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Twenty years ago, in an interview, Keeter (1987) asked Professor Shirley Chisholm, the first African-American woman elected to the U.S. Congress and the first to campaign for the presidency, if she knew of faculty behaviors that alienate African-American students or communicate uneasiness or if faculty sometimes communicates that they have different expectations of African-American students. She responded by saying that "Blacks have become very sensitive, and rightfully so, about attitudes of over-protectiveness or someone's bending over backward to accommodate them. Whites—along with Blacks—must realize that the era of beneficent paternalism is over" (p.15). In the two decades following Chisholm's remarks, sorry to say, due to the proliferation of programs such as affirmative action, some still believe that students of color are being coddled and receiving preferential treatment, and are being admitted even though they are not qualified or prepared for the rigors of college (Antonio, 2003; Keeter, 1987; Locks, Hurtado, Bowman, & Oseguera 2008; Turner & Myers, 2000).

Nonetheless, the professorate plays an important role in the academic achievement of underprepared students and the college student of color—a pivotal and crucial role in both their social and academic success. With the increasing complexity of campus ethnic and racial demographic profiles, we are beginning to see a widening gap between the professorate and particular student cohorts, namely, college student cohorts of color. The question then becomes, how do we respond to an increasingly diverse, underprepared, and unprepared student population? The answers are complex and multilayered.

In response, one plausible solution is for colleges and universities to seek out and embrace diversity and multiculturalism, cultivating the attitude that the more knowledge of the diversities presented by their campus clientele, the better prepared they will be to meet their needs (Neville, Heppner, Ji, & Thye, 2004; Hale, 2004;

Watson, Terrell, Wright, Bonner, Cuyjet, Gold, et. al., 2002). Another possible solution is for faculty to develop a greater sense of flexibility and cultural sensitivity in their teaching styles as well as a better understanding of student learning styles regardless of the level of academic preparedness or cultural background.

Nonetheless, students of color (African American, Native American Indian, and Latino/Hispanic) entering four-year Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) compared to their White peers are more likely to be identified as underprepared for college (Institute of Education Sciences [IES], 2004; National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 1995). In reality, African Americans who attend PWIs have problems with preparing for the experience as well as adjusting to their new environment. In fact, research even further suggests that regardless of levels of academic preparedness, a disproportionate number of students of color who manage to get through the doors of PWIs often find themselves ill prepared to thrive on these campuses.

For that reason, it is imperative for colleges and universities concerned about the academic success of students of color to recognize that academic success or failure is in part directly related to unmet cultural and developmental needs. Additionally, success is impacted at the microlevel through faculty attitudes and interactions as well as at the macrolevel through institutional culture and climate toward these students.

There has been a subtle paradigm shift over the last four decades in remedial and developmental education. That is, there has been a shift from the deficit being students of color to the deficit being predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Previously, there was carte blanche labeling of students of color as the ones in need of remediation and developmental services without regard to institutional preparedness for culturally diverse students. A trend exists toward to the assessment of institutions of higher education as the ones lacking culturally sensitive curricular, programs, and activities to meet the needs of students of color. This paradigm shift has been largely influenced by multiculturalism and, to a greater extent, by the financial constraints placed on many institutions including Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) that necessitate that financial survival of the institutions depends on their ability to recruit, retain, and graduate all students.

Unfortunately, in 2013, African-American students still face some of the racism, discrimination, alienation, and academic and social barriers that African-American students of yesteryear faced (Allen, Teranishi, Dinwiddie, & Gonzalez, 2000; Allen et al., 2000; Cleveland, 2004; Cureton, 2003; Harper, 2009). Understandably, the negative experiences affect African Americans' developmental process while attending college, especially at a PWI. In this article, we use our personal narratives and the lens of developmental education to prepare PWIs for African-American students.

Thus, we begin with a brief dialogue on *developmental education* as a theoretical lens to discuss the preparedness for completing college of this group in PWIs. We then provide reflections on the emotional, social, intellectual, mental, and psychological effects of our own higher education experiences attending PWIs.

We conclude with a proposed set of holistic strategies designed to meet the developmental education needs and facilitate the academic success of students of color on PWI campuses.

Theoretical Framework

Developmental education is used as a theoretical framework and to aid in discussing the academically underprepared college student and the experiences of African-American students in PWIs. Historically, remediation education has always existed in American higher education, and time has proved that it has never left. However, developmental education should not be centered on its history nor should its solution be closely tied to selective admission or the raising of admission standards as predictors of academic success. Neither should its occurrence be identified and traced to groups of color, but rather on its effectiveness in helping students complete their education and find decent, satisfying employment. The truth is developmental education is still alive and kicking and doing a darn good job with unprepared and underprepared students. Although remedial and developmental education are often used interchangeably and are closely related, they are defined differently.

By definition, the term *remedial* applies to any student, regardless of race and ethnicity who has completed high school, but did not complete a mathematics course during their senior year curriculum (Boylan, 1988). At the college level, remedial education courses are defined as courses in reading, writing, or mathematics for postsecondary students lacking the necessary skills to perform at the level required for successful matriculation at a respective institution (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000). Meaning, students enrolled in remedial courses are not just students of color.

