

BUILDING CULTURAL BRIDGES FOR BLACK MALES ENTERING COMMUNITY
COLLEGE: A CULTURAL PROGRAM FOR BLACK MALES

by

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ABSTRACT

Black males in higher education consistently rank toward the bottom of many measures of academic success. The issue is persistent and insidious, with deep roots going back generations. The associated cultural and social complexities require a multitude of solutions to fully overcome the problem. The focus of this dissertation is to develop a program for black males, particularly those from the environment labeled the “iconic ghetto” (Elijah Anderson, 2012), to mitigate the cultural traits that negatively impact the value they place on higher education and their sense of belonging in it. It is well documented that transitioning into a new culture can be an emotionally stressful event if one is unprepared to deal with the changes in social behavior and methods of communicating.

Many programs exist to support black men as they transition to higher education, but most focus on mentoring, remediation, fostering a sense of belonging, and other similar topics, but fail to directly address cultural traits that hinder academic success. The Building Lasting Academic Achievement into Culture program (BLAAC) adopts the practice used in programs to help international students and expatriate managers successfully transition to living in a different cultural milieu. BLAAC builds participant’s awareness of topics related to their culture, its origin, culture shock, and other culture-related topics that will provide program participants valuable insight into why certain cultural traits exist so strongly in black males that limit academic success. The topics also allow participants an opportunity to anticipate and preempt culturally challenging situations that portend counterproductive outcomes.

BLAAC is intended to be one of many tools that college administrators have at their disposal to combat poor academic performance among black males.

KEY WORDS: Black male students, culture, culture shock, student success

DEDICATION

I first dedicate this dissertation to my beautiful wife, Becky. I cannot express how blessed I am to have you in my life, and for all the love and support you have selflessly given me over the years. You have been a dedicated and supportive partner throughout the dissertation process despite the disruption to our lives. I cannot express my appreciation enough. I love you!

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

The importance of a college degree in the pursuit of contemporary social and economic success and stability cannot be overstated. Bachelor's degree holders benefit significantly from higher lifetime earnings, lower rates of poverty, increased job safety, better health, improved life expectancy and overall happiness relative to those who are not (Trostel, 2015). Conversely, the uneducated (those without a bachelor's degree) are 4.9 times more likely to be incarcerated, are disadvantaged by a higher reliance on expensive forms of banking and credit and are 74% more likely to be neither employed nor unemployed, rather out of the workforce completely (Trostel, 2015). Regrettably, African American men disproportionately fall into all the latter categories more often than men in other racial demographics.

Black men in higher education struggle to reach the same level of success as compared to many of their racial counterparts (Mortagy et al., 2018; Palmer et al., 2014). These educational challenges are as multifaceted and complex as the various social and political factors that have influenced them. Although generalizations can never fully describe all members of racial communities, or any community, there are distinct commonalities in the culture of poorer, inner-city environments, labeled by Elijah Anderson (2012) as the “iconic ghetto” —regions stereotypically known for excessive violence, riddled with criminal activity, severely impoverished and socially isolated, where “Black identity became increasingly confused with ghetto lifestyles” (para. 20). The consistency of these negative behaviors in ghettos, found mainly in large cities around the U.S., reveal common cultural mindsets which portend negative

social and financial outcomes, not the least of which is the inhabitants' inability to attain high levels of educational achievement.

Although there is significant literature on the impact that culture has on education for African Americans (Ogbu, 1991; Ogbu & Matute-Bianchi, 1986), few, if any, programs designed to assist black men in their transition to higher education openly discuss the counterproductive aspects of their culture and the origin of these cultural characteristics.

This dissertation results in the creation of the Building Lasting Academic Achievement into Culture program (BLAAC) focused on identifying and counteracting the cultural mindsets that contribute to poor academic outcomes in black men from the iconic ghetto. The program will provide program participants with a better understanding of the negative cultural influences of the iconic ghetto environment and how they distract from the pursuit of excellence in the classroom.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Various researchers have sought to explain the plight of black people in America, such as Blessett and Littleton (2017), who contend that institutional racism and associated strategies result “in multiple burdens being placed on segregated communities” (p. 1). William Oliver (1989) suggests “the failure of blacks to develop an Afrocentric cultural ideology and world view has made them vulnerable to structural pressure that promote definitions of blacks as innately inferior to whites, ignorant, lazy, dependent, promiscuous, and violent” (p. 259). And Herrnstein and Murray (1994) suggest that genetic inferiority portend the negative outcomes for blacks. The extent to which any of these ideas explain the plight of black men has been heavily debated. Thomas Sowell (2005), however, argues that cultural influences, and their origins, serve as precursors to counterproductive, even self-destructive behavior so strongly linked with black

men. These cultural influences afflict the educational achievement of poorer black students, causing peer pressure to avoid behavior that is viewed as being “too white,” rooting black identity in iconic ghetto culture celebrated by “gangsta rap” musicians, and attributing failure to external factors over which the individual black student has no control, all of which results in “an anti-intellectual black subculture which keeps many black students from doing their best” (p. 224). On the other hand, blacks who came from different cultural perspectives, including black immigrants from the Caribbean, or those who self-selected to enter schools like Dunbar in Washington, D.C., succeeded at rates sometimes exceeding those of white students from similar socio-economic backgrounds (Sowell, 2005). The role of culture in aiding or impeding academic achievement is foundational to the project of this dissertation.

The origins of the cultural influences now pervading our ghettos, however, precede both slavery in America and the racist tendencies often associated with them. McWhiney (1988) documented the migration of people from the Celtic Fringe—the Celtic regions of the British Isles and from the English uplands—to the American South centuries ago and the negative cultural characteristics they brought with them. According to Sowell (2005), this pervasive culture was ultimately adopted by black slaves, perpetuated in the iconic ghetto community, and adopted as endemic to the black identity. Jack (2014) concludes that disadvantaged undergraduates, such as black males from urban upbringings, lack the cultural capital to successfully matriculate through college as opposed to their more culturally endowed counterparts, indicating that these distinctive cultural traits contribute to the poor educational outcomes for black men.

With this cultural premise in mind, the author contributes to mitigating the poor educational achievement of black men from the iconic ghetto by applying some of the same

techniques used to help other cultural outsiders integrate into a new cultural milieu. And, as it is with exchange students, expatriate businesspeople, and immigrants, for whom training programs have been developed to mitigate the conflict that naturally occurs when they engage with a different and new culture (Ward et al., 2001), this author, likewise, created a culturally-based program to help facilitate a successful transition for black men as they attempt to integrate into the college environment.

CULTURE

Clifford Geertz (1973) defines culture as “a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men [*sic*] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (p. 89). Culture can affect the way people think, behave, and respond to situations; it can influence how individuals and communities respond to one another within groups; and it influences relationships between foreign peoples (Ward et al., 2001). Culture shock is a common occurrence among individuals exposed to an alien culture or environment, unbounded by era and place (Ward et al., 2001). The results of culture shock include “anxiety that results from losing all of our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (Oberg, 1960, p. 177), and “the depression and anxiety experienced by many people when they travel or move to a new social and cultural setting” (Irwin, 2007, p. 1). In sum, “culture shock: [is] a sense of confusion and uncertainty sometimes with feelings of anxiety that may affect people exposed to an alien culture or environment without adequate preparation” (Merriman-Webster, 2023). The lack of preparation is highlighted by Ward et al. (2001) as a main source of dismay for individuals involved in culture contact; he also found that failure rates of international sojourners could reach 50% if not mitigated.

