of that mission ought to be diversification of faculty, diversifying the student body, creating a strong network between the university and to probe into really the hard questions about why that isn't just forthcoming on its own, that it takes really hard work to do that.

Becca discussed her frustration with a recent search for a high-level administrator, explaining that the pool of applicants from which the position was filled did not include the possibility of diverse candidates: "That tells me that that little mission or that little mantra, that little cliché that we value diversity, and we embrace diversity is bullshit. That's what it tells me."

In their discussion of the campus cultural climate, faculty members alluded to three major themes: the presence of racial microaggressions, the need for and creation of counter-spaces, and concerns with institutional hiring practices.

Microaggressions.

One group of critical race theorists define microaggressions as often subconscious acts of disregard or denigration for a particular group, in this instance people of color, as a result of subscription to White supremacy (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Becca described her frustration with peoples' fear of speaking up about race issues, an instance of institutional microaggressions such that the campus culture tends to silence the concerns of faculty of color. Over time what may seem as minor microaggressions can accumulate and cause "racial battle fatigue" (Smith, 2004) resulting in faculty questioning their involvement, advising other faculty to

not do as much, or leaving a university. Catrina speaks to this point:

I've just said that I'm not going to do it, and that's a hard decision because often it's 'oh we could really use a faculty of color on this campus committee' and me saying 'you really need to get more faculty of color on this campus'. So, I say no because this is my menu and I'm not going to burn out.

Microaggressions can take on many forms including: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations. Each type is respectively comprised of derogatory verbal or nonverbal attacks, denigrations about racial heritage, or remarks that diminish the realities of people of color (Sue, Capodilupo, Torino, Bucceri, Holder, Nadal, & Esquilin, 2007). The majority of Black and Latino interviewees reported experiencing these offenses in the classroom. Henry describes becoming used to disrespect in the classroom:

There have been some situations where I've felt disrespected or not looked up to, not looked on as being as competent—not often, but occasionally—where you feel like someone talks down to you, and that's uncomfortable, doesn't happen often, but I think it just comes with the territory.

Counter-spaces.

Critical race theorists define counter-spaces as personally created spaces or groups that provide a source of reinforcement of worth and value, contrary to denigrating messages that may be received from the majority group (Solórzano, 1998). There were several instances in which faculty members discussed creation of peer groups to help sustain their presence at MRU.

Becca described a group of faculty that she “rolls with” and when questioned on the formation of the group, she responded:

How did we all get together? [emphasis added] I think because none of us seems to be too afraid to talk about who we are, in terms of identity and our identity politic. I'm not talking student development theory, I'm talking about our politics. This is who I am, this is how I roll, this is what I think. And you can get backlash from that and none of us seemed to mind the backlash.

In addition to peer groups, professors discussed their connection to spaces and organizations outside of the university as counter-spaces which contribute to their work as members of the faculty. Sylvia suggested that her work in a neighborhood school allowed her work and research at MRU to have meaning: “The service that I think I do represents the school of education in places where we need to be.” Becca also described her commitment to service in the surrounding community:

Most of my service is overwhelmingly in the community, and by community I mean just in the city...But what you'll find in Black communities is that they're not caring that you have a Ph.D., ...[My] larger role is service...to the community and...to the larger discourse in education.

These particular faculty members were able to form a different sort of counter-space outside of the university. Through their involvement with their racial community organizations and initiatives, they were able to create a connection to individuals in the city and feel that their contributions were of value. Rather than viewing the climate for diversity as dismal, Jorge instead viewed it

opportunisticly and used the potential as a type of mental counter-space.

Well, I have not found any better potential organization to create opportunity than I see here. And I've been around a while, but I mean I see the potential....We'll pull these places along by our own presence, our own desires, our own wishes to make these places welcoming and open places for all.

As suggested in CRT literature, counter-spaces provide a place where "deficit notions of people of color can be challenged and where a positive collegial racial climate can be established and maintained" (Solórzano, 2002, p. 70). Faculty at the research site seem to offset their sense of not belonging with the creation of groups or places that reinforce their worth and value.

Hiring practices.

Another area that impacted perceptions of campus climate for faculty members were the espoused and enacted hiring practices at the institution. While the context varied from search committee participation to written philosophical approaches, all left a sustained impression of the university's commitment to faculty of color and, in turn, students of color. Catrina expressed concern with the commitment to diversity issues in hiring procedures and called for the voice of Black and Latino faculty members to be heard:

I was on a search committee last year and I'd just hate to think what would have happened with that search. It was time-consuming, it had to occur, there was a lot of discussion on the committee about who to hire, what that person needed to reflect, our needs, our urban mission, all of those discussions were somehow lost. [I had to remind the

committee]: we have an urban mission, we need to diversify our faculty.

Faculty Perceptions of their Impact on Students

When asked how Black and Latino students interact with Black and Latino members of the faculty, there was a consensus among participants that their understanding of themselves and their experiences consistently played a role in their interactions with the students. The faculty members' perceptions of Black and Latino students' experiences varied due to their expectations of, interactions with, and connection to the students. Sylvia said:

They're precious little gems. Because I don't have that many, I can afford to really spend time with them, particularly when they're in my class, we work hard...I try to help, I contact them, I send them emails after they've left my class.

In contrast, Kwame stated:

My experience with African American or Latino students in the classroom has been overall a little frustrating. And what I mean by that is traditionally they are not the highest performing students in my classroom, and they tend to have more challenges.

Interestingly, issues important to Black and Latino faculty are brought into their classrooms. Gwendolyn spoke about her comfort discussing the campus climate and other issues, which have been expressed as important to faculty of color, within her classroom: "My activism comes into the classroom when it's appropriate. So I'll tell on the university any chance I get, but again when it's appropriate to the subject matter, I will speak out and include that in my class." Likewise, when asked if her experiences with

race in her life impact her teaching, Becca responded, “I probably bring that into the classroom, my anger. I know I bring that conversation, that discourse. The readings will change. I think it plays a role or has some impact on what I teach and how I teach.”

When asked for their general perception of the Black and Latino student experience, the faculty further expressed that it is a challenging one. Although Becca is assigned to solely teach graduate students, she points out that undergraduates are affected by the relative scarcity of faculty of color: “What happens every semester is I get calls or visits from Black undergraduate students. And I’ve heard this from other faculty members too, it’s not that I’m all that, it’s because I’m all dark.” Catrina noted the challenges experienced by Black and Latino students this way:

I know that can be very difficult for them in a class that’s overwhelmingly White, and I would say in classes that are also overwhelmingly in need of some real race sensitivity. I have found that many of the thoughts of the students of color in these classes got swallowed up, they wanted to be quiet.

Regardless of their experiences, there was agreement among the faculty members that they wanted the Black and Latino students on campus to know that, at the very least, Black and Latino faculty support their presence as well as their personal and academic pursuits. This understanding has been shown through the establishment of informal relationships, extra efforts of outreach, and a general level of concern. Eryka suggested she devoted a lot of her time to just that; “I spend an *enormous* amount of time making sure that I am mentoring, spending time with, talking to, making telephone calls, emailing students [of color].”

Overall, as Black and Latino faculty members considered the experience of Black and Latino undergraduate students, it became obvious they viewed their students’ experiences through their understanding of their own Black or Latino identities. This idea can best be seen through the words of Eryka, when she said “It’s almost like opening the door for acceptance. I think that for some of the [Black and Latino] undergraduate students it means that there is a place on this campus for them.”

Implications and Suggestions

To honor the voice and experiences of the faculty members who participated in the study, it is appropriate to discuss the implications of the findings and provide recommendations. As the emergent themes were time allocation, faculty feeling of support, faculty experience of campus climate, and their effects on the Black and Latino student experience, implications and suggestions are organized similarly.

Time Allocation

As Black and Latino faculty members stressed their desire for time to participate in service related to their race or ethnic identity, there appeared to be an incongruence found in the values of the university. The undervaluation of service of Black and Latino faculty members potentially poses a conflict for recruiting, retaining and promoting underrepresented faculty members. Therefore, it seems important that the university, whether faculty peers or senior administration, reconcile the incongruence to show equal value to the diversity of faculty experiences and priorities. One prominent concern that has been raised pertains the values demonstrated during consideration for promotion and tenure (Antonio, 2002).

