A Pilot Study of the Workplace Experiences for White Student Affairs Professionals at Historically Black Colleges and Universities: Implications for Organizational Culture and Future Research

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Abstract

This study examined the workplace experiences for White student affairs professionals at historically Black colleges and universities. More specifically, this pilot study was designed to gather in-depth data on a small group of White student affairs professionals to develop a better understanding of their perceptions as it relates to their treatment in the workplace. In the discussion section, data based on White professionals' perceptions were compared to the experiences of African American student professionals depicted in the literature. Findings from this study suggest that these White student affairs professionals have had few, if any, negative experiences in the workplace at historically Black colleges and universities.

Workplace experiences have been identified as a key ingredient for job satisfaction in the American workforce (Barsky & Nash, 2004). As such, supervisors have sought to reshape workplace experiences for their employees to increase their overall job satisfaction (Turner & Brown, 2004). In line with corporate research and workplace adjustments, colleges and universities have given attention to understanding and addressing workplace experiences (Aguirre, Hernandez, & Martinez, 1994). Even though attention to workplace experiences has occurred in higher education, specific groups (e.g., African Americans and women) have continued to have negative

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experiences at work (Aguirre, 2000). For example, acrimonious workplace experiences have been well documented for African Americans at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) (Davis, 1994c; Granger, 1993; Jackson, 2001; Lindsay, 1994; Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). Overall, this research suggests that African Americans have been alienated, rendered powerless, not valued, and ascribed a peripheral role in the academic workplace (Davis, 1994a; Jackson, 2002; Jackson, 2003; Johnsrud & Des Jarlais, 1994).

The aforementioned work conditions for African Americans have been viewed as vestiges of past legal discrimination (Jackson, 2004). The legal desegregation of the United States education system, both K-12 and higher education, resulted in African Americans attending predominantly White institutions (PWIs) in larger numbers (Chambliss, 1997; Davis, 1993; Educational Testing Services, 1997). Likewise, the legal integration of state higher education systems, have also led to efforts of integrating historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) (Jackson, Snowden, & Eckes, 2002; Snowden, Jackson, & Flowers, 2002). As a result, there has been an increase in non-African American students and staff at HBCUs. For example, retention data from 2002 indicated that White students made up 6% of the undergraduate population and 22% of the graduate population at HBCUs (Hall & Closson, 2005). More recently, an increase in Hispanic students attending HBCUs has received national media attention (Roach, 2004). Between 1990 and 2000, Hispanic enrollment at HBCUs increased 64% nationwide (Axtman, 2004).

While the presence of Hispanics on campus is a more recent phenomenon, Whites have maintained a substantial presence for decades (Guyden, Foster, & Miller, 1999). Albeit, little empirical knowledge is available about the experiences of non-African Americans and, with regards to this study, Whites at HBCUs (Foster, 2001). A modicum of research on White faculty at HBCUs has emerged during the past four decades (e.g., Levy, 1967; Smith & Borgstedt, 1985; Slater, 1993), and an even smaller number of studies on White students at HBCUs is available (e.g., Conrad, Brier, & Braxton, 1997). However, research that examines the experiences of White student affairs professionals at HBCUs is non-existent. Accordingly, this study was guided by two research questions: (a) what are the workplace experiences for White student affairs professionals at HBCUs?, and (b) do these workplace experiences differ from those of their African American counterparts at PWIs? The findings of this study will provide insight into the broader question, embedded in organizational culture, of whether professionals who work in environments where their ethnic and racial group is not the majority are predisposed to negative workplace experiences (Chatman, Polzer, Barsade, & Neale, 1998).

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What Do We Know About Whites at Historically Black Colleges and Universities?

A computer-assisted search for research on Whites at HBCUs yielded 11 journal articles, two books, and 17 newspaper articles. Although limited, the literature states that Whites have always had a role at HBCUs. Guyden, Foster, and Miller (1999) noted that HBCUs have always had a White presence. They stated that from the beginning, White participation in Black education was the rule and not the exception as missionary organizations, religious denominations, and individuals assisted with the education of slaves and newly enfranchised freedmen. Brubacher and Rudy (1997) noted that for almost 25 years after the establishment of HBCUs, the majority of the administrators and faculty were White missionaries.

Research on White faculty at HBCUs can be traced back to 1967, starting with an article by Charles Levy entitled, "The process of integrating White faculty into a predominately Negro college." This article examined what effects hiring White faculty had on the student body. Levy noted that the conflicts between African American students and White instructors at PWIs were also prevalent at HBCUs. In 1974, Ann Jones wrote a book entitled *Uncle Tom's Campus*. Jones wrote about her experience as a recent Ph.D. recipient and her first job at an unaccredited Black college named Thomas University. While at the university, she soon comes to realize that all institutions are not the same. Jones deals first hand with an authoritarian administration, unmotivated students, lack of community support, a miniscule budget, and the isolation of White faculty on the campus. Later, Warnat (1976) investigated White faculty at HBCUs. He concluded that White faculty had difficulties with socialization at HBCUs, and with establishing academic and interpersonal relationships.

