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Minority Student Growth and Development in a Rural 4-Year College

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Walden University
2020

Abstract

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MSW, Syracuse University, 1997

BS, Temple University, 1996

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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January 2020

Abstract

At a Mid-Atlantic, 4-year, rural, higher education institution, the minority student population, 25%, is growing compared to the 9% of minority faculty representation. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of minority faculty and students regarding student learning associated with minority students' relationships to minority faculty. Critical race theory was used as part of the conceptual framework which provides a narrative on the perspectives of race and dispels myths, racial beliefs, and misrepresentations of the truth. Social learning theory was also used as part of the conceptual framework because it explains how social influences impact the beliefs and actions of individuals in society. A basic qualitative study was the research design and semistructured interviews were used to collect data from 5 minority faculty and 8 minority students. The research questions focused on how the participants perceive the effect of having minority faculty at the local study site. Criteria for participant selection included being at the study site for 1 year or more, being from diverse ethnic backgrounds, and being adults. Each transcribed interview was reviewed, then coded into the following categories and themes: experiences with minority faculty, no experiences with minority faculty, relationships with minority faculty, and diverse faculty provide advantages. The data noted that 92% of the minority participants thought there were advantages to having minority faculty compared to 8% who did not. A recommendation paper was the result of the research study. Based on the findings, positive social changes may occur that affect minority students and faculty by improving minority student learning, increasing minority student enrollment, and possibly an increasing minority faculty at higher education institutions.

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Dedication

I would like to dedicate this project study to my family and friends, especially my daughter and mother. I appreciate your love, support, and encouragement, which helped me purse my doctorate degree. I would also like to dedicate this project study to all the minority faculty who have made an impact on my life, mentored me, and taught me many life lessons. Thank you all for believing in me.

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Section 1: The Problem

The Local Problem

A small, Mid-Atlantic, rural university, provides both undergraduate and graduate programs to a growing number of ethnic minority students who may experience learning difficulties at the local institution. According to the vice president of the study site university, there is a lack of diversity at the study site. The gap in practice at the institution is the lack of diversity due to the increase of minority students, which is approximately 25%, compared to 9% part-time and 16.1% full-time minority faculty representation per the vice president of the university. The literature recognizes that there is a gap in higher education between minority students' learning experiences and teachers' pedagogical responses, such as in the following areas of curriculum, pedagogy, and interactions, which would require improvements to the educational system for better learning outcomes (Yuan, 2017).

A possible cause of minority student learning difficulties may be due to a lack of college preparatory skills services, such as reading and writing at higher educational institutions (Yuan, 2017). Abdul-Raheem (2016) noted that a culturally diverse environment enhances the learning process and ensures that the cultural needs of minority students are accepted and respected. In addition, a culturally diverse environment is important to the educational growth and development of the increasingly diverse population of minority students (Abdul-Raheem, 2016). I conducted this qualitative

study to examine the perceptions of minority faculty and students regarding student learning associated with minority students' relationships to minority faculty.

Rationale

According to the university vice president, the lack of diversity initiatives is a concern for the minority students' learning who may be dissatisfied with the culturally relevant activities, such as lecturers and student organizations. As a result of minority students voicing their concerns about the lack of diversity on campus, the institution incorporated a diversity committee to address the concerns and possibly change the campus culture. The diversity committee focuses on campus initiatives that include various activities such as providing cultural activities and having guests who are from different ethnic backgrounds, etc. In this study, I examined the perceptions of the minority faculty and students regarding student learning associated with minority students' relationships to minority faculty. The findings of this study provided a better understanding of how minority students may learn, develop, and/or relate to minority and nonminority faculty.

Definition of Terms

Defining the following terms provides clarity regarding the focus of the study.

Diversity: A variety of experiences, backgrounds, and perspectives making the entire faculty and student body unique (Hughes, 2015).

Mentoring: Professional networking, counseling, guiding, instructing, modeling, and sponsoring; that promote development and socialization (McCoy, Winkle-Wagner, & Luedke, 2015).

Minority faculty: Professors from various backgrounds other than White such as Asian American, Hispanic, Black, and Native American (Karkouti, 2016).

Minority students: Students from various backgrounds other than White such as Asian American, Hispanic, Black, and Native American (Karkouti, 2016).

Significance of the Study

In the study, I focused on minority student learning at the local institution. Scholars and researchers have recognized there is a lack of minority representation in higher education and the impact this may have on the academic environment (Abdul-Raheem, 2016; June, 2015; Tekleselassie, Mallery, & Choi, 2013). Minority representation may also enhance the academic experience of minority students through the opportunity to build relationships with a more diverse faculty (Hughes, 2015). In addition, the study findings may motivate administrators at the study site to make changes and create new cultural, behavioral, and relational initiatives (see Hughes, 2015).

Research Questions

I developed the research questions based on the growing number of minority students who may experience learning difficulties at the local institution. According to Snijders, Rikers, Wijnia, and Loyens (2018), student faculty relationships are considered important because these relationships are thought to positively influence students' college

experiences. In addition, having positive student-faculty relationships are found to promote student happiness, identity construction, academic efficacy, academic performance, self-esteem, and degree completion (Thiele, 2016). The research questions were:

1. What are the perceptions of minority faculty on student learning associated with minority students' relationships to minority faculty?

2. What are the perceptions of minority students on student learning associated with minority students' relationships to minority faculty?

Review of Literature

I conducted the literature review through the online Walden University Library. I located peer-reviewed journals through ERIC, Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, and Sage databases. The keyword search terms used were *minority students, minority faculty, diversity, higher education, critical race theory,* and *social learning theory.*

The extant research provided insights on various aspects of diversity in academia, specifically regarding minority faculty and students. I reviewed literature concerning diversity initiatives, the benefits of diverse faculty, recruitment practices, mentoring, learning, social learning theory, and critical race theory. Overall, the literature on critical race theory and social learning theory provided me with guidance for the direction of my project study.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework that guided my project study were critical race and social learning theories. These theories promote tools to evoke change and create positive outcomes due to racial and ethnic inequality in higher education (Pazich & Teranishi, 2014). Critical race and social learning theories also provide an understanding of the issues that affect minorities and their experiences in higher education (Pazich, & Teranishi, 2014).

Approximately 20 years ago, critical race theory emerged from the development and research of Derrick Bell (Berry et al., 2014; Howard & Navarro, 2016). Bell thought of the critical race theory as narratives to communicate perspectives on race and dispel myths, beliefs, and misrepresentations of the truth (Berry et al., 2014). Critical race theory is an intellectual and social tool that examines the oppression in education (Hernandez, 2016). There are marginalized populations, such as minority students, who deal with racism, power, and oppression in education (Hernandez, 2016). Critical race theory ultimately addresses racism that is perpetuated throughout U.S. society, which may affect minority students in higher education (Hernandez, 2016).

Critical race theory was relevant to my project study because it examines the impact of race and racism in relation to the structures, practices, and communications in higher education (Critical Race Theory in Higher Education, 2015). I developed the research questions to focus on the perceptions of minority faculty and students on student learning associated with minority students' relationships to minority faculty. The topic

regarding minority student learning and diverse faculty is racially and culturally sensitive and may be perceived as racism and/or discrimination (Critical Race Theory in Higher Education, 2015).

The other conceptual framework that I used in my project study is the social learning theory. According to Kattari (2015), social learning theory, also known as social cognitive theory, was developed by Bandura with Rotter from the 1950s through the 1970s. Social learning theory explains how social influences impact the beliefs and actions of individuals in society (Kattari, 2015).

According to Karunanayake and Nauta (2004), social learning theory suggests that people learn from watching others, which fosters role models. Many theories have argued that individuals seek out role models who they perceived to be similar to them by identifiable characteristics (i.e., race or ethnicity), which have shown to be effective (Karunanayake & Nauta, 2004). Studies have also shown that students identify with the same race and gender role models (Karunanayake & Nauta, 2004).

There is a connection between critical race and social learning theories based on diversity in higher education and how students learn (Miller Dyce & Owusu-Ansah, 2016). The ways in which students learn and the influences of the environment were essential to my project to understand how students develop and relate to other students and faculty. Critical race theory focuses on the impact of race and racism on structures and practices in higher education as well as students' learning environment (Critical Race Theory in Higher Education, 2015). Social learning theory also explores race and

ethnicity, but it also includes how students learn by seeking role models who look like

them (Karunanayake & Nauta, 2004).

The learning experiences of traditional-aged minority students are relevant to

social learning theory and to the research questions of this study that focused on the

perceptions of minority faculty and students regarding student learning associated with

minority students' relationships to minority faculty. Social learning theory provided

insight into how social influences may impact the beliefs and actions of minority

students' academic experiences. The topic is sensitive and may raise awareness of the

learning process for minority students (Lynn, Jennings, & Hughes, 2013).

Critical race and social learning theories are relevant and appropriate to my

project study regarding the misunderstanding and misinterpretation by society of race,

learning, and development in higher education for minority students. The theories were

also relevant to the research questions to help understand the structures and practices of

race and racism in higher education, the students' learning environment, and how social

influences may impact the beliefs and actions of students. In addition, both theories

provided an understanding of the study participants' perceptions.

Review of the Broader Problem

There are an increased number of minority students in many institutions

nationwide (Luster-Edward & Martin, 2019). Scholars have recognized the problem and

acknowledge the need to include and/or increase diversity initiatives in higher education

(Hughes, 2015; Vollman, 2016). Institutions are challenged by the need to increase

diversity initiatives through the college programs and processes that are currently in place (Turner, 2013). In the United Kingdom, institutions are attempting to create inclusive environments due to the increase of diverse students (Kimura, 2014). As I completed the review of literature, I noted various themes and/or topics on institutional diversity, minority students, diverse sociocultural backgrounds, learning, development, and diverse experiences in higher education.

Minority Students and Learning in Higher Education

In the past, minority students have been viewed as inferior, culturally deprived, and deficient in learning (Yuan, 2017). Minority students have experienced lower academic achievement in the educational system (Yuan, 2017). Walls and Hall (2018) noted that minority students often have low grade point averages and are less likely to attend graduate school.

Researchers have found that minority students experience cognitive, emotional, and behavioral stress at predominately White institutions that are racially insensitive and/or noninclusive (Walls & Hall, 2018). Some examples of stress include anxiety, defensiveness, or shyness that may occur during race-related discussions in the classroom, and it is important to understand minority students' perspectives to encourage student engagement (Walls & Hall, 2018). Fickel, Henderson, and Price (2017) also noted that minority students experience low educational outcomes compared to nonminority students. The effectiveness of a teacher is important and can improve the learning differences between minority and nonminority students (Fickel et al., 2017).

Other researchers have indicated that the academic performance of minority students who take online courses experience better learning outcomes due to the convenience and flexibility of online courses (Yeboah & Smith, 2016). Kuo and Belland (2016) also discussed the similar advantages of flexibility and convenience but noted that access to technology and Internet are challenges for minority students in online instruction. Minority students rated online graduate career and counseling resources very helpful compared to nonminority students who rated the services as less helpful (Milman, Posey, Pintz, Wright, & Zhou, 2015).

Higher educational institutions in the United States and the United Kingdom are increasing in diverse students and it is important that the education gauge the learning of all students in the classroom (Hughes, 2016; Walls & Hall, 2018). The curriculum and pedagogy should incorporate the world view and experiences of all students (Hughes, 2016). In the United Kingdom, institutions noted that they failed to provide appropriate educational experiences to minority students; however, they reevaluated the teaching and learning practices to improve the education for the diverse student body (Hughes, 2016). Meanwhile, the colleges in the United States recognized that the learning experiences of minority students were not the same as majority students and they attempted to improve the environment by engaging minority students in the classroom (Walls & Hall, 2018).

