

Self-Construal, Culture and Diversity in Higher Education

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When those who have the power to name and to socially construct reality choose not to see you or hear you, whether you are dark-skinned, old, disabled, female, or speak with a different accent or dialect than theirs, when someone with the authority of a teacher, say, describes the world and you are not in it, there is a moment of psychic disequilibrium, as if you looked into a mirror and saw nothing. (Adrienne Rich)¹

Institutions of higher education the world over are charged with training the future professionals, scholars and leaders of nations. Although the number and range of institutions is greater than ever, there is a surprising uniformity in the basic orientation, values and priorities of higher education institutions. In fact the basic formula for how higher education is “done” has remained unchanged for at least a century (Altbach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 2005). By contrast the corresponding growth in the number of students seeking higher education has brought significant changes in the demographic “look” of students at many of these same institutions (Solmon, Solmon, & Schiff, 2002; Kurlaender & Flores, 2005). Shifts in the gender, racial, ethnic and socioeconomic profiles, and of interest here, cultural backgrounds of students have led to increasing diversity in the basic orientation, values, and priorities of higher education students. There is reason to think that this shift has led to incongruities between institutional assumptions about, and students’ culturally derived orientations concerning, the appropriate relationship between “individuals,” “others,” and “institutions.” Such discord can complicate transactions between higher education institutions and the students they mean to serve, and may be at the root of some of the diversity related challenges that have become the subject of great discussion in recent years.

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The Changing Profile of Higher Education Students

One factor driving changes in the demographic profile of college students in the US is the changing shape of the American young adult population as whole over the last few decades. Large growth-rate differences among ethnic groups in this age range signal that the nation's population will continue to change shape for generations to come. The US Census Bureau (2002) projected that for the period 2000 to 2010 the college student population would increase by 10.9% for Asian, by 20.1% for Black; and by 35% for Hispanic, but only by 7.2% for White students. Beyond population changes, public policy shifts and internal social justice initiatives have moved institutions to grant higher education access to students from increasingly diverse backgrounds. Arum, Gamoran, and Shavit (2007), reporting on higher education transformation in 15 countries (including the United States), reported significant expansion in higher education access in the last few decades. Recently colleges and universities have begun to capitalize on emerging scholarship identifying the value of diversity on campus for all students and in contributing to broader institutional goals (Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004) to justify diversity oriented initiatives.

There is a similar story to be told internationally. In the nation of South Africa for example, Kraak (2009) reports that in 1988, despite the fact that they were around 80% of the nation's population, only 10% of students at universities in South Africa were Black. White students, about 10% of the nation's population, occupied 77% of university slots. By 2002 these numbers had shifted dramatically² such that 40% of the students at these institutions were Black, and only 36% White. The numbers for Coloured and Indian students have shifted similarly for the same period.³ In the Caribbean there is also evidence of progress made with regards to higher education access. Miller (2000) reported growth in enrollment after the Montego Bay Declaration of 1997, which set a goal of substantial expansion and provision of higher education across the region. Such shifts in higher education access may be signs of progress toward social justice, but bring with them challenges as well. For example, important questions need to be asked about whether higher education institutions, as they are commonly configured, are equipped to meet the needs of their newest clientele. Trends associated with changes that have already occurred give some indication that most are not.

One sign that US institutions may be struggling to serve this new breed of students is that despite gross increases in enrollment in each racial category, between-group gaps in educational attainment have in fact widened or remained static over the last few decades (Karen & Dougherty, 2005; Price & Wohlford, 2005). Some educators, administrators, and policy makers are quick to ascribe the gap to student characteristics, (in particular to the stereotype that diversity initiatives have brought less capable students to campus), however other explanations may be more fitting. As mentioned, despite great changes in student

demographics, there has been little or no change in the basic formula for how things are done in higher education settings (Hargreaves, 1980). As a result, there is a strong likelihood that institutional capabilities and services, and students' needs have become systematically mismatched in ways that can only lead to problems for students and institutions alike.

In this chapter we will argue that cultural differences in conceptions of the relationship between self, others, and institutions play a role in some diversity related challenges. We will suggest that by increasing our understanding of these issues, and if we are willing to reconsider our basic assumptions about how higher education is properly done, the disconnect between students and institutions can be addressed to the benefit of both. We will begin with an analysis of how these dynamics have evolved and will offer a model describing how they may play out differently for students of different backgrounds as they interact with institutions owing their heritage and structures to the cultures of Europe. We will next describe, as a case in point, a recently completed research project in which we examined these issues among African descended young adults of three nations, the United States, South Africa, and Barbados. Our analysis locates the problem, and with it the onus for change, primarily with institutions rather than students and in so doing suggests a need for colleges and universities to reorient resources, capacities and services. The chapter will conclude with some recommendations for higher education administrators and faculty and suggestions for further research.

