

Title: Fitting In: The Importance of Cultural Congruity in Higher Education

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People tend to thrive in environments that share commonalities to their previous or concurrent communities and lifestyles, as these types of environments may instill feelings of familiarity, belonging, or comfort (Lu, 2006). One way to examine interactions between person and environment is through “cultural fit,” which focuses on analyzing how the individuals' cultural context interacts with the cultural context created by the environment. In a university context, this “cultural congruence” is a highly influential factor in students' academic persistence, retention, and achievement (Aguinaga & Gloria, 2015). Thus, an academic culture should appropriately reflect and students' varying cultural lifestyles and beliefs to ensure an environment of cultural congruity. The purpose of the present study was to examine ethnic differences on perceptions of the campus environment, academic engagement, and goal commitment.

One hundred and twenty eight students who were enrolled in psychology courses volunteered to participate in an online survey, which included modified versions of the Cultural Congruity Scale and University Environment Scale (Gloria & Kurpius, 1996). Results showed positive correlation between cultural congruity and perceptions of the campus environment, as well as indicators of academic success. Results also showed differences among ethnic groups on their perceptions of the campus environment and in their goal commitment. These results suggest that academic institutions should tend to programs and services that increase cultural congruence for all students, but specifically aim to increase congruence in ethnic minority students so that they might compete equally in a college environment and maximize their potential for future academic success.

References

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