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Title: Reality Check: A study of diversity and integration at St. Olaf College

Abstract:

This project focuses on definitions of diversity in the St. Olaf College Mission Statement compared to students' collective experiences of diversity. Though based on the sociological theory of the social construction of reality, this research also uses psychology, education, and other sociology literature to inform and guide the process of creating and completing this ethnography. Information was gathered through interview and focus groups with St. Olaf administration, faculty, student leaders of multicultural organizations (MCOs), and a portion of the general student body. The researchers found that the college mission statement and administration as well as the students on all levels express a strong desire to increase diversity. However, conceptions on the ideals and ways in which to achieve that diversity differ on various levels. The researchers found that the administration desired greater structural diversity, whereas students and faculty wished for more integration in curricular activities and life outside of classes. These findings acknowledge these differences in opinions and reveal possible solutions in order to create a more integrated St. Olaf student body.

Introduction:

The composition of the St. Olaf student body and how it functions as a whole are two aspects that determine both the nature of the students that the school attracts and the students it turns out. Given the increasingly diverse nature of American society, having a diverse campus would be a benefit for increasing students' tolerance and comfort with people of different or similar cultures on campus and their ability to succeed after graduation. The issue of student body diversity has been an issue of concern for professors, students, and administrators since the 1970s. Over the course of those thirty years, improving St. Olaf's diversity has come to mean many things to different people, and the process has generated several contentious discussions.

Recently, the past five years have seen initiatives to improve diversity change into initiatives for improving multiculturalism. The difference between these terms, according to the St. Olaf BORSC, is that multicultural refers to race and ethnicity while diversity encompasses race and ethnicity with other differentiable characteristics. A change in tactics and opinions regarding these topics has occurred in tandem with this focus shift. However, the change has not affected everyone on St. Olaf campus in the same way, and consequently understanding how administrators, staff, faculty, and students conceptualize the descriptive and normative aspects of multiculturalism is important for understanding how the St. Olaf student body can and should change in the future.

Setting/Community:

St. Olaf College is located in the southeastern portion of Minnesota in Northfield— a town of 20,000 people. The town’s motto, “Cows, Colleges, and Contentment,” reflects the influence of the dairy farms and the degree to which higher education is a part of the town’s identity. Northfield is home to two colleges—St. Olaf and Carlton— that are separated by the town and the Cannon River. Much of the college’s central identity characteristics are related closely to the local Scandinavian immigrant population.

The college’s founders named the school after a former king and patron saint of Norway, Olaf II. Since its inception in 1874, St. Olaf has developed a reputation for being the “Harvard of the Midwest.” School advertisements emphasize the prestigiousness of the graduates, noting the high rate of Fulbright scholars and Rhodes scholars, as well as high percentages of students earning graduate degrees. It has a strong service and international focus, and its 120+ study abroad programs and its ranking as the top sender of peace-corps volunteers among small colleges are a testament to these identities. The school’s relations to F. Melius Christiansen

bolster its reputation as a strong music school. It has twelve full music ensembles— eight choirs, two bands, and two full orchestras— as well as a mix of informal instrumental ensembles. At the same time, its commitment to the ELCA since 1899 gives it another reputation for being a “college of the church.” Ostensibly this means that the student body strives to “be an inclusive community of various faith traditions, beliefs, and backgrounds” (St. Olaf College (B) 2011). All of these different identities combine to create a distinctive perceived heritage and identity.

The identities of the students at the school, though, do not reflect the institutional identity of Scandinavian, Lutheran, and Minnesotan as much anymore. While the age demographics have stayed in a range from 17-23, student racial, ethnic, and geographic demographic characteristics have become much more diverse in recent years. The student body of 3,156 is 84% white non-Hispanics, 5% Asians, 3% non-resident international students, 2% African Americans, and 5% Other (St. Olaf College (C) 2011). This year, 15% of the 2013 class are students of color (Anderson 2010). Geographically speaking, students come from 47 different states and 39 different countries.

Students pay a Comprehensive Fee of \$45,300, but the school provides hefty scholarships to cover whatever expenses students cannot afford. For these costs, students enjoy a community in which 57% of other students were in the top 10% of their high school class, and they also benefit from a 12.3 to 1 student-professor ratio. By linkage, this means that St. Olaf employs a total of 254 faculty members (St. Olaf College (C) 2011).

