

The Role of “Woke” Faculty for Thriving Students of Color

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Abstract

“Woke” faculty are those who are aware of not only the needs of diverse learners but also the ways in which power and privilege shape the curriculum and their classroom dynamics. This study explored the specific experiences and interactions with faculty that appear to create a supportive and culturally responsive learning environment for students of color to thrive.

Thriving was defined as being intellectually, socially, and psychologically engaged in the college experience, based on students’ scores on the Thriving Quotient (Schreiner, 2016). Using structural equation modeling, the results explained 73% of the variation in thriving for 535 students of color. The major contributors to thriving were students’ perceptions of faculty’s sensitivity to diverse learners, incorporating multiple perspectives in the curriculum, and welcoming diverse views in classroom discussions. This study underscores that faculty are key cultural agents who can empower and positively shape the experiences of students of color (Bensimon, 2007; Dee & Daly, 2009), as well as awaken the awareness of privilege and introduce new voices and perspectives to dominant culture students.

The Role of “Woke” Faculty for Thriving Students of color

The landscape of higher education within the United States has shifted dramatically since the first colonial colleges were designed for White males from prominent affluent families (Thelin, 2011). Almost 400 years later, 56% of the undergraduates enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions are women and 46% are students of color (NCES, 2018). Although access to higher education continues to increase for historically underrepresented students, compositional diversity on college campuses is no guarantee of a hospitable learning climate. As Jayakumar and Museus (2012) noted, “a superficial commitment to diversity and multiculturalism on college campuses...falls short of genuine inclusion of students of color” (p. 1). It is not enough to have a compositionally diverse campus community. Given the vital role that faculty play in students’ self-concepts as learners (Cole, 2007), it is imperative that faculty are equipped to create culturally responsive learning environments.

Supportive interactions between students and faculty are an important element in cultivating a positive campus climate (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2010) and are positively associated with student success outcomes (Chang, 2005; Kim & Sax, 2017; Mayhew, Rockenbach, Bowman, Seifert, & Wolniak, 2016; Umbach & Wawrzynski, 2005). Yet there are differences in how faculty in dominantly White institutions interact with students of color. For example, Guiffrida and Douthit (2010) noted that Black students reported negative experiences with White faculty, which included faculty “generalizing students’ opinions in class as representing those of all Blacks” (p. 312) and not including Black viewpoints in course materials.

In addition to differences in classroom interactions, minoritized students interact less with faculty outside of the classroom and are less satisfied with the quality of those interactions (Kim & Lundberg, 2016), which can interfere with learning (Brayboy & Maughan, 2009). Students of color judge the approachability of faculty based on their tone and body language (Fries-Britt,

Younger, & Hall, 2010), and both Black and Native American students perceive faculty as less approachable (Lundberg & Schreiner, 2004). According to Booker's (2007) research, Black students tend to experience a sense of belonging in the classroom when they deem the professor to be an approachable classroom facilitator and when they connect with other students.

However, the classroom environment can also be the locus of microaggressions by students and faculty. Microaggressions are commonplace verbal and nonverbal slights or insults that communicate negative messages to persons based solely upon their marginalized group membership (Sue, 2010). These invalidating and demeaning messages may be intentional or unintentional, and often faculty do not know how to respond when they occur. Faculty may even be the source of the microaggression (Casanova, McGuire, & Martin, 2018). Yet recent research has found that intervening when a microaggression occurs is one of the most powerful affirmations faculty can provide to students of color. In Schreiner et al.'s (2017) mixed methods study of thriving students of color, participants often provided examples of such classroom interventions, as well as other validating incidents that originated with faculty. The occurrence of such examples was so frequent that these authors used the term *microaffirmation* to describe these brief interactions that "heightened a student's sense of being valued, encouraged, or affirmed" (p. 9). Examples of microaffirmations provided by these participants included faculty knowing their name, personally inviting them to participate in a campus event, or noticing when they were absent from class or feeling discouraged (Schreiner et al., 2017).

When students of color experience interactions with faculty that are positive and validating, the benefits include gains in learning (Cole, 2008; Eimers, 2001; Lundberg, 2012), intellectual self-concept (Cole, 2007), and personal development (Lundberg, 2012). Such benefits also accrue when such students experience classroom environments that are inclusive, culturally relevant, and responsive to the needs of diverse learners (Quaye & Chang, 2012).

Such environments often build a psychological sense of community for students of color, which has been found to be an important contributor to their ultimate success in college (Paredes-Collins, 2012; Schreiner, 2013; Schreiner et al., 2017).

