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An investigation of organizational communication citizenship behaviors of faculty and staff at historically black colleges and universities

Kenneth Rocker, Stephanie Kelly , and Stephen Croucher

ABSTRACT

Drawing on organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and structural divergence (SD), this study ($n = 190$) observes how SD and demographic variables predict OCBs among faculty and staff at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs). Stepwise regression revealed significant predictors for several OCB factors: salary, age, and tenure for conscientiousness; SD, age, and tenure for sportsmanship; salary for civic virtue; salary and attending an HBCU for courtesy; and salary, age, tenure, and attending an HBCU for altruism. This study highlights the role SD and demographic variables have in promoting OCB at HBCUs during a time when presidents/chancellors are tasked with issues surrounding declining funding, increased competition, and shifts in the pedagogical environment. Understanding these dynamics assists senior leadership in enhancing their approaches to leadership and governing the culturally unique HBCU environment.

KEYWORDS

Organizational citizenship behaviors; structural divergence; HBCU; PWI; organizational culture; organizational identity

Historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) embody the enduring struggle between educational equality, historical adversity, and intellectual achievement for African Americans in the United States higher educational system. HBCUs were created in the U.S. post-Civil War era to provide newly freed slaves the opportunity to receive a proper education (Freemark, 2015). Since then, HBCUs have been committed to addressing issues of systemic racism, where the exclusion of African Americans from predominantly White institutions (PWIs) has been prevalent. HBCUs have played an important role in the preservation of culture in the African American community while fostering academic excellence, activism, and community leadership for African Americans.

Examining the challenges and achievements of HBCUs provides a better understanding of the former and current marginalization taking place at these institutions when it comes to the pursuit of adequate and equal education. There has been an increase over the years in turnover of presidents and

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chancellors at U.S. universities. HBCUs are experiencing many issues dealing with state mandates, declining funding, shifts in the pedagogical environment, increased accountability and assessment measures, small endowment support, and increased competition (Gasman, 2013; Hirsch & Weber, 2002). Administrators, primarily presidents and Chancellors of these institutions often assume the responsibility for these outcomes.

The current study examines the organizational communication of HBCUs. Specifically, this study explores the extent to which HBCU organizational structures and divergences from those structures predict organizational behaviors. Focusing on HBCU faculty and staff, this study examines the extent to which faculty and staff experience structural divergence and what link divergence has on levels of voluntary citizenship behaviors. The findings contribute to the overall discourse on the organizational structures of HBCUs, while also offering support for presidents and chancellors in achieving an efficient organizational environment backed by their faculty and staff.

HBCUs' unique organizational characteristics

From a cultural perspective, HBCU senior leadership is strategically challenged with retaining elements from the original mission of providing education to African Americans, while also being pressured to transform the organization into one that can survive in a contemporary higher education market. Organizational identity developed in HBCUs contains elements that incorporate the dynamic history, focused missions for minority education, and the development of minority communities all into one shared vision. Billingsley (1982) found that African American faculty stayed loyal in their employment at HBCUs because they wanted to educate African American students and develop a strong group of Black faculty. HBCU faculties are composed of 56% African American or Black, 24% White, 9.5% Asian, 2.5% Hispanic, 0.7% Indigenous, and 0.7% two or more races (Gasman, 2021). Faculty at PWIs are 69% White and have low percentages of Black and Hispanic faculty at 5% (Gasman, 2021).

The survival of HBCUs heavily depends on the ability of organizational members to understand how their involvement and personal beliefs are related to the organization on a larger scale. Organizations from various fields experience a constant struggle when trying to establish a distinctive identity, but at the same time are generalized with the intent to be “maximally persuasive and effective” (Cheney & Christensen, 2001, p. 233). Many HBCUs are facing the revocation of accreditation, budget cuts, and decreasing enrollments (cf., Gasman, 2009), which are recognized by members of the organizations. Although these are issues that can exist at any higher education institution, the unique structural buildup of HBCUs often magnifies these issues.

