SCHOLARLY TAILGATING DEFINED: A DIVERSE, GIANT NETWORK

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Abstract

Scholarly tailgating and developmental relationships can soar professional identity, advance one’s scholarly career and foster cultural diversity in healthcare. This paper provides the definition and basis of scholarly tailgating for scholars who wish to propel their careers and help enable diverse cultural approaches. Scholarly tailgating is for those who wish to succeed and capitalize on the culturally diverse expertise and reciprocal network relationships from others in their web of influence. The concept of scholarly tailgating explains the use of homophilic and diverse, multidisciplinary network relationships to foster an intellectual community in healthcare in general and to benefit healthcare consumers and all being served. Scholars can benefit from standing on the shoulders of giants and allowing the aerodynamic wind to propel them to soaring career heights. Prudent scholars, apart from utilizing homophilic relationships and balancing these relationships with diverse heterophilic relationships, are able to lead in the professional academy, and become innovators who practice with cultural relevance. Multi-ethnic, diverse scholars working collaboratively can assist in igniting conversation and actions that reduce disparities, which are indigenous to those who are most vulnerable. Purposeful strategic planning and development of diverse networks that support scholarly advancement can best achieve these career accomplishments.

Keywords
Network; Scholarship; Diversity; Homophily; Heterophily; Career Growth

Sir Isaac Newton, scientist and scholar said, “If I have seen further than other men, it is because I stood on the shoulders of giants” (Torricelli, 2001, p. 213). Scholarly tailgating expands Newton’s premise of standing on the shoulders of giants. We lift our careers and aspirations to higher levels as we benefit from the profound knowledge and experience of giants within our field of study. A phrase in Bette Midler’s popular song may help to further describe this phenomenon, “you are the wind beneath my wings”. Whether you are standing on shoulders of giants or being lifted up by the support of colleagues, you are benefiting from forces generated by others. Individuals soar because scholarly tailgating forcefully moves them from inertia to dynamic and explosive scholarly and culturally diverse achievements (Adegbola, 2008). Scholarly Tailgating is a new term used to depict the diverse interaction of individuals with a common purpose. Such diverse professional

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interaction can transform the move for cultural diversity in forums such as healthcare delivery.

There are at least two giant forces, within the context of scholarly tailgating that can elevate an individual’s professional career and direction: the individual and others. By becoming aware of the potential forceful impact of networking and mentoring, the careers of scholars can be propelled to conquer new heights and help to transform healthcare. Scholars can fly high because of the investment of influential colleagues and heroes. Such investment promotes diversity in the multi-disciplinary healthcare market place and in the lives of others, such as patients, impacted by and receiving the care provided.

The purpose of this paper is to provide the definition and basis of scholarly tailgating. This focus is for individuals who wish to be inspired, motivated, taught to fly high, and expand their scholarly career perspective and approach, by capitalizing on intellectual expertise and reciprocal network relationships within their sphere of influence. Ultimately by practicing scholarly tailgating, healthcare providers will reap benefits of improved cultural diversity across multiple healthcare fields and in turn patients will receive improved culturally relevant care.

**SCHOLARLY TAILGATING**

According to Adegbola (2011, 2008) scholarly tailgating is defined as the process where individuals create an aerodynamic lift for their career by networking and benefiting from their professional partners’ expertise. The element of homophilic (homophilous) relational activity, acts as an impetus to give dynamic force to scholarly tailgating. Homophilic refers to individuals who have common goals and move in the same direction (Rogers 2003; Rogers and Bhowmik 1970). In such situations, individuals benefit from the surge of aerodynamic uplift that propels the activity of each individual. When a mutually beneficial relationship exists, as a result of scholarly tailgating, the support and knowledge derived from the relationship can have a positive impact on scholarly pursuits and diverse cultural relationships (Adegbola, 2011). Hence, scholarly tailgating a dynamic process of developing collaborative reciprocal relationships can advance scholarship by building upon what predecessors have established and by reaping new, bountiful harvests with outcomes that reflect exponential increases of crops (Adegbola, 2011).

Participants in networks that provide multi and interdisciplinary foci have the benefit of scholarly tailgating and are able to propel their careers to previously unknown heights (Adegbola, 2010; Adegbola, 2011), because these networks involve dynamic reciprocal and developmental relationships rather than simple dyads of interaction (Adegbola, 2011; Quatman & Chelladurai, 2008). That is, individuals who wish to propel their scholastic activities and careers should include multiple sources of networks that extend into international forums (Adegbola, 2011; Higgins, 2000; Kram, 1985; Sweitzer, 2007; Sweitzer, 2008), and capitalize on these relationships. In the past, mentorship and singular dyadic relationships were touted to be most important for creating and propelling successful professional careers. Now, relational developments beyond mentorship provide the basis for professional relationships and identity. (Adegbola, 2011).
Diversity, Scholarship, Health Disparities

