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Enriching Course Development: The Use of an International Faculty Development Experience

Anna K. Lee[1] and Naomi M. Hall[2]

Abstract This paper discusses the use of an international faculty development experience in the development of an *Introduction to Black Psychology* course. Faculty attended an 11-day seminar in South Africa to learn about the country's history and transformation into a multiracial, multicultural society. The seminar included lectures and site visits designed to provide faculty with an intercultural experience that could be used to enhance curricula and increase students' global understanding of social issues. A highlight of the training pertains to the parallel made between the historical similarities in the Black South African and Black American experience. Transformative learning forms the theoretical framework for assignment development, and specific teaching methods and pedagogical strategies offered may help students foster a greater global understanding of cultural, racial, and ethnic differences beyond the United States. We present lessons learned from this experience.

Key words: faculty development, global awareness, classroom

I

International faculty development experiences are opportunities for faculty to learn new perspectives that can enrich their interaction with faculty, administrators, and students at their home institutions. The multi-faceted area of psychology encompasses many sub-disciplines including areas that emphasize culture, race/ethnicity, and gender. In an effort to expand course offerings we decided to develop a course that reflected our interest in psychology and Black studies. Although the development of our *Introduction to Black Psychology* course was done for a Historically Black College/University (HBCU) located in the southeastern United States, the course is, and can be, offered at many different institutions across the nation. Therefore, it should be noted that the work described here is not limited to an HBCU context but can be applied to similar courses at Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and other Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). Also, the process described here can be implemented beyond psychology courses to other disciplines such as Black studies, sociology, and cultural studies.

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Black Psychology Defined

In the United States, the field of Black Psychology can be traced to the 1960s and 1970s and was developed because of African American psychologists' dissatisfaction with the ways in which theories from "traditional psychology" were used to promote the innateness of African American inferiority and White American superiority (Fairchild, 2000). Since the 1970s African American scholars have argued that theories developed by White researchers are inadequate in understanding the psychology of people of African descent (Guthrie, 1976; White, 1970). Black psychology is the study of the thoughts and behaviors of people of African descent from a perspective of African values, knowledge, reality, social relations, and environments (Grills, 2004). At the core of Black psychology is the idea that an individual's thoughts and behaviors are associated with their worldview. Worldview has been defined as shared values, beliefs, and assumptions that influences the way in which one behaves, thinks, and interprets their environment.

Scholars have distinguished between African-centered or Afrocentric and European-centered or Eurocentric worldviews. The Afrocentric worldview is circular and interdependent and emphasizes collectivism, spiritualism, harmony with nature, and subjective ways of knowing; whereas, a Eurocentric worldview is linear and independent and emphasizes individualism, materialism, domination over nature, and objective thinking (Kambon, 1998). The use of an Afrocentric worldview is necessary to sustain healthy, adaptive functioning among the indigenous people of Africa and those in the African diaspora (i.e., people of African origin living outside the continent of Africa irrespective of their citizenship) (Grills, 2004). Furthermore, Parham, White, and Ajamu (2011) argue that optimal psychological functioning for African descendants can only be understood from an African centered framework. Therefore, one way to empower students' self-exploration is to expose them to the ways in which historical cultural roots can be linked to contemporary beliefs and behaviors.

Scholars have argued that the Black American experience should be examined within the context of the African experience (Asante, 2003; Grills, 2004). In that spirit, we decided that the course should focus on shared experiences of people of African descent across the African Diaspora, including those living in Africa, Europe, South America, Central America, the Caribbean, and North America. The overall goal of the course was to promote a high level of critical thinking about the impact of race, ethnicity, and culture from a global perspective. We felt it was important to help facilitate an awareness and understanding of the psychological, social, and cultural forces which have helped to shape and determine the unique thought, styles, and behavior of people of African descent. We felt that our ability to teach the course would be improved through a personal international experience. The purpose of this paper is to describe how we used our international experience in South Africa to enrich the development of an *Introduction to Black psychology* course.