Although developmental education is broadened to encompass remedial education, it is more generally defined to include the cognitive and affective growth of all postsecondary learners, at all levels of the learning continuum (Boylan, 1988). Developmental education is sensitive and responsive to individual differences and special needs among learners and it commonly addresses academic preparedness, diagnostic assessment and placement, development of general and discipline-specific learning strategies, and affective barriers to learning.

Thus, from a remedial perspective, developmental students currently comprise almost 30% of all students entering the nation's colleges and universities (NCES, 2003) and this number has remained relatively unchanged since the early 1900s (Boylan & White, 1987; Brubacher & Rudy, 1976) and since 1983 (NCES, 2003). This seems valid because, most students continue to lack college-level proficiency in at least one skill area, be that mathematics, reading, writing, or sciences, therefore, a large majority of all U.S. colleges and universities continue to offer some formal developmental or learning assistance program to the students they accept (Merisotis & Phipps, 2000; NCES, 2003). Therefore, developmental and remedial education envelops both White students and students of color. Yet, in present contexts, we

often find it difficult if not virtually impossible not only to disassociate the terms remedial from developmental, but also *academically underprepared student* from minority status.

The role of higher education in teaching students who enter with academic deficiencies has expanded and become increasingly important, making the need for remediation an intricate and continuing force in academia. Therefore, colleges have the responsibility of both creating a more racially diverse campus and providing opportunity for the academic achievement and educational attainment of a less prepared student population.

After all, students who are remediated are as successful as or more successful than their academically prepared peers (e.g., National Center for Education Statistics, 2003b). America needs all of its citizens prepared for the technological, information-rich environment of the 21st century, for that reason, access to higher education is a must. Thus, we believe the disconnect for most students of color, is not taking remedial courses or the lack of diagnostic assessment and placement or academic preparedness, but rather PWIs campuses lacking sensitivity and responsiveness to individual differences, strategies for special needs among diverse learners, culturally responsive learning strategies, and addressing the racist and affective barriers to learning.

For that reason, we will use developmental education not only as a framework to explain and describe PWIs' behaviors toward the remediation of students of color and all remedial students, but also, to take the bright light off of students of color as the only ones needing remediation and put the light on faculty and institutions as the ones really in need of *remediation*. We embrace this framework not as an explanation for racial and cultural biased or biased institutional practices within the academy, but rather as a self-study tool to aid PWIs and their professoriate with future initiatives to aid in the academic success of African American students and students of color.

Academically Underprepared College Students

The face of the underprepared student becomes reified in the minds of the academy's inhabitants, mainly, that of the student of color. Realistically, data reveal that the underprepared student has no specific racial or ethnic identity, nor is there is a typical remedial student profile (Merisotis, 2000; NCES, 2003). Still, students of color, compared to White students applying to college, especially those who apply to PWIs, are more likely to be labeled as academically underprepared and in need of remedial education at levels significantly higher than their non minority peers. (IES, 2004; Antonio, 2003). This in turn leads to students of color being placed at the bottom of the academic hierarchy.

The resultant effect is that these students are not only blocked by barriers of ethnicity, race, racism, language, socio-economic status, and other cultural barri-

ers, but they are also blocked by the attitudes and perceptions of those who make key decisions regarding their matriculation (Clark, Anderson, Clark, & Williams, 1999; Cleveland, 2004; Morton 1992).

Therefore, we offer the previous caveat as a precursor to our discussion of both remedial and developmental education which will be based on an approach that affirms the achievement potential of all students with a special focus on meeting the needs of African-American students.

Closely related is the myth that remedial education is incompatible with the purpose and functions of the university; in other words, a strong belief that open access and quality education cannot coexist (Boylan, 2002). Hence, there is a perception that African-American students and students of color, thought to be deficient, only enter college because of open door admission policies, ultimately diminishing the quality of education.

Furthermore, some see affirmative action as reverse discrimination, regardless of its intent to make right unfair treatment that has historically disadvantaged certain groups. Perhaps, this litany of defensive beliefs and behaviors are put forth in order to avoid finding real and viable solutions to the wide disparities between White students and students of color. In spite of the defensiveness, as previously mentioned, it is important to note that college remediation is a core function of higher education for all students; and it has been for several centuries.

The reality of students needing multiple types and levels of assistance in order to be academically successful implies that the research as well as colleges and universities should focus on predictors of success for students (Boylan, 2002) such as HBCUs. Historically, HBCUs have had a solid foundation of providing educational opportunity for all. Regardless, the contributions of HBCUs have been largely ignored in the field of developmental education.

Even before the use of very selective assessment tools, professors in Black colleges were aware that education for a number of Blacks required the type of professors who could deal with a variety of deficiencies of a social, emotional, and academic nature (Jones & Richards-Smith, 1987). According to Jones and Richards-Smith (1987), the one exception to how students learn in PWIs as compared to Black colleges and universities is that at HBCUs they learn in a concerned, caring atmosphere where each student becomes a special person—special to himself, to the college, and to the professors. Fleming concluded that it was the *people factor* in education that distinguished the experience of African-American students in HBCUs from that in PWIs (Weber, 1992).