Research thus far on the role of student-faculty interaction in the success of students of color has tended to focus on academic success (Kim & Sax, 2017) or the formation of an academic self-concept (Cole, 2007), however, with some qualitative studies elucidating the psychological benefits of positive student-faculty interactions for students of color (Hernandez, 2000; Schreiner et al., 2017). However, the concept of thriving presents a more holistic perspective on student success that incorporates both the academic and psychological dimensions of student success, as well as the interpersonal aspects (Schreiner, 2016). Thus, the purpose of this study is to assess the contribution of student-faculty interactions, and particularly faculty sensitivity to diverse learners in the classroom, to the variation in thriving among students of color. This study was guided by the following research questions: *(1) To what extent does the frequency and quality of student-faculty interactions contribute to the variation in thriving among students of color?* and *(2) To what extent does faculty sensitivity to diverse learners, the inclusion of multiple perspectives in the curriculum, and the encouragement of diverse perspectives in classroom discussions contribute to the variation in thriving among students of color, after taking into consideration students' entering characteristics and other campus experiences?*

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of *thriving* that grounds this study is based in the literature on flourishing within the field of positive psychology (Keyes & Haidt, 2003; Seligman, 2011), as

well as in psychological models of student persistence as exemplified by Bean and Eaton (2000). Thriving students are engaged in the learning process, invest effort to reach important educational goals, manage their time and commitments effectively, connect in healthy ways to other people, are optimistic about their future, and are committed to enriching their community (Schreiner, 2010). Empirical evidence indicates that each of these qualities are amenable to intervention and connected to academic success and persistence to graduation (Schreiner, McIntosh, Kalinkewicz, & Cuevas, 2013).

Based on this conceptualization of college student thriving, the Thriving Quotient was developed as a valid and reliable 24-item measure of students' academic, intrapersonal, and interpersonal engagement and well-being ($\alpha=.89$; Schreiner, 2016). The five scales that comprise the Thriving Quotient include Engaged Learning, Academic Determination, Social Connectedness, Diverse Citizenship, and Positive Perspective. Literature on student characteristics and campus experiences associated with college student success formed the basis for the original model predictive of students' college grades and intent to persist, with scores on each scale of the Thriving Quotient incorporated into the model as a predictor variable. Because studies indicated that students' levels of thriving differed by ethnicity (McIntosh, 2015), further work by Ash and Schreiner (2016) explored the extent to which specific campus experiences predicted levels of thriving in students of color. However, that path analysis study was focused solely on students of color in six faith-based institutions. By expanding the analysis to students of color in both public and private institutions and using structural equation modeling to determine the specific contribution of student-faculty interactions and faculty pedagogy to thriving, this current study aims to explore the specific experiences and interactions with faculty that appear to create a supportive environment for students of color to thrive.

The campus experiences that were selected for inclusion in the structural model are those that have been established in previous studies of college student thriving, but for which the experiences of students of color are often significantly different. For example, student-faculty interaction has a long history as a predictor of academic success (Kim & Sax, 2017; Mayhew et al., 2016). Yet student-faculty interactions are not always positive for students of color (Cole, 2007; Lundberg, 2010) and do not reliably lead to the benefits experienced by White students (Fuentes, Ruiz Alvarado, Berdan, & DeAngelo, 2014). The type of interaction that most benefits students also varies by race (Einarson & Clarkburg, 2010). Included in the structural model of this study is a measure of students' frequency and type of interaction with faculty as one latent variable consisting of attending office hours, interacting with faculty about academic issues, and talking with faculty about career issues. A separate latent variable was created to describe their perception that faculty are sensitive to the needs of diverse learners, include multiple perspectives in their curricula, and are open to diverse perspectives in the classroom.

Also included in the structural model is students' psychological sense of community, which has been identified as the most substantial contributor to thriving (Schreiner, 2016). Sense of community encompasses not only a sense of belonging, which has been studied extensively in higher education (Hausmann, Ye, Schofield, & Woods, 2009; Strayhorn, 2012), but also feelings of ownership, emotional connections with others in the community, and interdependent partnerships. Each of these components varies by ethnicity and is more challenging for students of color to experience on dominantly White campuses (McIntosh, 2015; Paredes-Collins, 2012).

Other variables included in the structural model are levels of campus involvement, spirituality, and perceptions of institutional integrity. Each of these variables are defined below and included due to the demonstrated variance across racial/ethnic groups (McIntosh, 2012; Schreiner, 2016).

Campus involvement has been a predictive attribute of student success since Astin's (1984) theory of student involvement. Student success predictors connected to campus involvement include increased GPA (Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008), student-faculty interaction (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), and sense of community on campus (Strayhorn, 2012). Campus involvement has been researched specifically in students of color (Fischer, 2007) and has been found to be a significant predictor of thriving in students of color (Schreiner, Kammer, Primrose, & Quick, 2011; Schreiner et al., 2017). Because of the longstanding connection to student success, campus involvement is included in this study.