From a historical context, HBCUs have a unique history among higher education institutions (Brown & Davis, 2001). Evans et al. (2002) highlight that “HBCUs were not designed to succeed, rather they were established to appease black people or to serve as ‘holding institutions’ so that black students would not matriculate in historically white colleges and universities” (p. 3). This reality represents a time in the United States when racial tensions were high, and segregation was common. To further differentiate HBCUs, Garibaldi (1984) asserted, “Black colleges are not monolithic. Although they are similar to predominantly White institutions in many ways, their historical traditions and their levels and types of support make them distinct” (p. 6). The structural makeup and identities of today’s HBCUs are highly reflective of the way these institutions were set up.

According to Walters (1991), the goals of HBCUs are to: (a) maintain Black historical and cultural tradition; (b) establish key leadership in the Black community; (c) advance economic stability in the Black community; (d) present Black role models; (e) provide college graduates with a unique competence to address issues within minority and majority populations; and (f) produce Black graduates for specialized research, training, and information in Black and minority communities. To achieve these goals, HBCUs must structure themselves in a way that ensures these objectives are integrated into their organizational processes and initiatives. The challenges associated with this type of structuration place significant pressure on employees, especially considering that funding is limited, and faculty must spread themselves across all duties and goals (Gasman, 2021; Thompson, 1978). It’s reasonable to assume the experiences realized by faculty and staff at HBCUs differ considerably from those at PWIs.

Structurational divergence

The idea of “structure” can be described as systems of “rules and resources” that are continuously constructed and utilized as we maneuver throughout society (Giddens, 1984, p. 17). Rules and resources help guide individuals as they navigate various social structures (A. Nicotera et al., 2015). The creation of new structures is possible through the repetition and implementation of new practices over time (A. Nicotera et al., 2015). Employees develop perceptions and interpretations from within the organization, which is experienced on an individual basis among organizational members.

Structurational divergence (SD) is present “when the rules from different structures are incompatible but equally compelling” (A. Nicotera et al., 2015, p. 373). SD focuses on the creation of negative communication cycles that arise from the combination of incompatible structures that make individuals feel “compelled to simultaneously fulfill obligations from multiple systems of social rules, each normatively sanctioned by its own structure”

(A. M. Nicotera & Clinkscales, 2010, p. 32). When SD is present, subordinates in organizations perceive themselves to be incapable of simultaneously obeying organizational rules and acting appropriately, resulting in unclear communication across structures (A. M. Nicotera & Mahon, 2013; A. Nicotera et al., 2015).

There are two components that form the concept of SD: SD nexus and SD cycle (A. M. Nicotera & Mahon, 2013). The SD cycle comes because of the intersection of two equally compelling and contradictory structures, which can be referred to as the SD nexus. When these structures compete, a cycle of immobilization, unresolved conflict, and lack of development can occur. This cycle explains the ambiguity behind the competing structures and can often be seen in a literal sense through individuals' inability to achieve goals and interpersonal issues that exist in the structures (Rocker et al., 2021).

The conceptualization of SD first developed in the fields of health care and education (A. Nicotera et al., 2003) and has expanded to include fields such as climate change (Eise & Rawat, 2021). These fields aided in the development of the theory due to the large number of nexuses available among institutional, organizational, professional, and cultural structures involved throughout these types of organizations (A. M. Nicotera & Mahon, 2013). Consider the structure of higher education institutions. At the top, governance structures typically include entities involved in decision-making processes at the highest level. Down one hierarchical level are administrative structures that oversee the day-to-day operations of different academic and administrative units, such as department chairs. Lastly, there are academic units, such as departments, which include faculty and staff and the curriculum they deliver. Aside from these organizational structures, there are other structural aspects. SD would occur if individuals in the governance structure left individuals in the academic units feeling as though they have equally important but incompatible goals (cf., A. Nicotera et al., 2015). For example, if the governance structures impose financial constraints in support of institutional sustainability, there could be some competing priorities with the academic units, whose job is to deliver the curriculum and provide student support. As a result, there could be competing demands, such as the academic units being forced to reduce faculty and staff positions or increase class sizes. While institutional governance may feel these demands are necessary, individuals in the academic units may view these demands as a conflict that affects academic efforts and the ability to provide adequate student support. As these structures compete, individuals will be caught up in the SD cycle, leading to outcomes typically associated with SD.