Diverse Sociocultural Backgrounds

Diverse sociocultural backgrounds may be an important factor in the experiences of students and their learning and success in academia (Snowball & McKenna, 2017). A

sociocultural environment comprises physical, social, and cultural characteristics (Jessee, 2016). Examples of physical, social, and cultural characteristics include the layout of space, interactions among participants, and participant roles (Jessee, 2016). With these characteristics, an overall sociocultural atmosphere is possible and can produce positive measurable learning outcomes (Jessee, 2016).

Other researchers have suggested that institutions should take into consideration the prior knowledge of minority students they bring to the classroom based on their cultural and sociopolitical experiences (Castillo-Montoya, 2017). Taking into consideration minority students' prior knowledge would help faculty understand how their minority students, who are from diverse backgrounds learn (Castillo-Montoya, 2017). In addition, the academic standards and how cultural differences contribute to individuals' identities and their development of cognitive processes were discussed, which means that minority students' learning experiences may be different from nonminority students (Sharp, 2017).

In the literature, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds were found to be underrepresented in higher education; however, despite any challenges they may face, researchers noted that they tend to do well academically (Stone et al., 2016). While minority students from low socioeconomic backgrounds may be underrepresented in higher education, it is suggested that institutions provide opportunities for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds to engage with other students, faculty, their families, and communities to ensure successful student outcomes (Devlin & McKay, 2018). It

would be important to examine if support initiatives such as writing, counseling, or career services, play a role in the success of low socioeconomic students through research gathered by an institution (Stone, Walton, Clark, & Ligertwood, 2016).

Although students from low socioeconomic backgrounds are underrepresented in higher education, the recruitment and retention process of teachers at rural institutions is a concern as well. According to Azano and Stewart (2016), maintaining teachers at rural schools is difficult due to the limited resources and shortfalls, such as technology and lack of student motivation. In addition, rural areas have challenges related to poverty, geographic location, low salaries, and lack of community amenities (Azano & Stewart, 2016).

Researcher have suggested that schools have teacher preparation programs in place with culturally responsive pedagogy, which will allow teachers to understand their students, have meaningful teaching experiences, and address recruitment and retention issues (Azano & Stewart, 2016). Exploring culturally responsive pedagogy helps students learning, engage, and blend their home lives with circular goals (Azano & Stewart, 2016). Snowball and McKenna (2017) also discussed teaching and learning strategies for minority students from various sociocultural backgrounds that includes incorporating student-generated content, which allows minority students to bring their knowledge and experiences to the classroom.

Minority Student Development

Most of the recent literature on minority student development focused on learning disabilities, languages, and science programs; however, some researchers discussed the development of minority students in higher education, focusing on aspects of academic achievement. Researchers found that monitoring the academic preparedness of minority students who took the standardized aptitude test (SAT) was essential for college admissions because they noticed there were some discrepancies in SAT scores between minority and nonminority students (Santelices & Wilson, 2015). The revised SAT exam would calculate a new score and include a subset of questions that were favorable toward minority students (Santelices & Wilson, 2015). The researchers thought that implementing a revised SAT would possibly improve the SAT scores and help minority students with their college admissions, academic achievement, motivation, and performance outcomes (Santelices & Wilson, 2015).

Roksa and Whitley (2017) also discussed academic motivation including psychological factors such as grades and persistence, that contribute to academic success, which may improve student outcomes. They noted that African American students benefit less from academic motivation than their White peers (Roksa & Whitley, 2017). Samura (2016) found that the research on college student development stated that students who have a sense of belonging succeed in college. A sense of belonging is associated with a feeling of morale and having an affiliation with a group, which is

relevant to minority student development because students form relationships and/or associations with their peers in college that can be long lasting (Samura, 2016).

In addition, minority students can encounter isolation, stereotypes, and microaggressions in the classroom from their nonminority peers (Harris & Linder, 2018). When these encounters occur in the classroom, a negative learning environment can be created for minority students (Harris & Linder, 2018). Scott (2017) suggested that nonminority students foster intellectual discussions with their fellow minority students to get to know other students who do not look like them.

Lack of Institutional Diversity

The lack of institutional diversity is a topic that universities nationwide are attempting to address. Historically, institutional diversity has been a theme throughout higher education to the present (Chen, 2017). There have been shifts in student population, curriculum reforms, and types of colleges which influenced the rise of institutional diversity (Chen, 2017).

During 2003 to 2013, the supreme court decisions focused on racially sensitive admissions processes that brought attention to the educational benefits of diversity, which included meeting the needs of diverse students and increasing institutional effectiveness (Benefits of Institutional Diversity, 2013; Tienda, 2013). The supreme court decisions also addressed affirmative action in relation to the admissions process and increasing minority faculty, staff, and students at colleges (Ward & Zarate, 2015). As I read the

literature, I noticed the promotion of diversity was a key element in higher education

(Tienda, 2013).

In the literature, institutional diversity included race, disabled and international

students, and nontraditionally aged students that were noted to promote a positive

environment (Grayson & Meilman, 2015). At some institutions, their goals and practices

included diverse objectives to encourage and increase admissions and enrollment (Horn

& Marin, 2017). Another issue was the misalignment of diverse institutional values,

messages, actions, and initiatives (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016). There is a history of

institutional diversity in the literature that supports the need for diverse institutions

(Chen, 2017).

Diversity Experiences

According to Franklin (2013), students benefit from diverse learning experiences,

which makes students marketable and appealing in the workforce. Higher education

enhances social mobility and integration of all societal groups, which promotes a fair and

just society (Franklin, 2013). Students can experience diversity on many levels such as

structural, informal/interactional, and classroom which can affect institutional outcomes

such as diverse experiences and leadership development (Parker & Pascarella, 2013).

There are systemic issues in higher education with the underrepresentation and

retention of minority faculty and their experiences in predominately white institutions,

which were discriminatory, unwelcoming, and stressful environments (Zambrana et al.,

2015). A study on diverse experiences at elite colleges found that programs that included

diversity shaped the students' race relations and racial framework to understand cultural

campus approaches and differences (Warikoo & Deckman, 2014). Academic diversity

was noted as a goal of institutions for many years, but some colleges did not fulfil those

goals because they were culturally conservative, had minimal minority faculty

representation, and lacked a diverse learning environment (Karkouti, 2016a).

Cole and Zhou (2014) acknowledged that students who had diverse academic

experiences would become socially well informed and civic minded citizens. Diverse

experiences promote global society preparation and shape intergroup attitudes and civic

engagement (Denson & Bowman, 2013). Service-learning/civic engagement was an

important component to increase awareness and understanding of diversity and social

justice (Duffy, Mowatt, Fuchs, & Salisbury, 2014).

Minority faculty serve as role models to minority students as they can share their

experiences with minority students they teach, which can impact and influence minority

students (Poloma, 2014). Minority faculty are more likely to share a cultural, linguistic,

and capital cultural that is familiar to minority students from similar backgrounds

(Poloma, 2014). Various scholars recognize the problem and have conducted research to

understand the issues and/or concerns surrounding the lack of diversity in academia. The

themes and/or topics noted focused on institutional diversity, minority students, diverse

sociocultural backgrounds, learning, development, and diverse experiences in higher

education.

Implications

The project direction is a recommendation paper to address the increase of minority students and create new cultures, behaviors, and relationships at the study site. A recommendation paper includes background information with a summary of the research findings. After the data were collected and analyzed, the recommendation paper also incorporated evidence from the literature and research about the lack of, and need to increase, diverse initiatives at the local institution.

The research findings uncovered support for increasing diversity initiatives at the study site. In addition, the data provided insight on diversity initiatives on campus that possibly promote student learning, bringing awareness to the problem and increasing minority faculty at the study site. At the institution, faculty and students are aware of the problem so bringing it to their attention would be essential.

Summary

In Section 1, I include the gap in practice, which is the lack of diversity based on the proportions of minority faculty and minority students. The rationale for the project study was to examine minority student learning due to the increase of students of color, that is approximately 25% minority students compared to 9% part-time and 16.1% full-time minority faculty representation. It incorporates the definition of terms: diversity, minority faculty, minority students, and mentoring.

The low proportions of minority faculty in higher education was significant and can impact the student admission and retention rates. Through the interview questions it

would be appropriate to obtain the perceptions of the faculty and students about minority

faculty. The conceptual framework includes the critical race theory and social learning

theory. The literature review focuses on diversity initiatives, benefits of diverse faculty,

recruitment practices, mentoring, learning, development, and sociocultural backgrounds.

In Section 2, I focus on the methodology, which includes the qualitative

study research design and approach. The participants will be the faculty and students

from the local study site. The data will be collected from interviews, then the interviews

will be transcribed, reviewed, and analyzed through analytical coding into related

categories.

In Section 3, I will focus on the project. There will be explanations provided

regarding which genre will be appropriate for the project. A project description,

evaluation plan, and implications will be provided.

The last section, Section 4, incorporates reflections and conclusions regarding the

project study. This section focuses on the strengths and limitations of the project. It also

includes a discussion on scholarship, project development, and leadership and change

that highlights what I learned from the study. It also includes a reflection of the overall

project study. The implications, applications, and direction for future research will be

incorporated as well.

Section 2: The Methodology

Qualitative Research Design and Approach

The problem under study was that there is a growing number of minority students who may experience learning difficulties at the local institution. The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of minority faculty and students regarding student learning associated with minority students' relationships to minority faculty. I examined how the participants at the local institution perceive minority student learning. A basic qualitative research method provides descriptive, concrete, and contextual data, which are the types of information that would be essential to understanding minority student learning (see Merriam, 2009).

A basic qualitative study approach provided meaning and understanding regarding the gap in practice at the institution which, according to the study site vice president, was the lack of diversity due to the increase in minority students (i.e., approximately 25% minority students compared to 9% part-time and 16.1% full-time minority faculty representation). Lodico, Spaulding, and Voegtle (2010) noted that a basic qualitative study provides insight and an in-depth understanding of individuals, groups, and situations. In a basic qualitative study, the researcher collects descriptive data, uses inductive thinking, and attempts to understand the participants' point of views (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). A common theme I found among basic qualitative study definitions was that the collection of data focuses on a specific person, place, or thing (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

I also considered the ethnographic and phenomenological and the quantitative research method but found the basic qualitative study approach and design to be the most appropriate choice for this study. The ethnographic design focuses on the participants' native environment, and culture as well as how individuals' interactions in their cultural groups are influenced by society (Lodico et al., 2010). The phenomenological design describes the lived experience of participants in the study (Lodico et al., 2010). The quantitative design approach uses hypotheses or theories before the research begins and obtains numerical data (Lodico et al., 2010). Based on the definitions of these designs and approach, they were not suitable for this study because they focus on cultural interaction, the previous lived-experiences, and numerical data, while the basic qualitative study provides an in-depth understanding of the perceptions of minority faculty and students regarding student learning associated with minority students' relationships to minority faculty.

Participants

In this research study, the participants were faculty and students at the local study site. I attempted to include participants from the institution who were diverse in age, gender, and ethnicity. The focus of the basic qualitative study was to have participants who may or may not be aware of minority student learning at the study site.

