Kansas State University Libraries

New Prairie Press

An Analysis Of Work-Related Learning Literature Focusing On Race And Ethnicity

Jovita Ross-Gordon

Ann K. Brooks

Tamara Clunis

Lina Muñoz

Richard Parsells

See next page for additional authors

Follow this and additional works at: https://newprairiepress.org/aerc

Part of the Adult and Continuing Education Administration Commons

Recommended Citation

Author Information

Jovita Ross-Gordon, Ann K. Brooks, Tamara Clunis, Lina Muñoz, Richard Parsells, and Ursula Parker

An Analysis Of Work-Related Learning Literature Focusing On Race And Ethnicity

Jovita Ross-Gordon, Ann K. Brooks,
Tamara Clunis, Linda Muñoz, Richard Parsells, Ursula Parker
Texas State University at San Marcos, USA

Abstract: *Qualitative analysis of the literature in three domains of work-related learning points to a small but growing number of studies and conceptual articles focusing explicitly on race/ethnicity. Findings varied across the three domains of continuing professional education, human research development, and workforce development.*

Purpose

Learning related to work has increasingly become the focal point for scholarship in adult education. A number of authors writing in this area have devoted attention to the topic of diversity (e.g., Ross-Gordon & Brooks, 2004; Wentling, 1999). Nearly all definitions of diversity include race/ethnicity as a focus. Yet, we questioned the extent to which race served as the focal point within the work and learning literature, and wondered whether the extent varied across continuing professional education (CPE), human resource development (HRD), and workforce development. Hence, the guiding questions for this investigation were (a) to what degree does the scholarly literature within three domains of workplace learning reflect a specific focus on race and ethnicity, (b) what theoretical frameworks inform the scholarship, and (c) what are the concerns with regards to race within each of the domains?

Previous research informing our study

Previous studies provided models for analyzing scholarly literature for its attention to dimensions of diversity. For example, early studies by Cox and Nkomo (1990) looked at race as a variable in organizational behavior research, and Ross-Gordon (1991) examined multicultural research in adult education. More recently Johnson-Bailey (2001) focused on race and Bierema and Cseh (2003) employed a feminist framework to examine adult education literature. Each of these studies proved helpful in identifying strategies for selection and analysis of literature.

Research Methods

We conducted a search for race/ethnicity-related scholarly literature within CPE, HRD, and workforce development. We were reminded while doing this work of the definitional quagmire we had entered in trying to distinguish between these three domains. Searches for published articles and dissertations were conducted through numerous electronic databases that catalogue literature in the fields of education, business, and the health professions. These included Business Source Premier, Dissertation Abstracts International, Expanded Academic ASAP, JSTOR, PsychInfo, Education Full Text, Health Source: Nursing/Academic Edition, Medline, Social Sciences Full Text, and Social Science Index. We also conducted manual searches of conference proceedings for both the Academy of Human Resources Development and the Adult Education Research Conference since 1999. We included in our searches general terms like race, racism, ethnicity, or ethnic minorities

and terms specific to particular racial/ethnic groups (e.g., *African Americans, Blacks*, or African Diaspora; *Native Americans*, *Aborigines*, *First Nations Peoples*, Native Peoples, or *Indians*; *Hispanics*, *Latinos/Latinas*, *Mexican-Americans*, or *Puerto Rican Americans*). We used various search terms to identify literature in the CPE, HRD, and workforce development. For example, for CPE we used terms such as professional development, staff development and continuing professional education; for workforce development we used terms like welfare-to-work, pre-work programs, job displacement programs; for HRD we used terms like training, career development, and organizational development.

   We analyzed each article according to type of literature, level of attention to race/ethnicity, race/ethnicity related-conceptual framework applied, and group(s) serving as the focus of study. Types of literature analyzed included data-based (quantitative, qualitative or mixed-methods), comprehensive literature review, conceptual or theory building, or program evaluation. Preliminary theoretical perspectives included (a) critical race theory (b) Afrocentric or other ethnic-centered frameworks (c) multicultural education, (d) diversity, and (e) no explicit framework. Theoretical perspectives emerging from the analysis of data included anti-racist, racial identity development, whiteness/white privilege, access and equity, and cultural competence. We categorized the level of attention to race/ethnicity as either minimal (race mentioned but treatment scant), moderate (race/ethnicity receives significant level of attention, but is not a focal point), or extensive (race/ethnicity is the focal point). We also analyzed the literature for themes emerging from the findings, conclusions, and recommendations. Two researchers concentrated on each of the 3 domains, providing for inter-rater comparison.