Smith and Borgstedt (1985) later examined the characteristics of White faculty at HBCUs. They concluded that most White faculty were males between the ages of 35-44 and were assistant professors in the humanities. Additionally, they also explored the perceptions of the White faculty's relationships with family, students, fellow faculty, administrators, and the university in general. For example, they found that 75% of the respondents felt that they were accepted socially, 92% were committed to goals of the college, 24% of the respondents families attached some sort of stigma to their position at an HBCU, 60% felt that the administration was more rigid than at a PWI, and 87% felt that African American students were just as likely to approach them about a problem as they were to approach their African American co-workers.

Recently, an article in the *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* examined the composition of White professors at HBCUs. The article highlighted the fact that, in 1995, more than a quarter of all faculty members at HBCUs were White, while only 4.9% of faculty at PWIs where African American. Lastly, an edited book of essays by Guyden, Foster, and Miller

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(1999) probed into the experiences of White faculty at HBCUs by giving voice to them. One White contributor wrote about walking into class and for the first time feeling like a minority. Another spoke about being a minority on campus and having the comfort of relinquishing that title when she went home. The book also examines the climate of HBCUs from the perspective of several White faculty members. For the most part, many White faculty adjusted well to their new environment, but some talked about uncomfortable interactions, and occasional feelings of isolation.

When exploring the literature on White students at HBCUs, the reference base is also limited. In 1997, Conrad, Brier, and Braxton studied the factors that contributed to the matriculation of White students on HBCU campuses. They identified factors that influenced the choice of White students to attend an HBCU including financial support, academic programs, and the institution as a whole. Most recently, Hall and Closson (2005) examined the social adjustment of White graduate students at a public HBCU in the southeast. They reported that White students held a general sense of comfort and overall satisfaction attending HBCUs. They also concluded that White students were surprised to find the environment welcoming and comfortable. The remaining literature on White students at HBCUs appeared in the popular media (e.g., Washington Post, 2004 and CNN, 2000). The majority of this literature was focused on the increasing presence and enrollment of White students on the campuses of HBCUs. Many of these White students were attending HBCUs based on several factors including scholarship support, being closer to home, and having access to unique academic programs. Although there was not an extensive literature base on Whites at HBCUs, the literature currently available provided a solid foundation for the development of this article. The literature indicates that the shift in White students attending HBCUs is a growing phenomenon and that the diversification is likely to continue. Likewise, the presence of White professionals at HBCUs will continue to grow.

Organizational Culture: A Tool for Understanding Individual Behavior

The notion of organizational culture has been well established as an important factor in the study of organizational behavior (Barley, Meyer, & Gash, 1988; O'Reilly, 1989; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991; Smircich, 1983). Organizational culture has been defined as the observed norms and values that characterize an organization that influence which aspects of its operations and members become salient, how members perceive, and interact with one another, approach decisions, and solve problems (O'Reilly & Chatman, 1996). Although there has been disagreement over some elements of the definition of organizational culture, researchers seem to agree that culture may be an important factor in determining how well an individual fits into an organizational context (Kilmann, Saxton, & Serpa, 1986; Schein, 1985).

