

Student Affairs Initiatives Toward a Multicultural University

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This article presents the Cultural Environment Transitions Model elucidating a monoculturalism to multiculturalism continuum. The model assists one to understand institutional progress toward a multicultural environment.

Diversity, a buzz word for the 1980s, promises to be a goal as well as a rallying cry for student affairs educators into the next century. By the year 2000, there will be more African American and Latino students, learning-disabled persons, and individuals from diverse backgrounds constituting college and university populations than ever in the history of higher education (Hodgkinson, 1983, 1984; Smith, 1989). To date student affairs educators have used this information in an effort to change practices so that students and professionals of color are being actively recruited into higher education, represented in campus programs, and encouraged to use campus services.

Although colleges and universities have generated some successes from a strong recruitment effort, retention of multicultural students, staff, and administrators continues to elude solutions. Education and awareness training programs, particularly within student affairs divisions, have been initiated in an effort to increase respect for and encourage the valuing of cultural differences. Years of such activity on some campuses have helped but have not completed the task of moving those colleges and uni-

versities from monocultural to multicultural environments.

Student affairs departments shape, manage, and influence significant aspects of the university environment: residence life, student unions, campus activities, career planning, and athletics. Student affairs staff can directly influence the formation of a multicultural environment, build an inclusive campus environment, and transform institutional structures. As such, their impact on the process of multiculturalism is particularly important to all participants in the institution.

GOALS OF MULTICULTURALISM

The definition of multiculturalism (Strong, 1986, as quoted in Barr & Strong, 1988) is proposed as a goal toward which higher education institutions can grow.

The multicultural organization is one which is genuinely committed to diverse representation of its membership; is sensitive to maintaining an open, supportive and responsive environment; is working toward and purposefully including elements of diverse cultures in its ongoing operations; and . . . is authentic in its response to issues confronting it. (p. 85)

This definition is useful in its emphasis on communication, knowledge of different cultures, and appreciation and celebration of differences. An organization that is multicultural, understood as a dynamic interplay between and among cultures, can be productive, effective, and inclusive. Such an organization values the achievements and talents of all community members as part of its ethical and moral purpose.

CAMPUS CULTURES AND WHITE CULTURE

A discussion of multiculturalism is incomplete without an explication of the ambiguous term

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culture. The word “culture” is susceptible to many definitions that are seriously contested and open to multiple meanings, disagreements, and interpretations (Clifford & Marcus, 1986). Cultures are formed from a confluence of history, past experience, human action, and tradition (Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1979, 1984).

The crux of the dilemma concerning the descriptions and definitions of culture is that the following question is rarely asked: Whose past, traditions, actions, and experience are embraced within our institutional structures, described in the study of history, transmitted through the curricula of schools, and represented in the art and architecture of campus environments? The culture that has come to predominate through a variety of historical circumstances permeates organizations and institutions such that many campus community members accept its monocultural characteristics as a given or as the way things are done. This rarely questioned acceptance conceals the fact that many cultures are possible and, in fact, do exist within institutions.

In an attempt to make visible the less visible, Katz (1989) created a framework describing the characteristics and processes of the predominant

American (United States) culture. She referred to the predominant culture as “White culture” because of its Eurocentric origins (see Table 1).

White culture characterizes the majority of American organizations and institutions (Katz, 1989). It is expressed in the symbols, religion, language, rituals, and organizational structures of colleges and universities. This representation includes the presence of male symbolism in art and architecture, predominance of Christian or Christian-like ceremonies, use of standard English and academically sanctioned writing styles, and existence of bureaucracy. Institutional policy reflects predominant culture values of power (i.e., held by elites, expert authority, and upper-management decision making). Rigid time schedule of classes, meetings, and appointments, a parental style of club and organization advising, and housing assignment procedures that assume heterosexuality are additional examples of the predominant culture as it is expressed on campus.