CULTURE NOT RACE

Comparisons of academic achievement between groups of people often fall along racial lines (Shapiro et al., 2017), but culture may be the determining factor in educational outcomes. Research from Ogbu (1991) in various countries suggests that a “cultural model”—the context through which individuals from distinct culture groups determine which skills are most important to survive in their social and economic milieu—plays a greater role in success or failure in learning. For example, voluntary immigrants—those who emigrated to the United States willingly—have been shown to do better academically than involuntary immigrants—those whose ancestors were brought to the country against their will. Although each group may encounter discrimination due to their race, their perspectives on education may be vastly different due to their cultural understanding of the importance of academic performance and the emphasis they place on it.

CULTURAL TRAINING

Due to the cultural ecology that influences black men from the iconic ghetto to eschew college, some thought should be given to ways in which the cultural divide can be eliminated. Various cultural training programs have been successfully employed for years to ease the negative effects of culture contact and aid in the integration to a different culture. For example, according to Howe (2017), at the turn of the 19th century, Eastern European Jews migrated in large numbers to the United States to escape the persecutions and despotism of the Russian empire. Many of these immigrant Jews were aided by the more acculturated German Jews who developed training programs to help their kindred better integrate into their new, multicultural home. These German Jewish training programs sought to facilitate the cultural adaptation to the norms and behaviors of the United States, thereby greatly increasing their chances of a

successful migration. Similarly, international students are often provided training to increase their chances achieving academic success (Fiedler et al., 1971), and expatriate businesspeople undergo training to ensure business endeavors are successful favorable relationships with the host citizens are achieved (Kealey & Protheroe, 1996). Ward et al. (2001) state, “There is ample empirical and theoretical justification for providing systematic training for persons exposed to unfamiliar cultures”; they continue, however, the “majority of persons entering into culture contact received no formal training whatsoever, or only a perfunctory amount, usually insufficient to give them the intellectual and personal resources they need” (p. 249).

There are various benefits of intercultural training such as increased introspection of one’s own culture, an appreciation for the cultural mindsets of foreign cultures, a disinclination to negatively stereotype people from other backgrounds, reduced levels of stress and improved work performance (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994). Often, the lack of culture training increases the risk of the sojourner’s premature withdrawal from the host culture, resulting in personal hardship, a failure to adapt to the new culture, impaired self-esteem, stunted career development and other negative effects to close family members (Ward et al., 2001, p. 249). Goldstein (2022) suggests that longer term sojourns (from 15 weeks to 1 year) in the host country result in better intercultural competence versus shorter term visits of 8 weeks or less. However, the drop-out rate of black men, especially first-generation college students (Mortagy et al., 2018), can undermine the longer-term gains of intercultural competence. In the case of black men from underprivileged neighborhoods, the social and financial costs of not integrating into the dominant culture portend the perpetuation of a cycle of poverty, self-defeating behaviors, and social ostracization (Ogbu, 1991).

The development of successful training programs is predicated on various factors relative to the individuals themselves and the unique cultural nuances of the environment they are entering—such as, but not exclusive to, whether the individual is from a high context or low context culture, the cultural distance between the two cultures; whether the two cultures are individualistic or collectivist; and whether there is perceived discrimination (Ward et al., 2001).

International students, especially, have a plethora of resources available to them that help support a successful transition to an institution of higher learning and overcome incidents of culture shock. Pre-departure training has been found to be beneficial (Ward et al., 2001), because of its ability to help the sojourner anticipate the problems they may encounter in the new environment, as opposed to being caught off guard by awkward social situations after arriving.

Training should be designed for the specific type of culture contact. Ward et al. (2001) differentiate between between-culture contact and culture contact that occurs within multicultural societies. Between-culture contact training would be appropriate for international students and expatriate businesspeople who, for example, move from one country to another with the intent of living temporarily in the host culture. Multicultural contact is employed for minority groups who live permanently in a society where a strong bicultural competence is required. Facets from each type of training will be used in the creation of BLAAC.

Various programs available for black men in higher education address topics such as remedial education, tutoring support, counseling, mentoring, and study skills; other programs are designed specifically for underrepresented populations, like TRIO and affirmative action (Palmer et al., 2014, pp. 59-60). But these programs devote little of their focus to directly addressing the origin of the culture and the role it plays in how black men view higher education. The addition

of a program that focuses on the cultural shortcomings found in the iconic ghetto communities will help fill the gap in this area.

PROJECT FOCUS AND PURPOSE

This product dissertation will create a cultural training program for black men, primarily those from the iconic ghetto, to help facilitate a successful transition into and through higher education institutions. The student-focused program is supported by literature that provides best practices for its development and implementation. The program is most relevant for community colleges because of the large percentage of black men served by these institutions (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021) versus their four-year counterparts. However, the program could be beneficial to black males at four-year universities, as well.

The framework of the program is built from existing literature and appropriated for use with black men. The program can be employed as a supplement to already-existing programs that address academically based topics such as study skills, remediation, and other social supports like mentoring. However, the program is designed to provide black men with an understanding of the cultural influences that may have steered them toward both counterproductive and self-destructive behavior and away from academic success in the higher education arena, the historical perspective of how the Celtic culture became engrained in the ghettos of the inner cities around the U.S., and a broader perspective of the process of integrating into a new cultural environment of higher education.

SIGNIFICANCE

There is a significant need to address the self-efficacy and self-imposed identity of black men who have been overwhelmingly influenced by the iconic ghetto which promotes self-

defeating behavior as being a part of the “black” culture. Increasing the educational success of black men in the U.S. will benefit underprivileged communities whose residents are most at risk for poverty, violence, incarceration, unwed pregnancy, and improvident spending. Compared to most other racial groups, black males fall toward the bottom in most major measures of academic achievement. Providing black males with cultural training should increase their cultural astuteness and provide tools to help navigate the new cultural milieu of higher education, ultimately improving their chances of earning a college credential.

Attempting to change a person’s perspective about culture is difficult and fraught with challenges that are personally sensitive and potentially offensive. However, providing such a program with a foundation based in scholarly literature will improve the outcomes of program participants such that they are more apt to choose more productive behaviors and positive mindsets. Such training will allow black men to see the process of adapting to a different culture as a valuable skill to be valued, like Wes Moore (2011), who refers to his, and others like him, ability to adapt to various cultures as “code switching” when he says, “we realize it’s a tool as useful as speaking a second language, as long as we use it not out of shame or embarrassment but strategically, as a way to reach out to people or accomplish other goals” (p. 22).

One primary research question guided the research, development, and implementation of the program: *Can a program be developed for black men from the “iconic ghetto” to help mitigate the impact of culture shock?*

ORGANIZATION

Following this introduction, this dissertation is presented in four more chapters, followed by an extensive reference list. Chapter 2 provides a review of literature related to the history and background of culture shock and its history, programs created for black men in higher education,

the process for developing and implementation cultural integration programs. Chapter 3 describes the process for, and insights used, to create the culturally based program. Chapter 4 presents the program developed based on findings described in Chapter 3. Chapter 5 discusses the author's limitations and assumptions, acknowledges implementation challenges, and recommends the development of additional resources and tools.

