

Do Cultural Attitudes Matter?

Cultural Orientation and Academic Self-Concept Among African Descent College Students

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The Nature of the Problem

- ⌘ Educational outcomes are not linked to socio-emotional health of students.
- ⌘ Achievement gap discourse
 - ✖ Contextualized within deficit frame
 - ✖ Relies too heavily on psychological motivation
- ⌘ Failure
 - ✖ To link cultural notions of self to self-esteem

VISUALIZATION

Consider a student

Dyad Discussion

- What is it that you have experienced places students at risk?
- In what ways, if any, do you believe the student's racial and/or ethnic background shapes their risk?
- What values or beliefs do students bring from their home culture to the university?
- In your experience, how aware are they of the university's culture? Academic culture?
- What if any thoughts have you had about bridging the cultural gap?

Academic Attitudes and Culture

Academic self-concept (ASC), a student's sense of efficacy related to academic tasks, is related to academic achievement and has been found to affect black and African-descent college students differently.



Agenda

Today I will:

- ⌘ Present results of study.
- ⌘ Discuss the practice implications for recruitment and retention.
- ⌘ Present strategies for developing Academic Self Concept (ASC) among a black and African-descent student body.

And you will:

- ⌘ Draft a plan of action for your students.
- ⌘ Develop plan of accountability and an outcomes evaluation.

Academic Self-Concept?

- ⌘ A student's perception of their efficacy or ability for academic tasks (McGrew, 2007).
- ⌘ An aspect of the Global Self-Concept (Shavelson, Hubner, & Stanton, 1976) related to academic knowledge of oneself.
- ⌘ Positively related to academic achievement among ALL college students (Awad, 2007; Cokley, 1999, 2002; Cokley & Patel, 2007; Gerardi, 1990; Reynolds, 1988; Reynolds, Ramirez, Magrina, & Allen, 1980; Rinn, 2007).

Being Black/African descent and in College

- ⌘ Perceived and experienced racism at PWI (Predominantly White Institutions) shape the academic environment among Black/African descent students.
- ⌘ “Minority Status Stress”(MSS)– stress experienced as a consequence of one’s minority group membership.
 - ✖ Environmental, interpersonal, intra-group, race-related and achievement-related stressors
- ⌘ MSS is linked to students’ racial group membership and predicted poor academic performance (Greer & Chwalisz, 2007).

Perhaps the students are just not as bright!

- ⌘ Even among high achieving Black/African college students at PWIs, racial stereotypes negatively affected academic experiences.
- ⌘ Fries-Britt and Griffin (2007) found that students reported
 - ✖ assumptions that they were Affirmative Action attendees led students to
 - ✧ Monitor their behavior for appropriateness, fit.
 - ✧ Develop concerns about being a “token” or “imposter syndrome”.
 - ✧ Added pressure to balance bi-cultural tensions.
 - ✧ Succumb to pressure to prove their worthiness to attend school.

How who and where we are makes us think what we think.

- ⌘ **Students with low Academic Self-Concept (ASC).**
When asked why their attitudes were low, Cokley et al. (2003) found:
 - ✖ White students attributed doubt to feeling discouraged about school, though their ability for academic task was not questioned.
 - ✖ Black students attributed doubt in their ability for the academic tasks due to being underprepared.

- ⌘ **Black/African descent ASC was predicted by**
 - ✖ GPA @ PWIs.
 - ✖ *Quality of student-faculty relationships* @ HBCUs.

Anything you do I can do better!

- ⌘ For Black/African descent female students, positive racial/ethnic identity was positively correlated with ASC.
- ⌘ Among Black/African male students, no relationship between racial/ethnic identity and ASC was found.

Cokley & Moore (2007)

Racial Identity vs. Africentric Cultural Orientation

- ⌘ There IS a difference!
- ⌘ Racial Identity theory (Helms, 1990)
 - ✖ Marks one's progression through stages of awareness of their racial self.
 - ✖ Racial identity statuses include:
 - ☆ Pre-encounter
 - ☆ Encounter
 - ☆ Immersion-Emersion
 - ☆ Internalization
 - ☆ Internalization-Commitment
- ⌘ Good discussion in Beverly Daniel-Tatum's "*Why are all the Black kids sitting together...*"

Africentric Cultural Orientation (ACO)

- ⌘ Captures one's ethnic and cultural identification.
- ⌘ It is reflective of the deep structure cultural values that guide, sometimes unconsciously, the individual's attitudes and behaviors (Cokley, 2005).
- ⌘ ACO has been positively associated with psychological health and academic resilience (Myers, 1993; Neblett, Hammond, Seaton & Townsend, 2010; Pierre & Mahalik, 2005).
- ⌘ Middle school Black/African descent student achievement has been directly linked to ACO (Spencer, Fegley & Harpalani, 2003; Spencer, Noll, Stoltzfus & Harpalani, 2001).

If it can work in middle schools, can it work in college?

⌘ I think Yes!

⌘ Hypotheses for the study were

- ✖ Hyp. 1 – ASC and ACO are related.
- ✖ Hyp. 2 – ASC and student academic class and level (undergrad and grad)
- ✖ Hyp. 3 – ASC and involvement in culturally-relevant school and community activities.
- ✖ Hyp. 4 – ASC among Black/African male students will be lower than for female counterparts.

