African American Faculty and Student-Oriented Challenges:
Transforming the Student Culture in Higher Education from Multiple Perspectives

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Introduction

Higher education is charged with the dual mission of promoting the development of innate human potential and of ensuring the evolution of civilization (Hall & Rowan, 2000). It provides a conduit for diminishing social divisions among individuals and groups, and yet, it has not successfully forged bridges within its own context in relation to race. Historical and current cultural and social dynamics must be understood in order to recognize the challenges experienced by African American faculty members (Allen, Epps, Guillory, Suh, & Bonous-Hammarth, 2000; Epps, 1989). Higher education emerges from the social milieu, and thus, the experiences of various racial groups within academia reflect the status and power of these groups within the larger social structure (Allen et al.; Epps, 1989; Marcus et al., 2003). Contemporary literature suggests that African American faculty members are influenced by racial inequalities within academia (Astin, Antonio, Cress, & Astin, 1997; Nettles & Perna, 1995; Tack & Patitu, 1992). Creating strategies for transforming higher education would be ineffective if the role of discrimination and racial inequities and how these emerge within domains of higher education are not considered or are only considered in a cursory manner.

Discrimination in academia is subtle and difficult to identify in a clear and concise manner (Menges & Exum, 1983). Societal perceptions of race pervade the system of higher education and influence administrators, faculty members, staff, and students. Within the United States,

race is a social construction that encompasses sociopolitical factors which work to devalue specific groups of people (Robinson, 2005). Race and its corresponding social perceptions is correlated with huge variations in occupational choice, income, education, access to health care and other resources, and longevity (Anderson, 2003). The social ramifications of race transcend contexts and situations. In academia, it manifests in a variety of ways including, but not limited to, teaching evaluations, promotion and tenure procedures, recruitment and retention policies, and work climate (Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004; Collins, 1990; Collison, 1999; Cornelius, 1997; Perna, 2001; Tillman, 2001; Toutkoushian, 1998). Across the last three decades, the challenges encountered by African American faculty members have been documented in the literature. Although there has been progress in the domain of recruitment, there continues to be difficulties connected to creating an optimal environment in which faculty can thrive and flourish as academicians (Allen et al., 2000; Marcus et al., 2003; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999).

One of these difficulties encompasses the intentional and unintentional challenges posed by the student culture. There is a dearth of literature that clearly articulates how student culture influences the experiences of African American faculty members. Despite efforts on college campuses to increase representation of African-American faculty members and students and to promote an environment of diversity consciousness, many campuses continue to experience cultural encapsulation (Bucher, 2004). Diversity consciousness refers to "understanding, awareness, and skills in the area of diversity" (Bucher, p. 22). Establishing a learning community revolving around diversity consciousness is a dynamic process that requires ongoing commitment to openness, learning, and evolution. African American faculty members and all the individuals involved in higher education have the potential to promote such a learning environment.

This article overviews the race-related challenges experienced by African American faculty members in higher education and articulates how the student culture compounds the difficulties present in academia. Understanding and recognizing these dynamics is the necessary foundation on which to build strategies for promoting diversity consciousness in the student culture. It is vital that all of us, as educators, embrace a systemic perspective on how to transform student consciousness because it is a universal issue that transcends all levels of higher education. The article provides individual and systems level recommendations for transforming the student culture within academia.

Race Related Challenges in Higher Education:
Realities of Academia

Within higher education, several prominent issues that are pertinent to African American faculty members include recruitment, retention, salary and promotion, and work environment (Allen et al., 2000; Collins, 1990; Collison, 1999; Cornelius, 1997; Perna, 2001; Tillman, 2001; Toutkoushian, 1998). Tack and Patitu (1992) provide a snapshot of the minority experience in higher education: African American faculty are less likely to be tenured, more likely to experience racism and discrimination, feel isolated, and work in less prestigious institutions when compared to their Caucasian counterparts (Aguirre, 1995; Milem & Astin, 1993; Mirsa, Kennelly, & Karides, 1999; Olsen, Maple, & Stage, 1995). Contemporary literature consistently articulates the race related challenges experienced by African American faculty members. Increased attention to these issues has facilitated a dialogue about how to address the difficulties associated with being a minority faculty member; however, there continues to be a rationale for the ongoing focus, action, and institutional commitment to fostering diversity consciousness among all domains of higher education (Mirsa et al., 1999).