CONCLUSION

African American men in higher education have among the worst outcomes of any demographic. Black men from the iconic ghetto especially are negatively influenced by a culture that promotes unproductive and self-destructive behavior due, in part, to the cultural influences of the Celtic people who immigrated to the Southern U.S. during the 17th and 18th centuries. These negative cultural traits persist in the ghettos of big cities around the U.S. and portend a host of negative outcomes, including lack of success in higher education. In summarizing the inculcation of black slaves by their Southern white slaveowners, Sowell (2005) attributes the current culture in the iconic ghetto to the progeny of the Celtic people:

What the Rednecks or Crackers brought with them across the ocean was a whole constellation of attitudes, values, and behavior patterns that might've made sense in the world in which they had lived for centuries, but which would prove to be counterproductive in the world to which they were going—and counterproductive to the black who would live in their midst for centuries before emerging into freedom and migrating to the great urban centers of the United States, taking with them similar values. The cultural values and social patterns prevalent among southern whites included an aversion to work, proneness to violence, neglect of education, sexual promiscuity, improvidence, drunkenness, lack of entrepreneurship, reckless searches for excitement, lively music and dance, and a style of religious oratory marked by strident rhetoric, unbridled emotions, and flamboyant imagery (p. 6).

Without addressing the underlying cultural influences that support the counterproductive behaviors and mindsets of the iconic ghetto, black males who live therein will continue to find

themselves on the fringes of the educational mainstream and therefore struggling to obtain the social and financial success those from other cultures enjoy.

Because the challenges black men face are cultural in nature, similar techniques and tools that are used to assist other “foreigners,” such as international students, expatriate businesspeople, and immigrants, transition to a new cultural milieu will be appropriated for use. As such, this author will create a cultural training program for black males in higher education, *Building Lasting Academic Achievement into Culture*, as a supplement to other programs designed to help them successfully transition into and matriculate through institutions of higher education.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

To inform the development of the Building Lasting Academic Achievement into Culture Program (BLAAC) program, this chapter provides an overview and further development from Chapter 1 of literature relative to educational challenges for black men, the origins of the “iconic ghetto” culture, culture shock and its history, and the negative impact culture contact can have on individuals attempting to acculturate to a foreign culture. Lastly, the chapter will provide a review of culture learning and an overview of various college programs designed to mitigate culture shock in multicultural environments.

BLACK MEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

African American men in higher education have among the worst outcomes of any demographic as they rank toward the bottom in several major measures of educational attainment (Mortagy et al., 2018; Palmer et al., 2014). According to a longitudinal study conducted by Shapiro et al. (2017), black men had the lowest completion rate among students who started in four-year public institutions (40%), the highest stop-out rate (41.1%), and are more likely to attend less prestigious, open access schools than their white counterparts. Black men are also less prepared for the rigors of college as reflected in College Board’s (2021) SAT Suite Annual Report, which showed how 53% of black students fail to meet the minimum benchmarks. Mortagy et al. (2018) concluded that in 2017, African American first-generation males drop out

of higher education at a rate of over 66.67%, the highest of any group (p. 261). Black students in higher education also experience feeling out of place, being misunderstood, unprepared, singled out, anxious, and helpless (Jack, 2014). These feelings set the stage for the maladjustment of African American men from the iconic ghetto attempting to transition to institutions of higher education where the social norms may be quite different from that of their environment of upbringing.

BLACK MEN AND REMNANTS OF THE CELTIC CULTURE

As seen above, literature frequently segments educational maladjustment along racial lines. Sowell (2005), however, contends that culture, not race, plays the critical role in the educational divide between black men and their racial counterparts. This author does not intend to suggest that race, and racism, has not played a role in the negative educational outcomes of black men; it most certainly has. Contributing factors, like the mass incarceration and over-policing of people of color, for example, are well documented (Hinton & Cook, 2020). Nor is it being suggested that the counterproductive cultural traits found in the iconic ghetto developed in a vacuum. On the contrary, the author seeks to focus on the origin of these negative cultural traits to highlight the underemphasized cultural aspects that portend negative educational outcomes.

Black men from the iconic ghetto, like other cultural minorities, possess strong cultural and behavioral traits that tend to separate them from the dominant U.S. culture (Ogbu, 1991). The description of a violent (Welch, 2007), sexually promiscuous (Majors & Billson, 1992) black man who ignores his fatherly responsibilities (Majors & Billson, 1992), spends lavishly on material symbols of affluence (Charles et al., 2009), and disdains education (Fordham & Ogbu 1986) has defined African American men for generations. This caricature-like persona is epitomized in the popular “gangsta rap” genre of music where excessively bejeweled lyricists

promote over-the-top self-aggrandizement, extreme violence, misogyny, lurid sexual conquests, material excess, and a get-rich-or-die-trying lifestyle. This countercultural image, as unflattering as it is, it is too often played out in the streets of America's inner cities (D'Souza, 1995).

These counterproductive cultural traits, however, are not unique to black men, nor did these negative traits originate with them. According to Grady McWhiney (1988) in his historical writings about the inhabitants of the early American South, the rude, crude, violent, antisocial behavior now common in "big city" ghettos around the country were previously integral to the cultural norms of a different race of people from a bygone era. The warring people "from Celtic regions of the British Isles—Scotland, Ireland, Wales and Cornwall—and from the English uplands who managed to implant their traditional customs in the Old South" (McWhiney, 1988, p. xiii) are credited with being the progenitors of the iconic ghetto culture. These Celtic people who come from a region with "impotent laws" and "daily dangers" fought continually over generations making life's pleasures more apt to be enjoyed on a whim with a lesser regard for the long-term consequences of their actions (Sowell, 2005). The migration of these historically feuding clansmen, and the corresponding live-for-the-moment mindset, filled the cultural vacuum of the sparsely populated South. Their arrival intersected with the Atlantic slave trade (Curtin, 1969) which brought multitudes of black slaves who were forced to assimilate to the prevailing norms of behavior. In the succeeding generations after the Civil War, Reconstruction, and into the 20th century, the northern migration patterns of the Southerners, both black and white, in conjunction with the racist social and legislative imperatives of the U.S., resulted in the expansion of the ghetto enclaves of America (Gregory, 2005).

A comparison of behaviors between black men of the iconic ghetto and immigrants from the Celtic Fringe shows striking similarities. Using data gathered by the CDC Injury Prevention

& Control database for the years 2011-2013, William Julius Wilson (Reeves & Holmes, 2015) found that incidents of extreme violence existed disproportionately among black males. In comparison, Forrest McDonald (1988) provided a vivid picture of the extent to which Southerners' Celtic forefathers exhibited strong violent tendencies, antisocial behavior, and a propensity for dangerous activity.

Similar comparisons can be made regarding sexual promiscuity. The methods by which some black males declare manhood is often through a multiplicity of uncommitted sexual relationships and by fathering children (Majors & Billson, 1992). And research by Cavazos-Rehg et al. (2009) found that black men become sexually active at a much younger age than those from other racial groups. Likewise, Southerners from the Celtic Fringe exhibited a cultural looseness when it came to sexuality (McWhiney, 1988).

Improvident spending is also a common trait of both the iconic ghetto and Antebellum era Southerners. Charles et al. (2009) concluded that black people spend 16% less of their income on education than their white counterparts and a larger portion of their income on conspicuous goods with the goal of seeking status in the community, ultimately restricting the accumulation of wealth in the black community. Correspondingly, McWhiney (1988) writes of the Southerners' willful squandering of finances and resources and their widespread improvidence.

END OF SLAVERY AND MIGRATION TO THE NORTH

The overwhelming historical accounts of the counterproductive tendencies exhibited by the descendants of the Celtic people stands in stark contrast to the English Northerners who, conversely, migrated from the Southern areas of England mainly to the Northern colonies of America, bringing their more aristocratic, less quarrelsome, and frugal ways with them (Sowell,

2005). This cultural divide foreshadowed conflict as Southerners, both black and white, migrated to the North.