We attended the Council for International Education Exchange's (CIEE) 11-day faculty development seminar in South Africa titled "Building a Multiracial, Multicultural Society in South Africa." The seminar consisted of a combination of morning lectures and afternoon excursions. Lecture topics were intended to give us a comprehensive overview of the racial

history and transition from White governance to a multiracial, multicultural democracy. Topics covered were as follows: *Human Rights in South Africa, South African Democracy, Education and Transformation, Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: 11 years on, 'Race' in South Africa Today, Restitution of Land in South Africa, Affirmative Action, Gender and HIV/AIDS*. These topics illustrated the pervasiveness of race in South African society. In addition, site visits gave us hands-on experiences of lecture topics. Our site visits included: *Cape Town and the Cape Peninsula, Exploration of the Social Geography of the Townships of Cape Town, Robben Island, University of The Western Cape, the Apartheid Museum, Parliament, the Cradle of Humankind, Tours of Soweto, Johannesburg, and Pretoria and Home Visits with South African Families*.

The site visits allowed us to gain first-hand knowledge of the critical issues in the social, economic, and political landscape of the country and to better contextualize what we learned in the seminars. Based on the information gathered in the lectures and site visits, we realized that many of the same challenges experienced by Blacks in the US are also found among Blacks residing in South Africa (e.g., racism, educational inequalities, gender inequality, and disproportionate HIV/AIDS rates). It was vitally important to ensure that these major issues were used as the foundation for the development of course content and activities. We were able to develop a course that incorporated our experience in South Africa, along with our perspectives as Black Americans, psychologists, professors, and researchers. This proved to be an important component in the course as it allowed for shared experiences between faculty and students.

Significance of International Experience

An extensive self-study of the University of North Carolina System (UNC), of which our institution is a part, highlighted the need to embrace more global perspectives in the curriculum and developed recommendations to be considered by each of its 16 campuses. One recommendation was to enhance the global awareness of faculty and students. A mere 1% of all students who attend colleges and universities in the United States participate in study abroad programs (NAFSA, 2013). According to NAFSA, the Association of International Educators, 2011-2012 data, although African American students represented the second largest racial/ethnic group enrolled in secondary education (14.6%), African Americans were the fourth in number of students who studied abroad (5.3%). Other groups were represented as follows: Caucasians 76.4%, Asian Americans 7.7%, and Hispanic/Latino Americans 7.6%. HBCUs are dedicated to expanding opportunities for the growth and development of our primarily African American student population. The Institute of International Education reported only a 1.3% growth in study abroad participation during 2010-2011 (McMurtrie, 2012). Some factors that negatively impact student travel are the global financial crisis, fuel costs and health concerns. Since African American students participate in study abroad at a lower rate than other racial/ethnic groups, it is a necessity that faculty at HBCUs expose students to global awareness through their own international professional development experiences.

Historical Context of Race in South Africa and the United States

Knowledge of the historical significance of race in South Africa and the United States was necessary to understand the psychological phenomenon affecting the current multiracial,

multicultural dynamic in both countries. Although Blacks in South Africa represent a majority (79%) and Black Americans (12%) represent a minority, Black people in both countries have experienced personal, institutional, and cultural racism. For example, in South Africa the systematic and legal oppression of Blacks came through a system known as apartheid. Between 1948 and 1994 the White minority party established a system of laws that reinforced their rights and significantly diminished the rights of 'non-White' citizens. This legislation officially classified individuals into the following racial groups: Whites, Blacks, Colored (i.e. people of mixed racial heritage), and Asian/Indian (Tummala, 1999). The government sanctioned segregated education, medical care, beaches, and other public services, and provided Black people with services inferior to those of White people. The consequences of apartheid included inequality in housing and economic disparities and continue to affect the country today because of continuing gaps in education and work opportunities.

