

# Multicultural-Organization Development in Student Affairs: An Introduction

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*The creation of multicultural campus environments requires systemic, planned change efforts. This article introduces and extends the application of multicultural-organization development (MCO) concepts to the work of Student Affairs practitioners.*

Equity and access for people of color have been on the agendas of most college and university administrators for at least the past two decades (Conrad & Shrode, 1990). Proposed responses to these issues are myriad (Woolbright, 1989; Wright, 1987). The results are, at best, uneven (Cheatham & Associates, 1991). Regardless of the multicultural efforts on campuses, the overall enrollment and retention of students of color has declined steadily (American Association of State College and Universities [AASU], 1986; Carter, 1990). Even when there has been growth in enrollments of students of color, "sheer numbers alone have not been sufficient to bring about substantive change in programs, practices, and policies" (Jacoby, 1991, p. 296).

The prevailing racial climate of colleges and universities is inimical to the creation of multicultural campuses, where full participation by students of color would be realized. Instead, these students report feeling alienated from the campus; they describe the campus environment as unwelcoming, at best, and often hostile (Freeman, 1975; Pope, Ecklund, Mueller, & Reynolds, 1990; Wright, 1987). They experience hostility, anger, and even violence on college and university campuses (Reynolds, Roark, Shang, & Stevens, 1988). Reports of racially motivated bias and violence against students of color on predominately White campuses have increased significantly over the past several years (Terrell, 1988). In response to these incidents, students of color have expressed discontent and outrage on campuses across the nation (Pope, et al., 1990). Clearly, these experiences negatively affect students' emotional well-being, and the hostile and insensitive environments heighten the potential for academic risk in these students (Wright, 1987).

In recent years, Student Affairs divisions at colleges and universities across the nation have devoted increased attention to cultural diversity issues. This concern is evidenced by the growing number of published articles, conference presentations, and topical symposia on multicultural issues. The changing demographic forecast for the 1990s and beyond (Hodgkinson, 1986; Levine & Associates, 1989) is

'Although there is current and continuing debate surrounding the definitions of the terms race and ethnicity and the debate centered around the entire concept of "race" as an accurate or even helpful category, I have reluctantly chosen to use the term "race" for the purposes of this article for the sake of clarity and to conform to common usage.

one of the great motivators for this concern. Other motivators include escalating bias-related harassment and ethnoviolence, the ever-expanding number of groups on campus demanding inclusion, fear of legal and/or political battles, as well as a sincere desire to create campuses that are humane, welcoming, inclusive, and just.

A problem for those seeking to create multicultural campus environments is that there is no single or broadly accepted definition of the term multicultural and no unified vision of what a multicultural campus environment would entail. Individuals may be using the same words but have very different ideas about what is to be accomplished and how. At times the word "multicultural" is used synonymously with the word "multiracial" - referring only to racial and/or ethnicity diversity. Other times the term "multicultural" is used more inclusively to cover such diverse groups as students of color, gay, lesbian, and bisexual students, international students, students with disabilities, and students with a variety of religious beliefs, denominations, or preferences.

Although the same term "multicultural" is used in these two different situations, in actuality, these two meanings are very different. Confusion, misunderstanding, and exclusion often are the results of different uses of the term "multicultural." Questions of which groups to include, to what degree, and how to include them abound. Some authors are beginning to address these definitional problems (American College Unions-International, [ACU-11 1987; Pope & Reynolds, 1990). Pope and Reynolds (1990), for example, called for a broader use of the term "multicultural," stating that, "... in addition to responding to racial and ethnic concerns, the term multicultural can and should be inclusive of other groups such as the common experiences of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people, women, non-Christians, and people with disabilities" (p. 2).

Attention to cultural diversity issues has prompted the initiation of a variety of programmatic responses in Student Affairs. Typically, these responses have attempted to address cultural diversity or multicultural issues through the use of individual awareness (e.g., racial awareness) or consciousness-raising activities. Many of these interventions, however, are narrow in scope and overlook nonracial issues of cultural diversity, such as sexual orientation and gender. Although these efforts are valuable, particularly on an individual basis, they have had little effect on the structure and day-to-day functioning of an institution (Jacoby, 1991).