During the period of from 1790-1860, 90% of blacks living in the United States lived in the South (Farley, 1968). In the decades after the Civil War, Southerners migrated north in large numbers in search of economic and social advancement. Over the 20th century, millions of whites, blacks, and Hispanics migrated from the south to large U.S. cities (Gregory, 2005)

The term “ghetto,” coined in the 16th century and used both as a noun and a derogatory adjective, was for most of its history associated with the forced relocation of Jews, but evolved to be more widely associated with African Americans in the mid-20th century (Schwartz, 2019). As the ghetto expanded rapidly during the latter part of the 19th century the representation of blacks in ghettos grew from 27% in 1890 to 8% in 1970 (Cutler et al., 1999). The impact of the sudden cultural influence of Southerners on existing Northerners was significant (see Mossell, 1921, p. 177, for a vivid example from Philadelphia).

The amiable environment in Philadelphia of which Mossell wrote contrasted with the more contentious, even violent environment that resulted after the mass migration of Southerners acknowledges a distinct cultural divide that existed between people of the North and people of the South. However, it is important to note that the result of this culture conflict was unpleasant for many Southerners regardless of race as even white migrants who settled in the North, despite being part of the racial majority, also encountered a level of disdain and hostility from Northerners who regarded them as a culturally inferior (Killian, 1953).

In considering the intersectionality of American structural racism of the early 20th century, one must also examine the various policies that were instituted that resulted in the restriction of black citizens to specific geographic regions, and the role this had on the

continuation of the culture. The federally run Home Owners Loan Corporation's (HOLC) City Survey drew maps for over 200 cities. They drew the lowest-rated neighborhoods in red, hence the term "redlining." Lenders viewed those neighborhoods as higher risks, and the result was that the demographic composition of a neighborhood dictated who could borrow and who could not (Aaronson et al., 2021).

The long-term economic impact of these decisions resulted in minimal investment in neighborhoods and businesses, lower home valuations, and inferior schools (NLIHC, 2021). In addition to the HOLC, Schill and Wachter (1995) concluded that the FHA engaged in racially discriminatory underwriting practices which further separated blacks and whites. Black students residing in these "redlined" districts have been historically more prone to having inferior, underfunded school systems, higher incidents of student drop out, lower standardized test scores and fewer students who, thereafter, attend college (NLIHC, 2021).

CULTURAL IDENTITY

Cultural identity "is a part of an individual's self-definition that signals the individual psychological connection with the culture" (Wan & Chew, 2013, p. 247). The extent to which black men from the iconic ghetto identify with the associated counterproductive behavioral characteristics may be explained by the concept of the "cultural ecology," which is how one's natural environment both influences and is influenced by social organization and cultural values (Ogbu, 1985). The cultural norms of a societal group, the skills and behaviors deemed vital to that population, are demonstrated by tasks which must be done with such competence that individuals performing them are rewarded by, and can operate effectively within the confines of, that social group (Ogbu, 1985). Further, Ogbu considers these competencies to be preordained, such that the competencies have been proven to bring about the desired results by a culturally

organized system, not on the whim of an individual. Culturally organized formulae used to create competent adults in one culture may be considered foreign in another (Ogbu, 1985). For example, competencies such as assertiveness and directness may be held in high regard in middle-class occupations in the U.S., but these same competencies may not be as highly valued in other cultures. Likewise, certain traits within the ghetto may conflict directly with those from the larger U.S. society. The value of education, for example, is highly prized in American society while due, in part, to the difference in physical environment and scarcity of resources, black men from the ghetto may choose other means of getting by due to the subsistence economy at play. As a result, many black people struggle with the cultural aversion to “acting white,” which can lead to academic underachievement (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). This tendency ultimately prevents many black men from pursuing higher standards of education for other more counterproductive behaviors considered more authentically “black.”

CULTURE AND CULTURE SHOCK

Anthropologist Clifford Geertz (1973) defines culture as “a system of inherited conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men [*sic*] communicate, perpetuate, and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life” (p. 89). Culture can affect the way people think, behave, and respond to situations; it can influence how individuals and communities respond to one another within groups; and it influences relationships between foreign peoples (Ward et al., 2001). Culture is adopted from childhood and continually reinforced through learned experiences throughout one’s life through adulthood (Stewart & Leggat, 1998). As long as there have been villages and tribes with groups of individuals whose lifestyles coalesce around specific norms and standards of behavior, there have been individuals from other groups with different beliefs who come to visit. These visitors encounter new ways of

living, worshipping, and communicating, which often result in culture conflict (Acevedo & Chaudhary, 2015; Hawes, 2014; Kusow, 1994). Individuals who leave the confines of their own culture and venture into a different culture for any length of time can experience emotional and psychological distress as they attempt to reconcile the unmet expectations of behavior (Ward et al., 2001). The degree to which individuals from different cultures adjust to a different culture is often attributed to the extent to which the cultures differ—cultural distance (Searle & Ward, 1990). If the norms and beliefs of two disparate cultures differ drastically, misunderstandings can occur often leading to conflict. This conflict can be experienced externally, in the form of overt animosity and outright violence (Gourevitch, 1998), or internally, in more obscure psychological and physiological forms (Oberg, 1960).

During initial cross-cultural interactions anticipated behaviors can remain unrealized, such as behavior intended to be polite or friendly being received as rude or offensive, eventually resulting in a breakdown in communication. During the ensuing struggle to reconcile differences, individuals on both sides go through a process of acculturation through continuous and first-hand interactions, which can change the original cultural patterns of one or both parties (Redfield et al., 1936).

Culture shock is commonly experienced by individuals traveling abroad for significant periods of time, such as international students studying in a foreign land, or expatriate workers conducting business on foreign soil.

Kalervo Oberg (1960) provided one of the first working descriptions of culture shock as he observed the struggle to reconcile differences in newly expatriated missionaries serving overseas. These missionaries developed considerable anxiety as they began to lose many of their familiar signs and symbols of social interaction. Over the next 60 years since Oberg's

description, due to the widespread expansion of international travel by tourists, international students, expatriate businesspeople and immigrants, considerable research has been concluded on the causes, impact, and solutions for culture shock. And these concepts have been extensively researched in multiple fields, each providing an array of definitions in fields like Anthropology, Psychology, and Sociology.

Although many alternative descriptions have been offered to explain the concept of culture shock, the common sentiment is that individuals who encounter intercultural contact may experience some combination of psychological symptoms, including stress, confusion, disorientation, sadness, anxiety, and anger. The lack of preparation is highlighted by Ward et al. (2001) as a main source of dismay for individuals involved in cultural contact. Decades of literature affirm that culture shock can disrupt the mental and emotional capacity of those who enter a different culture to the point that they become unable to function normally due to the intensity of depression and feelings of helplessness that they may encounter (Irwin, 2007). In early years of the theory, authors explained the sojourner's experience as a condition or sickness that causes symptoms such as excessive hand washing, aversion to physical contact, mental lapses and anger (Demes & Geeraert, 2015). Other common difficulties of new culture contact can also consist of language problems, different cultural knowledge, mismatched needs, lack of support, stress, and host inflexibility (Baires et al., 2021; McLeod et al., 2021). If left untreated, cross-cultural contact can lead to a variety of mental and physical illnesses, including in extreme cases, suicide (Stewart & Leggat, 1998).