St. Olaf has a stereotyped identity that is based in its founders’ identity: Lutheran, Norwegian, and Midwestern. The student and faculty body stayed fairly close to the stereotype in past years. However, in line with its Mission Statement’s point about “striving to be an inclusive

community” (St. Olaf College (B) 2011), several indicators show that the racial and cultural make up of the students and professors has changed dramatically in the past five years.¹ In 2006, only 10% of the incoming class was made up of students of multicultural backgrounds. In contrast, the incoming class for 2010 was 15% multicultural students. Recently, the school has also taken initiatives to hire more faculty of color, though it does not provide any data or information about the current racial or cultural make-up of the body of faculty.

The decision and power structure that brought these changes is complicated. Any large-scale decisions begin with initiatives taken by the governing Board of Regents, who manage the business and affairs of the college. As the U.S. President is to Congress, President David Anderson must work with the BoR in proposing ideas or approving their ideas about how the direction or administration of the college should change. Under these two governing bodies are a host of other higher authorities that manage staff and faculty hiring, student admissions, and leaders of student support organizations or offices (e.g. MACO). On a lower level, student government gathers information on the student body through representatives in different branches, including one multicultural liaison. This liaison in turn works as a representative to the student MCOs that put on cultural events and act as a support system for multicultural students on campus. The outcomes of all these different positions’ perspectives and initiatives to achieve diversity on St. Olaf are what this study will engage.

¹ This portion of the Mission Statement, according to President Anderson is under revision to address diversity and community more explicitly.

Methodology:

The methods used to complete the research were interviews and analysis of existing data on the subject. Faculty members, including administrators, and leaders of multicultural organizations (MCOs), and general students were interviewed to provide room for open discussion.

The researchers collected pamphlets, leadership guides, and other printed information on the history and status of diversity at St. Olaf. Analysis of this data through reading current, relevant literature on the topic brought insight into the differing opinions on campus. Reading granted the ability to select points important to research, as well as providing references to back up findings. Ultimately, this information guided the construction of the research and interview questions.

The researchers interviewed 4 administrative personnel, 1 professor, 4 MCO leaders, and 2 students. Two of the administrative personnel, the students, and the professor were white Americans. One of the administrative personnel was African American and the other was of Hispanic descent. Their ages ranged from early 30's to late 60's. The MCO leaders came from China, Cuba, America, and Bangladesh, and three were juniors ('12) and one a sophomore ('13). Seven of the participants were male, and four were female.

The selection process differed based on the interviewee's level of authority on St. Olaf's campus. Tailored interview requests were emailed to administrative personnel and faculty. For student MCOs, the researchers selected an MCO that represented the most prominent minority groups on campus, and sent emails to the leaders of the organizations requesting interviews. Students were selected for interviews through a mass email sent out to a random selection of professors, who in turn sent out an email to all their class aliases. Those students who responded

were then recruited for interviews. Originally, the student component of the study had been structured as a focus group. However, lack of participation forced the researchers to simply conduct individual interviews.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format. Questions were sent upon request ahead of time, and participants came with general answers prepared. The semi-structured interview format allowed for other questions to be raised and answered during the process, and it also gave the interviewees the opportunity to voice other opinions they thought important. In each case, the subject was informed of the purpose of the study and given the freedom to refuse participation or to not answer questions. Through this method a general sense of the faculty goals and ideals, and student body experiences and conceptions of diversity and integration at St. Olaf College was reached.

The weakness of the methods mentioned above are that interviews were only a snapshot of the interviewee's perspectives. They also may have felt pressured to answer a certain way due to the identities of the researchers, due to time constraints, or other such political reasons. The fact that only two general students and no students of color were interviewed also created a great weakness that limited the generalizability of these findings to the larger St. Olaf student body. This weakness came about largely because the focus groups failed.

Problem:

The St. Olaf Mission Statement presents a set of hopeful and generally idealist goals for student life and learning outcomes. As it pertains to diversity and multiculturalism, it states:

St. Olaf College strives to be an inclusive community, respecting those of differing backgrounds and beliefs. Through its curriculum, campus life, and off-campus programs, it stimulates students' critical thinking and heightens their moral sensitivity; it encourages

them to be seekers of truth, leading lives of unselfish service to others; and it challenges them to be responsible and knowledgeable citizens of the world. (St. Olaf College (A) 2011)

Key phrases such as “inclusive community,” “differing backgrounds,” and “moral sensitivity” indicate an impulse to create an environment that will give students the tools to interact with culturally, religiously, and racially diverse people. Upon viewing this statement, we noted the lack of explicit reference to diversity or cultural sensitivity. This sparked a curiosity regarding the opinions and aims of the St. Olaf governing body regarding these topics and also the actual experiences of the students as they interacted with minority cultures. Given the current levels of minority students at St. Olaf, what is the college’s plan to develop majority students’ cultural and racial sensitivity? How do they expect to achieve it? What are their perspectives towards student integration? What roles do MCOs play in encouraging multicultural integration and cultural sensitivity? In short, how and to what degree is St. Olaf fulfilling its Mission Statement?

