Student Affairs and Higher Education Policy Issues Related to Multiracial Students

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In this case study I will be reviewing an article entitled “Student Affairs and Higher Education Policy Issues Related to Multiracial Students”, in which I will provide an overview of the U.S. Policy regarding racial data collection and reporting as it relates to multiracial students; organizations, programs, and services provided for multiracial students; and solutions to some of the issues. In order to provide data on multiracial students, we must first define who they are. According to Espenshade & Radford (2009), multiracial students are: 1) the biological children of parents of two different races (e.g. black and white) or ethnicities (e.g. Hispanic & Non-Hispanic) 2) the descendants of people from different racial or ethnic heritages (e.g. black, white, and Native American ancestors) 3) monoracial individual adopted by parents of a different race (e.g. an Asian child raised by two white parents). Multiracial was also defined as those identifying as having more than one race (mixed, hapa, etc.) or exploring an identity that includes more than one race (http://www.naspa.org/constituent-groups/kcs/multiracial/history).

Issues of the Case

In the past, race-based policies for higher education were based on the needs of monoracial students until recently the federal policies and procedures at the campus level have reflected this new known population; multiracial students. In order to serve multiracial students effectively, it is important for Student Affairs, Faculty, Staff, and other college administrators to understand the history and current national policy regarding racial identification and the impact on how campuses collect and maintain data on race and ethnicity (Kellogg & Niskode’, 2008).

Status of National Policy. Policy surrounding racial classification is governed by Statistical Directive 15 of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The
purpose of this directive is to ensure that all federal agencies, such as schools, the Social Security Administration, and the Bureau of the Census, report data in consistent categories. The directive defined four racial categories – White, Black, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indian/Alaskan Native – are required that each person be counted in only one of these groups, plus ethnicity of Hispanic Origin or Not Hispanic Origin. Although some federal agencies provided an option for individuals to check more than one box or mark “other” they still had to report the data in the designated monoracial categories. Fernandez’s work (as cited in Kellogg & Niskode’, 2008, p. 93)

In 1997, the OMB revised the categories in the Statistical Directive 15 and expanded the number from four to five categories with a slight difference (American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Black/African American, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, and White). More than 6.8 million people indicated more than one racial category on the 2000 Census report in which this included 2.8 million people under the age of eighteen who will soon be headed to college. It was mandated by the OMB that federal agencies implement the policy changes by January 1, 2003. The Department of Education (DOE) didn’t comply with these new changes right away (Wong & Buckner, 2008; Kellogg & Niskode’, 2008). When colleges do not make these changes to give students the option of choosing more than one race, this leads to over 1.1 million students falling in the ‘unknown’ category in Jaschik’s work (as cited in Kellogg & Niskode’, 2008). These changes are so important because based on the race of students; they could qualify or not qualify for certain scholarships, programs, and affirmative action guidelines. “For instance, would a student who is one-quarter Black qualify for a scholarship targeted for African American students” (Kellogg & Niskode’, 2008, p.99)? Some advocacy groups fear that allowing students to identify as multiracial will cause minority racial groups to lose benefits in
which this would make the Civil Rights laws seem null and void in Schmidt’s work (as cited in Kellogg & Niskode’, 2008).

Multiracial students dealt with other issues besides the data collection methods and Affirmative action. Most colleges have organizations/clubs that are specifically for monoracial students (e.g. African American and Hispanic clubs). However, there are not many organizations that are uniquely for multiracial students. Another concern is that Student Affairs personnel on campuses are not fully aware of the new multiracial policies so they will not be able to fully assist the students. The final and main concern that multiracial students have is dealing with pressure from their own peers. In one of the articles I reviewed, the multiracial students at a private Midwestern university formed an organization called SHADES (mixture of all shades and colors). For an example, one of the students (mixed with black and white) said whenever he tried to connect with the black students, they saw him as “white” and the white students saw him as “black”, either way he said he was “screwed”. (In academic papers, if you are using slang or what could be deemed as inappropriate language, be sure to attribute it to someone else by using an actual quotation.) He felt trapped and all alone with no one to relate to until SHADES. Another student stated that when he was a little boy the kids in his class would call him “zebra”. He said he didn’t know what it meant until he asked his parents. The multiracial students all agreed that most of their parents told them they were not different and not to worry about what people say said and to brush it off. The reality was that race did matter whether you were monoracial and especially multiracial. Most of them said they are still confused about which race they should embrace and which one to deny (Nishimura, 1999).

**Alternative Solutions**
I feel that all colleges nationwide need to update their databases and change all of their forms. Colleges need to plan for the investment of time and money that it will take for these changes to take place, and research and assessment needs to be conducted to see how to make data collection methods better in the future. I feel that Student Affairs Professionals need to learn how to relate to the multiracial students more so they can better assist them. The multiracial students agreed that if their parents would have educated them more and prepared them for some of the rude reactions and issues that they are dealing with, they would have been able to cope and deal with real life situations today. Students should learn how to embrace both of their races by continuing to participate in their multiracial support groups.

Analysis Factors Affecting the Success of the Alternative Solution

A lot of colleges simply do not have the time or money to update their entire database of thousands of students that go back years and years. It will take an enormous amount of planning in creating assessment forms and conducting research. Student Affairs Professionals will have to first examine themselves about how they feel regarding multiracial students and there will also have to be workshops set up in order to train all the counselors and Student Affairs personnel at all colleges across the nation regarding the new multiracial policies that have been established. Some of the multiracial parents don’t know how to educate their children about multiracial issues because they are monoracial but they decided to develop a relationship or marriage with a person of another race; so this is new to both parents. In order for the multiracial students to be somewhat prepared, it is going to take both parents of different races to teach their child about their race and upbringing. This will be difficult to do if both parents are no longer together.

Conclusion
Overall, there are no easy formulas for transforming higher education policy to protect multiracial students; however, institutions must address policies and programs to fit the needs of this growing population. All personnel, students, and parents need to become better prepared for this rapid changing multiracial world we live in. We all must learn to embrace our differences.

Solid analysis of a very charged topic. Good job! 150 points

References


Feedback

Score

150 / 150

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