On many campuses, in addition to racial/ethnic awareness programs, a current trend has been to hire/appoint an individual with primary programming responsibilities to address the issues and needs of students of color, including

recruitment and retention efforts (Cheatham & Associates, 1991). Although these programs are necessary and serve an important educational function, they are not enough. According to Jacoby (1991), "institutional responses to the increased presence of different groups of students have generally been fragmented attempts to deal with immediate, specific problems rather than long-range and comprehensive" (p. 296). A sporadic and uncoordinated series of programs by dedicated and sincere individuals will not suffice. Although such interventions may increase the numbers of students of color, they do not necessarily affect the level of racism, sexism, or other forms of oppression on campus in any positive, systematic fashion. These efforts do not alter the fundamental structure of the Student Affairs division or campus culture. As such, these interventions do not create multicultural campus environments. At best, they serve to increase the numbers of a given social group (usually a racial or ethnic group) on a particular campus, but do little to acknowledge the contributions (both historical and current), values, and interests of these groups (Manning & Coleman-Boatwright, 1991; Pope et al., 1990).

The purpose of this article is to extend the application of systemic interventions in the work of Student Affairs, specifically in the area of multicultural change efforts. One systemic approach that has been utilized in higher education is organization development. This approach has some limitations, especially in addressing multicultural issues, which will be set forth in a critique followed by a much needed and appropriate extension of organization development theory. This extension involves the introduction of multicultural-organization development (MCOOD) to the Student Affairs profession. MCOOD is a new and growing field, and its applications to Student Affairs offer great promise for effective multicultural change efforts.

### Systemic Organizational Change

The existing change theories and social-justice change literature assert that long term change in institutions requires that the interventions focus on the organization as a system (Cummings & Huse, 1989; Jackson & Holvino, 1988; Sargent, 1983). Systemwide change strategies involve integrating equity and access issues into the planned change-design processes (e.g., strategic planning) of Student Affairs divisions, rather than as separate and isolated parts (Stewart, 1991). This integration would ensure that unified and coordinated efforts to create multicultural environments would permeate the various subunits of the campus. Interventions targeted at the institutional level are necessary to alter the basic organization and operation of the division or institution.

The suggestion that Student Affairs utilize systemic-change interventions is not new. Since at least the early seventies, Student Affairs scholars and practitioners have recommended the incorporation of systemic-change interventions and, in particular, organization development-techniques (Borland, 1980; Conyne, 1991). Organization development (OD) was viewed as a means of assisting Student Affairs divisions in becoming more effective and efficient in their work and also as a means for transforming the structure of existing Student Affairs divisions in order to incorporate the then fledgling philosophy of student devel-

opment into the mainstream of the profession (Borland, 1980).

In addition to the lack of systemic-change efforts oriented towards multicultural issues, Student Affairs staffs have not fully included the oppression or social-justice agenda in their efforts to create multicultural campus environments. Many campuses have chosen to focus almost exclusively on cultural-diversity or so called "civility" issues rather than on the foundation issues of, for example, racism, sexism, heterosexism, or classism (Barr & Strong, 1989; Cheatham & Associates, 1991). For Student Affairs divisions to fully confront multicultural issues on campus, systemic approaches that adequately address both the structure of the organization and the underlying social-justice agenda are needed (Katz, 1989). Multicultural-organization development (MCOOD) provides a framework for large-scale, long-term multicultural-systems change and addresses social-justice issues (Driscoll, 1990; Jackson & Holvino, 1988). A brief review of organization development follows as a base for contrasting and extending the discussion of MCOOD:

### Organization Development in Student Affairs

Several differing definitions are contained in the literature both within the ecumenical body of OD literature and as applied to higher education in particular (Conyne, 1991; Cummings & Huse, 1989). In fact, the dynamic nature of OD, as presented in the literature, precludes a single or unified definition with which all authors agree; rather, OD and related intervention strategies are regarded as evolving and changing. However, enough agreement does exist to suggest that OD is a process for beneficial systemic change as opposed to random or coincidental change (Conyne, 1991). The definition offered by Cummings and Huse (1989) will be utilized for this article-. "a systemwide application of behavioral science knowledge to the planned development and reinforcement of organizational strategies, structures, and processes for improving an organization's effectiveness" (p. 1).

