



Black Males in the Academy: A Model Freshman Seminar

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Quality Education for Minorities (QEM) Network
Recruitment and Retention of African American Male Students
in STEM at HBCUs (March 19, 2010)

Topics: Kolb's Cycle of Learning

Concrete Experience
(Freshman Efficacy Seminar)

Active
Experimentation
(Applying the
Model)



Reflective Observation
(Seminar Results)

Abstract Conceptualization
(An Achievement Model)

Freshman Efficacy Seminar (“Race, Identity and Achievement”)



- A residence-based freshman seminar
- Discussions and activities based on readings that critically identify factors that **foster academic performance and psycho-social well-being**
- Facilitated by an academic advisor/mentor
- 9-10 students annually
- Met weekly in the fall, bi-weekly in spring
- 5 years of the seminar
 - Over 50 participants

Seminar Format

40 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of each participant's goals, academic assignments, commitments, and outcomes from the previous week.• Ensuing discussion centers on a participant's challenges, concluding with a collaboratively-generated solution.
60 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A discussion and activity based on the readings or other assignments
15 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Participants discuss their commitments and goals for the following week.

Seminar Topics



Fall Topics

- The Achievement Contract
- Working Smarter (1-3)
- Learning Styles
- Racial Identity (2)
- Stereotype Threat
- Cultural Fluency
- Achievement Motivation
- Preparing for Finals
- Setting Goals

Spring Topics

- Review Goals/ Setting New Goals
- History of AA Action at MIT
- Assault on Affirmative Action
- Situational Leadership
- Integrity and Character
- Roundtable Discussions (guests)
- Service Project

Seminar Results

- Freshman GPA (compared to non-participants)
 - No difference in GPAs over 4 years
 - Seniors consistently had GPAs above university average
- Persistence
 - 15 percentage points higher than URM average
 - One student forced to withdraw for academic reasons
- Campus/Regional Leadership

Seminar Results: Most Valuable Lessons



- “Identity, power to change my course, **separate failure from bad preparation.**”
- “Study habits and working together.”
- “Listening to the experiences of guest speakers...**It helped build up confidence** and have **high aiming goals.**”
- “Being Black & surviving at MIT (overcoming stereotypes)”
- “I took the readings and applied them to my life, which was very helpful.”
- “**I learned how to study effectively.** I learned how to use a planner and use my time effectively. I learned how to be more organized and how to work with others and hold each other accountable.”