Inequities in salary and promotion continue to be demonstrated in the literature (Collison & Fields, 1999; Menges & Exum, 1983: Perna, 2001). Toutkoushian (1998) compared faculty salaries based on gender and race by examining the data from 25,780 faculty participating in the National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF) survey (NCES, 1993). He discovered that women varied only one to two percent in their earnings when compared by racial group. African American women actually earn more than White American women in academia. However, the differences among men faculty were more pronounced. White American men earned nine to twelve percent more salary than African American, Hispanic/Latino, and "other" men. Asian American faculty members did earn four percent more than their White American counterparts. Despite documented inequities, the literature on African American faculty experiences signifies that minimal advances have been made regarding recruitment and salary (Mirsa et al., 1999; Riggs & Dwyer, 1995; Toutkoushian, 1998). A look at the most recent NSOPF:04 (Forrest Cataldi, Fahimi, & Bradburn, 2005) reveals that 5.5 percent of respondents were African American full time faculty as compared to 80.3 percent who were White American. These results are from a sample of over 26,000 participants. This serves to illustrate the disparity in the percentage of African American versus White American faculty working in higher education. A further look reveals that 52.1 percent of men in

the survey held tenure while 48.0 percent of women held positions of tenure. This illustrates that while the gap in tenure between men and women is narrowing, a gap remains. Finally, Toutkoushian and Conely (2005) found that women with similar qualifications persist in having lower salary levels than men.

One measure to address the inequities in salary and the disparity between the number of African American faculty members in academia when compared to other faculty members lies in the recruitment of African American faculty. A more intentional methodology would be to effectively utilize Ph.D. programs as a pipeline for the recruitment of African American faculty. The lack of effective recruitment strategies serves to perpetuate the challenges of retention and promotion as many potential faculty members may shy away from working environments that lack peers who are also African American.

Despite the recent increase in African American faculty representation and salaries in academia, retention and promotion continue to be fundamental challenges in higher education (Allen et al., 2000; Collison & Fields, 1999; Fields, 2000; Flint, 1995; Perna, 2001; Turner, Myers, & Creswell, 1999). Promotion and tenure continue to be areas of concern since African American faculty are over-represented in non-tenured positions (Flint, 1995). One of the significant influences on retention is situational salience which refers to the degree to which the individual African American faculty member experiences "token status" in the work environment (Niemann & Dovidio, 1999). Dovidio (1998) surveyed minority faculty members in psychology departments and found that 25 percent of Hispanic/Latino participants and 27 percent of African American participants reported being the only minority in their department. This variable contributes to situational salience and diminishes occupational satisfaction (Evans, 1998). It contributes to feelings of isolation and marginality which, in turn, impact the process of retention (Jackson, 1991).

The academic work environment itself generates other challenges for African American faculty members due to implicit discrimination and marginality (Aguirre, 1995; Milem & Astin, 1993; Mirsa et al., 1999; Olsen, Maple, & Stage, 1995). Faculty members who are minorities encounter the same racial-based stressors described in the general labor market (Contrada et al., 2000; Pliner & Brown, 1995; Plummer & Slane, 1996). Isolation and role overload are critical issues for African American faculty members who may be disproportionately expected to recruit and mentor minority students, teach multiculturally-oriented coursework, represent the department on committees, generate discourse on diversity, be visible in the community, and be responsible for fostering diversity consciousness in students (Allen et al., 2000). Marginality

can result as African American faculty members seek to balance the overload or disparity of responsibility in the roles of service, scholarship, and teaching within the context of an environment that entails implicit discrimination (Allen et al.; Thompson & Dey, 1998).