HBCUs have not been explored in the context of SD. HBCUs facing financial constraints that limit their ability to support initiatives still have more historical and immediate development goals than a traditional PWI because of their unique history. This lack of development could cause

employees to experience negative organizational outcomes. SD has been found to have strong correlations with subordinates' emotional exhaustion (A. M. Nicotera & Clinkscales, 2010), perceived role conflict, and burnout (A. M. Nicotera & Mahon, 2013). SD also impedes organizational change processes and causes employee disengagement, employee perception of dissonance, job dissatisfaction, confusion, and staff turnover (Whiteley et al., 2013). This study will explore SD at HBCUs juxtaposed to organizational citizenship behaviors.

Organizational citizenship behaviors

Organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB) are discretionary actions employees in organizations take that are not explicitly rewarded but benefit the organization (D. Organ, 1997; Podsakoff et al., 2000). These behaviors contribute to the survival of any organization (D. W. Organ, 1988). D. W. Organ (1988) discusses five forms of OCB: altruism, sportsmanship, conscientiousness, courtesy, and civic virtue. *Altruism* is assisting others with tasks or problems relevant to the organization. *Sportsmanship* is withholding complaints and grievances when dealing with inconvenient aspects of organizational life. *Conscientiousness* involves employee behaviors that extend past the minimum requirements when it comes to punctuality, attendance, and the utilization of time and resources. *Courtesy* refers to behavior that displays the avoidance of work-related issues with others. *Civic virtue* includes behaviors related to participation in and contributions to the organizations' day-to-day issues. These components are not related to each other and may be predicted by differences in individuals or organizational contexts.

Koster and Sanders (2006) suggest supervisors have a role in the creation and sustainability of cooperative employee behavior. Managing employee behavior effectively could be a factor that separates effective leaders from the opposition, which is important when comparing leadership between HBCUs and PWIs. OCB has been shown to have a positive relationship with organizational structure, organizational commitment, teamwork (Hajirasouliha et al., 2014), employee commitment (Tepper et al., 2004), perceived organizational support, psychological empowerment (Chiang & Hsieh, 2012), work satisfaction (Oplatka, 2009), and positive well-being (Sonnetag & Grant, 2012). OCB can be promoted in the workplace through the motivation of employees, as well as by constructing an environment that allows for and is conducive of these behaviors (D. W. Organ et al., 2006).

Insights from previous studies have shown a relationship between OCB and various demographic characteristics. When looking at gender, research suggests men and women show no differences when exhibiting OCB (Chou & Pearson, 2011). Age, however, has been shown to be related to the display of OCB when comparing older and younger employees. Previous research

demonstrates older employees display more OCB than their younger counterparts (Ng & Feldman, 2008). This observation could result from the fact that older employees typically have more tenure than younger employees. Longer-tenured employees demonstrated higher levels of OCB than younger employees (Hafidz et al., 2012), even when looking at executive positions (Singh & Singh, 2010). When considering the relationship that organizational position or rank has on OCB, MacKenzie et al. (1999) found OCB to be positively correlated with rank. Research has also shown individuals who hold higher positions consider the display of OCB as an integral part of their roles (Bogler & Somech, 2004). In terms of salary, OCB has been shown to be negatively related to salary increases (MacKenzie et al., 1999) while having a positive relationship with compensation (Oetomo et al., 2016).

Structurational divergence and organizational citizenship behaviors

The relationship between SD and OCB remains relatively unexplored despite the implications it may have on organizational communication. SD extends structuration theory and addresses the interpenetration between individuals' actions and organizational structures, whereas OCB relates to the discretionary behaviors individuals exhibit that are useful to the organization but not directly recognized by the formal reward system. Understanding this relationship can provide further insights into how university structures and individual behaviors interact. Investigating the presence of SD in organizations provides a clearer picture of not only how organizations are shaped but also the individual behaviors members of organizations participate in that contribute to the cycle of immobilization, unresolved conflict, and lack of development outcomes associated with the SD cycle. Given that OCBs are voluntary and discretionary behaviors, it is critical to see how the presence of SD can affect these behaviors, as individuals feel obligated to abide by a specific set of rules dictated by the organizational structures in which they operate. Higher levels of SD could lead to issues that disrupt organizational structures, which could discourage the display of OCB. Understanding the relationship between SD and OCB can assist HBCUs in developing faculty and staff who are better equipped in contributing to the overall success of the organization.