In the 1980s, a number of researchers (e.g., Ahlburg & Kimmel, 1986; McCain, O'Reilly, & Pfeffer, 1983) started to investigate the effects of organizational culture as it related to group demographics or organizational demography. These researchers concluded that organizational demography had an effect on social integration and organizational attachment (O'Reilly, 1989). Katz and Kahn (1978) found that within a group, individuals' personal satisfaction with other members and their motivation to sustain those relationships are important indications of integration[1]. In addition, Tsui, Egan, and O'Reilly (1992) purported that such characteristics as race and age played a role in how an individual interacts with co-workers and the level of attachment and integration in the organization. Their study found that higher levels of organizational diversity resulted in lower levels of attachment among the group members. Interestingly, Tsui, Egan and O'Reilly concluded White men had the largest negative effect of increased group heterogeneity, than any other group. In essence, White men had lower levels of job satisfaction and self-esteem, and greater job-related depression in a diverse workplace.
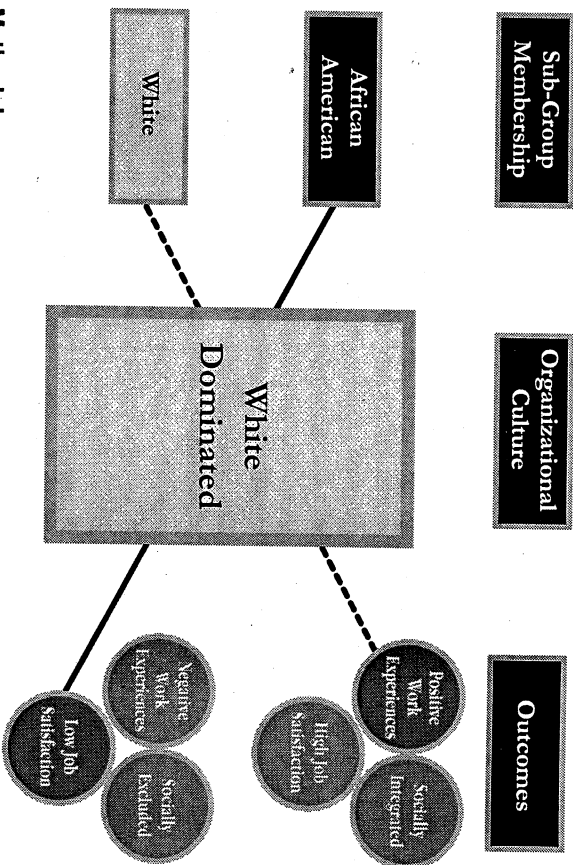
Over time, research (e.g., Stephan, 1978; Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992) has consistently found that individuals choose to and prefer to interact more often with members of their own social group than with members of other groups. Chatman (1998) affirms earlier research by contending that people of the same nationality, racial background, or sex are more likely to associate with one another within organizations. Of particular note, Zenger and Lawrence (1989) found heterogeneous work groups were less socially integrated, thus resulting in more communication problems, more conflict, and higher turnover rates than homogeneous groups. Moreover, individuals who were different from their co-workers in terms of age, tenure, education, sex, and race reported feeling more uncomfortable and less attached to their employing organization (Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992). O'Farrell and Harlan (1982) reported that women in predominantly male environments were isolated and treated with hostility by male co-workers. In contrast, Schreiber (1979) found that men in predominately female environments were socially integrated and experienced almost no hostility from female co-workers (see Appendix). It has been argued that increased interaction by the majority with the minority would improve the majority's attitude toward the minority (Allport, 1954/1978);however, Blau (1957) found that discrimination by the majority will increase as the proportion of the minority increases.

While it is clear that the American workforce is becoming demographically diverse (Johnston & Packer, 1987; Offerman & Gowing, 1990), there is strong evidence that individuals desire to work in homogeneous work environments (Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992). The aforementioned research shows great

[1] In the context of Katz and Kahn's (1978) study, integration meant combing two or more groups into a unified group.

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promise for understanding and interpreting data collected for this study. Previous studies provide a framework to understand individual behavior in homogeneous versus heterogeneous environments. But most importantly, it does so for minority and majority[2] interactions (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Work Experiences of African Americans in a Predominantly White Organization

Sub-Group Membership — African American / White — Organizational Culture — White Dominated — Outcomes — Negative Work Experiences, Low Job Satisfaction, Socially Excluded, Positive Work Experiences, High Job Satisfaction, Socially Integrated

Methodology

A qualitative inquiry is appropriate for the study of a phenomenon for which researchers have very little previous empirical knowledge (Shank, 2002). Creswell (2002) stated more eloquently that "qualitative research examines a research problem in which the inquirer explores and seeks to understand a central phenomenon" (p. 52). Within this context, an exploration means that little is known in the literature about the phenomenon and the researcher in turn will use data from participants to develop foundational knowledge. In order to achieve this goal, it is often recommended to employ a comprehensive interview protocol using open-ended questions (Brenner, Brown, & Canter, 1985; Flowers & Moore, 2003; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). This study utilized the internet to collect qualitative data.

The internet has become a popular medium for finding, retrieving, and exchanging information for use in research (Crossman, 1997; McFadden, 2000). More recently, researchers (e.g., Flowers & Moore, 2003; Moore & Flowers, 2003) have described the usefulness of the internet for collecting

[2] In the context of this study, majority and minority only refers to the numerical representation of a group.

qualitative data. Specifically, Flowers and Moore (2003) found that the benefits of collecting qualitative data on the internet were increased efficiency and accuracy by eliminating the time needed to transcribe audiotapes. This study employed e-mail interviews for data collection. Creswell (2002) states: "E-mail interviews consist of collecting open-ended data through interviews from individuals using computers and Web site or the Internet" (p. 207). This approach is recommended when you need to collect data from a geographically dispersed group of people. Accordingly, e-mail interviews were deemed appropriate for this study.