With the era of globalization it is imperative to seek and increase intercultural exchanges and relationships. Collaboration with others can promote diversity within the healthcare community, better address health disparities locally and internationally, and promote culturally sensitive healthcare programs (Dolcini, Grinstead, & Marin, 2009). Workforce diversity representation in healthcare is most important for providing safe, culturally focused care. Because of these collaborative sociological network relationships there will be the increased cultivation of ethnic-minority scholars who will serve and represent diverse, vulnerable individuals. Another serendipitous benefit of scholarly tailgating and collaborative relationships is being able to acquire previously difficult to access funding sources. With new collaborative, multiethnic and multidisciplinary networks, funding sources may become more accessible and findings from research may result in more positive, relevant outcomes (Adegbola, 2010).

THEORETICAL SCAFFOLD

The theoretical basis of scholarly tailgating is derived from social and developmental network theories where sociological relationships diverge into dynamic networks that support individuals and scholars. As scholars are supported in their careers, the result is enhanced mobility and enriched professional growth (Adegbola, 2008; Higgins & Kram, 2001; Kram, 1985). Higgins & Kram (2001) and Kram (1985) have both espoused developmental network relationships as a sociological support extending beyond mentorship.

Social networks foster multifaceted relational webs and give direction to career advancement and scholarly pursuits. According to Sweitzer (2008) these networks act as extensive, dynamic conglomerate relational webs engaging individuals and groups in a constellation of relationships and entail a multiplicity of roles and supportive services (Quatman & Chelladurai, 2008). Such roles and services are applicable to general healthcare delivery.

There is also information sharing for individuals in homophilic relationships who have a common interest (Adegbola, 2010,2011). Scholarly tailgating, as evidenced by developmental relationships and social network webs, gives a lift to individual’s career (Higgins, Chandler, & Kram, 2007) and scholarship, with promise for national and international application and recognition.

Using Scholarly Tailgating and Networking

The individual is the nucleus of his network and the center of his circular, divergent relationships. It is essential to constantly self assess and determine the individual needs and the type of ties required for personal and professional success (Kram, K. 2008, personal communication). Based on identified personal needs, the individual chooses to acquire strong or weak network ties. Strong ties are usually developed with approximately 5 to 8 personal contacts that are known and interested in the individual’s progress (Kram, K. 2008, personal communication). With weak ties, individuals usually operate in a consultant role and rarely have personal interactions.
Application

Practical application, strategies and examples of scholarly tailgating are beyond the scope of this paper and have been described elsewhere (Adegbola, 2010; 2011). In summary, scholarly tailgating provides a basis that addresses basic elements necessary for developing mutual, goal-directed yet diverse relationships. For example, it is important to evaluate biographical profiles of leaders to identify the elements or traits of success a person can emulate and inculcate. Additionally, by contacting an esteemed leader in a field who is scheduled to speak at a conference on diversity issues, that the individual plans to attend, the individual can initiate a dynamic relationship that can best be developed further at the conference or with a future appointment (Adegbola, 2011).

Another delightful and beneficial network strategy is to invite an esteemed leader in the area of healthcare cultural diversity to lunch (Adegbola, 2011). As the nucleus of your network and instigator of influence, you take charge and propel the course of productive events. Figure 1 graphically depicts a model of scholarly tailgating. These activities and processes are described in table 1.

Relationships: Heterophilic and Homophilic

When scholars choose homophilic relationship through scholarly tailgating there are exponential benefits, including efficiency and increased productivity. In this era of limited personal and fiduciary resources, it becomes imperative to accomplish more with less. Scholarly tailgating enables homophilic communication and interaction that can lure social change for scholars (Adegbola, 2008; Adegbola, 2010). The individual who desires increased scholarly pursuits should initiate action. By using inter-related constellations of developers, he/she can benefit from scholarly tailgating, increase scholarly output and productivity, and effectively and efficiently use resources. Individuals with common interests are likely to experience greater outcomes from homophilous network partners (Rogers, 2003). Scholarly tailgating, with its basis in homophily, is a useful approach in service, academia and elsewhere. However, an astute scholar is able to holistically and innovatively include diverse heterophilic (heterophilous) relationships to enable multidisciplinary collaborations. Heterophilic, the opposite of homophilic, describes relationships and communications of unlike kind, moving in different direction and having dissimilar meaning (Rogers 2003; Rogers and Bhowmik 1970).

Heterophilic relationships bring new, divergent foci and opinions and may spark innovations because of the divergent approaches (Rogers, 2003). Heterophilic relationships sometimes result in discovery through serendipity; such as working outside of a person’s division, discipline or area of expertise may allow him/her to benefit from expert ideas of others with varying approaches, thus observing a situation through different lenses (Adegbola, 2010). Solely, heterophilic relationships may be detrimental to the business of scholarly tailgating when scholars attempt to act selfishly, as an island and isolated from other members of the professional academy. By focusing only on individual efforts, there is the certainty of failure or delayed achievement, resulting in reinventing the proverbial wheel. Scholars respond to the challenge of balancing heterophilic and homophilic relationships to enable wholesome
outcomes that capture multidisciplinary activities, strengthen the academy, and result in innovative practices.