Faculty Feeling of Support

While there were several instances in which faculty members expressed experiencing true support, it was more common for the study participants to question the commitment of the department and institutional leadership to their overall success. This suggests that the university can enhance the successful retention and promotion of Black and Latino faculty members through an increased demonstration of support. There are three ideas that seem warranted for the university to institutionalize support of Black and Latino faculty members; instituting a mentoring program, creating department chair training, and revising the tenure process. The study participants suggested that having informal mentoring relationships with senior faculty members, whether faculty of color or not, provided an avenue for them to better understand the politics of the university while also giving them the opportunity to connect with other faculty members who can articulate the value of Black and Latino faculty members' presence, research agenda, and service. Creating department chair training sessions that highlight the struggles experienced by faculty of color and increase the value paid to service would provide two opportunities that institutionally demonstrate that Black and Latino faculty are equally valued by the university.

Faculty Experience of Campus Climate

The comments of the faculty members regarding the campus climate often focused on the limited presence of Black and Latino faculty members. Therefore, one important consideration for the university is increasing efforts to recruit, retain, and promote Black and Latino faculty members. There has been progress in past efforts, but there is a need for the university to intentionally enhance its efforts to bring Black and Latino people into

the professoriate. One recommendation of this research team is to assess the effectiveness of an existing campus recruitment initiative and reconsider providing the funding necessary to reinstitute the effort.

Faculty Perception of Student Experience

Perhaps most important, all study participants saw themselves as advocates for Black and Latino undergraduate students. They also found that their experience of the campus climate for diversity played a significant role in their ability to support, advocate, and be present for Black and Latino undergraduates. Therefore, it seems particularly essential that the university administration listen to, validate, and address the concerns of faculty of color.

Limitations

As with all research studies there are limitations to this study that must be addressed. Sample size and representation are two areas that require discussion. Although the research team worked to provide the opportunity for all Black and Latino faculty members to participate in the study, our sample reflects a higher proportion from disciplines related to business and the social sciences. We recognize that the experiences of faculty members in the sciences may be different. Moreover, having only ten faculty members from the research site limits transferability of the results to other institutions. While the research discusses the impact of Black and Latino faculty members on the Black and Latino undergraduate experience, current Black and Latino students were not interviewed. Although we presume that faculty members' perceptions of campus climate are connected to the lived experience of Black and Latino students, our research does not provide a definitive understanding

of how the Black and Latino faculty members' experiences directly impact Black and Latino undergraduate students.

Conclusion

In line with previous research, this study has shown the importance of a positive and supportive campus climate for both faculty satisfaction and student success. In order to improve the effects of the campus climate on the experience of both faculty and students, it is necessary to truly transform the institutional culture in a pervasive and intentional way (Hamilton, 2006). According

to Hamilton (2006), racial and ethnic minorities often feel silenced and powerless to make changes to the campus racial climate. Instead, it has been found that "senior administrative support, collaboration, and visible action are among the core elements requisite for transformational change in higher education" (Harper & Hurtado, 2007, p. 20-21). For this reason, it is imperative that administrators make a concerted effort to change the policies and procedures of the academy to welcome and support the entire campus community.

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Beyond the Barricade: A Holistic View of Veteran Students at an Urban University

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As veteran students return to campus following their service, colleges and universities are establishing various resources in an attempt to assist them. For this study, a group veteran and military participants at an urban university were interviewed to determine the extent to which current campus conditions foster a sense of belonging for veteran students. The study found that veteran students at this university identify with their older peers because of their maturity and life experiences. Their veteran identity is viewed as secondary, if considered influential at all. These findings suggest that universities should focus on providing services for the larger non-traditional student population in order to meet the needs of veteran students.

As a result of the 2008 G.I. Bill revision and increasing numbers of troops returning from conflicts overseas, veteran students are enrolling in colleges and universities at an increased rate (DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008). The newest waves of veterans are returning primarily from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan: Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF), respectively. Students are enrolling in college with life experiences that are misunderstood or difficult to relate to for a majority of their peers and faculty (DiRamio et al., 2008). Moreover, veteran students have special requirements and guidelines for using their benefits, and managing finances through this new set of complexities can be challenging (Rumann & Hamrick, 2010).

These circumstances create issues in the transition to the campus culture and influence veteran students' *sense of belonging* on campus, which is a critical factor in determining persistence and success (Freeman, Anderson, & Jenson, 2007). Sense of belonging refers to a feeling of acceptance and connection with the university community (Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow & Salomone, 2002). In light of these unique needs, special consideration must be taken to

understand how to best support veterans throughout their college experience.

Creating an inclusive and supportive community for all students is an important part of fostering an environment in which students are likely to succeed (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2006). Furthermore, student success can be greatly affected by students' experiences in their first semester (Hunter, 2006). Therefore, creating an intentional and impactful opportunity to support veteran students' connection to their university and peers in the first semester is vitally important to the successful transition for this student population.

To address the intersections of the aforementioned issues, this paper will first examine the current literature regarding the concept of one's sense of belonging and the factors that influence and encourage this feeling for individuals in a given environment. Included literature will also present discussions on the new generation of veteran students enrolling in colleges and universities across the country, as well as the transitional issues they face upon their return from military commitments. Second, this paper will describe the context of the study and the methods used to gather the subsequent data. After presenting the findings of the study, this discussion will

revolve around how this study both reinforces current literature and offers new insights into the unique needs and characteristics of our veteran student population.

Literature Review

Current literature on sense of belonging for college students and the needs of veteran students was reviewed. The review of literature covers both a discussion of sense of belonging as it affects students' success as well as issues regarding veteran students' transition to college life.

Sense of Belonging

The unique experiences that impact veteran students' transitions often pose challenges to establishing a sense of community on campus (Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, & Salomone, 2002). Within a higher education context, Hoffman, Richmond, Morrow, and Salomone (2002) define sense of belonging as a "sense of affiliation and identification with the university" (p. 228). Sense of belonging is an important part of new students' transition to higher education and their continued success and persistence (Freeman, Anderman, Jenson, 2007). This feeling allows individuals to identify themselves as an integral part of the campus community (Hagerty, Lynch-Sauer, Patusky, Bouwsema, & Collier, 1992). Sense of belonging is a vital piece of collegiate success and can lead to increased motivation in the classroom and retention (Freeman et al., 2007). When analyzing a students' sense of belonging, social support, faculty interactions, and classroom culture become key elements (Freeman et al., 2007; Hoffman et al., 2002).

With further research, there is more support that shows that sense of belonging to the university is associated with positive adjustment (Pittman & Richmond, 2008).

Students who have a positive sense of belonging during their first year were shown to have positive self-perceptions in areas such as academic competence and self-worth (Pittman & Richmond, 2008). Additionally, sense of belonging influences the physical and mental health of college students, which can be particularly relevant to the veteran student population due to the nature of their experiences (Hale, Hannum, & Espelage, 2005). Throughout the literature, one consistent component in supporting students in establishing a positive sense of belonging is providing opportunities for students to build meaningful relationships with peers and faculty members in a safe environment (Freeman et al., 2007; Hoffman et al., 2002; Tinto, 1993).

Sense of belonging can be especially difficult for students who do not feel as though they belong to the majority group on a campus (Meeuwisse, Severiens, & Born, 2010). As described by Meeuwisse, Severiens and Born (2010),

The similarity of shared backgrounds, aspirations, and attitudes among students who constitute the dominant majority on campus probably makes it easier for these students to adapt to campus life, whereas adaptation is likely to be more difficult for those who come from different backgrounds (p. 532).

Moreover, the article goes on to discuss the impact of institutional culture, as explained in Meeuwisse et al.'s conclusion that if students feel that they do not fit in, that their social and cultural practices are inappropriate.

Most of the literature fails to address the sense of belonging of veterans, leaving this integral aspect of the higher education experience underexplored. Students must feel a part of the majority to have a sense of belonging, and current research suggests that veterans struggle to identify with the

majority of students (DiRamio et al., 2008; Hassen, Jackson, Lindsay, McCabe & Sanders, 2010).

Veteran Student Transitions

In many respects, veteran students are much like their civilian peers, but military service has left many of them struggling with matters other than the usual academic challenges (DiRamio et al., 2008). Some of the unique needs identified in existing literature include health issues, financial aid problems, discomfort in large crowds, and a feeling of anger or resentment toward others who do not understand their experiences (DiRamio et al., 2008; Hassen et al., 2010). Additionally, veteran students often demonstrate a higher level of maturity due to the experiences they have endured in wartime service (DiRamio et al., 2008). Also, The National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE, 2010) found that returning veterans, especially combat veterans, spend more time working and caring for dependents than their non-veteran counterparts.