From a practical perspective, executive leadership should be concerned with this relationship, as it may provide rationale in developing or managing their organization more efficiently. Increasing OCB in employees can be beneficial for organizations; therefore, it's crucial to understand what causes OCB, especially from a structural context. Knowing how much influence their leadership has on the shaping of structures within the university could assist management in identifying potential SD nexus points. If leadership's approach to governance proves to be a significant factor in how the current structures operate, they can

seek to address those issues directly. Conversely, if nexuses appear to be occurring as the result of the intersection between faculty and staff values and structural issues inherent to the university itself, leaders will be better equipped to identify and address those issues at the source. If SD is found to negatively predict OCB, executive leadership may need to focus on addressing structural issues to promote a more unified organizational culture. It is also helpful to determine how demographic factors such as faculty and staff age, sex, salary, and years of tenure explain OCB. Thus, the following research questions are presented:

RQ1: To what extent does structural divergence explain the variance in organizational citizenship behaviors?

RQ2: To what extent do demographic factors explain organizational citizenship behaviors?

Method

After receiving ethical approval, the researchers collected a nationally representative sample from HBCUs in the United States ($n = 190$) from April to August 2023 using Survey Monkey. The primary researcher, who had previously attended an HBCU for undergraduate and graduate studies, reached out to acquaintances and initiated a snowball sampling method. Although a snowball sampling technique was used, several steps were taken to enhance the representativeness of the sample. Participants were instructed to complete the survey only if they were currently employed as HBCU faculty or staff. Considering the limited number of HBCUs, this method ensured all respondents met the criteria. Additionally, the primary researcher distributed the survey via LinkedIn, Facebook, X, and Instagram during the same period. Participants were given the opportunity to enter a drawing with an opportunity to win a \$100USD Amazon gift card prize after the completion of the online survey. Full demographic information is presented in [Table 1](#).

Table 1. Fit statistics.

	GFI	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA
Structurational Divergence Original	0.76	0.73	0.11	0.13
Structurational Divergence Modified	0.90	0.92	0.05	0.09
Conscientiousness	0.95	0.92	0.05	0.17
Sportsmanship	0.99	1.00	0.02	0.04
Civic Virtue	0.98	0.97	0.03	0.13
Courtesy	0.98	0.99	0.02	0.08
Altruism	0.94	0.94	0.04	0.17

Measures

The survey included demographic questions and the following measures: the measure of structural divergence (A. M. Nicotera et al., 2010), and the measure of organizational citizenship behaviors (Podsakoff et al., 1990). Demographic items were also included to capture salary, HBCU alumni status, age, tenure (i.e., years working for the institution), and ethnicity. Salary was captured as an ordinal variable, while age and tenure were ratios. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for these measures. Note that there was some non-normality in the age variable, so a natural log transformation was used to scale the variable appropriately for analyzing the data.

Measure of structural divergence comprises a 17-item self-report instrument that measures the extent to which an individual experiences structural divergence in their organizational experience. The measure used a 5-level scale ranging from *rarely* (1) to *frequently* (5).

Measure of Organizational Citizenship Behaviors features 24 items that assess five factors (*altruism, courtesy, sportsmanship, conscientiousness, and civic virtue*) to describe specific behaviors. Each behavior is rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from *strongly disagree* (1) to *strongly agree* (7).

Results

Before research questions were addressed, it was important to determine whether the factor structure of each measure was retained. Each time a measure is used, there is a hypothesis, often unwritten, that the measure retains its factor structure within the new sample (Kelly & Westerman, 2020). When a measure fails to maintain their factor structure, it is not suitable for analysis. Each measure in this dataset was analyzed through confirmatory factor analysis. The fit statistics for each measure can be seen in Table 1, and the descriptive statistics, including reliability scores, can be seen in Table 2. Each of the measures retained factor structure except for SD. Five items in the SD measure caused a statistically significant amount of residual error on other items in the measure. These items were removed to reduce the noise in the

Table 2. Descriptive statistics.