The Social Construct of Reality is a theory that focuses on the creation of a reality through social interaction with other persons. There are two underlying theories within this theory: the reality of everyday life and social interaction in everyday life. Our main focus is on the latter, where through “face-to-face” interaction, we learn from other people. When we learn from others, we eventually habituate into their given roles and play it out. This knowledge then becomes institutionalized, where the society acts out their conception of the world around them. The interaction results then become the structure for society, and thus the social reality we create is through the construction of these interactions with other people. The reality of everyday life is just the construct of the different spheres interacted, thus the theories name the social construct of reality. For example, if a student from St. Olaf College interacted with people from around the world then their construction of reality would reflect the knowledge and conceptions gained from

that interaction. In turn, their reality is constructed from these facets and becomes widely diverse. Students at St. Olaf have the chance to create a broader construct of a worldly social reality by interacting with diverse students and faculty. By theory, they are then able to gain knowledge and various conceptions from different experiences and viewpoints to create a wider understanding of their social system. The social system then in turn becomes building blocks for their social reality, and the reality becomes a reflection of the diversity within the world. This helps students to acquire the skills necessary for when they graduate to work in diverse environments. Therefore, growing up in a diverse environment and interacting with those people can create a larger social reality.

Substantial research has been done on other campuses regarding the interaction between white students and minorities. A general consensus exists in the research that more diverse campus student bodies lead to valuable interactions that offer benefits such as problem solving, group functioning, and occupational awareness (Brunner 2006, Denson 2009). Cross-racial or cross-cultural interactions prepare students to “actively participate in our democratic, multicultural society” (Denson 2009, 808), because when these interactions occur, students’ perceptions and thinking become more flexible, they gain sensitivity, understanding, respect, and other skills (Brunner 2006). Researchers’ found that, in their universities, students felt the college bore the responsibility of fostering such interactions. However, other studies indicate that the ways in which this “fostering” may occur vary.

According to HU Shouping and George Kuh (2003), diversity can be thought of and approached on three levels: structural, classroom (i.e. institutional and programmatic), and individual interactions. Structural diversity represents the demographic composition of the student body. Classroom diversity is the degree to which human and cultural diversity is

represented in the curriculum and in school sponsored programs. Finally, interactional diversity refers to the extent to which students from diverse backgrounds actually come into contact and interact in educationally purposeful ways outside of class (Hu and Kuh 2003, 321). Several initiatives may be taken to address diversity on the classroom and individual interaction levels, each with its own benefit. Group-learning initiatives target students' cognition of race to reduce stereotypes. Classes addressing multiculturalism affect students' attitudes to reduce prejudice and increase tolerance (though they do nothing for inclusion or integration). Peer-facilitated initiatives increase contact and affect students' emotions positively (Denson 2009, 809). Sociological studies reveal that mostly students desired greater interactions and group learning initiatives (Hu and Kuh 2003, Denson 2009, Brunner 2003). Each of these initiatives benefits all students, but researchers found that white students gained more learning from such initiatives.

Other researcher by Locks et al. (2009) indicates that both schools and students benefit from diversity initiatives, since providing support for diverse student activities and multicultural acceptance on the classroom or programmatic level is also important for student retention and academic achievement. The extent to which students felt they were "part of the campus community," "member of the campus community," and had a "sense of belonging to campus community" had an enormous effect on their decisions to persist in that college (Locks et al. 2009, 260). All of these emotions were mediated by the amount of support given to students via programs and institutional support to help reduce intergroup anxiety (held mostly by whites who have little experience interacting with students of different races) (Locks et al. 2009). Overall, reducing inter-group anxiety is key to reducing perceptions of racial tension and producing improvements in students' interactions and sense of belonging at the school.

