

CHAPTER 22

John (Johnnie) McFadden



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Bonds mended before broken

John McFadden typifies the dedicated professional in the counseling profession. His life and achievements model professional scholarship that is actualized in humanitarian efforts. His scholarship includes over 80 publications (more than 35 journal articles, 18 book chapters, and 7 books) and over 140 professional presentations tied to his scholarly pursuit of transcultural counseling. His presence in the international field, including presentations in England, Germany, Spain, Brazil, France, Sweden, New Zealand, Switzerland, India, and the Netherlands, has contributed to developing perspectives on international education in the area of multicultural counseling. His major academic contribution to counseling, his second edition *Transcultural Counseling* (1999), delineates the Stylistic Model of transcultural counseling and addresses multicultural counseling by examining qualities that connect diverse cultures. This is a refreshing approach to diversity that teaches counseling students inclusion concepts. His grants and proposals have brought over \$1.8 million to the University of South Carolina (USC) and have contributed to enriching the educational environment in the state.

Leadership in associations and to the university community exemplifies John McFadden's service commitment. He has provided leadership to the American Counseling Association (ACA) at a variety of levels. He has been involved at the regional level serving as the Southern Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (SACES) Multicultural Interest Network Chairperson for 7 years. On the national level, John has been coordinator of the ACA International Conference on Cultural Diversity, National Chairperson of the ACA Media Committee, and most prominently president of the Association for Multicultural Counseling and Development (AMCD, 1983-1984). During this time he was involved in helping the association change its name from the former Association for Non-White Concerns to the current AMCD. This name change exemplifies John's strong belief that "we all need to be at the table."

John McFadden's vita lists many major contributions to his university, including current director of the African American Professors Program and previous administrative roles such as senior vice president for Intercultural Affairs and Professional Development as well as Associate and Acting Dean of the College of Education. Over the course of more than 30 years at USC, he has been called to serve in an array of service roles at the university. His close friends know that no university service gives him more personal pride than his endowed chair as the Benjamin Elijah Mays Professor. Through the Mays Scholars Academy for Leadership Development at USC, John has provided mentoring opportunities for junior and senior high school students in the legacy of Benjamin E. Mays.

PERSPECTIVES ON LEADERSHIP THROUGH THE YEARS

John's personal beliefs about leadership fit well with his professional pursuits of transcultural counseling. He describes leadership for him as emerging at three levels: leadership from his mentors, passing through himself, and emerging in his students. John states that he sees himself imparting some of who he is, what he believes in and what he likes, and trying to instill some of himself in others so that they will be able to be better people and better counselors and pass that on to another generation.

John McFadden attributes his development of leadership from growing up in Wilmington, North Carolina, with a mother and father and four sisters, the fourth in line with no brothers. He reports that the family had a strong connection with their church. John's mother and father divorced when he was in his early teens. His father, Jerry McFadden, worked at the local shipyard and later worked similarly in Norfolk, Virginia, and re-

maintained an influence on John's life. His mother, Emma Jane Postell McFadden, worked as an assembly person at one of the local lumber yards and later was a dietician at one of the Wilmington hospitals. She was the matriarch who kept the family together and instilled in her children good values, striving for excellence, and pursuing dreams with a warm heart.

Growing up, as he puts it, as "the little boy from Wilmington, North Carolina" (quotes of John McFadden come from an interview with Marty Jenkins, June 2001), John sought the guidance of members of his community. "I found myself growing up and using a lot of people in the neighborhood: teachers, the minister, Sunday school teachers, even the midwife." He developed his natural skills of connecting with people who were of service to the community, people who encouraged him to pursue his education and make a difference with his life. From the front porch of his childhood home, John would look out over the neighborhood and wonder:

Sitting on that front porch I'd look at the horizon across a far away area called Love Grove. I used to look out there at that skyline from the porch and watch the Atlantic Coastline train traveling back into the city. I used to notice the train a lot when I was growing up. I used to wonder where it was going, what was out there, never knowing whether I would ever get beyond the porch, beyond Love Grove, beyond the city, beyond North Carolina. I knew though that there had to be something out there. I knew that in order to go out there, I had some homework to do . . . go to school, pitch horseshoes less than my friends, go to school, play a little softball but not as much as the other guys, not hang around the corner drinking Pepsi colas, but get a part-time job.

A pivotal experience that defines John's worldview occurred to him early on in the classroom as a student. The school system he grew up in was intellectually stimulating but also segregated. Despite segregation the school allowed for him to see, to feel, and to be touched by individuals who provided leadership for him. One such teacher was Ethel Telfair:

One of my best experiences came about when I was in the third grade with Mrs. Telfair. She was such a source of inspiration. If you asked me right now, "What happened to you, McFadden, during your lifetime that really helped you set your philosophy in perspective for who you are, what you want to do, and how you are going to impact other people?" I would have to give credit to Mrs. Telfair, my third grade teacher.