Fundamentally, OD is concerned with planned, systemic, change. It involves planning to diagnose and solve organizational concerns, yet it remains flexible and plans can be altered as new information is available after the implementation of the change strategy (Cummings & Huse, 1989). Accordingly, Cummings and Huse (1989) noted that OD goes beyond merely activating a change program to a "longer term concern for stabilizing and institutionalizing change within the organization" (p. 2). An OD change strategy then would focus interventions or "action on a number of fronts - in relation to strategy, technology, organization structure, and its management style" (Morgan, 1986, p. 65), and it also would apply attention and action to the core goals, values, and mission of the organization.

OD provides the necessary, planned change strategies to institute long-term, systemic change, and it adequately addresses the fundamental structures and processes of Student Affairs divisions. However, OD is based on a perspective in which organizational values, goals, norms, and practices are centered in only one culture, the dominant culture, which in the United States and on predominantly White college campuses is White, male, heterosexual, Christian, and able-bodied. The founders of OD initially

had hoped that traditional OD change efforts would have an impact on social-justice issues in organizations (Jackson & Holvino, 1988). These founders made the assumption that by promoting a new, more humane workplace, it would automatically be a socially-just workplace. However, humanization of the workplace (which typically addresses such issues of employee participation and satisfaction) is measurably different from the redistribution of resources and power that social justice necessitates (Driscoll, 1990; Holvino, 1988). Consequently, while, as Driscoll (1990) stated, "OD is cloaked in the mystique of being the champion of social reform in organizations, " ( p. 62) it really perpetuates the status quo and is not a truly transformational effort. Although OD is designed, in part, to challenge and change existing suboptimal systems and structures, it is limited by its current practices and theories. The most significant barrier to OD's attempts to transform organizational reality and culture lies, then, in its ultimate acceptance of organizational culture in its current form (Driscoll, 1990). OD, in many ways, fails to recognize that there may be other viable realities and cultures.

Over the past years, various attempts to create more culturally diverse campuses have been proposed (e.g., Cheatham & Associates, 1992; Manning & Coleman-Boatwright, 1991; Wright, 1987). These attempts clearly have value for practitioners interested in creating more welcoming environments for students of color. What is missing from these works, however, is a systemic-change process and framework that would buttress creative conceptualizing and experimenting with Student Affairs structures, processes, policies, and procedures. In addition, in order for any significant long-range, long-term impact to occur, more attention by the Student Affairs profession should be focused on the role of top-level administrators.

#### **Multicultural-Organization Development: Key Concepts and Principles**

The concept of MCOD as a method of planned change was developed in the early 1980s through the work of Jackson, Hardiman, and Holvino.(Driscoll, 1990). Jackson et al., recognized the inherent limitations in OD interventions, particularly as they relate to concepts of social diversity and social justice. Jackson and Hardiman (1981) offered the following vision of a multicultural organization

A multicultural organization reflects the contribution and interests of diverse cultural and social groups in its mission, operations, and product or service delivery; acts on a commitment to eradicate social oppression in all forms within the organization-, includes the members of diverse cultural and social groups as full participants, especially in decisions that shape the organization; and follows through on broader external social responsibilities, including support of efforts to eliminate all forms of social oppression and to educate others in multicultural perspectives. (p. 1)

MCOD and all of its related terms and technologies remain in the stage of "knowledge production" (B.W. Jackson, personal communication, March 28, 1990). An authoritative body of literature that describes, discusses, and debates its nature, function, and practices does not exist. In its current stage, MCOD has been defined as an "organizational transformation effort which has as its

primary objective the creation of socially diverse and socially 'ust organizations" (Driscoll, 1990, p. 129). Further, an underlying goal of MCOD is the creation of efficient, effective, productive, socially diverse, and socially-just work environments. Where MCOD differs from OD is in the fundamental principle that an organization cannot be effective and healthy *without* addressing issues of social justice (B.W. Jackson, personal communication [class lecture], Spring, 1990).