Institutional Challenges

In the context of higher education, a student body is "non diverse" when it is composed of primarily White Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, middle class heterosexual and depending on the field of study, men. Strictly speaking of course a great deal of some types of diversity is certain even within those narrow parameters of human identity, a fact that betrays the term's common usage to be more political than sociologically accurate. This does not diminish the legitimacy or importance of diversity concerns (Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). Indeed such political designations are usually, as this one is, derived from long histories of political, social, and economic tensions between groups of people who tend to benefit from or suffer at the hand of a given social order.⁴ In any case the type of interest to this work is cultural and to a lesser extent, ethnic diversity.

There is a growing literature that seeks to describe and address the kinds of problems faced by students of color in higher education (Altbach, Lomotey, & Rivers, 2002; Bowman & Smith, 2002; Solmon, Solmon, & Schiff, 2002), the most apparent and concerning consequence of which are academic underachievement and underattainment. Both are associated with substantial social and economic cost, such as higher unemployment, lower earnings, and greater dependence on

welfare and other social services (Rumberger, 1987). Feagin (1992) identified feelings of alienation, isolation, and intimidation, as well as perceptions of discrimination and racism among the factors that can undermine students' academic success. Students of color who sense that their institutions are not supportive of their personal, social, and academic needs can become alienated (Loo & Rolison, 1986) and so more likely to drop out. Combinations of these and related factors can lead students to feel unwelcome at the very institutions charged with serving them by (Altbach, Lomotey, & Rivers, 2002; Thaver, 2009)

Many (though certainly not all) colleges and universities have directed significant resources toward addressing such problems (Braxton & McClendon, 2002). Some have mechanisms for early identification of students who may need academic and or psychological support. Others offer academic support directed specifically toward minority students, and or establish organizations charged with helping students from similar ethnic backgrounds create and maintain a sense of community (Bowman & Smith, 2002). Despite all of the staff, funding, and other resources that have been committed toward retaining and supporting them, problems of underperformance and poor retention persist (Kurlaender & Flores, 2005).

Theory and research in social and cultural psychology invites us to wonder whether existing efforts are often founded on critical misunderstandings of the problems they hope to solve. For example, most current efforts to "help" are aimed at helping non-traditional students "fit-in" to the traditional structures of higher education institutions as if those structures are immutably and unassailably appropriate when this may not be the case (Whitla, Howard, Tuitt, Reddick, & Flanagan, 2005). While it is hard to argue with the long history of relative success enjoyed by higher education as an enterprise, it certainly also stands to reason that any industry needs to progress as its clientele evolves. For example, an increasing number of higher education enrollees come from cultures known to prioritize people and interpersonal relationships over independence and self-actualization. Known in social psychology as *self-construal*, status on this single variable could have important consequences for how students and institutions interact.

Self-Construal Orientation

Among social psychologists, self-construal is defined as a person's primary orientation towards significant others (Singelis & Sharkey, 1995). A distinction is made between an independent and interdependent construal of the self, where people can be thought of as disposed toward thinking of themselves as mainly *independent of* or *interdependent with* others. A person's primary orientation toward others is known to inform his or her perceptions, attitudes, and perspectives on social relationships and social reality, and thereby to govern how they

interact with others. People whose self-construal is independent are thought to be primarily concerned with securing their own success relative to others while those who see themselves as interdependent are said to value the success of the group as a whole over their own success.

Research has found that interdependent self-construal is associated with public face saving, obedience (Argyle, Henderson, Bond, Iizuka, & Contarello, 1986), embarrassability (Edelmann & McCusker, 1986), higher regard for the views of others (Modigliani, 1966), with feeling that group memberships are appropriate markers of identity, (Triandis, 1995) and to a preference for group over individual or competitive interactions (Nobles, 1974; Triandis, 2001). Independent self-construal is associated with feeling that possessions and accomplishment are appropriate markers of identity, with the display of ego-focused emotions (Triandis, 1995), with preference for working alone (Earley, 1993) and for placing importance on having choices (Iyengar & Lepper, 1999).

It's easy to imagine how a person's self-construal would influence their experiences in higher education settings. Whether a student perceives him or herself as interdependent or independent would govern how s/he will interact with faculty members and other authority figures on campus. It would also influence who a student perceives to be part of his or her peer group and how they would relate with those people and others. It would also likely influence whether, with whom, and how they might seek support when they encounter difficulties in school. Through all of these things, the student's self-construal orientation would influence their efforts to establish a place in a campus community and would have a significant impact on the types of strategies they pursue toward academic success.

How Does Culture Influence Individual Differences in Self-Construal?

Increased access to higher education has brought young people from various racial, ethnic and national groups to campus in unprecedented numbers and with them patterned, culturally rooted group differences in things like self-construal. Culture is commonly defined as the shared values, norms, beliefs, and behavior (habits, traditions, rituals) that distinguish groups of people (Gordon & Armour-Thomas, 1991). Contemporary scholarship in psychology increasingly distinguishes those dimensions from what has been termed cultural *deep structure* (Moemeka, 1998) which can be defined as the perceptual, cognitive, affective and behavioral predispositions that are common among members of cultural groups.

