Eastern Kentucky University values diversity, which the University characterizes by equitable opportunities and treatment, mutual respect, and the inclusion and celebration of diverse people and ideas. Attending the 2015 Kentucky Association of Blacks in Higher Education (KABHE) annual conference provided a platform to share with like-minded individuals to discuss educational issues and explore solutions to resolve those issues that impact Blacks in higher education whether that be faculty, staff, or students. KABHE’s 2015 theme was “Re-Examining the Gap: Gaining Access for Professional Success.” Aligning with the theme of the conference, sessions articulated the needs and concerns of Black faculty, staff and students as well as offering a support system to promote unity, cooperation and awareness of the challenges facing Blacks in higher education in the hope to enhance the personal and professional growth of attendees.

I was intrigued when reading the session descriptions for the conference. There were three sessions in particular that stood out to me. Two of these sessions were facilitated by Dr. Sherwood Thompson “Professional development Advisory Team” and “The Experiences of African-American Administrators and Faculty on College and University Campuses: Marginality, Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Attitudes”. Additionally, Dr. Roger Cleveland and Mrs. Tracey Folden-Stewart session on “Cultural Taxation: The Re-Mix”.

These sessions sought to investigate cultural and social influences on the development of leadership in educational settings, I was immediately drawn in. Throughout these sessions. I had the ability to engage in discourse pertaining to practical application of sociocultural concepts to leadership issues and problems in educational settings. The concepts discussed and debated during these sessions have been invaluable as I seek to continue a career in higher education administration.

As we discussed forms of microagression such as micro assaults, micro insults, racial/general and sexual orientation microagression I was able to formulate strategies to counter marginalization within the workplace. Additional areas that I found particularly eye-opening and transformational were the review of cultural and identity taxation discussed by Dr. Cleveland and Mrs. Folden-Stewart. The presentation provide valid and scholarly research on how Cultural and Identity Taxation impacts faculty/staff of color working at predominately White institutions. As discussed and defined by Padilla (1994), “cultural taxation is the obligation to show good citizenship toward the institution by serving its needs for ethnic/racial representation on committees, or to demonstrate knowledge and commitment to a cultural group which may even bring accolades to the institution but which is not usually rewarded by the institution” (p.26).

The instruction provided throughout these sessions vastly assisted in my development of context based research and empowered me with the competencies to advance the theoretical understandings in the education policy field. I am excited about the opportunity to work with students from diverse backgrounds pursuing higher education to assist in motivating, empowering and aiding in their development as students as well as persons. The networking connections that were made through the conference will extended my development of theoretical practices and understanding as a practitioner as was relayed in developing a professional advisory team session.

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