A little about the students

- ⌘ 119 students (75% female)
- ⌘ Academic Class
 - × Freshmen 14
 - × Sophomores 29
 - × Junior 32
 - × Seniors 21
 - × Graduate Students 23
- ⌘ Attended PWI in Southeastern US
 - × Demographics: 49% White, **27% Black**, 11% Asian American, 11% mixed race/ethnicity and 3% Hispanic/Latino
 - × Identity: 77% African-American/non-Hispanic, 10% Black/African, 3% Afrikan, 2% Black/African/Hispanic and 3% Other.
 - × Students identifying as “Other” wrote in descriptions designating their nationality (e.g., Jamaican and Ethiopian).

Data Collection

- ⌘ A demographic questionnaire.
- ⌘ **Africentrism Self-Report (ASR) Measure Form C** (Grills & Longshore, 1996).
 - ✖ For non-clinical populations.
 - ✖ Measures adherence to the principles of the *Nguzo Saba*: (Umoja (unity), Kujichagulia (self-determination), Ujima (collective work and responsibility), Ujamma (cooperative economics), Nia (purpose), Kuumba (creativity), and Imani (faith) (see Karenga, 1997).
 - ✖ Sample Items:
 - ✧ I am more concerned with reaching my own goals than with working for the _____ community.
 - ✧ It hurts me when I see another _____ person discriminated against.
- ⌘ **Academic Self-Concept Scale (ASCS; Reynolds, Ramirez, Magrina, & Allen, 1980).**
 - ✖ Measures the academic aspect of the general self-concept among college students.
 - ✖ Sample Items:
 - ✧ Being a student is a very rewarding experience.
 - ✧ I sometimes feel like dropping out of school.

And we learned...

Hypothesis One:

ASC and ACO are related.

- ✖ Yes there is a positive relationship between ASC and ACO.

What might this mean for academic and student affairs programming?

Hypothesis Two

ASC and student academic class and level (undergrad and grad) will be positively related.

Yes! There is a relationship.

Why might that be? How might knowing this shape the way programming is structured?

Hypothesis Three

ASC and involvement in culturally-relevant school and community activities will be related.

NO! Student involvement in school and community culturally-relevant programming was not related to ASC.

However, ACO was highly correlated to student involvement in such activities.

Why might this be? What have you seen among active students that may explain both of these findings?

Hypothesis Four

ASC among Black/African male students will be lower than for female counterparts.

Female students reported higher ASCs than male students.

How might this knowledge influence our thoughts about intervention?

Strategies/Recommendations

Implementation of specific programming for Black/African male students' perceptions of their academic environments. Focus on:

- ✧ Development of effective coping strategies, while providing **comprehensive support structures**.
 - ✧ Academic (tutoring and other remediation)
 - ✧ Advisement
 - ✧ Counseling
 - ✧ Resources (housing, financial, legal, social services, etc.)

Strategies/Recommendations (cont)

Development of programming which facilitates student involvement in culturally-relevant school and community activities is valuable to student sense of belonging and overall well-being.

- ⌘ Determine ways to support involvement within an academic achievement structure.
- ⌘ Incentivize students through course credit or certification for their leadership in organizations that positively shape the campus and surrounding communities.

Strategies/Recommendations (cont)

Utilize empowerment approaches.

One example may include incorporating the tenets of liberation psychology (Martin-Báro, 1994; Moane, 2003) to :

1. Raise student consciousness about contextual factors that impact their academic attitudes, while
2. Mediating dialogue between student and university administrators and assisting students to develop strategies for implementing campus change.
3. Remain mindful to move the focus away from a preoccupation with problems and toward change.

Students that advocate for themselves and others within university context may experience positive mental health developments as a result of their involvement (Moane, 2003), thus contributing meaningfully to the student's development, overall.

Strategies/Recommendations (cont)

Provide opportunities for more advanced (older) students to share their experiences with younger students, especially those at particular risk for leaving the academic environment.

- ⌘ Mentoring provides needed support for younger students while building efficacy for academic and advisement tasks among older students.
- ⌘ Develops connections with the potential to create a sense of community, belonging, and accountability.
- ⌘ Provide positive reinforcement for matriculation, even through difficult times, while placing them in an environment in which culturally relevant supports are available.

Strategies/Recommendations (cont)

Extend strategies/recommendations to other student groups that also face retention and persistence challenges.

- × Latino/a students
- × Asian/Pacific Islander
- × Students from indigenous communities
- × International students
- × Students with disabilities (physical and psychological)
- × Students with complicated immigrations statuses
- × Students underprepared for college
- × Students from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds
- × Any student that may also benefit from direct intervention which reflects integration of their specific social and cultural context into their academic lives.

REMEMBER THAT
STUDENT

Develop Student Programming

- ⌘ Let's join dyads (4 persons) and create a program with two priorities:
 1. Mine the home/university cultural gaps;
 2. Highlights and/or supports academic task(s).
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Asset Check

- ⌘ What supports are needed?
 - × Financial, institutional, familial, professional peer, student resources, community???
- ⌘ What are the barriers?
 - × Are some from the list of above?
 - × Others? – Systemic culture/will, student motivation, staff.

