PARALLEL PARADIGMS:
Racial Diversity and Racism at Universities

Additional findings of the Commission on Race and Racism in Anthropology and the American Anthropological Association

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University administrators often proclaim their commitment to racial/ethnic diversity. Yet when we look at the numbers, it is clear that while student bodies on college campuses are becoming increasingly diverse, the same is not true for the faculty. In the 21st century, we do not have racially diverse faculty populations at universities and faculty and administrators at these universities are resistant to actively working to insure diversity. The question is why is there a lull in proactively implementing faculty diversity at universities in the post civil rights era and after the election of the first black president of the United States which, for some, signal a changing racial climate.

Throughout this paper I argue that a racially diverse faculty cannot be sustained (although it can be temporarily acquired) in a white privileged or racist university cultural environment. While universities are gaining ground in attracting students of color, the faculty is a different story. It is argued that the main reason for this is the changing nature of racism on college campuses. The focus of this paper will be on universities, in general, but specifically with the lack of faculty diversity in anthropology departments. With a discipline based upon studying people of color, a focus on culture, and a commitment to social justice, one would think that anthropologists would be leaders in creating and sustaining faculty diversity in their departments. This is not the case. Rather, anthropology departments resemble other departments with a dearth of faculty of color. To begin to understand this issue within anthropology, I will briefly review some historical elements of the discipline.
Anthropology and Diversity Issues

It is well known that the history of anthropology includes both anthropologists as a major contributor to the concept of biological race and the racist ideology that it is based upon and as proponents of anti-racist ideology. The way that people think about race today is partly due to the writings of early anthropologists and other social and natural scientists who focused on describing and explaining human biological diversity. We are still dealing with the legacy of the basic thesis from this era: that there are distinct biological groups called races; biological differences are the basis for social differences, and lastly, there is a legitimate reason for differential treatment of racial populations. These ideas became part of American culture. That is, such ideas were socially transmitted from one generation to the next and continue to be an underpinning belief in American society. This is true among anthropologists just as it is in the general population.

The early history of anthropology with its contribution to the concept of race and racism was influenced by people such as Samuel Morton, Paul Broca, Josiah Nott, and George Gliddon and others as well as Boas’ early response and his legacy of an environmental approach among his students. In response to racism in Germany where Boas argued that Jews were Germans, he made the distinction between race, culture, and language (Hutchinson 2005). Although Boas trained his students to renounce scientific concepts of race, to ignore folk concepts of race, and to work toward an egalitarian society, upon his death in 1942, sociocultural anthropology was different to skin-color differences that were/are the basis of racial folk classifications. Instead, they were concerned with salvaging ethnography and expanding the field of ethnology among small-scale societies. Race did not matter and therefore racism was irrelevant to the study of anthropology (Shanklin 1998).

In doing so, most anthropologists, i.e. cultural anthropologists, did not consider race to be within their area of study (Visweswaran 1998). Race was in the realm of biology and biological anthropology and therefore outside the cultural domain. Ironically, this is what physical anthropologists in the Boasian era had usually argued (although they also assigned cultural and personality traits to races). Race and racism were not topics of scholarly research and, overall, anthropologists considered themselves to be color-blind (nonracist), therefore racism within the discipline was not considered an issue. Race and racism were not examined by anthropologists in the United States who considered themselves nonracist.

However, when the American Anthropological Association (AAA) is examined in relation to the greatest civil rights movement in the United States, we find that their response to racist hostilities was reactionary rather than proactive in nature. Anthropology developed by studying people of color; however in the early days of the civil rights movement, the AAA did not, as a unit, actively advocate or ‘fight’ for their rights. For example, at the annual meeting in 1956 the AAA passed a resolution in support of Section H (Anthropology)
of the American Association for the Advancement of Science to forgo its annual meeting rather than hold it in Atlanta, Georgia, under conditions of segregation (AAA 1956). There was no organized activist effort within the AAA to aid in the demise of segregation and racial discrimination. Then in 1961 the Executive Board of the AAA passed a resolution on race at its annual meeting in Philadelphia. The resolution stated that the AAA: “repudiates statements now appearing in the United States that Negroes are biologically and in innate mental ability inferior to whites (AAA 1962:616). This too was reactionary and lacked actions since there was no institutionalized effort by the AAA to end racial discrimination against the people who were the primary subject of anthropology.

