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THE IMPACT OF MINORITY FACULTY AND STAFF INVOVLEMENT ON

MINORITY STUDENT EXPERIENCES

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A thesis

Presented to

The School of Social Sciences, Education & Business

Department of Higher Education and Student Development

Taylor University

Upland, Indiana

———————————————

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts in Higher Education and Student Development

———————————————

by

Elijah Genheimer

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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MASTER'S THESIS

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This is to certify that the Thesis of

Elijah Markson Genheimer

entitled

The Impact of Minority Faculty and Staff Involvement on Minority Student Experiences

has been approved by the Examining Committee for the thesis requirement for the

Master of Arts degree
in Higher Education and Student Development

May 2016

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Abstract

This study explores the experiences of racial and ethnic minorities on American college campuses as well as the impact the involvement of minority faculty and staff persons has on this experience. Using a phenomenological case study method, this study interviewed participants at a small faith based liberal arts university in the Midwest. Ten individuals in total, comprised of students, faculty, and administrators, participated in this study. This study found significant themes regarding what forms of involvement minority faculty and staff practice. These practices included the creation of a safe space; accessibility; and advocacy and representation of minorities on campus. Significant themes relating to minority student benefits from such involvement also emerged. Students benefitted through, racial identity development (in racially matched pairs), increased sense of belonging, and greater responsibility to minority and campus communities. Higher education institutions should seek to equip, support, and acquire involved minority faculty and staff as minority students who encounter such involvement have an enhanced collegiate experience.

Acknowledgements

There are many individuals that deserve my thanks and gratitude for the completion of this project. First and foremost, I thank my family. Particularly, my gratitude goes to my parents who taught me to be inquisitive, think critically, and care for people. I would also like to thank my committee, especially Scott Gaier for his support, insights, and challenges in conducting this research and writing this thesis. Also, a special thanks to my friends, colleagues, professors, and cohort at Taylor University. Your interest in and support of this work has been invaluable. Thanks also to all the teachers, mentors, peers, and friends who ignited my passion people, students, minority groups, and higher education. You are many but all important to me. Finally, I wish to thank my participants, and all minority individuals in higher education whether students, faculty, or staff. Your presence and your influence are greatly needed in Colleges and Universities. I know that your presence does not come without trials and sacrifice. Therefore, I thank you for making the choice to come to your campuses despite the barriers you face every day.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

"Role models who look like you make you feel welcomed and at home. They make you feel as if you belong and are a part of things, and they help you believe that you too can strive for success." (Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2005, p. 56)

Introduction

"Minority," a broad and adaptable term, denotes any group of people comprising a smaller portion of a given population. Minorities can consist of racial and ethnic, sexual, socio-economic, political, religious, or any number of people groups. For the purpose of this study, the term "minority" applied to racial and ethnic minorities on college campuses.

Minority populations grow quickly within the United States. Indeed, in the 2014-2015 academic year, national statistics reported minority populations now compose over half of the student population in K-12 public schools (National Center for Education Statistics, 2005). However, this same study, which made projections through 2022, did not predict a similar shift within higher education. This study predicted that minority students in fifth grade during the 2014 school year will not have the same representation in their freshman year of college as they did in their fifth grade classrooms. If this projection proves accurate, minority students seemingly will remain underrepresented in higher education for the foreseeable future.

The current study took an exploratory approach to the issues facing minority students, faculty, and staff. Prior studies of this topic took more narrow approaches, focusing on either specific ethnic and racial minority groups, specific faculty and staff behaviors (e.g., mentoring, role modeling), or specific student outcomes (e.g., social integration, persistence). However, little research addresses the complex social systems of racial and ethnic minorities on college campuses or the relationship between students and faculty or staff members. This study utilized prior research to identify the relevant components of minority experiences in higher education and the relationships that exist between students and faculty or staff. This study examined the social constructs named above from a broader perspective.

Minority Students

Minority students face many unique obstacles compared to their White peers in having a positive college experience. During their college experience, many minority students face instances of racism, tokenism, stereotyping, lack of college preparedness, and social marginalization (Cabrera & Nora, 1996; Chwalisz & Greer, 2007; Cureton, 2003; Eimers & Pike 1997; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Just, 1999; Rankin & Reason, 2005). Negative minority student experiences become observable through several indicators including minority student retention rates and minority student sense of "fit"—a student's feeling of academic and social integration into his or her institution (Alvarez et al., 2007; Eimers & Pike, 1997; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Just, 1999). Along with a student's sense of fit, academic and vocational success provide two additional indicators of a positive student experience (Arment, Kendricks, & Nedunuri, 2013; Griffin, Pérez, Holmes, & Mayo, 2010; Guiffrida, 2005).

Minority Faculty and Administration

Like their student counterparts, minority faculty, administrators, and staff members also face hurdles such as tokenism and racism (Baez, 2000; Chun & Evans, 2009; Josey, 1993; Padilla, 1994). On top of these discriminatory experiences, several other important areas exist that faculty and staff must address, including the tenure system, which calls for high commitment to research and publication (Centra, 1993; Jarvis, 1991; Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995), as well as the implicit or explicit pressures of "engaging" with the minority student population (Baez, 2000; Josey, 1993). Often times, due to these expectations, minority faculty and staff must decide to respond to one pressure or responsibility to the detriment of the other(s) (Josey, 1993).

Faculty and Staff Involvement

Faculty involvement with minority students falls into three main behavioral categories: mentoring, role modeling, and advocating for minority students (Arment et al., 2013; Cole, 2008; Davis, 2007; Guiffrida, 2005). Mentoring represents the process of entering into a relationship with a student with the goal of personal, academic, or professional development. In role modeling, one intentionally serves as a positive presence and example to students. Operating as an advocate entails interacting with other faculty, staff, and administrators to work on improving the support and resources for minority students. Minority faculty can have deeply meaningful and formational relationships with minority students (Dahlvig, 2010; Guiffrida, 2005). These relationships prove most effective with the presence of behaviors such as mentoring, role modeling, or advocacy. In different ways, each of these behaviors by faculty and staff can enhance the minority student experience.