Criteria for Selecting Participants

To gain a deeper understanding of minority student learning at the study site, I retrieved a list of possible participants with permission from the administrative office of

the study site. The intended participants were minority faculty and students who were

over 18 years old. In addition, the study participants had to be either employed or

enrolled as students at the study site for a minimum of 1 year.

The goal of basic qualitative research was to obtain specific data about a

phenomenon (Lodico et al., 2010). Using interviews as the data collection method was

appropriate for this basic qualitative study because the convenience sample was small. I

decided to use a small convenience sample to obtain essential knowledge or information

related to the study because gathering data from the entire study site would have been too

large to process (see Lodico et al., 2010).

Gaining Access to Participants

To recruit participants for this study, I had the administrative office at the study

site sign a Letter of Cooperation providing access to a list of minority faculty and

students. Walden University provided an approval #12-28-18-0596643 via letter from

the institutional review board (IRB). I also received approval from the study site's IRB.

It was important to select the participants based on the criteria for the project study to

properly address the research questions. The potential faculty and student interviewees

were chosen from the list provided by the administrative office that documented the

criteria for age, ethnicity, and length of time at the study site.

I contacted 77 potential participants. For the study, I was able to obtain five

minority faculty participants and eight minority student participants. I kept reaching out

to possible participants until I reached this sample size. I obtained the list of potential

participants obtained from the administrative office at the study site and contacted them

via telephone and/or e-mail. I provided possible participants with an explanation of the

project study and inquired about their interest in participation. If they agreed to

participate, I presented them with a consent form to sign, arranged a time to meet, and

conducted the interview. If the potential participants declined, I contacted other potential

interviewees from the list I received from the administrative office.

Method of Establishing Researcher-Participant Relationship

When I met each participant for the interview, I identified myself as a Walden

University doctoral student and researcher requesting data to help establish a researcher-

participant relationship (Lodico et al., 2010). In addition, I informed the participant that I

previously worked at the institution from 2010 to 2013. I defined the researcher-

participant relationship by explaining the interview process to the participant (see Lodico

et al., 2010). Participants had the opportunity to stop the interview at any time if they did

not wish to continue. The interview lasted approximately 45 to 60 minutes (see

Appendics B and C). In addition, as a form of member checking, I informed each

participant that they would be contacted after the interview via e-mail and asked to

review the transcription of the interview to ensure that the information was correct and

offer each of them an opportunity to clarify or add additional comments. The preliminary

findings were also sent to each participant for clarification and comments as well as and

to verify that the information was accurate.

Rights of Participants

Protecting the rights of the participants is important to the research process to avoid any ethical issues that may arise. Before beginning each interview session, I introduced myself to the participants. The interviews took place in a private and quiet room that was assigned by the institution. The participants were informed that their information would be kept confidential and would only be used for research purposes (see Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). I used numbers, (i.e., 1–13), to identify and protect the identities of the participants.

I provided a consent form to each of the participants for their records and also had each participant complete a copy of the form establish their rights and confidentiality as a participant. It was important to inform the participants of their rights, which include no harm to participants, i.e., physical, mental, etc. In addition, I informed the participants that they would be treated with respect and dignity (see Bogdan & Biklen, 2007).

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Data Collection

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Interviews

I used semistructured interviews to collect data, which consisted of asking the participants open-ended and flexible questions (see Merriam, 2009). According to Lodico et al. (2010), semistructured interviews include questions that can be changed, omitted, or varied based on how the interview is progressing. Semistructured interviews also provide the ability to add questions during the interview session (Lodico et al., 2010).

Interviews provide descriptive data and are a good tactic to obtain information that cannot be directly observed (Merriam, 2009). The interview questions (see Appendics B and C) focused on the perceptions of the faculty and students regarding minority student learning at the institution. It was important to gain a better understanding of the gap in practice between the increase of minority students and low ratio of minority faculty to understand any possible effects on minority student learning. At the beginning of the interviews, I discussed the interview process, asked permission to record the interview, and informed the participants that the interview would take approximately 45 to 60 minutes. The participants were also informed that they would be able to leave at any time without any negative consequences.

Keeping Track of Data

With permission from the participants, I audio recorded the interviews. Approximately an hour after conclusion, I transcribed the interviews and saved the transcriptions onto a flash drive that was locked in a cabinet in my home office. I developed a reflective journal in which I documented behaviors, both verbal and nonverbal, of the interviewees (see Merriam, 2009). In my reflective journal, I included my thoughts regarding the interviews and the data that were retrieved. A research log was also used to maintain a record of events, activities, and interactions (see Lodico et al., 2010).

Role of the Researcher

I informed both the participants and the IRBs that I had previously worked at the study site from 2010 to 2013 as a faculty member and that I currently work at the study site. Participants for the interviews included faculty and students that I did not work with during my employment and that I did not work with in my current position. It was not appropriate to impose my biases and experiences onto faculty and students that I may have previously worked with or that I currently work with at the institution. I did not have any power over the participants or their relationship with the study site.

Data Analysis

Data analysis requires consolidating, reducing, and interpreting the research data (Merriam, 2009). Identifying segments and recurring themes in the data are key in analysis because they provide insight for the project study (Merriam, 2009). After each interview, I transcribed the interview into a Microsoft Word document. Each transcript was labeled with the interviewee's number and participant category (i.e., faculty or student). The transcribed interviews were then reviewed at least three times to verify and clarify the information that was obtained. I did not use special software applications to record data, only Microsoft Word and/or Excel.

There are a few types of coding: open and axial or analytical (Merriam, 2009). Open coding is the beginning phase of the analysis process, in which segments of data are identified (Merriam, 2009). Axial or analytical coding is the process of grouping open codes (Merriam, 2009); this was the type of coding I used in this study. Creswell and

Plano Clark (2011) stated that coding is the process of grouping and labeling information together to reflect ideas and broader perspectives. The process that I used to complete the data analysis was to transcribe, review, and code the information into categories, combine codes, and organize those codes into themes that were related from the interviews.

Evidence of Quality

To ensure credibility and validity the research must be conducted in an ethical manner by following the IRB guidelines. I invested time to member check and clarify biases. These biases may include the previous relationships I had with some faculty and past students and thoughts about increasing diversity at the study site. Member checking allowed me to solicit feedback from all the participants regarding the findings after the data are analyzed (Merriam, 2009). I contacted each participant after each interview and review the transcript with them to clarify information and obtain feedback about the data, which were reported in my project study. Clarifying biases provided an understanding to the reader of the interpretation of the data, perspectives, and assumptions (Merriam, 2009). The biases that I had included the lack of minority faculty and previous and recent employment at the study site.

Discrepant cases include data that may not confirm or may challenge the emerging findings from the research (Merriam, 2009). The procedures for addressing discrepant cases are to ensure that the data are accurate, complete, and reviewed (Lodico et al., 2010). I included the discrepant cases from the interview questions and reported the research results in the project study.

Data Analysis Results

The findings from the data analysis were based on the descriptive and narrative interviews that were conducted regarding the perceptions of minority faculty and minority students regarding student learning associated with minority students' relationships to minority faculty. In preparations for conducting the interviews, I coordinated with the administrative office to obtain a list of minority participants. In addition, I was also assigned a private and quiet room to conduct the interviews.

After receiving the list of participants, I began contacting the participants via email. I contacted a total of 77 potential participants, and I received 22 responses from the prospective participants. The responses were hopeful but did not turn into actual interviews due to not meeting the criteria, declining to participate, and agreeing to participate but not responding after additional inquiry. At that point, I lost eight potential participants, but I continued to e-mail potential participants and finally obtained and completed 13 interviews for my research study.

The 13 participants were minority students, faculty, and staff who were racially diverse. Their racial backgrounds included Asian-Korean, Filipino, African, African American, Ecuadorian, Haitian, Hawaiian, and Honduran. In addition, some of the participants were multiracial. All the participants met the criteria of being minority who were over 18 years old and employed or students at the study site for a minimum of 1 year.

The data findings were informative and the interview questions (see Appendic C & D) prompted various themes and categories. Throughout the interviews the recurrent themes that emerged included experiences with faculty, relationships with minority faculty, and diverse faculty provide advantages. I found that 11 (85%) had direct, indirect, casual, and/or positive experiences with minority faculty while only two (15%) had no experience with minority faculty. There were 11 (85%) who felt that minority students are affected by having minority faculty and two (15%) did not think so.

Ten (77%) of the 13 participants believed that minority faculty relate to the student body while only three (23%) were not sure due to their experiences. I also explored the advantages and disadvantages of having minority faculty and found that 12 (92%) thought that there were advantages to having minority faculty compared to one (8%) who did not. On the other hand, eight (62%) thought there were disadvantages to having minority faculty versus five (38%) who did not.

Based on the data that I gathered from the interviews, I found that there was a high correlation with my research questions regarding the perceptions of minority faculty and minority students on student learning related to minority students' relationships to minority faculty. There is a sense of comfort, community, relatability, and experience that minority students glean from have minority faculty relationships according to the data collected. The minority faculty and students had direct and indirect experiences with minority faculty and the narrative still expressed the value and impact of having minority faculty at the study site.

After each interview was completed, I transcribed the material carefully. Each participant received their transcription via e-mail for their review to make sure it was accurate and if it were not correct I requested that they inform me of the inaccurate data. By completing this step, I was able to clarify the information and obtain any additional feedback about the data (Merriam, 2009). Throughout this process I found that the majority of the data were accurate, and the feedback was consistent and positive. There were only a few grammar errors that were questioned, but the data remained accurate.

<div align="center">**Themes**</div>

Throughout the research process, I obtained a wealth of data from the participants. I reviewed the data and coded the information into categories, combined codes, and organized into themes that were related from the interviews. The themes that emerged were experiences with minority faculty, no experiences with minority faculty, relationships with minority faculty, and diverse faculty provide advantages. I will distinguish between the two types of participants and present the data based on each research question.

Research Question 1: What are the Perceptions of Minority Faculty on Student Learning Associated with Minority Students' Relationships to Minority Faculty?

Theme 1: Experiences with minority faculty. The minority faculty participants provided me with extensive data on their experiences with perceptions of minority faculty and minority students regarding student learning. I was surprised to find similar perspectives among the minority students as well. According to the data, minority

faculty, 100%, noted that minority students are affected by having minority faculty due to connection, comfort, experience, representation, or relatability that affects minority student learning. However, their feedback was based on whether or not they had experiences with minority faculty. For example, Faculty Participant 6 did not have any experience with minority faculty but noted:

> I think it's a big deal. I do know there was a time and a part where admission department had Hispanic staff that would recruit Hispanic students from the districts. The perception was they could relate, and they would invite them to their home and cook for them. One thing is different. The color of my skin doesn't mean culture. I'm from Hawaii and I grew up with all types of cultures, Polynesian, Asian, biracial, White and when I came to the United States it was different. I went to college, CBC, in Missouri and it was a shock for me because things that I would say back home in Hawaii were considered offensive here, so I had to be aware of that.

Whereas, Faculty Participant 1, did have some experiences with minority faculty and stated:

> From my interaction with students, I believe they feel comfortable to engage with me and share some of their personal life experiences and home experiences as well as particularly with one student I found that he felt an extra sense of motivation to succeed.

Other minority faculty participants had various experiences with minority faculty because they were minority. For instance, when I interviewed Faculty Participant 11, they acknowledged that they had personal and professional experiences with minority faculty. Faculty Participant 11 further explained:

Ok so as a nonWhite, I am shaded enough that I do run with the white but I'm very conscious of the fact that I'm very Asian in my culture values. Especially coming to the East Coast, I find the East Coast non Whites, non Browns are very class oriented, they're strata is with education, finances, skin, style, and if you don't meet those particular requirements you tend to be smiled upon but not graciously heard.

