Developing Faculty Multicultural Awareness: An Examination of Life Roles And Their Cultural Components

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This article describes the use of narrative to develop multicultural awareness. Faculty were asked to examine their own "internal multiculturalism": how their various roles and statuses reflect differing and sometimes conflicting cultural imperatives. Findings explore points of connection and conflict experienced by faculty within the university culture and foster the negotiation and understanding of various cultures in all member of the academy.

Introduction

Among the central concerns of higher education today is understanding cultural diversity and how educators should respond to the needs presented by America's growing multicultural population. Central to this discussion is the need for a campus climate that accommodates cultural diversity (Levine and Cureton, 1992). If universities are

to be leaders in the field of educational thought, it is imperative that we begin to raise the awareness of college and university faculty to the increasingly multicultural classrooms they will face. Gaff (1992) underscores this need: "In order for professors to become a part of the solution and not the problem, they need to examine their own views and emotional roots." p.31. If faculty can begin to understand the complexity of their own experiences due to cultural influences and realize that they negotiate that complexity in their own lives, they can bring increasing awareness and cultural sensitivity to instructional activities and interactions with students.

This article describes the efforts of the University of Hawaii to raise faculty awareness of multicultural issues in the classroom through a series of faculty development workshops. By encouraging faculty to examine their own life roles and the cultures in which those roles are embedded, we hoped to raise faculty awareness of the issues minority students face in campus classrooms. Through the use of narrative, faculty were asked to examine their own "internal multiculturalism": how the various roles they play reflect differing and sometimes conflicting cultural imperatives. *Role,* as used here, refers to the connection between a category of persons occupying a social position and the behavior appropriated to persons holding that position (Triandis, 1983).

Theoretical Framework

Edgar Schein (1985) defined culture as

> A pattern of basic assumptions—invented, discovered, or developed by a given group as it learns to cope with its problems of external adaptation and internal integration—that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems. p.385.

The basic assumptions found in each culture form the basis for behaviors which are then seen as necessary for survival. Although there is some debate over the exact nature of causal linkages between values, culture, and behavior (Mooney, Gramling & Forsyth, 1991), there is no doubt that they are connected.

If, as Schein claims, cultural values and assumptions arise out of the group's attempts to survive, these cultural imperatives take on a strength and urgency previously unrecognized. Cultural norms dictate the use of time, space, and communication in university settings, influencing behavior both in and out of the classroom (Chaffee & Tierney, 1988). Awareness of these issues can enhance faculty's ability to adjust to the multicultural demands made both in the classroom and within their departments.

Flannery and Vanterpool's (1990) model for infusing cultural diversity concepts across the curriculum targets learning objectives in the cognitive and affective domains and examines the importance of personal relevance to student learning. Their model describes the egocentrism of traditional undergraduate students and emphasizes the importance of relating ideas to the students' own personal experiences before progressing to larger and perhaps more abstract concepts. The underlying assumption is that understanding cultural diversity progresses from narrowly focused personal relevance to more broadly focused concerns.

However, Flannery and Vanterpool's work does not address similar needs for faculty. The authors seem to assume that the professoriate comes with a ready-made set of correct assumptions about the need to infuse cultural diversity concepts in their classrooms. Yet, before faculty can infuse cultural diversity concepts into their own curriculum, they first need to be aware of these concepts and recognize their importance for students in their classrooms. The assumption that understanding cultural diversity progresses from narrowly focused personal relevance to more broadly focused concerns applies to faculty as well.

Flannery and Vanterpool describe conceptual frameworks for culturally receptive and culturally resistant students. Like their students, faculty are receptive or resistant to including concepts of cultural diversity in their classrooms in varying degrees across differing disciplines.