Similarly, the slave trade marked the beginning of the Black experience of oppression and racial segregation in the United States. From 1620 to 1865 African people were brought to America and forced to serve as free laborers. Since there were no laws prohibiting slavery and since African people were not protected under English law, they had no rights. After the Emancipation Proclamation abolished the practice of slavery, the systematic and legal oppression of Blacks was enforced through Black codes also known as Jim Crow laws. According to Alexander (2012), Jim Crow laws developed in an effort to maintain the racial hierarchy established during slavery. Between 1876 and 1965, legal segregation was implemented to establish the "separate but equal" status of Black Americans. Jim Crow laws restricted voting rights and promoted segregation in public accommodations (i.e., schools, public transportation, theaters and hotels). A few examples of Jim Crow laws are as follows: White nurses could not care for Black male patients; Interracial marriages were prohibited; Separate schools were established for White and Black children; Books could not be interchanged between the White and Black schools, but were only to be used by the race originally using the books; and baths and lockers for Blacks were to be separate from the Whites in western mining areas. These laws led to systematic economic, educational, and social disadvantages such as housing discrimination and separate and unequal educational opportunities. Although the legislation enacted at the end of the Civil Rights Movement eventually brought an end to the Jim Crow era, some scholars argue that it continues to exist today through the current disproportionate incarceration of people of color. Characterized as the "New Jim Crow," it is suggested that the present day criminal justice system has legalized the discrimination against those labeled as 'felons' in housing, education, employment, and voting rights (Alexander, 2012; Ford, 2010; Forman Jr, 2012). Consequences of the new Jim Crow are reflected in disparate mass conviction and incarceration rates for African Americans versus White Americans (Alexander, 2012). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, Black American men have a much higher likelihood of being incarcerated (1:3) compared to White American men (1:17) (Bonzcar, 2003).

Resistance to oppression from apartheid in South Africa and Jim Crow laws in the United States was significant. Organizations were formed to galvanize people to participate in peaceful protests, passive resistance, and armed insurrection. After these policies were abolished, public apologies for the atrocities committed were few and far between. In South Africa, a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) was formed by the Government of National Unity to address the perpetrators of torture and violence during apartheid (TRC Website, 2013). The TRC was a

restorative justice court-like system that not only allowed victims to testify regarding their experiences during apartheid, but also allowed perpetrators to testify and plead for amnesty. The TRC consisted of three committees: the Human Rights Violations (HRV) Committee, the Reparations and Rehabilitation (R&R) Committee and the Amnesty Committee (AC). The HRV Committee investigated human rights abuses during apartheid based on statements given to the TRC. The R&R Committee provided victim support, developed proposals for policy, and made recommendations about rehabilitation. The AC considered amnesty applications for any act, omission, or offence associated with a political objective committed between March 1, 1960 and May 11, 1994.

The TRC has been described as a socio-political process in which the post-apartheid oppressors and oppressed sought reconciliation. While some scholars argue that the public shaming that resulted from the TRC is equal to justice from a penal system, others have argued that the TRC was ineffective and only benefited those that received amnesty for their crimes (Pascoe, 2009; Gibson, 1999). A study examining three South African ethnic groups' (Xhosa, Afrikaner, and English) perceptions of the effectiveness of the TRC, found that the Xhosa, an indigenous South African people of the Eastern Cape, were more likely to believe the commission uncovered the truth than the English born South Africans and Afrikaners (South Africans descended from the Dutch and Huguenot settlers of the 17th century) (Vora & Vora, 2004)). However, none of the groups felt the commission was effective in bringing about reconciliation. According to Vora and Vora (2004), when wounds are deep, reconciliation is more difficult to achieve and must happen on an individual level. Furthermore, the TRC had a social justice focus but neglected to focus on the psychological and personal, which may have inhibited reconciliation.