Astin, Astin, and Lindholm (2011) found that spirituality is an essential piece of college students' life. Defined as a sense of meaning and purpose that is a foundational lens for decision making, spirituality has been demonstrated to be a significant predictor of thriving in students of color (McIntosh, 2015; Schreiner, 2014) and an important contributor to student success outcomes and psychological well-being (Astin et al., 2011).

Institutional integrity is defined as mission congruence, met expectations, and accurate portrayal of the campus during the admissions process (Braxton et al., 2014). Institutional integrity has been shown to positively influence persistence (Ash & Schreiner, 2016), sense of community, and perceptions that tuition is a worthwhile investment (Conn, 2017). Institutional integrity is especially important for students of color when it comes to ensuring accurate depictions of diversity in institutional marketing (Lowe, Byron, Ferry, & Garcia, 2013).

Methods

The purpose of this study is to measure the effects of student-faculty interactions, both inside and outside of the classroom, on thriving among students of color. To measure these effects as well as the contribution of student demographic characteristics, campus experiences,

and psychosocial variables on college student thriving, this study utilized structural equation modeling.

Participants

The initial sample included 5,990 undergraduate students from 13 public and private four-year institutions who responded to an electronic survey about their campus experiences and levels of thriving. To ensure the fidelity of the data collection, the electronic survey included an informed consent that limited participation to students 18 years of age or older who were actively enrolled in college. The final screened dataset included 2,724 usable cases. Table 1 displays the characteristics of the sample of 535 students of color who form the focus of this study.

Table 1

Participant Characteristics (N=535 Students of Color)

Item	<i>n</i>	%
Gender		
Male	143	26.7%
Female	392	73.3%
Institution was first choice at enrollment		
Yes	290	54.2%
No	245	45.8%
Lives on campus		
Yes	351	65.6%
No	184	34.4%
Degree aspirations		
Graduate school	389	72.7%
Bachelor's degree or less	146	27.3%
Race		
Black	100	18.7%
Asian/Asian American/Pacific Islander	116	21.7%
Latino/a	228	42.6%
American Indian/Alaska Native	11	2.1%
Other	80	15.0%

Instrumentation

Data were collected through an online instrument containing the Thriving Quotient subscales (Schreiner, 2016), as well as scales measuring psychological sense of community on campus (PSC), institutional integrity, spirituality, campus involvement, and student-faculty interaction. The Thriving Quotient is a 24-item instrument that measures academic, psychological, and interpersonal well-being and engagement. Thriving has been established as a higher-order factor consisting of five latent factors: Engaged Learning, Academic Determination, Positive Perspective, Social Connectedness, and Diverse Citizenship. A confirmatory factor analysis yielded fit indices of $\chi^2(123) = 651.15$, $p = .000$; CFI = .954; TLI = .943; RMSEA = .053 with 90% confidence intervals from .049 to .057 (Schreiner et al., 2013). Internal reliability of the instrument is strong, with a coefficient alpha of $\alpha = .89$ and scale reliability estimates ranging from $\alpha = .74$ to $\alpha = .88$ (Schreiner, 2016).

This study incorporated an array of observed and latent variables designed to measure the contribution of student input characteristics, campus experiences, and psychosocial variables to the variation in college student thriving among the sample of students of color. All observed and latent variables are provided in Table 2.

Table 2

Description of Variables and Coding

Variable	Definition and Coding
Female (Female)	Self-reported Gender variable, where 0 = Male, 1 = Female, and 99 = Other. Recoded responses to Gender variable, where 1 = 1 (Female) and 0 or 99 = 0 (Other).
High School Grades (HSGrades)	Response to item: "How would you describe your grades in high school?" Self-reported variable with response options on a 6-point scale, where 1 = mostly A's, 2 = A's and B's, 3 = mostly B's, 4 = B's and C's, 5 = mostly C's, and 6 = below a C average. Reverse scored.
Graduate School Aspirations (GradSchool)	Response to DegreeGoal item: "What is the highest degree you intend to pursue in your lifetime?" Self-reported variable with response options on a 7-point