Purpose

Minorities remain underrepresented and underserved within higher education. Students, faculty, and staff face increased adversity compared to White peers (Baez, 2000; Cabrera & Nora, 1996; Chwalisz & Greer, 2007; Chun & Evans, 2009; Cureton, 2003; Eimers & Pike 1997; Gurin et al., 2002; Josey, 1993; Padilla, 1994). Minority students' success hinges upon their sense of belonging and integration into the social and academic culture of an institution. However, because of adversity, their college experience can often lack these components (Alvarez et al., 2007; Eimers & Pike, 1997; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Just, 1999). However, the influence and involvement of minority faculty and staff through behaviors like mentoring, role modeling, and advocacy have proven powerful in enhancing minority student experiences and increasing minority student satisfaction (Arment et al., 2013; Cole, 2008; Davis, 2007; Guiffrida, 2005).

In light of this current context and the specificity of past research, this study broadened the focus of exploration to investigate racial and ethnic minorities and student relationships with faculty and staff members. This study focused on a specific case and utilized a purposeful sampling of students, faculty, and staff who could speak to the subject with expertise. This approach allowed for a more full exploration of these broader concepts within a more controlled setting. Through this method, the current study aimed to answer the following question: What impact does minority faculty and staff involvement have on minority student experiences?

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Introduction

In American higher education today, racial and ethnic minority students struggle to belong and feel welcome at their institutions (Alvarez et al. 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Just 1999; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003). This struggle affects students socially, personally, academically, and professionally. Such negative attitudes affect minority student retention, impacting both students and institutions (Eimers & Pike, 1997; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Just, 1999). Many minority students' experiences appear positively affected by interactions with faculty and staff, particularly if the faculty or staff member also identifies with a minority group. However, minority faculty and administrators represent a small portion of academia (Davis, 2007), and minority faculty and administrators often face similar obstacles as students (e.g. racism, tokenism) due to their minority status (Chun & Evans, 2009; Josey 1993). These limitations can hinder minority faculty's involvement with minority students, interrupting the positive impact they have on students.

Minority Student Experiences

Minority students face more obstacles to achieving a positive collegiate experience than their White peers. One such obstacle often faced by minority students, particularly at predominantly White institutions (PWI), comes in the form of tokenism.

Tokenism involves the practice of expecting a minority individual to represent a whole racial or ethnic group rather than just themselves. As explained by Gurin et al. (2002), "In such situations, the solo or token minority individual is often given undue attention, visibility, and distinctiveness, which can lead to greater stereotyping by majority group members" (p. 360). This practice can feel alienating, stressful, and dehumanizing.

Many minority students face the additional obstacle of academic stress. These pressures include greater uncertainty about academic success, an institutional perception of lower academic competency, unpreparedness for college academics, or—particularly in the case of first generation minority students—anti-intellectualism from family or home communities (Chwalisz & Greer, 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner 2002; Just, 1999; Kadison & DiGeronimo, 2005). In regards to Black students, Fries-Britt and Turner (2002) noted these stereotypes have an impact on students' intellectual development, study habits, career goals, and general academic achievement. These added stressors and negative stereotyping greatly impact academic culture and often lead to negative minority student attitudes. These negative attitudes prove especially important considering how minority students' perception of the academic culture has served as a greater indicator of satisfaction than the racial culture of a campus (Eimers & Pike, 1997; Graham & Gisi, 2000; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003).

Minority students also often find themselves unprepared socially. Students in minority groups, particularly those attending PWIs, face an adjustment to a new culture as well as the numerous other changes and challenges that come while at college (Just, 1999). Many minority students face instances of racism or discrimination (Cabrera & Nora, 1996; Cureton, 2003; Eimers & Pike 1997; Rankin & Reason, 2005). A study by

Rankin and Reason (2005) found minority students more likely experience discrimination on campus, and "the vast majority of harassment felt by students of color was in the form of derogatory comments about race and came from other students" (p. 57). Similarly, "[t]he perception of a hostile climate on campus can directly affect minority students' sense of belonging" (Just, 1999, p. 6). This lack of belonging impacts students and whether or not they decide to persist at their institution (Alvarez et al., 2007; Eimers & Pike, 1997; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Just, 1999).

Minority Faculty and Administrator Experiences

Minority faculty and administrators experience many of the same barriers in their roles on campus (Baez, 2000; Chun & Evans, 2009; Josey, 1993; Padilla, 1994). Such difficult work environments can create challenges in retaining minority faculty. The extra pressure put on minority faculty and staff impedes their ability and availability as positive influences on the minority student body (Guiffrida, 2005).

Minority faculty and administrators also experience prejudice much like minority students, including tokenism. Faculty and administrators often receive the task of representing their culture—and diversity in general—to their White colleagues and students and, in some cases, simply function as a draw to get more minority students to their institution (Baez, 2000; Josey, 1993; Padilla, 1994). Other prejudices such as overt, covert, and systematic racism remain present in America and in American higher education today (Chun & Evans, 2009). Chun and Evans (2009) found these sentiments and behaviors can create a "chilly climate" in which minority faculty feel the need to prove their abilities constantly, do not receive proper support in teaching or research, and

have a general feeling of "otherness." These factors result in stressful work environments for minority faculty.

Minority faculty and administrators feel expected to mentor and become role models for minority students (Baez, 2000; Chun & Evans, 2009; Josey, 1993). However, such work and services do not seem as valued in higher education as research and scholarship when considering promotion and tenure (Centra, 1993; Jarvis, 1991; Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995). For minority faculty, "that usually means that their White counterparts have the edge in writing, conducting research and working towards tenure" (Josey, 1993, p. 306). Such pressure can lead minority faculty to neglect the support and wellbeing of minority students for the sake of self-preservation (Guiffrida, 2005).