Race/Ethnicity and CPE Literature

   The two researchers who focused on CPE reviewed 22 studies and 2 comprehensive literature reviews.   We used the following definition of CPE: "Education of professional practitioners that follows their preparatory curriculum and extends their learning throughout their careers…. The term professional is used broadly in this context, to describe the wide range of occupational areas that are based, to some extent in a discrete body of information and specific competencies" (Queeney, 2000, p. 375). The literature of CPE emphasizes the learning and career development of the individual professional. This was also true of the literature focusing on race and ethnicity in CPE, with most articles focusing on how professionals could improve their individual practice to more effectively serve students or clients from non-dominant racial/ethnic groups. The largest segment of this literature focused on K-12 educators (15 data-based studies) with the remainder focusing on other professionals including counselors/social workers, nurses, college faculty, and police (7 data-based studies and 2 literature review/theory building article). Dissertations predominated within the educator professional development literature (12 of 15 studies); all but one dissertation dated within the last 5 years, suggesting this is a relatively new focus of research for educators. For other professionals, articles published in scholarly journals comprised the largest segment of the literature.

   The most common focus was the perceived need for and impact of professional development addressing race/ethnicity and/or cultural diversity (with race/ethnicity as a key dimension); fourteen of the manuscripts reviewed focused on this topic, including 9 dissertations on K-12 educators. Two of these studies examined the specific experiences of African American professionals participating in such programs. Clearly there is an interest in

determining the impact of PD programs relating to race/ethnicity. The second most predominant focus was on PD aimed at enhancing professionals' effectiveness for working with specific populations/communities such as teachers working with Latino and African American children (Colombo, 2004; Duffy, 2002; Kelly-Stiles, 1999, Roberts 2002) and nurses working with African American and Native American patients and families (Silverman, Goodine, Ladoceur, & Quinn, 2001; Underwood, 1999; Weaver, 1999).   The smallest subset of literature focused on the PD needs and experiences of professionals from marginalized racial/ethnic groups (e.g., Alfred's 2001 study of African American female faculty at predominately White university, Archung's 2002 case study of an African American teacher in an urban school, and Waters' 1996 analysis of the strategies needed to increase the number of ethnic-minority researchers in postdoctoral nursing programs).

In our examination of the theoretical frameworks identified either explicitly or implicitly through authors' selection of terms to discuss race, different patterns emerged. The literature on K-12 educators employed the most diverse range of theoretical frameworks, the majority making use of either explicit frameworks or terminology tied to multicultural education/diversity (10 studies); a number referenced other frameworks including anti-racism, Pan Africanism, racial identity development, feminist postructuralism, and social constructivism. The literature on other professionals relied heavily on theoretical frameworks related to cultural competence, a framework incorporating attention to cultural skills, encounters, knowledge, and awareness (Campinha-Bacote, Yahle, & Langenkamp 1996). Alfred (2001) added a unique perspective to this focus by examining bicultural competence.

Our analysis of findings and conclusions pointed to 6 significant themes: (a) various professionals perceive limitations in their training programs and a need for greater professional development opportunities related to race and ethnicity (Silverman et al. 2001, Watts, 2003; Stevenson, 1995; Weaver, 1999); (b) professional development focusing on topics of race, ethnicity and culture can have an impact on professionals beliefs and practices (Bell, 1999; Hyland, 2000; Moore, 2003; Roberts, 2002; Teasley, 2002; Augustin & Nicole, 2001); (c) interests in PD and the impact of PD related to race and ethnicity are mediated by participants' positionality (Bell,1999; Hyland, 2000; Moore, 2003; Roberts, 2002; Teasley, 2002; Tucker Blackman, 2003); (d) results of PD related to race, ethnicity and culture are not universally successful, given resistance to change of strongly ingrained belief systems and resistance Whites may exhibit to examining systemic racism and White privilege (Leistyna, 2001; Sillman, 1996); (e) to have an impact on knowledge , attitudes, and practice, effective racial/ethnic related PD requires multiple strategies including formal PD training and carefully designed experiential components (Colombo, 2004; Duffy, 2002; Stevenson, 1995; Underwood, 1999; Watts, 2003; Weaver, 1999); and (f) professional development of individuals from marginalized groups is significantly influenced by numerous sociocultural factors (Alfred 2001, Archung, 2002)