The assumptions and characteristics of White culture form the basis for ways of behaving and operating in educational institutions. These ways of operating become the *norm* or standard

TABLE 1
Components of White Culture: Values and Beliefs

Rugged Individualism	Protestant Work Ethic
Individual is primary unit	Working hard brings success
Individual has primary responsibility	Progress and Future Orientation
Independence and autonomy highly valued and rewarded	Plan for the future
Competition	Delayed gratification
Winning is everything	Value continual improvement and progress
Win lose dichotomy	Emphasis on Scientific Method
Action Orientation	Objective, rational, linear thinking
Master and control nature	Cause and effect relationships
Pragmatic utilitarian view of life	Quantitative analysis
Decision Making	Dualistic thinking
Hierarchical	Status and Power
Pyramid structure	Measured by economic possessions
Majority rule when Whites have power	Credentials, titles, and positions
Communication	Believe "own" system is best
Standard English	Family Structure
Written tradition	Nuclear family is the ideal social unit
Direct eye contact	Man is the breadwinner and head of household
Control of emotions	Woman is primary caretaker of children
Time	Patriarchal structure
Adherence to rigid time schedule	Aesthetics
Time viewed as a commodity	Women's beauty based on blonde, blue-eyed, thin, and young
History	Music and art based on European cultures
Based on European immigrants' experiences	
War romanticized	

Reprinted and adapted from "The Sociopolitical Nature of Counseling" by J. Katz, 1985, *The Counseling Psychologist*, 13(4), p. 618.

against which behavior is shaped and judged. Traits, characteristics, and actions that differ from these accepted or sanctioned ways are considered deviant, abnormal, and are, in general, rejected as appropriate ways of being (Schaeff, 1985). A great deal of time and effort during the educational process is devoted to teaching adherence to these cultural norms (Giroux, 1988; Willis, 1977).

People of color, women, international students, physically challenged students, homosexuals, lesbians, and others who represent diverse perspectives may feel disenfranchised and alienated from an environment in which their way of operating, life-style, or cultural characteristics are not the norm reflected in institutional symbols, language, and behaviors (Heath, 1983). The norms around which the college was organized (e.g., admissions standards, sanctioned behavior, disciplinary procedures, and financial expectations) are at odds with what feels "normal" for students of diverse perspectives. For example, Latino students may have learned to *switch* (i.e., be proficient with the use of cultural patterns, behaviors, and language from their own and other cultures), but this balancing act is achieved with varying degrees of success.

People from diverse cultures may believe that there is no one with whom they can identify. Feelings of isolation, alienation, invisibility, and attitudes that they are not welcomed are probable reactions for these students. Students of color often comment that there is no place on campus where they can feel psychologically or physically safe (Fleming, 1984). The reality of a predominant culture on campus can create a hostile and potentially dangerous environment. The moral imperative of remedying this situation takes on an increased urgency as the number of diverse students increases. Student affairs educators frustrated with the slow pace of change toward multiculturalism are facing the realization that racism, sexism, and other forms of oppression are cyclical and recurrent unless approached through ethical, developmental, and educational initiatives.

BEYOND INDIVIDUAL AWARENESS

The current educational and awareness training sessions conducted on campuses take advantage of individual awareness models. Examples of these models can be seen in Jefferson's (1986)

work and that of Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1989). These models promote individual development from monoculturalism or ethnocentrism through awareness, understanding, and appreciation to multiculturalism.

One could postulate that institutions go through a parallel process so that through education, awareness, and sensitivity, institutions can become multicultural. Such models can assist student affairs educators to understand the dynamics and complexities of institutional change.

CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT TRANSITIONS MODEL

The following Cultural Environment Transitions Model (see Table 2) depicts institutional struggle with issues of diversity. The model, a chronological though not necessarily contiguous process, is not a definitive way of explaining, predicting, and controlling environments but is a means to assist institutional members to define and work toward the goals of multiculturalism. At each step and plateau of the model, community participants can recognize initiatives (upper half of the model) and indicators (lower half of the model) that characterize their institution's receptivity to the goals of multiculturalism. An organization in which racial slurs and violent attacks are tolerated with little recourse available can be located at the monocultural end of the continuum. When switching by predominant and nondominant culture administrators is encouraged, role modeling is readily available for students of color, and power is distributed equitably throughout the institution; the organization is closer to the multicultural end of the continuum.