Participants

Participants were 15 White student affairs professionals employed at HBCUs. Demographic data on the participants who returned their survey questionnaires showed: 12 were female and three were male; 12 were born in the United States and three were foreign-born (e.g., Germany); their ages ranged from 21 to 54; six had a bachelors degree or less (associates degree), three held a masters degree, and six held a doctorate or professional degree; six worked in the health center, three worked in career services, and six were senior-level student affairs professionals. Because there is little research on this group of professionals in higher education, it is difficult to assess the representativeness of our sample. Participants were treated in accordance with the "Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct" (American Psychological Association, 2002). No participant names or other identifying characteristics were used in reporting the results of this study.

Protocol

The E-mail Interview Protocol for the Work Experiences for White Professionals in the Academic Workforce at Historically Black Colleges and Universities was developed to examine this phenomenon (Jackson & Daniels, 2005). Items on the e-mail interview protocol were based on a comprehensive review of the literature addressing the work experiences of African Americans at PWIs (e.g., Benjamin, 1997; Bridges, 1996; Crase, 1994). The aim was to ensure that data were collected on White professionals at HBCUs that would permit comparison to previous empirical knowledge about African American work experiences at PWIs. For the most part, the e-mail interview protocol consisted of open-ended questions (except for demographic information) and was arranged in the same manner the researchers would have asked in-person. The e-mail interview protocol is divided into seven sections: (a) demographic information, (b) academic and professional background, (c) workplace perceptions and relationships, (d) challenges and stress, (e) support, (f) environment, and (g) job satisfaction. Pilot testing of the e-mail interview protocol was completed using three White professionals at a PWI. White professionals at PWIs were used for pilot testing due to the sparse availability of the target population for this

study. Respondents were asked to complete the e-mail interview protocol, give comments on the clarity of statements, and identify other items that should be included. Comments were analyzed, feedback was reviewed, revisions were made, and the e-mail interview protocol was revised.

Data Collection

Research data were collected through the use of e-mail interviews. Data for this study were derived from a larger research project focused on the work experiences of White professionals at HBCUs. Relative to this study, data specifically on White student affairs professionals were disaggregated for analysis. The e-mail interviews were administered via electronic mail and a web-based data collection site. To develop our pool of participants, we sent e-mails to senior-level administrators (e.g., vice president) at each HBCU (n=105) requesting names of White professionals employed at their respective institution. Upon receiving the names, each potential participant was sent an e-mail explaining the purpose of the study and assuring confidentiality. The e-mail requested participation in the study and included a direct link to the data collection website. If the individual agreed to participate, the link would take them to the e-mail interview protocol. After completing the e-mail interview protocol, the data collection website prompted the participant to recommend the names of others who met the criteria for inclusion. The e-mail interview protocol typically took approximately 20 minutes to complete. This data collection process, to date, has yielded 93 completed e-mail interviews, 15 of which were student affairs professionals.

Data Analysis

Using Conrad's (1982) constant comparison method, emergent themes were analyzed after all data were submitted to the web-based data collection site. Themes of particular interest to the researchers were those associated with elucidating the research questions for this study. These themes were labeled and described independently by the two researchers. These themes and their descriptions were then cross-verified by the researchers together, re-labeled, and defined. Each researcher then re-examined the original transcripts for separate verification of the presence of the emergent themes. Original transcripts from these data were extracted as supportive evidence for the existence of each data theme. The researchers together combined findings from the separate analyses to produce a final description of each theme, along with their properties and dimensions.

Limitations of the Study

There are several limitations for this study that should be noted. First, the researchers are not sure how the absence of face-to-face dynamics might have changed the responses of the participants. Second, the researchers

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were unable to read non-verbal cues and signals, which are important aspects to qualitative interviews. Third, the technology used for this study could have discouraged some White student affairs professionals who otherwise would have participated. Fourth, it is unclear how the race of the researchers could have changed or altered the answers of the participants. While data were not collected face-to-face, it was possible for participants to review the personal websites of the researchers.

Findings

Academic and Professional Background

Of the White student affairs professionals included in study, all of them except three attended a PWI as an undergraduate. Three of the student affairs professional were currently pursuing a bachelor's degree from the HBCU at which they were employed. For the most part, White student affairs professionals in this study had worked at their current HBCU for five years or less. Specifically, six worked at their current HBCU for less than one year. Only three White student affairs professionals had previously worked at another HBCU, while nine had previously worked at a PWI, and three had not worked in higher education previously.