Different schools have distinctive characteristics that enable them to create such relaxed,

diversity-friendly environments. Researchers Hu and Kuh affirmed that when schools have the characteristic of being a liberal arts college, they have greater potential for increased positive inter-cultural interactions than to universities. This is largely due to liberal arts colleges' close proximities and smaller student bodies, which provide increased opportunities for students to engage in conversations about culture and race outside the classroom (2003).

In sum, school characteristics combine with student characteristics to affect student experiences and outcomes.

Our study seeks to analyze the school characteristics of St. Olaf and to map out the initiatives being taken. In this way, we hope to understand the current shape and direction of diversity on campus. Our study builds on this body of research by applying theory to St. Olaf's context. All of these studies also differ from our own in that our study explicitly identifies and compares the different perspectives coming from the higher administrative organizations and the student or lower-authority-level offices. In terms of research approach, our project focuses on individual perspectives in comparison to our college's stated goal. Our approach stands in contrast to other research projects that use generalized findings from opinion surveys and focus groups in order to prove or disprove a theoretical model. While we referenced theoretical models to inform our research, confirming or disproving them is not our goal.

Our study comes after the Board of Student Regents Committee (BORSC) published a similar report, and our findings parallel theirs in many ways. In this report, students analyzed attitudes and initiatives surrounding diversity at St. Olaf. The report maps out the importance that diversity has carried in the past, what the demographics of the class of 2013 are versus the 2010 class, and administrative and student perspectives on the issue. It listed findings from

administrators, which dealt with increasing the number of multicultural students and faculty, and it outlined the services available to St. Olaf students of diversity (SSS and TRiO). With regards to student perspectives, the report included perspectives from MCO leaders regarding administrative support to diversity initiatives and perceptions of the wider student body's attitudes towards people of other cultures or multicultural activities.

Our report builds on this former BORSC report by applying the sociological research and theory mentioned above. Those findings noted below represent only our unique contribution to the discussion on St. Olaf and diversity. The structure of the following report is organized according to themes raised during interviews and in printed sources from St. Olaf.

Findings:

The "Wall" as an Issue Showcasing Campus Attitudes towards Diversity

During the interviews, the researchers asked people's reaction to the Wall event that occurred the previous year. What happened was namely that one of the SGA organizations placed a piece of paper in the hall way to the library asking students what diversity meant to them. General comments were positive; however there were several harshly negative comments that sparked disputes and revealed racial hostility in the student body.

The degree to which the words aroused a reaction differed between students and the administrators. A number of minority students felt unsafe and threaten by the hostile comments that were placed on the board. In response to those hostilities a group of students held a discussion panel in Viking Theater on the comments that were made. Administrators participated in the discussion but did not react publicly due to the fact that it was student oriented and they did not want to seem to inhibit or influence students' freedom of expression. At the same time, after interviewing faculty and staff the researchers found out that the faculty had spent a

significant amount of time talking about it, and that it was a matter of greater concern for the administration and staff than the students were aware.

The Wall event left a lingering feeling of unease and questions regarding the effectiveness of past cultural education on campus. From the interviews, both administrators and students thought that the way the topic was addressed left room for what President Anderson called, “illicit conversation.” Most interviewees condemned the idea of leaving a piece of paper up where no one would be responsible for the views that they expressed on a very sensitive issue. At the same time, the Wall reflected the possible tensions amongst students that both faculty and administrators were not aware. One professor commented that the faculty cannot easily comprehend what it like is to be a minority on campus and how students experience dorm life, and therefore have little idea of what needs to or would be appropriate to teach in the classrooms. Whatever the conflict it caused, the Wall at least created an environment for students to come together and openly discuss their opinions on the manner of diversity at St. Olaf, which was something other students said they felt is needed on campus. The two students interviewed emphasized a need for an environment or forum that allowed students to openly voice thoughts and that the school should provide such areas of safety for them. President Anderson stated, “If you want to have understanding, you need to have accountability for what is said.” This goes hand-in-hand with what the students desired: an environment that fostered positive conversations about identity when asked. The Wall showed that such an environment still has not developed fully at St. Olaf, but it is needed. In any case, the topic certainly hasn’t be placed to rest and would certainly rise again as the campus continues to diversify.