Further, Fleming stated, "It seems to me that remedial programs without a strong affective component are ineffective, because what really works for minority students is being in an institutional atmosphere that encourages them" (Weber, 1992, p. 21). Students attending HBCUs have higher retention rates, higher grade point averages, and are more likely to acquire graduate degrees and to report less discontent and isolation than those attending PWIs (Fleming, 1984; Gurin & Epps,

1975). We believe that there should be more research on HBCUs' success with students regardless of the level of academic preparedness or their racial status. Those lessons gleaned from HBCUs ought to provide a model for understanding how students of color's college life affect their academic success.

Unprepared for PWIs—Students of Color' College Experience

Any attempts at unbundling the college student's of color experience is at best challenging and at worst highly complex. The Good News is that HBCUs success with African Americans and other students proves that institutions of higher education can provide a nurturing, supportive environment with a faculty that have positive expectations and attitudes, with or without remedial interventions, that can facilitate the academic success of students of color and White students; they simply do a better job of helping students of color and underprepared students make a successful adjustment to college (Allen, 1992) That is, HBCUs have a positive influence on Black students' cognitive, academic, and interpersonal development. In any case, African-American students attending HBCUs are more successful academically than those students at PWIs (Fleming, 1984; Hughes, 1987; Sedlacek, 1999; Thomas, 1981).

According to some scholars (Bonner & Evans, 2004; Mendoza-Denton, & Page-Gould, 2008; Museus, 2008; Strayhorn, 2009), a number of factors serve as important contributors to the undergraduate experience: campus climate and environmental factors; academic integration and mentoring; and social integration experiences. Each of these factors individually and collectively play an important role in how minorities choose to interface with their respective institutions.

Important to not only the recruitment but also the retention of students of color to institutions of higher education are the ways in which students experience the campus environment. The literature is replete with descriptions offered up by individuals of color who describe these contexts as racist, stressful, chilly, depressing, and unwelcoming (Harris & Molock, 2000; Neville et. al., 2004; Smith, 2004; Turner & Myers, 2000; Watson, et al., 2002); thus, creating an exigency on the part of institutions to seek ways to change these perceptions.

Additionally, many students of color who attend postsecondary institutions continue to experience what Tinto (1975) has referred to as the lack of "student-institution" fit. Essentially, what Tinto concludes is that the more congruent a student is with the institutional context—the better the fit—the more likely the student will persist to graduation. Lastly, other than racial identity theorists (e. g., Cross, 1991; Helms, 1995), developmental theorists (e.g., Kohlberg,1969; Maslow, 1954) have been remiss in applying development theory to persons of color in general and student development theory to student of color specifically.

Existing developmental theories that ignore cultural differences, erroneously assume that environment, culture, and backgrounds of students are the same. In essence, differences in race, ethnicity, and culture-related factors such family roles,

child-rearing practices, cultural values, and growing up as a person of color in American should create different developmental dynamics for students (Herndon & Moore, 2002). In other words, the cultural differences are too strong to be ignored.

Factors Contributing to the Academic Success of Student of Color

Regardless of levels of academic preparedness, a vast majority of students of color who manage to get through the doors of PWIs often find themselves ill prepared to survive on these campuses. Students of color who do not hold positive racial identities may be especially vulnerable. Several factors such as race-related stress, psychological/interpersonal stress, and academic stress; poor self-esteem; negative racial identity, low academic and social self-concepts, and family background and the institutions themselves contribute significantly to students of color academic success or lack of success (Cureton, 2003; Fleming, 1984; Herndon & Moore, 2002).

For example, students of color enrolled in PWIs report feeling isolated so that the need for affiliation outweighs need for achievement or they feel that they must choose between need for academic success and need for affiliation or social integration. Other factors that strongly impact the academic success of students of color include psychosocial and racial identity development, family, and culture (Herndon & Moore, 2002; Neville et al., 2004; Wilson & Constantine, 1999). These factors compounded with their previous academic experiences with racial inequities (e.g., glass ceilings, admissions policies, culturally biased testing; unfair grading polices) destroy students' of color abilities to achieve academic success.

As expected, students attending HBCUs are better adjusted and have better successful psychosocial adjustment than African American students at PWIs (Fleming, 1984; Hughes, 1987; Thomas, 1981). Success is impacted at the micro-level through faculty attitudes and interactions as well as the macro-level through institutional culture and climate towards these students. For that reason, it is imperative for PWIs concerned about the academic success of students of color to recognize institutional factors (e.g., the lack of attention to multicultural education in classes, academic preparedness, and student relationships with faculty, other students) can influence the achievement of students of color.

As African Americans who attended PWIs and as faculty currently employed in PWIs, we offer our narratives, four different journeys as African-American baccalaureate students up through the ranks of acquiring master's and doctorates in PWIs as illustrations of the experiences of African-American students in PWIs. Our struggles and experiences are consistent with the literature presented in this article and the experiences and feelings of other African Americans and students of color attending PWIs. Therefore, we hope that this glimpse of our real life experiences will provide inside perspectives that make the other information presented in this article real and human for our readers.