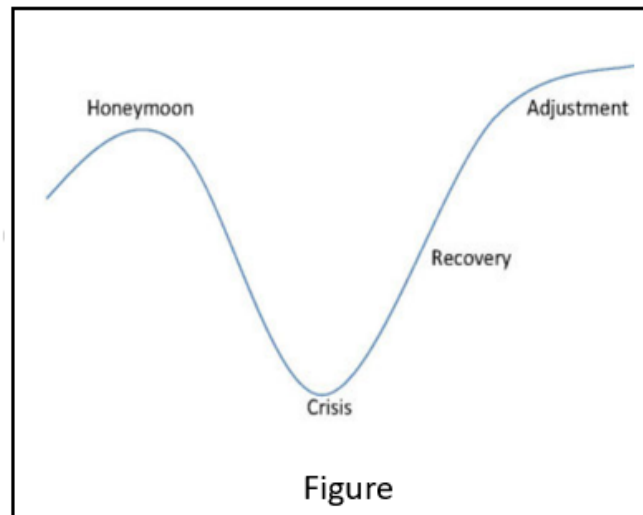
The severity of symptoms is classically most recognizable when the degree of differences between the social and psychological distinctions of two cultures is significant (Adler, 1975).

STAGES OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE SHOCK

Pedersen (1995) provides solace in suggesting that culture shock is not a disease from which one must recover, but rather a learning process with a predictable series of actions or steps through which one must traverse before symptoms diminish. Lysgaard (1955) captures this transitional experience in four stages as shown in his U-curve graph (Figure 1), in which the variable of time is represented on the x-axis and one's degree of adjustment is represented on the y-axis; the four stages are: (1) honeymoon, (2) crisis, (3) recovery, and (4) adjustment.

Adler (1975) coined this process the “transitional experience” that moves from low to high self and cultural awareness and outlined the following five stages of a linear progression: (1) initial contact, (2) disintegration, (3) reintegration, (4) autonomy, and (5) interdependence (pp. 15-20).

Figure 1. U-curve graph



Source: https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Lysgaards-1955-U-shaped-curve_fig1_328941845

MITIGATION OF CULTURE SHOCK

Soon after the theory of culture shock was defined in the 1950s and 1960s, initial methods of mitigating the process were proposed. According to Pederson (1995), methods like critical incidents and cultural assimilators which can be employed to prepare those transitioning to a new culture to reduce the discomfort of culture shock. Further decades of research produced more middle-of-the-road perspectives, including personality adjustments, coping strategies, and modifications of expectations. In Geeraert and Demoulin's 2013 analysis of previous limitations and boundaries of research, it was determined that variable-centered and person-centered analyses determined how stress reduction and increase in self-esteem could mitigate the individual's traumatic experience in a controlled environment.

Initially, researchers needed to accumulate and analyze both successful and counterproductive cultural experiences to determine like traits of the individuals or similarities of the environment and processes. Locus of control (Ward & Kennedy, 1992) and self-efficacy (Harrison et al., 1996), for example, are among several traits that have been studied in relation to the success of a cultural transition. Various means of improving intercultural contact have been discussed, including the use of social networking sites to develop intercultural competence (Valencia & Benavides, 2019), and culture-focus peer mentoring programs (Pekerti et al., 2021). One of the most renowned and popular conceptualizations of personality, however, is the Five Factor Model, also known as the Big Five (Costa & McCrae, 1992; Demes & Geeraert, 2015; Piedmont, 1998). In the Big Five, the traits of openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism are classified as crucial to all sojourners, with a sixth trait coined honesty-humility added thereafter. Together, researchers concluded that these traits serve as good predictors of efficacious intercultural relocation.

Based on evidence accumulated over several decades, training programs are successfully utilized to reduce incidents of premature repatriation. Such training is necessary to remedy the relatively large numbers of individuals who return home before completing an assignment, as much as 15-40% for expatriates, according to Thomas (1996).

A review of training programs designed for international sojourners (international students, expatriate managers) reveals that programs often include some introduction to the concept of culture, one's tendency toward ethnocentrism, and some reflection on one's own culture in relation to others. Brislin (2013) attributes ethnocentrism as a key to understanding culture shock. This self-centered view of the world can have an adverse effect in cross-cultural adjustment (Ward et al., 2001).

Gudykunst et al. (1996) point out the difference between high context and low context cultures. Low context cultures, like non-minority Americans, tend to be straightforward in their approach to communication and rely on clear, direct speech to relay messages (Kim et al., 1998), while high-context cultures, like African Americans, tend to relay messages through more ambiguous means, like eye contact, gestures, and facial expressions (Lynch & Hanson, 2011). Challenges in communication are not limited to contextually governed situations. The incongruence can be exacerbated by a paradox of the cultural distance hypothesis which predicts that the degree of difficulty in adjusting to a foreign culture is based on the distance of the cultural gap between two cultures. That turns out not to necessarily be the case. For example, Americans would likely have less difficulty in culture contact situations with people from the United Kingdom due to the relatively low culture distance versus interactions with South Koreans due to the high culture distance. The paradox, according to Selmer and Shiu's (1999) research of Hong Kong-based managers assigned to mainland China, and their subsequent poor

performance, demonstrates that culture contact between individuals in low culture distance groups can also be problematic because the individuals fail to anticipate the cultural challenges with the same level of diligence as they would with individuals in high culture distance scenarios. Furthermore, the challenges that are encountered by foreigners are more likely to be ascribed to deficiencies within themselves, exacerbating an already negative experience. The relative “closeness” of the cultures between black men from the iconic ghetto and that of higher education in the larger U.S. could explain why there is scarce literature on programs designed to directly address the cultural challenges that black men in face higher education. Moreover, the lack of culture training allows the subtle cultural nuances most likely to cause challenges to remain obscured.

CULTURE LEARNING

Cultural minorities seeking to acculturate to a new environment do so with the goal of completing an objective, whether it is an expatriate manager starting a business endeavor or an international student seeking a college degree, necessitating mutually beneficial interactions with the host community (Ward et al., 2001). The process of acculturation is, in part, understanding the rules of communication between the sender and receiver, which can often be different depending on culture (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988). Relationships can break down if expectations of communication are not met. Ward et al. (2001) highlights the inability of people to regulate social encounters using verbal and non-verbal communication as a hindrance to building effective relationships. Triandis (1994) suggests that the differing communication styles between low-context and high-context culture can be especially problematic, explaining that high context cultures are those which rely heavily on implicit and non-verbal communication while low context cultures rely on direct, unambiguous communication. According to Kim et al.

(1998), Americans are considered low context and value direct, efficient communication styles, while Bai (2016) asserts that, like high-context Chinese, Japanese, and Korean cultures, African Americans exhibit high-context behavior. African Americans often communicate indirectly and implicitly through the use of gestures, and even silence, instead of directly uttering words. According to Fiedler et al. (1971), when groups share a common language the high- versus low-context communication disconnect is even more pronounced as the similarities obscure the differences between cultures, as is seemingly the case with black men transitioning to higher education.

Lei et al. (2023) focused on concepts such as culture and ethnocentrism to develop intercultural learning in college students. A study by Mu et al. (2022) determined that intercultural development is correlated to becoming aware of one's own cultural background and the need to make adjustments when interacting with the host culture.