These differences and unique needs can sometimes cause irritation or frustration when relating to peers on-campus (DiRamio et al., 2008). However, several veteran students expressed an interest in connecting with other veterans on campus, and many were interested in a student organization of veterans (DiRamio et al., 2008). The literature on student veterans suggests that this desire for the opportunity to associate with others who share in the veteran experience extends beyond faculty and staff to their peers. Rumann and Hamrick (2009) reiterated that “student veterans frequently seek contacts with other veterans and military personnel as ways to validate their experiences and aid in successfully making the transition to college” (p. 30). A subsequent work by Rumann and Hamrick (2010) identified similar feelings, supported by their findings that veteran students who

were able to attend college with members of their unit mentioned their feeling of ease and comfort in the social aspect of the transition. In this way, the current research seems to suggest that not only are student veterans seeking out others who have similar experiences in order to feel more comfortable, but they also find the transition to higher education easier when they are able to connect with peers who understand their unique situations and transitional concerns. Also, Rumann and Hamrick (2010) noted that several participants in their study described feeling like an outsider at times because other students did not know how to approach veterans. On a larger scale, NSSE (2010) found that veterans reported lower levels of support from their institutions and were generally less engaged than their nonveteran peers. From these results, NSSE concluded that institutions should find ways to engage more veteran students and create a successful environment for them.

Herrmann (2008) identified that another key element related to the veteran students’ transition from soldier to student is academic advising and the availability of resources for students. DiRamio et al. (2008) assert that while mandating professional development for university faculty and staff regarding veteran students may be difficult, opportunities should be available. They believe participation should be highly encouraged in order to help educate those who will be critical in meeting the unique needs of veteran students and easing the transition into the classroom (DiRamio et al., 2008). To this effect, DiRamio et al. found, “Of the sixteen themes identified in the study...a consistent message from the participants was that they hoped faculty members would acknowledge their veteran status and attempt to understand them as a student population” (p. 89). Rumann and Hamrick (2009) agreed with the significance of knowledgeable and caring faculty and

staff. They reported that student veterans in their study emphasized the importance of having faculty that share an understanding of their experiences.

On many campuses, the issue of how to accommodate this unique and growing population of students is a concern for college administrators (Lokken, Donald, McAuly, & Strong, 2009). However, the amount of scholarly literature focused on veteran students is insufficient. Primarily, there is a great need to update the literature for the current cohort of veteran students: those having served in the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, previous research has focused mostly on the mental health of veterans, with less attention given to the importance of transition (DiRamio et al., 2008). While research has shown that student success is enhanced when campuses provide environments that are both inclusive and supportive, a gap exists in the research to connect those findings to what an inclusive and supportive environment might look like for veteran students (Herrmann, 2008). Therefore, higher education institutions have the responsibility to provide a supportive environment for veteran students that allows them to develop a sense of belonging.

The purpose of this study is to inform and improve practice at the selected institution as well as serve as a foundation of research of best practices. The conceptual framework of sense of belonging, as defined earlier, guides the analysis by examining the extent to which veteran students feel comfortable on the college campus. The following questions guide this study: To what extent do veteran students have a sense of belonging at the urban campus of study, and how is sense of belonging developed in veteran students at an urban institution?

Methods

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the veteran students' experiences, a qualitative method was selected. Semi-structured interviews, which encourage participants to discuss their experiences and communicate their ideas from their own unique perspectives, were chosen because they create an environment for participants to discuss their time at the university as well as challenges and potentially difficult memories that may be too complex to understand in other qualitative methods such as observation (Merriam, 1998).

Context

The research site was a public, urban, research, non-residential, 4-year undergraduate university that also houses a medical and law school (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2010). The institution has an approximate enrollment of 30,000 students, two-thirds of whom are undergraduate students and one-third are graduate and professional students. Additionally, the total enrollment is composed of 19,000 full-time students and 10,000 part-time students with 13,000 students being over the age of 25; therefore 45% of the population is considered non-traditionally aged. The site has a newly established office dedicated exclusively to serving veteran students on campus, demonstrating the increased interest in learning about the needs of this growing population of students.

Participants

Participants were selected for the study through a short survey. The survey was initially administered in order to use purposeful sampling, specifically maximum variation, to ensure a wide range of experiences to document (Patton, 2002). To implement this method, an initial survey was distributed through a listserv of veteran and

military students to try to collect demographic information and to construct a diverse sample of participants. Access to the listserv was facilitated through cooperation with staff who work to support veteran students on this campus. However, due to the specificity of requested sample, this approach proved to be limiting in terms of the number of respondents produced; therefore, the purposeful sampling technique, criterion sampling, was revised to open the sample to include all veteran students who responded to the survey (Patton, 2002). The change in method provided the opportunity to gather the needed qualitative data within the necessary time constraint. Through criterion sampling, seven participants were selected, of whom five were males and two were females. After completion of the survey, potential participants were contacted by a member of the research team and were asked to set up an interview appointment. The participants were diverse in age, military experience, and branch of service; however, they had all been on active duty in Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and/or Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF).

Procedure

The interviews were conducted in an intimate, one-on-one setting and generally lasted between ten and twenty minutes. The veteran students were read an opening statement that ensured them confidentiality of the interview and described the purpose of the interview and study. Participants were provided with a brief explanation of the purpose of the study in advance, but specific interview questions were not revealed prior to being asked. In addition, due to the semi-structured format, unplanned questions arose based on participants' responses and experiences. Veteran students were then asked to respond to a series of questions based upon their development of sense of belonging at the institution; the interviews

were recorded and later transcribed. These open-ended questions, developed through the concepts presented in the questionnaire developed by Hoffman et al. (2002), allowed participants to describe their experiences at the urban university of study. Some of the topics the students were asked about included: interaction with faculty members, interaction with classmates, challenges as a veteran student, and how they define and view their own sense of belonging. The primary purpose of the interviews was to allow veteran students the opportunity to explain who they are and how they have experienced the university, specifically in regards to sense of belonging. Upon completion of interviews, the research team coded data by identifying emergent themes found in interview responses. The following common themes identified throughout the interviews were: 1) primary identity as non-traditional aged students, 2) transition difficulties, 3) interaction with peers and faculty, 4) use of existing campus resources, 5) academic focus, and 6) sense of veteran identity.

Findings

Within the framework of sense of belonging, this study was designed to focus on the aggregate environment, specifically veteran students' experiences as one group within the population of the urban university of study. Emergent data expands on this concept to include a broader picture of veteran students and their needs at an urban institution where they make up a relatively small percentage of the population. In the description of the findings below, the term "veteran students" should be interpreted as being limited solely to the group of veteran students included in this particular sample.

Sense of Belonging

In seeking to further investigate the degree to which veteran students feel they

belong at this particular urban university, several points of interest arose as common themes among all participants. First, interview participants had a clear idea of how they would define the term “sense of belonging”. They could readily articulate a meaning for this concept as well as provide an example of where they have a sense of belonging. Interestingly, although the interviewees had a well-developed understanding of this phrase, when asked to describe their sense of belonging at the institution, they often did not relate it to their formal higher education experience but instead to previously established support systems that include high school friends and family members. One veteran student described his sense of belonging, “Well right now it’s my family. That’s exactly where I belong. I suppose there is sense of belonging with school but I think it’s pretty superficial.”

Further, veteran students not only gave examples unrelated to their college experience to express sense of belonging, but they also specifically mentioned *not* seeking social connections through their college experience. As one participant explained, “I’m older and I have all the friends that I think I will essentially have the rest of my life. It’s a feeling that I don’t need that social interaction and most of the students I would be interacting with would be much younger than me...I don’t think we would make great friends.” When asked to discuss sense of belonging as it relates specifically to their college peers, several interviewees mentioned connecting with other students close to their own age to feel accepted and understood. In contrast, study participants were largely uninterested in establishing a sense of belonging among their younger peers, suggesting that the younger population of students could not relate to their experiences at a level that made them feel as though they truly belong.

Personal Identity

While existing literature focuses very specifically on students’ veteran identity, findings suggest that such a narrow focus considers only one facet of a complex identity that must be viewed more holistically. All of the veteran students interviewed self-identified primarily as non-traditionally aged students, citing differences in age and other life experiences that separated them from what they considered traditional students (non-veterans, directly from high school, ages 18-24, no children or spouse). Such distinctions were exemplified by one participant when he said, “I’m an older student, you know, with wife and kids and so it’s just different, you know? Most of the students here are obviously younger, single, it’s just a compatibility issue.” The students noted their ability to choose to disclose their veteran identity to others, but identified their age as a constant visible identity marker. Many reiterated the concept of the veteran identity’s invisibility with comments such as, “You would not know that I am a veteran from walking around the campus, unless I tell you.” In this way, the veteran students interviewed discussed their identity primarily in terms of being a non-traditional aged student, because they felt they were rarely acknowledged as a veteran student unless they made the conscious choice to display that facet of their identity.