Use of Narrative for Self-Discovery

The use of writing and narrative works to create community across cultures and within the university. Both the discourse traditions of aesthetics and anthropology understand story telling as a negotiation of power (Grumet, 1987). The story marks the territory that is to be the ground for meaningful action. Thus the creation of narratives constitutes a crucial step toward meaningful action that the challenges of multicultural classrooms demand of the academy today. Grumet (1987) argues that the interpretation of narrative is a form of research that honors the spontaneity, specificity, and ambiguity of knowledge, as well as one that honors both the history and agency of subjectivity. The ethnographic perspective sees narrative as a form of cultural symbolization that contributes to the continuity and shaping of the life of a community.

In the case of multicultural issues, we work to create a community across cultures, a community of "cultural border crossers" or cultural negotiators. This work aims to foster, through narrative, an understanding of what it means to be "multicultural," to cross the border from one culture, be it Asian, Black, Anglo, or Chicano, into another culture. For our students this second culture is often the white male culture of the academic bureaucracy.

In Hawaii, students in the public school system face predominantly Asian-American female teachers and must make a major shift to interacting with predominantly white male faculty at the university level. Tierney (1992), in reference to native American students, claims that they are often caught between a form of cultural suicide and intellectual suicide when faced with the conflicting demands of their family and university cultures. Tierney conducts an anthropological analysis of Vincent Tinto's (1975, 1982, 1987) model of college student attrition, which asserts that the greater a student's integration into the institution's fabric, the greater likelihood the individual will not develop a sense of anomie and will not commit "academic suicide" by leaving the institution. Tierney criticizes this model for its misinterpretation of the cultural definition of ritual and an over-reliance on an integrative framework.

However, it is not just our students who are "border crossers," in danger of committing academic suicide. Faculty themselves cross borders each day: the border from the home to the office, and thus from the culture of home to the organizational culture of the university; and, when they write, the border from the personal to the academic. If faculty can begin to understand the task they face in crossing these cultural borders, the tensions, the negotiations, the editing of self, perhaps they can understand what minority students face in classrooms each day.

Applying Theory To Practice

Perhaps nowhere in the nation is the need for awareness of multicultural issues in the classroom more imperative than at the University of Hawaii at Manoa. In the fall of 1991, the undergraduate student population was 31.9% Japanese-American, 16.2% Caucasian, 11.3% Chinese-American, 10.6% Filipino-American, 7.6% Americans of Hawaiian ancestry, 3.2% Korean-American, 1.0% Hispanic, .8% African-American, and, attesting to the mixed race complexity of this population, 17.4% Other. The faculty population, however, is predominantly Caucasian. In the fall of 1991, UH-Manoa's tenured and tenurable faculty was 69% Caucasian, 13% Japanese-American, 10% Chinese/Korean-American, 2% Americans of Hawaiian ancestry, 1% Filipino-American, 1% Hispanic, .3% Native American, .2% African-American, and 3% Other Asian/Pacific. Thus, a predominantly white faculty (almost 70%) faced a culturally diverse student body of which no one group was dominant.

The demographic profile of the University of Hawaii, Manoa, predicts a vision of the future. As minority populations grow across the nation, a predominantly aging, white professoriate will face an increasingly diverse student body in our colleges and universities. It then becomes increasingly imperative that our professoriate understand the needs of this diverse student population in their classrooms if they are to respond in culturally appropriate ways.

Faculty Development Workshops

It was within this context that the Office of Faculty Development and Academic Support sponsored cultural awareness workshops for new and junior faculty at the university. This paper describes the results of a series of faculty workshops aimed at developing multicultural awareness. Through the use of narrative, faculty were asked to examine their own "internal multiculturalism", to analyze how the various roles they occupy reflect differing and sometimes conflicting cultural imperatives. Findings explore points of connection and conflict experienced by faculty within the university culture and foster the negotiation and understanding of various cultures in all members of the academy.

Recognizing differences among individual faculty and between academic disciplines, our task was initially to raise the awareness of all faculty by focusing on personally relevant issues. Through a series of guided exercises, faculty were led from this personal level to an intracultural focus. These exercises were followed by a discussion and sharing of coping strategies the faculty use and how those might apply to classroom situations.