Research indicates that there are important deep structure cultural differences in how groups of people perceive relationships with others. For example, a variety of authors have observed that the psychological orientations of people of North American and Western European heritage are largely based in individualism. By

contrast interdependent self-construal has been associated with people of Asian, South American, Pacific Island, and African heritage (Adams, Anderson, and Adonu, 2004; Markus, Kitayama, & Heimann, 1996; Nobles, 1974; Triandis, 2001). Beyond just varying by cultural group, however, self-construal is of interest to this work because much of the tension attributed to increasing "diversity" among students may be attributable to the fact that young people from cultural groups that emphasize interdependence are showing up on campus in numbers significant enough to bring to light a mismatch between institutional and students' orientations.

Self-Construal in Higher Education Institutions

Just how much students' own self-construal will be relevant to their educational experiences depends significantly on the position of their higher education institutions on related issues. Though it is not right to think of an institution as having a self-construal per se, it is well established that institutions generally reflect the values and priorities of those who originate them and that their structures and functioning generally serve to maintain and even enforce same. Because higher education as it exists globally today was derived largely from the template of European higher education of the late eighteenth century (The- lin, 2004), the independence and competition that were among the key value orientations of that period permeate the structure and infrastructure of higher education even today. If it is true that both students and institutions are bound to be positioned on the question of how the ideal person should relate with other people, and that they can be positioned differently, it stands to reason that a direct examination of such dynamics could be useful in understanding issues related to the fit between students and institutions. Related to the previous discussion on interdependence and independence, if a student has a strong interdependent construal of the self, and the institution is organized around the assumption that the ideal student is primarily independent and autonomous the disconnect can only lead to problems for both parties. Issues of culture are highly relevant to any discussion of diversity in higher education precisely because it is apt to be ignored. Where it is attended to, the discourse tends to center on expressive or functional definitions of culture. Moreover educators tend to view institutions as culture-free and in so doing assume that their configuration and modes of operation are the only or ideal possibilities. This assumption is generally false. Like deep structure culture among groups of people, once incorporated into the infrastructure of institutions such orientations can be determinedly self-maintaining.

We can speculate on how transactions play out when a student and institution are matched in emphasizing independence. For example, students who are independently oriented would likely prefer primarily independent learning.

Because such preferences would be consistent with most of the pedagogy to which they will be exposed and by which their grades are determined, we expect independent learning preference to have a positive relationship with academic success. We posit that institutions affirm and enforce independence beyond pedagogy and so predict that independent self-construal itself would also have a positive relationship with academic success. The dynamics would change significantly in cases where there is a mismatch between student and institutional orientations.

Self Construal in the African Diaspora

The empirical literature in cultural psychology suggests that interdependence among many continental African groups is, more than an appreciation for one's relational connection with others, experienced as an inescapable fact (Moemeka, 1998) and as a connection not only to other people but also to place, spiritual forces, and a sense of built-in order (Feme, 2001). In the broader African Diaspora, this emphasis takes related forms. South Africans of color for example have also been described as emphasizing interdependence (Eaton & Louw, 2002; Naidoo & Mahabeer, 2006), often under the name Ubuntu (Letseka, 2000).

A growing body of scholarship and research places African Americans as a group closer to other groups of the broader African Diaspora than to the Euro founded mainstream of US culture on several deep-structure cultural themes including ones related to self construal (Boykin, 1986; Gaines, Ramkissoon, & Matthies, 2003; Nobles, 1974). Boykin (1986) for example describes African American culture as emphasizing *communalism* (Boykin & Allen, 2000), a term that describes a person's appreciation for the fundamental interdependence among people. Communalism among African Americans is said to have origins in the West African groups from which African American people were enslaved and to have been passed across generations via home and community socialization practices. Communalism has been related positively with volunteerism (Mattis et al., 2000) religiosity, (Mattis, Hearn, & Jagers, 2002) and moral reasoning (Woods & Jagers, 2003). African American students have been shown to prefer communal over individualistic (Hurley, Allen, & Boykin, 2009; Hurley, Boykin, & Allen, 2005) or competitive (Marryshow, Hurley, Allen, Tyler, & Boykin, 2005) interactions.

There is comparatively less research concerning self-construal or related variables among Caribbean people. The available findings are somewhat mixed but generally suggest that interdependence is a significant cultural theme among West Indians (Gaines et al., 2003; Hunter, 2008; Punnett, Greenidge, & and Ramsey, 2007). For example, a mix of Caribbean participants living in the region and abroad scored similarly to Africans on the communalism dimension of the Africentrism scale (Kwate, 2003).