Much like OD, MCOD is a systemic, planned change effort that utilizes behavioral science knowledge and technologies for improving organizational effectiveness. MCOD incorporates and extends-OD, challenges the status quo, and questions the underlying cultural assumptions and structures of organizations, as opposed to assuming that system change will be accompanied or followed by themes of social justice. Inherent in MCOD's adaption of behavioral-science knowledge and techniques is the commitment to address the underlying racial, gender, disability, class, sexual-orientation, and religious issues within an organization.

Like OD, MCOD focuses on the interrelated subsystems of an organization. MCOD change strategies necessitate action within the subsystems of an organization: mission and values, structure, technology, management practices, the psycho-social dynamics, environmental interactions, and the "bottom-line" (the product or service an organization produces) (Morgan, 1986). With MCOD, the purpose of the attention on the subsystems is to help identify and remove or reduce the harmful effect of the monocultural nature of an organization, which, in turn, can influence the effectiveness of an organization and the work environment (Jackson & Holvino, 1988). In fact, according to Jackson and Holvino, "evidence is beginning to show that there is a direct relationship between the quantity and quality of the product or service an organization delivers and the ability of that organization to provide a just working environment for all its employees" (p. 14).

Although OD and MCOD theorists and practitioners utilize similar strategies and technologies and operate from similar epistemological and ontological assumptions about the nature of organizations and planned change, fundamental differences do exist. A primary difference involves the degree to which multicultural values and concepts influence and dictate the focus of the change effort. This difference is not only a contrast in the focus of an intervention itself, but it also demonstrates a philosophical dissension in the level of significance that race/ethnicity, gender, and other social group memberships have on group interactions and group functioning.

#### **Implications for MCOD in Student Affairs**

In an effort to create the multicultural organization [or campus] as proposed by Jackson and Hardiman (1981), Katz (1989) asserted that success is more probable when appropriate diagnosis and interventions are utilized. Jackson and Hardiman (1981) and Katz and Miller (1986) have offered diagnostic instruments or models that assist in the assessment of an organization's stages of multicultural awareness or evolution. The instruments are similar (primarily because the Katz and Miller model was adapted from the Jackson and Hardiman model), and both offer a continuum that is chronological but not necessarily contiguous. According to

Katz (1989), "the model outlines how an organization can move developmentally from being a monocultural system, whose goal is to maintain a White cultural system, to being an inclusionary, multicultural system, which seeks and values diversity" (p. 9). In order for MCOOD to be effective in higher education, the proper environmental context of higher education must be examined. Utilizing an extensive program of research that explores the components of higher-education institutions which require an integration of multicultural policies, procedures, and interventions is necessary in order to understand what changes need to occur in order to create multicultural campus environments.

Quite literally, the complexion of college and university campuses is changing. Current and projected demographic data suggest that within the next 10-15 years White, male college students will be the numerical minority (Hodgkinson, 1986; Levine & Associates, 1989). College and university administrators are searching for effective methods to prepare their campuses for these changes. Ebbers and Henry (1990) and others (cf., Barr & Strong, 1988; Katz, 1989; Manning & Coleman-Boatwright, 1991) have indicated that one of the most significant tasks facing higher education administrators is to develop and cultivate multiculturally-sensitive environments. These environments must have students, faculty, and staff who not only tolerate cultural diversity, but also accept, appreciate, and celebrate cultural diversity. The institutional structures (policies, procedures, management practices, reward systems, etc.) must reflect this appreciation and celebration of cultural differences. The called for change awaits the development and adoption of models sensitive to cultural diversity and awaits attention targeted on the institutional structures themselves as well as targeted at the overall campus culture (i.e., norms and values) (Barr & Strong, 1988; Pope, 1990; Stewart, 1991). The development of such models needs to be based on research that examines the campus cultures and institutional structures that both create and hinder the infusion of multicultural values into higher education.

Manning and Coleman-Boatwright (1991) have suggested utilizing interventions targeted at the structural level of the institution. The models offered by Barr and Strong (1988), Manning and Coleman-Boatwright, and others (e.g., Stewart, 1991) do much to strengthen the argument for Student Affairs staffs to address institutional responses to multicultural issues more systemically. However, these models fail to utilize the available data on the nature of planned change as well as the variety of diagnostic and intervention typologies and models. MCOOD fills in this gap by offering concrete behavioral science tools and techniques to institutionalize multicultural planned-change efforts.

