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# Race or Culture? African American Student Experiences at a Predominantly White Institution

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# African American Student Experiences at Predominantly White Institutions

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## Purpose of Study

To examine, increase awareness about, and provide support for African American students attending predominantly White institutions. Therefore, this study aimed to identify African American student needs and to provide effective programming in an effort to provide a more inclusive campus community for them.

## Research Questions

1. What can be done to positively affect experiences of race related stress and alienation of African American students at Predominantly White Institutions?
2. How can Institutions create a less hostile and more inclusive learning environment to help African American students to be successful academically and socially?

## Selected References

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## Participants

- Personal interviews and Focus groups were conducted with 2014-15 students who identified as African American.
- Four interviews were held with three males and 1 female ranging from ages 18-22.
- Two focus groups were held with two males and three females ranging from ages of 18-22.

## Findings

### Themes

- **Connection with Campus Culture & Environment**
  - High School Life
  - Initial Adjustment
  - Orientation & Campus Tour
- **Factors that Impact African American Student Experience**
  - Campus involvement
  - Relationship with parents & peers
  - World View
- **Student Identity**
  - Culture
  - Identity
  - Race
- **Supports**
  - Awareness through programming
  - Increased African American Student body
  - More visual African American faculty representation

## Methods

This qualitative study focused on nine undergraduate African American students during the 2014-2015 academic year. Students voluntarily interviewed individually and in focus groups responding to a series of questions regarding their experiences on a predominantly White campus.

## Implications

- Many African American students attending predominantly White institutions are no longer first generation and/or low socioeconomic status students who race is no longer most salient to them, however, still important. This study identified strategies to support all African American students while attending predominantly White institutions.
- It provided recommendations to higher education professionals to assist in creating effective diversity programming. This in turn could enrich academic and social learning and lead to a more inclusive campus culture for minority students.
- Further research could examine interracial diversity and closeness among African American students at predominantly White institutions.

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