Cultural Discontinuity in Higher Education Settings

An analysis of the interplay between race and culture can help to account for some of the more subtle ways that the status quo in higher education can undermine students of African heritage. For example, Nasir and Hand (2008) pointed out the importance of considering how race and culture interact as students constantly reconstruct their identities in interaction with individuals, communities, and social institutions. Given that interdependent individuals are known to experience the world from the perspectives of significant others (Aron, Mashek, & Aron, 2004), students who experience the exclusion and or denigration of their ways of understanding the world are bound to notice similar struggles among others who look like them. They may come to interpret these experiences, and so higher education itself, as negatively racialized. Since higher education is voluntary, disengagement also seem likely as a coping strategy, however for those who persist, coping with this shared experience would likely galvanize their group (racial) identity *and* reinforce the attitude and behavioral mores shared among them.

A Limited Model and Exploratory Investigation

Although the available previous work establishes that many of the key elements are in place to support our assertion that issues of culture play a significant role in the challenge of serving an increasingly diverse clientele, missing is an empirical examination of the specific way in which group differences in self-construal may interact with various academic and social transactions that take place on a college campus. Figure 3.1 illustrates a model that we propose describes relationships among a few of the cultural and racial variables that should contribute to students' prospects for success in higher education. The model is narrow and does not intend to represent the entire array of relevant variables. Rather, by describing the relationships among a few key variables, we hope to support the argument we have made and to provide a template for examining other relevant variables.

Examining the model closely, first we have argued that many African descended young adults are socialized toward interdependent self-construal. The question at hand then is, what role being interdependently orientated is likely to play in their academic lives at institutions that privilege and enforce individualistic and competitive attitudes and behavior in the variety of settings that make up a campus climate. We can expect a few things. It stands to reason that people high in interdependence will prefer collaborative work and may possess a repertoire of related skills that could, but seldom will be leveraged to their educational benefit. This is represented as the positive relationship between self-construal and learning preference.

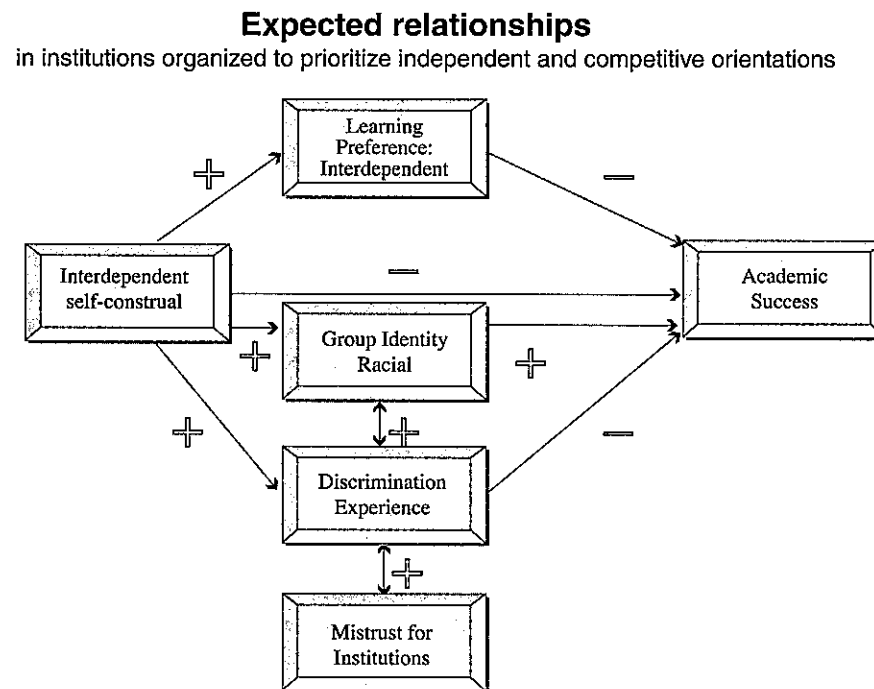


Figure 3.1 Predicted relationships among the variables of the model.

Such students could find themselves at odds with the priorities set by and enforced in the day-to-day operations of higher education in and out of the classroom. This could undermine their feelings of belonging and support on campus as they are held responsible for navigating the extra hurdles of adapting to the modes that are available to them. Therefore, we assume a negative relationship between interdependent learning preference and academic achievement, if only because the effort to adapt is added to the effort they must exert toward mastering course content. Some students will compensate by working twice as hard, but conceptually we can view communal learning preference as contributing negatively to academic achievement under these circumstances. The same should be true of interdependent self-construal itself for similar reasons relating to students' need to navigate the broader institutional environment. Although such dynamics constitute a significant problem in their own right, they are only part of the story. As discussed earlier, additional issues arise because students are apt to notice that others who look like them face similar challenges that others do not. Coupled with the likelihood they will also witness/experience more explicit forms of discrimination,⁵ many such students may come to see their academic and other

difficulties on campus in personally relevant racial terms. This is reflected in the model as a positive relationship between interdependent orientation and the belief that one's racial group is the target of discrimination. The perception that one's group is a target of discrimination can be expected to have a generally negative relationship with academic success. Interdependence should be positively related with racial group identity, as will be the perception of racial discrimination. We view increased racial group identity as in part a coping strategy in so much as students may provide one another a reference point and support in their shared struggles, thus we expect group identity to have a positive correlation with academic success. Finally, we expect that as a protective factor group identity would mediate the negative relationship between interdependence and academic success.