Of those who had previously worked at PWIs, when asked how their experiences working at a PWI differed from a HBCU they responded:

In my experience, the difference is probably more specific to this particular department, rather than a reflection of PWI vs. HBCU. But, maybe not! The major difference is that this particular department is very poorly run, and apparently has little history of acceptable functionality/few protocols in place/not much legacy of management - is this an HBCU reflection? Don't know. I have worked in PWI offices with similarly-poor morale due to management deficiencies. One difference is the bureaucracy is thick here, and communication has been formalized and squelched. (Also, student complaints to me would indicate that often one department within student affairs doesn't know what the other is doing - but this isn't something that affects my work directly at all.)

The main difference was in the demographics of the populations and the heritage attached with the institution.

More student-centered at the HBCU, sometimes to the detriment of efficiency and effectiveness of services and the long-term development of the student. Example: Rather than holding to deadlines and policies, many exceptions are made.

According to White student affairs professionals, factors they considered when applying for their current positions were: location, proximity to home,

security, work environment, institutional climate, institutional values, educational benefits, institutional size, governance, goals of student affairs division, quality of supervisor, institutional reputation, and quality of students.

Workplace Perceptions and Relationships

All 15 White student affairs professionals reported having a positive and productive professional relationship with their African American co-workers. For example, one participant responded "I would consider my professional relationship with my co-workers to be genuinely friendly and that I do not feel an outcast in any way." Nine of the White student affairs professionals expressed that they had established a personal relationship with their African American co-workers. Examples used to describe these relationships included: regular lunch meetings, office pot lucks, office visits, and social outings after work and on the weekends.

Nine participants indicated they had established personal relationships with their African American co-workers and felt they were viewed as equals by their African American co-workers. For instance, one White student affairs professionals stated: "I know that I am respected for the skills and knowledge that I bring to the table. I have been asked to conduct a staff development workshop and participate in different committees throughout the campus. I know that if I was not viewed as an equal that these opportunities would not have been brought before me." However, the six participants who had not established a personal relationship with their African American co-workers did not feel they were viewed as equals. These feelings are evident in the passage by one participant "The peers that I work with on a daily basis appreciate the work I do and see me as a value to the organization. I feel that upper-management has yet to see my capabilities and that may possibly be because I am Caucasian."

The two groups of White student affairs professionals answered in a similar fashion relative to their perceptions of their interactions and comforts with members (e.g., faculty and staff) of the university community. The same nine answered yes and the other six answered no. Below are selected responses:

I feel that a good percentage of the staff find it easy to work with me, however some individuals have trouble communicating with me.

I've recently been part of a mixed-department committee where we made a presentation, and the working environment was comfortable. One major difference was that I have a higher professional degree than did the administrative assistants with whom I was working, so the educational levels were not matched. But the camaraderie was fine.

When individuals seek out your opinion on programs, how to do something on the computer, openly ask you to participate in activities, come to you for assistance, or are willing to lend assistance when needed, then I believe that the university community is comfortable in interacting

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with me. I have had all of these situations occur and at no time did I feel that any of those individuals were uncomfortable in dealing with me.

Good interactions with faculty as well as staff, attend conferences together, discuss university issues and share jokes.

When asked the same questions in reference to students, all White student affairs professionals felt students of all races were comfortable discussing their concerns or problems with them. In fact, they all considered themselves to be mentors to students on campus. Mental health, personal image, sexual issues, interviewing, and resumes were all listed as areas White professionals had served as a mentor. To summarize the views held by the participants when considering employment at their current HBCU, one participant stated "I considered the atmosphere, values, commitment to those involved with the institution, and the way in which the employees behaved toward those they interacted with."

Challenges and Stress

Six of the participants felt that particular challenges existed for White student affairs professionals at HBCUs. Interestingly, the two groups that formed, in reference to answers on questions before, were in tack for this question as well. One participant expressed that she felt her challenge would be "Acceptance at other, non-HBCUs as equally qualified." While another participant communicated his thought about minimized challenges in this way:

Due to my background I had no qualms about working at an HBCU and was very comfortable and excited about this opportunity. But everyone else wanted to know how I felt working at an HBCU, was I comfortable, or was I uneasy or unhappy. These are the questions that even after the two years that I have been here that I am still asked by others on the campus. However, I have never been denied any opportunity to develop professionally in any way. The opportunities that are available to everyone else on campus are available to me as well.

For the most part, White student affairs professionals in this study believed that working at a HBCU has helped their career as exemplified in the following comments:

I believe working at an HBCU has helped my career. My attention to detail and my self awareness have both become stronger attributes that I have retained while being employed at the College.

As a communicator, I've had to find the best way to effectively communicate with students of a predominantly different background - but that's the nature of being a health care provider anyway.

I feel that my career has only been helped by working at an HBCU. By being with XXXX for two years now it shows to others that I can handle

the diverse work environment that is prevalent in today's society. It also shows that I am comfortable with who I am.

