Indeed, a continuing dialogue about what constitutes relevant and essential preparation in student affairs is crucial to the ability of the profession to meet the changing needs of higher education.

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The Barriers of Race and Gender: The Experience of African-American Women in Higher Education

Deanna Jordan

In her famous "And arn't I am woman" speech, Sojourner Truth addresses the compromising position experienced by many African-American women in today's society (Hudson-Weems, 1989). The predicament of this population in higher education, especially at traditionally white universities, reflects similar sentiments. In addition to sharing many of the same racial prejudices as their male counterparts, African-American women also experience the prejudices that beset their gender. Although the number of opportunities in higher education, for both women and African-Americans, has increased over the past several decades, current enrollment statistics indicate that African-American women are not taking enough advantage of these opportunities (Guy-Sheftal & Bell-Scott, 1989).

In an effort to learn more about the experiences of being a "double minority," three African-American women from the Indiana University-Bloomington campus (IU) helped shed light upon the experiences of their population. This paper will discuss previously reviewed literature and propose recommendations for student affairs professionals in regards to working with African-American women.

As student affairs professionals, it is important to acknowledge our personal stereotypes about different student populations. Through challenging our underlying beliefs, we can educate ourselves to better serve these populations. These interviews provided an opportunity for me to examine my own underlying beliefs about African-American women, as well as the image portrayed by society through sources such as the media.

Literature Review

Much of the recent literature reflects the belief that African-American women are deficient in academic preparation for college (Lindsay, 1984; Garibaldi, 1990). Numerous researchers argue that "the quality of academic instruction in many urban schools attended by African-American girls is not comparable to that in many white suburban schools" (Lindsay, 1984, p. 142). Programs such as Upward Bound provide African-Americans from disadvantaged school systems access to an education and college preparatory skills otherwise unavailable.

Researchers address the lack of appropriate guidance and counseling services at both the high school and college levels. When discussing factors that influence the success of African-American women in college, all three women concurred regarding a lack of support from their high school guidance counselors.

This frustration continues at the college level. Small academic programs can create a

fishbowl effect for the minority students in that program. One respondent commented, "It amazes me that teachers I haven't even had know me. It's like I'm an anomaly or oddball or something" (personal communication, Nov. 20, 1992). Sedlacek's (1987) research suggests that this singling out of African-American students, lowering expectations of African-American students, and providing overly positive response to academic work constitute prejudice.

A lack of role models at the university level also plagues African-American female college students (Sedlacek, 1987). The lack of African-American professors, and women in particular, at the university level is evident at many universities, including IU African-American students also frequently feel intimidated by white professors (Sedlacek, 1987). The assumption that they will not be understood or accepted leads many African-American students to avoid personal interactions with their professors in spite of the fact that they may need their help.

Many studies have indicated that African-American women involved in extracurricular and co-curricular activities are happier and more successful at the college level (Guy-Sheftal & Bell-Scott, 1989; Lindsay, 1984; Sedlacek, 1987). All three respondents seemed to support these findings. Researchers such as Sedlacek and Brooks (1976), Astin (1982) and Tracey and Sedlacek (1984, 1985, 1987) have found that identification with an institution is an important factor in retention of African-American students. While numerous African-American students also report that predominantly white campuses feel socially alienating, and only 38% of African-American students say that they feel like a part of the campus, these three women are involved in organizations that provide them with a social network, a community of peers and an opportunity for involvement on the IU campus (Blake, 1987).

Another theme in the literature is that African-American women experience higher levels of stress in college, including feelings of tension, alienation and non-acceptance (Guy-Sheftal & Bell-Scott, 1989; Lindsay, 1984; Parham & Helms, 1985). The obvious combination of sexism and racism seems to be the underlying factor in all of these barriers. According to Hudson-Weems (1989), the African-American woman's experiences are so different from those of white women, their needs must be prioritized to address both issues of gender and race. One specific obstruction is the classroom environment. The issue of a "chilly" classroom environment is experienced by many women, especially African-Americans. Lack of attention from professors, discounting of ideas contributed during discussion, and lowered expectations are all examples of factors which create this unwelcome atmosphere in the classroom.

Smith and Witt's study (1990) indicates that African-American women consider skin color a greater source of discrimination than gender. These findings were further supported by the respondents. A study by Gooley (1989) reveals that African-American women have a stronger gender consciousness, as well as a strong race consciousness. Too often African-American women are seen on the same level as African-American men in the struggle for racial equality; their gender issues are minimized. One woman stated, "Being a black woman is more of a challenge. People look past the fact that I'm a woman and see my color first" (personal communication, Nov. 30, 1992).