Another Faculty Participant 13, had basic experiences with minority faculty such as meetings, gatherings, etc.

Although minority faculty did not directly report their perceptions of minority student learning, they did frequently share that minority students appeared to be comfortable with minority faculty. They acknowledged that there is a correlation between the relationships that are developed with minority faculty and minority students' learning. Luedke (2017) noted that minority students who experience positive minority faculty relationships through mentoring experience lower attrition rates, higher grade point averages, increased self-efficacy, and better-defined academic goals.

Theme 2: No experiences with minority faculty. An unexpected theme appeared regarding minority faculty and their perceptions of student learning associated

with minority students' relationships with minority faculty, which was no experiences with minority faculty. During the interviews, I asked minority faculty participants about their experiences with minority faculty at the study site. I assumed that the minority faculty participants had experiences with minority faculty, but I found that four (90%) had experiences and one (10%) did not.

Faculty Participant 13, shared indirect experience, "I know from the basketball position, especially, I think hearing my players talk about that it's definitely very important for them to establish a connection with people that look like them essentially." While, Faculty Participant 5, noted, "I haven't but that's primarily because there are very few faculty who identify in that minority group." This was unexpected because I assumed that minority faculty experiences would impact their perceptions of student learning associated with minority students' relationships with minority faculty, which was no experiences with minority faculty.

Theme 3: Relationship with minority faculty. As I collected the data, I found that participants acknowledged having minority faculty relationships between minority students and faculty. I asked the participants how they thought minority faculty related to the student body. Faculty Participant 13, noted, "I think they do a great job just from my perspective." Another Faculty Participant 6, had a different perspective and stated:

I think me personally I can't speak on behalf of everybody else but me

personally I think of course through God's grace and the direction that he's led

me throughout my entire life being in Hawaii where it was so multicultural, they call Hawaii the melting pot.

While, Faculty Participant 5, shared, "I was going to say, I don't really know, because I don't see that interaction between minority students and faculty too often as my role as adjunct faculty." Faculty Participant 1, stated:

To be honest I don't know. I haven't observed as much I would like to, in order to feel comfortable to answer the question accurately. I believe that from what I have seen personally in several incidents with other faculty members there's at least a general level of engagement, so there isn't any favoritism or anything like that. So beyond that I haven't really been here that long to really see anything else.

Among the minority faculty participants, the data showed that three (60%) noted that minority faculty related to the student body while two (40%) did not know; however, as I mentioned before, 100% of the minority faculty noted that having minority faculty present is positive for student learning.

Theme 4: Diverse faculty provide advantages. The participants also noted that having diverse faculty was an advantage which was another theme that emerged from the research. I found that all five of the minority faculty, 100%, agreed that having a diverse faculty was essential for minority students and the study site, which was very interesting. Their responses were similar as well but varied.

For example, Faculty Participant 11, shared, "Well it certainly frees our minority students, it's hopefully it sets an environment to set the minority students to be to have a sense of equality to the non-Minority." Whereas, Faculty Participant 13, noted, "I wish we could have more." While, Faculty Participant 5 stated:

> A broader perspective. So when you have the absence of minority faculty you're blinded to the needs of, some of the needs of the institution. So let's say you don't have any minority faculty, but you have minority students, you're blinded to that because you have a whole population of people that aren't being, that aren't represented.

Research Question 2: What are the Perceptions of Minority Students on Student Learning Associated with Minority Students' Relationships to Minority Faculty?

Theme 1: Experiences with minority faculty. The minority student participants shared similar experiences to the minority faculty regarding their perceptions of student learning associated with minority students' relationships with minority faculty. I found that the majority of the minority student participants had experiences with minority faculty that impacted their learning. There were five (63%) minority students who had experiences with minority faculty compared to three (37%) who did not.

I found that some of the minority student participants have had direct experiences with a particular minority faculty member and shared experiences of positive interactions with minority faculty. Student Participant 9 shared, "Well, I've been going here almost ten and a half years. Within that ten and a half years, I've only had one African

American instructor. But in that ten and a half year period I've seen less than five

minority faculty on campus." While, Student Participant 10 shared:

> Well I haven't had any professors that were minorities my second year my first
>
> year I had one professor. My old testament survey class. He was very
>
> knowledgeable, easy to approach, he always would be like if have any questions
>
> come see me after class or come by my office hours.

Theme 2: No experiences with minority faculty. As I noted in the previous

section regarding experiences with minority faculty there were three (37%) of minority

students who did not have experiences with minority faculty compared to eight (63%)

who did. After further review of the data, I realized that the theme was unexpected since

I assumed that the minority students had experiences with minority faculty. However,

the minority student participants' perceptions of student learning associated with minority

students' relationships with minority faculty were not affected.

Student Participant 2 had no experience with minority faculty and explained

"Somewhat, for maybe for certain subjects and it allows the students to be more

understood and the teachers to be more understood by the students." This was the same

experience for Student Participant 4, in a different department, who also shared with me

concerns about the overall learning experience at the study site:

> I don't know the effect but for African Americans it's a struggle. I wonder if it
>
> would be the same experience at HBCUs. Am I treated with the same respect?

Are they trying to help me differently with more opportunities, family issues,

financial?

Another student, Participant 12, acknowledged that there were not a lot of minority

faculty as a whole at the study site, but also explained that there were no minority faculty

in their major.

Theme 3: Relationship with minority faculty. The minority student

participants shared with me similar experiences as minority faculty with regard to how

minority faculty relate to the student body. The data showed that seven (90%) versus one

(10%) of the minority students thought that minority faculty related to the student body at

the study site. Student Participant 8 stated, "I think from especially this campus having

similar viewpoint when it comes to Christian belief help us to be able to relate to each

other help us to be able to like talk about issues we go through helping us to go and to

develop our spiritual life." While Student Participant 4 shared, "Minority faculty can

relate, based on interaction, good atmosphere, vibe."

However, there was a minority student who did not think that minority faculty

related to the student body, but it was based on their experiences with minority faculty at

the study site. Overall the data showed that 10 (77%) of the participants found that

minority faculty related well to the student body. However, only three (23%) were not

sure, which may have been due to whether or not they had any experiences with minority

faculty. Yuan (2017) acknowledged that minority students struggle with experiencing

educational equity and excellence in the U.S. society, which could affect student learning.

Theme 4: Diverse faculty provide advantages. The minority student

participants also shared similar perspectives as the minority faculty regarding the

advantages of having minority faculty such as sense of comfort, community, relatability,

and experience. A majority of the minority student participants, seven (90%) versus one

(10%) shared that there was a need for diverse faculty at the study site. Again, I would

note that the minority students who did not think there was an advantage to having

minority faculty based their opinion on their limited experience with minority faculty at

the study site.

For example, Student Participant 3 stated:

I would say different cultures you learn something new every day about different

people especially coming from faculty since they have so much experience they

tell you their story they tell you what they know it gives us more knowledge and

experience to open ourselves to become even more dominant to what they have

witnessed.

Student Participant 4, stated, "Brings more perspective, family opportunities, and

different countries." As well as Student Participant 8 noted:

Yes, because there's an opportunity for the staff and everyone else on the faculty

that work here to see different opinions because if you have everyone from the

same group it's going to be hard for the minority students to be represented.

Overall, the minority faculty and minority student participants recognized that

there was a need to have more minority faculty regardless of their experiences with

minority faculty. According to the data, there were seven (92%) student participants who thought there was an advantage to having minority faculty at the study site compared to one (8%) who did not. Abdul-Raheem (2016) noted that having a culturally diverse environment can be beneficial to a growing diverse population. In addition, the literature noted that institutions who have a diverse faculty help create insights regarding cultural experiences, which can be shared with others (Abdul-Raheem, 2016).

Discrepant Cases

Merriam (2009) acknowledged that discrepant cases include data that may not confirm or may challenge the findings from the research. As I coded the transcriptions, which resulted in the themes, I discovered some outliers. Due to the number of participants, which was small, I anticipated discrepant cases. When I interviewed the participants some had direct or indirect experiences with minority faculty, which I did not anticipated. I assumed that many of my participants would have experiences with minority faculty. Faculty Participant 1 had some experience with minority faculty at the study site and noted that they had casual conversations. I anticipated similar responses from the other participants, which did occur as I continued my research.

However, that was not the case and as I continued the interviews, I found that there were only a few participants who did not have any experience with minority faculty at the study site. There were only two participants who did not have any experience with minority faculty. I recognized these two participants as discrepant cases. Student Participant 2 stated, "Not really." Student Participant 12 did not have experience with

minority faculty because there were no minority faculty in their department. Lodico et al. (2010) noted the process for addressing discrepant cases is to ensure that the data is accurate, complete, and reviewed, which I did with the participants.

Evidence of Quality

According to Lodico et al. (2010), qualitative research requires credibility and validity. Once I was able to secure my participants, I began scheduling dates with them to meet, discuss the interview process, and review the consent form. Upon my initial meeting with the participants, I was able to complete the recorded interview. However, I had a participant that agreed to the interview but rescheduled the actual interview.

Each recorded interview meeting was completed within 60 minutes or less. The participants were eager and/or enthusiastic to participate in my research study and found an interest in the topic. After each interview, I transcribed and coded the data into themes. I then contacted the participants via email to obtain feedback and ensure that the data were accurate (Merriam, 2009). There were only a few data corrections needed, which were completed and reverified as needed.

I did not conduct member checking which would allow me to solicit feedback from the participants regarding the findings after the data were analyzed (Merriam, 2009). During the data collection process, I did credibility, accuracy, and triangulation by recording the semistructured interviews (Lodico et al., 2010). In addition, I was able to provide participant samples and I maintained a reflective journal throughout the data collection process.

Project Deliverable

An outcome of this case study research is a policy recommendation paper that is designed to include methods to increase minority student learning. Currently, the study site maintains minority students and faculty, but they are underrepresented compared to their white counterparts. The policy paper will present a few recommendations to the study site with relevant literature, policy description, goals, implications, and an evaluation plan that may possibly enhance minority student learning.

Summary

The findings of this case study revealed data related to the research problem and the research questions. The participants provided detailed and informative data about their specific experiences with minority faculty at the study site. Throughout the interviews, the participants explained the experiences they did or did not have with minority faculty. I found that 85% compared to 15% of the participants thought that minority students' learning was positively affected by having minority faculty at the study site.

There was a commitment to the idea that having minority faculty was an advantage because they would bring diverse and cultural experiences, and relatability, relationship, and varied learning perspectives to the study site, which will enhance student learning. Only one participant did not see an advantage to having minority faculty at the study site. According to Vollman (2016), it is essential for student learning to retain excellent and diverse faculty by creating an inclusive campus climate that

supports the student body. In addition, the literature noted that students recognize a need for diversity in higher education and want institutions to include more diverse initiatives and faculty (Vollman, 2016).

My data analysis produced three themes that included experiences with faculty, relationships with minority faculty, and diverse faculty provide advantages. The data supported my assumption that minority students and minority faculty recognized that having minority faculty at the study site is important for minority student learning. Initially, I did assume that the participants would find that having minority faculty was important for student learning at the study site but, I was pleasantly surprised by the number of participants who agreed. Many participants disclosed that they noticed an increase of minority faculty and would like to see more.