	scale, where 1 = none, 2 = bachelor's, 3 = teaching credential, 4 = master's degree, 5 = doctorate, 6 = medical or law degree, 7 = other graduate degree. Dummy coded variable where 4, 5, or 6 = 1 (goal is grad school bound) and 1, 2, or 3 = 0 (goal is BA or less).
(FirstChoice)	Response to item: "When you chose to enroll in this institution, was it your first choice?" Self-reported variable with response options on a 2-point scale, where 1 = yes and 0 = no.
Major Certainty (MajorSure)	Response to item: "How sure are you of your major?" Self-reported variable with response option on a 6-point scale, where 1 = very unsure, 2 = unsure, 3 = somewhat unsure, 4 = somewhat sure, 5 = sure, and 6 = sure.
Residential Status (OnCampus)	Response to item: "Do you live on campus?" Self-reported variable with response option on a 2-point scale, where 0 = No and 1 = Yes.
Works for Pay (WorkForPay)	Response to Work item: "Do you work for pay?" Self-reported variable with response options on a 4-point scale, where 0 = no, 1 = on campus, 2 = off campus, and 3 = both on and off campus. Dummy coded variable where 1, 2, or 3 = 1 (Works) and 0 = 0 (Does Not Work).
Financial Difficulty (FinDiff)	Response to item: "Considering the financial aid that you've received and the money you and your family have, how much difficulty have you had so far in paying for your school expenses?" Self-reported variable with response options on a 5-point scale, where 1 = no difficulty, 2 = a little difficulty, 3 = some difficulty, 4 = a fair amount of difficulty, and 5 = great difficulty.
Campus Involvement (CampusAct)	Response to item: "How often do you participate in events or activities?" Self-reported variable with response option on a 6-point scale, where 1 = never to 6 = frequently.
Faculty Sensitivity to Diverse Learners and Multiple Perspectives (FacDivPer)	Latent variable comprised of three items: (1) "Instructors include diverse perspectives in class discussions or assignments, (DivDisc)" (2) "Faculty sensitivity to the needs of diverse students, (FacDiv)" (3) "The extent to which faculty encourage students to contribute different perspectives in class (DivPersp)." Measured with a 6-point scale, where 1 = very dissatisfied to 6 = very satisfied
Student-Faculty Interaction (FacInteraction)	Latent variable comprised of three items: (1) "How often this year have you discussed career or grad school plans with faculty, (CareerFac)" (2) "How often this year have you discussed academic issues with faculty, (AcadFac)" and (3) "How often this year have you met with faculty during office hours (OfcHrs)?" Measured with a 6-point scale, where 1 = never to 6 = frequently.
Institutional Integrity (InstIntegrity)	Latent variable comprised of three items: (1) "My experiences on campus so far have met my expectations, (Integrity1)" (2) "The institution was accurately portrayed during the admissions process, (Integrity2)" (3) "Overall, the actions of faculty, staff, and administrators on this campus are consistent with the mission of the institution (Integrity3)." Measured with a 6-point scale, where 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree.
Spirituality (Spirituality)	Latent variable comprised of three items: (1) "My spiritual or religious beliefs provide me with a sense of strength when life is difficult, (SPIR1)" (2) "My spiritual or religious beliefs give meaning and purpose to my life, (SPIR2N)" and (3) "My spiritual or religious beliefs are the foundation of my approach to life. (SPIR3)" Measured with a 6-point scale, where 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree.
Psychological Sense of Community (PSC)	Latent variable comprised of four items: (1) "I feel like I belong here, (PSC1)" (2) "Being a student here fills an important need in my life, (PSC2)" (3) "I feel proud of the college or university I have chosen to attend, (PSC4)" and (4)

	“There is a strong sense of community on this campus (PSC5).” Measured with a 6-point scale, where 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree.
Thriving (Thriving)	First-order construct composed of the mean scores for the following subscales of thriving: Engaged Learning (ELI), Academic Determination (AD), Diverse Citizenship, Positive Perspective (POS), and Social Connectedness (SC).
Engaged Learning (ELI)	Mean score of four items: (1) “I feel as though I am learning things in my classes that are worthwhile to me as a person, (ELI1)” (2) “I can usually find ways of applying what I’m learning in class to something else in my life, (ELI2)” (3) “I find myself thinking about what I’m learning in class even when I’m not in class, (ELI3)” and (4) “I feel energized by the ideas I am learning in most of my classes” (ELI4) Each item is measured on a 6-point scale: 1=strongly disagree, 6=strongly agree.
Academic Determination (AD)	Mean score of six items: (1) “I am confident I will reach my educational goals, (AD1)” (2) “Even if assignments are not interesting to me, I find a way to keep working at them until they are done well, (AD4)” (3) “I know how to apply my strengths to achieve academic success, (AD5)” (4) “I am good at juggling all the demands of college life (AD6),” (5) “Other people would say I’m a hard worker (AD7),” and (6) “When I’m faced with a problem in my life, I can usually think of several ways to solve it (AD8).” Each item is measured on a 6-point scale, where 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree.
Diverse Citizenship (DC)	Mean score of six items: (1) “I spend time making a difference in other people’s lives, (DC1)” (2) “I know I can make a difference in my community (DC2),” (3) “I value interacting with people whose viewpoints are different from my own, (DC3N), (4) “It’s important for me to make a contribution to my community, (DC4)” (5) “It is important to become aware of the perspectives of individuals from different backgrounds, (DC5N),” and (6) “My knowledge or opinions have been influenced or changed by becoming more aware of the perspectives of individuals from different backgrounds” (DC6N). Each item is measured on a 6-point scale, where 1=strongly disagree to 6=strongly agree.
Positive Perspective (POS)	Mean score of two items: (1) “My perspective on life is that I tend to see the glass as ‘half full,’ (POS1)” and (2) “I always look on the bright side of things” (POS3N). Each item is measured on a 6-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree.
Social Connectedness (SC)	Mean score of six items: (1) “Other people seem to make friends more easily than I do, (SC1_R)” (2) “I feel like my friends really care about me, (SC2N)” (3) “I don’t have as many close friends as I wish I had, (SC3_R)” (4) “I feel content with the kinds of friendships I currently have, (SC4N)” (5) “I often feel lonely because I have few close friends with whom to share my concerns, (SC5N_R)” (6) “It’s hard to make friends on this campus” (SC6_R). Each item is measured on a 6-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree. Items 1, 3, 5 are reverse-scored.