Mrs. Telfair told the students to come to school one morning with a bowl and a spoon because she was going to serve them soup on a winter school day. Dressed in his knickerbockers and long socks, clothed in a

leather jacket. John was walking to school with the bowl in his brown paper bag. He was swinging his bag as he walked along to school and when the school crossing guard halted him in mid-stride, he dropped the bag on a cement sidewalk at the corner of Sixth and Campbell streets. Two things he was immediately aware of when he dropped his paper bag were that he had broken his mother's bowl and he wasn't going to enjoy any soup with his classmates that day.

I went into the school with tears in my eyes. Mrs. Telfair was a wonderful lady. She threw her arms around my shoulders and used her thumb and forefinger to rub under my chin because that was her trademark. She asked me what was wrong and I told her. I mentioned to her that I would not be able to have any soup and she said, "Oh, yes you will," because she had brought some extra bowls. That's my story, the mended bowl. She mended my bowl right then. For third grade, fourth grade, tenth grade, twelfth grade, college, university professorship, marriage, and as I sit now, I don't have a broken bowl, it's mended, it's fixed. Is it fixed for life, yes? Does it ever crack a little bit? It gets little cracks in it but Mrs. Telfair told me how to mend it, how to fix it. So I found myself mending bowls for people, kids, students, teachers. And, man, I do that all the time and it is so rejuvenating and so fulfilling—that's what makes me tick, that's what helps me to cope and get through life.

He noted that every time he tells the story, he relives the experience; even years later it is still potent. He had a potentially discouraging experience years later with a teacher who singled him out as the worst kid in the room, or so she thought. John claimed he wasn't the worst kid, just the one who got caught for cracking up at other students' antics. At the end of the year the teacher planned to take a field trip. John was left behind from the trip because "he was too bad" in his teacher's eyes. He did get promoted to the next grade, however, and related, "I wasn't broken, because Mrs. Telfair had already fixed my bowl." He extends the charge to his adult role as an educator: "If you were to ask me about my philosophy of life, I would have to say it is about the mending of bowls."

After high school, he went to a segregated college, Winston-Salem Teachers College. Teaching wasn't his goal at the time. His goal was to be an architect. He was dissuaded by this career choice when his only Black college choice at the time for architecture was Tuskegee Institute (which was out of the question for him due to distance and resources) or North Carolina State University, which was segregated. School segregation prevented him from pursuing his dream as an architect. Even today he claims to long to be an architect and includes those design qualities in the work

that he does. His Stylistic Model of counseling is one of the few counseling models to use a three-dimensional cubical model. He reconciled this loss of a career dream by saying, "I think that even if I would have designed a building by now it would have needed to be repaired or it would have been torn down, because that's what happens to buildings. But I build people. People last, eternally."

He graduated from Winston-Salem Teachers College (Winston-Salem State University) Magna Cum Laude and went to teach in the Statesville, Wilmington, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg school systems at a time when the latter school system in North Carolina was beginning to desegregate. Of that time he recalls:

In 1966 I left Wilmington, North Carolina, for Charlotte to be a sixth grade teacher at Selwyn Elementary School for four years. I was one of the first persons to help desegregate the entire system (Charlotte-Mecklenburg). It was a marvelous experience.

John describes his experience as probably unique from what other teachers breaking the color barrier had encountered. The opposition to his being an African American teacher in a White school was minimal, which he knows may have differed from the experiences of others with desegregation. Explaining why he was not targeted for his racial heritage, he states:

I knew who I was, I had had experience teaching, I was focused, and I was creative. I just loved working with kids. I was going to teach and educate them just like I did anybody else. Parents at that time were looking for someone who really cared and would embrace and teach their kids. They [the students] wanted to learn and that's what they got out of that. From out of that experience have come architects, surgeons, professors, and Broadway directors.

John can only recall one incident in his teaching where there was concern about his desegregation experience. While having a physical education class on the playground with his students and playing kickball, the boys were inspired to all tackle the teacher and pile on top of him. The principal of the school observed this from a distance on the hill and was certain that the students were beating Mr. McFadden. He came running to discover that the students and John were really just playing together.

John continued his studies to include an M.Ed. degree from Temple University in 1966 and a Ph.D. degree from the University of South Carolina in 1973. His dissertation was directed by Tom Sweeney, another individual recognized for leadership in this book. He sees his progression from

teaching to include a process of natural advancement in his career: "I was a teacher who trained to be a school administrator. I then stumbled into a counseling communication skills class." He was encouraged by Bill Meyer, a professor from the University of South Carolina, to take additional courses in counseling. He enjoyed the process of counseling and continued with that as an educational career path. He summarizes his life of work by saying, "Teacher, school administrator, higher education associate dean, vice president and now back to teaching and scholarship."

As a counselor educator, John McFadden actualizes another belief he has about leadership in this profession:

(Counseling is a threefold charge . . . The best people who counsel are also good to excellent teachers, because I see counseling, teaching, and leadership as intertwined. Our best counselor educators are our best teachers and our best leaders.

