

Title

Cultural Diversity in Student Ministry Leadership: A Case Study at Pepperdine University

Abstract

In an attempt to contribute to how ministries and Christian academia is addressing issues of diversity, I am conducting a study to analyze correlations between ethnicity and styles/values of leadership. The goal is to uncover whether or not a particular ethnicity generally prefers one style of leadership over another. Past research on the subject has already seen that, in the business world, certain practices work better than others. For example, those from an Asian culture are more likely to prefer formality and authority as opposed to the collaborative and relationship-oriented style of leadership found in America. I will contribute to the data on these correlations by testing a sample of students from Pepperdine and asking for (a) their race and ethnicity, (b) their preferred leadership style out of the 3 most common leadership styles, and (c) their preferred leadership values out of a list of 5 Christian leadership values. Testing for correlations between these three scales, all reported anonymously, would help inform future ministry leaders or Christian higher education professionals if certain leadership styles or values would work better with certain cultures.

Full Explanation

The majority of materials on multiethnic ministry hold a consensus that such ministries must avoid establishing a “norm.” Ministries that do so are, instead of accommodating diversity, assimilating them into the majority norm of behavior. These norms can take the form of expected conduct, length of service, style of worship, and style of leadership. Pepperdine University, which, in some ways, operates much like a megachurch, faces the same multiethnic challenges among its diverse student population. Based on personal experience and conversations, it would appear that Pepperdine is also propagating a particular “norm” when it comes to values in Christian leadership. For example, the majority of student leaders on campus, especially in ministry settings, are extroverted, charismatic, and visionary.

My proposed research project is to identify whether or not such norms exist, and whether or not this creates a dichotomy such that people of different ethnic backgrounds feel excluded from leadership because of their different opinions on Christian leadership. I intend to do this by using two Likert scale inventories that examine (a) forms of leadership, using the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), and (b) values in Christian leadership, using the Christian Leadership Questionnaire (CLQ). I will administer the survey to a variety of ethnic groups on campus, asking them to respond based on their impression of what kind of leader they would respect and want to become. Thus, the two research questions will be:

- 1) Is there a correlation between race and ethnicity (IV) and preferred leadership style (DV)?
- 2) Is there a correlation between race and ethnicity (IV) and preferred Christian leadership value (DV)?

A MANOVA will be conducted between ethnicity (1 IV, multiple levels) and preferred leadership style (3 DVs, each composed of a quantitative score on the MLQ's 3 scales). A second MANOVA will be conducted between ethnicity (1 IV, multiple levels) and preferred leadership style (5 DVs, each composed of a quantitative score on the CLQ's 5 scales). The preferred leadership styles questionnaire is Bass & Avolio's Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), available at <http://www.mindgarden.com/16-multifactor-leadership-questionnaire>. This questionnaire will be purchased for a fee. The preferred Christian leadership values questionnaire is Wu's Christian Leadership Questionnaire (CLQ), available from his dissertation published at Fuller in 2012. I was given personal permission from him via email to use his questionnaire.

If there is a correlation between race and ethnicity (IV) and either leadership style (the MLQ) or Christian leadership value (the CLQ), some significant conclusions can be drawn. Pepperdine is one of many Christian schools currently facing the challenge of seeking a diverse student population and making sure minorities feel welcomed. It's easy to create surface-level quotas to meet a diverse population requirement. However, minorities are best welcomed by making sure our culture matches theirs. Therefore, this study will help draw initial conclusions on how certain styles of leadership might be better or worse for certain cultures. The subjects are students at Pepperdine. Therefore, they or their successors at Pepperdine could directly benefit from improved leadership that is more sensitive to cultural preferences.