Differing Normative Approaches to Diversity

When asking the question of what an ideally diverse St. Olaf would look like, we found that the responses varied greatly based on the interviewee. For President Anderson and Desiree Keenan, the central goal of the upper reaches of the administrative body was closely related to what researchers Hu and Kuh termed structural diversity initiatives. Both interviewees advocated that an ideally diverse St. Olaf would be able to pass what they term “a 180° test.” In this setting, students should be able to exit a building, perform a 180° pan of the surrounding area, and find a student that looks like their own self. Both President Anderson and Desiree Keenan stressed the importance of increasing the percentages of multicultural students on campus as the only initiative to take to improve the campus’s diverse climate. In fact, in his interview, President Anderson noted that he was quite against “programmatically” approaches to improving students’ perspectives or interactions. At the same time, however, both administrators also expressed the view that perfect diversity should also mean an environment where, as Anderson stated, “there is no one set of cultural assumptions based on race or religion,” meaning that no group of students is underrepresented or has a fear to express their culture. Also, it means that their culture receives positive affirmation and acceptance when expressed.

In contrast to the structural approach but more in line with Anderson and Keenan’s second diversity ideal, the other administrator in charge of MCOs and the faculty member were much more in favor of institutionalized monitoring of the norms regarding diversity that were created in classes and activities on campus. In other words, both the faculty member and this administrator’s perspectives on the proper approaches to diversity fit within Hu and Kuh’s classroom diversity initiatives. For the faculty member, his approach to teaching indicated that he felt education about America’s multicultural history was an essential part to student’s development. The administrator felt strongly also that colleges had a responsibility to teach

students directly about diversity and to take action on issues to combat problems or deficiencies in students' multicultural education. He noted, "diversity is a curriculum" in which students learn about different cultures and learn how "they can truly help in the community." At several points in the interview, this administrator noted that diversity is something he views as an integral necessity within students' classes and activities on campus, and that he and other professors have been working on addressing this. However, in this statement was a clearly implied a lack of support from the higher levels of the administration in acting to provide this necessary education.

The leaders of MCOs expressed varying ideas on what an ideally diverse St. Olaf would look like. However, they did express a general consensus that ideally, all the students would participate in cultural events, that the student body would have both more domestic and international students in these MCOs, and that the MCOs would safe space for any minority students. Though they noted that St. Olaf College has made progress on diversity there is still more that could be done.

In terms of the interaction initiatives towards diversity, all levels of the St. Olaf community stressed that students' personal choices to interact and the attitudes they adopted had to be their own. President Anderson noted that St. Olaf was not a place to tell students what to think but rather an institution that taught students how to consider their own thoughts and how to then think for themselves. The two students interviewed similarly felt that interactions were not important. In the words of one junior male student, "the college doesn't necessarily have to help people interact. Students get a good education with their GE's" and by being in an environment that has safe spaces for people of every belief, race, and culture. Both students emphasized that students mostly interact people from their same culture as an issue of comfort, and did not feel the need to break out.

The Roles of St. Olaf Community Members in Achieving Diversity Goals

Each member of the St. Olaf community had a different answer to the question: How does your work/role affect diversity on campus.

When interviewing President Anderson he expressed his role in the discourse of diversity on campus as someone who encourages and supports the efforts. His role includes raising discussion on the topic, holding conversations with other administrative bodies and Board of Regents, editing the mission statement, guiding discussions on how to provide resources for domestic and international students, and making sure the campus someday reaches a “multiculturally integrated condition.” The two central ways that President Anderson felt he worked on diversity and the only ways he felt he *should* work on diversity were in the recruitment of diverse students and the recruitment of diverse staff. At the moment the campus only has 15% multicultural students, and President Anderson feels that, as chief administrator, it is his responsibility to work with that number. Currently, 1/10 is not a good number but compared to the last five years is a significant change. Similarly, creating a diverse staff is important, where students think what professors look like me. Though students only remain on campus for four years, teachers remained for about 35 years. He generally is not favor of using curriculum other than for intellectual purposes. His reason: “It is our job to teach you how to write your own politics.”

The other administrator (an admissions counselor) who was interviewed expressed similar enthusiasm in her role to diversify the campus body through a structural approach. In her job, she says she looks at numbers daily and the discussion of diversity plays a major role in her interactions with coworkers. This job focuses on accepting students, which is based on a number of factors (primarily related to the kind of influence they would have on campus such as different

cultural perspectives or distinct talents), and she is responsible for relations with other offices of administration that deal with new students of diverse backgrounds such as SSS and TRiO. For admission, multicultural diversity has to be a top priority, mostly due to the fact that “who they admit and who we enroll affect what this campus looks like and is.” There is evident dedication and work towards insuring that more students of diversity enter campus and that they receive the financial aid needed to enter college. In short, the admissions office has the responsibility, power, dedication, and role to gather the fundamental ingredients to create a well-mixed student body on campus.