Although he is passionate about good leadership, John prefers to stay out of the limelight and he is not sure why the spotlight comes in his direction. "I am more of an introverted kind of a person," he says, "off to the side, out of the limelight, doing my quiet thing and I have had to come out of that because of roles and being thrust into a lot of positions." Leadership in his eyes emerges over time. He never personally defined himself as being a leader, offering that "Others seem to think that of me, more than I think of myself." The qualities that others see in John place him in leadership positions and they include "faith in me that if I get placed in a task, the job will be done, and it will be done well and in a timely fashion. This signifies a democratic, yet focused and creative leadership style."

As a leader at USC, John McFadden has achieved many firsts as an African American including a vice presidency, an endowed chair and a full professorship (the first since post-reconstruction). In recent years, USC held its rededication of the original university grounds celebrating the 200th anniversary of the university. John was asked to walk through the arched gates of the university in the rededication ceremony. Reluctant to be in the limelight, his decision to participate in the ceremonies was driven by a respect "for all those African American colleagues who at one time could not walk through these gates, those who have come before me making it possible for me to walk through these gates."

Throughout John's life and to this day, women continue to play an important role for him. His mother is still alive and they continue to have a wonderful relationship. The two immediate women in his life are his

wife, Grace Jordan McFadden, USC History Professor Emeritus, and their daughter, Rashida Hannah McFadden. Of Grace, he speaks:

(Grace came in my life, she played a significant part in my life because of the tremendous respect that I have for her as a wife, partner, friend, scholar, as a person. She serves as a barometer for me in decisions that I make.

In Rashida, John sees some of his dreams as an architect and designer emerge through her professional life as a corporate communications associate with National Public Radio. He states, "Rashida keeps me balanced, sane and fatherly, a well-rounded person."

One final passion that keeps John balanced is his rose garden. John takes good care of his garden and finds it a place where he can go, work with the roses, reenergize his professional life, and meditate. He also uses the garden as a place where his design creativity comes through outside of the academic realm.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

While working on this project, I (Marty Jencius) have been touched by John's philosophy of "mending bowls" before they are broken. As a pretenured assistant professor I am continually impressed with the way in which John helps me feel comfortable with my teaching ideas, scholarly inquiry, and writing. I speak to him on the phone about once a month and he always greets me with plenty of time for us to talk and share ideas. This mentoring has been extremely helpful for me and represents a model for how I try to be with my student advisees. John knows to mend bowls before they break and he truly lives that philosophy.

It was in the summer of 1977 that I (Chas Durant) received a master's degree from the University of South Carolina and several weeks later met John McFadden through my faculty advisor. John interviewed and later hired me as his administrative assistant when he was working as assistant to the Dean of the College of Education. Two years in that role and 23 years of mentoring have provided a unique perspective to share reflections on his leadership and dedication as well as be a witness to the multitude of bowls that have been enriched by his personhood. It is without doubt that my personal and professional growth is a legacy of his insight and ideals. With a nurturing and person-centered approach, he has been the embodiment of a mentor as I served in midlevel and senior administrative positions at several universities.

My (Lisa D. Hawley) personal experience with John McFadden is about transcendence. I appreciate John's ability to practice his writing and scholarship in his teaching, mentorship, and service activities. In our mentoring relationship, we were able to transcend race, gender, class, sexual orientation, and age to develop a relationship that assisted in my development as a counselor educator. I enjoyed the many conversations we had that went well beyond the scope of my classroom experiences to include politics, social justice, and historical, anthropological, and sociological references. These stimulating dialogues challenged me to think outside the box and to grow in my understanding of the role of the counselor educator in a broad framework. Two aspects of John's mentorship I have found most meaningful include his ability to promote excellence and his sense of compassion. His sense of rigor and high expectations challenged me and many other students to achieve important milestones with high quality. But ultimately, John's sense of compassion to promote a better society transcends his teaching, scholarship, and service. One of John McFadden's hopes is that his positive influences on my experiences transcend to others. Therefore, as a young counselor educator, my hope is to model these important mentorship qualities with my students and colleagues much like he would expect.

In conclusion, John McFadden's life experiences helped mold his personal leadership style. These life experiences led him to see leadership as a transgenerational process passed to him from his mentors, with a recognition that what they had given must be passed through him and on to others. Secondly, he saw leadership as something that is not chosen but that one is chosen for. John McFadden has established a reputation as a thoughtful, encouraging, and inclusive leader. He is someone who, when committed to a leadership role, works with little fanfare, as part of his own humility, to accomplish goals collectively with the membership. Finally he describes his leadership style as being democratic and participative so that everyone has a voice. Those working with John are reminded by his actions that inclusion is at the heart of his leadership style. These three concepts make up John McFadden's approaches to leadership.

REFERENCES

- McFadden, J. (1999). *Transcultural counseling* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.