Six workshops were given to faculty on college campuses across a university system over the course of a year. The first workshop was given for new faculty at a new faculty orientation; three for general university faculty, and two for community college faculty. While the workshops had to be modified for differing audience needs and size, a general outline of the process used can be described.

Goals

The goals of the workshop were to:
1. Raise the awareness level of faculty regarding their own internal multiculturalism, i.e., how the various roles they play in their lives reflect differing and sometimes conflicting cultures.
2. Foster understanding of the complexities of the university culture they are presently entering and how that complexity might manifest itself in the classroom or in departmental relations.
3. Encourage faculty to reflect upon alternative methods for negotiating potential cultural conflicts.

Process

1. The workshop was introduced by asking faculty to think about all the baggage they had brought with them across the ocean to their new home in Hawaii. They were then reminded that they brought not only their belongings, but cultural baggage as well: an intact set of norms and values that arise from their families of origin and cultural backgrounds. They also carry organizational cultural baggage from their previous institutional affiliation, whether they left a former faculty position or graduate school. Figure 1 was then presented and faculty were asked to think about their own particular life roles and how they would fill out the circle. What were the roles they played as sons or daughters and siblings in their family of origin? What were the norms and values of their family culture? What cultural messages did they hear from their families, for instance, about education and about being a student?

2. Schein's definition of culture was then presented to illustrate the three levels of culture: artifacts, values, and assumptions. (See Figure 2.) Examples of all three levels were given.
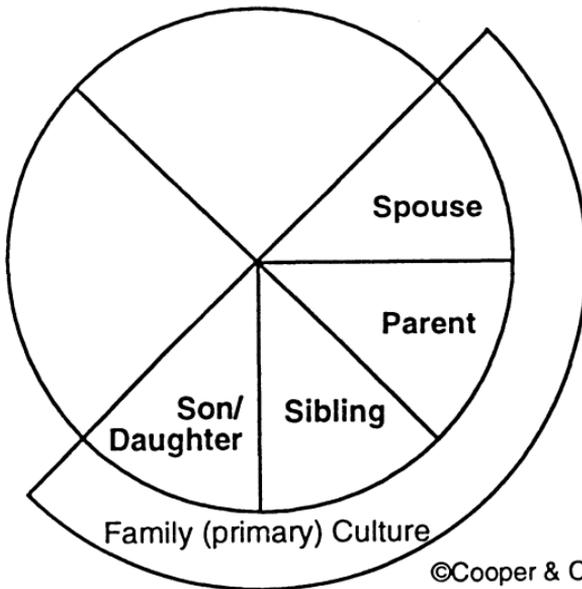

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Figure 1. Roles and Statuses in the Family

3. Faculty were divided into small groups and asked to identify two or three values or assumptions from their family cultures. One way to uncover these is to think about stories that were told in your family or to say, "We Smiths believe..."

4. The components of age, gender, and ethnicity were then added to the diagram (see Figure 3), and various members were asked to give examples. For example, Jane is a West-Coast European-American single female parent in her forties in Education. Celeste is an East-Coast Asian-American married parent in her thirties in Social Work. Joe is a Filipino-American married male in his thirties without children.