The Impact of Minority Faculty on Minority Students

Clearly, racial and ethnic minority students struggle more than their White counterparts to fit in at their institutions and maintain persistence attitudes (Alverez et al., 2007; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002). However, previous research reveals two ways by which minority faculty and administrators positively impact minority student experiences. First, minority students typically feel drawn to mentoring relationships and role models that the needed amount of professional, personal, and academic support. Such relationships seem predominantly available among minority faculty and administration (Antonio, 2002; Dahlvig, 2010; Davis, 2007; Josey, 1993; Just, 1999; Padilla, 1994). Second, minority faculty often teach in ways better received by minority students and more likely incorporate minority perspectives into curriculum (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Guiffrida, 2005; Milem, 2001).

The presence of a minority role model or mentor can significantly improve a minority student's college experience. Minority students typically better identify and connect with minority faculty rather than White faculty (Dahlvig, 2010). As one African American professor stated,

> Black students on White campuses say, "Hallelujah, I finally found a black professor." That is because they feel safe in our presence. We are the ones to whom they can tell their stories of racism. They feel like they can tell us what is happening and how the institution is affecting them personally. (Josey, 1993, p. 305)

These relationships also have a greater impact on students' academic success and persistence attitudes. "[Ethnically] matched mentor relationships [show] greater gains in cumulative GPA and graduation rates than non-matched pairs" (Dahlvig, 2010, p. 371). Conversely, many minority students feel they cannot connect to White majority faculty or staff and do not see them as valid role models (Davis, 2007; Guiffrida, 2005). Because of the ease of connecting with minority faculty and the barriers to opening up to White faculty, many minority students find it beneficial to reach out to faculty also in minority groups.

Racial and ethnic minority students also respond better to the teaching and curriculum of minority faculty. In their research, Fries-Britt and Turner (2002) found African American students at historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) received better learning outcomes than their counterparts at PWIs. This increase occurred despite the fact that, in comparison to their counterparts at PWIs, "students at HBCUs usually come from lower economic backgrounds, score lower on standardized

tests, and are disadvantaged by less adequate physical facilities and faculty with lower credentials at HBCUs" (p. 317). While such improved learning opportunities to some extent result from the social atmosphere of the institution, the impact of having a same-race teacher remains evident. Faculty members from a minority group also have an impact on the sort of material incorporated into curriculum. Minority faculty (excluding Asian Americans) more likely incorporate discussion on race and ethnicity than other faculty (Milem, 2001). They also more likely incorporate minority culture, literature, and thought into their courses (Guiffrida, 2005).

Effective Mentoring of Minority Students

Mentoring, in particular, represents an important method for improving minority students' attitudes and success (Cole, 2008; Dahlvig, 2010). Certain approaches and strategies prove helpful in interacting with minority students (Cole, 2008; Guiffrida 2005). These methods apply to same-racial and ethnic relationships as well as cross-cultural ones.

Constructive criticism operates as one such strategy. However, minority students can perceive negative feedback from majority group members as negative stereotyping (Cole, 2008; Guiffrida, 2005). Conversely, if someone from a minority groups gives the negative feedback, the feedback often proves highly motivating for minority students (Cole, 2008; Guiffrida, 2005). While such feedback can cause detrimental results to cross-cultural interactions between minority students and majority faculty, a relationship that feels safe to the student and also includes high levels of support and encouragement counteract these negative effects (Cole, 2008).

Another important factor in minority student mentoring is the presence of challenge coupled with support. This challenge should take place both academically and also vocationally (Griffin et al., 2010; Guiffrida, 2005). As one minority student said about a mentor,

> My faculty mentor is very helpful in my academic career, she helps me plan my
> classes. She encourages me to fulfill the goals that I set for myself. This
> semester, she help[ed] me with one of my hardest classes (chemistry) that I
> dropped before, now I'm passing with an A. I'm happy she is my mentor during
> this program. (Arment et al., 2013, p. 40)

In this case, the faculty mentor provided a challenge to the student in retaking a class the student previously failed and then provided support for the student in the process. As the twofold results, the student excelled in class and developed a more positive relationship with his or her mentor.

For minority students, a holistic approach or a sense of faculty going above and beyond offers one of the most important aspects of good mentoring (Guiffrida, 2005). This above and beyond approach entails investing in a student's academic and vocational development as well as his or her personal development. "My faculty mentor has always been interested in my academic success. He cares not only how well I am doing in my classes but [is] also concerned about my general welfare" (Arment et al., 2013, p. 40). Such relationships in which a faculty mentor holistically invests in his or her student more commonly appear between two people of the same race (Guiffrida, 2005).

Finally, minority students receive the most benefits from mentoring relationships when faculty or administrators advocate for their students both academically and in other

areas of their collegiate experience (Guiffrida, 2005). One student gave an example of how faculty advocacy affected a friend's life:

> My one friend, he wasn't able to find a job so one [White] professor was like, oh that's bad. She was sympathetic, but [a certain Black professor] called her friends, and was like, could you possibly need a student to organize your desk or answer your phones or something? And she found another professor who was like sure, and he was able to get a job, which he needed. (p.711)

This student may not have continued at his institution without finding a job. Having a professor go above and beyond expectations made a big impact on his life. As minority students face obstacles and discrimination, having an ally in a faculty or staff member can propel students forward in their academic and social lives on campus and their future careers.