Narrative One: Why Don't Y'all Go to Your Own Schools

At 7:55 a.m., September of 1975, I vividly remember feeling extremely frustrated and sweating bullets as I rounded the corner for the tenth time, trying to find Biology 100 lecture hall, on the humongous campus on the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) then Chicago Circle. I was a bright-eyed undergraduate of 18 years, freshly (two months and two days) thrust into Chicago from the backwoods of Southern Arkansas during the height of the Black power era. This marked behavior of circling around aimlessly trying to find my way and negotiate and access the necessary resources (financial aid, advising, mentoring, academic and social enclaves became a metaphor for my experience during my 13-year undergraduate and graduate tenure at predominantly White institutions (PWIs). Circling and the following two painful and degrading incidents from my doctoral program set the tone for my experience on PWIs.

The first incident was during a doctoral course in higher education. The second author, then a doctoral student in higher education, was presenting his paper on the glass ceiling and racial and gender bias relating to graduate admission policies and the recruiting of women faculty and faculty of color. He compared these practices of HBCUs and PWIs. One of the White female students, after hearing the success HBCUs have had with African-Americans students remarked, "Why are you all trying to come to our schools? I don't see why you don't go to your schools." The professor said nothing.

The next semester, while sitting through an Educational Psychology course, listening to a White male psychology professor try to explain why White men would not be a minority in the year 2020, I was once again insulted as a student of color. The professor concluded in his remarks, "If you have less than 1% Indians, about 3% Asians, 12% African Americans, and 24-25% Hispanics and add them all up, there would be 40% and hell, half of those are damn women." The White students turned to me for a reaction as an eerie quite silence loomed over the room. I swallow the lump in my throat along with a lethal remark, a morsel of dignity, and buried my pride in that eerie silence—waiting for the others to say something, say anything. Disappointingly, no one spoke up—not for me or for my people or other people of color.

Reflecting back on my experience, I naively thought then that my initial transition into college life was difficult because Chicago was a big city and I was merely a country bumpkin. Now looking back 30 years later, through multicultural lens, with an understanding of White and gender privilege, I know the PWIs, though maybe not intentionally, were unprepared and ill-prepared for African-American students. This was evident by the small isolated pockets of courses, programs, and activities labeled African American such as Black student organizations, ethnic studies programs, courses, and a handful of faculty and administrators. Similarly, at the graduate level few of the education, psychology, and counseling courses that

I took made any reference to the experiences of people of color (people who look like, thought like, and acted like me) in education or mental health.

It wasn't until I entered the doctoral program that I felt included. I was immediately adopted by the African-American community within the university. In addition, I was part of a strong Black graduate student peer group and we looked out for each other. In my program area, I was embraced by White faculty who were supportive, culturally responsive and sensitive, and provided excellent mentoring. My doctoral counseling cohort, although I was the only African-American student in the program, were supportive and like the Black student group, we too, look out for each other.

Nevertheless, outside of the program and my peer groups, the campus was not prepared for students of color. Like the other PWIs that I attended, there were some faculty and administrators of color, minorities programs, activities, and groups, but without any university-level integrated holistic approach or roadmap focused on the academic and social success of students of color. This left me and other students of color to fend for ourselves often without the resources or knowledge to access resources in our academic environment.

Based on my subsequent coursework and experiences in culturally monolithic academic environments, I now realize that was not part of the equation, or my people, or other people of color. As a consequence, my experience on White campuses compromised my growth as an African-American person, and most importantly ill-prepared me to work with other people of color. Hence, when I look back over my 13 years of academic coursework, for sure, by Eurocentric standards, I received top-notch education. From an Afrocentric perspective, however, I was cheated out of a cultural experience, one that included having students of color and faculty of color in classes, having White professors and students who were culturally sensitive and responsive, and reading textbooks and other instructional materials included and reflected the experiences of my people.

Narrative Two: Girl Raised in the South (G.R.I.T)

Realizing that education is the key to success, I left home in pursuit of a college degree. As a first generation African-American female, my collegiate experiences during my undergraduate and graduate years posed several challenges at each of the predominately White institutions (PWIs) in the South and the Midwest. Moving away from home and living on campus for the first time was overwhelming. I needed a cultural community that would show me the ropes and help to smooth my transition. I was out of luck because there were no "programs" designed at this university to meet my needs. My only source of finding this community was in the Black Greek letter organizations. I joined one of the fraternity auxiliary groups and later a sorority. These organizations allowed me to feel connected culturally and socially, explore my leadership and interpersonal skills, and to develop personally and academically.

During my graduate study at the master's level, there were a total of ten members in my cohort and I was the only African American, female or male, in the program. I struggled both cognitively and developmentally in the course of Basic Statistics. I had to pass this course to graduate. There were no "tutoring programs" in place at the university at that time. I had heard "stories" from other African-American students about this professor and did not want to speak with him for fear that he would view my situation as a "stereotypical African-American student" who did not study but yet expected to be "given" everything as a result of Affirmative Action programs. I shared my challenges in the course with one of my White male cohort members and he spoke to the professor (they were fraternity brothers) on my behalf. Acting as a conduit, my cohort member communicated the material that the professor wanted me to study so that I could pass the final exam.