5. Participants were asked to contemplate a second role, that of professor or educator, and its accompanying university culture. A look at the particular organizational culture new faculty have entered reveals a second and perhaps conflicting set of norms, values and assumptions. The values and assumptions embedded
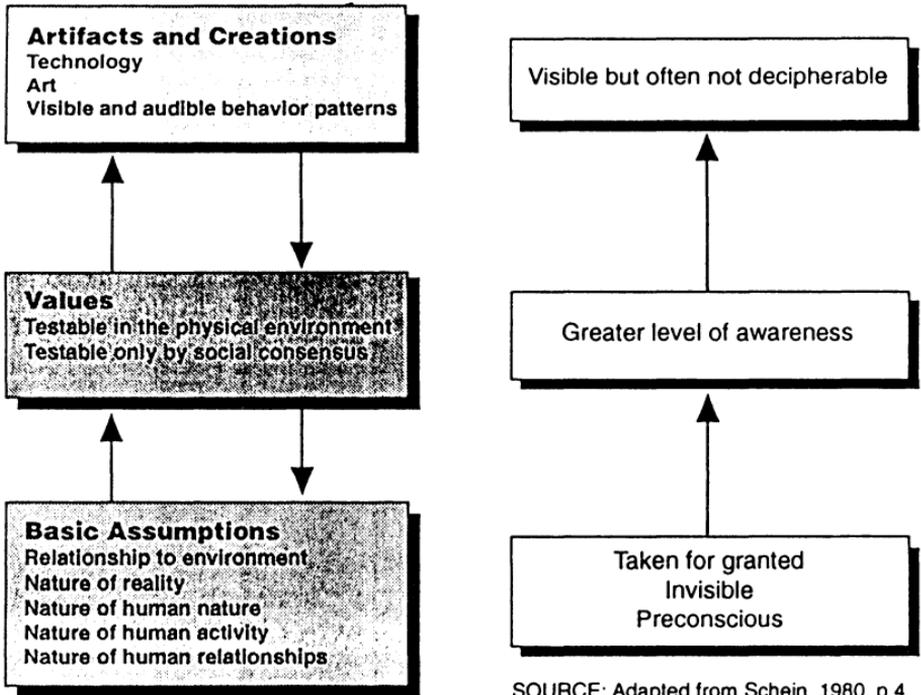

SOURCE: Adapted from Schein, 1980, p.4.

Figure 2. Levels of Culture and Their Interaction

in the university culture were discussed. Artifacts found in the campus dining room, such as chopsticks and shoyu next to the silverware and salad dressing, and the serving of eggs and rice for breakfast are reminders of the Asian influence on the campus culture in Hawaii.

6. Faculty were asked to reflect upon the following questions in writing and then to share their insights with others. How do the above norms and values differ from previous organizational cultures? Do these cultures connect or conflict? Do the norms and values of the university culture conflict with those of one's individual family culture? If so, how are those roles negotiated and what are the implications for cultural conflict in the classroom? Do new faculty carry strategies for negotiating family and university cultures that can be used in the classroom? Participants were
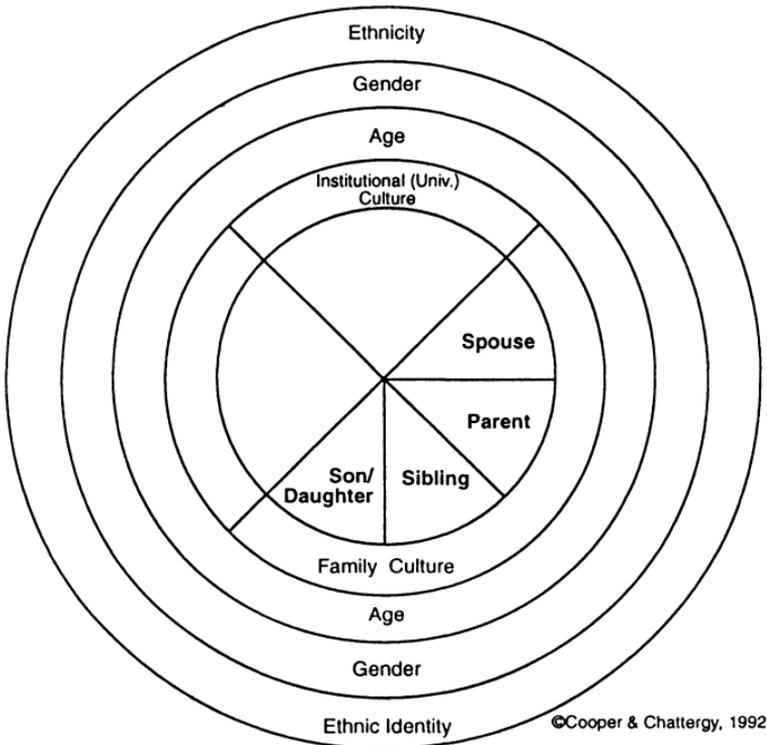