The Cultural Environment Transitions Model assumes that organizational growth occurs as members of the community acquire knowledge about other cultures, gain experience with people different from themselves, and are challenged with structural and systemic change through this effort. Essentially, the status quo changes. Changes in policies, administrative procedures, and language are indicators of organizational growth toward multiculturalism. Representative numbers of multicultural staff, judicious use of symbols, and inclusion of diverse cultural styles indicate an increased level of expression of diverse cultures. The model

TABLE 2
Cultural Environment Transitions Model

<p>Student programs based on one culture Outreach by minority staff "Revolving door" for students of color</p>	<p>Integrated staffs with limited support and understanding Training focuses on awareness of differences</p>	<p>Training focuses on internal "self" and racism Effective staff recruitment invitations and reputation</p>	<p>Staff interventions change ways of operating Change in disciplinary structure to reflect multiple perspectives</p>
<p>Family programs to build support Multicultural mentors and support systems Differences made explicit (e.g., incorporated into roommate contract)</p>	<p>Offices of multicultural affairs established</p>	<p>Training focuses on different "ways of knowing" Training focuses on trust and changing modes of power and control</p>	
<p>Advent of cultural centers</p>	<p>Upper administration makes verbal commitment to diversity but lacks knowledge to change</p>		
<p>Minority members conduct training Efforts result in guilt, denial, anger, and blaming of victim</p>			
<p>Student awards chosen to respect students of color Affirmative action hiring appointments</p>			
<p>AWARENESS WITH INABILITY TO CHANGE Avoidance of overtly racist language Black History Month, Hispanic Awareness Week, and sporadic programs</p>		<p>HEIGHT OF THE CONFLICT Students of color initiate efforts to gain power Backlash within community Cries of "reverse discrimination" Brawls and fighting Call for men's centers</p>	
<p>MONOCULTURAL Segregated social activities and friendships Racial slurs, newsletters, and flyers Western civilization and other monocultural courses as requirements</p>		<p>Multiple learning and presentation styles Integrated student groups Power and authority equitably shared Change in language of majority culture Organizational structure more flexible and reflective of multiple styles of management</p>	
<p>"Pioneer" students join organizations, RA staffs, and student leadership</p>		<p>INDICATORS</p>	
<p>INSTITUTIONAL REBIRTH REFLECTS MULTICULTURAL GOALS</p>		<p>MULTICULTURAL</p>	
<p>Switching by other than minority groups Multicultural foods served in dining halls and snack bars</p>		<p>Art, architecture, and campus symbols represent many cultures Cultural center populated by all</p>	

shows organizational progression from monoculturalism, through a period in which some college members are aware but unable to effect change in the institution, into a time of openly expressed conflict, through organizational rebirth reflective of multicultural goals, and, finally, into a state of multiculturalism that is systemic and institutional. These stages do not necessarily follow one another in an orderly fashion. Rather, commitment or retreat by institutional participants, particularly university leaders, can influence a university so that stages are skipped, a period of regression can occur, or a renewal of multiculturalism is established symbolically through personnel changes.

A true state of multiculturalism is hard won through efforts, dramatic change, and compromises. Past practices, institutionalized to become "the way things are done here," serve to promote oppression. Organizational structures built on monocultural norms are difficult to penetrate by anyone outside the predominant culture; new groups receive limited resources because of previously established allocation procedures. Selection procedures rarely formally recognize the contributions of people who possess a perspective different from the institutional norm. The institutional structure and exclusionary practices inherent in that structure are formidable.

The process of increasing communication to intensely honest and effective levels as well as acquiring skills not formally valued in the institution is a long one. This process is fraught with false starts, pitfalls, and blind alleys. The Cultural Environment Transitions Model depicts this dynamic process, which requires constant educational processes and vigilance to reward nondominant cultural styles, structure, and behaviors.