The Current Study

In a recent investigation we set out to test several of the assertions of this model. First, we wanted to determine whether we would find evidence of group orientation among young adults of African heritage in three nations. Second, we wanted to examine the relationship between students' self-construal and their learning preferences. It is safe to assume that by young adulthood they have in some ways acclimatized to the individualistic and competitive priorities typical in educational contexts, thus it is important to determine whether students who may be group oriented in their personal lives, will prefer interdependence-oriented learning. Finally, we determine whether independent self-construal would be associated with variables related to race. We chose three variables, feeling that one's group is discriminated against, feeling connected with others of their racial/ethnic groups, and with mistrust for people of European heritage. The third question could shed some light on whether a simple orientation mismatch between a given student and their schooling experiences is likely to take on larger connotations related to race.

To accomplish this study we measured orientations toward others, learning preferences, perceived discrimination and cultural mistrust among three samples of African descended young adults in South Africa, the United States and Barbados. Participants were 191 African descended male and female young adults. For the purposes of this chapter we present an abridged description of the methods, analysis, and results.

Measures

We assessed participants' *group orientation* using the self-construal scale (Singelis & Sharkey, 1995) the communalism scale (Boykin, Jagers, Ellison & Albury, 1997)

and the The Inclusion of Others in the Self scale IOS (Aron, Aron, & Smollan, 1992). The Self-construal scale is a 24-item measure with subscales assessing respondents' construal of the self in relation to others. The scale yields separate scores for interdependence and independence. The communalism scale is a 31-item self-report measure that assesses an individual's orientation towards social bonds and interdependence. The IOS assesses "respondents' perception of overlap between themselves and a target other," in this case other members of their racial/ethnic group (Li, 2002; Mashek, Cannaday, & Tangney, 2007). This single-item measure presents a series of ten two-circle Venn diagrams. In each pair the circles vary from not touching and spaced apart to almost completely overlapping. Participants are asked to circle the pair whose positioning best describes their relationship with the target other. We assessed students' learning preferences using the communal scenario of the Learning Contexts Scenarios—college version (LCS-C). The LCS were developed to determine whether students' attitudes toward high achieving peers vary depending on the cultural orientation expressed in the peers' achievement attitudes and behaviors (Marryshow et al., 2005). Respondents were also asked to circle yes or no in response to a single item query about whether they belong to a racial or ethnic group that is or has been a target of *discrimination* in their nation of origin. Finally we administered the cultural mistrust inventory, a 48-item questionnaire that assesses the degree to which people of African heritage should mistrust and/or be suspicious of the motives and behavior of people of European descent (Terrell & Terrell, 1981).

Procedures

All instruments were distributed as a questionnaire, which participants completed anonymously after giving informed consent. Participants read the instructions and items to themselves.

Results and Discussion

Table 3.1 displays means for each measure for the whole sample and by group. The mean scores for the interdependence subscale of the self-construal scale was identical to the mean reported by the scale's authors in a sample in mixed heritage college students (Singelis, 1994). Note that separated by group, mean interdependence scores for South African and African American members of our sample were slightly higher while those for our Barbadian participants were marginally lower than those reported by the scale's authors. Mean scores on the independence subscale of the self-construal scale for the whole sample were higher than the sample mean reported by the scale's authors. Separated by group, South African members of our sample scored higher in independence than did Barbadian and African American participants. Communalism scores for members of our sample

Table 3.1 Means for self-construal and communalism

		Nationality				
		AA	SA	BBDS	Tot	
Interdependent	mean	4.12 a	4.22 b	3.89a*, b*	4.01	4.01***
Self-construal	SD	.63	.85	.66	.68	Singelis, 1994
Independent	mean	4.41 a	4.77a*, b*	4.40 b	4.44	4.02***
Self-construal	SD	.66	.60	.66	.74	Singelis, 1994
Communalism	mean	4.24a	4.22	3.98a*	4.11	4.31****
	SD	.51	.47	.62	4.06	Boykin et al., 1997

Notes: Means in the same row that share a subscript letter are significantly different from one another. *p < .05, **p < .01. ***In an ethnically diverse sample of college students. Means have been converted to enable comparison with the six choice response format used in this study. ****In 3 samples of African American college students.

were somewhat lower than means reported by the scale's authors among African American college students (Boykin, Allen, Davis, & Senior, 1997). By group, the mean for African American and South African participants was close to those reported by Boykin, Allen, et al., while that for Barbadian participants was lower.