It was not until 2008 that U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution apologizing for slavery and Jim Crow (CNN, 2008). However, shortly after the abolishment of slavery in the United States, reparations or compensation to Black slaves for the trauma and discrimination that ~~was~~ suffered was discussed and a bill ~~was~~ developed to distribute land to freedmen, but it ultimately did not pass. More recently, there are some who believe that economic reparations must be given to compensate Black Americans for unfair treatment. These payments may be from the United States government, ex-colonial governments, and private institutions (McCarthy, 2004; Winbush, 2010). Darity (2008) argues that because major credible civil rights groups such as the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the National Urban League (NUL) have not officially supported or lobbied for reparations the movement has been hindered. While there is a National Coalition on Black Reparations (N'COBRA) that has advocated for the measure, this group is not widely visible or well known (Darity, 2008). The historical similarity of racial oppression and discrimination experienced by both Black South Africans and Black Americans provides a context of familiarity with which students can relate. Both experiences were marked by government run and endorsed discrimination. Therefore, we decided to integrate the historical context of race within the course to help students understand Black psychological concepts such as self and racial identity, racism and community dynamics.

II

Theoretical Framework

Based on the knowledge gained through the seminars regarding the history of race relations, education, and socio-political policies in South Africa, we decided to develop assignments for this course based on transformative learning (TL) theory. TL is the process of affecting change in a frame of reference (Mezirow, 1997). A frame of reference is comprised of cognitive, conative, and emotional understanding of a concept. According to Mezirow (1997), our frame of reference derives from ideas acquired through cultural assimilation (i.e., adopting names or religion preferences of the majority culture) or through socialization (i.e., beliefs or values adopted from family, television or books). The author suggests that frames of reference can be transformed via critical reflection of our interpretations, beliefs, or points of view. Because students have a pre-existing frame of reference regarding race and culture, we decided that assignments based on TL would be best to allow for a shift in students' point of view. Assignments that highlight the Black South African and Black American experience would give students a richer understanding of Black psychology in a global context.

III

Recommended Assignments/Activities

In light of the historical similarity of the Black experience of oppression, discrimination, and unfair treatment in South Africa and the United States, we developed TL activities and assignments in an effort to bring a socio-historical and socio-political understanding of discrimination and oppression. We define TL assignments as activities that allow students to explore their personal thoughts, feelings, and behaviors about a concept and/or phenomena. Social psychological literature suggests that we find information related to the self more meaningful and easier to remember than information related to others (Gray, Ambady, Loventhal & Deldin, 2004). Therefore, designing assignments that require students to relate material to them should increase memory for the material and enhance the understanding of the course concepts addressed. Our goal is to motivate students to gravitate toward a more tolerant and understanding pluralistic society. As the global context of human relations becomes more accessible through news outlets and social media, it is imperative that students seek out ways to understand dynamics of the cultural context in other regions of the world. Specifically, for HBCU students, this understanding can enhance the likelihood of an African-centered global economy and stronger socio-political position.

For example, when covering the chapter on race and racism, an in-class group assignment is given in which students are shown a video clip about the apartheid era and the current state of South Africa. After viewing the video in class, students are asked to organize into groups of 4 to 5 and discuss how apartheid contributed to current political, social, and educational issues in the country. Students are then asked to compare and contrast Jim Crow laws in the U.S. and South African Apartheid. Once the groups have had time to discuss amongst themselves, the class engages in discussion to discover what was said in each group. This activity allows students to discover other perspectives and shift their understanding of racial discrimination to a more global

context. This shift is important because it encourages students to see shared similarities between their own knowledge and experiences with other cultures around the world.

In a critical analysis assignment, students are probed to contemplate retributive versus restorative justice. Retributive justice is a theory that considers punishment as a morally acceptable response to a crime. This theory considers the satisfaction and psychological benefits this form of justice can bestow to the aggrieved party, its intimates, and society. Restorative justice is a theory of justice that emphasizes repairing the harm caused or revealed by criminal behavior. It is best accomplished through cooperative processes that include all stakeholders. Students are then prompted to look critically at the ethics and consequences of both, including the differences between the Black American quest for monetary reparations and the Black South African pursuit of truth and reconciliation.