PROGRAMS FOR CROSS-CULTURAL STUDENTS

Ward et al. (2001) suggests that training and educational program be employed as a method by which culture learning can be successfully obtained. Literature provides examples of programs and studies devoted to addressing the challenges that occur due to cross-culture contact with the goal of increasing the chances of a successful adjustment, including international students (Mabe, 1989), and overseas businesspeople (Bogorya, 1985).

Many academic institutions offer cross-cultural orientation to help alleviate the culture shock associated with the transition into higher education.

- The Dashew Center programs at the University of California Los Angeles (n.d.), provides cross cultural learning opportunities (found at <https://internationalcenter.ucla.edu/programs-events/program-overview>).

- The University of Michigan’s Student Life International Center (n.d.) offers virtual pre-departure orientation for new international students planning on studying at the institution, designed to assist with campus life, immigration and other resources (found at <https://internationalcenter.umich.edu/pdo-all>).
- The University of Texas at Austin’s (2023) Peer Mentor Program, connects international students with current students who have studied abroad. The program provides opportunities for students to connect with each other, ask questions, and receive support (found at <https://global.utexas.edu/abroad/about/peer-mentors-program>).
- The University of Sydney (n.d.) offers English language courses for international students through its Centre for English teaching. The courses help students improve their English proficiency and provide opportunities for cultural exchange and understanding (found at <https://www.sydney.edu.au/cet.html>).

Although literature is replete with culture orientation programs geared toward individuals and groups traveling abroad, one need not travel far to encounter a distinctly different culture (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994). Peifer et al. (2021) found that non-travel-based experiences can have a significant positive impact on intercultural competence.

An additional review programs designed specifically for black students at various U.S. colleges found that many are geared toward community building, identifying campus resources, promoting association with other black students, mentoring, and adjusting to college life—limiting the cultural programs to international students alone, as seen at University of San Francisco (Heller, 2017).

Alternative programs have been developed that do not focus strictly on culture, such as:

- SAAB (2020) provides “educational and cultural activities for its members and others” (found at <https://saabnational.org/about/mission-and-vission>).
- National Society for Black Engineers (2023) seeks to support black students pursue degrees in engineering disciplines with mentoring, academic support, and professional development opportunities (found at <https://nsbe.org/about-us>).
- African American Male Initiative (Augusta University, 2023) is a college-based program which seeks to “promote student success and improve graduation rates through social and academic networks” (found at <https://www.augusta.edu/aami/>).

- My Brother's Keeper Alliance Program (Obama.org, n.d.) seeks to "address persistent opportunity gaps boys and young men of color face" (found at <https://obama.org/my-brothers-keeper-alliance/about/>).

Of the programs listed, as popular or successful as they may be, nothing could be found to suggest that any of them overtly address the origin and history of the iconic ghetto culture, culture shock, or the unique cultural concepts, like ethnocentrism, low- and high-context cultures and cultural distance, or how these concepts can be brought to bear on academic achievement for black men. The transition from a familiar culture to an unfamiliar one can be a daunting experience for the foreigner, and the consequences of an unsuccessful transition can be severe. Most failures in trying to adjust to a novel environment occur due to the use of do it yourself, trial and error methods which don't work (Ward et al., 2001). BLAAC seeks to remedy that.

CONCLUSION

To combat the unfavorable outcomes in higher education for black men, some mechanism must be developed to mitigate the cultural influences known to negatively impact their social standing and their ability to find success in the classroom. Culture orientation programs have been employed for years to preclude adjustment problems for international students, expatriate managers, and immigrants as they transition to an unfamiliar cultural milieu. Likewise, black men from the "iconic ghetto" also encounter cultural challenges as they begin their college journey, yet despite the plethora of programs designed to support them scant resources can be found which directly address the cultural behavioral and mindset challenges they face during their transition. BLAAC appropriates successfully implements strategies from cultural orientation programs designed for international foreigners and modifies them to mitigate the unique cultural challenges black men face.

CHAPTER 3: CONCEPTUAL DESIGN

INTRODUCTION: WHY BLAAC IS NEEDED

The guiding question for this dissertation is: Can a program be developed for black men from the “iconic ghetto” to help mitigate the impact of culture shock? To increase educational success rates and reducing instances of premature withdrawal, various programs for black male students offer academic and social aids, often in the form of mentoring, peer support, academic tutoring, and integration assistance (SAAB, 2020; Obama.org, n.d.). As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, research has been provided to substantiate the appropriateness of adding multicultural training for black male students, as one’s culture, often overlooked by current intervention strategies, plays a vital role in academic outcomes. Culture can determine how much value one places on educational success, the extent to which one is willing to sacrifice time and effort for it, and one’s sense of belonging in the academic environment (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Despite this, there are few, if any, programs dedicated to helping black men understand the fundamental underpinnings of culture, the role culture can play in how they view themselves in the educational environment, that certain cultural characteristics can be counterproductive, and that culture and identity are not fixed. These concepts are often limited to programs for individuals and groups embarking on an international journey, such as international students, expatriate managers, and immigrants. BLAAC fills a gap in existing college programs designed to help black male students from the iconic ghetto succeed in college by focusing on the identification and mitigation of counterproductive cultural mindsets.

By utilizing established techniques found in programs for international students and expatriate managers, this chapter describes the process for the development of BLAAC and provides the outline and intent of the various components of the program, including techniques to improve intercultural communication and skills development.

CHOOSING PARTICIPANTS

Program participation is voluntary. The criterion for participation is limited to black males who are current or potential community college students. Potential students may include those who are in high school, or at a local third-party workforce development office considering community college.

Although sojourners can participate in orientation and training at any point in their transition, programs that are administered before the sojourner starts the transition have been found to mitigate maladaptation (Martins & Tomé, 2015; Ward et al., 2001); therefore, participants will be sought out prior to starting their college education, perhaps as part of the college orientation. However, current students may also participate.

METHODOLOGY

Pedersen (2000) suggests the following steps be taken in the development of a successful intervention or training program: (1) Conduct needs analysis, (2) Determine objectives of the program, (3) Develop design techniques, (4) Implement the training design, and (5) Conduct evaluation.

CONDUCT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

According to Pedersen (2000), the first step in developing successful training or orientation programs is conducting a needs assessment to determine participants' awareness,

knowledge, and skills. The initial orientation session in BLAAC will assess each participant's awareness and knowledge of their own cultural background and what they can expect from the college culture, as well as an assessment of what skills they need to make a successful response to "culture shock."

As it is the case with other programs developed for black male students, and those developed for international students, BLAAC is designed to be preemptive in nature and therefore assumes intended and self-selected participants can benefit from the culture orientation regardless of their current cultural awareness, knowledge, or skill level. The key consultants agree, based on prior experience, that the target audience likely has little previous awareness or knowledge of the significant role culture plays in their academic pursuits and can benefit from the program. Further, they agree that the depth of culture related information provided by BLAAC will be previously unknown information.

Also, considering the statistical data for the educational outcomes for black men, previously discussed in Chapter 2, indicating that significant improvement is needed, this cultural intervention has merit.

DETERMINE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

BLAAC was developed to address the guiding question for this dissertation posed in Chapter 1: Can a program be developed for black men from the "iconic ghetto" to help mitigate the impact of culture shock? According to Brislin and Yoshida (1994), successful programs adopt four main objectives to increase intercultural communication: (1) Improve the enjoyment and benefit of cross-cultural interactions, (2) Improve the attitude of hosts toward sojourners, (3) Facilitate the accomplishment of participant's own goals, and (4) Reduce stress for the

participant in the new cultural milieu. These four objectives support development of the program as stated in the guiding question.