Did it Work?

⌘ Assessment/Evaluation of Outcomes

× Formative Assessment

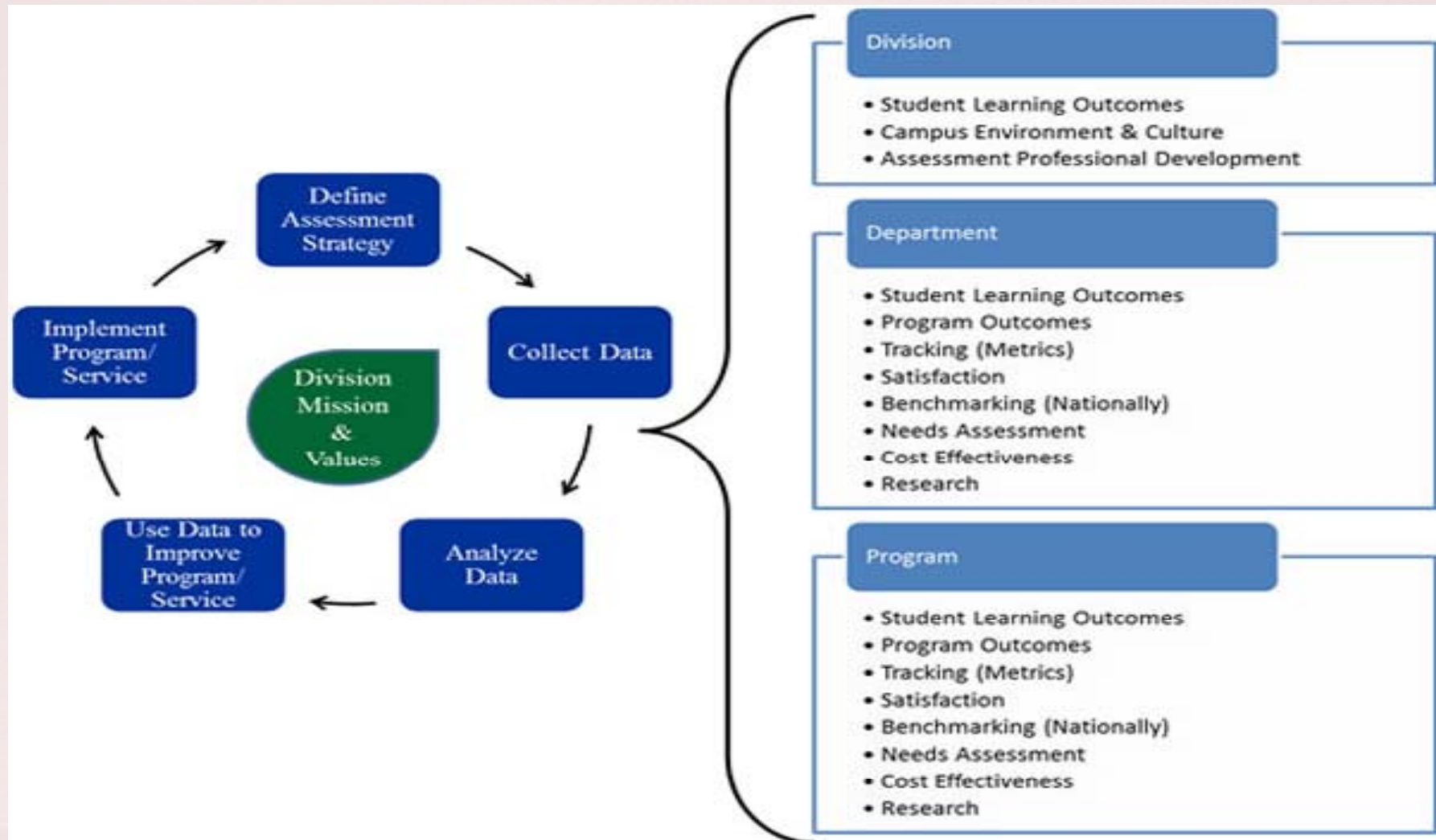
Formative assessment is utilized to provide immediate feedback that can inform further development and improvement of the program.

× Summative Assessment

Summative assessment is cumulative in nature and is utilized to determine whether students about whether the development and learning goals of the program have been achieved.

Before, during and after program implementation!

What are the goals of your program?



From whom and how?

- ⌘ From whom we do we collect?
 - × Students
 - × Other groups with information about student life/experiences (on or off-campus)
- ⌘ Devise a plan for accessing that data?
 - × Archival data
 - × Database
 - × Surveys/measures
 - × Observations
 - × Interview
 - × Focus groups

Did we do everything?

- ⌘ Present results of study.
- ⌘ Discuss the practice implications for recruitment and retention.
- ⌘ Present strategies for developing Academic Self Concept (ASC) among a black and African-descent student body.
- ⌘ Draft a plan of action for your students.
- ⌘ Develop plan of accountability and an outcomes evaluation.

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