African American Students


To better understand the high school educational experiences that lead some African American students to be underprepared for college literacy tasks, Banks conducted interviews of African American Freshmen English students regarding their high school preparation. Students generally reported low teacher expectations, lack of challenge, and emphasis on rote memorization. The article explores the coping strategies (such as “active listening”) students developed to succeed in college literacy classes and suggests the need for both “instructional strategies which acknowledge and enhance African American students’ literacy potential” and curricula changes that incorporate culturally rich resources. Though conducted in the context of college English, our shared interests in literacy and critical thinking make these findings relevant to IL instruction.


Research shows that African American students at predominately white universities express less satisfaction and more stress and isolation than their counterparts at Historically Black Universities. This survey-based study examines how classroom interactions and environment impact a sense of belonging and connectedness among African American students at a predominately white university. Survey responses identified instructional styles promoting active learning and discussion (as opposed to lecture) as contributing most positively to a sense of belongingness, followed by personal interactions with faculty in which faculty are approachable, caring, and respectful. Booker concludes “specific instructional techniques and strategies designed to increase the involvement of African American students in the educational environment” are needed.


This excellent work provides invaluable advice on creating academic environments that encourage and support the academic achievement, retention, and success of African American college students. Edited by college professors with extensive experience at Historically Black Universities, the book addresses issues of communication, teaching techniques, assessment, and learning styles through the cultural and historical lens of the African American experience. The strength of the work lies in its ability to combine the theoretical and cultural underpinnings for the suggested pedagogy with practical strategies. Though not focused on library instruction, this work is valuable for gaining cultural perspectives as well as effective teaching techniques applicable to all students.


This article describes the Research Assistance Program (RAP), a program designed to assist undergraduate African American students enrolled in predominately white universities develop their research skills. The author briefly reviews the literature on culture and learning styles, identifying the styles most prominent among African American students. Hall also emphasizes the importance of the affective aspects of the teacher-student relationship to student learning.
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The program which involves one-on-one “research mentoring” focuses on four main skills: topic formulation, effective search strategies, discernment of scholarly information sources, and understanding information seeking as a process involving critical thinking and decision making, all of which are discussed in the context of the research on African American students.


This edited work provides both analysis of engagement theories and research relating to specific student populations and strategies for engagement. Three chapters are directly related to engagement of African American students: 1.) Harper’s “Institutional Seriousness Concerning Black Male Student Engagement: Necessary Conditions and Collaborative Partnerships” (pp.137-156), 2.) “Engaging Racial/Ethnic Minority Students in Predominantly White Classroom Environments” (pp. 157-178) by Stephen John Quaye, Tracy Poon Tambascia, and Rameen Ahmadi Talesh, and 3.) “Engaging Racial/Ethnic Minority Students in Out-of-Class Activities on Predominantly White Campuses” (pp. 179-197) by Viannda M. Hawkins and Heather J. Larabee. Each chapter contains references.


Katopol uses structured, open-ended interviews to explore the information behavior of African American students in a graduate education program at a large predominantly white university. She examines the students’ information seeking processes as well as problems experienced. However, it is her discussion of the powerful impact of race perception on this process that provides the greatest insights. She expands the concept of “library anxiety” to the broader “information anxiety,” and explores factors such as “stereotype threat” which may contribute to information anxiety in African American students.


This article describes a successful program at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign in which the library partnered with the Office of Minority Student Affairs to offer instructional sessions to minority students as part of its outreach efforts. Noting lower retention rates for African American and other minority students, Love reviewed the literature evaluating different models for library outreach programs. The author concludes that incorporating instructional and reference services into already established academic programs such as the Ronald E. McNair Scholarship, Summer Research Opportunities, and Upward Bound Programs provides a simple, effective means for offering such services to minority students. The author discusses how initial workshops offered through the partnership with the Office of Minority Affairs led to increased outreach including additional instructional sessions and individual research consultations.
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This article highlights the importance of faculty encouragement in increasing the motivation and academic self-concept of African American students. The authors review the literature on motivation theories and academic self concept, noting that perception of faculty encouragement is among the highest predictors of academic self-concept among African American students. The authors integrate those findings with the library literature on the information search process and IL instruction to make the case librarians should incorporate the research on faculty encouragement into their instructional programs. The article provides suggested strategies for increasing the perception of encouragement in IL instruction.


Parsons briefly reviews the literature and then provides a quick, easy-to-read discussion of how mainstream instructional activities can be adapted to meet the needs of African American students. The first sample lesson illustrates how mainstream core values are reflected in underlying assumptions, lesson structure, and choice of activities. The second example shows how the same lesson can be adapted to reflect a culturally inclusive point-of-view and take advantage of the strengths of African American students. Parsons includes bullet-point explanations of A. Boykin’s 1983-1986 research, which developed nine dimensions of the Black cultural ethos (BCE). Brief bibliography and notes included.


This article examines the positive impact of collaborative learning on the intellectual growth reported by African American male undergraduates. Using data from the *College Student Experiences Questionnaire*, Strayhorn found “involvement in collaborative learning experiences such as working with others on a class assignment or activity was associated with a strong positive difference in self-reported intellectual gains.” Moreover, the more frequent the collaborative learning experiences, the greater the gains. Though based on the overall college experiences of students and not grounded in a specific discipline, these findings have clear implications for IL pedagogy.