Promoting Campus Engagement and Involvement Among Male Athletes from Diverse Backgrounds

Keith Champagne, University of Washington
Jennifer Lee Hoffman (Advisor), University of Washington

Socio-cultural
Abstract 2012-276
Saturday, May 26, 2012
11:15 AM

Male students—specifically men of color from diverse student backgrounds on the nation's campuses are not involved and/or engaged in the "student life" of the campus outside of the classroom and this is especially true for student-athletes—particularly once their intercollegiate athletic eligibility has expired. This certainly is the case at the Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs).

In this paper we will discuss the development of an organization and program on one campus that is addressing this problem. At Central Washington University, administrators and students created an organization called E.M.P.I.R.E. (Extraordinary Men Pursuing Intellectual Readiness through Education). We will discuss how a Multi-Theoretical approach and framework were used to develop this organization and explain how the Multi-Theoretical frameworks were interconnected and utilized in unison to build the foundation for the E.M.P.I.R.E "Organization and Program" at Central Washington University. The Multi-Theoretical Frames are as follows: Student Development Theory, Student Retention Theory, Critical Race Theory, Social Cognitive Career Theory, and Social Culture Theory.

Tinto's "Theory of Student Departure" (1975, 1987) posits that students enter college with personal, family, and academic skills and specific intentions regarding personal goals and university attendance. They adjust these intentions on a continuing basis through both positive and negative interactions with peers, staff, faculty, and systemic institutional protocols, processes and structures. Moreover, according to other retention theories such as Astin's "Theory of Student Involvement" (1977, 1985, & 1993) and Pascarella's "General Model for Assessing Change" (1985, & 1991), reaffirms Tinto's claims. These two theories underscore the importance of students' backgrounds, positive contacts and campus engagement. Also, in order, to address the impact of the University environment and community on the academic and co-curricular success of men of color on a PWI campus, we have to view these and other issues through the appropriate lens. Critical Race Theory (CRT) allows to do just that. Even though, our focus is on engaging men of color comprehensively in the campus community, the classroom can not be treated as an isolated space that is void of dominant cultural norms, values and beliefs. Critical Race Theory addresses this particular point and highlights the historical context in which students of color are situated that limits their potential in PWIs (Delgado, Bernal, 2002; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Solorzano & Villalpnado, 1998).

Men of color are working to find their place in the University community and a place that will allow and facilitate academic and co-curricular success in a barrier free environment. Bandura envisioned the multi-directional interplay among personal attitudes and behavior, external environmental and/or organizational and institutional factors to converge to impact person's long-term success (Lent et al., 1994).

Sociocultural theory provides a conceptual framework for studying changing subjectivities in the light of relations between humans and their sociocultural. Vygotsky's (1978) theory is an acceptable and applicable framework for understanding the plight and campus experience of young men on today's college campuses especially men of color from the inner cities and offering a "model" for teaching these young men the following skills: communication, time management, writing, leadership, public speaking and problem-solving. According to Vygotsky (1978), the social cognition learning "model" asserts that culture is the prime determinant of individual development. Humans are the only species to have created culture, and every human child and/or student develops in the context of culture.

This presentation will highlight some of the relevant literature on student development theory, student retention-student engagement theory, critical race theory and sociocultural theory, and situate it in the context of engaging and facilitating the development of men and student-athletes of color on a Predominantly White Campus. Also, we will discuss and explain the E.M.P.I.R.E Organization and the success that we are currently having with men of color and student-athletes on one campus. The presentation will conclude with some important implications for research and
practice pertaining to the campus engagement, involvement and development of men and student-athletes of color on our nation's college and university campuses.