Objective 1: Help Black Men Increase Enjoyment and Benefit of College

BLAAC seeks to assist in providing the best opportunity for the participant to have an enjoyable college experience by taking advantage of all college has to offer, both academically and personally. The program will assist in developing a broadened perspective of participants' own cultural biases, traits, and ethnocentric tendencies, and those of the second culture. Further, the program helps participants understand how their existing cultural tendencies interfere with a positive self-image, outlook for their future, and positive interactions with others. Participants should gain skills that help them make acquaintances with people from cultures different than their own, join social clubs, college organizations, and extracurricular activities. The participants should also gain increased confidence in their chances of graduating due, in part, to their increased knowledge and anticipation of the cultural pitfalls that can hinder success for black. Participants will also benefit from the corresponding mental preparation that takes place to mitigate problems with acculturation.

Objective 2: Create a Positive Image

BLAAC will provide insight into various "iconic ghetto" mindsets that may hinder effective intercultural communication, including verbal and non-verbal communication. The program can help improve communication skills, increase confidence, and demonstrate a positive self-image so participants have a better chance of creating allies among faculty, peers, and administration.

Ward et al. (2001) suggest "predeparture contact with the target culture also increases the likelihood of sojourners-host friendship and spending leisure time with those nationals" (p. 148).

Objective 3: Help Student Achieve Their Own Goals

Primarily, BLAAC seeks to support black male students in their efforts to obtain a college credential in their chosen program of study in a reasonable amount of time by addressing the cultural identity issues that hinder academic success. The program will also address concerns about participants' sense of belonging and provide practical information about how to navigate the college environment. In addition, the program will provide the skills to manage future transitions in which culture contact is required.

Objective 4: Reduce Stress in College

The BLAAC program aims to mitigate the stress and discomfort often encountered by black male students on the academic pathway. Through targeted interventions and resources, BLAAC focuses on empowering program participants with the necessary tools and skills to excel in their educational pursuits.

To achieve this, providing program participants with opportunities to experience common cultural faux pas in a non-threatening manner through the use of cultural assimilators and critical incidents would be impactful. The program's comprehensive approach considers various factors that contribute to college success, including access to resources, mentorship, cultural sensitivity, and a supportive learning environment. This emphasis on skill development and cultural understanding allows participants to gain valuable insight and practical experiences that can alleviate stress and discomfort associated with navigating through the educational experience.

DEVELOP DESIGN TECHNIQUES

The development of a typical intercultural communication program is comprised of determining the amount of time allotted to conduct the training and the budget allocated; once determined, a collection of training methods are then assembled (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994).

Figure 2, from Hånberg et al. (2009), provides an “overview of the cross-cultural training methods, their focus, timing of implementation and general activities used to convey training.” (p. 11).

Figure 2. Cross-cultural training methods

Training	Focus	Timing	Activity
Didactic	Factual information, culture general and/or culture specific	Pre-departure and/or post-arrival	Lectures, informal briefings
Experiential	Practical learning, culture general and/or culture specific	Pre-departure and/or post-arrival	Look-see trips, workshops, simulations
Attribution	Learning to think and act as a host national, culture specific	Pre-departure	Cultural assimilator
Language	Facilitating specific intercultural communication	Pre-departure and/or post-arrival	Traditional teaching
Cultural Awareness	Understanding culture as a concept, culture general	Pre-departure	Role-plays, self-assessment exercises
Interaction	Learning from previous expatriates, culture specific	Pre-departure and/or post-arrival	Overlaps, on-the-job training
Cognitive Behaviour Modification	Learning to focus on rewarding activities, culture general	Pre-departure	Counselling
Sequential	Synergies from combined training, culture general and culture specific	Pre-departure, post arrival, repatriation	Combining different training methods

The methods by which the training objectives of BLAAC will be carried out are based on various techniques, such as attribution, cultural awareness, cultural sensitization, critical incident technique, didactic, experiential, interaction and sequential. Case studies, critical incidents, cultural assimilators, interactive discussions, lectures, and role play will be employed to support the methods. Certain activities are explained below:

- Case studies are “an in-depth investigation of a single family, event, or other entity...to understand an individual’s background, relationships, and behavior” (American Psychological Association, 2023).
- Critical incident is “an event that matters and is regarded by one or both of the participants as being of some importance and as having a significant, non-trivial impact on their lives” (Ward et al., 2001).

- Role Play provides participants an opportunity to “act out” potentially problematic situations in a safe environment. Role play also allows participants to practice communication skills, both verbal, non-verbal and written without fear of judgment from authority figures.

DETERMINE PROGRAM FORMAT

The training format for BLAAC is developed such that the various modules contained therein can be presented over several timeframes, from hours to weeks, depending on the participant availability. However, the following format is designed such that the program is administered over one four-hour period.

DETERMINE FACILITATOR QUALIFICATIONS

Ideally, the facilitator should be a black man possessing a bachelor’s degree, minimally, from a predominantly white college or university. He should also have personal experience with the iconic ghetto, either as a current or former resident or someone who has considerable experience working with individuals from that environment. It is desirable that the facilitator also have experience undergoing a cultural transition on an international scale. The facilitator must also be well-versed in the subject matter being discussed.

DETERMINE ASSESSMENT TECHNIQUE

The participant’s learning outcomes will not be assessed using the Classroom Assessment Technique’s Basic 3-2-1 Format (NIU, 2023). At the conclusion of the training, each participant will be provided with a brief, non-obligatory questionnaire that will ask the following questions:

1. What are three of the main topics of the session that you found most interesting?
2. Please provide two examples of how these topics might be beneficial to you.
3. Please provide one confusing or unclear topic discussed in the session.

DETERMINE DELIVERY METHOD

The delivery method will include a combination of lectures, group discussions, critical incidents, cultural attributions, and role play. Participants will be encouraged to engage the facilitator and other participants in conversation about the subject matter.

DETERMINE TRAINING DETAILS

Prior to the start, a training date, time, and suitable physical location should be determined. A complete agenda should be created, including guest speakers, if applicable. All supplies (such as audio/visual equipment, flip charts, etc.) should be procured.

CONDUCT TRAINING

Once the participants are gathered in session, the facilitator should introduce himself and allow participants to introduce themselves by engaging in an “ice breaker” to make them feel at ease. The ice breaker should be a light-hearted, inconsequential question that is formulated to get the participants used to talking in a group setting without concern of giving a right or wrong answer.

After the ice breaker, the facilitator should discuss expectations of the session, such as creating and maintaining a “safe space” where thoughts and opinions are respected not challenged; group discussion is also encouraged.