Summary

Clearly, the involvement of minority faculty has a positive impact on the experience of minority students. Minority faculty provide a welcoming environment through their classes and curriculum (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Guiffrida, 2005; Milem, 2001) as well as effective role modeling and mentoring (Antonio, 2002; Dahlvig, 2010; Davis, 2007; Josey, 1993; Just, 1999; Padilla, 1994). Majority group faculty who understand the unique struggles of minority students can also prove valuable (Davis, 2007; Guiffrida, 2005). However, professionals who wish to become involved with minority students must understand minority students thrive with high levels of challenge accompanied by equal levels of support (Cole, 2008; Guiffrida, 2005). Higher education professionals should also remain aware that minority students connect with faculty who

address more than just their academics, and often minority student need someone to advocate for them (Guiffrida, 2005). Above all, if colleges and universities want to best serve their racial and ethnic minority students and improve retention rates, institutions must prioritize the employment and involvement of minority faculty and staff on their campuses. Therefore, the benefits for students of these minority faculty and staff behaviors deserve exploration and better understanding. This specific study added to previous research by exploring these behaviors and made the case for increased employment and involvement of minority faculty and staff.

Chapter 3

Methodology

Research Design

The current research utilized a phenomenological design in the context of a case study. According to Creswell (2013), "A phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon" (p. 76). While previous research addressed more specific behaviors or populations related to this topic, minority faculty and administrators' active involvement with minority students and consequential positive outcomes for the minority student experience remain largely unexamined. Therefore, with this study exploratory in nature, the researcher preferred a qualitative method (Creswell, 2012). Using a phenomenological model provides a descriptive depth to individuals' experiences useful in evaluating and describing these phenomena.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher combined the phenomenological design with a case study. Considering the broad nature of faculty and staff involvement, as well as student experiences, a need existed to narrow the focus of this study in some way. Therefore, the researcher utilized a specific campus to find participants, centering this research within a specific context. Focusing this research by using a case study model allowed for a better understanding and more in depth examination of the phenomena (Creswell, 2013). In particular, this current study used an instrumental case

model, which examines the case in order to understand a specific issue in its context

(Stake, 1995).

Context

The researcher selected participants from a private faith-based liberal arts

university in the Midwest with a student population of approximately 1,900. The school

was a predominantly White institution (PWI) (see Table 1).

Table 1

Racial Demographics of Student Population

Race/Classification	Percentage of Student Population
White	85.1%
Total Minority Population	14.9%
Asian	5.6%
Black	4%
Hispanic/Latino	4%
American Indian	1%
Two or More Races	.3%
International	5.1%

Note. International students are also included in their specific racial or ethnic category.

Participants

The researcher identified and selected participants through a process of purposeful

sampling, as this research explored as wide a variety of minority student experiences as

possible. Ten individuals participated in this study, selected from students, faculty, and

administrators at the institution. This variety gave the researcher a data group "based on places and people that can best help [the researcher] understand [the] central phenomenon" (Creswell, 2012, p. 205). In order to aid the researcher in selecting participants, the minority and international student office partnered in identifying individuals for this study.

Student participants. Table 2 provides the demographic information of the student participants.

Table 2

Student Participant Demographic Breakdown

Student Participant	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Year/Class	Identified an involved minority faculty/staff
SP1	Biracial (Black/Korean)	F	Junior	Yes
SP2	Black	F	Sophomore	Yes
SP3	Black	F	Senior	Yes
SP4	Latino International	M	Junior	Yes
SP5	Chinese International	F	Junior	Yes
SP6	Bahamian International	F	Sophomore/ Transfer	No
SP7	Latina International	F	Transfer	Yes

Faculty and administrator participants. Similar to Table 2, Table 3 lists the demographic information of the faculty members who participated in the current research.

Table 3

Faculty Participant Demographic Breakdown

Faculty/Staff Participant	Role	Race/Ethnicity	Gender
FP1	Faculty	African Immigrant	Male
FP 2	Faculty/Administrator	Black	Female
FP 3	Faculty	African Immigrant	Male

Procedure

The researcher held the interviews in person and conducted them on-campus in either a public space or office. The researcher used two different sets of questions—one set for student participants and one set for faculty and administrator participants. Prior to the interview, participants signed a consent form to participate in the study. The researcher then took a semi-structured approach to the interviews. This approach allowed the researcher to explore areas of interest with greater depth and elaboration as they occurred in interviews. The researcher recorded the interviews for later transcription. The researcher also took notes during each interview. Interviews were then transcribed and coded for themes. Once clear themes emerged, the researcher distributed the themes to the participants for member checking, confirming the information's accuracy and representation of the participants' experiences (Creswell, 2012). The researcher also utilized triangulation to validate findings. "In triangulation, researchers make use of multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories to provide corroborating evidence" (Creswell, 2013. p. 251). This study used both a case study and

phenomenological methods, interviews of both faculty and students, and member checking. The implementation of all of these procedures ensured the greatest level of validation.

Summary

By using phenomenological and case study methods, this study explored the experiences of minority students, faculty, and administrators. Examining these interviews with minority faculty and administrators and with minority students provided both a breadth and depth to the data that interviewing only one group could not provide. These interviews, coupled with knowledge of the institution, provided a rich understanding of minority student experiences and the impact of minority faculty and staff on those experiences. Using these various methods allowed the researcher to examine relevant themes and provide direction for both further research and improving minority student experiences.

Chapter 4

Results

Introduction

The major themes found in this research divided into two categories. First, themes emerged identifying the attributes of positively involved minority faculty and administrators. Second, themes arose delineating the benefits received by minority students with minority faculty and staff involved in their collegiate experience. This chapter describes each theme found by this study and how they presented themselves in the data.

Attributes of Involved Faculty and Administration

Three major themes emerged from this research regarding the attributes that involved minority faculty and staff possess. These attributes included a safe space for students; accessibility; and advocacy for and representation of minorities on campus. Faculty, staff, and students described minority professionals positively involved with the minority student population on-campus as possessing these three attributes.

Safe space. Six student participants identified involved minority professionals as people who created a safe space for students. All three faculty and staff participants also identified this attribute as a key part of their involvement with students. Components of a safe space included a comfortable and welcoming atmosphere, the ability to process on-campus experiences openly, and availability of guidance and advice.