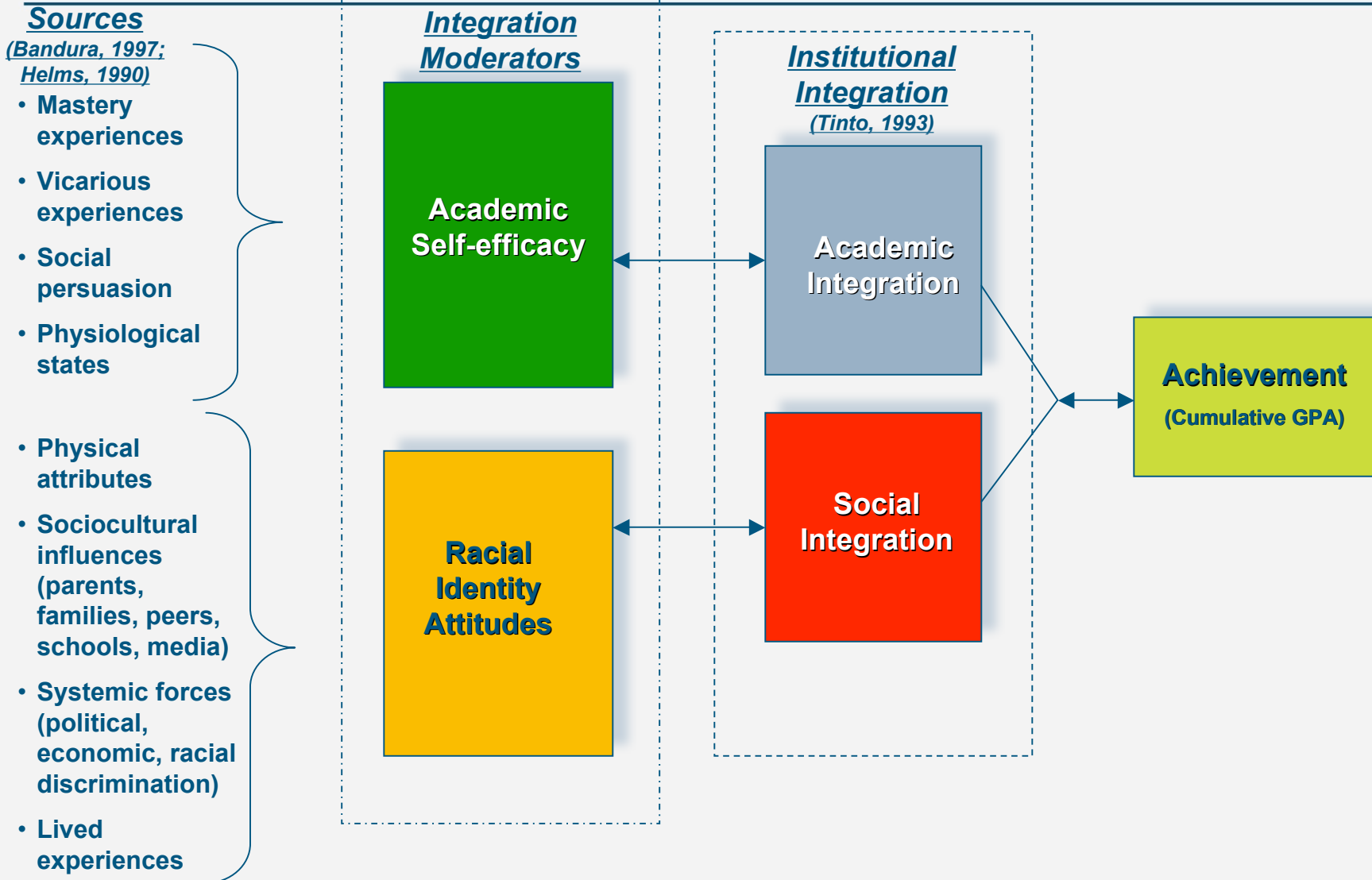
Theory Development



Research Question

Do African American male undergraduates in selective PWIs who report heightened self-efficacy, racial identity attitudes, and levels of institutional integration score higher on measures of achievement than Black males who perform less well?