**Creating Diverse Network Leverage**

One of the benefits of scholarly tailgating is acquiring leverage where involvement and interaction with others serve as powerful ignition for growth. Such growth results in professional and personal expansion, and instigates social network epidemic changes. A social network epidemic is applicable to scholars and others and generates viral power for all users (Gladwell, 2000).

**Scholarly Tailgating and Bird Power**

The link between social network and scholarship creates epidemic changes and impacts the lives of recipients and all involved. It is known that geese migrate in flocks and utilize a ‘V’ formation to powerfully capitalize on the aerodynamic lift of another. In flight the flock is powerful as a unit and by their innate wisdom and collaboration benefit from each other’s uplift.

In flight, a large flock of geese can cause an airplane to come down when both engines are affected. In January 2009, a US Airways airbus 320 careened into the icy Hudson River in New York City. The speculation was that a large flock of geese precipitated the crash. Even though the momentum of the flock of geese in this situation could have negatively affected the lives of 155 individuals, the outcome was historic. The plane landed on the Hudson River, all occupants survived and many lives were forever changed. More amazingly, the power of the human flock and first responders moving in the same direction was exemplified first by the power of the geese and secondly, by the miraculous positive outcome of rescue efforts. All survived the unprecedented Hudson River crash landing because of the unity and focus of rescuers despite their varying backgrounds. There is power in a flock when all are moving in the same direction and with the same purpose. Moving in the same or like direction with the same purpose is homophily.

**The Leading Force of Diversity and Scholarship**

John Quincy Adams said of leadership, “your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more and become more” (Casciato, 2007, p. 8). A leader of the caliber of scholars has the responsibility to use scholarly tailgating with aerodynamic lift to propel others into action. Scholarship is moving towards the excellence and zenith of career role function, and involves creative activities that increase knowledge and enable individuals to reach the pinnacle of their scholastic or professional life by systematically and publicly contributing to intellect and the academy (AACN, 1999; Boyer, 1990).

Accomplished scholars are defined by their strategic design for scholarly advancement. By identifying individual needs and objectives, developing and planning effective and detailed strategies, scholars can expect results that support their decisions to soar. Using the wind force of others and making individual decisions to stand on the shoulders of giants can exponentially increase one’s professional leverage and give wind to scholastic flight pertaining to culturally delivered healthcare.
CONCLUSION

As a scholar most of one’s success or tentative success can be attributed to scholarly tailgating. Individuals should acknowledge and thank those to whom they are indebted, and reflect on others who provided wind to your flight. It is a scholar’s obligation to encourage and inspire other colleagues to strive for career heights and to influence culturally diverse practices. This paper provides the basis and definition of scholarly tailgating and demonstrates that through the efforts of predecessors and developers, individuals can have revolutionary global impact. Working together in multidisciplinary forums enables both homophilic and heterophilic outcomes relative to goals for diverse, cultural healthcare delivery. As a scholar it is imperative to advance systematically and rigorously the move towards cultural diversity in healthcare services. Scholarly tailgating can be used to create a social network epidemic for all scholars. Scholarly tailgating can produce diverse and great wind force for someone’s flight towards career success and healthcare services when standing on the shoulders of giants.

Acknowledgments

During preparation of this manuscript, Dr. Maxine Adegbola was supported by a NINR T32 Pain and Associated Symptoms grant at the University of Iowa College of Nursing.

REFERENCES


Figure 1.
Model of Scholarly Tailgating ©, Adegbola, 2012
### Table 1

**Process of Scholarly Tailgating**

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Take charge</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Take the initiative to design, begin, and propel course of action</td>
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<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Develop strategic network relationships</td>
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<td>Develop and maintain network relationships that foster strong or weak ties depending on your desired level of interaction</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Pilot and propel the course</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Persevere to see the expected end; include maintenance of relationships and ties</td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Engage in Community</td>
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<td>Interact with groups and individuals pertinent to your area of influence. Form coalitions and work within your community. Foster diverse connections. Not all constellations will share the same foci</td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Solve world problems</td>
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<td>Apply and translate locally acquired skills to traverse global situations and create a forum for international collaborative sharing and action</td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Multidisciplinary global relationships</td>
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<td>Foster relationships that are holistic in approach and accomplish multidisciplinary goals or foci. Capitalize on both homophilic and heterophilic relationships to ensure a holistic view through different lenses, attaining power for the journey, and divergence for innovations (Adegbola, 2011).</td>
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