Recommendations

African-American women are trying to find a niche in traditionally white institutions of higher education despite many challenges. American colleges and universities, and specifically student affairs professionals, need to examine more thoroughly their response to the needs of African-American women.

One recommendation towards this goal is an institutional commitment to a diverse faculty and staff population. Based on the research and the responses of the three women interviewed, IU and many other campuses across the country do not have a faculty and staff that is representative of the African-American population. This denies African-American women not only professors that they can feel comfortable with, but also role models that they can look to for guidance and support.

Included in this diverse faculty and staff should be guidance and counseling services professionals specifically trained to recognize and meet the needs of African-American women. African-American women, as evidenced by the literature and the interviews, experience many stressors in college that can be overlooked or misunderstood by professionals. Providing support groups and special programs specifically for African-American women can aid in establishing a sense of support within the university.

Hughes (1987) found that student development programming specifically for African-American students is not being provided at colleges and universities. Student affairs professionals need to educate themselves about the specific developmental needs of African-American women and work to incorporate this knowledge into purposeful programs and interventions for this student population.

Educating students on campus about diversity, and specifically racism, is also important. Campuses should not continually look to the African-American student population to educate the rest of the campus about racism; rather, this programming should come from a wide variety of sources and receive the support of administrators on campus. Helping to create a learning environment where every student feels valued and able to learn should be the primary focus of this programming.

Another recommendation is stronger support of traditionally African-American student organizations, specifically those joined by African-American women. Traditionally African-American organizations provide a source of community and support, as well as a social outlet, for African-American women. These organizations need to be encouraged to participate on campus and recognized as an important aspect of campus life.

A final recommendation is for student affairs professionals at all levels to continue to examine their beliefs and challenge their paradigms about African-American women. Underlying assumptions affect our interactions with students. Realizing our own limitations makes us better prepared to help the students that rely on us for fair and equitable treatment.

Conclusion

The success of African-American women on traditionally white campuses, as exemplified by the respondents of this study, continues to evolve. However, these three successful women should not be the exception for their population on college campuses. Student affairs professionals need to help African-American women reach their potential by assisting them in finding their niche on predominantly white college campuses.

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Changing Sexual Behaviors of College Students

Max Davis O'Guinn

Although most college students are aware of the deadly nature of HIV, many believe that HIV infection is not an issue of personal concern. According to the American College Health Association, one in every 500 American college students is presently infected with human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and this number is rising. One of the major reasons students do not fear AIDS is because they do not see fellow college students infected with the disease. Because of the disease's long incubation period, symptoms, in some cases, can take up to ten years to become visible (Wickens, 1994). With an absence of an effective vaccine or treatment for AIDS, health professionals must capitalize upon the proactive role of education to stem the tide of this epidemic.

Many health educators and student affairs administrators assume that they are not responsible for informing students about AIDS. As Walters suggests, "it is a common fallacy that if educators provide the facts about HIV and AIDS, then students will reduce high-risk sexual behavior" (Walters, 1992). According to Kathryn Brown, an Indiana University Medical Center health educator, although the level of awareness is extremely high in college in terms of knowledge of AIDS, there is also a feeling that college students cannot get AIDS (Hahn, 1994, p.7). According to Weinstein, Rosen, and Atwood (1991), a large number of programs need to be actively directed toward altering risky behaviors of college students. The purpose of this paper is to suggest additional interventions by student affairs professionals and college administrators that focus on changing attitudes in order to reduce sexual behavior among college students, and therefore, reduce the transmission of HIV.

Several recent studies addressing AIDS knowledge, attitudes, and behaviors among college students have reported a dramatic increase in understanding of the disease. Two studies conducted at a private university in the South reported that, as a result of a vigorous AIDS prevention program sponsored by the university's student health center, students earned excellent scores on an AIDS knowledge test administered on campus. Unfortunately, however, the students believed that they were not very susceptible to AIDS and were unlikely to practice safe sex (Manning, Barenberg, Gallese, & Rice, 1989; Manning, Balson, Barenberg, & Moore, 1989).

A study by Weinstein, Rosen, and Atwood (1991) of 465 college and high school students resulted in similar conclusions. Although students involved in this study had gained substantial knowledge about AIDS, less than half reported a corresponding change in sexual behaviors. In addition, the number of partners with whom they were sexually involved since learning about AIDs had not decreased—3.5 (the number of sexual partners that respondents reported ever having) compared to 3.3 (sexual partners reported since learning about AIDS). "Thus, in general, knowledge about the disease, the immune system, and how AIDS is contracted is well known, but there is insufficient behavior change" (Weinstein, 1991, pp. 317–318).

Brown (1989) recognizes that college students' increased knowledge will not necessarily