Helped so far, I have been able to quickly have expanded leadership responsibilities and become much more aware and involved with the leadership of the campus.

When asked if they felt under more pressure to perform because of their race, only three of the participants responded yes. The other 12 participants felt that race had nothing to do with their performance appraisal. For example, "In my work environment it is not your race that is taken into consideration when it comes to performance, it is your skill set. It is how you perform that counts." One participant who felt their race played a factor, explained: "Only during the first 6-10 months. After that period I felt I had 'passed the test' and would be judged on my work and accomplishments." Additionally, three of the participants felt that their job performance was scrutinized more because of their race. Interestingly, it was not the same participant who thought that they were under more pressure to perform because of their race.

The participants stated that working under a sub-standard administration, dealing with traditions that prevent the most efficient use of resources, and standard student affairs challenges (e.g., student complaints, budget cuts, and faculty-administration conflict) were sources of stress for them at work. None of them attributed their stress to their race. To deal with stress associated with their current jobs, the participants developed realistic professional goals, learned from previous mistakes, established a clear line between work and home, took meditation breaks, and engaged in physical exercise. The participants credited their co-workers, supervisors, mentors, and role-models for helping them to develop coping strategies.

Support

When describing their primary support system inside of the university, the participants spoke of a broad network. This network included co-workers, supervisors, top-level administrators, staff, and their professional peers. The support network outside of the university included spouses, church members, friends, former university employees, and colleagues at other institutions. Nine of the participants felt that their department and/or university provided a supportive environment, while six did not. The participants made note of the impressive level of support HBCUs provided students. The six participants who did not feel they worked in a supportive environment based their responses on encounters with their supervisors. Three participants felt very strongly about their direct supervisor not effectively addressing problems among employees which shaped departmental dynamics. The other three participants expressed concerns with the institution's inability to issue timely annual contracts and their supervisor's lack of effort to resolve the matter.

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Environment

White student affairs professionals in this study were not alone on campus; they typically saw or interacted with on average two White professionals a day. Three of the participants were the only White professional in their division, while the rest were not. One of the former participants stated that she was more likely to "take more care and time in making decisions, which is a good thing," in responding to how it made her feel. For the most part, these participants did not feel that having other Whites in the same work environment made it any more pleasant to go to work. The comments of one participant are telling in this regard: "We joke openly about being minorities." Six of the participants felt that a more diversified workforce is needed in their current place of employment. The following are their selected responses:

How can they expect students to graduate and go into the working world with a good rounded environment if the racial diversity is so slim. Students are not going to know how to interact with other races. I have noticed that most young African American College students are very different from young Caucasian College students.

It wouldn't make a difference in what I do, but if there were more diversity, I wonder if the students would feel less comfortable coming to the health services. I think there's a mistrust towards white health-care providers by some students!

Diversity is more than just race. Social status, nation of origin, religious beliefs, one gender, and other factors comprise what is considered a diversified workforce. Although we are an HBCU, I work with individuals who are from different countries, have different backgrounds, and who have different experiences.

Staff should be hired on the basis of qualifications alone with only the most qualified being recruited & hired, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality.

There is much diversity in the faculty and less in the staff. It is good for students to interact with diverse individuals in different capacities.

Nine of the participants felt that their institutions were committed to increasing the diversity of its workforce. Many of the participants communicated that they did not see any attempts to diversify the workforce at the university level. One participant went further and stated: "Very traditionbound. If a non-HBCU had similar hiring practices it would be sued into submission as violating the EEOC laws." At the department and unit level, 12 felt a commitment to increasing diversity in the workforce. For the most part, these participants expressed that hires within their division were based on qualifications and not race.

White Student Affairs Professionals

Job Satisfaction

In general, these participants were somewhat satisfied with their experiences working at an HBCU. None of these participants expressed being unhappy with their job. One participant mentioned that her satisfaction was diminished due to the fact that she made 25% less than her counterparts at other PWIs within the same state higher education system. All but one participant was satisfied with their authority to make decisions. The one participant stated she was "used to much more autonomy and less micromanaging." These participants were equally satisfied with their workload. For the most part, participants were pleased to be "handed numerous opportunities to go above and beyond what is described in [their] job description."

The participants in this study were on average neutral about their opportunity for advancement in their current position. These participants were divided on their satisfaction with the leadership in their unit. While on one hand, participants described major problems with leadership, on the other hand, they praised the work of their supervisors. Nine of the participants had thought about leaving their current position. The factors they considered were: career advancement, business ownership, money, and proximity to home. Twelve participants were very satisfied with their professional development opportunities, while three was very dissatisfied. The latter stated they had no budget for professional development. While the remainder of the participants attended conferences, workshops, joined professional organizations, and participated in continuing education.