Section 2 identifies a qualitative study as the research design. A qualitative study was the best design because it targets individuals in a specific environment. The IRB guidelines were used as a guide to ensure that procedures were completed ethically. I obtained information from the study site administrative office to contact 13 participants who were faculty and students, from various ethnic backgrounds such as Asian, African American, and/or Latino, over 18 years old.

Before requesting semistructured interviews, I requested permission from the interviewees to participate in the study and I audio recorded the interview. Semistructured interviews were conducted in a private room at the study site. After each interview, I transcribed them and saved the transcriptions onto a flash drive that was

locked in a cabinet in my home office. Member checking was used to solicit feedback

from all their transcripts and the findings after the data were analyzed. In addition, I

clarified biases to provide an understanding to the reader of the interpretation of the data,

perspectives, and assumptions.

Section 3: The Project

Introduction

In Section 3, I discuss the project in detail, which originated from the findings of the study. The section includes project description and goals, implications, literature review, and an evaluation plan for the project that may possibly enhance minority student learning. A recommendation paper, which was the selected project, was displayed in Appendix A. The purpose of the position paper is to provide the study site with implementable recommendations that may enhance the institution's overall minority student learning.

Project Description and Goals

I selected a position paper as the project for this study because position papers help establish renewed commitment to address issues and/or concerns in higher educational institutions, especially related to the needs of students (see Wasescha, 2016). Researchers have noted that over the years, the use of position papers have aided institutions with the implementation of mission statement changes, which contribute and support the interaction between teachers and students (Gregorutti, 2015). In this study, I identified the gap in practice at the institution, which is the lack of diversity due to the increase of minority students; however, the data also acknowledged the desire for diversity that can potentially impact minority student learning. Therefore, it is appropriate to assume that all institutions that enroll minority students recognize the need to implement changes to accommodate potential learning needs of minority students

(Yeboah & Smith, 2016). Since there has been an increase of minority students at the study site, the purposed solutions may impact their learning.

My primary goal for the recommendation paper (see Appendix A) was to address the learning needs of the minority students at the institution. A majority of the study participants (i.e., 92% versus 8%) noted that having minority faculty was an advantage that impacted leaning, which supports the desire for diversity at the institution. Furthermore, there is support for minority students relating to minority faculty, which 100% of the participants supported, stating their responses were based on experience, motivation, comfort, opportunities to relate in a positive manner, value interactions, and respect. Consequently, my second goal for the recommendation paper was to potentially maintain and/or increase the number of minority faculty at the institution due to the findings from the data that supports the importance of minority faculty working at the institution.

Project Rationale for Genre and Content

Position papers provide support for concerns and/or issues, which can become policies and procedures that are essential in higher education for sustainability (Leal et al., 2018). Again, the primary goal for the recommendation paper (see Appendix A) was to make recommendations regarding the learning needs of the minority students at the institution based on the findings from the study. A position paper can be used to provide culturally responsive recommendations as the literature has noted (Baumgartner et al., 2015).

White papers, also known as position papers, can be utilized to address policy issues within higher education, which was done in South Africa on gender equality (Akala, 2018). I also found that white papers can present current research and make recommendations to address issues and/or concerns in higher education (see TYCA White Paper on Placement Reform, 2016). Akoojee (2016) acknowledged that white papers provide detailed information on how to handle issues, which is why presenting a position/white paper was appropriate for this study and study site. The white paper I prepared for this project contains information about the problem at the institution, offers recommendations to address the problem, and supports the solutions offered with research and current literature.

Review of the Literature

I conducted a literature review through the online Walden University library, searching for peer-reviewed journals through the ERIC, Academic Search Complete, Education Research Complete, and Sage databases. Many keyword search terms were used, which including *policies, position paper, and white papers*, for the project genre. In addition, I searched *higher education, diversity, minority students, minority faculty, inclusive environment, faculty, faculty development, faculty mentorship,* and *diverse training* for the content.

The literature provided insights on various aspects of diversity in academia, specifically regarding minority faculty and students and potential recommendations. I reviewed the research that discussed inclusive environment, faculty diversity, faculty

development, faculty mentorship, and diverse training diversity initiatives. Overall, the literature on the position or white papers and the potential recommendations supported my project study.

Position or White Paper Genre

Position or white papers have been used in higher education for many years and are essential for implementing change and/or to address any issues and/or concerns that may be recognized (Leal et al., 2018). Position or white papers have been utilized in academia with regards to faculty hiring and I found research that in particular examined tenure-track search and selection processes to streamline the process (Tomlinson & Freeman, 2018). Other researchers focused on the American Educational Research Association (AERA) and whether the cohorts of the AERA Fellows were becoming more diverse in racial and gender. The researchers found that they were not accomplishing their mission to include the research of faculty of color, women, and faculty in interdisciplinary fields, which lead to reviewing policy to increase diversity (Hartlep et al., 2017).

Dowd and Liera (2018) noted that data from research have been used to advocate for change in higher education in many national, state, and institutional policies and initiatives, which is why I decided a position or white paper was the appropriate project for this study. Internationally, position or white papers have also been used in Tanzania to change policy or make recommendations regarding the promotion of research within the universities (Fussy, 2018). In Russia, the researchers conducted a study to review the

language of policy issues to create, deliver, and process knowledge locally, nationally, and globally in higher education and the data that were found were used to develop strategies and tactics for the stakeholders to address language concerns with the use of a position paper (Atabekova, Gorbatenko, & Shoustikova, 2016).

Position or white papers are effective when providing solutions or making recommendations. For example, Bucher et al. (2017) showed that a position paper could make implementation recommendations for food and nutrition that targeted the consumers, nutrition and behavioral researchers, policy makers, and stakeholders. Position or white papers have also provided a foundation for the educational programming of criteria and standards, seeking evidence and critique, and making adaptations to improve the evaluation process (Gullickson, King, LaVelle, & Clinton, 2019). A position or white paper is the appropriate genre to present recommendations for enhancing minority student learning at the study site (see Iram & Riffatun, 2019).

Support Diversity in Higher Education

Wilder, Osborne-Lampkin, and Jackson (2015) noted that the Supreme Court recognized the value of the higher educational benefits when students are educated in diverse settings staffed by diverse faculty. I found support for diversity in higher education in the extant research, which is why I recommend enhancing the educational environment for minority student learning through an inclusive environment with faculty diversity and implementing faculty development, faculty mentorship, and diversity training.

In higher education, institutions have made changes to the mission statements of their colleges to include diversity (Phillips, 2019). Mission statements are formulated through different processes that vary among institutions based on the interests of accreditation agencies, alumni, government, business, students, and faculty (Wang et al., 2007). Phillips (2019) also noted that dimensions of diversity include gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, age, ability, class, religion, language, culture, ideas, structures, and values. However, for educational institutions diversity may include diversity in representation, climate and intergroup relations, curriculum and scholarship, and institutional values and structures (Phillips, 2019).

There are various models that support diversity in higher education such as Cox's model, inclusion models, and affirmative action. The Cox model was developed from Cox Jr.'s (2001) research, which was collected in the book, *Creating the Multicultural Organization*, that suggested that managing diversity includes:

> understanding its effects and implementing behaviors, work practices, and policies that respond to them in an effective way. The challenge of managing diversity is to create conditions that minimize its potential to be a performance barrier while maximizing the potential to enhance organizational performance. (Wilson, 2018, p. 1)

In the early 1990s, Cox and Blake (1991) noted that managing cultural diversity in organizations incorporated leadership, training, research, analysis, a change to culture and human resource management systems, and follow up.

Higher educational institutions have examined inclusion models and/or initiatives that support diverse environments for all faculty and students (Iram & Riffatun, 2019). Researchers have looked at implementing an ecological model to create an inclusive community, which would foster interaction, relationship building, and communication, and promote diversity on campus (Williams, Conyers, & Garcia, 2018). Other researchers reviewed science, technology, engineering, and mathematics degree programs to examine if an inclusive environment affects minority student enrollment, finding that when a program is diverse, most likely the enrollment of students of color may increase (Garibay & Vincent, 2018). In addition, Teague (2015) studied the inclusion of women in academic leadership roles was reviewed due to the low percentage of minority women, recognizing the need to increase diversity by creating inclusive cultures on campus and implementing accountability to achieve inclusivity.

The affirmative action model has been noted as an idea and/or option to increase diversity in higher education. Berry et al. (2018) conducted research on how all state higher education offices address diversity and affirmative action and found that diversity was mentioned in their strategic plan, but most institutions did not reference the differences that are made or the equity of diversity on campus. In other research, socioeconomic status-based affirmative action was examined by Reardon et al. (2018) regarding college admissions and diversity using a stimulation model, finding that SES-based affirmative action was unlikely to be able to increase diversity; however, race-conscious affirmative action was noted to increase racial diversity especially when

colleges used the affirmative action model. Further research looked at post-affirmative action and considered alternatives to race-conscious policies and new strategies for promoting racial/ethnic diversity on their campuses, which supported inclusion in higher education (Glasener, Martell, & Posselt, 2019).

I found literature regarding minority faculty, faculty development, and diversity training that supports and promotes a diverse environment and may enhance minority student learning. In the research, I noted a lack of minorities in medicine and women hired in faculty and leadership positions at academic medical institutions (see Mader et al., 2016). The researchers highlighted that maybe women and African Americans are better represented at historically Black colleges and women and Latino/Hispanics at Puerto Rican medical schools compared to peer universities (Mader et al., 2016). Other researchers have also recognized that there was an underrepresentation of women and racial/ethnic minority faculty and noted how critical minorities are to develop inclusive learning environments (Sanchez et al., 2018). Walters et al. (2019) reported an underrepresentation of American Indian and Alaska Natives, which comprised about 2% of the U.S. population and 0.5% of the faculty in higher education and continued to support the increase of diverse faculty at educational institutions.

The literature also supports faculty development as an option to increase and/or maintain minority faculty in higher education. Ceo-DiFrancesco, Kochlefl, and Walker (2019) conducted a case study and found a need for training at a midwestern, Jesuit, Catholic university that was motivated by climate survey findings and racial bias

incidents at the college. In Australia, there was increased competition between institutions; greater student diversity; and industry changes, such as professional ready graduates, reduced funding, and rapid technological advances, among the universities that sparked faculty development (Thomas, Harden-Thew, Delahunty, & Dean, 2016). Stachowiak (2015) recognized diversity but suggested that faculty development be implemented within a social justice framework that requires institutions to assess their current faculty's understanding of and investment in social justice initiatives, which provided a different perspective but supports faculty development in higher education.

Faculty mentorship is also supported in the literature and researchers noted that faculty mentors function as master scholars or experts and provide opportunities for pedagogical training (Harris & Lee, 2019). Other research noted the need for mentoring opportunities for female faculty of color, especially Asian Americans, that recognize, validate, and nurture their perspectives and experiences as assets not liabilities to their work in higher education (Hsieh & Nguyen, 2019). A case study was conducted that examined the development of an academic cross-cultural mentoring and found that mentoring is two-fold; four phases that include initiation, cultivation, separation and redefinition; and four roles: advisor, instructor, employer, and agent of socialization, which support diversity in higher education (Daniel, Franco, Schroeder, & Cenkci, 2019).