Procedures

Data were collected in the Fall term of 2017 from 13 public and private institutions who chose to participate in the Thriving Project (www.ThrivingInCollege.org) administered by Azusa Pacific University. The administration period and method for the survey varied by institution but

generally extended between October and November of the fall semester and utilized either a total sampling or stratified random sampling process. Response rates also varied across institution but averaged 18%.

Results

Because we sought to understand the contribution of multiple variables on thriving among students of color, we employed structural equation modeling (SEM) that would enable us to identify the direct and indirect relationships (Byrne, 2016) among student input characteristics, campus experience, and psychosocial variables. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), the initial step in the process, established the measurement models for each of the latent variables in the structural model (Byrne, 2016), including faculty sensitivity to diverse learners and multiple perspectives, spirituality, institutional integrity, frequency of student-faculty interactions outside the classroom, psychological sense of community (PSC), and thriving. After evaluating modification indices and appropriately trimming the hypothesized structural model, an omnibus model was established for the aggregate sample. Fit indices for this structural model included root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), which is acceptable if less than .06, and the comparative fit index (CFI), with $>.90$ representing an acceptable fit to the data (Hu & Bentler, 1999). After evaluating modification indices and appropriately trimming the model, the final fit indices reflected a strong fit to the aggregate sample ($\chi^2_{(373)} = 2506.419, p < .001$; CFI = .936, RMSEA = .046, with 90% confidence intervals from .044 to .048).

Utilizing the omnibus model, multiple-group analysis (MGA) was used to compare the pathways to thriving between students of color ($n = 535$) and their White counterparts ($n = 2,104$). Each path in the model was sequentially constrained and chi-square tests were used to compare the differential effects of each path on the model. The MGA indicated that the structural model for college student thriving varied significantly among the two student groups.

Although six paths were found to differ significantly between groups, the paths containing student-faculty interaction and faculty sensitivity to diverse learners and multiple perspectives were of interest in this study. Students' perceptions of faculty commitment to diverse students and multiple perspectives in the classroom contributed more to perceptions of institutional integrity among students of color than White students and also had a greater direct effect on thriving for students of color. However, there were no significant differences between White students and students of color in the strength of the contribution of student-faculty interaction *frequency* to their thriving.

Upon identifying that the omnibus model demonstrated variance among the student populations, a final structural model was developed for students of color ($n = 535$). After evaluating modification indices and appropriately trimming the model, the final fit indices reflected an excellent fit to the sample of students of color ($\chi^2_{(345)} = 728.359, p < .001$; CFI = .944, RMSEA = .046, with 90% confidence intervals from .041 to .050). The final model explained 73% of the variation in thriving in this sample (figure 1). Table 3 displays the total, direct, and indirect effects for this sample.