The American Association of Physical Anthropology (AAPA) followed a similar pattern. For instance, at the 1962 annual meeting in Philadelphia the AAPA condemned racism and the writings by Carleton Putnam such as *Race and Reason* (1961) where he argued that blacks never contributed to civilization. Again, a respected scientific organization that focuses on human variation did not take the opportunity to vigorously attack myths related to human diversity (Hutchinson 2005). Much later in 1996 the AAPA adopted a *Statement on Biological Aspects of Race*. In the preamble they stated that since they are scientists who study human variation and evolution, they are obligated to share their understanding of human variation with the general public. They acknowledged that scientific traditions of the nineteenth century presumed that visible features predicted other social traits and those notions were used to support racist doctrines. They wavered on whether or not racism affects quality of life.

The most recent statement on race by the AAA was written by Audrey Smedley and adopted in 1998. The AAA acknowledged the general public’s view of race as natural divisions among humans but stated that there is more genetic variation within a population than between populations. They pointed out a 6% difference in genes but did not explicitly state that there are no qualitative differences. The statement notes that physical characteristics are inherited independently of one another and that knowing the range of one trait does not predict the presence of another trait, discordance. The statement did an excellent job in outlining the historical contribution to the idea of race. “The racial worldview was invented to assign some groups to perpetual low status, while others were permitted access to privilege, power and wealth” (AAA 1998: 713, Smedley 1993, 2007). The AAA countered racist arguments by stating that cultural behavior is learned and conditioned in infants and that behavior is always subject to modification (AAA 1998).

Sociocultural anthropologists, with some notable exceptions, did not return to the study of race and racism until the 1990s when there was a call to study social race by cultural anthropologists such as Johnnetta Cole (1992), former President of the AAA Annette Weiner (1995), Faye V. Harrison (1997, 1998a, 1998b, 2000), Carol Mukhopadhyay and Yolanda

As a discipline, anthropologists study cultures and all types of -isms, but not racism. Lack of concern about racism may be related to the promotion of a color-blind society. This approach to diversity was debated in the Anthropology Newsletter (1998) where H. Glynn Custred favored a color-blind society but argued that reverse discrimination toward white Americans is more prevalent than traditional forms of racial discrimination against Latinos and blacks. Custred contended that by being obsessed with race we missed the important class dimension. Assaults on class that whites bear are considered more important than race-specific obstacles of class that racial minorities experience in terms of employment, education, health, and accumulation of wealth (Harrison 1998b, 2000). Faye V. Harrison (1998b) countered that reverse discrimination is a fallacy. She argued that meritocratic individualism in which deserving individuals should not be oppressed by state regulations that discriminate against the most qualified does not consider that ... collective privileges transferred from generations of unequal opportunity are being misrecognized as merely individual achievements gained solely through hard work done on a level, colorblind and gender-neutral playing field (1998b:16).

While many believe that structural barriers to black upward mobility no longer exists, studies of black-white mobility indicate that inequities are still based mainly on race (Jaynes and Williams 1989; Wolpin 1992; Bowser and Hunt 1996; Harrison 1998b).

If anthropologists believe that they can eliminate racism by not dealing with race then race should not be a factor in recruitment or hiring faculty. The problem with this is that it ignores the realities of student and faculty of color experiences and maintains the status quo which is predominantly white and male. Focus groups on racism in anthropology held at the AAA annual meeting in 2008 among graduate students and faculty of color noted that racism is infused in the life of departments. It was repeatedly stated in the focus groups that white faculty are surprised that students of color (SOC) are articulate. Faculties assume that SOC are not as capable as other students. One student said that a faculty planned to give him a D, although the student knew his work was better than that, but the faculty gave him a C out of the goodness of his heart. He told his mentor about it and he said “don’t worry about it”. Nothing was done and this is tolerated. Collegiality among faculty can be more important than students.

Students complain that liberal white faculty will not tell them when their work is substandard because they do not
want to feel like racists. SOC response is: “Don’t say it’s great when it’s not.” Some students are passed without doing the work because some white faculty members fear being perceived as racist and some white faculties have double standards because they do not believe SOC can do the work. SOC are taught to participate in class but not to speak. Students have strengths and weaknesses but white faculty act as patriarchs to SOC rather than advisors and mentors. SOC are sometimes not mentored because white faculty are afraid of being perceived as racist or they may think of themselves as racist if they require quality work. Therefore, SOC have to get mentors elsewhere because their advisors are not treating them the same as white students by requiring equal quality work. It seems that some liberal white faculty can only interact with SOC as patrons (Brodkin et al., 2011).