Welcoming and comfortable space. All six students who addressed having a safe space on campus with minority faculty and staff mentioned the importance of feeling welcomed and accepted. As one student stated, "I feel always safe to talk to them and feel comfortable. And they are very very nice to me and help me a lot." Welcome and comfort for minority students entailed feeling known and accepted in their race and ethnicity. However, students also mentioned the importance of feel known personally and holistically. Students defined this feeling as being known in the relational, academic, or spiritual parts of their lives as well as their racial and cultural context and experiences.

A space to process. Five students also mentioned the importance of talking with minority faculty and administrators and processing the various experiences they encountered at their institution. Specifically, these professionals offered a place to discuss students' cultural adjustment to the institution and race-related incidents. These five students mentioned the difficulties they had adjusting to the culture on a PWI campus. Two international students and one domestic student who talked about this adjustment did not feel surprised by this adjustment. However, for two domestic students who identified as coming from predominantly White communities before college, this adjustment proved unexpected. For international and domestic students alike, the ability to process with minority professionals helped greatly in their institutional adjustment.

Processing racial incidents included both personal experiences on campus as well as larger national and international incidents relating to issues of race and culture. In particular, the three domestic students mentioned the important role their mentors played in helping them process and understand the national issues surrounding race America had

faced within the past few years. An important aspect of this processing included helping students understand their personal role in addressing these issues.

Guidance and advice. Five students also mentioned the importance of the guidance and advice these involved professionals gave. All three faculty and staff participants mentioned guidance and advice as integral to their work with students. The advice sought by the students covered many areas of life including academics, vocational goals, or personal and relational issues. However, much of the advice and guidance given focused on students' adjustment to campus and students' experiences as a minority. This focus proves unsurprising considering these two areas also emerged as common areas that students sought to process with faculty and staff.

Accessibility. Six students and all three faculty and administrators also mentioned the importance of accessibility. Most broadly, accessibility meant that these professionals welcomed interruption by students and implemented practices that allowed for those interruptions to happen more often. Specifically, these individuals practiced having a high visibility on campus. One faculty participant mentioned specifically his habit of eating lunch where students could approach him:

> I always have my lunch at [the cafeteria]. That is my personal time but I also use it to interact with as many students as I can. We don't set up appointments—I go and just mingle with students and we talk.

Other involved professionals also engaged in similar activities, having meals with students, staying on campus after regular office hours, inviting students into their homes, and even helping students shop. Students, faculty and staff participants also talked about an open-door approach to office space and time.

Advocacy and representation. Three students and all three faculty and staff also mentioned advocacy and minority representation as an important aspect of involved minority professionals. All three professionals who participated noted the conviction to use their position to bring more diversity into their respective areas. Both faculty members incorporate minority perspectives and scholars into curriculum and teaching about marginalized people groups. For one of the faculty and the one administrator, this perspective entailed representing the experience of minority students to the larger campus community. This practice also included advocating for the continued improvement of student experiences and increased inclusion and diversity at an institutional level. The three student participants noted similar practices in their experiences with involved minority faculty and staff either individually or broadly for the minority student body.

Student Benefits from Involved Faculty and Administration

As students described the impact of involved minority faculty and staff on their collegiate experience, three main positive outcomes arose from this study. Students who had a relationship with a racially matched faculty or staff member developed in their racial identity. Students also gained an improved sense of belonging at the institution. Finally, students who had the benefit of minority faculty or staff involvement matured in their sense of responsibility to both majority and minority communities on campus.

Racial identity development. One benefit minority students receive from an involved minority faculty or staff members appears to be the potential for racial identity development. However, these benefits only emerged in racially matched student and professional pairs. When not connected to a professional of the same race or ethnicity, students tended toward a less integrated racial identity and greater focus on individuality.

Two students connected to a same race faculty or staff member experienced significant growth in the integration of their race and identity. As one student noted:

Freshmen year I guess I kind of started to realize – oh wait, I'm black. And I kind of just like denied it for like the most part all of freshmen year until like – I think it was the end of freshmen year was when stuff started happening in the news… So then beginning of sophomore year, I started meeting with [my mentor]… We kind of started talking about that and what It looks like for me to start like processing that.

Both students explained similar experiences with their mentors. Having someone to talk to and process with allowed them to take what they experienced and have it form their values, beliefs, and identity.

In contrast, students who could not identify a faculty or staff member of their same race or ethnicity involved in their campus lives seemed more likely to deemphasize their race or ethnicity as it related to their broader identity. In these students' experiences, strong themes occurred of individuality in their identity and a de-emphasis of their racial or ethnic background as related to their identity. As one student stated,

I don't really feel… myself as minority actually. I feel like I'm just being very individually independent… So I have realized like if I put my perspective on my own race, I might feel like—I probably going to feel like really disappointed and upset that I do not have a partner or do not have someone who can feel the way I feel. So I am more reversed so that I understand myself – this is myself, my feeling, my purpose, my reflection. That I'm more focused on my individual because I just do not have another one like me.

Because these students did not have someone with whom to connect or process their race or ethnicity, they felt more comfortable focusing on their identity as an individual rather than as part of a racial group.

Increased sense of belonging. Six students spoke to the increased sense of belonging they had on campus due to the involvement of racial and ethnic minority faculty and staff. A sense of belonging proved present with both racially matched and non-matched pairs. Belonging strongly tied to a safe space that involved minority professionals created for students on campus. Comfort, care, and a sense of home all appeared as common descriptors for what students felt because of the involvement minority faculty and staff. Beyond simply belonging within relationships with minority populations, this sense of connection extended to White students on campus and to the institution as a whole. Involved minority faculty and staff aided minority students in navigating the difficulties and conflicts that arose with their White peers and helped them understand and navigate the culture of the institution. In short, these faculty and staff not only gave students a sense of belonging within "minority spaces" but also contributed to students' sense of belonging at the institution as a whole.