Several students went so far as to say that their veteran identity status, as a small piece of their personal identity as a whole, had no impact on their time at this urban research institution other than using G.I. Bill benefits to finance their education. One respondent emphasized the separation between his student identity and his veteran identity by making a clear distinction between the two: “It [veteran identity] hasn’t influenced it measurably. I pretty much put it behind me. I mean, I used the G.I. Bill, and in that sense it helped out, made things easier

financially, but other than that, I don't think it has really." The findings suggest that several veteran students see their veteran status as an invisible aspect of a complex identity, as well as an aspect they often do not share because they feel as though others may not understand. These students feel the impact of their visible identity as older students and then primarily identify with this broader aspect of their identity.

Related to this primary identity, veteran students tended to answer any broad question such as "tell me about your time here at [this institution] so far" or "do you have anything else you would like to add" with a focus on academics. One interviewee stated that his only goal was to finish and move on, "I want to get it done and over with and go back to working." Academically-focused responses emerged as a theme suggesting that the students interviewed have a very specific, academic purpose for their time at college. Furthermore, when discussing the ways in which they were actively engaging on-campus, veteran students noted obstacles such as full-time jobs or families that kept them from being part of a student organization or attending campus events. Most participants quickly returned to their specific academic purpose when asked about extracurricular involvement and then went on to discuss their engagement in a more academic sense. Almost all of the veteran students mentioned active involvement in the classroom through tutoring other students, an especially intense interest in an academic topic, or a well-articulated practical application of knowledge learned. In his or her own way, every veteran student interviewed expressed engagement with the institution in an academic sense.

Environment

In order to fully investigate sense of belonging, veteran students were asked

about their perceptions of the environment on this particular campus for those who identify as veterans. Participants' responses identified peer interactions, relationships with faculty, and the on-campus resources as factors influential to their perception of the environment.

As Strange and Banning (2001) posited, environmental fit is based on the extent to which a group perceives an environment to be congruent with their needs, values, and interests. The greater congruence a group feels with the environment, the more likely they are to be successful within that setting. Veteran students' congruence with the environment may depend largely on the people who make up their immediate surroundings. Several veteran students discussed feeling comfortable at the urban institution studied because they had peers who were close to their age. Since the institution is an urban setting and a large percentage of students are over the age of 25, veteran students seem to feel more comfortable. One interviewee said, "There's a lot of older students here on this campus, so I feel like I belong very much so." Another respondent described relationships with older students:

And in my one group most of the group members are a little older. There are two members that are older, one who is the same age, and one that is younger. They all work full time and are non-traditional students, and they are very understanding of my situation and we communicate a lot between emails. Those few students that I do work the [most] closely with are very understanding and [it] has been a very positive experience.

However, several others mentioned a lack of interest in interacting with their peers,

especially those younger than them. One veteran student said,

I'm only thirty years old, but I see your average 19, 20, 21 year old running around doing stuff I used to do back then. I look back on it now and say, 'really, you might not want to do that' ...I'm a little more cautious.

In this way, the findings suggest that ease of connection to peers was not impacted by veteran status but rather by age or maturity level. This idea is captured nicely in one participant's quote, "The kids are a lot younger. So I don't think it has anything to do with being a veteran that makes it a difference it's a matter that I am closer to their parents' age."

Overall, participants spoke very positively of the faculty with whom they had interacted. Nearly every respondent had a specific example of the ways in which faculty members had been understanding and supportive when the students needed to make special accommodations related to their veteran status. One interviewee said,

All of my professors have been very understanding if I need to record lectures or if I am not going to be there this day because of a doctor's appointment. Or, what has happened to me recently, when I take a medication that completely wipes me out so I can't be in class and the professor has been understanding.

Two of the veteran students also explained ways in which faculty had invited them to share their unique experience and knowledge to add value to a class discussion.

Outside of the classroom, the veterans office on-campus is the main resource provided to veteran students. The mission of this office includes assisting veteran students in their transition from military to college

life. Findings regarding use and perceptions of the veterans office suggest that while participants regard the veteran office in a positive light, the office is solely utilized for business purposes. One veteran student described his use of the veteran office, saying

They actually were helpful at the beginning of the year when my G.I. Bill paperwork was all messed up. They were helpful with that. But I think that's the only thing, um, I could have used them for...it would have been nice to talk to someone else to talk about that and work through that.

One veteran articulated his desire for more support on campus, suggesting it would be helpful "to have a class where someone could have sat me down...like a one credit hour class. They could explain what programs are available to me, if I needed help... something more than 'go here, fill out your military paperwork, see you later.'"

Transition

While no specific questions were included in the initial research design to inquire about the extent to which veteran students felt supported in their transition to higher education, a majority of the study participants mentioned struggles with transition. Specifically, one veteran student commented,

It's hard being away from school and then coming back to the school environment. Actually learning how to study again 'cause it is like a skill, like how to take tests and stuff. It would be nice to be around people going through the same thing.

When discussing his transition back to campus, one participant stated, "I had issues with coming back to a less structured environment where you are more so on your

own.” In this way, transition issues were an emergent theme that highlighted the intersection of veteran students’ personal identities with the environment in which they were interacting. All participants mentioned difficulty relearning forgotten study skills as well as adjusting to the new structure of college life. Findings also suggested that the veteran students in this study felt that institutional support for transitional issues similar to those they identified was lacking.

Discussion

Using qualitative research methods, the aim of this study was to examine how the environment at an urban university facilitates the transition to college life by providing veteran students with a sense of belonging and connection to the campus community. While there were expected differences between experiences, common themes emerged that point to the need to redefine veteran students as a specific sub-population of a rapidly evolving student body. The results indicate the significance of the non-traditional student identity as the primary identity, with the veteran identity considered secondary or completely separate from the student experience.

In general terms, the results indicate that veteran students find their age and life experiences, including family, maturity level, work, time away from school, and other commitments and responsibilities to be the most significant influences in their experience at the institution. Because veteran status is an invisible identity, disclosure of this identity can be negotiated and prioritized on an individual basis. Some veteran students concluded that revealing this identity can be extraneous, having little to do with their role as a student.

Overall, veteran students perceived a discernible difference in age and maturity

compared to students who continued to college immediately following high school. They expressed the common belief that the younger students with whom they interact may not understand or appreciate their experiences. Although veteran status can be found in all age groups, this student population did not actively seek these connections with younger students to establish a sense of belonging on campus; rather, they sought to connect with students close to their own age as a social support system. For veteran students, sense of belonging is often found outside of the university setting in previously established support systems that include friends and family members. These trends reveal the need for specially-tailored co-curricular experiences to encourage the development of a support network for veteran students, both inside and outside of the classroom, as an integral part of the larger non-traditional aged student population.

The present findings also illustrate that many veteran students have an academical focus when discussing their experience in college. Veteran students often referenced accommodating interactions with faculty, positive classroom environments, and pursuing clear academic goals as significant features of their experience at the institution. While there were differences in relationships with classmates, veteran students were in agreement that they were not at the institution to make friends. With such intense academic concentration, veteran students have a clear sense of what they want from their time at the university and they have enrolled to meet those specific goals. Considering these findings, the ways in which the institution seeks to engage veteran students should include academic engagement as well as a more broadly integrated recognition of the value of their previous experiences.

Limitations

Although this study presents important findings for effectively serving veteran students, limitations must be considered when understanding how this research can be useful in practice. One limitation of the study is the time constraint in which the data was collected. The findings are a snapshot of the veteran students' perceptions of their experience in college, rather than a comprehensive longitudinal study that analyzes changes in attitudes and/or feelings of belonging. As with any site-specific research, this study is unique to the campus at which it was conducted and findings may not be transferable to another institution due to the differing campus cultures and student populations. Acknowledging these limitations, our findings inform a more holistic view of veteran student needs through the categories of sense of belonging, personal identity, environment, and transition.