Heading back to school at the age of 40, as the research terminology prefers to phrase as "re-entry into the academy," I began my doctoral studies. My major anxieties focused on writing scholarly research papers in each class and finding a community that would meet my cultural, spiritual, social, and recreational needs. These anxieties were realized during various stages of my doctoral studies. For example, when one of my professors instructed me to get tutoring with my writing at the university's Writing Lab because she did not like my writing style, I had no idea that such a place existed since I had not had this type of service available to me at the master's level. I attended the writing lab and was given a tutor. After three revisions on the first six-page assigned paper, the professor finally accepted my assignment. I felt that this professor's request was unusual because how did I write well for three other professors and not for the fourth one? She was the only professor during my entire doctoral studies of three years, including writing the dissertation, who requested that I attend the Writing Lab. My experience with this professor proved to be a negative one with thoughts of racism as a possibility for her unfavorable treatment towards me in class.

The challenges that I faced at each of the PWIs are not "atypical" to African-American students or students of various ethnic groups who experience a lack of tolerance for diverse groups, feelings of mistrust among university officials, a sense of isolation and loneliness, and a place to carry out their own customs and traditions. Resources and services for African-American students at these types of colleges were not a top priority for university officials and administrators despite the efforts of Affirmative Action programs. College administrators and faculty must be intentional in identifying and implementing services and resources that would assist African-American students and all students of color to be successful during their collegiate years.

With a lack of resources and services during my undergraduate years, feelings of insecurity and inadequacy in the classroom during my master's study, and blatant racism in my doctoral studies, I found these challenges to be unacceptable at each of my institutions but was able to persist and persevere despite the odds.

Although I was successful in pursuit of each of my degrees, services and resources such as tutoring, cultural organizations, and mentoring proved to be valuable and empowering during my collegiate experiences.

Narrative Three: Beyond Expectations— Surviving My Freshman Year at a PWI

As I reflect on my experiences in predominantly White institutions, I am reminded of an unforgettable moment in my life that happened during my first year experience as a freshman. I had just graduated in June from a public high school located in the largest urban school district in Indiana. I was an African-American female who was counted as one of the 30% racial minorities attending this college preparatory institution. I knew the cultural climate wasn't the best, but during my four years I didn't experience any racial discrimination.

I remembered my excitement about leaving home and finally gaining my independence. I was enthusiastic about and interested in making new friends, especially with my roommate. Well, that moment finally arrived!! I checked in to the dormitory early that afternoon. I settled in and waited for several hours to meet this wonderful person. I envisioned a friendship that would last forever. Finally, late evening, the door opened and there they stood a young Caucasian woman, her mother, father, and boyfriend with looks of disbelief, disappointment, and dismay. They finally entered the room, casually spoke, and carefully placed some of her clothes in the closet. Of course, most of her clothes remained packed for the next few days and there was absolutely no, I mean no, conversation.

After about a week, my roommate came in early that day and discovered an African-American friend sitting on the edge of her bed. She was livid! She ran out of the room downstairs to the office screaming and hollering lascivious words and accusing me and my friend of having cooties and tails like monkeys. She imagined her bed filled with bugs because my friend had sat on the edge. Shockingly, the dorm mother offered little or no support for me and insisted that I move into another room. What a great introduction to independence and the college experience! Fortunately for me, through the love and supported of my family, I not only learned the significance of the struggle to our literal and spiritual survival, but I also learned to embrace it and appreciate the struggle of being an African-American in a predominantly White institution enough to continue my educational path to and throughout graduate school.

Similarly, I entered my graduate studies with the same level of enthusiasm. Although the experience was different at the graduate level, I still felt left out. I was at the beginning of my teaching career and had to take night courses when I enrolled in my Master's classes. As a consequence, I was not on campus enough to feel included, to bond with other students, and to develop those necessary networks.

This was the same situation in my doctoral program with the added factor of

having to commute about seventy miles one way to take classes while still maintaining a career and a family. As one can imagine, this was an arduous task! I found rather quickly that I had to be instrumental in finding mentoring and support outside and inside the university environment.

Like my undergraduate experience, I found myself being isolated and alienated by many of my White peers. That is, isolated literally and isolated because my interests and area of focus was different from mainstream students. However, the isolation that I experienced, along with my multicultural interests, created stress and a feeling of not belonging.

Therefore, to combat this isolation and loneliness and keep me motivated, I sought out students of color in other program areas and discovered they were experiencing the same isolation and loneliness. Eventually, I developed a strategic plan for myself in order to overcome the obstacles and hostile environments which included developing my own research agenda so that I would not be dependent on collaborative efforts. Fortunately, as a faculty of color in a predominantly White institution, I am still interested in education and I am still excited about making new friends. However, I even more fortunately have the same strategic plan focused on overcoming the obstacles in hostile environments.

Narrative Four: Past Reflections to Elicit Forward Movement

From my undergraduate mission to become an orthodontist to my graduate and post graduate desires to become a college president, finding some sense of agency and a niche in the academy that would afford me the luxury just to "be me"—an African-American male—serves as the theoretical perspective from which this narrative is constructed.