Race/Ethnicity In HRD

In the area of human resource development, we reviewed 27 data-based research articles and 3 literature reviews. For the purposes of this review, we used Harbison & Myers' (1964) definition of human resource development: "Human resource development is the process of increasing the knowledge, skills, and the capacities of all the people in the society". However, in keeping with the more limited use of the term within the U.S. over the

last few decades, we included in this review only articles that addressed race and/or ethnicity *within* work organizations. Most of the literature focused on career progression (20 data-based articles), with 7 addressing training. The literature was more or less evenly split between academic journal articles, conference proceedings, and dissertations and distributed across the years from 1995 through 2005. Most of the articles we reviewed assumed an "access and equity" perspective, which may be related to the legalistic nature of much that overtly occurs around race and ethnicity in the workplace, while the remainder explicitly stated a perspective of critical race theory.

Within literature on career progression, the greatest focus (12 articles) was on elements within the organizations that hindered or facilitated career progression. Two articles addressed the strategies racial/ ethnic group members used to cope with career hindrances. Six articles compared the career experiences of Black, Latino, and/or White people.

The training literature addressed learning and training experiences; and diversity training. Caputo (1997) and Cianni (1995) focused on equity of access to training experiences, while Hayes, who conducted a critical ethnography, focused on the work experiences of women involved in welfare-to-work programs. She concluded that contrary to the expectation that these women were not learning particularly high-level and important skills in their entry-level jobs, they often learned sophisticated strategies for negotiating the unacknowledged and specific demands of their jobs. Snow's (2005) theory-building assessment of need looked at police officer formation of attitudes toward minorities.

One literature review published in the Human Resource Development Quarterly analyzed the research through the lens of critical race theory and concluded that issues concerned with race or ethnicity (and gender) are collectively perceived as attitudinal rather than structural (2003). Our own review, which covers a larger body of literature, observes that while some of the literature views race and ethnicity as an attitudinal problem, the vast majority identifies organizational barriers to advancement and meaningful work.

Three major themes emerged from our analysis. First of all, a variety of elements hindered career advancement for minorities, and these can be seen as overt examples of institutional racism (Caputo, 1997; Cianni, 1995; Combs, 2003; Houston-Brown, 2002; Morales, 2000; Padilla, 2003; Palmer, 2001; Peery, 1998; Regules, 1997; Silva, 2003). Hindrances to the career progression of minorities were racial discrimination, lack of mentors, being locked into a diversity track, lack of an informal social network, "good ole boy" networks, lack of racially appropriate role models, and lack of opportunity for developmental experiences.

The second major theme centered on career facilitators, which included mentors, family and spouse support, peer support, creating own opportunities and informal social network (Combs, 2003; Darden, 2003; Padilla, 2003; Palmer, 2001; Peery, 1998; Regules, 1997; Silva, 2003). Interestingly, 2 articles on Hispanics (Peery, 1998; Zuniga, Skaruppa & Powell, 2000) observed that assimilating to the dominant White culture improved career advancement, while none of the articles on Blacks made the same observation. For example, in their qualitative study of 5 Hispanic corporate managers, Zuniga, Skaruppa & Powell (2000) looked at the affect of the degree of assimilation on career advancement and concluded that value and culture congruence with management were important if Hispanic managers wish to advance.

The third major theme regarded discrimination and racism: both Black and Hispanic persons experienced significant discrimination, while White persons, both male and female,

were generally unaware of their own racial prejudices (Combs, 2003; Darden, 2003; Robinson, 1997). However, Parker, Baltes, & Christensen (1997) concluded from their quantitative study that White men did not associate support for Affirmative Action and Equal Opportunity with a loss in career development opportunities, organizational injustice or negative work attitudes, whereas White women, Black, Hispanic, and Asians associated it with a gain in opportunities, organizational justice, and positive work attitudes.