Implications

The findings of this study both support existing literature on veteran students and offer new insights into veteran students' needs on campus. While veteran students have unique needs that distinguish them from other populations of students transitioning to higher education, present findings do not attribute the source of these needs as exclusively or even primarily related to their veteran status; rather, their unique needs are attributed to their non-traditional student identity. Based on these findings, it is essential that veteran students are not solely defined by their veteran identity, but that a more holistic view of this population be considered. Student affairs professionals and university administrators must not only focus on the needs of the veteran student, but on the needs of the non-

traditional student with whom veteran students primarily identify.

While the veteran's office includes assisting veteran students in their transition from military to college life as part of its espoused mission, participants in this study identified it as an office associated mainly for business matters. They described their interactions with the office and its staff as mostly limited to managing paperwork and closely related to the financial benefits of the current G.I. Bill. Considering the current use of this office, the university must establish a more holistic approach in fostering an environment that encourages a sense of belonging on campus to more effectively serve veteran students. The ways in which administrators attempt to create these types of environments at institutions must be reconsidered and revised to meet changing student populations. Administrators must reevaluate ideas of how to engage today's students and subsequently offer the appropriate support to foster a sense of belonging and promote success for all students. Future research should focus on student perceptions of existing best practices in serving non-traditional students, including the unique needs of veterans, as well as profile the academic and co-curricular needs of this new generation of veteran students. Research is needed to establish standards for engagement that can be implemented and measured to improve the environment of the environment for veteran students.

Conclusion

While much of the current literature on veteran students narrowly focuses on their veteran identity, it is crucial that these students' needs are explored beyond the barricade, integrating a more holistic approach to understanding how to best serve them. The findings of this study suggest that the non-traditional student identity is more

significant and impactful for veterans than their secondary veteran identity. Therefore, veteran student's non-traditional identity should be considered substantially when developing services to meet their needs. Veterans in this study interpreted their experiences on campus as typical for non-traditional aged students and not exclusive to their veteran identity. Given the limitations of this study, these findings cannot be generalized to different campus environments; however, they do raise important issues for higher education administrators.

Before universities can successfully aid this sub-population of non-traditional students, consideration should be given to establish services to better meet the needs of

the broader non-traditional student population. Findings also revealed that veteran students are highly focused on their academics; therefore, when administrators are considering how to assist and support these students, they should explore redefining how they are engaging nontraditional students in the campus experience. Through an understanding of the needs of nontraditional students, and veteran students as a sub-population of that group, universities can be more intentional in the resources and support they provide to students, creating a more positive university experience for students.

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The Experience of White Students as a Temporary Minority in TRIO-Funded Programs

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Although research has been conducted on the experience of White students as temporary minorities in some racial minority settings, little research focuses White students' experiences as a temporary minority in TRIO-funded programs. In this study, the experience of White students in a TRIO experience were examined through focus groups. Findings suggest that students often had an initial fear of the experience; however, they felt the program was largely positive and beneficial to their growth and development. Participants expressed an overall consensus pertaining to the advantages of being in a diverse student environment. Implications and conclusions for program administrators, student affairs professionals, and other campus leaders are discussed.

Federally-funded Student Support Services (TRIO) programs have existed for over forty years. These programs have enabled thousands of students to gain access to college and assisted students in multiple capacities, including academic tutoring, advising, and other success-oriented activities (U.S Department of Education, n.d.). The primary goal of the programs is to "provide college students from disadvantaged backgrounds with assistance in meeting basic college requirements, opportunities for academic development, and motivation to successfully complete their postsecondary education" (McElroy & Armesto, 1998, p. 375). While the focus of TRIO programs does not specifically mention race, the greater part of the participants in most of the programs are racial or ethnic minorities (McCants, 2003). The racial dynamic of TRIO programs potentially places White student participants in a "temporary minority" role (Hall & Closson, 2005). This temporary role is inconsistent with the predominantly White society in which White students participate as members of the majority.

The experience of White students as a temporary minority is an area of study with increasing importance, especially as the number of minority students in college is

steadily increasing (Strayhorn, 2010). There is also a small but growing body of research that has focused on the experiences of Whites at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). This research has shown that these students appear to experience few barriers in their adjustment, experience little to no racial discrimination on campus, and generally enter into environments that are perceived as friendly and welcoming. While this research has shown that the White students attending HBCUs are initially anxious about being in a minority role, these concerns are typically pacified by the supportive faculty and social environment (Strayhorn, 2010).

The importance of the success of students in support programs extends beyond minority racial boundaries. Because TRIO programs are designed to assist all students who fit the criteria of financial need, it is important to study how the environment of a student service that has primarily served minority students meets the needs of White students (Tierney & Hagedorn, 2002). In an attempt to begin filling this gap in the research, this study investigates the experience of White students in TRIO-funded programs as temporary minorities.

Understanding the Temporary Minority Status of White Students in Higher Education

First, we describe the term “temporary minority” and the potential effects on a student’s experience on campus or in particular programs within higher education. The next section delves deeper into specifics of White students’ experiences as temporary minorities in a Higher Education context. Understanding this population as a temporary minority in this setting provides a guiding framework for this study.

Defining Temporary Minority

Coined by scholars to describe a particular type of shift in group status, the term “temporary minority” is used to refer to individuals who belong to a majority group in the larger societal context, but who then enter an environment where they are identified as the minority (Hall & Closson, 2005).

In examining the temporary minority experience it is important to recognize that there are three distinct types of minorities: the autonomous, voluntary, and involuntary minority (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Autonomous minorities are people who belong to groups that are small in number. Although these groups may suffer discrimination, they are not completely dominated or oppressed by the majority group. The “caste-like,” or involuntary, minorities are those who are brought into a given environment against their own will. Lastly, the voluntary minority group consists of people who “voluntarily” enter environments where they become a part of the minority group (Ogbu & Simons, 1998), such as the participants in the study at hand.

Ogbu (1998) argues “how and why a group became a minority and the role of the dominant group in society in their acquisition of minority status” (p. 157) are what determines its voluntary or involuntary status rather than race and ethnicity. All minority groups may face certain barriers in

the higher education setting but the groups’ differing histories and self-perceptions may influence their ability to adjust socially, cope with their given barriers, and eventually overcome them. For the purpose of this research study, voluntary minority status will be utilized as a defining framework, as it has more relevance to the study and examination of the temporary minority experience.

Voluntary minorities are motivated by the possibility of better opportunities than those afforded to them in their place of origin (Ogbu, 1998). Thus, voluntary minority groups are said to more willingly accept and adapt to mainstream culture, as it is perceived to be a strategy for getting ahead in society. More often than not, especially in the higher education setting, temporary minorities fit the voluntary minority definition having made a personal choice to temporarily adopt a minority status in the hopes of receiving a better, unique and/or more affordable educational opportunity (Hall & Closson, 2005).

Based on Ogbu’s definition of a minority population, one that occupies “some form of subordinate power position in relation to another population within the same country or society” (Ogbu & Simons, 1998, p. 162), it could be inferred that the experience of being a temporary minority may not have an entirely positive effect. Some researchers hypothesize that one of the main sources of failure for students belonging to a minority group is the lack of the necessary cultural capital possessed by the majority group in a given environment.

Students have varied levels of cultural and social capital which effects their incorporation into a society (Ogbu, 1992; Bourdieu, 1986; Coleman, 1988). However, this is not a long-lasting condition with voluntary minority groups as the obstacles may be viewed only as temporary setbacks. Therefore, there may be motivation to overcome obstacles with the belief that the

condition will increase their chances of success (Ogbu & Simons, 1998; Ogbu, 1978). Because of this, the effects of the temporary minority experience on individuals in a higher education setting have been largely proven to be positive in part because of their voluntary status (Ogbu, 1992).

Whites as Temporary Minorities in Higher Education

The White student presence at HBCUs is one example of White students as a temporary minority in Higher Education. Between the years 1976 and 1994, White student enrollment in HBCUs increased by almost 70% (Brown, 2002). White students account for 16.5% of HBCU enrollment nationally, while African American students comprise only 9.4% of the student population at White campuses (Brown, 2002). These statistics alone provide evidence for how important it is to further research White students as a temporary minority as they are pursuing this status at an ever increasing rate. Research states that there are a number of reasons White students pursue HBCUs. In addition to students choosing to attend for the purposes of diversifying their experience, White students often attend because of the low cost to attend, minority scholarships that are offered under collegiate desegregation compliance plans, and the proximity and/or programmatic offerings of the school (Brown, 2002).