As an eager new undergraduate student at The University of North Texas (then called North Texas State University), I entered the institution with a heightened degree of excitement as well as trepidation. Although I graduated with honors and in the top 10% of my high school class, coming from a small, rural town of less than 1,500 people in Northeast Texas—was I truly ready to tackle this hydra called higher education?

It was not until the conclusion of my freshman year that I gained some sense of comfort in my abilities to not only do college level work but to also excel in my endeavors. I was awarded the University's top honor for academic achievement—The University Interscholastic Services Award—a coveted prize presented to the African-American and Hispanic student in each class with the highest overall grade point average. Receiving this award was the true beginning of combating my feelings of inadequacy.

Perhaps what led to my solid undergraduate record was the mentoring and guidance I received from my Department advisor. From the first day I sat down in his office—a space befitting a chemist with beakers, Bunsen burners, and a bumper

sticker that stated, "Honk if you passed Physical Chemistry!"—I knew that I would find a constant source of support. As a professor in the field of higher education, I am keenly aware of the literature in the field that speaks to best practices in retaining students of color in academe. Yet, it was my authentic experience as a student of color—sitting knee-to-knee with an advisor, who said—"I am invested in your successful completion of this program, and if that means providing you with individual tutorial sessions, I am willing to do that…" which made the difference.

After completing my undergraduate studies, I secured a graduate fellowship in engineering. This experience rapidly proved to be my first true foray with overt racism. It was the opening informational session for students enrolled in the College of Engineering. The conference room was filled with students, faculty, and administration. The Dean opened by providing a "State of the College" address and in his concluding remarks mentioned his plan to initiate an exchange program with a local HBCU—providing students with an opportunity to cross-enroll in courses. Suddenly, a student from the back of the room retorted; "I'm not going over there with those niggers!" I have learned, primarily through teaching graduate courses in college student development theory, that we typically make three key choices when we are in unfavorable environments—we change the environment, change ourselves, or flee—in this case I chose to flee.

Leaving this catabolic environmental context proved to be one of the best decisions I made. I left the engineering graduate program, returned to my hometown, and worked as a substitute teacher for an entire year. This respite provided me with the time I needed, the time I didn't take between my undergraduate and graduate program, to truly find out what it was that I ultimately wanted to do with my life. Little did I know that this time of reflection and deep contemplation would lead me to the College of Education at Baylor University.

I found my experiences at Baylor to be quite affirming. As an institution with pretty low enrollments among populations of color, I was somewhat skeptical of their commitment to diversity. After all, I had just escaped an institution that I perceived to be at best inhospitable to students of color. Yet, my Baylor experience was diametrically opposed to my previous engagement—the students that I encountered in my classes seemed to readily welcome diversity and the faculty seemed to overextend their hospitality and sense of concern for my academic well being.

Graduate school in general and Baylor in particular taught me some very important lessons. I continued to benefit from these strong lessons in my final engagement as a doctoral student at The University of Arkansas. Perhaps the most critical lesson being the importance of administration, faculty, and staff creating institutional environments that welcome students of color. As the age-old axiom asserts, "Hindsight is twenty-twenty," but if we are to presently make strides in the recruitment and retention of students of color in institutions of higher education—we better find a new pair of glasses.

Preparing Me for My Future

It was 1984, and it all began at a small private college, Westminster College. Westminster College had a student population of 800 people—13 of which were Black. I can remember walking through the columns, a sacred ritual that symbolized the beginning and end of one's passage through the college. As I walked through the columns, I remembered scanning the faces of my fellow classmates, searching for faces that looked like mine. In my mind, I kept asking, "Where are the students who look like me?" Finally, my eyes rested on three who fit the qualification. It was as if we were little Black dots in the crowd. Little did I know, that this was just the start of my educational experience—an education that taught me not only about academics but also about how to be comfortable with being different.

I can recall going through rush that first month of college. There were only two sororities on campus: Kappa Alpha Theta and Kappa Kappa Gamma. Prior to arriving on campus, I was so excited. As I read through the brochures on sorority life, I could picture myself as a sorority girl. It was then, I determined that I would be a sorority girl—after all, isn't that a part of college life? As I went through rush week, I noticed I was the only Black person there. There were no other Blacks pledging as members of either sorority. As it came time for us to commit to actually choosing one sorority or the other, I remember asking myself these questions: "Do I really want to do this; can I really do this; and do I really want to be the *only* one?" My response to my own questions was a resounding, "No". It was too much for me to be comfortable with this trailblazer role of being the *only one*.

This would not be the only time I would find myself face-to-face with a dilemma. In fact, in my short two-year stint at Westminster College I was forced to deal with convert racial insults of my personhood, such as being the only Black person or person of color in many or most of my classes, having to prove to people that you were actually worthy intellectually to be there, or having to answer questions such as "Why don't you wash your hair everyday?" To add insult to injury, I remember trying to unsuccessfully to blend in with other students. In particular, I recall attending White fraternity parties and feeling uncomfortable and out of place, feeling like everyone was looking at me, and wondering if there would be music I could dance to or even if I would be asked to dance or my going on excursions to other college campuses to get cultural fulfillment or simply to maintain my sanity.