Diversity training in higher education is also supported in the literature. Higher education institutions have used diversity or cultural competency training to make efforts towards developing inclusive educational spaces that are welcoming to a diverse

population (Kruse, Rakha, & Calderone, 2018). Another study examined issues related to gender, religious identity, environment, relationships, and experiences and perceptions of others at public universities (Delmas & Ivankova, 2018). The focus of this particular study was on the academic experiences of Catholic women religious educators and found that diversity training would be beneficial to institutions and bring awareness to the issues that were studied (Delmas & Ivankova, 2018). The literature supported diversity training at institutions and discussed how trainers maintain self-care and navigate resistance through intersectional identities, proving legitimacy as diversity educators, experiencing burnout, and validating and supporting each other as cofacilitators, which supported diversity training, but provided a different perspective (Miller et al., 2018).

Project Description

Resources and Existing Supports

The budget or financial resources and faculty trainers that currently exist at the institution would need to be reviewed in order to support the project. I do not foresee any additional resources needed since the institution budgets for faculty development and/or training. Any recommendations from the project could be conducted at a minimal cost and within the institution's budget to maintain and/or increase minority faculty at the institution due to the findings from the study that support having minority faculty at the institution.

Potential Barriers and Solutions

Potential barriers to this project are resources and staff to implement faculty development, faculty mentorship, and diversity training. Although the institution may have some resources for faculty enrichment, there is a possibility that the budget may need to be increased to include more faculty development opportunities. Making improvements and changes at an institution can become costly when attempting to add new faculty or programs. The amount of time may not be an issue, but the budget may not accommodate new ideas such as faculty development, faculty mentorship, and/or diversity training.

The solutions may be to restructure and/or increase the current budget to accommodate new faculty development, faculty mentorship, and/or diversity training initiatives as well as new faculty. Currently, there is a board of trustees that approves changes at the study site. Maybe a proposal can be developed, and I could submit it to the board of trustees with recommendations to increase the budget.

Implementation

In order to implement the recommendations as soon as possible, multiple stakeholders would need to be involved. The study site's calendar hinders the amount of possible implementation dates and the earliest term this policy could be implemented is in all 2020. This would give the institution and stakeholders time to review current initiatives in place and look at possibly implementing suggested recommendations to begin during faculty in-service which usually occurs every August before the fall

semester begins. I would need to work with the Offices of Academic Affairs and Institutional Effectiveness to strategize and assist with the planning of the recommendations through the academic year.

Project Evaluation Plan

The primary goal for this recommendation paper is to address the learning needs of the minority students and the secondary goal is to potentially maintain and/or increase the number of minority faculty at the institution. A formative evaluation of the project would be appropriate to identify and address the issues or problems in the policy recommendation paper (Lodico et al., 2010). The formative evaluation will be used to obtain feedback and revise and/or improve the recommendation paper. It would be ideal for a few faculty members at the study site to review the recommendations in the project, provide formative useful and appropriate feedback with possible improvements via a questionnaire (Appendix A).

There are two specific members from the offices of Academic Affairs and Institutional Effectiveness at the study site who are the key stakeholders. The Academic Affairs office consists of a committee of selected faculty who review faculty related issues such as development and promotion. The Institutional Effectiveness office is also comprised of faculty who examine how the institution functions in relation to the faculty and students. These offices would be appropriate to review and evaluate the recommendation paper: inclusive environment with faculty diversity and implementing faculty development, faculty mentorship, and diversity training.

Once the offices of Academic Affairs and Institutional Effectiveness review the project recommendation paper, there is an opportunity for the institution to obtain buy in and implement one or more of the recommendations during the next academic year. Afterwards, the university can obtain feedback from faculty on whether an initiative(s) was effective, useful, and/or appropriate at the study site. If the college finds that a particular recommendation(s) was useful they can continue to implement it the following academic year. At that time, the offices of Academic Affairs and Institutional Effectiveness can compare the findings throughout the year and make changes as needed to the diversity initiatives or continue with the same plan.

The success of these recommendations resides in the administration's willingness to fund the institution's diversity initiatives to support minority student learning and possibly increase faculty diversity. As Berry et al. (2018) noted, college completion initiatives benefit from local to statewide planning that acknowledges the importance of diversity and its impact on educational attainment.

Project Implications

Importance of Project

The project recommendations are important for the study site to bring awareness to the topic of diversity in higher education. Conducting this research allowed me to provide data that supports diversity at the institution and possibly provides recommendations for diverse initiatives. Again, the literature recognizes that diverse educational environments are essential for learning in higher education (Vollman, 2016).

Local Implications

Local implications for social change that may result from this study include commitment to improving minority student learning, an increase of minority student enrollment, and may possibly include an increase in minority faculty. The additional commitment to support minority student learning and increase minority faculty would strengthen minority student satisfaction and possibly increase minority student enrollment. In higher education, researchers note the increase of racial and ethnic students; however, they acknowledge that universities continue to work toward diversity, inclusion, and equal access (Castellanos, Gloria, Besson, & Clark Harvey, 2016). These researchers also found that the perception of the university environment was a strong positive predictor of college satisfaction; however, cultural congruity was a strong predictor of life satisfaction (Castellanos et al., 2016).

Larger Context Implications

In a perfect world, it would be opportune for all higher educational institutions to have a diverse and well-balanced representation of all ethnicities at all colleges. However, since that might not be feasible at this time, maybe colleges will continue to work toward increasing diversity initiatives and strategic planning at their institutions. Again, research acknowledges that if institutions have a clear, coherent, and shared vision for diversity they may experience benefits of inclusion and student learning at their colleges (Glasener et al., 2019).

Summary

In Section 3, I described the goals and rationale for using a position paper as the project genre. The literature review supported the position paper genre and diversity in higher educational institutions. The project recommendation paper included the implementation, evaluation, and implications.

In the final Section 4, I focused on my reflections and conclusions. Section 4 will focus on the project strengths and limitations, alternative research approaches, future research recommendations, and personal reflections regarding my growth as a scholar practitioner.

Section 4: Reflections

Introduction

Section 4 includes the strengths and limitations of the project I developed to addressing the problem of this study. In this section, I also provide my recommendations for the alternative approaches to the problem and solutions to address the gap in practice between the lack of diverse faculty members and minority student learning. In addition, I discuss scholarship at the study site and provide reflections on the work, its implications, and directions for future research.

Project Strengths and Limitations

Project Strengths

The project deliverable that I designed based on the research findings was a policy recommendation paper (see Appendix A). In the project, there are many strengths outlined, and specific evidence is provided along with a clear recommendation. My choice of policy recommendation as the project for this study aligns with Leal et al.'s (2018) belief that position and/or white papers are essential for implementing change and/or addressing any issues and/or concerns that may be recognized. Higher education institutions have used position papers in the past to promote and support changes at their universities, especially regarding minority student learning (Iram & Riffatun, 2019). Bucher et al. (2017) also supported the use of white papers through their research about food and nutrition that targeted consumers, nutrition and behavioral researchers, policy makers, and stakeholders.

The data presented are a strength of the policy recommendation, and they support having diversity at the study site. Based on the data from the study, 92% of the minority participants thought that having minority faculty at the institution was a positive compared to 8% of the minority participants who did not. In addition, the results indicated noted that minority student participants felt a sense of comfort, community, relatability, and experience from have minority faculty at the study site.

Lastly, in the project, I provide clear recommendations that are a strength. The primary goal of the position paper was to provide suggestions to enhance the educational environment for minority student learning. The project recommendations suggested to accomplish this goal include having an inclusive environment with faculty diversity as well as faculty professional development, faculty mentorship, and diversity training. At the Offices of Academic Affairs and Institutional Effectiveness, which are the stakeholders at the study site, the staff will have the opportunity to review the policy recommendations and consider adopting some or all of the suggestions.

Project Limitations

The policy recommendation has some limitations such as resources and staff to implement faculty development, faculty mentorship, and diversity training for project delivery. There may be a limited budget devoted to faculty development and training, which may pose an issue when attempting to implement changes. Currently, the study site does not have a specific budget for faculty development and training as well as the processes of implementing the resources. Researchers have noted that institutions have

limited funding and time constraints and professional development training organizations

(Hilliard, 2015). It is possible to increase the budget if needed to accommodate the

policy recommendations, which may ultimately impact the diversity at the institution.

Another project limitation is the use of staff or outside experts to provide the

faculty development and faculty training, which also is relevant to the resources at the

study site. Unless faculty development and faculty training can be provided free of

charge or essentially at no cost, the institution may find it difficult to adapt the policy

recommendation. Peer-to-peer mentoring may be a way to avoid additional costs that

may affect the budget. Professional development for learning and teaching is an

approach that can enhance teaching practice, but there are reduced funds to support these

initiatives (Thomas, Harden-Thew, Delahunty & Dean, 2016).

Overall, the policy recommendation will be presented without a formal

presentation to the stakeholders: the offices of Academic Affairs and Institutional

Effectiveness. If a formal presentation was conducted, there would be an opportunity for

me to engage with the stakeholders and address any questions and/or concerns. There

would also be a time to inquire about the budget and get an idea of the study site's

implementation processes.

Recommendations for Alternative Approaches

I designed the policy recommendation to positively impact minority student

learning by increasing the number of minority faculty at the study site, which could also

improve minority student retention at the institution. The project format would have also

been appropriate as a formal presentation to disseminate the information to the

stakeholders, the office of Academic Affairs and Institutional Effectiveness, as my

intended audience and to engage in a dialogue about possible resources and

implementation strategies. However, an alternative could be to have a question and

answer session and discuss the policy recommendation with other administration, faculty,

and staff at the study site to gather feedback, then formally present to the stakeholders at

the institution.

       According to the results from the study, many of the minority participants were an

advocate for diversity at the institution. Proposing a policy recommendation to the

stakeholders at the study site is still appropriate, but another alternative approach could

be to conduct a survey with the entire university through an anonymous portal enlisting

their recommendations for increasing diversity at the institution. The survey results

could be compiled in a report and shared with the college via e-mail. This active

participation from the entire university might be viewed by the institution as positive and

helpful feedback that could possibly spark a movement to implement diversity initiatives

and/or strategies.

Scholarship, Project Development, and Leadership and Change

Scholarship

       Throughout the writing process of my research study, I have been pleasantly

surprised. As I identified the gap in practice and conducted my investigation in this

study, I did not know what to expect from the participants regarding their views on

having minority faculty at the institution but found there was positive comments and perspectives regarding having minority faculty at the study site. Although the institution has some minority faculty, the participants' desire for additional diversity was apparent.

After conducting my research, I immersed myself in the literature on diversity in higher education and found numerous experts on this topic (e.g., Chen, 2017; Glasener et al.; Phillips, 2019). A few of the researchers also had other publications on various aspects of diversity as well, which I appreciated (e.g., Espino & Zambrana, 2019; Gordon, 2016). I was able to use these other publications in my literature review. I gained a wealth of knowledge from the extant research and learned to become well versed in other related scholarly topics to diversity in higher education. The literature also supported the lack of minority representation at colleges and noted that there were additional benefits, such as student learning for having minority faculty in higher education that makes a difference in the academic environment (Abdul-Raheem, 2016; Glasener et al., 2019).

Project Development

When I began my research on minority student learning, I assumed that my project would be a professional development training. As a social worker and professor, I have conducted trainings and this form comes naturally. However, after further review of the data and feedback from my committee, it was obvious that completing a project recommendation was appropriate.

When I began constructing the project recommendations, I had a difficult time formulating my ideas until I spoke with my chair, whose suggestions were helpful. I found that my ideas began to flow, and I was very pleased with the outcome of the project recommendations. In the future, I look forward to sharing the project recommendations with the stakeholders on campus and hope the project will be a model to other higher education institution.