Responsibility to the community. Finally, the six students who experienced involvement from a minority professional showed a high responsibility toward their communities. This responsibility proved transcendent, evident in their own racial and ethnic communities, the broader minority student community, and the institutional community.

Responsibility to their racial community. Five of the students reported current involvement in their respective racial student groups. The sixth student, though not

currently involved, had had a higher level of involvement in years past. They all saw this involvement as an important component of their time at college. Students felt the benefits of community and belonging through these groups. Because of these positive experiences, they felt responsible to provide similar opportunities for other students in their racial or ethnic group. These students wanted to ensure the community for their race or ethnicity stayed supportive. The six students who spoke to this theme identified minority faculty or staff members as the individuals who first connected them with these communities.

Responsibility to the minority student community. Beyond their specific racial or ethnic group, five students also identified a strong commitment and responsibility to the minority student population as a whole. As one student said, "I felt that this is also my responsibility to help other new students who like me are really fresh like that. So… I got involved with [the multi-ethnic student association]." Similarly to their specific racial or ethnic support groups, the broader minority community became a place of support and belonging. Student participants desired for other minority students to integrate into the minority student community as well as the broader intuitional community.

Responsibility to the institutional community. All six students also felt a responsibility to the broader university community. These students expressed frustration with some of the difficulties they encountered building relationships with White students. However, they also possessed great care for white students and appreciation of the welcome many had received from the majority community. Because of their strong investment in relationships with White friends and peers, minority students felt a higher

responsibility to majority students. These students desired to continue building cross-cultural relationships, educating and informing the majority student body. Minority faculty and staff played a significant in these students' processing and understanding of how to make positive change.

Summary

The key findings emerging from this research divided into two main categories—attributes of involved minority faculty and staff and the benefits that minority students receive from those involved professionals. Attributes of involved minority faculty and staff included providing a safe space for students, remaining accessible to students, and advocating and representing minority students on campus. The key benefits students received from involved minority faculty and staff included racial identity development in racially matched pairs, an increased sense of belonging, and a feeling of responsibility to the community. The following chapter discusses exact implications of these themes.

This research demonstrated the important role minority faculty and staff involvement has on minority student experiences. Clearly, minority students who experience the involvement of a minority faculty or staff member have a better collegiate experience. By aiding students' development, increasing their belonging, and fostering community responsibility, minority faculty and staff improve minority student experiences on college campuses.

Chapter 5

Discussion

Introduction

Minority students face increased adversity compared to their White peers when integrating into the culture of a campus and feeling a sense of belonging (Alvarez et al., 2007; Eimers & Pike, 1997; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Just, 1999). However, the involvement of minority faculty and staff positively impacts minority student experiences (Antonio, 2002; Dahlvig, 2010; Davis, 2007; Josey, 1993; Just, 1999; Padilla, 1994). By conducting interviews with minority students, faculty, and staff, this study identified the impact minority faculty and staff involvement on the experiences of minority students. Several key findings emerged from this research. Some themes helped further define and clarify positive involvement for minority faculty and staff. Other themes revealed the benefits that minority students receive from having minority faculty and staff involved in their college experience. This research and the related literature clearly showed that minority students who experience the involvement of minority faculty or staff benefit. Overall, these students acquire a more positive collegiate experience.

Discussion

Past research shows minority students face obstacles in their experience in higher education, such as racism, tokenism, stereotyping, and marginalization (Cabrera & Nora, 1996; Chwalisz & Greer, 2007; Cureton, 2003; Gurin et al., 2002; Eimers & Pike 1997;

Just, 1999; Rankin & Reason, 2005). If higher education institutions want to combat the negative experiences minority students face in higher education, they must have a minority faculty and staff population positively involved in the lives of minority students.

Belonging proves essential for a positive minority student experience (Alvarez et al., 2007; Eimers & Pike, 1997; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Just, 1999). By creating safe spaces and showing availability to students, involved minority professionals can improve students' senses of belonging. This study found that belonging grew both within the minority populations on campus as well as the university community as a whole.

As one approach, minority professionals foster belonging by helping students adjust to campus. Minority students, particularly those students attending PWIs, must transition and adjust to a new culture when attending college (Just, 1999). This study displayed how minority faculty and staff aided students in their larger adjustment and integration into the campus community. These faculty and staff helped students connect to other individuals across campus. They also helped students process their experiences as minorities on campus in a healthy manner. With the involvement of these faculty and staff, students felt connected to the minority population as well as the campus as a whole.

Minority students' perception of a safe space created by a minority faculty or staff member emerged as another prominent theme that contributed to studnets' sense of belonging. A significant facet of a safe space came with the ability to discuss race and ethnicity without it defining the mentor or role model relationship. Students felt free to discuss anything in their lives—relational, vocational, academic, or spiritual—along with race. This finding proves consistent with previous research that notes the effectiveness of holistic mentoring in the lives of minority students (Arment et al., 2013; Guiffrida, 2005).

These spaces allow students to process their experiences as minorities freely. The importance of processing race with a minority professional also appears in previous research (Josey, 1993). Students can go to these safe spaces for guidance and advice from faculty or staff members and can freely discuss their experiences on campus.

Involved minority faculty and staff also took the initiative to advocate and represent minorities on campus. All three faculty and staff participants identified these activities as an important part of their role on campus. One part of representation—also reflected in the literature—involved the inclusion of minority viewpoints and scholars in the academic setting (Milem, 2001). Advocacy and representation occurred outside of the classroom as well, extending more broadly to the campus community and culture. This form of advocacy has a positive impact on minority student experiences (Guiffrida, 2005). Having increased representation and a greater voice on campus also contributed to minority students' senses of belonging, both as individuals and as minority groups.