	ω	Range	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Skew	Kurtosis
Structural Divergence	0.90	1.00–4.41	2.52	0.84	–0.05	–0.90
Conscientiousness	0.83	1.00–7.00	4.55	1.38	–0.58	–0.16
Sportsmanship	0.84	1.00–6.40	3.22	1.29	0.33	–0.98
Civic Virtue	0.81	1.00–7.00	4.46	1.32	–0.49	–0.53
Courtesy	0.91	1.00–7.00	4.57	1.48	–0.49	–0.69
Altruism	0.87	1.00–7.00	4.54	1.34	–0.47	–0.39
Age		18.00–67.00	29.68	8.57	2.16	5.72
Age Transformed		2.94–4.22	3.39	0.24	1.22	2.00
Salary		2.00–7.00	4.21	1.50	0.00	–1.29
Tenure		1.00–6.00	2.76	1.37	0.80	–0.07

Table 3. Correlation matrix.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Altruism	–					
2. Conscientiousness	0.82**	–				
3. Sportsmanship	–0.23**	–0.22**	–			
4. Civic Virtue	0.62**	0.62**	–0.01	–		
5. Courtesy	0.84**	0.77**	–0.24**	0.71**	–	
6. Structural Divergence	–0.05	–0.08	0.40**	–0.11*	–0.05	–

* $p < .05$ level (2-tailed)** $p < .01$ level (2-tailed)

analyses, allowing researchers to see the relationships more confidently between variables.

To answer the research questions, stepwise regression was run using structural divergence and demographic variables (age, sex, salary, years of tenure at the institution, and HBCU attendance as a student) as predictors of each OCB. For conscientiousness, the model contained one statistically significant predictor: salary ($\beta = .50, p < .001$) with $R^2 = .25$. For sportsmanship, the model contained two statistically significant predictors: structural divergence and ($\beta = .54, p < .001$), age ($\beta = -.16, p = .01$) with $R^2 = .25$. For civic virtue, the model contained only one statistically significant variable: salary ($\beta = .45, p < .001$) with $R^2 = .20$. For courtesy, the model contained two statistically significant predictors: salary ($\beta = .48, p < .001$) and having attended an HBCU as a student ($\beta = .21, p < .001$) with $R^2 = .23$. Finally, for altruism, the model contained two statistically significant predictors: salary ($\beta = .52, p < .001$) and having attended an HBCU as a student ($\beta = .17, p = .01$) with $R^2 = .29$. (See Table 3 for the correlation matrix.)

Discussion

This study aimed to analyze the relationship between demographic and SD factors on OCB among HBCU faculty. Several observations emerged when looking at the relationships between these factors. When examining conscientiousness behaviors, faculty members with higher salaries were observed to extend themselves beyond the basic requirements of the job. Faculty members earning higher salaries could possess a greater sense of dedication in their roles due to their monetary advantage across the organization. In a meta-analysis of 19 studies looking at earnings in relation to the Big Five personality traits, Roberts et al. (2011) found conscientiousness had a positive relationship with earnings. Similarly, Wiersma and Kappe (2017) found that although conscientiousness had no effect on starting salary, the effect was significant in relation to salary growth over time.

The display of sportsmanship behaviors was also significant in faculty who were older. Additionally, the presence of SD was also a factor that predicted sportsmanship behaviors, indicating faculty experiencing

divergences in their respective organizational structures were more likely to refrain from expressing complaints or criticisms in challenging situations. Older faculty may approach organizational issues with more maturity, allowing them to accept any inconveniences that may arise. Not much is known about the relationship between the SD cycle and sportsmanship behaviors; however, the findings of this study provide some insight on the connection.

Displays of civic virtue behaviors in HBCU faculty were only predicted by salary. This finding suggests faculty with higher salaries were more likely to be active in participation and engage in behaviors that contribute to the day-to-day issues of the organization. This relationship between higher financial compensation and the display of civic virtue behaviors implies the financial aspect plays an essential role in shaping faculty members' mindsets and behaviors, mainly in their willingness to engage in activities that contribute to the overall well-being or betterment of the institution. This finding is consistent with Ali and Miralam (2019), who also found salary to be a dominant predictor of civic virtue behaviors among IT professionals.