Anthropology departments are not actively increasing faculty of color for a variety of reasons. During one focus group, new academics believe departments “don’t need to hire blacks, we have African American Studies.” One student said when she came out of grad school she could only get a job in Pan African Studies since her research was in Jamaica. Students said they were in African American Studies and not anthropology because their work was not respected in anthropology. The example of St. Claire Drake was given since he was in African American Studies and not anthropology. He had a signal that he was not welcome in anthropology departments and noted that Diaspora studies are devalued and the activist approach is not appreciated at white universities (comment by one of his former students). Anthropologists are a part of society and subject to the same conditioning as the rest of society. It is not surprising, then, that racism exists in anthropology as it does elsewhere. The consequences of this are inadequate approaches to recruiting and retaining racially diverse faculties in anthropology departments.

Examples of University Recruitment and Retention Strategies

Blacks makeup 5% of the college faculty nationwide (12% of U.S. population) but a large percentage of these black faculty are at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Only 3.6% of the total faculties at the nation’s 27 highest-ranked universities are black. Usually, black faculty teach in religion, sociology, black studies, urban affairs or law; and are less likely to be found in the natural sciences, engineering and computer science (Cross and Slater 2002). Even in fields with more minority faculty such as psychology and education, the numbers for minority faculty are low (Trower and Chait 2002).

What are the recruitment and retention strategies for faculty of color at contemporary colleges and universities? Also, which universities are doing the best job at attracting and retaining minority faculty? These types of data were collected and have been reported in the Journal of Blacks in Higher Education (JBHE) (1994, 2002). This information was gathered only on the integration of African Americans into the nation’s
leading universities. Most of these universities were all white prior to the mid-1960s. Similarly, blacks did not hold tenured positions at a major predominantly white university until 1947 when Professor Allison Davis, a graduate of Williams College (Master’s from Harvard and Ph.D. from the University of Chicago) was hired in a tenured position in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Chicago. Today, almost all major universities have tenured black faculty (JBHE 2002).

Based upon data collected, Duke had the “highest average diversity rating” in terms of, for instance, black student enrollment, five year progress in these enrollments, and university-wide percentage of black faculty. One reason for this high rating was attributed to the commitment by the President of Duke, Nan Keohane, to racial diversity. There was a plan to make it advantageous for departments to hire black faculty (JBHE 2002). The Black Faculty Strategic Initiative provided beginning funds for hiring black faculty. The program pays 100% of salaries for the first year and over 5 years the cost is transferred to departments. Between 1995 and 2002 the number of black faculty in the arts doubled at Duke. At the same time, Duke’s worst performing category was the percentage of tenured black faculty (only 2.7%) (Cross and Slater 2002). While Duke rated number one, there are serious racial issues on the campus, residential segregation in the city, little interaction between black and white students on campus, and high black faculty turnover (JBHE 2002).

Emory finished first in total black enrollments and second in categories dealing with black faculty such as tenure. While Emory is located in a city with a high black population which has been under black political control for generations with a wide variety of cultural and social activities, there is a low percentage of black students and black faculty at this university (JBHE 2002).

Princeton was the third highest ranking university with a high black graduation rate and improvement in attracting black freshmen. They increased their black student yield by creating a new financial policy that helped low-income students of all ethnicities. Those from families earning under $46,500 received full tuition as a grant. While students benefitted from this plan, Princeton had a low percentage of black faculty (JBHE 2002).

When I served as Director of African American Studies at the University of Houston, I attempted to increase the percentage of black faculty on campus. In consultation with senior administrators, I gathered resumes from recent doctoral graduates in a variety of disciplines. Having served on numerous search committees, I am aware of requirements for tenured positions. Names were submitted only for individuals who met specific requirements such as a strong publication record and from respected institutions. While administrators can submit and request that departments consider these scholars, departments were not mandated to increase racial diversity and were resistant to it even when presented with qualified candidates. The position of departments at the university was that they

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1. The system rates the 26 highest academically ranked universities in the nation based upon the following 13 categories: 1) total black student enrollments (graduate and undergraduate); 2) the five-year advancement of the university in black student enrollments; 3) the percentage of blacks in the most recent first-year class; 4) the five-year progress in black enrollments in the first-year class; 5) black student yield (percent who accept admittance) in undergraduate admissions; 6) five-year progress in black student yield; 7) university wide percentage of black faculty; 8) five-year progress in percentage of black faculty; 9) black student graduation rate; 10) seven-year progress in the percentage of black faculty; 11) difference in graduation rates between black and white students; 12) university wide of blacks among the tenured faculty; and 13) seven-year progress in the black student graduation rate.
wanted a national search to select the best candidate and they were not interested in candidates that were not generated by them. White faculty want to operate in a color-blind university environment where they hire people who look like them, who they feel comfortable interacting with, and who they feel are like them. Consequently, they would not consider these candidates as visiting scholars, paid through university and not departmental money (they were not asked to grant tenure). In over 20 years, the percentage of black faculty has not increased at the University of Houston.