Mean Inclusion of Others in the Self (IOS-Eth) ratings made by Barbadian participants overlapped significantly less than those chosen by South African and US participants. Table 3.2 displays the difference. As expected, all three groups of

Table 3.2 Means for IOS-Eth, LCS-C, Discrimination and Cultural mistrust

		Nationality				
		AA	SA	BBDS	Tot	
Inclusion of racial/ethnic group in the self	mean	4.65 a	5.39 b	3.85 a**, b**	4.28	
	SD	1.67	1.78	1.96	1.90	
Communal learning preference	mean	4.98	5.37	5.09	5.08	
	SD	.84	1.1	1.0	.97	
Individualistic learning preference	mean	3.73	4.33 a*	3.30 a	3.56	
	SD	1.41	1.61	1.49	1.5	
Competitive learning preference	mean	4.00	4.23	3.73	3.88	
	SD	1.24	1.60	1.51	1.43	
My racial/ethnic group is discriminated against	Yes	85%	67%	36%	58%	
Cultural mistrust	mean	3.29 a**, b**	2.82 a	2.93 b	3.06	
	SD	.53	.33	.66	.62	

Notes: Means in the same row that share a subscript letter are significantly different from one another. *p < .05, **p < .01

our sample preferred the communal over the individualistic and competitive peers. The three groups did not differ significantly in their ratings for the communal peer. Fifty-eight percent of respondents answered yes to the single item asking whether they are part of group that is the target of racial/ethnic discrimination. The proportion varied by group with 85, 67 and 36% of respondents answering yes among the African Americans, South Africans and Barbadians respectively. Finally the mean for cultural mistrust was right at the midpoint between strongly agree and strongly disagree indicating that overall about as many of our participants expressed considerable mistrust for people of European heritage as did not. By group, African American participants expressed significantly more cultural mistrust than did participants from the other two groups.

Testing the Model

We examined the pattern of relationships among the variables of interests as a partial test for the predictions of our model. For this test we used participants' scores on the communalism scale as the indicator of their group orientation.⁶ Figure 3.2 displays the observed relationships. As expected, communalism was a positive predictor of participant's liking for the communally oriented peer

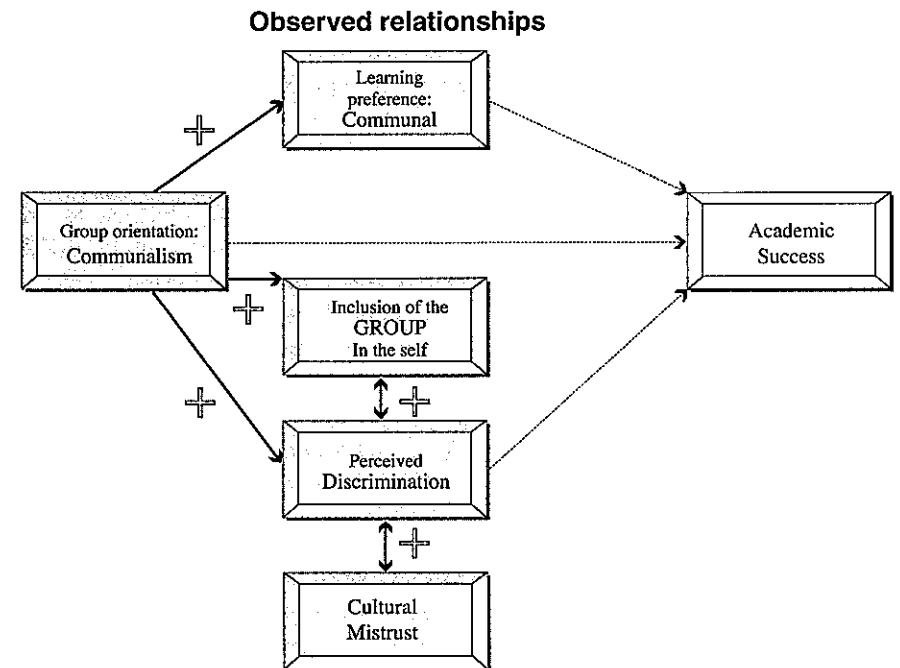


Figure 3.2 Observed relationships among variables of the model.

(path a) but unrelated to their liking for the individualistic or competitive peers (not pictured). Our observation of this relationship in this age group speaks to the importance of understanding and accounting for students' home- and community-based orientations in the ways that we conceive and enact pedagogical and support strategies that hope to serve them.