Another incident that remains vivid in my mind was the Black Students Association protesting a White fraternity's racist depicting of the annual ceremony of the Old South, specifically, having a White fraternity student dressed as a slave with Black shoe polish on his face driving a horse buggy down fraternity row. However, the final straw and the time I started to seriously consider transferring schools came when a fellow Black classmate and I were leaving the library and stumbled upon the word "Nigger" written on steps of the college library.

The next year, with help of new African-American friends that I had made

during the summer, I set out to seek greener (at least, more colorful) pastures. In fact, with persuasion from some friends, I transferred to Texas Tech University sight unseen. I was so excited because to me going to a university meant a diverse student body with plenty of students who looked like me. I did not know that this would only be a continuation of my previous experience. What I found indeed was a larger Black population, that is, if you consider 500 students out of 20,000 students a large Black population. Although, in numbers there were more Black students, it was still like being little Black specks and to my disappointment, it was more of the same racist stuff that I had left behind in the other institution, namely, being the only or one of a few Black students in the class and proving your intellectual worthiness. On a positive note, this would just be a continuation of my education and my preparation for the future.

Our Experiences Looking through the Lens of Developmental Education

"In the end," says Dr. Martin Luther King, "We will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends" (Washington, 1991). The same themes of social isolation, hostile, unwelcoming environments spoken about in books and articles on the experiences of students of color at White institutions resonate in our narratives. However, from a developmental education perspective, that is, the cognitive and affective growth of all postsecondary learners, at all levels of the learning continuum (Boylan, 1988), next to racism, Dr. King's words capture one on the most powerful and deadliest enemies to our development as African-American students—silence.

In that vein, we reflected on that silence in the multiple examples of racism that we encountered, and there were no interventions on our behalf. The first narrative author recounted painful memories when White professors and White students and her fellow doctoral students said nothing when she, her race, her African American history, value systems, and culture were verbally attacked. Similarly, the second narrative author described a racist incident during her undergraduate dormitory experience where she felt unfairly accused and verbally attacked by a White room-mate who ran screaming from the room because she thought she and her African-American friend had "cooties and tails like monkeys." Instead of speaking out on her behalf, her resident supervisor, the dorm mother, insisted that she move into another room.

Or more subtle silence, as the fifth narrative author has never forgotten the emotions that she experienced when she and her fellow Black Student Association members were the only group protesting a White fraternity's blatant racist depiction of the annual ceremony of the Old South. In particular, the second narrative author shared an incident when in an open forum in the middle of a Dean's State of the College speech, a White student was allowed to blurt out the words "I'm not

going over there with those niggers!" with no public outcry or discourse of any kind in response to this incident. Sadly, both the second and fifth narrative authors fled institutions where White students, faculty, and administrators failed to speak out against blatant racial epithets and incidents.

On the contrary, there were also experiences that have facilitated our developmental growth. Case in point, the second narrative author shares a positive experience as a student of color with a White advisor, "sitting knee-to-knee with his advisor assuring him that he was invested in his successful completion of this program, even if that "means providing you with individual tutorial sessions." The author of the third narrative had a fellow White male doctoral student intervene on her behalf with her White male professor, his fraternity brother, in order to help her pass a course. Evidently, by our degrees and faculty positions, we are all considered academically successful—but not without scars or cost.

Thus, as seen in our reflections, from a developmental education perspective, the deficit blocking our progress was not in us, but rather the institutions that we attended, strictly speaking, lack of preparedness for African-American students and a lack of culturally sensitive curricular, programs, and activities to meet our needs. That is, not to say, that there are not African-American students are not in need of remedial developmental education. Regardless of their academic status, academic preparedness, or the type of institution, sensitivity and responsiveness to individual differences and special needs among learners, assessing cultural differences, providing diagnostic assessment and placement, using general and discipline-specific learning strategies, and understanding the affective barriers to learning are key elements to African American students' success. This means that developmental education, a continuing force in academia must take an important leadership role in higher education with African-American students who enter with or without academic deficiencies.

Cultural Responsive Holistic Strategies
for Preparing Students of Color for PWIs

As evident in the above anecdotes, academic success is a complex and persistent problem and the authors' experiences of racism, discrimination, conflict, social and academic isolation mimic the same experiences of students of yesterday as well as those of today. Facilitating the academic success of African-American students at PWIs requires intensive efforts on the part of faculty and the predominantly White institutions, as well as a partnership between the faculty and administrators at PWIs and African Americans. Thus, from a developmental perspective, we believe that the time has come to rethink the traditional transition from high school to college. This could mean moving from a principle of remediation to acceleration, moving from a principle of seeing diverse students not as liabilities but as assets.

One example of this principle in action is the Early College High School,

where underrepresented and underserved high school students have access to college. Usually these programs are collaborations between community colleges and school districts; they compress together high school and the first two years of college. These high school students have access to college instruction, advising, and advanced credit or remediation. By the time students graduate from high school, they also get an associate's degree. Also, college faculty and advisors get a better idea of the conditions of learning. This type of initiative can have multiple advantages starting with vastly heightened articulation between high school and college curricula. Articulation is simplified because high school and college teachers find themselves in the same department.