The other administrator that we interviewed was very actively involved with the issue of diversity in both the upper administrative and student levels of campus life. Almost every day he is involved with the topic of diversity and acting as a diversity supervisor/advisor to the student government, MCOs, administration, and the general student body, and as a liaison between liberal arts colleges to compare diversity initiatives and approaches. Through his line of work he helps MCO's and diverse students to adopt healthy perspectives and an awareness of concerns of the community's evolving culture. Specifically relating to the development of student cultural sensitivity, he takes a guiding role with the MCOs. He offers leadership training to MCO chairs in order to help them become effective cultural teachers and representatives. He expressed support for diversity education in curriculum, noting that including a positive education on different cultures into all academic fields may help with student integration. His goals are centered more around the increasing level of awareness and interaction amongst the student body and organizations, while at the same time creating opportunities of networks across many dimensions. In short, he bears the responsibility to work on creating and maintaining an environment that teaches students cultural sensitivity in curricular and cocurricular activities.

The other faculty members interviewed expressed his concerns of diversity through academics. There was an expression of interest in teaching about racial diversity because of the makeup of the campus. He frequently interacts with the African American population on St. Olaf campus and provides support for their events. In his opinion, the topic of issues in America's current society is and should be addressed with a historical context. As was also noted by the students in interviews, he felt classroom provides a generally good forum for interaction between white students and minority students. There, issues with integration of students are brought into light and addressed appropriately with the guidance of a teacher. He states that discussions on diversity and race are a balancing act; that the teacher has to allow room for expression yet at the same time stop things before they get out of hand. He felt that professors do not have much insight or influence in what happens in the social life of students on campus. The classroom gives them at least an academic point of view on the topic of student integration. From this interview, it seems that professors may have the role of monitoring students' theoretic and academic perspectives on other cultures, but little knowledge or ability to influence their behaviors.

As the body in charge of student extracurricular (and some curricular) affairs, the St. Olaf Student Government Association also has played a role in shaping student interactions and social norms on campus. The congressional body is the Student Senate, and its official role is to discuss the operations of Student Government. Administrators and staff present information regarding the college and frequently solicit student feedback from Senators. One of the elected Senator positions is that of the Multicultural Affairs Liaison, which this year is held by the leader of CUBE. This Senator's responsibility is to monitor the actions of the student government to ensure that decisions are made that pay heed to issues of minority or multicultural students. In

fulfilling that role, the Senator would hold biweekly meetings with the multicultural organization leaders to report on what issues had been discussed in the Senate and to gather MCO leaders' questions, comments, and concerns on those issues.

However, according to this Senator, SGA recently has recently cut the sub-committee that deals with multicultural affairs. This sub-committee would have headed projects to assess and work on issues relating to minority or multicultural students. The Senator stated, "I feel as though SGA may not be fully awake to the issues that multicultural students face," and expressed a desire to keep the sub-committee and multicultural affairs liaison positions active in SGA.

Regarding the roles of MCOs themselves, they express similar key goals and functions in their mission statements. Their goals are to raise awareness, educate and celebrate their culture in community with St. Olaf students. They also provide a space for people of the same culture to come together and relax, as well as creating an environment of learning for any who wish to participate. It is not their goal to enforce their culture on others, but to encourage and support the community in its efforts to diversity and integrate the campus. MCOs represent a percentage of minority students and Harambee helps to specifically integrate the MCOs together and create a general networking community amongst its members and leaders. Though the leaders interviewed expressed these goals of networking and minority community support, they also noted several issues related to their work. One main concern was the lack of attendance from the majority of the student body. Leaders said that they wanted to increase the number of participation but at the same time did not want to be seen forceful. In response to this one MCO leader noted that "there should be no distinction between people...I think that we should celebrate together, but it's not just that person's job to put it together." She later added that the

point of college is to learn, that everything is a learning experience. In this sense, St. Olaf MCOs provide majority students with the opportunity to experience other cultures.

After interviewing the two students from the general student body, we encountered a difference in opinions on how much the students should do on the interaction front and how much was the responsibility of the school's administration. Both administrative personnel and student level interviewees agreed that the administration can only do so much to encourage interaction, and that the rest would be left up to students to take initiative to resolve. As noted before, the administrators felt that the school should not be responsible for any influence over students' interactions, and this was repeated in student opinions. One quote from a student illustrates both opinions that "the school will be at its best when it's not trying to GET people to experience other cultures, but when it has enough cultures present FOR people to experience."