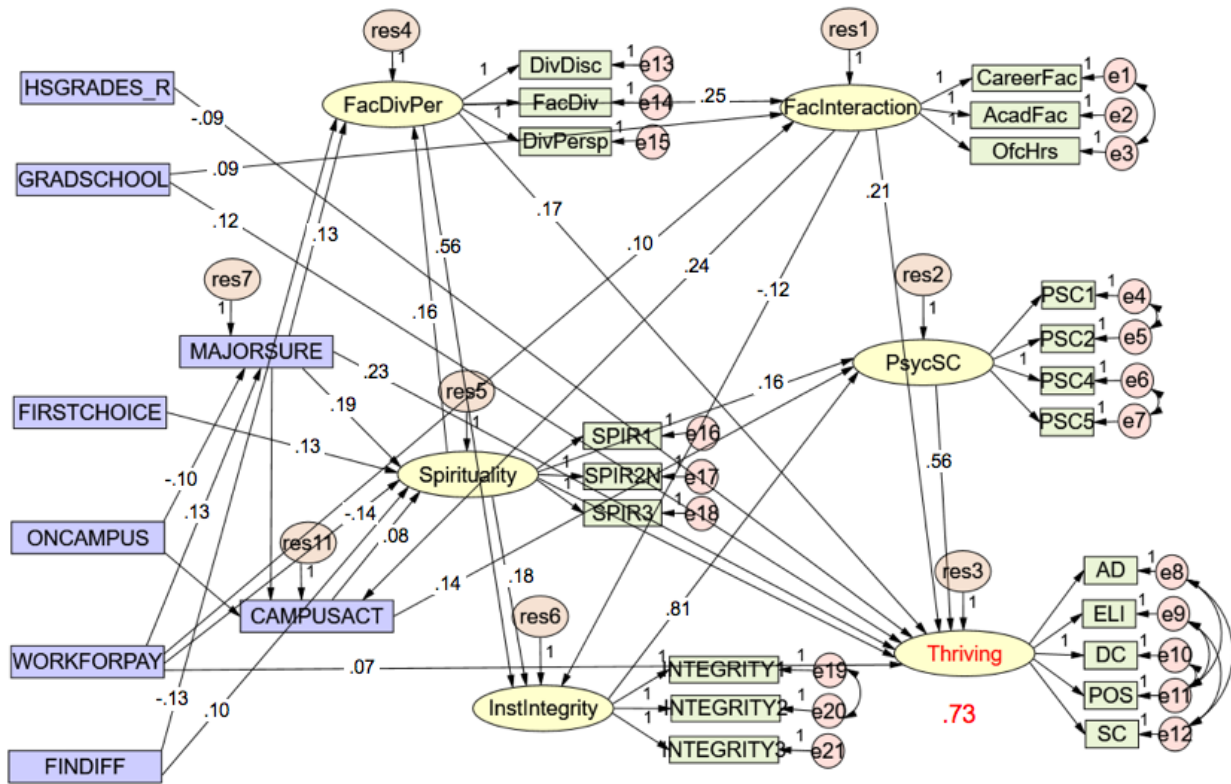


Figure 2. Final structural model for students of color.

Table 3

Standardized Indirect, Direct, and Total Effects on College Student Thriving for Students of Color

Item	Direct	Indirect	Total
Observed Variables			
High School Grades	-0.091		-0.091
Graduate School Aspirations	0.117	0.017	0.134
Institutional First Choice		0.046	0.046
Financial Difficulty		-0.025	-0.025
Employment in College	0.068	0.016	0.084
Residential Status		0.011	0.011
Major Certainty	0.231	0.138	0.369
Campus Involvement		0.107	0.107
Latent Variables			
Spirituality	0.116	0.246	0.362
Faculty Sensitivity to Diverse Students & Multiple Perspectives	0.165	0.299	0.463
Student-Faculty Interaction	0.211	-0.030	0.180
Institutional Integrity		0.455	0.455
Psychological Sense of Community (PSC)	0.562		0.562

The major contributors to the variation in thriving among students of color were their sense of community on campus ($\beta = .56$), perceptions of faculty sensitivity to diverse students and multiple perspectives ($\beta = .46$), perceptions of institutional integrity ($\beta = .46$), major certainty ($\beta = .37$), level of spirituality ($\beta = .36$), and frequency of student-faculty interactions ($\beta = .18$). Other input and environmental variables contributed to the variation in thriving either directly or indirectly through mediating variables. This paper emphasizes the effects of student-faculty interactions and faculty sensitivity to diverse learners and multiple perspectives on thriving.

To that end, the final structural model indicated that faculty sensitivity to diverse learners and multiple perspectives contributed directly ($\beta = .17$) and indirectly ($\beta = .30$) to thriving. The

indirect effect was mediated by students' perceptions of institutional integrity, or congruence between institutional policies and practices, and subsequently their psychological sense of community on campus (PSC). In essence, students of color who believed that faculty were sensitive to diverse learners were more likely to perceive mission congruence within the institution, which enhanced their ability to develop a sense of community in the college environment. Students' perceptions of faculty sensitivity to diverse learners and multiple perspectives also indirectly contributed to thriving through frequency and type of student-faculty interactions ($\beta = .25$). Students of color who perceived that faculty were sensitive to diverse learners were also more likely to interact with faculty outside of the classroom, which then directly contributed to their thriving ($\beta = .21$).

Three variables contributed to the variation in students' perceptions of faculty sensitivity to diverse learners and multiple perspectives: students' financial difficulty ($\beta = -.13$), major certainty ($\beta = .13$), and level of spirituality ($\beta = .16$). Students of color who reported higher levels of financial difficulty were less likely to have a positive perception of faculty sensitivity to diversity. However, students who were confident in their academic plans and reported higher levels of spirituality were more likely to perceive that faculty were sensitive to diverse learners.