Discussion

The findings of this pilot study yielded results that refuted in large part what we know about the workplace experiences of African Americans at PWIs and provide significant support for previous knowledge on organizational culture of homogenous environments. First, the major difference highlighted as salient by White student affairs professionals between working at PWIs and HBCUs was the student centered nature of the institution. Some thought that these institutions were student centered to the point that they believed it was to the detriment of the institutions and the students. Interestingly, the student centered focus of HBCUs has been the identified reason African American students and faculty have selected to be at these institutions (Davis, 1994c), and why Hispanics students are increasingly selecting these institutions. Second, all White student affairs professionals stated they had positive and productive relationships with their African American counterparts. These White professionals reported that they did not feel uncomfortable, they were socially integrated into the work environment, felt respected, treated equal, and experienced no real challenges at work. These findings are in stark contrast to the experiences of African American student affairs professionals at PWIs (e.g., Gaston, 2003; Holmes, 2003).

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Third, most of the White student affairs professionals had established personal relationships with their African American co-workers. However, this is different from African American professionals at PWIs. They report having strained relationships with their White co-workers and experienced cultural, social, and professional alienation (Holmes, 2003). Of particular note, the White student affairs professionals who connected on a personal level with their African American co-workers were more likely to feel a part of the workplace while White student affairs professionals who did not connect on a personal level with their African American co-workers were less confident about their status in the workplace. These Participants also seemed to be less certain about their answers. Fourth, HBCU students were comfortable interacting with White professionals as perceived by the participants. Participants noted that they mentored HBCU students and regularly talked with them about personal and professional matters. In contrast, previous research (e.g., Flowers, 2003) on African American students at PWIs states that these students are often uncomfortable interacting with White professionals on campus.

Fifth, White student affairs professionals in this study depicted HBCUs as great institutions to work. More specifically, these White professionals felt that working at a HBCU helped their careers. Most felt, by working in a highly diverse environment, it helped them become more self-aware, helped them to hone their communications skills, and helped their leadership skills. While this may be true for these participants, previous research on African American administrators show that they were often disenchanted with working at PWIs (Davis, 1994; Jackson, 2002). Sixth, these participants strongly asserted that their race did not matter at their respective HBCU. Subsequently, they felt that race was not a factor when it came to their performance appraisal and that they were under no pressure to perform because of their race. Moreover, they felt that it was their skills that their co-workers and supervisors cared about most. This finding is in direct opposition to the perception held by African Americans employed at PWIs (Jackson, 2002).

Seventh, these White student affairs professionals were able to establish a broad network and support system both inside and outside of their respective HBCU. Research on African Americans at PWIs demonstrates that it was a significant challenge for them to establish network and support systems at their institutions, but much easier to do so outside of the institution with other African American professionals (Jackson & Flowers, 2003). Eighth, these White student affairs professionals were not alone at their respective HBCU. All of the participants stated they saw at least two White professionals each day. In addition, all except one participant expressed they had another White professional in their division. The literature on African American professionals at PWIs characterize them as "solos" and tokens to represent the fact that they are often the only African American, if not the only person of color (Lindsey, 1994). Ninth, overall

the collective responses of the participants of this study suggest that they were satisfied working at HBCUs.

Implications for Organizational Culture

Examined through the lens of organizational culture, this study produced some findings that were particularly interesting. Previous research (e.g., Tsui, Egan, & O'Reilly, 1992; Zenger & Lawrence, 1989) found that individuals that were different from their co-workers reported stories of feeling uncomfortable and that heterogeneous workgroups were found to be less socially integrated. However, our study comes to a different conclusion. The results of this study indicate that in a Black dominated culture, Whites have little or no trouble socially integrating. Social integration is linked to positive work experiences and high levels of job satisfaction. While there is at least one other study (e.g., Smith & Borgstedt, 1985) that derived a similar conclusion relative to White faculty at HBCUs, we have attempted to contextualize our results through a framework of organizational culture. In doing so, we have developed an emerging model (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. Emerging Model for Work Experiences of White Professionals at Historically Black Colleges and Universities
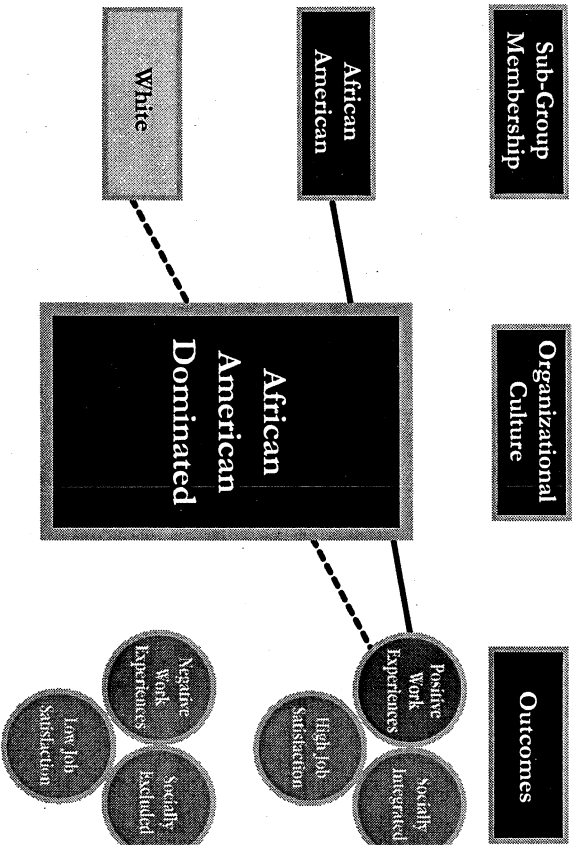
As noted throughout this document, our present understanding of the influence of dominant culture on sub-group memberships within heterogeneous and homogeneous environments are based on studies that