Engaging in courtesy behaviors was found to be higher in HBCU faculty who received higher salaries, as well as those who attended an HBCU as a student. These faculty were more likely to be more considerate in their actions when trying to avoid work-related issues. The heightened display of courtesy behaviors could stem from the incentive to avoid work-related issues due to the potential monetary satisfaction that comes with higher salaries. Previous research has found salary to be a predictor of the display of courtesy behavior in employees (Ali & Miralam, 2019). Having attended an HBCU in the past could also encourage these faculty to avoid issues for the betterment of their institution because they can understand the culture, missions, and objectives from a personal perspective.

Lastly, HBCU faculty who had higher salaries and attended an HBCU as a student were observed to show higher displays of altruism. These individuals were more likely to display voluntary behaviors in an unselfish manner that contributed to their colleagues and the organization. Faculty receiving higher salaries may go out of their way to voluntarily assist their colleagues because they are satisfied with the compensation they receive to do so. When considering age and tenure, experience may play an important role in the willingness to extend themselves. Being able to assist colleagues with organizational tasks they are familiar with may come with ease, especially if it contributes to the organization. Previous research supports this relationship between altruism and salary (Jane et al., 2023). Faculty who can relate to the HBCU experience may possess a unique understanding of the organizational missions and objectives, which could motivate them to display altruistic behaviors that will benefit their colleagues and the organization.

Theoretical and applied implications

Understanding the significance of OCB and SD in achieving desired organizational outcomes is important to executive leadership. This study provides significant contributions to OCB and SD literature, as it was conducted in HBCUs where organizational culture and identity are unique within the broader context of Western culture. While much of the existing research on OCB and SD has been studied in Western cultures where there are individualistic cultural norms, HBCUs provide an opportunity to investigate a collectivistic subculture that emphasizes the needs and goals of the group. Despite this, there is a lack of research discussing these aspects in HBCUs, making this exploration necessary to fill the gap and contribute to the emerging theoretical explanations of OCB and SD.

Organizational citizenship behaviors

OCB has been studied in various contexts and has become an interest to scholars due to their contributions to achieving organizational effectiveness. Since conceptualization, scholars have identified various forms of OCB (Podsakoff et al., 2000), which expands on the initial dimensions D. W. Organ (1988) identified. OCB has also been linked to concepts like job satisfaction (Schleicher et al., 2004; Yee et al., 2008), organizational commitment (Wagner & Rush, 2000; Zheng et al., 2012), employee engagement (Rurkkum & Bartlett, 2012; Saks, 2006), and high-performance HR practices (Mukhtar et al., 2012), all of which should be an emphasis of executive leadership when focusing on fostering effective organizational outcomes. When organizations direct more emphasis toward OCB, they demonstrate better performance and realize greater success than organizations where the display of OCB is non-existent (Podsakoff et al., 2000).

The findings of this research expand the theory of OCB by investigating how the unique aspects of HBCUs predict the expression of OCB. In the past, OCB has been shown to vary across cultures in relation to the dimensions, the actual display of behaviors, and anticipated outcomes (Podsakoff et al., 2000). While previous studies have argued for a re-examination of the theory that would include more culturally derived samples (Cohen, 2007), this study provided theoretical support for OCB as conceptualized by D. W. Organ (1988).

This study also considered the presence of OCB within HBCUs and factors related to its manifestation. Since HBCUs are experiencing issues that ultimately fall on leadership, knowing how to approach faculty and staff based on the display of their discretionary behaviors provides direction and guidance for executive leadership. When tasked with issues of solving problems and working with limited resources, OCB has been shown to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of academic leaders

(Rita et al., 2018). Employees have also been viewed as more receptive to transformation-oriented leaders, a characteristic that has proved to have a positive influence on OCB (Michel & Tews, 2016). To promote OCB, leadership must know the dynamics behind their employees, as well as the type of behaviors their employees are displaying before they can address the issues.