However, students noted they rarely take initiative to interact cross culturally outside of classes. Each student noted that the only venue in which they interacted with minority students and/or discussed topics of racial or cultural diversity were in the classrooms— specifically in the social science classrooms. Similarly, both students said that they participated in MCO events when they had time or it related to something addressed in a class. One student expressed a thought that students looked more to classes to provide them with information about other cultures and that students consequently felt little need to seek out interaction on campus for that education. This same student then noted that MCO events were not the most enlightening for building up cultural sensitivity, but instead it was the normal "casual" interactions that mattered. A diverse student body that has a norm of intercultural interaction would support this type of learning. St. Olaf does not yet have these two components— if it did, there would be no need for research into the problems of integration. Since this is the case, St. Olaf is not developing

students' actual ability to interact in a culturally sensitive manner and only developing their theoretical knowledge of other cultures.

Student perspectives on MCOs

Students expressed that they thought the MCOs played an important and necessary role on campus, though they also offered some suggestions. Though both students interviewed admitted to lack of participation in MCO events, they noted that MCOs served an essential role of placeholders to keep the students aware of the diversity on campus. At the same time the topic of celebration vs. evangelism arose. The students echoed what MCO leaders had said insofar as they felt that MCOs were most effective when put on events because they want to have fun in celebrating their culture, however the students added the idea that when MCOs become “evangelistic” with culture—e.g. forcing other students to observe their differences— that the events may serve a negative or alienating purpose. Essentially, according to the two students, MCOs should provide the opportunity and subsequent choice for majority students to interact with multicultural students on the basis of relaxed and open cultural celebration. One student noted, “Diversity is a life topic, not an academic topic.” In some ways, this view increases the problem instead of solving it, since St. Olaf has no way to help students learn this life topic outside of school except by supporting those student life orgs that *do* have an influence in life. A balance needs to be found between extracurricular and curricular “pushes” to encourage students to start or continue participating in the MCO events that teach cultural sensitivity.

International versus Domestic Perspectives on Diversity and MCOs

This study also uncovered more information that supports and begins to help fill in a gap identified in the St. Olaf BORSC report that international diversity should be studied separately from domestic diversity. In our interviews, we found a distinctive difference in definitions of an

ideally diverse St. Olaf and perceptions of international students' roles in the larger St. Olaf body. Both international student leaders of MCOs expressed surprise when confronted with the question of what diversity should mean for St. Olaf since, as one addressed, they had not needed to consider it before. They seemingly did not perceive themselves as being diverse or a minority, since they only had just adopted/been given these labels upon coming to America for study. Furthermore, they also felt that they did not need to play as much a role in educating the St. Olaf body as supporting other students with similar cultural backgrounds. For the Chinese Culture Club, the leader noted that the club had become a place for Chinese international students to spend time with each other in comfort. However, for the Cuban leader of Presenté, because she interacted with domestic Latino students, expressed that Presenté had the responsibility of educating others about their culture. It seemed that international students who partnered with domestic students from the same culture also understood the need to educate others about "who we are" and to build long-term norms of cultural acceptance, understanding, and tolerance/celebration in that community. Domestic multicultural students seem to be invested in making sure that these two norms are created since they will be staying in American society with other St. Olaf graduates longer than international students.

The levels of necessity of MCOs are different for international and domestic students. For international students, MCOs are a source of comfort and "haven" to relax into their familiar cultural practices and language. For domestic students MCOs become a group support for minority students who feel that their culture is being suppressed and disregarded in America. Because of their lack of presence, they feel a need to let their voices and opinions be heard. Both international and domestic students use MCOs for a sense of community, while at the same time perceive of MCO's roles differently to meet their differing needs.

Suggestions and Conclusions:

Looking over the interviews, several key points stand out. The initiative adopted by St. Olaf five years ago has already made great progress in structurally diversifying the student and faculty body, and the administration's initiative to make diversity a central focus has shown great results. All interviewees expressed strong support for the initiative, and wished it to progress further.