The policy recommendation paper that I created opens the opportunity for other possible stakeholders (i.e., faculty, staff, and students) to review the document. The paper can be easily disseminated and is simple to comprehend, which allows for the institution to engage in the beneficial process of change.

Leadership and Change

Currently, as an administrator at my institution, I feel a great responsibility to lead change on campus, and I recognize that research can assist with making changes. I believe that change should be encouraged and hope that I can be a part of that process. In the future, my research could be implemented as a change model and similar institutions could adapt my proposal, although that may be an added budget expense to some. My doctoral study has provided me with the knowledge to inspire change at my institution and, hopefully, others in the future as well.

Personal Reflection

When I began my doctoral journey, I was a social worker with previous teaching experience as a professor at a few institutions. At that time, I was focused on my social

work career and was not thinking about pursuing my doctorate degree. However, I considered returning to college to pursue a nursing degree because I worked in healthcare, but after finding out about the additional requirements, I made the decision to obtain my doctorate degree in education.

The courses I took as a part of my doctoral program have provided me with a wealth of knowledge about what it means to be a scholar, an education practitioner, and project developer in higher education leadership. A scholar gains knowledge about a particular topic, and this is what I learned from my courses and the various writing assignments. As an education practitioner and project developer, I am now able to use the knowledge from my doctoral program in my current position as department chair, especially when working with my faculty members on projects.

I have been on this journey since May 2015 with some challenges along the way, but I have maintained a consistent drive to gain this knowledge. During this process, I have switched employment a few times, which allowed me to return to academia, and also acquired a second job. I have shared my journey with family, friends, colleagues, and students and they have been supportive and encouraging. This doctoral program has taught me what it means to be a scholar as well as allowed me to develop my first project (see Appendix A) and possibly become published in the future.

Reflection on the Importance of the Work

Researchers have acknowledged that the presence of diverse faculty is beneficial to higher education settings and enriches students' learning experiences, which

introduces students to other perspectives (Cartwright, Avent-Harris, Munsey, & Lloyd-Hazlett, 2018). I expect that research on faculty diversity will continue because higher educational institutions consistently review and/or address diversity concerns and/or issues. However, the qualitative data that I gathered in this study supporting diversity initiatives, such as increasing minority faculty, inclusion on campuses, and student learning may encourage higher education institutions to commit to incorporating these ideas to ensure a diverse environment. Therefore, this study and its findings will remain important and relevant in higher education, especially as the student population continues to become more diverse.

Implications, Applications, and Future Research

Positive Social Change

The results of this study on minority student learning may impact positive social change by affecting people on the individual and family level as well as organization and society on the policy level. The findings of this study may encourage minority individuals and families to continue to access colleges, which improves the variety of people of color in higher education and adds to social change (see Luster-Edward & Martin, 2019). Educational institutions may make positive social changes to their colleges that continue to promote and implement strategies to increase minority student enrollment on campuses (see Griffith, Hueston, & Wilson, 2004). I could envision societal policy changes regarding minority student learning at a macrolevel through higher educational accrediting bodies such as Middle States. As I have noted before, my

primary goal with this study was to enhance the educational environment for minority student learning through promoting an inclusive environment with faculty diversity as well as faculty professional development, faculty mentorship, and diversity training.

The concepts of critical race and social learning theories were evident throughout my doctoral study. There is a connection between critical race and social learning theories concerning how minority students learn and the influences of the environment (Miller Dyce & Owusu-Ansah, 2016). Critical race theory is used to examine the impact of race and racism on structures and practices in higher education as well as students' learning environment (Critical Race Theory in Higher Education, 2015). Social learning theory is used to explore race and ethnicity as well as how students learn by seeking role models who look like them (Karunanayake & Nauta, 2004).

Continuing to research minority student learning and faculty diversity in higher education is imperative because there are institutions that lack inclusive and supportive environments that encourage minority students to thrive. There is a possibility that additional research regarding minority student learning and faculty diversity may provide colleges with other strategies to improve recruitment, retention, and graduation rates.

Conclusion

This study was a great opportunity to explore minority student learning in higher education. The study site, as well as other institutions, could use the data that I obtained recommendations made. I gained a wealth of knowledge from the research experience as a developing scholar, education practitioner, and project developer.

Conducting the research was an enlightening process, and my analysis of the transcribed interviews inspired a project that recommended a policy to address minority student learning at the study site. In this policy recommendation paper, I presented an opportunity to have an inclusive environment with faculty diversity as well as faculty professional development, faculty mentorship, and diversity training at the research site and I desire to continue to explore these topics in the future.

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Appendix A: The Project

Recommendation Paper on Minority Student Growth and Development in a Rural

4-Year College

Executive Summary

I conducted a research project that examined the perceptions of minority faculty and minority students regarding student learning associated with minority students' relationships to minority faculty. There is a growing number of minority students, 25%; whereas only minority faculty have only increase by 9%.

The results show that minority participants 92% compared to minority participant 8% thought there were advantages to having minority faculty. These advantages included diverse and cultural experiences, which may enhance student learning. Minority students, 85%, were positively affected by having minority faculty.

I developed a recommendation paper based on my research findings to address minority student learning at this institution. To enhance the educational environment for minority student learning it is important to:

- Create an inclusive environment
- Faculty diversity
- Faculty professional development
- Faculty mentorship
- Diversity training.

Creating an inclusive environment incorporates diverse atmosphere where students are relatable and develop relationships that positively impact their learning. Having diverse faculty allows minority students to experience a variety of learning perspectives. Faculty professional development increases awareness to diversity on campuses and helps enhance teaching practices. A faculty mentorship program assists minority faculty learn about the campus climate, build relationships, and making connections with other faculty. Diversity training sets the tone for culture and appropriate workplace behaviors at this institution.

These recommendations will enhance minority student learning at the college. They may also encourage minority students to continue to enroll at this institution and have a sense of inclusion. Overall, the results show that this university has seen a rise in minority faculty and minority students, therefore, an increase in minority faculty is recommended for this institution.

Introduction

At this rural institution, the minority student population, 25%, is growing compared to the 9% of minority faculty representation. Therefore, the gap in practice at the institution is the lack of diverse faculty members, which may have an impact on minority student learning, since there has been an increase of minority students at the university. The study examined the perceptions of minority faculty and minority students regarding student learning associated with minority students' relationships to minority faculty. Based on the results of the study, I found that the participants acknowledged that there were advantages to having a diverse faculty at the institution. The intended audience for the recommendation paper is the Offices of Academic Affairs and Institutional Effectiveness.

Background

The study included thirteen participants who were racially diverse minority students, faculty, and staff. Their racial and ethnic backgrounds consisted of Asian-Korean, Filipino, African, African American, Ecuadorian, Haitian, Hawaiian, Honduran, and some of the participants were multiracial. The criteria for participating in the study included being a minority, 18 years old or older, and employed or students at the study site for a minimum of one year.

I conducted a qualitative study that included semistructured interviews completed in a private room at the institution. In addition, I obtained consents from the interviewees to participate in the study. Each interview was audio recorded, transcribed, and coded

into categories. I also conducted follow-up emails with each participant post

transcription to clarify the data findings, the interpretation of the results and their

perspectives and assumptions during the interview.

Since the study focused on the perceptions of the minority participants regarding

student learning, the research questions were:

1. What are the perceptions of minority faculty on student learning
   associated with minority students' relationships to minority faculty?

2. What are the perceptions of minority students on student learning
   associated with minority students' relationships to minority faculty?

Summary of Findings

The themes that emerged included experiences with minority faculty, no

experiences with minority faculty, relationships with minority faculty, and diverse faculty

provide advantages, which provided data regarding the perception of minority students

and minority faculty on minority student learning that aligned with the research

questions. I found that 12 minority participants (92%) thought there were advantages to

having minority faculty. The advantages included diverse and cultural experiences as

well as various learning perspectives that will enhance student learning. Many

participants, 82%, noted that there were no disadvantages to having minority faculty.

The responses were based on whether or not the minority participants had direct,

indirect, casual, and/or positive experiences with minority faculty. There were 85% who

did have experiences with minority faculty compared to 15% who did not have any

experience with minority faculty. I also found that 11 (85%) felt that minority students were positively affected by having minority faculty and 2 (15%) did not think so, because they did not have any experiences with minority faculty.

In addition, 10 (77%) of the participants believed that minority faculty relate to the student body while only 3 (23%) were not sure due to their experiences. Throughout this process, I found that there was a sense of comfort, community, relatability, and experience that minority students glean from have minority faculty relationships according to the data. Thiele (2016) noted that positive student–faculty relationships are found to promote student happiness, identity construction, academic efficacy, academic performance, self-esteem, and degree completion.

Review of Literature

The cost of higher education is increasing and students question whether or not to obtain a college education (López, 2018). Although the cost of higher education is rising and is a concern, the number of students enrolling in colleges is increasing, especially the number of minority students (Mooring & Mooring, 2016). Iram and Riffatun (2019) noted that students access higher education to improve economic, social, and individual outcomes, and to increase chances for employment and productivity.

According to Lopez (2018), student involvement reflects the amount of physical and psychological time and energy the student invests in the educational process. Students benefit from a diverse education that allows them to contribute to organizational effectiveness when they enter the workplace (Crocitto et al., 2018). The literature further

noted that there is a need for diversity and opportunities to enrich students' experiences in understanding and valuing a diverse educational environment (Crocitto et al., 2018).

Abdul-Raheem (2016) found that cultural diversity, which includes faculty, educators, and students is encouraged in higher education. Research also noted that multicultural educational environments promote positive learning atmospheres through getting to know people, various perspectives, cultures, etc. (Akombo, 2013). Yuan (2017) acknowledged that there are a growing number of minority students accessing higher education; however, the question is how institutions can improve the current educational philosophies, instruction, and curriculum to meet the learning needs of minority students. I hope to provide some recommendations to address minority student learning at the institution.

Recommendations

I selected a recommendation paper as the project for this study because student satisfaction is a key concept as well as is student learning in higher education (Senior, Moores, & Burgess, 2017). It is important to address the possible barriers in higher education regarding minority student learning and I would like to do so by offering recommendations that may provide possible solutions to enhance minority student learning (Grainger, Crimmins, & Burton, 2019). Again, researchers have noted that how minority students' think about their racial identity could possibly be connected to their potential educational attainment (Yeboah & Smith, 2016).

This study found that minority students and faculty participants recognize that having minority faculty at the study site can affect minority student learning. Therefore, it is safe to assume that having a diverse environment is a key element for learning in higher education (Vollman, 2016). The primary goal of the recommendation paper is to enhance the educational environment for minority student learning through an inclusive environment with faculty diversity and faculty professional development, faculty mentorship, and diversity training.

Inclusive Environment

Between 2014-2015, higher education institutions have experienced racial tensions on campuses, i.e., UCLA, Duke University, etc., and students of all ethnicities are organizing for racially inclusive campus environments (Jones, 2016). Small liberal arts colleges have also experienced racial tension and implemented inclusive training for faculty and students to embrace diversity at their institutions (Gordon, 2016). Clauson and McKnight (2018) acknowledged that universities are more diverse, i.e., racial, gender, etc., than ever before and students are selecting institutions based on diversified campuses, which is causing college administration to plan, create, and sustain inclusive environments.