White students who attend HBCUs have various factors that affect their experience on a college campus. Many White students who attend these institutions feel comfortable in their classes (Peterson & Hamrick, 2009). They do not feel the need to prove themselves as White students in the classroom for attending an HBCU in the way that students of color often feel at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) (Peterson & Hamrick, 2009). These students do not express any anxieties while attending

an HBCU because they generally have positive experiences within their social life (Closson & Henry, 2008). Also, White students who have active interactions with faculty through participating in activities such as asking for feedback on assignments have a raised level of satisfaction with their collegiate experience (Strayhorn, 2010). Overall, many White students view HBCUs as an opportunity to grow individually (Hall & Closson, 2005).

On the other hand, White students at HBCUs are able to identify with Black students who attend PWIs and have feelings of hyper-visibility because of their race (Peterson & Hamrick, 2009). Also, Closson and Henry (2008) explained that White students who adjust well still feel the internal pressures of not trying to racially offend their peers

There is much to be learned from exploring the White college student experience when they become temporary minorities. Though there is some literature around the experience of White students attending HBCUs, there is little research on the experience of White students who voluntarily take on the role of temporary minority status in other settings. Therefore, this study aims to explore the experience of White students as a temporary minority in programs that predominately serve racial minority students. This study focus remains an under-researched area in the higher education and temporary minority literature (Closson & Henry, 2008).

Methods

Participants

Participants in this study were undergraduate students at a large four-year and predominately White public research institution in the Midwest. Specifically, the focus was on self-identified White or Caucasian students who participated in a

majority African American TRIO-funded program. All current undergraduate White students who participated in this program were eligible. In total six students participated in the study. All six students, three males, with pseudonyms Bill, Paul, and Steve and three females, with pseudonyms Brooke, Rachel, and Jane were first year students who completed the Summer Bridge component of the program a few months prior to the study. As a requirement of the program, all student participants were first generation college students, demonstrate financial need, and maintained at least a 2.0 grade point average during their summer tenure.

During the summer before their first year in college all of the TRIO students experienced the Summer Bridge component of the program, while living with other TRIO students in the same residence hall. They also took six-week clustered courses together during the summer for credit that was applied to their overall grade point average.

Data Collection

Snowball sampling was utilized in order to make preliminary contact with qualified participants. This method of sampling was useful when the population that is being studied is a “hidden population”; as the case here with a small number of White students in a predominately racial minority student program (Faugier & Sargeant, 1997). Once the preliminary White students had been contacted via personal communication, they were asked to recommend White peers who had also participated in the program.

After participants for this study had been identified, semi-structured focus groups were used in order to investigate the experience of White students as a temporary minority within the TRIO program. Focus groups were used as they permit the formation of a group dynamic and allow the participants to potentially recollect shared

perceptions and experiences (Kaase & Harshbarger, 1993). Semi-structured focus groups provided in-depth insights into how the participants felt about a certain topic. In this case, they were given the opportunity to reflect on and provide interpretations of their experience as temporary minorities in this TRIO funded program, and why they felt this way (Bertrand, et al. 1992). Utilizing focus groups allowed findings to be presented in a narrative form with direct voice from the participants.

Protocol

The facilitator of each focus group guided the participants through the discussion by probing their experiences, attitudes and behaviors as a temporary minority in a TRIO-funded program, while being a good listener (Kaase & Harshbarger, 1993). During the facilitator’s questioning, a note taker was used and employed the “inventory of points discussed” system for which to take notes (Bertrand et al., 1992). With this system, the note taker writes “down each question from the protocol given at the top of a separate sheet of paper” and each time the conversation turns to this topic the note taker “writes down the main points made by each participant” (Bertrand et al., 1992, p.203). Utilizing this system allowed the vast amounts of information collected from the focus groups to be compiled in a manageable form for analysis (Bertrand et al., 1992).

Participants in the study attended one of three focus groups. Due to the small number of participants the focus groups turned out to be semi-structured focus groups with two participants, a facilitator and a note taker. Each one lasted between 30 and 60 minutes to limit lack of participation after attention spans of participants had been reached (Kaase & Harshbarger, 1993).

Each focus group session was audio recorded, transcribed and facilitated by two

researchers, one of whom was tasked with taking notes of the participants' discussion and nonverbal behavior and the other with facilitating the discussion with the participants (Hall & Closson, 2005). Focus groups met in residence hall conference rooms, which were chosen to be neutral locations free from distractions where participants could feel at ease.

Data Analysis

Once each focus group was conducted and notes were gathered, both the note taker and facilitator began analysis immediately. Both researchers listened to the tape in order to clarify certain issues or to "confirm that all the main points were included in the notes"; this approach is known as the "note-expansion approach" (Bertrand, 1992, p. 202). This approach for data analysis was selected for its ability to save time and allow the researchers to retain the key points discussed during the focus groups (Bertrand, 1992.) After the data was transcribed, the constant comparative method, which uses an inductive process for forming categories (Schwitzer, 1999), was used to determine categories of themes.

Five key themes were determined from the data: 1) initial fear of the unknown/unfamiliar 2) the role of the environment 3) social economic status as a unifier 4) postive overall experience 5) diversity benefits. There were varying degrees of experiential influence by each student within the determined themes. The researchers believe this was due to a range in the participant's exposure with people of different diverse backgrounds other than their own.

Findings

Initial Fear of the Unknown/ Unfamiliar

Steve felt anxious despite his previous relationships with Black students in high school mentioning, "I came from a city where

I was a minority. White people were less dominant than Black people or Hispanics. So the program wasn't a culture shock, the biggest problem for me was actually getting to talk to people." Steve was unable to identify if his fear of talking to people related to his new surroundings, his status as a temporary minority within the program, or some other factor.

At HBCUs, White students' initial expectations of feeling unsupported and outcasted were not the reality once they entered the environment. Contrary to their expectation, they quickly became comfortable (Hall & Closson, 2005). This feeling of comfort was felt by Jane after entering the TRIO program. Despite her initial fear of violence, she soon became at ease in her new settings. Jane went on in her focus group to later state:

The first day I was crying like 'Mom don't leave me here, I'm going to get beat up.' I wanted to go home so bad. But then I was sitting there talking with two Black people the second day and they were the sweetest people and I realized 'I'm going to love this.'

Initial fears for students can also stem from the stereotypes they hold regarding Black students, as well as a fear of what Black students will think about them as Whites. This threat can affect the members of any group about whom a negative stereotype exists. Where bad stereotypes about these groups apply, members of these groups can fear being reduced to that stereotype. For those who identify with the group to which the stereotype is relevant, this dilemma can be self-threatening (Quaye, Tambascia, & Talesh, 2009). This is damaging because it affects the most academically motivated and successful students even when they do not believe the accuracy of the stereotype (Quaye, Tambascia, & Talesh, 2009). White

students in the focus groups found that these stereotypes had an effect on their initial experiences in the program and that the program coordinators recognized these issues and initiated a workshop to help break down these early social barriers for the students. Brooke and Rachel described the situation together in their focus group. Brooke first stated that,

I feel like in the beginning people kind of stick together because everyone was nervous but I feel like the White people were more nervous. And then we had that [diversity program]. People ended up talking and saying stuff back and forth. The Black girls' group was like 'people are afraid to approach us because we're not shy generally' and then I remember someone from the White girls group was like 'yea, that's kind of true' and they said a few words back and forth and I was like 'wow'. But then at the end they were like 'yea'; they accepted it and they understood what each other were saying at the end.

Rachel continued the sentiment stating that,

That was helpful too because you presented the stereotypes about your group and then you said which ones were most reasonable and which ones were most hurtful and then other groups were like 'oh I didn't realize saying that or assuming that hurt you.' Kids really just took it seriously and it helped.

The ability to express what was hurtful to the students acted as both a therapeutic moment for the student expressing the sentiment, and informative for those students of other races who were able to listen to their stories. This exercise helped the White students get past their initial fears and

incorporate themselves into the group dynamic of the program.

The majority of the student participants in the focus groups expressed some sentiment of initial fear when entering the TRIO program. Some were able to equate it to being a temporary minority, while others either could not express the reason or related it to another apprehension. The students who expressed this initial fear all felt their anxiety relieve itself; many of them early on within the program. Their social interactions, academic experiences, and involvement in workshops with staff members allowed them to move past these fears and have generally positive experiences with other students, faculty, and staff members.

The Role of the Environment

One of the more prominent themes from the conversations with the White student participants was that their setting determined the type of interactions they had with other members of the program. While there were many different examples that came up in the interviews, the two settings that were most prominent can be broken down into academic settings and social settings.