An issue that has not been empirically examined in a young adult (or any) sample is how a disconnect between their orientations and those supported in the institutions of higher education they attend may lead students to interpret their experiences in racial/ethnic terms. Communalism scores were positive predictors of the overlap our participants reported on the IOS-eth measure (path b). Thus, the more group oriented were our participants, the more they included other members of their ethnic group in their own self-concept. This observation is significant because although communalism scores did not vary systematically between those who did or did not believe that their ethnic group is a target of discrimination, IOS-Eth scores did. They were higher among participants who responded yes to that item (path c). Those who reported being discriminated against also scored higher in cultural mistrust than did those who did not (path d). There was also no relationship between communalism and cultural mistrust in this sample. Interestingly among those who did not see themselves as members of a group that is discriminated against, communalism was associated with feeling less cultural mistrust (not shown). This observation is consistent with our contention that interdependence in and of itself would not be negatively related to intergroup relations (perhaps even contributing positively), but can become racialized under some conditions.

Our exploration of the model affirms our hypotheses about the relationship among the variables for which we have data but the investigation omits the critically important outcome variable—academic achievement—which the model hopes to predict. We did not set out to conduct a comprehensive test of the model but to take an important step forward in establishing relationships among variables that are highly relevant to but not commonly considered in the discourse concerning diversity and academic achievement in higher education settings.

The pattern of relationships allows us to piece together some picture of the kinds of difficulties that such students might face in higher education settings. After gaining access to institutions of higher education students may arrive and find themselves facing unexpected and unnecessary extra hurdles in the classroom as pedagogical strategies are employed which fail to capitalize on their existing skills and orientations to learning. Students may find their institution unprepared or unwilling to support their ways of understanding and interacting with the world and so be frustrated in their attempts to seek assistance with classroom and other difficulties. Finally they may observe that others like them face similar difficulties and are similarly unsupported by the institutional infrastructure and so may conclude that the institution does not make a priority of their progress or value

their presence on campus. This may be consistent with their perception that people of their group are the targets of systematic discrimination and confirm and enhance their existing mistrust of mainstream institutions. Surely our data only provide indirect supporting for the assertions of the model described here. Further research will be needed in order to confirm the relationships we have observed, test our assertions about the relationship between these variables with academic achievement and to determine the generalizability of this model (in whole or in part) to students from other heritage groups known to prioritize interdependence. We also hope that this work will encourage research on the relevance of other cultural variables to higher education. Bearing those things in mind in the next section we next offer a few categories of suggestions based on our analysis that may be helpful to faculty and administrators.

Recommendations

As discussed in the chapter group orientation may inform an individual's interactions with others in various settings. Of particular interest to us is how group orientation would relate to students' experience at institutions of higher education. Some interesting findings emerged that could yield insight into how students of color may experience these institutions.

Pedagogy

(i) We observed a positive correlation between communalism and a preference for the communal learning style. This suggests that for our sample, those students who scored high on communalism also showed a preference for the communal learner. This finding may inform teaching pedagogy, at least to the extent that instructors should be aware of the fact that differences exist in how students choose to learn. Interdependence was also positively correlated with a communal learning preference. This indicates that when given a choice, those students who reported high levels of interdependence also showed a preference for communal learning.

Braxton and McClendon (2002) suggest that, as part of faculty development, cooperative/collaborative teaching techniques should be the focus in faculty development workshops and seminars. Understanding and accommodating communal or collaborative learning and teaching may enhance the learning experience of students who prefer the communal learning mode. It is not suggested that all teaching should happen in a communal or cooperative mode, but that instructors should develop an understanding of the different orientations students may bring to the classroom, and seek ways to accommodate these preferences.

(ii) Johnson and Johnson (1994) have done extensive work investigating the conditions under which cooperative learning is most successful. These conditions

can help enhance both the teaching and learning experience of students. The most important factors that contribute to effective cooperative learning, according to Johnson and Johnson, include positive interdependence (team members perceive that they need each other to complete the task); individual accountability (an understanding of each member's contribution to the task); face to face interaction (opportunities for members to give advice to other members on how to complete the task); interpersonal and small group skills (the ability for group members to interact and communicate with each other); and group processing (opportunities for group members to assess progress and set new goals if needed). These factors make it clear that for the most part, successful cooperative learning depends on the personal attributes of the students, and their ability to effectively negotiate and plan with other students with whom they are working.

Institutional Climate

(i) In our sample the question related to whether participants feel they have personally experienced racial/ethnic discrimination yielded interesting results. First, a positive correlation was observed between communalism and also indicating that "one belongs to a group who has been discriminated against." Also, 85% of African American, 67% of South African and 36% of Barbadian participants indicated that they belong to a group whom they believe has been discriminated against. Institutions are therefore faced with the challenge of creating a safe environment for these students who have become to the institution aware of different forms of discrimination imposed by the broader society.