Other advantages of Early College High School include improved early identification of academic problems, improved college entry advising, and increased speed through both the high school curriculum and any needed remediation. A feature of these programs could be college-bridge programs modeled on Upward Bound, starting at the summer prior to the junior year. The goal of these programs would be to extend the year provided by the Early College High School, with more focus on nurturing and preparing students for college. Perhaps the most important effect is that having access to college curriculum, faculty, and advisors can help to promote a culture college on the high school campus and White college faculty having early (and more) access to students of color.

Developmental education advisors should work with schools to encourage students' college-readiness by guiding juniors to plan on rigorous senior years. Earlier identification of skill deficiencies could help developmental education advisors lead students to summer bridge programs during their junior and senior years. Such efforts must require increased sensitivity on the part of developmental education advisors because of the second set of predictive factors in this article, those associated to poverty.

Whether the interventions are cognitive, social, or emotional, it is certain that they cannot come early enough, and developmental education advisors have a critical role. Just as important, there is a need for a student development model for African American students and holistic institutional-related strategies that focus on curricular and environmental modifications so that the classroom and the institutional environment is not only conducive to optimal learning and engagement, but address the social, affective and cultural needs of students of color and of all students. Successful strategies must also include an acceptance of a diversity of students' learning styles, students' interests, and most importantly, the affirming of students as culturally diverse individuals with diverse needs and concerns in philosophy and in action. In addition, we offer the following culturally responsive holistic and developmentally appropriate strategies for preparing and facilitating the academic success of students of color on predominantly White college campuses.

For optimal effects, we recommend that institutions develop mental health and social, identity and leadership development strategies to meet the students' of color

academic, developmental, and cultural needs. As witnessed in the above narratives, other key areas that must be considered when attempting to shed light on African American college students in the academy is the degree of academic and social integration and mentoring that these students receive. Therefore, holistic, culturally responsive strategies for African-American students must integrate psycho-social, family, peer, and institutional factors such as the following:

(a) requiring diversity sensitive training for everyone (administrators, faculty, staff, and students) specifically about African-American life; this training should include strategies for improving faculty expectations and cultural biases, the classroom and institutional climate, and ultimately, faculty-student relations, student-student relations, and student-administrator relations;

(b) mandatory and monitored curricular (with multicultural considerations) that is nondiscriminatory, free of cultural bias, and speaks to the strength of African-American students;

(c) clear strategic plans to create a critical mass of people of color;

(d) acknowledging the presence of privilege, "Whiteness," and White-American ethnicity in curricular and cultural activities;

(e) exposing students to activities, events, and organizations that reflect their cultural backgrounds;

(f) institutional practices that reflect non-Eurocentric paradigms, for example, practices that are collectivistic rather than individualistic;

(g) encouraging students to form networks in their social community, familial, and clergy-based institutions; and lastly,

(h) developing partnerships with the African-American community and other communities of color.

Conclusion

How do we bridge these barriers of race, language, culture, and attitude for the success of African-American students and other students of color? We sincerely believe the disconnect for most African-American students is not the lack of diagnostic assessment and placement or academic preparedness, but rather PWIs campuses lacking sensitivity and responsiveness to individual differences, special needs among diverse learners, culturally responsive learning strategies, and addressing the affective barriers to learning as set forth by the tenets of developmental education. Thus, another important role of developmental education should be to hold colleges and universities accountable for creating a more racially diverse

campus and providing opportunities for the academic achievement and educational attainment for these students, rather than "blaming the victim."

Finding a sense of academic comfort can be a formidable task for African-American students who often lack key role models and mentors to assist them in navigating the academic terrain. Also, locating a social niche in an environment that does not even remotely reflect the interests of African Americans is equally disheartening. Therefore, we believe that a concerted effort on the part of campus-based officials and community people who capture and validate the authentic voices of African Americans will be key.

Dr. Hodgkinson's (Former Director of Center for Demographic Policy at the Institute for Educational Leadership) response of, "not to lower the standards but to increase the effort" (George, 1993, p. 23) can still be applicable today. Further, he continued, "When we increase the access, people assume the quality is going down; and when we work on quality it is clear that access does go down because that's how we define quality. I think we need a teeter totter where both ends can go up simultaneously; then access and quality can go up together, and certain kids will not be systematically excluded in the process" (p. 23).

Perhaps, through the writing of this article and the sharing of our personal experiences as African-American students we can shed some light on the cognitive, affective, and spiritual realties of what being African-American students on predominantly White campuses is like and help find solutions to what is needed to prepare students of color for predominantly White campuses. Ironically, at the conclusion of writing this article, each of us discovered that the same negative experiences and factors that blocked our academic success as students of color in PWIs are the exact same ones, some 20 to 30 years later, now blocking our success as faculty of color in the promotion and tenure process in PWIs.

Nevertheless, we feel that our experiences as African-American students are consistent with the literature and research on students of color and our experiences in many ways epitomize the experiences of so many African-American students on predominantly White campuses, both yesterday and today. Thus, we hope that our experiences as African-American students provide validation for the experiences of other African-American students, and that the information gained from reading this article will aid not only in meeting the developmental needs and the academic success of African-American students, students of color, and students in general, by preparing PWIs for their diverse student body.

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