Joint identities? A qualitative case study of the professional identity development for minoritized JD/PhD professionals

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Outline

i. Literature Review
   a. Few students enter doctoral programs with a solid understanding of doctoral education or the faculty career (Sweitzer, 2009)
   b. As universities around the world feel pressure to develop practice-based pedagogical curricula, it is important to understand how individuals with certain educational experiences make sense of their professional identities (Trede, Macklin & Bridges, 2012)
   c. Identity formation is an ongoing process that involves the interpretation and reinterpretation of experiences (Beijaard, Verloop & Vermunt, 2000)
      i. Research on graduate and doctoral student identity development
         1. Sparse (Foot, Crowe, Tollafield & Allan, 2014; Langrehr, Green & Lantz, 2017),
         2. Emphasizes the socialization process of students (Liddell, Wilson, Pasquesi, Hirschy & Boyle, 2014)
      ii. Research on law student identity development
         1. Mostly non-empirical analysis (Fruehwald, 2015; Hamilton & Organ, 2016; Golemon, 2017)
         2. Bliss (2017) identified bright-line division between personal values and professional self

ii. Theoretical Framework

Using a case study to critically analyze the status, relationship, and power dynamics between and among graduate students in a joint-degree doctoral/legal education program, this study draws heavily from the theoretical perspectives of critical theory and the praxis objectives of critical inquiry (Glass, 2001). This paper is influenced by the Critical Race Theory (CRT) movement, which is a body of work that first emerged in American legal scholarship in the late 1980s and has since spread to other disciplines, including education (Turner, Sweet, & Fornaro, 2019; Ladson-Billings, 1998). Its central target of critique has been law, and its primary methodological innovations in legal scholarship have been the use of 'storytelling' fiction or anecdote to criticize legal reasoning and legal doctrine (Harris, 2015). The CRT model is a dynamic one, but typically consists of five elements focusing on the centrality of race and racism and their intersectionality with other forms of subordination; the challenge to dominant ideology; a commitment to social justice; the centrality of experiential knowledge; and the transdisciplinary perspective (Tate, 1997).

Each of these five themes is not new, but collectively they represent a challenge to the existing modes of academic scholarship. CRT informed this project by leading us to examine our own experiences as members of an intellectual community that at various times and in myriad ways mirrored the
experience of marginalization during our joint degree programs. Following one of the basic tenets of CRT we make the conscious choice to highlight the racial aspect of our experience in this program.

Our emphases on CRT lead us to take a fresh look at double consciousness. Double consciousness is a term describing the internal conflict experienced by subordinated groups in an oppressive society (Bruce, 1992). It was coined by W. E. B. Du Bois with reference to African American ‘double consciousness’, including his own, and published in the autoethnographic work, The Souls of Black Folk. Double consciousness describes the individual sensation of feeling as though your identity is divided into several parts, making it difficult or impossible to have one unified identity.

Du Bois spoke of this within the context of race relations in the United States. He asserted that since American Blacks have lived in a society that has historically repressed and devalued them that it has become difficult for them to unify their black identity with their American identity. Double consciousness forces blacks to not only view themselves from their own unique perspective, but to also view themselves as they might be perceived by the outside (read: white) world. This is what Du Bois spoke of in the above passage when he talked about “the sense of looking at one’s self through the eyes of others.” (Bruce, 1992).

The term originally referred to the psychological challenge of “always looking at one’s self through the eyes” of a racist white society, and “measuring oneself by the means of a nation that looked back in contempt.” (Wamba, 1999). The term also referred to Du Bois’ experiences of reconciling his African heritage with an upbringing in a European-dominated society. Since its inception, the term has since been applied to numerous situations of social inequality, notably women living in patriarchal societies.

Double consciousness also has applications beyond the African American experience as well. Theresa Martinez (2002) argued that Du Bois’ concept of the “double-consciousness” and Gloria Anzaldúa’s concept of the “mestiza consciousness” are reverberating issues. Martinez (2002) argues that Du Bois described “two warring ideals in one dark body,” the consequence of the veil of racial prejudice and injustice and Anzaldúa shares stories of the “cultural collision” examining “two … incompatible frames of reference” in what Anzaldúa describes as a racist, sexist, and homophobic “borderland.” While Du Bois deals with race and class issues in his critique of the matrix, Anzaldúa also faces issues of gender and sexuality.

In the academic setting, Sweitzer (2009) offered a model of professional development that states that individuals rely on relationships in and out of the work context to provide support, advice, guidance, and nurturing. Under this model, peer and advisor relationships are the key variable for doctoral student professional identity development as the network that a student develops as introduced by the advisor serves as a necessary bridge between the student as an “apprentice” and the student as a “professional.”

When it comes to doctoral students who are part of joint degree programs, these relationships are often forged with advisors and mentors from two different professions. Often the advice that emerges from these relationships can be contradictory. Therefore, this study seeks to develop the concept of “academic double consciousness”, a concept by which the individual sensation of feeling as a person’s professional identity is divided into two parts (one-part law, one-part another discipline), making it difficult for those in joint degree programs to have one unified professional identity.

iii. Methodology

a. Paradigm
   i. Social constructivist interpretive framework, which relies “as much as possible on the participants’ views of the situation” (Creswell, 2013, pp. 24-25).
   ii. Case study: Exploration of a bounded system over time through detailed, in-depth data from multiple sources of information (Creswell, 2013; Yin, 2009).
      1. Temporal boundaries: Beginning date when they began their doctoral or legal educations.
      2. Physical boundaries: Four racially and ethnically minoritized joint-degree JD and doctoral students and recent graduates, and their social networks (i.e., “developing professionals”).

b. Participants
   i. Authors are the developing professionals of the case study
   ii. Using social network analysis to identify those professionals who influenced the professional development of the members of the case, working
professionals with doctoral and legal degrees were recruited via convenience 
(Creswell, 2013) and paradigmatic sampling (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

1. Convenience sample: Saved time, money, effort to approach persons to 
ask as participants.
2. Paradigmatic sample: Able to "maximize the utility of information from [a] 
small sample[]" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 230).

iii. Social network
1. 10 professionals with law and doctoral degrees in various fields; all 
affiliated with academia in various ways (e.g., administrative, 
professoriate)

ii. Data collection
1. Reflective memoranda (responding to research questions)
2. Self-run focus group with developing professionals
   a. Discussed experiences in joint-degree program
   b. Probed into commonalities and differences of experiences
3. Reflective memoranda (responding to focus group)
4. Questionnaire for developing professionals
5. Interviews with developing professionals’ social network
   a. Semi-structured interviews
   b. Lasted between 30 and 90 minutes
   c. Content of interviews in three main sections
      i. Background and current professional responsibilities
      ii. Personal professional development
         a. Career trajectory
         b. Meaning of being a professional with a JD
         c. Meaning of being a professional with a doctoral degree
         d. Meaning of being a professional with both
     c. Interactions with and perspectives of developing professionals

iv. Data analysis
1. Inductive coding after reading through transcripts of focus group interview and 
social network interviews
2. Trustworthiness
   a. Triangulation through use of various sources of data
   b. Reflection of positionality prior to and during process
   c. Multiple member-checks when coding

iv. Preliminary Findings

a. Multiple categories, depending on relative importance of studies
   i. Focus on JD
   ii. Focus on doctoral degree
   iii. Focus on both in equal capacity
   iv. Focus on neither
b. Emphasis on unique skillsets
   i. Emphasis on translation
   ii. Emphasis on multilingualism

References

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299-309.


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