From an applied perspective, the findings of the study offer insights for leadership in the evaluation of faculty and staff. Across all five factors of OCB, salary proved to be the most motivating factor in the expression of OCB. Leadership should focus on developing ideal pay structures that foster OCB through a competitive but incentive-based approach. Achieving employee motivation through the incorporation of financial incentives can attract more dedicated workers to the organization (Lazear, 1986). Although underfunding and other HBCU-specific constraints may limit leadership's ability to offer such incentives, there are non-monetary options that can be used to demonstrate their appreciation until funding allows for salary increases. Non-monetary rewards include formal commendations and awards, favorable mention in university publications, being publicly recognized, letters of appreciation, status indicators such as enhanced job titles, flexible work schedules, greater job autonomy, paid sabbaticals, and more interesting work responsibilities (Aguinis, 2013). By implementing these strategies, leaders can offer support to faculty and staff in making sure they feel valued and motivated to express OCB despite any structural misalignments.

Age also had a strong contribution to the display of OCB for faculty and staff, as it predicted the display of sportsmanship. The relationships between age and OCB have been mixed, with some previous studies identifying negative relationships (Atatsi et al., 2021; Wagner & Rush, 2000) and others positive (Ajrlouni et al., 2021; Wanxian & Weiwu, 2007). That older faculty displayed more sportsmanship indicates that executive leadership may be able to instill sportsmanship in their younger faculty through formal mentoring, pairing older faculty as mentors for younger faculty.

Leadership should also be aware that having faculty and staff who attended an HBCU themselves as students can lead to greater displays of OCB. We advocate for more hiring of professionals at HBCUs who understand what the HBCU experience is. These findings linking associations with HBCUs and OCB advance that claim, suggesting HBCU leaders should not only recognize the value of hiring from within but also prioritize developing faculty and staff without such background. This approach will assist in creating a culture in which all faculty and staff, regardless of their educational background, can embrace and advance HBCU missions.

Structurational divergence

The finding that higher levels of SD are associated with increased levels of sportsmanship behaviors among HBCU faculty and staff provides practical implications for leadership. Leaders play a large role in fostering sportsmanship behaviors from their subordinates; however, a focus on the management of these behaviors can be beneficial in preventing divergences before they occur. Malterud and Nicotera (2020) suggest a nonconfrontational conflict management style, and taking conflict personally may escalate SD. Scholars are continuously making efforts to conceptualize SD with hope it may bring stronger insights into how and why individuals resist organizational structures. As our study found faculty and staff were reluctant to express complaints or criticisms in challenging situations where SD was present, incorporating collaborative spaces where employees can express their frustrations could lead to better SD management. The goal for leaders should be to minimize or eliminate the presence of SD altogether.

Supporting faculty and staff autonomy and encouraging constructive criticisms across organizational structures could help leadership better understand the varying concerns of their workers, as each structure may express different complaints and criticisms, ultimately resulting in different organizational outcomes. Establishing policies that unify organizational structures when it comes to expressive communication could be a viable strategy that encourages healthy and meaningful dialog from a top-down approach. The cycle of SD is influenced by both cultural and institutional restraints (A. M. Nicotera et al., 2014); therefore, examining HBCUs offers valuable insights into how a nuanced understanding of cultural diversity predicts divergences in organizations. An examination of the concept across other professions and organizational settings that also operate within multiple structures has been recommended (Malterud & Nicotera, 2020). Aside from the fact that universities offer scholars an opportunity to examine organizations with a long history of non-static structures, HBCUs introduce a variety of cultural perspectives that can enhance the development of SD research. Particularly, HBCUs offer new insights that are more inclusive and representative of a community that is often overlooked in organizational research. Addressing the knowledge gaps in SD was one aim of this study, as this is one of the few studies examining SD in a HBCU context.

HBCUs vs. PWIs

This study also contributes to the discourse surrounding HBCUs vs. PWIs. These institutions face the same challenges; however, HBCUs operate with a smaller margin of error (Oshikanlu, 2023). PWIs are at an advantage when it comes to additional funding and access to institutional resources (Upton &