Race/Ethnicity and Workforce Development

Under the domain of workforce development, we identified 8 data-based studies and 8 reviews of policy in welfare-to-work and pre-employment training programs related to workforce training and/or development, learning, and race. For the purposes of this literature review, we limited workforce development to pre-work training programs for the unemployed worker and activities that promote the necessary skills and knowledge to succeed in the workplaces of the 21st century (U.S. Department of Labor, 2001). None of the 16 articles and dissertations looked solely at race and learning among adult populations in pre-employment training, but rather they addressed the intersection of class, race, gender and/or personal and family history in discussing the impact of certain programs or the experiences or attitudes of individuals in these programs.

We found themes centering on three issues which crossed all 16 articles: (1) a disconnect existed between teacher belief and work training and literacy program ideology regarding the importance for adult learners of individual agency and a determination to succeed, and the structural barriers that impede adult student success (Alfred, 2005; D'Amico, 1999; Hull, 1997; Sandlin, 2004; Sandlin & Cervero, 2003); (2) a deep rooted racist ideology in welfare policy maintained negative assumptions about education and training programs for welfare recipients who are disproportionably people of color (Alfred; 2005; Bok, 2004; Jackson, 2003; McDonald, 1997; Sandlin, 2004); (3) good connections for jobs among friends and family members supported stable jobs for people of color; however, when jobs disappeared, the social support tended to disappear because those in the social network were also without work (D'Amico, 1999, Schneider, 2000); and (4) training staff need to talk explicitly about perceptions of racism, cultural differences, and language and structural barriers with both people of color in pre-employment training programs *and* with their potential employers (D'Amico, 1999; Fleischer, 2001). Fleischer found improved retention in organizations in which such conversations took place with both groups (Fleischer, 2001).

Conclusions

Our comparison of findings across the three work-related learning domains indicates a number of similarities and differences. For the sake of brevity we will focus our discussion on similarities that appear in one way or another across at least two of the three.

    1) Institutionalized discrimination affects individual careers and program directions across all the three domains.
- Structural barriers and inequitable access to training, mentoring, and other career supports hinder career progress of racialized minorities (HRD)
- Such discrimination impacts access to and sensitivity for the need of race/ethnicity related CPE and support systems for nondominant groups. This limits access to, acceptance of, and positive outcomes of race/ethnicity focused CPE.

• Some CPE concerns itself with the impact of institutionalized racism on client groups and ways to limit this (e.g. patients, students).
• Deep-rooted structural barriers within society perpetuate inequities in access to work training and other formal education that would enhance employability and limit opportunities for racial/ethnic minorities "graduates" of workforce development programs to gain employment access and/or job advancement (WD)

2) Personal determination and resourcefulness, peer and family support, mentors, and social networks are especially important to the career advancement of racialized minorities in the face of reported barriers (HRD and CPE)

3) Whites are generally less aware of manifestations of racism and benefits of white privilege (HRD and CPE) and in some cases demonstrate resistance to examining these (CPE). Similarly, prevailing uninterrogated negative assumptions about racialized minorities limit human capital investment in welfare recipients and unemployed (WD)

4) A point of interconnection between HRD and CPE is seen in the degree to which literature focused on developing "cultural competence" was focused on the "helping" professions and organizations – those that require sensitivity to client perspectives in order to accomplish their "helping" goals/missions.

Our work demonstrates the relative scarcity of attention to race and ethnicity across all three domains, particularly workforce development, and that more work needs to be done in these areas.

Reference List

Bierema, L.L. & Cseh, M (2003). Evaluating AHRD research using a feminist research framework. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 14*(1), 5-26.

Cox, T., & Nkomo, S. M. (1990). Invisible men and women: A status report on race as a variable in organization behavior research. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 11,* 419-431.

Ross-Gordon, J. M. (1991). Needed adult education research for the twenty-first century: Toward a multicultural perspective. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 42(1), 1-16.

Johnson-Bailey, J. (2001). The road less walked: A retrospective of race and ethnicity in adult education. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20, 89-99.

Ross-Gordon, J. & Brooks, (2004) A. Diversity in human resource development and continuing professional education: What does it mean for the workforce, clients, and professionals? *Advances in Developing Human Resources, 10* (10), 59-85.

Wentling, R. M. (1999). Components of effective diversity training programmes. *International Journal of Training and Development, 3,* 215-216.

Complete references are available at the "Publications" link at http//www.txstate.edu/edphd/