The steps (see Table 2, I and II) in the model can be perceived as steep 90° angles that community members must scale. The plateaus are not flat but can be viewed metaphorically like the rolling deck of a ship: slippery, difficult to traverse, and often treacherous. Hard-won movement along the continuum is difficult to sustain. The all-pervasive presence of the dominant culture in the organizational structure works against progress toward multiculturalism. These realities are not causes for discouragement but, rather, sources of understanding about the need for empowerment, policy making, and goal advancement. These processes must be

rooted in long-term organizational development to achieve multiculturalism.

The second 90° step (see Table 2, II) in the model is a towering one up which few institutions have ventured. It is a turning point or quantum leap of sorts after which the organizational structures are transformed. A critical mass of understanding and awareness precludes participants from settling for anything less than fully inclusive practices. Social justice and egalitarianism are institutionalized and systemic.

The period leading up to this second step is one from which student affairs educators and college administrators regularly retreat. The cusp through which institutions must travel is characterized by conflict, abandonment of past well-practiced ways of operating, and acknowledgment of the discrepancies between intentions and reality.

THE INEVITABILITY OF CONFLICT

Institutions must confront the conflict present at the second step of the model to progress toward multiculturalism. Power relationships, role definitions, and priorities shift, both in a revolutionary and evolutionary sense, as multiple cultural perspectives become prevalent, recognized, and valued. Conflict, viewed from a multicultural perspective, is not a negative process to be avoided but is positive, growth producing, and essential to achieving the goals of multiculturalism.

Little in history would lead a person to believe that the transformation from one culture to many cultures occurs through a voluntary relinquishment of the privileges and prestige of being the dominant culture. Change is resisted on many levels. Individually, practices that base performance rewards on mastery of a dominant culture management style recreate a dominant culture structure. Institutionally, practices that perpetuate university sagas and fail to recount the accomplishments of women and people of color further reinforce a dominant culture perspective. This resistance to multiculturalism can be violent and traumatic, such as the hiring and firing of people who do not conform. The maintenance of the dominant culture structure can also occur less overtly by development of a reputation for exclusionary practices that discourage diverse applicants.

The reality of conflict during cultural transformation raises substantial issues for student affairs

practice. Conflict management such as roommate changes emphasize diffusion. The unfulfilled promises of student protests follow a practice of avoidance. These conflict management practices of diffusion and avoidance must be abandoned in lieu of opportune confrontation and true conflict resolution. These include the use of social contracts and interventions that build community and interaction among cultures.

Student affairs educators have a significant role in prompting the institution beyond the reactive responses and conflict diffusion approaches that are currently the *modus operandi*. This reactive approach has been useful in spurring institutions toward a new form of efficacious intervention. Unfortunately, these interventions fall short of empowering people toward the goals of multiculturalism. Renewed efforts must propel community members from a level of complacency and status quo to dissatisfaction with the current representation of one culture within the campus power and administrative structures.

The system as a whole must change when there is a presence of enough people willing to and demanding change. A critical mass of students of color, significant accumulation of cultural knowledge by White administrators, and adoption of an attitude that one culture can no longer be viewed as the best or only one represented in the power and administrative structures are all triggers for dramatic change. An intolerable incident that triggers students' demands for change cannot be easily ignored by student affairs educators who have incorporated celebration of differences into their everyday language and behavior.

Although certain incidents (e.g., student protest) precipitate revolutionary action, the institution works toward change through multiculturalism that exists in pockets and individual offices. For example, efforts on the part of a particular administrator can result in a department or program that has staff (dominant and nondominant cultures) who provide inclusive services and programs. Individual student affairs educators, regardless of the campus climate toward multiculturalism, can change their behaviors that are incongruent with diverse perspectives. Changes occur as individuals share power and engage in dialogue about topics previously not discussed (Freire, 1970, 1985). Additionally, the college's objectives and goals can be rewritten to reflect inclusive practices. Institutional

language can change from a dominant perspective (e.g., military and violent metaphors) to more empowering language (e.g., emphasizing talent development of all rather than using superlatives to describe a few). Expectations of staff and student employees can include the goals of multiculturalism. Advocacy work would be distributed throughout the campus rather than focused on work by culturally diverse people.