Tanenbaum, 2014). Individual states, backed by the federal government, have failed in the disbursement of equal funding and general support to HBCUs (Wheatle, 2019). If HBCUs aren't realizing adequate funding, this may explain why salary proved to be the most motivating factor in the expression of OCB by faculty and staff. These individuals may view salary as a motivating factor due to the fact that they are employed by an institution that is plagued by funding issues. During the 2018–2019 academic year, the salaries of HBCU faculty were \$18,000–\$24,000 lower than the national average for all professorial ranks at comparable institutions (Clery, 2021). It is reasonable to believe these disparities in compensation promote greater expressions of OCB among HBCU faculty and staff who place significant value on salary or salary increases. Research has also shown increased commitments in teaching loads, advising responsibilities, and service commitments for faculty and staff at HBCUs (Golden et al., 2017). Not only are they receiving lower salaries, but there are increased expectations when it comes to commitment to the organization. These issues create uncertainty for the institution, but faculty and staff may also question their job security as opposed to faculty and staff at PWIs who encounter fewer issues of funding. This may also explain why tenure proved to be a key element in the display of certain OCB. HBCUs have seen a decrease in the hiring of tenure-track faculty and a rise in adjunct faculty (Escobar et al., 2021). As HBCUs strive to survive in today's climate, faculty and staff who obtained tenure may feel more secure in their roles, allowing them to focus on more expressions of OCB.

While the findings of this study may not be assumed to be applicable to all institutional types, results could offer significant insights for decision makers at HBCUs. SD is only present “when the rules from different structures are incompatible but equally compelling” (A. Nicotera et al., 2015, p. 373). Historically, one of the main missions of HBCUs was to preserve Black culture (Albritton, 2012). The missions and strategic goals of HBCUs and PWIs are different, which implies the rules and structures will also be different. This suggests faculty and staff at HBCUs will realize SD in a different manner than they would at any other institutional type. This also applies to the expression of OCB, as despite any consideration of institutional performance, OCB levels have been shown to vary across discipline and institution type (Rose, 2012). The findings of this study should only be considered in the context of HBCUs and their unique cultural environment.

Limitations and conclusion

This study contained some measurement noise in the SD measure. The source of this noise is uncertain and could stem from the discrepancies in the chosen demographic or the fact that the SD measure was developed to be utilized in a health-care setting, whereas in this study it was

utilized in an educational setting. Further research is needed to understand why some of the measurement items didn't perform well in this study.

It's important for leadership at HBCUs to not only understand how their organizational structures function but also the relationships that potential divergences from those structures have on organizational citizenship behaviors. The findings of this study discuss the relationship between SD, demographic variables, and organizational citizenship behaviors for faculty at HBCUs. Analyzing these relationships can provide senior leadership insights on how to foster behaviors that contribute to the overall success of HBCUs when it comes to faculty engagement and commitment. Senior leadership should also be mindful of retaining a healthy balance between the changing dynamics in modern-day academia and the unique cultural heritage that has always been present at HBCUs.

This study recognized SD and demographic factors such as salary, age, tenure, and having attended an HBCU as a student as significant factors predicting faculty behaviors. Senior leadership should be conscious of these factors, as they have been shown to shape the conscientiousness, sportsmanship, civic virtue, courtesy, and altruism behaviors displayed by HBCU faculty. The significance of these relationships can shed light on the necessary practices that need to take place at HBCUs when it comes to achieving desired organizational outcomes, whether it be from a cultural or strategic standpoint. Future studies should compare faculty and staff who have worked at both HBCUs and PWIs to determine if the difference in environment predicts the displayed levels of these variables. It would also be interesting to see how the differences in organizational culture between the two institution types predict SD and other forms of workplace behaviors. Since SD is a new concept, it would also be interesting to see if executive leadership at both institutional types are aware of potential divergences and analyze any current policies they have in place to promote OCB and prevent or minimize the SD cycle. This will benefit the advancement of the construct, as not much SD research is conducted in university settings. Despite the difficulties HBCUs face in the modern landscape, including state mandates, funding, shifts in the pedagogical environment, increased accountability and assessment measures, small endowment support, and increased competition (Gasman, 2013), understanding the relationship between SD, faculty demographics, and organizational citizenship behaviors should be a valuable factor in creating and implementing strategies to navigate the troubling environment. The findings of this study can assist leadership in understanding the dynamics of their faculty, which in turn will allow them to enhance the effectiveness of their leadership. Ultimately, this will benefit HBCUs in achieving sustainable and long-term success in the higher education market.

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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