Hypothesized Achievement Model

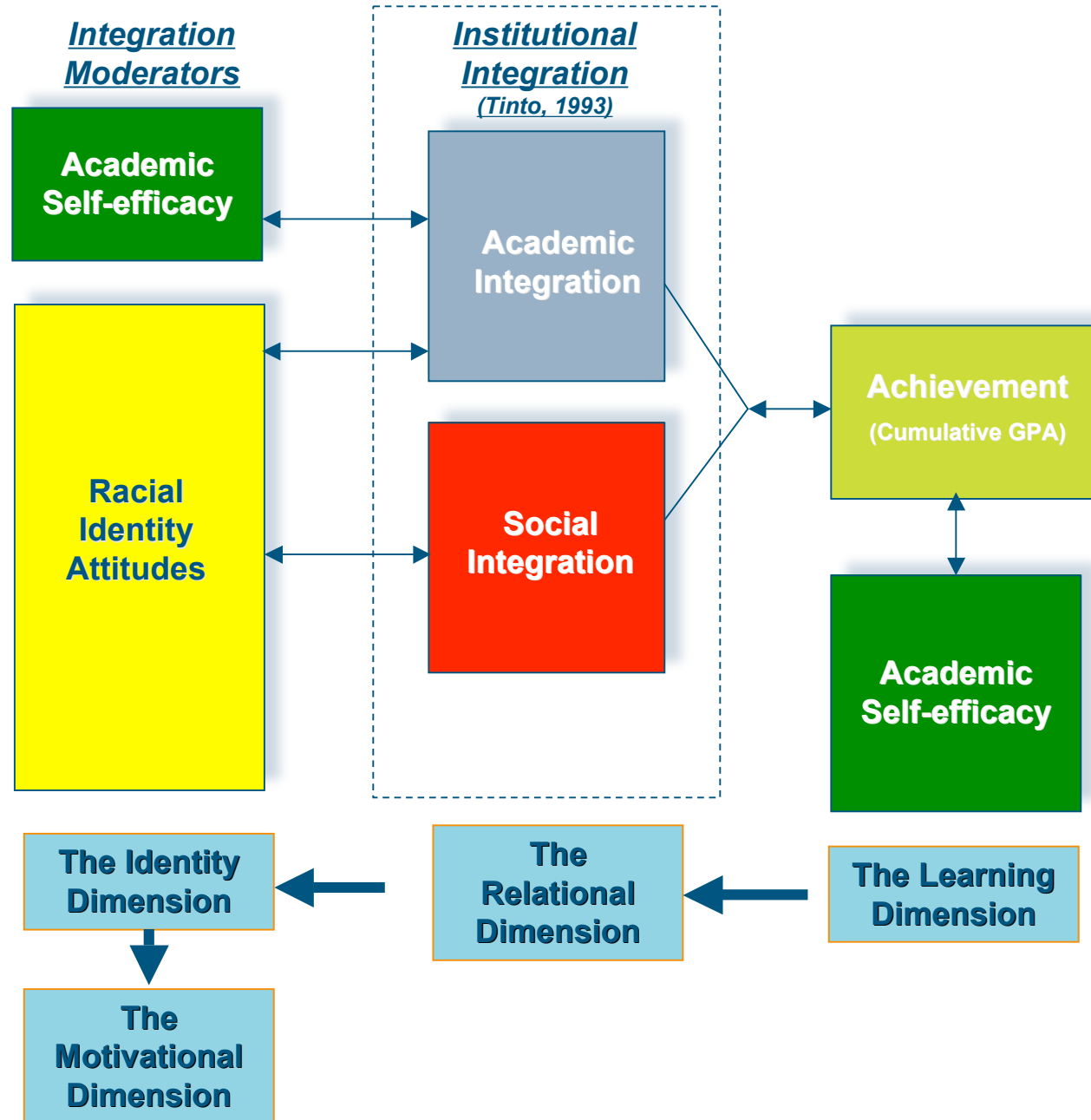


Findings: Factors that Matter

Sources

(Bandura, 1997;
Helms, 1990)

- Mastery experiences
- Vicarious experiences
- Social persuasion
- Physiological states
- Physical attributes
- Sociocultural influences (parents, families, peers, schools, media)
- Systemic forces (political, economic, racial discrimination)
- Lived experiences



Findings: What Matters for High-Achieving Black Males in College?



- They had high confidence in their academic ability
- They had strong relationships with faculty
- They were more socially integrated in the campus community
- They possessed a strong "internalized" racial identity

How do we foster these conditions and attitudes?

Recommendations for Improving AA Male (and ALL Student) Outcomes



- Everyone on campus must take ownership of the responsibility to improve African American male (and other student) outcomes
- Benchmark and increase the academic self-efficacy of students
 - Leverage the three of the major sources of self-efficacy
- Facilitate opportunities to increase positive faculty contact
- Attend to the racial (ethnic) identity development of Black (minority) male (female) students
 - Increase faculty and counseling staff awareness about racial identity schema
 - Increase opportunities for Black males to have meaningful cross-cultural interactions while supporting their need to retreat to a place of “identity safety” (Steele, 2003, p. 125)
 - Leverage mentoring relationships and role modeling
 - “Engineer their Posse”

Application: The UNCF Black Male Initiative

- **Our Aspirational Goal**

- To increase **Black male enrollment by 30%** and **graduation rates by 10%** across schools that receive our grants

- **Our Approach:**

- Sponsor Morehouse Male Initiative research study
- A network-wide assessment and **inventory** of successful access and completion programs targeting Black males
- **Grants** to support
 - Innovative pedagogical, curricular, and **faculty development** initiatives
 - Mentoring, advising, and **faculty engagement vehicles**
 - Programs that foster the positive identity development of African American males
- **Scholarship** support for Black males who have the greatest financial need
- **Share best practices** in Learning Institutes and other venues