Chapter 15
Together We S.O.A.R.
A Theoretical Framework for the Underrepresented Student Leader

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ABSTRACT

Ogbu reflects on the experiences of underrepresented populations in higher education by highlighting the process of cultural inversion. This process rejects assimilation opportunities to develop academically and occupationally due to historical social bias. Without the support of faculty, students from underrepresented groups are often left barren without the proper social and academic skills to contribute to society effectively. Many scholars have stressed the importance of underrepresented student leadership. Within this process, underrepresented students are allowed integration into the culture of higher education and can be properly trained for the task of working towards being a part of the global workforce.

INTRODUCTION

Ogbu (1993) reflects on the experiences of underrepresented populations in higher education by highlighting the process of cultural inversion. This process rejects assimilation opportunities to develop academically and occupationally due to historical social bias. Without the support of faculty, students from underrepresented groups are often left barren without the proper social and academic skills to contribute to society effectively. Many scholars have stressed the importance of underrepresented student

leadership. Within this process, underrepresented students are allowed integration into the culture of higher education and can be properly trained for the task of working towards being a part of the global workforce (Tinto,1993).

The goal of institutions of higher education is to provide a foundation for all students to develop as leaders for an inclusive future. (Astin & Astin, 2000; Parks,2000) This goal is often obtained by underrepresented students participating in ethnic identity development in the areas of career readiness and social responsibility. (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005) Underrepresented student leadership provides instrumental and socioemotional support to act as agents for intercultural connections. Both group members and underrepresented leader play an active role in this process and help one another develop further within their perspective identities to reach their professional goals. (Cooper, Denner, & Lopez, 1999; Schachter & Ventara, 2008)

Cooper (2002) suggest that underrepresented leadership help address feelings of isolation and stereotypes about their culture and community. Underrepresented leaders help navigate reciprocal learning, personal growth, and transferable skills. (Bell,2000; Kram, 1988, Lankau & Scundara, 2002; Zachary, 2000, 2002) When underrepresented students engage in leadership development, cultural and career educational outcomes are produced. (Daloz, 1999, Kram, 1985) Psychosocial outcomes transform the leadership experience into a forum for guidance, acceptance, and advocacy. (Kram,1985) Career outcomes produced from underrepresented student leadership establish and maximize efficiency within the workplace. The guidance of group members heightens the professional visibility of the underrepresented student by providing a network of political capital, vocational coaching, and, organizational commitment. (Kram, 1988)

The relationship between underrepresented students and leadership is more than just a series of formal and informal jobs. It is an engaging process of modeling leadership behaviors that inspires underrepresented students to become holistic critical learners. (Baker & Griffin, 2010) Simpson (2014) supported the benefits of leadership context of preparing underrepresented students for complex cultural and workplace demands. This emphasizes in intercultural responsibility and educational opportunity is the core of creating an inclusive and diverse higher education institutional culture.

BACKGROUND

The standard of leadership is often based in theories that reflect the culture, networks and ideologies of a dominant society that has a past in oppressive culture towards others who represent as a different culture. (DenHartog & Dickson, 2001) Within the American republic underrepresented populations are overlooked and shunned from being introduced into a culture of becoming a leader. Many bosses view diverse leaders as special cases who received a special advantage over their underrepresented counterparts. The underrepresented leader has the potential source for adding more inclusive data for the theories within leadership development studies. (Ospina & Floyd, 2009) Sheriff (1966) suggest an alternative idea that almost anyone can be an effective leader within a magnitude of situations no matter of race, gender, or social class. Students who identity within an underrepresented group face unequal access to leadership roles and opportunities. Institutions of higher education, communities, and occupations must integrate underrepresented students into their environmental culture as leaders to effectively meet the needs of society. (Tinto, 1993) Durkin (1951) theorizes that underrepresented students who are socially integrated as leaders achieve higher rates of successful working and learning outcomes.

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