Special hires occur for a variety of reasons including identification of qualified applicants during the search who do not completely fit the job description but would be a quality addition to the department. Half of African American and American Indian faculty were hired through special hires. Asian American and white faculty were almost always hired through regular searches but some were hired through special hires (Smith et al. 2004).

Robert Alvarez (1994) described his experiences as a minority recruit in anthropology. He argued that recruitment of minorities at predominantly white universities is symbolic of fulfilling institutional goals and requirements to diversify the faculty population. However, in efforts to recruit minorities, universities operate in “...secrecy, manipulation, misused power, and reasserted hierarchy” (1994:260). In the recruitment process, Alvarez experienced an effort to recruit him but not to hire him. Sometimes specific members of an anthropology department were opposed to the hire because they believed the position should be available to all candidates and not just minorities (ignoring biases due to the “good old boy” system). At other times, members stated they already had one Chicano in their department and did not need to hire another one.

In each case examined in the *JBHE*, the high rankings were associated with a specific strategy implemented by the university to increase minority faculty or there was a commitment by a high ranking official, such as the President of Duke, to diversity. Another example of this is the Dean of Carleton College who asked all faculty to occasionally write black academics who might be interested in Carleton. In Minnesota (where Carleton is located) blacks are a small percentage of the population but 4.6% of the Carleton faculty. The Haverford College has a Minority Scholars-in-Residence program that recruits black scholars to teach as inviting lecturers and some are hired in tenure-track positions. This type of program also exists in Mexican American Studies, African American Studies, and Gender Studies at the University of Houston. At Notre Dame there are two Fellowships to enable African American doctoral students to complete their dissertation. The hope is that, upon graduation, they will take a teaching position at the university. Northwestern University allocated more money to increase the number of minorities at the doctoral level and funded research projects for doctoral candidates. Its efforts resulted in the hiring of ten new black professors. These programs require the intentional commitment by the
university to diversity and therefore it is subject to individual
differences to such commitment. Most faculty appointments
are generated by and depend upon support from departments
who resent interference from administration and an admin-
istration that does not want conflict tend to agree with the
majority faculty (Cross and Slater 2002). Operating on this
level, individual attitudes and beliefs can play a pivotal role in
how a university addresses racial diversity issues.

**Reasons for Lack of Diversity**

A variety of arguments by faculty are given to justify the low
percentage of faculty of color, such as, there are not enough
blacks in the academic pipeline (earning doctorates) to popu-
late a qualified pool of candidates (Solorzano 1993). While the
limited pipeline argument may be indicated at the community
college level where the percentage of minority faculty is less
than at four-year universities (Smith et al. 2004), the JBHE’s
data have repeatedly shown that with 60,000 blacks teaching at
colleges in the U.S., each year an additional 1,500 earn Ph.D.s.
These candidates do not show up in the ranks at prestigious
schools but are more likely to be found in small liberal arts
colleges (4.7% of total faculties at these colleges) (Cross and
Slater 2002) such as Carleton.

Due to this pipeline argument and labor market limita-
tions (Busenberg and Smith 1997), many assume that faculty
of color have an edge over white male faculty because there
could be competition for limited minority faculty (White
1992). This contradicts reality where minority faculty, post-
doctoral fellows, and administrators do not experience bidding
reported that minorities who recently earned doctorates from
prestigious fellowship programs were not especially sought
after. Olivas (1994) found that while credentials of the Latino
law school faculty exceeded that of their white counterparts,
white candidates “with good (but not sterling) credentials are
routinely considered and hired, while the high-demand/low-
supply mythology about minorities persists” (1994:133).

Issues of diversity may not be of concern or considered
important by white faculty or administrators (Brayboy 2003).
Although the level of black faculty at prestigious universities
is low, there are no specific programs for recruitment at Ivy
League schools such as Harvard (racial diversity is not a factor
in faculty selections). Only 2.7% of the faculty is black and
almost half are in the Afro-American Studies or the law school
while most departments at Harvard are all white. Afro-Amer-
ican Studies is used to indicate their fulfillment to diversity
(Cross and Slater 2002). They do not want to be involved in
diversity issues and thereby end up “reinscribing the status quo
of diversity by ghettoizing these issues.” (Brayboy 2003:81).