For this sample, the frequency and type of student-faculty interactions had a direct ($\beta = .21$) and indirect ($\beta = -.03$) effect on thriving. Faculty interactions with students outside the classroom directly contributed to thriving ($\beta = .21$), but the same variable had a negative effect on perceptions of institutional integrity ($\beta = -.12$). The more frequently students of color interacted with faculty during office hours around academic and career issues, the less likely they were to have positive perceptions of institutional integrity; however, this negative effect was mitigated by the positive direct effect of these student-faculty interactions on thriving. In addition, student-faculty interactions had an indirect effect on thriving through campus

involvement ($\beta = .24$) and subsequently PSC ($\beta = .14$). This path indicated that students who interacted in these ways with faculty outside the classroom were more likely to become involved in campus events and activity, thereby developing a sense of community and thriving.

Variables that contributed to the variation in student-faculty interaction included students' graduate school aspirations ($\beta = .09$), employment in college ($\beta = .10$), and perceptions of faculty sensitivity to diverse learners and multiple perspectives ($\beta = .25$). Students who planned to attend graduate school, worked during college, and expressed a positive perception of faculty sensitivity to diverse learners and multiple perspectives were more likely to interact with faculty outside the classroom.

The final structural model deviated from the hypothesized model primarily through the relationships among the variables related to students' relationships with faculty. A path emerged between faculty sensitivity to diverse learners and multiple perspectives and students' perceptions of institutional integrity; additionally, faculty sensitivity to diverse learners and multiple perspectives had a direct effect on thriving. Contrary to the hypothesized model, the final model revealed that the level of financial difficulty and spirituality among these students of color had a direct effect on their perceptions of faculty sensitivity to diverse learners and multiple perspectives. Also, in contrast to the hypothesized model, the final structural model revealed a negative relationship between the frequency of student-faculty interaction and students' perceptions of institutional integrity, while students' employment in college emerged as a positive contributor to the frequency of their interactions with faculty.

Discussion

The findings from this study indicate that faculty members' sensitivity and openness to diverse learners' needs, as well as their inclusion of multiple perspectives in their curricula and classroom discussions, has a direct effect on the academic, interpersonal, and psychological

engagement and well-being of all students, but even more so for students of color. Through their interactions with students, faculty also have a significant influence on students' perceptions of institutional integrity (Braxton et al., 2014)—the embodied mission of the university. Thus, “woke” faculty who are aware of not only the needs of diverse learners but also the ways in which power and privilege shape the curriculum and their classroom dynamics could have a significant impact on multiple dimensions of student success among students of color as well as their White counterparts.

Our findings indicate that the frequency and type of student-faculty interaction contributed directly to thriving in students of color. In addition, students of color who interacted with faculty outside of the classroom were more likely to become involved in campus events and activities; these faculty interactions contributed indirectly to their sense of community and thriving.

However, the new and most potentially significant finding from this study is the role that faculty sensitivity to diverse learners and multiple perspectives in the classroom contributed both directly and indirectly to thriving in students of color. It appears that positive perceptions of faculty sensitivity and commitment to diverse learners within the classroom leads students of color to interact with faculty more frequently outside the classroom, contributing to more positive impressions of the institution's mission congruence and thus to a stronger sense of community on campus—all of which have a direct effect on their thriving.

Given the significant role that faculty have in encouraging dialogue and interaction within their classrooms, additional training and support could be designed to support faculty in learning how to facilitate effective conversations that center around diverse perspectives. Most faculty are well-versed in course design and curriculum management within a given content area;

however, many faculty may not be as adept at facilitating difficult conversations that surface during classroom discussions (Williams & Conyers, 2016).

In addition, the importance of enacting the institution's mission for diversity and inclusion must be emphasized, as it is directly related to students' perceptions of institutional integrity. Campus administrators would be wise to consider Smith's (2015) charge to include a diversity initiative at the heart of an institution, and then work to foster an inclusive and welcoming environment that goes beyond compositional diversity to include curricular and co-curricular programming and an inclusive campus culture. Faculty are key cultural agents who can empower and positively shape the experiences of students of color (Bensimon, 2007; Dee & Daly, 2009), as well as awaken the awareness of privilege and introduce new voices and perspectives to dominant culture students.

Limitations

The major limitation of the study is that all of the sample are from four-year institutions and most are female. Therefore, this study most accurately represents the elements of thriving for female students of color in four-year public and private institutions. The sample limits the generalizability of the findings in this way.

Implications for Practice

There are four areas of opportunity where faculty and administrators might foster an environment of openness and sensitivity to diverse learners and multiple perspectives: faculty awareness, the curriculum, classroom interactions, and the campus environment. Faculty who are "woke" are essential to creating an inclusive campus environment; therefore, faculty awareness is foundational to building an inclusive curriculum, positive classroom interactions, and an inviting campus environment for students of color.