Figure 3. Life Roles and Their Accompanying Cultures and Influences

asked to think about their own anticipations and expectations before coming to Hawaii, and then to write about their experiences getting settled in their departments, starting classes, etc. Have their expectations been met? What has surprised them? How do they cope with differences they have encountered? (An example was given by the presenter.) What expectations do these new faculty now have about their first year here? How do these expectations fit or conflict with the "cultural baggage" they brought with them?

7.   Participants from each small group volunteered to share their perceptions. Large group discussion followed.

This orientation helps faculty to discover the plurality within themselves in the hope that they, in turn, will neither deny their own complex identities nor the identities of their students in the classroom.

Faculty Responses

Faculty discussed the impact of culture, gender and age expectations on their lives and their work. They reported a reciprocal relation between cultures, with both points of conflict and points of connection between cultures, and the use of "cultural informants" to help translate academic cultural norms and expectations. Faculty adjustment efforts between cultures include attempts to increase credibility and the use of coping strategies such as escape, compartmentalization, denial, and substitution.

Reciprocal Relation

Faculty report a reciprocal or interacting relationship between the culture of family and the culture of the academy in which each influences the other. In addition, a reciprocal relation exists between one culture and the roles prescribed by another. Thus each culture influences and changes the role behavior manifested in the opposing or differing culture, creating a state of dynamic tension and continually negotiated relationship. One woman, for instance, reported that her home life had changed as a result of the university's cultural norms and expectations. Her husband and daughter were taking more responsibility for housework and meals; thus, her role in the family culture

was changing as she negotiated the academic culture of her workplace. Faculty not only bring who they are to the workplace, so that the values and norms of their family life affect the role they play in higher education, but their role as faculty affects the roles they play within the family.

Within this relationship, faculty created narratives that explored both points of conflict and points of connection between family and university cultures. One point of conflict was dress. Women faculty reported that they adjusted the way they dressed to meet departmental standards, always looking "professional on teaching days" and "presentable on non-teaching days," even though their personal preference might be to dress more casually.

A second point of conflict arose around the discussion of professional accomplishments. This is especially difficult for women and Asian minorities who experience what one woman described as "old tapes" that state "Don't brag," and "If you're good, others will recognize your work." The preference was still not to discuss accomplishments, but cultural pressures push faculty to do so for survival in the academy.

A third point of conflict was the feeling of "being different" due to racial, age, or marital status differences. One faculty member wrote:

> Being "haole"[white] is still a minority in some areas and in [her department], so as well as being a single parent, and younger, I felt at times not taken seriously, or that I had to (still have to) work harder to prove myself.

The narratives facilitated both the discovery and development of points of connection or congruence. One new faculty member discovered that his small town upbringing on the mainland had influenced his valuing of relationships—a point of connection with Hawaiian and Asian cultures, which are cultures of affiliation rather than achievement and influence the university culture in Hawaii in significant ways. One faculty member expressed the satisfaction of finding points of connection:

> There are lots of areas of connection. With many of the faculty, diverse points of view and creativity are encouraged and welcome...I

like to work creatively with other people and have found that university life is full of these pockets of original voices. I like to sing with them.

Faculty also discovered points of connection between past academic cultures and new ones. However, even though academic settings have some common elements, they differ, often in significant ways. One faculty member compared a past and present office culture, describing one as autocratic and controlled, the other as democratic, affiliative, supportive, and personal.