Limiting recruitment and retention efforts to certain disci-
plines marginalizes minority faculty and restricts scholarship
diversity. Among Asian Americans, the model minority myth
and the misconception that they are well represented in faculty
ranks shows that they are mainly in science, engineering.
medicine, and Asian language departments and less common in social sciences and humanities (Smith et al. 2004). The academic pipeline is important for Asians to achieve broader representation at universities.

Other universities such as the University of Michigan and the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill have much larger percentages (over 4%) of black faculty than prestigious private institutions such as Stanford, Yale, Northwestern, Rice, Princeton, or Harvard (less than 3%). Partly due to possible racial discrimination lawsuits from white academics not hired, many universities are cautious regarding programs specifically aimed at hiring black faculty. Preferences in faculty hiring are subject to laws against race discrimination in employment. Therefore, many universities believe race should be considered for student enrollment but not for academic appointment because of the legal issues pertaining to equal employment (Cross and Slater 2002).

Alleviating underrepresentation of faculty of color is considered a stand alone policy at predominantly white institutions rather than an institutional goal. With assumed racist free and academic equality, there is no need to tinker with the racial structure of the university. When institutions have some black faculty on campus they may believe that they have done their part. Their bodies are marked as an implementation of diversity goals (Brayboy 2003).

Smith and associates (2004) examined if strategies used to target minority faculty produce different outcomes from those that do not. They found that strategies do make a difference because, for one thing, regular searches in fields unrelated to diversity issues will not result in diversity hires. Successful hires occur when the job description provides a connection between scholarship and the study of race/ethnicity or when the traditional search process is modified to be inclusive of new opportunities. Additional strategies are needed to increase representation of faculty of color outside of departments related to ethnic/racial issues.

Structural Violence

In the absence of high administrative commitment to diversity, departments determine if the university will be diverse. Department heads and senior faculty develop recruitment policies and department faculties decide what constitutes productivity and quality measures and how publications, research, and community service are factored into merit. “The qualifications of minorities alone are almost irrelevant [in the hiring process, instead] personal and political preferences, prejudices, and fears of majority faculty and inaction of administrators play a larger role in the final decisions reached” (de la Luz Reyes and Halcon 1991: 179). Busenberg and Smith question meritocracy as a hiring policy and instead discuss “informal systems of preference” (1997: 170).
These informal systems are institutionalized at universities and form the backbone of university culture. In terms of hiring and tenure practices, this system operates contrary to university values of equality and meritocracy. The result of this informal system is discriminatory practices that result in emotional, financial, and academic harm to potential minority candidates. In this sense, such systems are analogous to structural violence. "Whenever persons are harmed, maimed, or killed by poverty and unjust social, political, and economic institutions, systems, or structures, we speak of structural violence" (Kohler and Alcock 1976: 343). Structural violence is a type of discrimination, exploitation, and injustice. Victims of structural violence are groups as opposed to individuals. We recognize structural violence at the collective level where we observe rates that are too low relative to available resources (Hoivik 1977). The low percentage of black and other minority faculty at universities is a form of structural violence. Indeed, many would argue that insidious assaults on dignity such as racism and sexism cause injury in terms of job productivity and health. In structural violence we can identify the victims (minority academics), means (university culture), and intention (maintenance of white privilege) of the violence. Academics, like the general population, make life choices that are structured by racism, sexism, poverty, and political violence (Farmer 1996). To have true equality and meritocracy at colleges, structural violence must be addressed.

**Racism and Diversity at Universities**

Universities acknowledge the need for a diverse student body and to prepare students for a diverse society but diversifying the faculty is the least successful of all of the diversity initiatives despite years of affirmative action policies (Smith et al. 2004). From the previous discussion it is clear that universities implement temporary programs that are not sustainable in the long term. But what is needed? It has been put forth that the hiring of faculty of color takes place when one of three conditions occur: 1) job description engages diversity at the department or subfield level; 2) institutional special hiring where certain conditions are waived to hire the individual; or 3) a search is conducted by a racially/ethnically diverse search committee (Smith et al. 2004). However, I would argue that these factors will not bring about the desired result unless they are part of the structure of the institution and not left up to individuals.
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