Pope and Reynolds (1997), among others, tried to advise institutions on how to create an academic environment that supports minority students. They argue that a key goal of student affairs on campus should be to work toward creating a multicultural campus environment. It is proposed that this is best achieved by dedicating significant time, attention, and resources to creating a campus that is open to all cultures. Reynolds and Pope propose that this is best achieved by developing an inclusive mission statement, extensive recruitment and retention efforts, strict anti-discrimination policies, and activities and curricula that create an awareness and celebration of diversity. By being vocal about an institutional commitment to being inclusive, institutions may succeed in assuring these students who believe that they belong to groups who have been discriminated against, that they are welcomed and supported at the institutional level.

(ii) Credle and Dean (1991) and Fleming (1984) point out that it is not just the responsibility of student affairs to create an inclusive institutional environment, but that institutions should recognize the special needs of minority students. They propose, among other things, that institutions recognize and respond to the affective and social development of students, provide mentoring opportunities,

assist with academic support, provide guidance through organizational structure and provide proper assistance in career choices.

Conclusion

We have argued that much of what has been coded as growing diversity on higher education campuses actually amounts to increasing participation by young people whose natal socialization experiences have led them to be high in interdependence. This mismatch is certainly not the only problem related to diversity but it is one that is broad enough and important enough to be addressed systematically and to substantial benefit. Moreover it is a problem primarily because of reticence on the part of universities to reexamine their ways of doing things. Accepting that individualism and competition in the institutional culture of higher education are cultural artifacts more than they are meaningful pedagogical strategies is important. Even if we decide they are meaningful educational goals, there is no reasonable argument to be made that students should be forced to assimilate without help. To the extent that those who have the power influence and construct the day-to-day realities of higher education do inflexibly expect students to assimilate and give no deference to who they are or what they bring to the table, we are choosing not to value their ways of being. To the extent that the higher education institutions that are meant to serve them when we as educators behave as if they only deserve the fruits of education when and if they conform to our expectations we are choosing not to see them and in so doing diminishing our own reflection of the world.

Notes

1. Rich, Adrienne 1986 "Invisibility in Academe."
2. Progress toward diversity in South African higher education institutions is obviously in large part due to the end of Apartheid in 1994, however, within the larger societal changes, higher education institutions have had to negotiate the implementation of new policies on their campuses. This is evidenced by the fact that the diversity statistics vary dramatically among even the most visible universities nationally.
3. We should note that the referenced racial categories were established by the Population Registration Act of 1953 (Schoole, 2005). An individual was classified Black if s/he was from one of the original Southern African tribes. The term Coloured originally referred to individuals of mixed heritage, though Colored people in South Africa do not consider themselves bi-racial or mixed, but members of an established and distinct culture that has evolved over 150 years. Individuals who are classified Indian are generally of Southern Asian heritage, and the White population is descended from mainly Dutch and British settlers.

4. It is possible to criticize the language of diversity, which is often aside from the goals of those who champion it (to address past and current ills in the social structure that give people different access to the levers of social mobility). I believe the gentle language of diversity is intended to soften the discussion by removing guilt and blame terminology that accompany the language of social justice movements. There is great value in using language that invites into the conversations those who have the power to influence events but who may also be responsible for, complicit with, or who at least benefit from, unequal social orders. Unfortunately the gentler language can also lend itself to distortion and over-generalization and misdirection to the point of diminished usefulness.
5. The second author teaches a course in Black Psychology and in 10 years of teaching has never taught the course in a semester in which there was not some campus, national, or global racial event controversial enough to warrant putting aside the syllabus in favor of a discussion.
6. Communalism scores were moderately correlated (.48 $p < .000$) with participants' scores on the interdependence subscale of the self construal measure and showed better psychometric performance (were more reliable in the whole sample and for each group, and showed better discriminant and convergent validity) in this sample.

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Unintentional Prejudice and Social Psychology's Lessons for Cross-Racial Teaching

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Research on interracial interactions shows that unintentional prejudice affects our judgments and behaviors more than most of us assume. Unintentional prejudice is an insidious process by which society's unwritten rules about status, respect, and worth can elude even the most egalitarian among us. As such, it is naïve and inappropriate for any of us to assume that we are immune to the effects of a prejudicial society. As educators, with so much contact with a variety of students, we must be especially vigilant against bias in our perceptions and treatment of our students.

As I will argue, students who are a minority in the classroom likely experience a sense of "other"ness that prevents them from feeling like full members of the class. We are wise to engage in a bit of affirmative action (in the true intent of the term) in the classroom and apply extra effort to make sure that students from racial minority groups don't fall through the cracks. I will discuss some of the processes by which stereotypes can affect us in order to specify the path that such influences might take, thus enabling us to maximize our positive impact on our students.

Unintentional Prejudice

The recent arrest of African American Harvard professor Henry Louis Gates, after he was reported trying to open a stuck door at his own house in Cambridge, provides an object lesson in the ways in which some people are treated differently