examine White dominant and White-male dominant culture. Therefore, this previous knowledge explained why women were more likely to have negative work experiences in male dominated environments as well as people of color in White dominated environments. Further, these findings illustrated that White males were privileged in both environments. Nonetheless, it was unclear if these scenarios held true for African American dominant environments. Thus, the findings of this study provide a preliminary glimpse into this matter.

While our data did not directly examine work experiences of African Americans at HBCUS, we did draw on previous research (e.g., Brown, 2002; Johnson & Harvey, 2002) to represent African Americans' general perceptions about working at HBCUs. Accordingly, African Americans as a sub-group who work in an African American dominant organizational culture generally are situated in a positive work environment, are socially integrated, and experience high levels of job satisfaction. While you may expect to find White professionals at HBCUs to have similar work experiences as African Americans at PWIs, the results of this study and the model depict otherwise. White professionals employed in an African American dominant organizational culture did not encounter negative work experiences, social exclusion, or low levels of job satisfaction. Rather, they too enjoyed a positive work environment, were socially integrated, and experienced high levels of job satisfaction. Clearly, more testing on this preliminary model is warranted.

Implications for Future Research

Due to the nature and scope of this pilot study, it would be premature to suggest implications for policy or practice. However, this study does provide insights into the types of future research needed to enrich and expand the literature on White professionals at HBCUs.

First, a study with a larger sample of White student affairs professionals is needed to determine if the themes and patterns found in this study hold true. Second, additional research is needed to explore the work experiences of other White professionals at HBCUs (e.g., academic administrators and faculty). Third, data on the perception of White professionals at HBCUs by their African American co-workers would be insightful. Fourth, a study of the perceptions of African American students at HBCUs of White professionals could be useful in enhancing our knowledge of what factors impact college students at HBCUs. Fifth, a study that explored the perceptions of White professionals at HBCUs by their White counterparts at PWIs would be enlightening.

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Appendix

The Work Experiences of Males and Females in a Male Dominated Environment
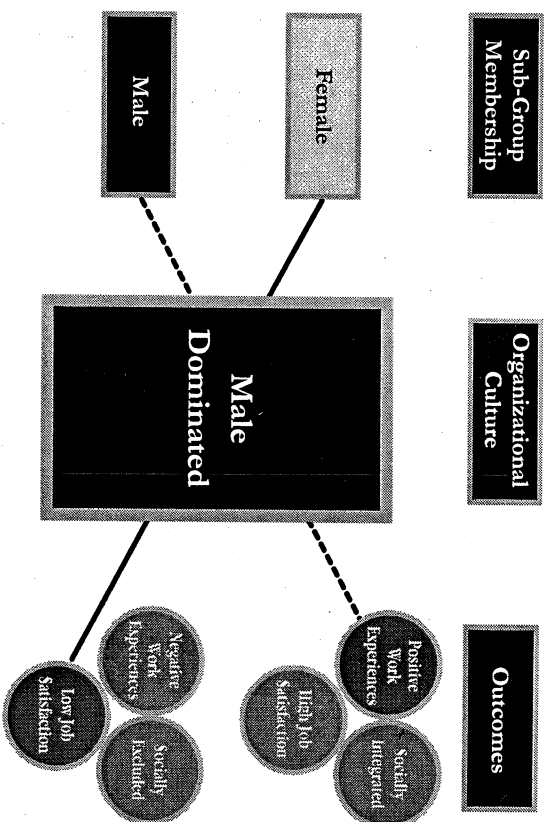
The Work Experiences of Males and Females in a Female Dominated Environment