A self-reflection assignment is associated with the discussion on self-attributes and identity. In this assignment, students write their own personal ethnic and/or racial autobiography. Specifically, they are required to answer the following questions: How do you define your race and or ethnicity; When did you first become aware of racial and ethnic difference; and How have race and ethnicity functioned in your family and life? This assignment allows students to become self-aware of how they identify with their own racial/ethnic categorization, whether they are of African descent or not.

One of the most pressing sexual health issues affecting Black South Africans and Black Americans is human immunodeficiency virus (HIV). HIV infection rates for both populations are astounding. In the United States, Black/African Americans constitute approximately 12% of the population, yet in 2010 they accounted for 44% of new HIV infections (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2013). According to the same source, if the course of the pandemic does not change, an estimated 1 in 16 Black/African American men and 1 in 32 women will be diagnosed with HIV in their lifetime. In 2011, an estimated 5.6 million people were living with HIV/AIDS, the highest number of people in any country (Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS [UNAIDS], 2012). The HIV prevalence rate in South Africa is 17.3% within the general population, but varies by region (much like HIV rates in the United States). Those most affected by the HIV/AIDS pandemic are Black African females aged 20-34 (Human Sciences Research Council, 2012).

To discuss the impact of HIV/AIDS students are put into small groups representing either the United States or South Africa. They are then presented with statistics on the incidence and prevalence of HIV in their particular country and asked to brainstorm answers to the following questions: How does race and/or culture impact prevention and transmission of HIV? What social, cultural, and environmental factors may contribute to prevention activities? What social, cultural, and environmental factors may contribute to risky behavior? Students are then asked to discuss, as a class, the similarities and differences they see between HIV transmission and infection in South Africa and the United States.

Although, our experience in South Africa was a catalyst to the development of our Introduction to Black Psychology course, we go beyond comparisons of the Black experience in South Africa and the United States in order to truly spark a sense of global awareness. We touch

on the Black experience across the African diaspora. For instance, we present students with news articles and clips describing racism in sport, racial profiling, and racial discrimination from around the world. Because we have observed that many students think of racism as a United States phenomenon, we encourage them to consider not only racism in other countries but to also consider other variables such as nationalism, personal identity, social identity, racial/ethnic identity, big business, and social enjoyment. These variables represent the various ways in which categorizations have consequences for different groups. For example, in some places national identity may supersede racial identity and have a significant effect on attitudes, thoughts, and behaviors.

IV

Lessons Learned

We take away three important lessons from this experience. First, international development experiences for faculty can be a valuable pedagogical tool. It allows faculty to enrich the courses they develop and teach, and infuse lessons learned from the experience. In addition, it adds value and credibility for faculty to have opportunity to visit and learn about the topics they share with students. Secondly, international faculty development experiences promote personal and professional growth for the faculty member. The learning experience for the individual faculty person is valuable, in that it provides a lens for global awareness. Professionally, there are opportunities to network and collaborate with others from around the globe. Lastly, sharing international faculty development experiences in the classroom stimulates student interest in transnational issues and may encourage students to seek their own study abroad opportunities.

Unfortunately, African American college students have very low rates of participation (less than 5%) in international experiences (Institute for International Education, 2012). These faculty experiences can help to promote interest in, and pursuit of developing faculty-led study abroad opportunities for students. It is necessary for students to comprehend that we live in a global marketplace that requires intercultural skills, cultural competency and sensitivity, and an understanding of the interconnectedness of people around the world. It is a standard pedagogical tool for business majors/departments to infuse an understanding of the importance of international education, relations, and experiences into the classroom. It is important that faculty from other areas (e.g., social sciences, natural sciences, health sciences) pursue globalization of curricula in hopes that students increase their universal perspective on social issues.

68 Enriching Course Development

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