A conscious effort to understand the climate for African American faculty members may represent a commitment to advocacy and prompt a systemic change. One of the domains in the work environment that has not been addressed substantially in the literature relates to student-oriented challenges that African American faculty members encounter. Exploring such realities for African American faculty members encourages the articulation of key challenges and the creation of potential solutions on an individual and systems level.

Student-Oriented Challenges:
Realities in the Classroom and in the Hallways

A number of variables come to mind when discussing the climate and stressors that face African American faculty such as: (1) being seen as lacking in credibility (Jackson & Crawley, 2003), (2) encountering unintentional and intentional bias (Aguirre, 1995), (3) having to work to gain acceptance (Turner, 2002), (4) feeling as if they are the spokesperson for all African Americans (Allen et al., 2000), (5) being seen as someone who was hired as a token (Misra et al., 1999), (6) working with others who do not understand the meaning or consequences of being privileged (Goodman, 2000), (7) feeling as if everyday they encounter unknown threats within academia in both overt and covert manners (Allen et al.), (8) feeling pressure to get exceptional teaching evaluations (Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004), and (9) working diligently to be seen as a competent professional. These concerns can be magnified when an African American faculty member must face them not only from peers and colleagues, but also from those we have entrusted with our care and knowledge, namely the students with whom we work. To encounter negative challenges from students is to further risk and magnify experiencing isolation, marginality, and an overall frustration with the academic climate.

According to Jackson and Crawley (2003), within academia, African American faculty members tend to be younger than their White American colleagues and if they are on a tenure track, are at a lower rank. Jackson and Crawley further contend that due to these factors there is an inherent belief by White American students that African American faculty are lacking in credibility. To elaborate on this issue, Hendrix (1998b) investigated student perceptions of African American faculty

credibility and found that African American professors were viewed as fair and even more favorable once they went to great lengths to prove their credibility to students. What is alarming about this idea is that within the same study Hendrix found that White American faculty were not tested as harshly or as honestly by their students to prove their worth. The question that emerges is how are African American faculty experienced by students?

Hendrix (1998b) points out that the study of variables that influence the classroom experience for students who engage with and attempt to learn from African American faculty is limited. Hendrix further states that given the variables of alienation and isolation experienced by African American faculty in conjunction with the fact that many White American students have limited contact with any faculty of color, it is logical to assume that African American faculty face a difficult challenge in building credibility and acceptance from a classroom of predominantly White students. Within the Hendrix study, the twenty-eight participants who were both White American and African American defined teacher credibility as being knowledgeable and possessing the ability to translate the material in a way that is easily understood by students. It was found that students felt that African American faculty had to work harder to prove that they were credible. This theme was especially salient when engaging with a faculty member who taught a course that was not specific to cultural or ethnic studies. Finally, Hendrix reports that a number of students from both races felt that African American educators had to work harder to attain and maintain their status as a professor.

Interestingly, the perception of African American faculty members was in contrast to how the students perceived their White American counterparts (Hendrix, 1998b). Some participants in the study expressed thinking that White American male faculty had less difficulty proving their credibility to students based on the biases and assumptions inherent in mainstream academia. Within the study conducted by Hendrix, it was noted that a number of students routinely challenged the authority and qualifications of African American faculty both in and out of class. Jackson and Crawley (2003) offer one view of why this may occur by stating that African American faculty members' limited presence and interactions with White American students leaves room for White American students to explore their attitudes toward African American faculty (Jackson & Crawley, 2003).

White American students use their cultural worldviews to impose an expected homogeneity upon those who are not White American (Jackson & Crawley, 2003). Jackson and Crawley contend that African American faculty are expected by those who are not of color to alter their

methods and means of communication to be seen as more approachable or collegial. African American faculty members may experience this as pressure to alter their identity for the sake and safety of others. Feelings of marginality and loss of integrity are coupled with this systemic pressure to conform to a cultural norm that may not "fit" with the individual faculty member's cultural being.