Clearly, minority faculty and staff can have a great impact on minority students' experiences. Faculty and staff helped students in their adjustment to campus, became a safe space for students, and represented and advocated for minorities on campus. All of these activities helped increase minority students' senses of belonging, which proves key to a positive experience (Alvarez et al., 2007; Eimers & Pike, 1997; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Just, 1999).

Limitations

As with any research, this study has certain limitations to take into account when considering its implications, applications, and future research. First, the potential remains for researcher bias in understanding the literature, creating a methodology, and

collecting and interpreting the data. Besides this broader limitation, several other aspects of this study should temper the understanding and interpretation of its findings.

The biggest limitation of this research arises from the demographics of the participant group itself. First, all participants came from the same institution—a small, faith-based, liberal arts university in the Midwest. The researcher intended such specificity so as to manage the scope of the study. However, all participants shared certain experiences that might not hold true for individuals attending other institutions. A great imbalance in the female-to male-ratio of student participants also presented itself as a limiting factor: six females and one male. Similarly limiting, six students could identify a minority mentor or role model while only one did not have such a person. Because of this imbalance, the researcher could not draw themes from this population.

Sample size also limited this research. Despite the presence of race and ethnicity diversity, not all races and ethnicities had equal representation because of the limited sample size. As another limitation in sample size, only three faculty and administrators participated in this study; thus, trends did not form from their stories and thoughts but rather supported the trends found in students' experiences. While these factors do limit this study, some important implications for practice emerged nonetheless.

Implications for Practice

This research discovered and highlighted several important implications for practice. Some implications exist on the institutional level, some involve minority higher education professionals, and most rely on a partnership from both. These implications prove both poignant and urgent for higher education institutions that seek to continue growing as places of equity and diversity.

This research revealed clear benefits of having minority faculty and staff positively involved with the minority student population. However, literature reveals minority faculty and staff do not often feel well supported by their institutions in such involvement (Centra, 1993; Guiffrida, 2005; Jarvis, 1991; Blackburn & Lawrence, 1995). If institutions wish to prioritize improving minority student expenses, they must equally seek to support minority faculty and staff properly. For example, institutions expect minority faculty and staff to mentor minority students (Baez, 2000; Chun & Evans, 2009; Josey, 1993). Institutions should explore strategies to lift some of the academic, research, or administrative burdens these individuals face. Such alleviation would help in avoiding increased stress on minority faculty, as noted by Guiffrida (2005) and Josey (1993).

Some notable behaviors identified in this research help enhance the minority student experience: creating a safe space, having availability, representing minorities on campus, and serving as an advocate. If minority faculty and staff want to involve themselves positively with minority student populations, they should seek to incorporate these traits into their campus role. Similarly, if campuses wish to have such involvement from minority faculty and staff, the institutions must implement strategies to help train and educate these individuals in how to implement these practices.

Finally, efforts should be made to increase the number of minority faculty and staff on college campuses. Increasing the number of minority professionals would help meet the expectations of institutions for these individuals in a more manageable way. However, this change cannot simply occur through competing for the same limited pool of minority faculty and staff that currently exists. As Aguirre (2000) notes, "Despite appreciable gains in the number of Ph.D. degrees earned by… minorities, their

proportionate representation in the U.S. faculty population has remained unchanged" (p. 5). Therefore, those in higher education should seek to encourage their minority students to consider pursuing positions on college campuses to increase the minority population within higher education. As another way to achieve this growth, institutions can pursue faculty and staff at an international level. Either way, the increasing of the minority faculty and staff population remains an important goal for American higher education.

Future Research

Besides important implications for practice, some highly pertinent areas for future research related to this topic present themselves. Some of these avenues arose from the themes within the data. Other topics came from important items that emerged through the course of the research but could not receive sufficiently study. Finally, expanding the scope of exploration to the relationship between the White and minority individuals deserves investigation.

Several areas merit pursuing further research in regards to the attributes of positively involved minority professionals. First, it would prove worthwhile to explore further the positive attributes of involved minority faculty and staff: a safe space, availability to students, and advocacy and representation. Specifically, how these attributes can become incorporated into other areas of campus to help further improve the minority experience and lighten the burden on minority professionals should receive examination.

Studying the concept of a safe space, as well as what exactly contributes to this idea for minority students, would likewise prove a valuable course of research. While many of the sub-themes and aspects of a safe space have been explored in previous

research, the concept as a whole has had little attention. The idea of safe spaces has become more prominent within higher education. Therefore, understanding what this concept should and should not entail and how to best implement it remains important for higher education institutions.

Two student benefits that emerged from this research also warrant further exploration. Previous research shows that greater gains in other areas of development (e.g. academic, vocational) when student and faculty or staff pairings match racially (Dahlvig, 2010; Davis, 2007; Guiffrida, 2005). However, this study found the additional benefit to students' racial identity development of having a racially matched student and professional pair. Previous research does not identify this benefit, and it therefore deserves further exploration.

A large gap in the literature regarding the theme of minority student responsibility to the community also revealed itself. Worthwhile research findings would likely result from exploring what other factors contribute to this sense of responsibility, how exactly minority faculty and staff involvement fosters this responsibility, and what benefits different communities receive from minority students with a heightened sense of responsibility. This last finding in particular proves important because, when interviewed, students identified these communities as another important source of belonging for minority students. Their responsibility to their communities appeared to increase both their sense of belong and that of other minority students. Additionally, this responsibility allowed students' to become more self-sustained in their belonging.

Other issues also arose in this research, not prominent enough to become themes but worthy of pursuing with further research. First, this study could not fully examine the

experience of those minority students without minority faculty or staff involved in their time at college. This topic merits pursuit. Likewise, due to the limited number of faculty and staff participants, this study did not wholly explore their experience. This research, however, did clearly indicate minority faculty and staff prove vital to minority student experiences. Thus, future studies should explore what factors positively contribute to the experiences and persistence of minority faculty and staff on college campuses.