Faculty awareness. It is essential for faculty members to “wake up” and recognize how they embody the diverse and intersectional aspects of power and privilege. It is also important for faculty members to more fully understand themselves and to question their own biases, as that is an initial step toward becoming more sensitive and aware of others. Faculty training programs, presentations, or workshops can be useful to generate awareness, especially if other faculty members lead those sessions. Utilizing the interest and expertise of faculty who are “woke” and who can share their own learning experiences from a peer perspective is a powerful way to enroll others into a broader awareness and new way of thinking. Learning from and being encouraged by faculty peers can build confidence and competence in faculty members who are beginning to “wake up” and realize their own power and privilege. More experienced faculty members who are transparent and able to share what they have learned through trial and error are likely to engage more effectively with other faculty members who are less aware. It can also be useful for administrators to support these initiatives by providing resources and serving as a support network for faculty, especially if a diversity initiative is at the heart of the campus mission. In addition to structured workshops or presentations, informal faculty sessions designed to generate and facilitate awareness could include a regularly scheduled brown bag “lunch and learn” or “coffee and courage” sessions.

The curriculum. It is important to take a critical look at what is taught on the campus. The campus curriculum as a whole, as well as what is taught in each classroom, are central considerations for how faculty members engage with diverse learners and integrate multiple perspectives in their respective classrooms. If the campus has a general education program, inclusion of a specific diversity component as part of the general education courses is a strategic way to facilitate diversity awareness. If there is a diversity component as part of the campus curriculum, it is important to ensure that it is clearly labeled—or named—in the description of

the curriculum; it is not enough to simply embed a diversity component into a course where it is more likely to get absorbed or glossed over. For individual courses, it is important to consider the authorship of course materials and consider if diverse perspectives are represented by the main authors of the required textbooks or course materials, or if the main authors reflect a predominantly homogeneous (e.g., White or male) population or way of thinking. Consider the title of the course itself; the title can set the stage and clearly indicate a diverse perspective or course focus. Articulating an intentional diversity component in course learning goals and objectives is another avenue to underscore an intentional integration of diverse perspectives in any given course. And finally, to facilitate learning in diverse learners it is important to incorporate a variety of teaching methods or modes of delivery into the course curriculum.

The classroom. Another aspect to consider is what happens in the classroom during scheduled class time. Using a carefully designed syllabus as a foundation, the faculty member should be able to clearly communicate course expectations to students. The faculty member should also plan ahead and consider how to set and model classroom expectations for dialogue and discussion of potentially difficult and divisive topics. If visuals are being used, be sure that those visuals represent a racially diverse population. Also, be sure that the visuals represent areas of intersectionality and a variety of contexts and demographics. Openly encourage and invite students to share their perspectives during classroom discussions--and give them time to answer questions that arise. And finally, work to utilize a variety of teaching methods and approaches during the classroom sessions to engage diverse learners.

The campus environment. The final area to consider is whether the overall campus environment is inviting to diverse learners and if there is space on the campus for multiple perspectives. Does the campus environment as a whole contribute to a student's psychological sense of community? Do students of color feel as if they belong and are an integral part of the

campus community? Compositional diversity can provide a powerful visual to help students see themselves as leaders in their future professions or fields of study. Although the visual of compositional diversity can be a powerful arbiter of engagement for students of color, a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) does not reflect such compositional diversity. For PWIs something as simple as visually highlighting diverse professionals in a field of study on departmental bulletin boards can be reinforcing to students of color. In addition, inviting diverse professionals to campus for lectures or events can also provide a powerful visual as well as a networking possibility for students.

Although the results of creating a welcoming campus environment can be beneficial to students of color, the process of establishing this environment can be beneficial for faculty as well. For example, at a PWI where the majority of faculty and administrators represent the dominant culture, the very act of pursuing diverse representation in a given field can be an “awakening” experience for faculty to broaden their own understanding of diverse representation within their own fields. Understanding the diversity, or lack thereof, within one’s own field contributes to the initial, foundational element of developing faculty awareness of themselves and how best to support students of color.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study added to the understanding of faculty’s role in student thriving and the need for additional research on the role of “woke” faculty within higher education. Recommendations for further research include a deeper exploration into how to facilitate faculty understanding of power and privilege as well as their own self-awareness. Further research on the best initiatives for assisting faculty to better serve students of color and create a sense of community in the classroom would enable more students to thrive.

Significance of the Study

Instead of focusing on the barriers and challenges students of color experience in their interactions with faculty in the classroom, this study focused on how faculty might be in a position to enhance thriving for students of color through their sensitivity to diverse learners, the inclusion of multiple perspectives in the curriculum, and the encouragement of diverse perspectives in classroom discussions. When faculty are able to critically evaluate the curriculum, the campus environment, and their own classroom dynamics, as well as recognize the role they play in enhancing thriving among students of color, there is increased potential for students of color to experience the intellectual, interpersonal, and psychological vitality that will lead to their success.

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