Furthermore, Jackson and Crawley (2003) state that the expectation for homogeneity occurs to a larger degree when the students have little to no familiarity with the culture of another. Delpit and Dowdy (2002) describe this phenomenon in more depth by arguing that within the communication process there is an exchange of codes of cultural personhood. Successful communication depends on the degree to which those cultural codes are valued, accepted, and affirmed (Jackson & Crawley). According to Martin (1996), White Americans, as the privileged group, take their identity as the norm or standard by which other groups are measured. By understanding their own experience as the norm, the identity is invisible even to the extent that many White Americans do not consciously think about the profound effect being White American has on their everyday lives (p. 125). In general, faculty members are frequently unaware of how students perceive their teaching and how this can create a disconnect between them (Miley & Gonsalves, 2003). Unlike their White American colleagues, African American faculty must consistently be aware of how their students perceive them and their teaching ability and credibility.

Bonner (2004) illustrates some factors that contribute to the struggles faced by African American faculty. According to Bonner (2004), African American faculty are consistently put in a place of having to prove their merit and worth on a continual basis while in those times feeling as if they are not respected in the same way as other professors. Bonner continues by highlighting his personal experience of feeling an expectation that he must entertain students instead of educating them. Similarly, Ladson-Billings (1996) speaks of her classroom encounters with students during which silence can be a tool used by White American students to (1) control class dialogue, (2) assume power, and (3) ignore authority.

An African American faculty member must be aware of what Cole (2001) identifies as a bicultural existence that is critical to finding balance within academe. West (1993) asserts that what is required of African American faculty to secure their careers in the academy is to take on dominant paradigms but to use African American subject matter. This is exemplified in the notion that African American faculty members must adopt and then manipulate the cultural paradigm in academia to find a balance between being successful and not relinquishing their

identities (Cole). Cole and West further discuss how seeking this type of balance creates a struggle to move between the worlds of academia and our own communities. It is imperative that the academic community recognize that an African American faculty member does this at the risk of disconnecting from the African American community at large while at the same time not being seen as an equal member within the academy. Cole provides the summation and reminder that as African American faculty members, our success and accomplishments are not just our own, but that of our families and communities. This cultural framework does not resonate with students and other faculty members who are not African American and who value the world of individualism.

The call for multicultural sensitivity is but one example of the academy's pursuit of equality and social justice not only within higher education but within the larger society as a whole. It is difficult when an African American faculty member faces invisibility and marginality within the academy, and when this is compounded by experiencing student-oriented challenges in the classroom, the degree of difficulty in navigating this path is heightened. It is paramount that African American faculty members recognize the challenges posed by student in regards to their openness to diversity consciousness and their challenges to faculty credibility and authority, as well as their cultural worldview (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002; Hendrix, 1998b; Jackson & Crawley, 2003).

Within the literature in counselor education, we are taught to understand and work with the idea of multiculturalism and operate within a pluralistic society (Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, & Alexander, 1995; Sue, Ivey, & Pedersen, 1996; Sue & Sue, 2003). We are also challenged to prepare ourselves and our students to be change agents (Ponterotto, Casas, Suzuki, & Alexander, 1995; Sue, Ivey, & Pedersen, 1996; Sue & Sue, 2003). In answering this call, a few critical questions remain: How do we transfer these skills to one who teaches in any other discipline to enhance the learning environment beyond the intended subject content? How do we transfer these skills to the students we work with who understand multiculturalism in name but lack practical experience? Systemically, there needs to be a change. We are challenged to prepare individuals and groups to be open to dialogue, commitment, and action about the subject of race, racism, and social justice in higher education.