COMPONENTS OF A MULTICULTURAL INSTITUTION: VALUES AND BELIEFS

In an effort to visualize and clarify what a multicultural environment might look like, Katz's (1989) model of White culture (Table 1) was adapted by the authors to reflect and identify major characteristics of a multicultural environment (Table 3). These characteristics serve as a guide and should not be construed as a definitive description of all multicultural institutions.

The many styles valued and respected within a multicultural environment enjoin that all participants become adept at switching (e.g., communicating with people of all backgrounds and experiences, using a variety of languages and expressions, adopting multiple cultures and perspectives). The responsibility for adaptation and adjustment should not be the sole obligation of the culturally diverse but shared by all members of the institution. Concurrently, the presence of different voices and points of view necessitate that the campus become a less hostile environment for nonmajority students, faculty, and administrators.

The multicultural environment is not a perfect place. The diverse preferences and perspectives represented in its cultures characterize the environment as chaotic and difficult to administer. In homogeneous organizations where people have similar backgrounds and cultural styles, some level of agreement and consensus is ensured. Already a long process, building consensus in a multicultural organization is a practiced art.

SUMMARY

Multicultural institutions are more complex than organizations relying on a majority worldview. The expression of diverse opinions, varieties of learning styles, and multiple perspectives provide more opportunities for misunderstandings, communication errors, and style clashes. The

TABLE 3
Components of Multicultural Institution

Individual and Community	Work Ethic
Win/win situations	Stopping out, flextime, maternity/paternity leaves
Consensus	Productivity among elderly
Autonomy and interrelatedness valued	Decision-Making Approach
Acceptance of coexistence with environment	Collaborative efforts valued
Communication	Nonbureaucratic organizational structure (e.g., project groups, flat structure)
Ability to communicate with more than one culture	Time
Variety of communication modes and styles utilized (i.e., oral traditions, storytelling, use of symbols, silence)	Flexibility in time schedules (e.g., staggered work day, job sharing)
Multilingual	Holidays
Language reflecting fewer military and competitive metaphors	Diversity of religions activities recognized and celebrated (e.g., Kwanzaa)
Status and Power	Thinking Styles
Power distributed equitably throughout system	Metaphoric
Belief that shared power enhances everyone's power	Overlapping boundaries recognized
Advancement and recognition based on diverse perspectives one brings to situation	Global
Belief that differing styles and modes of operating can obtain same or better results	Qualitative and quantitative research methods
Blurring of gender role boundaries	Religion
Profit motive not sole measure of success	Life viewed in many ways (e.g., generative, cyclical) other than linear and finite
Less emphasis on aggressiveness	Aesthetics
History	Value in life transitions
All American cultures represented	Diversity represented in art and architecture
Family Structures	Cooperation
Single parent families	Win/win situations
Extended family involved in child rearing	Consensus
Lesbian parenting	Action Orientation
Same-sex life partners	Coexistence with nature
	Lateral changes viewed positively
	Small is valued

awareness training currently conducted at many colleges and universities that focuses on individual awareness and education must proceed to more advanced stages of intercultural communication, group awareness, and systemic change.

Implications

In addition to the human rights and moral purposes inherent in the multicultural movement, student affairs initiatives toward awareness and change in the structure of the university serve a practical purpose. As universities become more multicultural, they also become more effective, highly productive institutions where all members are affirmed and fulfilled (Katz, 1989). Heterogeneous institutions with varied perspectives encourage more creativity, effectiveness, and problem solving. Such institutions are more interesting places to live, learn and work. The personal expression and achievement possible when all people feel valued within the institution is currently unimaginable. As all members of the college are free to express their individuality,

personal styles, and culture, all involved can reach a level of success and achievement for themselves as well as the institution.

Student affairs educators have the capacity to profoundly influence the initiation and fulfillment of multiculturalism within their areas of responsibility as well as throughout the campus as a whole. Through management of major programs on campus (e.g., residence life, financial aid, campus activities), profound influence on the choices of university symbols (e.g., major speakers, leadership awards), and input, if not decision making, about cultural representation in everyday campus life (e.g., staff hiring, dining hall food, student union decor), student affairs staff have significant windows of opportunity to influence and shape a multicultural campus environment.

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