MCOOD offers a methodology which Student Affairs divisions can adapt to increasingly complex and uncertain cultural, as well as, economic and political changes. MCOOD can assist a Student Affairs staff or division in creating effective responses to these changes and, in many cases, can support the division in attempts to influence proactively the strategic direction of the institution as a whole. Student Affairs practitioners can utilize MCOOD to do for the creation of multicultural campuses what OD attempted to do for the integration of student development into the work of Student Affairs professionals. MCOOD can be utilized to ensure that a comprehensive and systemic incorporation of

diverse people, cultures, values and norms occurs on college and university campuses.

## Conclusions and Future Research Suggestions

Student Affairs professionals, along with other members of the college and university communities, have instituted a variety of change efforts to address multicultural issues on their campuses. Effective long-term multicultural change in institutions requires that the interventions focus on the organization as a system. Moreover, in order to create campuses that are truly multicultural, Student Affairs practitioners must develop strategies to integrate simultaneously cultural diversity and social-justice issues into the long-range planning processes and other currently utilized organizational change strategies. In the recent past, Student Affairs literature called upon Student Affairs divisions to utilize organization development (OD) in an attempt to integrate student development theories and practices into the total function of the profession. If the creation of multicultural campuses is as important to our profession as we profess, and if it is seen as being as central to our core as student development theories are, then MCOOD or some other multiculturally sensitive, systemic change efforts must be used to integrate multicultural issues and concerns into the total function of the profession. Using MCOOD to guide all aspects of our work honors our historical traditions and the theory-to-practice roots of our profession.

In order for Student Affairs to develop into a more multiculturally sensitive division in higher education, thus leading the way for the rest of the institution, an extensive program of research examining multicultural change efforts and MCOOD must be undertaken. Such research must include descriptive research that will involve in-depth study of the multicultural efforts to date. What are the current practices and institutional structures on university and college campuses that support or hinder the creation of multicultural environments? Environmental studies that examine these factors both at individual institutions and on a national level are needed. Survey research that measures both the attitudes of key administrators as well as analyzes the current institutional structures (i.e., policies and procedures) which may support or hinder the creation of a multicultural campus environment will fill a significant gap in the literature. What multicultural interventions currently are being used in Student Affairs? What are the goals of such interventions? Are these interventions targeted at the divisional or individual level? When institutions make multicultural interventions, do they attempt to change people's attitudes or organization structures? Ecosystems research, which has been utilized in higher education as an environmental assessment and intervention for the past two decades, offers an important tool for understanding our institutions and for helping to change them as well.

Evaluation research that examines what makes current multicultural practices effective will be key in creating understanding as well as building a foundation for what needs to be done in the future. Gathering information that can either support or challenge the premises and strategies of MCOOD is paramount to understanding the utility and potential of MCOOD change-efforts in Student Affairs. MCOOD offers great promise in addressing multicultural issues on a structural and institutional level; yet, there is

scant empirical and validating evidence for MCOB theory and/or practices. There have been no published outcome studies to determine which MCOB tools and techniques work best. Future research needs to include not only outcome studies but experimental designs as well. When a multicultural intervention is implemented, what is the result, short-term and long-term, on the individual and on the institution? Utilizing pre- and posttest designs and studies that examine the impact of these interventions is one way to test the MCOB models and tools. Studies that examine the various subsystems, such as management practices, mission/values, and psycho-social dynamics, will create a better understanding, of what works and what does not. Diagnostic models currently in the literature (cf., Katz & Miller, 1986; Manning & Coleman-Boatwright, 1991) need also to be studied. Are these theories reflected in the daily realities? If interventions based on these frameworks are implemented, do the results support what the theories predict? Instrumentation that identifies and codifies the current practices, structures, and strategies may need to be developed in order to answer such questions. Using instruments that gather self-reported attitudinal data of individuals within institutions, as well as questionnaires that can be used by outside consultants to measure institutional dynamics and practices, is necessary to understand the institution from the broadest angle possible. As future efforts are made to implement the principles and strategies of MCOB, the results must be researched and studied so that practitioners are guided in their work and, as stated previously, so that the theory-to-practice roots of our profession are honored.

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