Strategies for Navigating and Transforming Student Culture: The Power of One

It is paramount that African American faculty members recognize the challenges posed by student in regards to questioning faculty cred-

ibility (Hendrix, 1998), expecting homogeneity in worldview (Jackson & Crawley, 2003), encountering cross-cultural exchanges in the classroom (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002), and balancing pressures between identity conformity and identity integrity (Cole, 2001; West, 1993). Having realistic expectations about the student culture and its dynamics provides an opportunity to facilitate dialogue related to diversity consciousness in higher education. African American faculty members must be willing to become involved on multiple levels to evoke change within students and within the larger culture (Hickson, 2002). The consideration of strategies for individual faculty members must be coupled with a charge to the system of higher education overall. An empowering higher education culture stimulates dialogue, recognizes the cultural context of students and faculty members, and actively works to address racial related concerns and issues (Obidah, 2000). The discussion of strategies for African American faculty members is one component of a multilayered approach to transforming the student culture.

Gaining awareness about student-oriented challenges creates the opportunity to be strategic in how African American faculty members engage students. Cornelius, Moore, and Gray (1997) encourage African American faculty to actively scrutinize the political environment of their departments and institutions. Understanding the politics of higher education can be extended to recognizing the dynamics among students and in the classroom.

Despite the multifaceted challenges present in higher education, African American faculty members can continue to perceive themselves as educational leaders who share responsibility with the system to evoke change. Perceiving ourselves as champions of learning environments that are diversity conscious requires the recognition of potential ramifications connected to embracing this role. The role of a faculty member includes challenging worldviews, promoting critical thinking, and exploring issues (Thompson & Dey, 1998). Choosing to evoke change in higher education needs to be coupled with a realistic recognition of how African American faculty may experience not "fitting in" in academia and not "fitting in" in the larger African American community (Thompson & Dey).

Current research suggests that undergraduate students are more invested in their learning experience if they interact with faculty and with peers (Astin, 1993; Millis, 1994). The impact of how faculty members approach the classroom and how they deliver course material supersedes the influence of the content and structure of the course (Astin, 1991). African American faculty members have an opportunity to expand their teaching styles and to focus on engaging students within the classroom. For example, an associate professor in mathematics can have a profound

influence on the diversity consciousness of students by choosing to attend to delivery and engagement factors in the classroom.

It is critical that we, as educators, see ourselves as empowered to utilize our inherent power as faculty members to concurrently advance the learning of students in our particular field and to promote a multicultural perspective in the student culture. Green (1989) states that faculty "create and legitimize knowledge and determine the quality of experience in every classroom" (p. 81). Educators must be aware of the cultural context of teaching, so they can exhibit intentionality in course design and implementation. African American faculty members can acknowledge how who they are as cultural beings shapes the learning environment. Attending to the cross-cultural experiences in the classroom and the possible expectation of homogeneity empowers the African American faculty member to proactively articulate what type of learning environment they want to create (Cole, 2001; Delpit & Dowdy, 2002). The faculty members in this situation are thus allowed to assist the students in their own personal growth and development without sacrificing academic integrity or compromising who they are as individuals.

Our presence in the classroom communicates the most potently to students about how we value diversity consciousness and multiple perspectives (Paccione, 2000). The hallmark of cultural leadership is the willingness to model what we articulate as our beliefs and values (Tierney, 1992). Modeling an openness to dialogue and increased consciousness in our roles as educators, researchers, learners, mentors, and advisors creates a learning environment characterized by the ability to question and challenge accepted norms and assumptions (Arredondo & Arciniega, 2001). Cultural leadership focuses on creating the space and safety to engage in dialogue, and it does not focus on mandating what the dialogue entails (Tierney, 1992).

Creating a space for dialogue among students is connected with promoting cultural empathy, establishing rapport, and engaging in honest reflection. The literature in counselor education reiterates the role of empathy and rapport building with students in evoking change (Arredondo & Arciniega, 2001). Fostering empathy requires a connection with students on an intellectual and emotional level (Goodman, 2000). African American faculty members can work to expose students to life experiences that are different from their own and can encourage group activities among diverse students (Goodman, 2000). Establishing rapport with students opens the door for dialogue about cultural factors in a non-threatening and constructive manner. African American faculty members can engage in on-going self-reflection that seeks to honestly explore their role as an educator. Possible questions include: Who am I as an educator? How am

I creating the learning environment? How am I influencing the learning of students? How is who I am as an African American faculty member interacting with who my students are in this context?