Finally, this research focused on the relationship between minority individuals. However, in their discussion of mentors and role models multiple students also spoke to the impact that White faculty and staff had on their college experience. Exploring what exactly the positive impact of majority faculty and staff involvement has on minority student experiences would prove beneficial. Conversely, further study could valuably show the impact of minority faculty and staff involvement on majority student experiences.

Conclusion

Clearly, minority students face obstacles to having a positive collegiate experience. These students face racism, tokenism, stereotyping, and adjustment issues, both socially and academically (Alvarez et al., 2007; Eimers & Pike, 1997; Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Just, 1999). However, this research has shown that the positive involvement of minority faculty and staff can have extensive influence in counteracting these obstacles for minority students.

Effectively involved minority faculty and staff create safe spaces for minority students to feel welcome, they allow students to process their experiences, and they provide guidance and advice. These individuals also actively engage in practices that

make them readily available to students. Finally, these individuals display advocacy and representation for minority students. However, minority faculty and staff also face obstacles in their roles on campus compared to majority peers, which can hinder such involvement (Chun & Evans, 2009; Guiffrida, 2005; Josey, 1993).

Institutions of higher education must make efforts to support minority faculty and staff properly in their involvement, and increasing the number of minority faculty and staff on campuses must become a priority. Additionally, higher education professionals should explore how to help incorporate additional avenues for safe spaces, availability, advocacy, and representation for minority students on campuses. All of these steps prove important, as the involvement of minority faculty and staff greatly impacts minority students. Minority professionals help minority students thrive in their development, find belonging on campus, and positively contribute to college and university communities.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

Student Interview Questions

1. Do you have a mentor? Are they in your department? Are they a minority? Do they share your race ethnicity?
2. What has this person(s) done to impact your life at college?
3. Do you have any faculty/staff that are role models, your look up to, or admire? Are those people minorities? Are they from your minority group?
4. Why do you look up to this individual(s)?
5. To the best of you knowledge, how many minorities are within your department?
6. How has being a minority student impacted your time at college?
7. What sort of programming/support for minorities are you aware of at your institution? How did you hear about them?
8. Do you utilize any of those support systems? What/who caused you to get involved in those programs?

Faculty and Staff Interview Questions

1. In what ways do you involve yourself with the minority student population?
2. What sort of contact do you engage in with minority students outside the classroom/office?
3. What, if any, expectations do you feel to support minority students?
4. Do you feel sufficiently resourced by your institution to support minority students?

Appendix B

Informed Consent

The Impact of Minority Faculty and Staff Involvement on Minority Students

You are invited to participate in a research study of the relationship between minority faculty and staff involvement and the minority student. You were selected as a possible subject because you are a minority student, faculty, or staff member who has been recommended by you institution. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you many have before agreeing to be in the study.
The study is being conducted by Elijah Genheimer as a part of his thesis project for the Taylor University Master of Arts in Higher Education program.

STUDY PURPOSE
The purpose of this study is to gain a deeper knowledge and better understanding of what impact the involvement of minority faculty and staff has on the experiences of minority college students.

NUMBER OF PEOPLE TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
If you agree to participate, you will be one of 12 subjects who will be participating in this research.

PROCEDURES FOR THE STUDY:
If you agree to be in the study, you will do the following things:
- Take part in a one on one interview with the researcher around a half an hour in length
- Once the interview has been transcribed and examined by the researcher, you will look over the themes found by the researcher to confirm that they properly represent you thoughts and opinions
- Having examined the researcher's findings, give any additional information you feel is important to the researcher that did not arise from the interview

RISKS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
While on the study, the risks are:
- Emotional discomfort or distress

The researcher will to what they can to make sure that interviews and in a comfortable setting for the subject and it is not the researcher's intent to cause undue stress or anxiety. The researcher will accommodate the subject's emotional need as appropriate and acknowledges that the information being given may be uncomfortable to share.

BENEFITS OF TAKING PART IN THE STUDY:
The benefits to participation that are reasonable to expect are an increased understanding of one's own situation as it relates to the topic of research.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Efforts will be made to keep your personal information confidential. We cannot guarantee absolute confidentiality. Your personal information may be disclosed if required by law. Your identity will be held in confidence in reports in which the study may be published or presented. Aliases will be used throughout the research process and in subsequent presentations and publications. Recordings of interviews will be seen or heard by the interviewer and perhaps a transcriber. If the subject wishes to remain anonymous to the transcriber, their identity will not be recorded or the researcher will personally take on the task of transcribing their interview.

Organizations that may inspect and/or copy your research records for quality assurance and data analysis include groups such as the study investigator and his/her research associates, the Taylor University Institutional Review Board or its designees, and (as allowed by law) state or federal agencies, specifically the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) etc., who may need to access your research records.

PAYMENT
You will not receive payment for taking part in this study.

CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS
For questions about the study or a research-related injury, contact the researcher Elijah Genheimer at 651-387-6072 or email at Elijah_genheimer@taylor.edu

For inquiries regarding the nature of the research, your rights as a subject, or any other aspect of the research as it relates to your participation as a subject, contact Taylor University's Institutional Review Board at IRB@taylor.edu or the Chair of the IRB, Susan Gavin at 756-998-5188 or ssgavin@taylor.edu .

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF STUDY
Taking part in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to take part or may leave the study at any time. Leaving the study will not result in any penalty or loss of benefits to which you are entitled. You decision whether or not to participate in this study will not affect your current or future relations with the researcher.

SUBJECT'S CONSENT
In consideration of all of the above, I give my consent to participate in this research study.

I will be given a copy of this informed consent document to keep for my records. I agree to take part in this study.

Subject's Printed Name: _____

Subject's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Researcher's Printed Name: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____ Date: _____