Though St. Olaf community members have the same goal of seeing a diversified and integrated campus, their approaches differed. We feel, after performing an analysis of the interviews, that each community member constructed their normative view of what should happen based on the issues that are raised in their daily responsibilities. These include the challenges that they have picked as priorities or have been told they must overcome. In this way, the social construction of St. Olaf's diverse reality is one that divides the responsibility for diversity and gives each member its own challenges. The central question we pull away from this is whether these different approaches are given enough support and recognition. In the same way that a wheel has many spokes, the direction and type of initiatives to improve St. Olaf's campus community for minority and multicultural students go in many directions. So long as they are supported and connected at the center, the end result is a wider, more comprehensively accepting, and more inclusive community. Our interviews did not include a section on whether each community member felt supported as they engaged diversity at St. Olaf, and so we are not fully capable of answering whether the differences in approaches will cause problems or become a strengthening aspect.

Several plain suggestions did stand out in the interviews. First, the responsibilities of students and administrators in creating norms of integration need attention. With the level of

structural initiatives being as high as they are, the next task is to figure out which parties are responsible for building up classroom and co-curricular approaches to integration. After all, both curriculum and personal interaction are important to reaching the full benefits of structural diversity, and knowing which parties at St. Olaf are responsible for this and what they can do to improve these areas is essential to explore. For example, if President Anderson desires to increase the structural diversity of the campus, should there be a concurrent increase in the amount of money given to multicultural organizations that support these students' sense of belonging at the college?

On another front, one student from the general body expressed a wish that several MCO leaders also echoed in respect to participation. Regarding the question of what should be done to improve the majority students' interactions with minority students, he stated "I'm not sure I would change a whole lot. Having more discussions is always a good thing. We need personal discussions in the right environment." The environment, he went on, is one that allows students to come in freely and without fear of being called racists to express their opinions on the topic of diversity. The Wall event proved that there is a lack of such discussion space. Students need to have an area where they can express themselves and also where they can personally receive feedback from peers on their opinions. Though daily interaction helps, providing a safe space for discussions (such as public student discussion forums) would be beneficial for campus life.

Also, our interviews uncovered another need that the St. Olaf administration needs to consider. St. Olaf should find a way to measure its success on building cultural sensitivity, the psychological and developmental effects of interactions, and the level of integration on campus. Such data could prove to be useful in assigning future curriculum, funding for specific programs,

student organizations and activities, as well as assessing its progress in integration and not diversity.

On the Conducting of the Research:

Over the process of conducting the research, we developed and refined our methods, and also found several points that we would have liked to expand upon. Early interviews were much more structured and restrictive than later interviews when we had discovered a range of issues (such as the Wall and the Mock Quinceañera among others) that would reveal people's opinions on diversity and integration better than direct questions on the issues.

We both felt that our interviews could have been improved if we had more experimentation and an earlier research start date so that we could include more interviews and expand our questions. Having more interviews would allow more information and opinions on the matter. In order to handle such a demand, extra partners would be beneficial to handle gathering information and organizing findings. One question that came up was the degree to which the presence of our respective races influenced the interviewee's answers. A white student's perspective and experience of diversity and integration on St. Olaf campus may differ from a minority student's point of view. In the future, all interviews would be conducted as a team so as to balance out the influence that being white or Bahamian would have on the respondent, if such a factor affects the interviewing process at all.

In terms of the ways we desired to expand our research, we wanted to look more at the role of SGA and BoR in supporting or shaping students' norms or multicultural activity participation. Another possible area to add to the research would be to explore more faculty perspectives in different departments across campus on their students' cultural learning outcomes.

And of course, conducting more expansive interviews or focus groups with the student body on what diversity should look like on St. Olaf campus would be one of the most important expansions to the research. Hopefully such research projects will reveal increasingly encouraging views on diversity and integration at St. Olaf, or at least that they will help St. Olaf come closer to achieving its goal of creating competent citizens who are prepared to engage with people from cultures in any part of America or the world.

Overall, the current amount of research collected proved enough to shed light on the level of diversity and integration on St. Olaf campus. It showed that the college is progressing at a moderate pace, there is a presence of collective agreement on diversifying the student and faculty body, integration methods should be raised to avoid future conflicts and that providing some form to measure success would be beneficial. Further study, as noted above, would benefit the college more in providing an environment that reflects the social construct of reality, or of the rapidly changing demographics of the world. The research process itself, due to the limited time we have, could provide more fruit if research time is lengthened. In conclusion, the information present has provided both positive and reflective results on the issue of diversity and integration, and there is room in the future for more research.

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