In other literature, a few solutions to inclusion were noted to increase the representation of Black faculty in academia, which included a race-conscious approach to diversity initiatives, an institutionalized approach to a commitment to diversity, and a political approach that challenges mainstream ideologies in higher education (Wilder,

Osborne-Lampkin, & Jackson, 2015). Researchers also found the need for diverse

faculty, staff, and curriculum in the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy and

noted inclusion strategies such as providing additional guidance on how diversity could

define individual pharmacy programs, conducting cultural assessments with faculty, staff,

and students to determine their individual attitudes towards other groups, and sponsor

organizations that support minority faculty (Hagan, Campbell, & Gaither, 2016).

Luster-Edward and Martin (2019) investigated the diversity disparity in higher

education of minority faculty and students at a Midwest research institution. The

researchers identified the leadership behaviors, policies, and procedures noted by

minority faculty and students (Luster-Edward & Martin, 2019). After conducting the

research, the researchers recognized the need for minority faculty representation in

teaching and administration at the university (Luster-Edward & Martin, 2019). The

researchers suggested that the institution embrace and encourage differences by

implementing strategies that would support inclusive policies within the higher education

system to increase the organizational value of diversity through equitable populations

(Luster-Edward & Martin, 2019).

Although this institution may experience little racial tension on campus, the

results showed that the participants acknowledged previous racial concerns that were

addressed by the institution. The participants recognized that there were advantages to

having minority faculty, which was 92% compared to 8% who did not. Their responses

regarding the advantages of having minority faculty were based on diversity, culture,

relatability, relationships, perspective, and learning. I also found that in particular the

minority student participants felt there was an advantage to having minority faculty, 90%

versus 10% of minority student participants who did not at the institution.

It may be appropriate for the institution to review their policies and procedures on

diversity and inclusion of minority faculty and students at the university and implement

changes as needed that create an inclusive environment. If there are no policies and

procedures, the next step would be to have a committee and/or task force that could

collaborate to create some policies and procedures to promote an inclusive environment.

The recommendation to have and/or sustain a diverse and inclusive environment could be

supported by the institution's budget as needed and is a feasible option.

Faculty Diversity

The next recommendation would be to maintain and/or increase faculty diversity

at the institution. Researchers have found that higher educational institutions have

become more diverse; however, the increase of minority faculty and minority

administration is low compared to the increase of minority students (Stout, Archie, Cross,

& Carman, 2018). According to the literature, the low number of minority faculty may

be due to the lack of minority faculty promotion and tenure at colleges, which also may

affect the graduation rates of minority students (Stout, Archie, Cross, & Carman, 2018).

In other research, I found that the recruitment and retention of minority faculty in

academia were low because of the hiring processes such as interviews and experiences

post hire at institutions (Cartwright, Avent-Harris, Munsey, & Lloyd-Hazlett, 2018).

Another researcher also identified a strategy to recruit faculty by grooming existing minority doctoral students and recruiting minority faculty candidates at the institution (Abdul-Raheem, 2016). In California, community colleges have incorporated faculty diversity internship programs (FDIP) to promote inclusive efforts, as well as to locate, and attract qualified potential minority faculty (Sirihekaphong, 2018). The research was conducted at two different locations in the California community college system and found four benefits of participation; mentorship, teaching experience, professional development, and networking and collaboration opportunities (Sirihekaphong, 2018). However, the FDIP did not have a significant effect on increasing faculty diversity, but did impact preparing faculty for employment at a diverse community college (Sirihekaphong, 2018).

The data from the study site not only acknowledged there were advantages to having minority faculty, it also showed that minority students, 85% versus 15%, were positively affected by having minority faculty at the university. Looking further at the data, the responses of the participants were based on their experience, motivation, comfort, opportunities to relate in a positive manner, value interactions, and respect. In addition, the participants noted that minority faculty related to minority students, 92% compared to 8% who did not. Maintaining and/or increasing minority faculty at the institution is a positive option to enhance minority student learning, which is supported by the data from the study.

Faculty Professional Development

In the literature, faculty professional development is a topic that higher educational institutions have examined because there has been an increase in diversity on campuses (Russell, Hodge, Frank, & Vaughn, 2019). Researchers have examined how well multicultural faculty perform in higher education and found that administration should adopt diversity practices to improve the psychological diversity climate in a diverse work environment (Bhatti, Alshagawi, Zakariya, & Juhari, 2019). At the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a program was piloted to target students and faculty to address the academic achievement gap between minority students and their peers who were Caucasian (Gillian-Daniel & Kraemer, 2015).

In Mexico, a community college initiated a faculty development program for a semester that coached community college minority instructors about simple, effective teaching strategies that promote student academic achievement (Perez, McShannon, & Hynes, 2012). At community colleges in Texas where there is an overrepresentation of minority students, a program called *Dream Catchers* was developed for faculty to look at the multicultural curriculum literacy program and how faculty incorporate cultural understanding of their students into developmental courses (Doran & Singh, 2018).

As a follow-up with the University of Wisconsin-Madison, a faculty professional development module was implemented to raise instructor awareness and increase inclusive teaching practices due to achievement gaps between majority and minority students (Schmid, Gillian-Daniel, Kraemer, & Kueppers, 2016). Madison Teaching and

Learning Excellence (MTLE) was the professional development program that the

institution implemented for early career tenure track faculty (Schmid, Gillian-Daniel,

Kraemer, & Kueppers, 2016). The university found that the faculty professional

development program raised instructor awareness and improved teaching practices,

which could address educational inequities (Schmid, Gillian-Daniel, Kraemer, &

Kueppers, 2016).

Although the data from my study do not specifically address faculty development,

they do reflect a need for diversity at the institution which is in alignment with a faculty

professional development recommendation. During the interviews, participants noted

that the environment has changed over the years and recently has diversified in students

and some faculty. It is appropriate to review the faculty professional development

programs that currently exist at the study site. The next step would be to examine how

effective they are and revise and/or implement changes as needed. In light of this

change, the institution has encouraged some diversity initiatives for students but not

faculty, which is why faculty professional development would be an appropriate

recommendation.

Faculty Mentorship

Faculty mentorship is another recommendation based on the literature review

conducted. Higher educational institutions recognize the absence of mentorship

programs that invest in minority faculty (Espino & Zambrana, 2019). Vollman (2016)

also noted that mentoring faculty, especially minority faculty, was essential to assist them

with learning the campus climate, building relationships, and making connections. The literature also discussed how science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines looked at peer to faculty mentoring to alleviate social pressures of college, ease the transition into the academic setting, provide a supportive environment that addresses the challenges associated with underrepresented students, and promote coping skills and resiliency (Lisberg & Woods, 2018).

Another study was conducted with African American women in academia who also worked at predominately white institutions and suggested specific strategies to university administrators to recruit, retain, graduate, and promote African American women in these institutions (Grant & Ghee, 2015). Wilder, Osborne-Lampkin, & Jackson (2015) noted that institutions have incorporated many programs such as grants, outreach, and student and faculty mentoring programs as part of and/or to support institutional diversity initiatives and plans.

Zambrana et al. (2015) conducted a study of mentoring experiences of fifty-eight underrepresented minority faculty at twenty-two research intensive institutions. The researchers found a need for mentoring that valued underrepresented faculties' ideas, intellect, and commitment to uplift both students and their communities from systematic oppression (Zambrana et al., 2015). A guide for mentoring was provided regarding how to engage with underrepresented minority faculty and strategies and knowledge to assess the effectiveness of mentorship to increase the retention of minority faculty (Zambrana et al., 2015).

Again my study did not specifically inquire about mentoring programs for minority faculty, but I am aware that mentoring exists for the first year of teaching at the study site. It would be appropriate to continue with this mentoring but may incorporate partnering minority faculty with other minority faculty to foster supportive climates for recruitment, retention, and longevity of diverse faculty (Cartwright et al., 2018).

Diversity Training

The last recommendation I would like to make is diversity training that creates awareness amongst multicultural employees about other cultures and appropriate workplace behaviors at the institution (Bhatti, Alshagawi, Zakariya, & Juhari, 2019). In the literature, I found that student activists from California to Maine were demanding diversity training due to the increases of minority faculty and students (Minowitz, 2016). According to the literature, the researchers found the best practices to address diversity in corporations and higher education included diversity priorities, strategic planning, outreach to underrepresented minority communities, administrative structures that support diversity efforts, and diversity training (Moshiri & Cardon, 2019).

According to the literature, researchers found diversity competency, which is learning to understand, appreciate, and embrace opportunities and challenges that are presented in a diverse social environment, was a concern related to peer learning (Crocitto et al., 2018). After further research, the researchers noted that among the best practices to address diversity competency included diversity priorities, strategic planning, outreach to underrepresented minority communities, administrative structures, and

diversity training in higher education (Crocitto et al., 2018). Researchers also found that diversity training can help create cultural awareness amongst multiracial employees in the workplace (Bhatti, Alshagawi, & Juhari, 2019).

In other research, a study was conducted on how effective faculty participation was during a diversity training (Booker, Merriweather, & Campbell-Whatley, 2016). This study defined multicultural/diversity training as "preparing faculty to use culturally diverse instructional strategies and language from multiple groups, cultures, and societies in the development of course content, teaching techniques, and assessments (Booker, Merriweather, & Campbell-Whatley, 2016, p.1)." Focus group interviews were conducted with faculty and students of the faculty examined the impact of the training program on classroom dynamics, instruction, and assessment (Booker, Merriweather, & Campbell-Whatley, 2016). The researchers found that the faculty benefited from the training and it made an impact on their personal growth, particularly attitudinal and curricular changes (Booker, Merriweather, & Campbell-Whatley, 2016). Students felt a sense of community and growth during the multicultural course that was taught by the faculty during the training (Booker, Merriweather, & Campbell-Whatley, 2016).

Based on the literature there are some benefits such as personal growth, attitudes, and a sense of community to having diversity training in higher educational institutions. Implementing diversity training for faculty may be appropriate in order to help recruit and maintain minority professors at the university. In addition, it may encourage minority students to continue to enroll at the institution and have a sense of inclusion.

Overall, the results from the study show that the institution has seen a rise in minority faculty and minority students and there is a continued desire to increase and/or maintain minority faculty at the university. The minority participants acknowledged that there are advantages to having minority faculty at the institution, which can positively influence minority student learning. I am recommending that having an inclusive environment, faculty diversity, faculty professional development, faculty mentorship, and diversity training may be a few options used to recruit and/or maintain minority faculty and positively impact minority student learning at the institution.

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Formative Evaluation Questionnaire

Please see the formative evaluation questionnaire and provide responses. Thank you.

1. Did you agree with the recommendations? If so why or why not?

2. How would you like to implement the recommendations?

3. What other recommendations would you like to see implemented at the college?

4. Do the recommendations require a budget? Why or why not?

5. Is there any additional feedback that you would like to share?

Appendix B: Faculty Interview Questions

Name (Number#)

Years at Institution:

1. What experiences have you had at the institution related to minority faculty?

2. How are minority students affected by having minority faculty at the study

   site?

3. How do you think minority faculty relate to the student body?

4. What are the advantages of having minority faculty member?

5. What are the disadvantages of having a minority faculty member?

6. How do minority students relate to minority faculty?

7. How do minority faculty relate to minority students?

Appendix C: Student Interview Questions

Name (Number#)

Years at Institution:

1. What experiences have you had at the institution related to minority faculty?

2. How are minority students affected by having minority faculty at the study site?

3. How do you think minority faculty relate to the student body?

4. What are the advantages of having minority faculty member?

5. What are the disadvantages of having a minority faculty member?

6. How do you relate to minority faculty?

7. How do minority faculty relate to you as a minority student?