The academic setting was instrumental in the student experience and their interactions with others. Many of the students spoke of the group work and designed projects where they had to work with students of different racial backgrounds. Most of these students seemed positive about these experiences and the opportunities they had to get to know other students because of these academic activities. For example, Steve said,

You're here with 300 other kids who you have no choice but to talk to and have classes where we were in groups. I was able to broaden out and meet other people because we had to meet and work

with each other... Having open discussions in classes helped us learn to talk to each other.

Some of the students felt as though these designed interactions were somewhat awkward, but ultimately led to a higher level of learning how to interact with others who thought differently, and the value of working with others that they normally would not have. Rachel thought that over time, the awkwardness of the environment was alleviated and she felt as though she was able to share her thoughts and feelings with those in the class.

The one area that was not completely positive had to deal with the forced nature of the interactions. Paul said, "In the math class there wasn't a lot of student interaction. The teacher kind of tried to make it happen by doing group assignments but honestly it just turned into me doing the math and that's it...but I learned a lot more from the students in other classes." A similar sentiment was shared in a separate interview by Bill who said, "Each of the teachers tried to set up groups. It was nice because you would get to know people and then talk with your other classmates and get to know them."

After all that was said about the interactions in the academic settings, the underlying theme was that these opportunities became a great neutralizer of the racial dynamics of the program. To illustrate this point, she shared an experience stating that,

I think socially, being White, it changed my experience because I was more apt to hanging out with the White students. I don't think it was just me. I think a lot of the Black students too hung out with groups of Black students. So socially I think it played a part but academically, like in the classroom, you were there learning and writing things according to what you knew not based on race. So I

think socially it [race] did play a role and academically it didn't.

Ultimately, the designed interaction in the academic setting was seen as a positive outcome for the majority of the students interviewed. This idea seemed to be shared by many of the interviewees. It seemed apparent for them that the academic setting was a great neutralizer of race and background and let the students see each other for who they are, not on the basis of preconceived stereotypes.

While the academic setting was valuable in encouraging interaction between the students, the social setting appears to be an even more valuable experience for many of the students. Brooke said,

For me it was so much fun. After we get out of class I'd either hang out in the lobby or go to my boyfriend's room and chill with him and his roommate or we would go down and do stuff or go out to eat... It always felt like a family/party type thing. My current best friend is someone I met in the program; we hang out every day and we're going to live together next year so socially it [the program] was awesome.

An interesting contradiction was found in the organized parties put on during the summer. Some of the students seemed to really enjoy them, others didn't really feel like they belonged, and others simply didn't go, either to get caught up on their homework or their home was close enough to campus that they would just go home for the weekend. Bill in particular really enjoyed the parties. He states,

I actually enjoyed the parties. I thought they were really interesting. Cause they're [Black students] finally the majority and you're [White students] the

minority so you're kind of standing out. So I feel like they kind of notice you and kind of want to interact with you instead of people around them. So you kind of stood out and then you get to know more people through that.

Paul describes a contradictory opinion;

So they [the program] threw a lot of parties but honestly it wasn't really my crowd so I just didn't get out. So I was walking into one of the dances and I was like literally the only White guy and I just did one sweep through the place like in a circle and just hopped right back out and was like this is awkward.

As illustrated, the setting of the interactions appeared to be very significant in the overall experience of the students. The academic setting created a variety of opportunities for the students to interact with others that they might not normally have considered. There was also a strong sense that based on these interactions, the racial factor was greatly neutralized, at least in this setting, and the students were able to learn from others as individuals, and not as specific members of any stereotype. As would be expected in any similar scenario, there were those who thought these forced interactions were awkward and apparently could have done without them, but the underlying feeling was that these situations created opportunities for interaction that would not have been readily available otherwise.

The social interactions might be a little more telling, at least in regards to the variety of the experiences had by some of the students. There were a multitude of activities both formally planned and random gatherings. Some of the students spoke very highly of these opportunities to learn about others from different racial backgrounds on a more informal basis.

Socio-economic Status as a Unifier

One of the most unifying themes that became clear throughout the focus groups was the commonality of socioeconomic status (SES). Many of the students were able to bond with others based on coming from similar backgrounds. Steve said, "A lot of people from the program are low-income and the parents didn't go to college, they came from rough areas." Even though there was frustration expressed by some at this stereotype, many felt as though it helped some students come out and become a little more involved than they otherwise may have. To further illustrate this point, Steve said,

People in the program are people that I can really connect with. My family didn't have a lot of money and everyone in the program all went through the same thing. We weren't wealthy and we didn't let that affect us. Now, most of the people I talk to are from the program, a couple people on my floor and my roommate.

For this student, the fact that he came from a similar economic situation as many others in the program helped him to make friends in the program and ultimately become more involved. This concept was one of the reasons that so many of the students ended up feeling very close to the program. A female student best summarizes this idea in saying,

I honestly miss the program so much...If I could have it ideally to be here at [this institution] like it was in the program I would have it that way. I feel the honestly that's my family here away from home. I haven't connected with anyone here [the institution]... There are so many people here with money that have their nose up and the people in the program were so down to earth. They've been beaten down; they know what it's

like to come from a struggling home. And that was the best gift to come through that program, I'm so glad I did it.

Positive Overall Experience

In addressing the statement, "Tell me about your general experience in the program" the White undergraduate students in this study expressed positive feelings across the board although initially apprehensive of being in a predominantly Black environment. When reflecting back, participants heavily utilized the word 'opportunity' in reiterations of their positive experience and each stated in one way or another how privileged they felt to have had the temporary minority experience. Bill stated the following:

It was definitely different than where I went to school. I was the minority this time. But it was nice to explore and get to know the other cultures, the other schools, the other people. I liked it, personally. I could do stuff I never actually did in high school. It was a good experience just to get to know everyone. I feel like more White people should try and experience this, just like a different side of the U.S. There were also Hispanics in that program, more than usual and it was also nice to experience their programs. I went to some Latino things with the people that I met and it was cool too. I feel like more Whites should try to go outside their boundaries, because [the institution] is mainly White, and go to these events because you get a different perspective.

The tone of the participants' responses mirrored that of the participants in Hall and Closson's (2005) study on the temporary minority experience of White students attending HBCUs; opportunity was also identified as one of the focus group themes

with the White students defining opportunity as "having a unique experience to grow personally" (p. 37).

Other factors that contributed to participants' positive experience were academic and social in nature. Academically, strong faculty and staff support were acknowledged by participants to have had an impact on their academics and personal development. From efforts to provide an environment conducive to learning and creating a support system to being highly accessible and willing to help, both faculty and staff were contributing factors toward their positive temporary minority experience. Steve affirms this finding by asserting that:

I had two teachers that really helped me. One teacher gave me a support system because he knew I wasn't social. I was really drawn back in my classes. And he told me "if you never find anyone to talk to I can talk to you" because he had gone through the same issues. He pushed me to talk and called my name in class.

Additionally, when asked to relay their positive experiences as a temporary minority, respondents often relayed fond memories related to instances when they were made to feel like a novelty in various social settings. This is apparent in responses such as Brooke's recount:

I think more people knew the White peoples' name because it was like you stood out. Like I remember I know I pass people now, there'll be Black people passing me and they'll be like "hey" and I'll be like "hey" but I don't remember your name, I don't remember seeing you. That happens to me a lot. So I think you stick out a little bit more because you're a minority...

Despite some difficult experiences mentioned by this study's participants regarding meeting new people, these students did not allow it to significantly affect their overall experience in the program. Instead, some respondents chose to cope with the situation by "escaping" their temporary minority status for brief periods throughout the program whether it'd be physically leaving the environment where they were a temporary minority or surrounding themselves with individuals of the same race. Rachel shared her feelings. Below are recounts of some of these instances:

I didn't meet a lot of the students [in the program] but I was fine with that in that I worked hard on my studies. No, I didn't go to the social hours in the evenings. I live really close; I live about 15 minutes away...so I went home every weekend. I went home and did laundry and all that good stuff.

This example illustrates respondents' general maintenance of a positive attitude towards their voluntary adoption of temporary minority status as influenced by the "back home" comparison; they view it as a chance they would not otherwise have attained from back home (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Hence, some temporary minorities were more willing to adapt to the mainstream culture because they did not imagine that it would harm their group identity and considered it an additive that would enable them to succeed further in society (Ogbu & Simons, 1998).

Diversity Benefits

The final theme that arose from our study was the diversity awareness that White participants of the program gained through the experience as a temporary minority. Though the degrees to which each student

expanded in their knowledge and understanding of diversity varied, all the participants of this study felt that they gained a better awareness of racial/ethnic issues and understanding of their minority peers.