African American faculty members need to recognize that they can influence the student culture on an individual level, and yet, they need to acknowledge that the impact of multiple faculty members committed to the same vision would be even greater (Brinson & Kottler, 1993). Seeking out faculty members who share the investment in promoting diversity consciousness in the student culture would magnify the message and create a more comprehensive strategy for change. Again, a systems orientation is necessary in order to generate long-term, comprehensive, and intrinsic changes within the student culture. Expecting, encouraging, and promoting a systemic perspective shifts the responsibility from one group of people, namely African American faculty members, to the complete system itself. Such a shift contributes to a more integrated and dynamic relationship among the parts of the whole; African American faculty members will no longer be expected to "fit" into a system that perpetuates social perceptions of race, but rather, the system and all its parts will be expected to create new meaning and understanding and to fashion diversity consciousness.

The Role of Higher Education: A Systems Perspective on Transforming Student Culture

Higher education exists within a sociocultural context and is influenced by societal perceptions of race (Allen et al., 2000; Epps, 1989: Marcus et al., 2003). Thus, there are unique race related challenges inherent in higher education as race converges with the system (Collison, 1999; Perna, 2001; Tillman, 2001). Discrimination within higher education tends to be subtle and covert (Menges & Exum, 1983). Salient issues include recruitment, retention, salary and promotion, and work environment (Allen et al., 2000; Toutkoushian, 1998). A systems orientation to addressing these race related challenges encountered by African American faculty members in academia is necessary to create an environment that is encouraging and promoting of diversity consciousness among students.

Therefore, the administration of institutions needs to take proactive actions to identify potential areas of discrimination and to develop strategies to address them. On-going reflection of administrators is necessary to maintain a concerted effort to evoke systems level changes. Pondering questions such as "Do the demographics of the administration, student population, and faculty match that of the community? Is there more than one African American representative in various departments and

colleges? Is there an organizational commitment to creating diversity consciousness among students? How do biases in students manifest themselves on our campus? How are we demonstrating our commitment to faculty, students, and the community?" generates a dynamic process of evaluation and development (Evans, 1998). Commitment to diversity consciousness needs to permeate high-level administrators and needs to be overt and consistent (Epps, 1989).

Furthermore, institutions can establish a commitment to creating communities that recognize and honor differences based on race (Tierney & Bensimon, 1996). Such an endeavor entails a paradigm shift in higher education in which the focus is on adapting and expanding institutional policies and procedures to respond to the needs and challenges of African American faculty members (Perna, 2001). Current approaches to supporting African American faculty tend to focus on initiatives to acclimate individuals into the system; the paradigm shift would generate a more interactional model in which both the system (higher education) and the individual (African American faculty member) are mutually engaged and influenced.

Some specific strategies focus on awareness, recognition, and involvement. Department chairs and tenure and promotion committees need to be cognizant of the potential for negative bias to emerge within teaching evaluations for African American faculty members (Bradley & Holcomb-McCoy, 2004). The social perceptions of race and credibility within the student culture can negatively impact receptivity in the classroom as well as evaluation of teacher effectiveness (Hendrix, 1998). Strategies for influencing the student culture include sponsoring open dialogues about racial relations in departments and discussing how unintentional discrimination may emerge in evaluating the credibility of African American faculty members.

Furthermore, higher education can recognize the efforts of faculty members, students, and administrators who seek out opportunities to evoke change (Cullinan, 2002; Kroshnamurth, 2003). This would communicate an active commitment to the expressed value of diversity consciousness. Also, the involvement of faculty members who are African American in policy decisions and evaluations is critical (Hall & Rowan, 2000). Encouraging participation of African American faculty decreases their feelings of marginality and enhances the likelihood of creating successful and beneficial policies and procedures.