Points of connection or congruence can also be developed over time. The use of technology, which in this case seems to be a point of connection, was listed by one faculty member. She reported it was difficult to learn to use a computer, but she felt the pressure to become competent in this area. She said she had resisted, but once she had mastered it, she could hardly wait to get to work and use her computer. It had become a surprisingly indispensable part of her life.

Cultural Informants

Faculty reported that they coped with conflicting cultural demands by using "cultural informants." Secretaries who have been in the system for years can be invaluable to new faculty as they attempt to decipher the university norms of professional and social behavior, rituals around the ordering of textbooks, the negotiation of travel forms, university regulations for grading, graduation, etc. Colleagues can also be valuable informants about norms for teaching, tenure, etc. One faculty member reported that she operated on her previous cultural norms the first week on campus and accidentally dismissed classes 1/2 hour early each day. Another wrote her course outline according to the catalog, only to discover (having been informed by a student) that the catalog was wrong and the course was a week shorter than originally planned.

Another faculty member wrote, "I remember being very grateful that one of the women professors I met on my interview trip to the university told me how to negotiate my salary." Responding to cultural constraints about what it is appropriate to talk about, this faculty member almost failed to gain information vital to the smooth integration into the university.

Coping Mechanisms

Faculty reported various coping mechanisms when they encounter points of cultural conflict. Although the methods were idiosyncratic, they fell into general categories of escape, denial, compartmentalization, and substitution. One new faculty member said he reads every word of the sports page first "for escape." Other faculty reported coping mechanisms such as denial: "It isn't that bad! I'm not that broke! That didn't really happen" and compartmentalization: "Every part of me could be in a different place. When I try to integrate, it can be difficult; and is it safe for others to know about me?" Finally, faculty report that they use substitution: "where you do one thing as a substitute for an emptier part of your life."

Conclusion

Through this workshop, faculty became aware of the various cultural negotiations they experience daily as they move from home to university and back again. They struggle with cultural stereotyping they feel they must overcome through harder work, attention to dress and adjustments in behavior. The cultural conflict they feel results in confusion, frustration, and attempts to cope through escape, denial, and compartmentalization. Although faculty are able to find points of connection as well as points of conflict, they often are required to commit their own small forms of "cultural suicide" to survive in the university (Tierney, 1992). As increasing numbers of women and minorities enter the academy, faculty will experience more and more clearly the points of cultural conflict minority populations face. As these faculty begin to understand their own experiences and the adjustments they must make to successfully "integrate" or involve themselves in traditional academic cultures, the damaging aspects of denial, compartmentalization, and sublimation will be underscored. These coping mechanisms are slow pieces of the cultural suicide Tierney discusses.

Yet buried in the efforts of these faculty to integrate or cross cultural barriers are also the seeds of hope. If faculty can turn these possibilities upon their classrooms, search for ways to provide cultural informants, make new cultural norms more explicit, and change

classroom practices to accommodate diverse learning styles and belief systems, we will be on our way to Tierney's "framework of emancipation and empowerment" for both faculty and students.

More research is needed to understand the complex interaction of culture and role behavior and to explore the classroom experiences of various minority populations. The module presented here can be a starting point to create awareness levels and to raise vital questions about classroom practices that might be most effective with cross-cultural populations.

Although these workshops provide only a beginning step, this step can be a helpful one. As one faculty member wrote:

> I think that taking the opportunity to purposefully step outside of my habitual frame and to look at the different roles and cultures I move through every day was the most valuable learning experience.

A second stated:

> I learned to be very careful about my assumptions of my past young adult students' needs/expectations/ cultural 'baggage'...i.e. to be more sensitive—perhaps testing the waters first—about where they are coming from before plunging head on with my teaching schedule and agenda.

His last statement defines a vital next step: "I'd like to learn more about coping skills—some practical skills—about those awkward situations in class."

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