Several of the participants stated that when they arrived to the program, they were very aware that they were in the minority. Students stated that in the beginning people kind of stuck together because everyone was nervous but felt like the White people were more nervous than others who were in the program. Another student, Brooke, recalled her first day in the classroom and how she, for the first time, noticed race ratios in the class. "At first I remember sitting down in one of the classes I went to I looked around and I counted how many people were in the class and then I counted how many White people were in the class compared to the Black people and it was like three to ten, it was so different." For several of the participants, this was the first time they had become aware of their own race in relation to others and what it felt like to be placed in a temporary minority status.

Participants also discussed how, over time, they began to expand their horizons of interactions with students of color and learn to enjoy being in the presence of diverse students. Here, Steve shared his initial experience in the program: "I put my guard up a lot, but by the end of the summer I made friends and I still talk to most of them. It was a great experience" This was an area of growth for our White participants who all expressed preconceived notions of "others" and what the experience would be like based off their own stereotypes. Steve further explains: "I felt like we had nothing in common (Black students) but when I came down here I found we had a lot in common, it was eye opening to see stereotypes not play out".

Previous studies have shown that students who participate in frequent

conversations on racial and ethnic issues and who socialize with someone from another racial/ethnic group are more likely to report increased levels of racial and cultural awareness, promotion of racial understanding and openness (Pascarella, Edison, Hagedorn, Nora, & Terenzini, 1996). Several of the participants exuded this development of racial awareness and heightened obligation to stand up for inequality of their peers. Jane recalls and experience she had while visiting a shopping mall with a group of her Black peers she had met in the program:

I didn't realize how much people stereotype Blacks. I went to the mall with a bunch of my Black friends and they were like that lady is looking at me like I'm about to steal something and she (the lady) really was! They said its okay I'm used to it, and I was like why? If someone was staring at me like that I'd be pretty mad. It got me to the realization of why they (Blacks) are outspoken. They get stereotyped against so much and I would be angry if people starred at me like that and were so rude too.

Similarly, Brooke recalls the way the group of people she was with downtown were perceived by people in the community "When we go out, if it's me with one other White person and like five to ten Black people would go out, like they wouldn't stare at me but they'd be like looking like "that's odd." Moreover, many participants reported that the more interaction and contact they had with students of color, the more they began to change their own personal biases and embrace differences. They felt that being in a program where they served as the temporary minority allowed them to see common misconceptions of people abolished. Steve explained how "the best part of being

around large amounts of Black people was getting to know them. Now when I go out and I see someone being stereotyped, I don't have a problem saying something to them or telling them how wrong they are, they just really need to get to know them,". With some of the participants, we even saw a disconnection between friendships that had formed with high school peers due to lack of understanding of the participants' new appreciation and acceptance of various cultures and races. Here Jane reflects on her relationship with a high school friend with whom she had come to the program with and how their relationship changed: "I made so many other friends we didn't relate anymore, I grew so much through the program by learning about other people's lives, it just really touched me."

Findings such as these suggest that institutions that host programs such as this TRIO program, that cause White students to serve as temporary minorities, create settings that foster development and growth for White students and their diversity awareness (Pacarella et al, 1996). All of the participants had positive statements regarding how they felt about being temporary minorities and how beneficial the overall experience was for them. Several stated that they had continued to foster the relationships they formed during the summer bridge component of the program. Jane sums it up best with the following:

The program changed my life, I love it. It really opened my eyes to how it feels to be in the minority and to be the one that's like getting judged and looked at like they're different. It made me think about my views on other people and how it must feel for them. I feel that honestly that [the program] is my family here away from home. That was the best gift to come through that program I'm so glad I did it.

Discussion

It should not come as a surprise that White students felt some initial anxiety about being the minority in the program. Many of the students expressed feelings of fear, violence, or not fitting in during the beginnings of their experience. Comparable research has shown that White students who have taken on a temporary minority role at HBCUs have reported that prior to starting classes they were nervous and apprehensive about attending a historically Black institution (Hall & Closson, 2005). Other students were concerned that they would be seen only as White students and not be recognized for their other attributes. Some students also feared that faculty members may be very into race and wouldn't like them (Hall & Closson, 2005). These sentiments were echoed by White students participating in the predominantly Black TRIO program in the given study.

It was interesting to discover patterns among those interviewed as they discussed their experiences of being a temporary minority. One of the most promising findings was the break down of traditionally held stereotypes among those interviewed. It was apparent that as the students spent time as a minority within the program they gained the ability to empathize with their Black counterparts.

Much of this success needed to be attributed to the faculty and staff of the program. There was no evidence of preferential treatment or bias among those interviewed. These personnel associated with the program were apparently instrumental in facilitating discussions and providing opportunities that forced students to leave their comfort zone and interact with others. As this occurred, the students found themselves relating to other students regardless of racial background.

As would be expected, the context of the interactions should be considered. There was a much greater range of experiences regarding the social aspect of the program where interactions were not required, as opposed to the academic setting where everyone had a common purpose. Overall, it was interesting to see the agreement among the students interviewed that they had a very positive experience in the program, especially as temporary minorities. The students were generally able to gain a better perspective toward a more diverse student population and were able to see the value of diversity in their educational experience.

Limitations

A primary limitation of this study is the small number of respondents. Given the small sample size of the study, the transferability of the findings from this study is limited. Another factor to consider was that the students who participated may have been more inclined to do so as a result of their positive experience within the program. Consequently, the results possibly paint a picture that does not accurately reflect the opinions of other White students in the program.

Additionally, contact with the participants was one time only. With a limited timeline, the data collection phase was highly constrained. To more confidently apply the themes found in this study to other students, further study is needed with additional samples. The focus group format used required participants to share experiences in small groups comprising of only one other woman or man. Perhaps a follow-up study that relies on larger same-gender compositions may produce new, additive, or modified information that to our findings.

Implications/Conclusions

The research findings leave a number of inquiries that have yet to be explored regarding White students in TRIO-funded programs. Given the results of this study, several implications have sprouted in order to encourage researchers to further explore these students' experiences in a more direct and specific way. Having a better understanding of the White student experience in TRIO-funded programs has led to a more in-depth comprehension of how areas within the program that are meeting the needs of this population. Researching the White student experience as a temporary minority in these programs has also brought to light potential areas of improvement that may enhance the overall experience of these students. Specifically addressing the experience of White students in these programs in social and academic settings, there is much to be explored.

Students in the focus groups touched upon their social experience in the program. The level of engagement between students varied but with further research done to investigate this phenomenon, practitioners and faculty alike could reveal a multitude of different factors that play a role in the student's engagement levels. Because this component of the student experience was addressed in the focus groups, it proves to have quite a bit of relevance to the White student overall experience in TRIO programs. In order to better understand this student population in these settings, it would be crucial to research this area of interest further and more thoroughly.

The concept of the "supportive campus environment" was evidenced in the focus group sessions; students often mentioned the communal aspects of their environment. The relationship shared between the student and the setting is not something to be taken lightly. A student's surroundings have a great impact on their attitude and can have an even

greater impact on their performance in these TRIO programs. This should be taken into consideration by practitioners and faculty members.

Given these implications for further research, there are a number of conclusions that have been made regarding some practical ways in which appropriate personnel could increase their efforts to meet the needs of White students as temporary minorities. Increasing direct outreach to the White student population could aid in growing the numbers of this student population within TRIO-funded programs. The enrollment of White students into these programs can aid in their overall student experience with an exposure to diversity.

Assessing the needs of the White students as individuals can aid in addressing pressing issues right from the beginning. This can be conducted by administering a survey to the students prior to or upon their arrival to the program. Giving students the opportunity to express their wants and needs may help to put students at ease, potentially lessening the initial fear they experience. In doing so, the appropriate TRIO program personnel at their respective institutions can have student-centered support for the decisions made in the environments they facilitate.

Overall, the results of our study outline a number of factors to consider when working with White students in TRIO programs. It is important to recognize the benefits inhabited by those who participate in these programs. White students have great and proven potential to benefit from racially diverse experiences. The findings of this study can surely be transposed in order to address how the White student experience can benefit minority students as well. Furthermore, practitioners, administrators, and faculty personnel associated with these programs can be assured that all parties can be better served once the student experience

is understood. This study aims to aid these individuals in gaining that understanding. Knowing what the students experience and

knowing what they need help with, TRIO-funded programs can better serve their student populations on the whole.

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