It is critical that administrators in higher education encourage other faculty members to promote diversity consciousness. The onus of responsibility for evoking change in the student culture needs to be shared among African American faculty members and other faculty

members within the institution. As educators, all of us are responsible for infusing diversity consciousness into our courses and for celebrating multicultural awareness in our departments, colleges, and institutions. Expecting African American faculty members to be the only initiators of dialogue, catalysts for change, and role models of diversity consciousness devalues and perpetuates the challenges encountered in academia by African American faculty. A commitment to diversity consciousness in the student culture needs to pervade the institution and needs to be a shared vision among faculty members (Epps, 1989). Failure to take a systems perspective on generating change in the student culture creates a myopic and impotent strategy for fashioning such a change.

Conclusion:
Acknowledging the Realities
and Creating a New Student Culture

Our colleges and universities are culturally diverse, yet the faculty and curriculum rarely represent this diversity (Jackson & Crawley, 2003). Until institutions of higher education are able to address the needs of African American faculty members and others of color, they will continue to have marginal success in achieving consistency in the diversity of faculty (Thompson & Dey, 1998). The diversity consciousness of the entire institution will be compromised by a myopic and limited response to the challenges experienced by African American faculty (Bucher, 2004).

The unique race-related needs of African American faculty have been consistently articulated within the literature, yet progress in these areas has been marginal at best (Collins, 1990; Collison, 1999; Cornelius, 1997; Perna, 2001; Tillman, 2001; Toutkoushian, 1998). This is most evident in the number of African American faculty who do not receive tenure as this process is, in theory objective, but in reality, is subjective. The issue of race related challenges is further explained through the inequities in salary and rank and in feelings of isolation, marginality, and what Finkelstein (1984) identifies as being the pitfalls and stresses of being the token minority.

A number of the concerns that arise within the context of student interaction can be alleviated in addressing the overall unique race related challenges for African American faculty within the academy. For example, should the number of African American faculty within academe increase and remain consistent, there would be inherently less shock when White American students encounter an African American faculty member (Cole, 2001; West, 1993). Another possible outcome of addressing these challenges for African American faculty is the idea that

as our numbers increase there will be more African American college students who can see themselves represented within the faculty ranks on a consistent basis. This could increase their interest in obtaining a position in higher education. The plight of African American faculty is a major concern since it is seen, heard, and experienced by African American students on any given campus. The literature (Fogg, 2003) highlights cases of African American faculty serving as advisor, mentor, committee member, and counselor to many African American students. As a result, some African American students may directly tie their career and educational choices to the examples they see in the lives and experiences of their African American mentors. Thus, the African American students' perceptions of how the faculty member is engaged by and engages the system may be a hindering or promoting catalyst for their personal occupational and educational development.

Prior to addressing these concerns we must answer the questions: (1) How do we help educators within the academy negotiate and navigate the classroom experience when working with students who may have never experienced a faculty member of color? (2) How do we continue to educate at all levels within the academy without suffering from burnout and tiring of teaching others what it means to African American? and (3) How do we hold all within the academy accountable for the development of diversity consciousness on a systemic level? These questions will continue to shape the efforts of African American faculty members and others who are committed to the vision of diversity consciousness.

It is paramount that higher education, at all levels, assesses the status of race relations within the system (Marcus et al., 2003). African American faculty members must be joined by their colleagues, administrators, and students in an on-going dialogue that tackles the race-related issues that continue to infiltrate higher education and society. Higher education is experiencing transformation and redefinition on multiple levels as we settle into the 21st century. It is a time full of opportunity for sparking innovative and progressive dialogues about the role of higher education in promoting diversity consciousness and in shaping how we understand the development of human potential (Hall & Rowan, 2000; Tierney, 2001).

Note

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