The facilitator will then review the agenda and begin the formal presentation:

- Importance of education (Didactic)
 - Current statistics
 - Benefits of college degree
- History of black men in higher education (Didactic)
 - Current statistics
 - Discussion

- What makes educational experiences of black men so different? (Sequential: Cultural Awareness, Didactic, Experiential, Interaction)
 - Iconic ghetto discussion
 - Discussion: Counterproductive characteristics
 - Delineate and provide statistics
 - Violence
 - Lack of educational pursuit (“acting white”)
 - Improvident spending
 - Touchy pride
 - Promiscuity and unwed births
 - Why are these traits so prevalent
 - Anticipate racism as ultimate cause
 - Challenge assumption, if necessary: How does racism result in these behaviors?
- History of iconic ghetto culture (Sequential: Cultural Awareness, Didactic, Experiential, Interaction)
 - Immigration of people from Celtic Fringe (awareness)
 - Customs and culture (awareness)
 - Intersection with slave trade (awareness)
 - Migration to the North (awareness)
 - Contrast with Northerners (black and white)
 - Segregation and expansion of ghettos (awareness)
 - Development of iconic ghetto culture and identity (awareness)
 - Discussion (knowledge, awareness)
- Understanding culture and culture shock (Sequential: Cultural Awareness, Didactic, Experiential, Interaction Attribution)
 - Culture (knowledge)
 - Definition and examples
 - Ethnocentrism
 - Discussion
 - Culture Shock
 - Symptoms and examples (international students)
 - Causes
 - Low- vs. High-context cultures
 - Culture distance
 - Discussion
 - How is college culture different?
 - Goals and objectives

- “U” curve (confirm with Ch. 2)
 - Four stages of culture shock
 - Cognitive changes
 - Emotional changes
 - Behavioral change
- Benefits of orientation (Sequential: Attribution, Cultural Awareness, Didactic, Experiential, Interaction)
 - International students and expatriate managers
 - Discussion
- Understanding the College Environment (Sequential: Attribution, Cultural Awareness, Didactic, Experiential, Interaction)
 - Introduction to college
 - College norms and expectations
 - Role of faculty
 - Deference to instructors
 - College terminology
- Effective Communication (Sequential: Attribution, Cultural Awareness, Didactic, Experiential, Interaction)
 - Verbal
 - Non-Verbal
 - Written
 - Asking for help (self-reliance vs. self-confidence)
- Importance of Relationships (Attribution, Cultural Awareness, Interaction)
 - Student to faculty
 - Student to student
- Conclusion (Sequential: Didactic, Interactive)
 - Review of “High Points”
 - Question and answer session
- Evaluation

CONCLUSION

The structure of BLAAC is supported by literature which demonstrates the value of intercultural training in successful acculturation. It provides a foundation upon which participants can begin to understand the complexities of culture, their own and that of the college environment, and the impact that culture shock can have on their educational development.

Considering the stakes involved in not adapting to the college environment for black men, such a program has considerable merit. According to Ward et al. (2001), relative to cultural maladjustment, “In all instances of failure there is a personal cost in terms of impaired self-esteem, delayed career progression and general unhappiness” (p. 246). BLAAC seeks to mitigate these negative outcomes.

CHAPTER 4: CULTURAL TRAINING PROGRAM

INTRODUCTION

The following pages contain the printed images of the PowerPoint presentation for BLAAC (Figures 3-89). Each image is followed by written notes to inform the reader as to the intent of each slide. However, animations within some of the actual PowerPoint slides cannot be replicated.

PROGRAM CONTENT SLIDES

Figure 3. Title slide of presentation

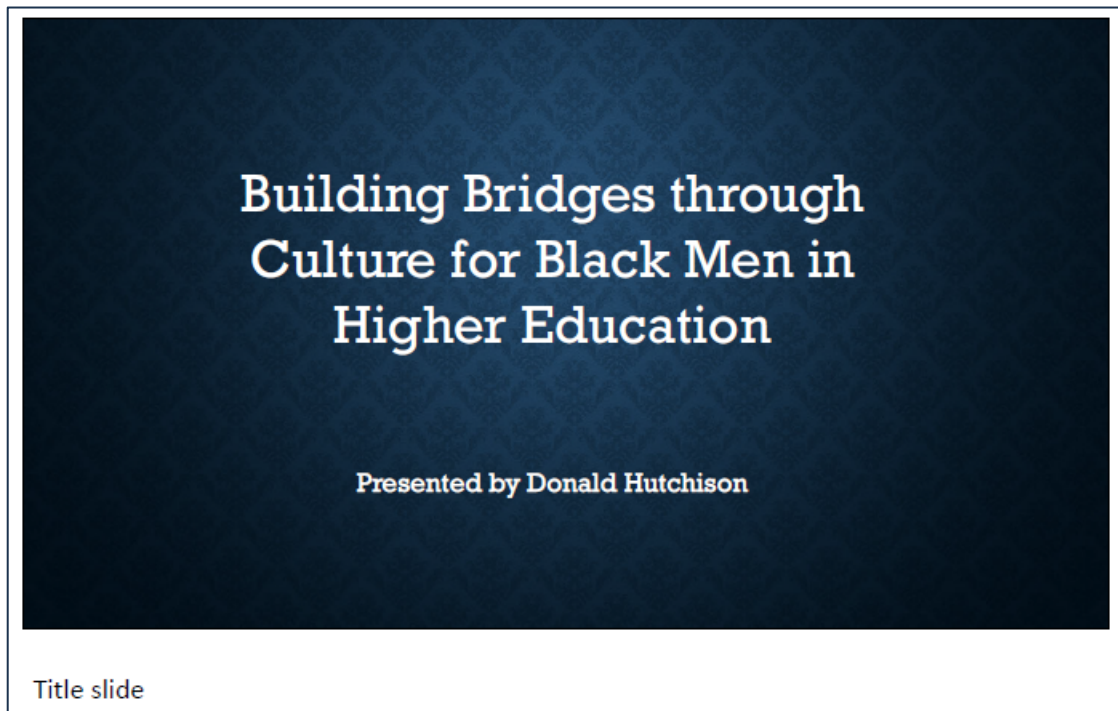
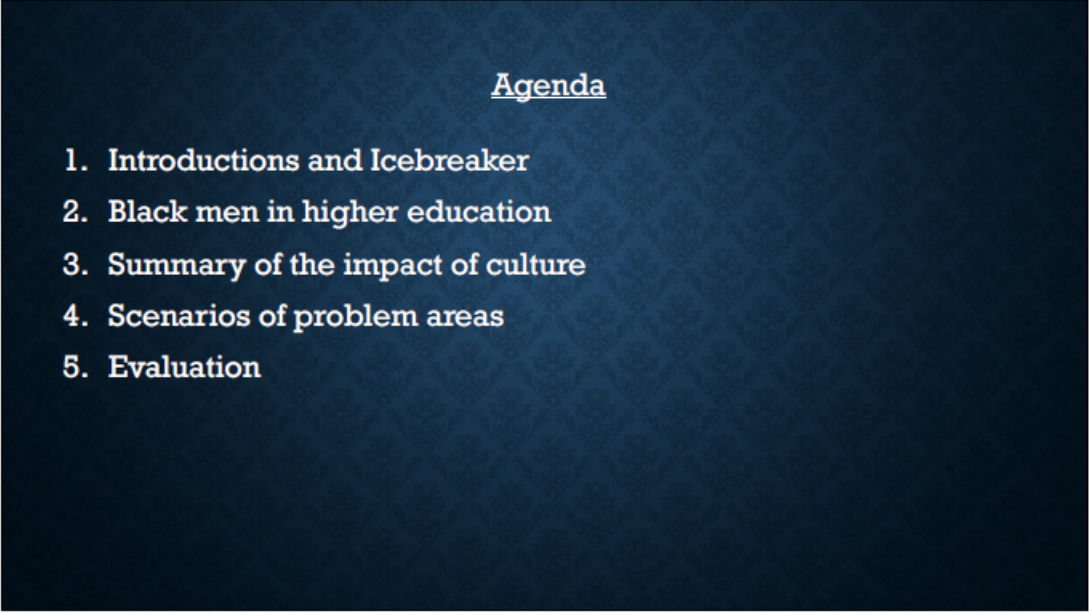


Figure 4. Agenda slide

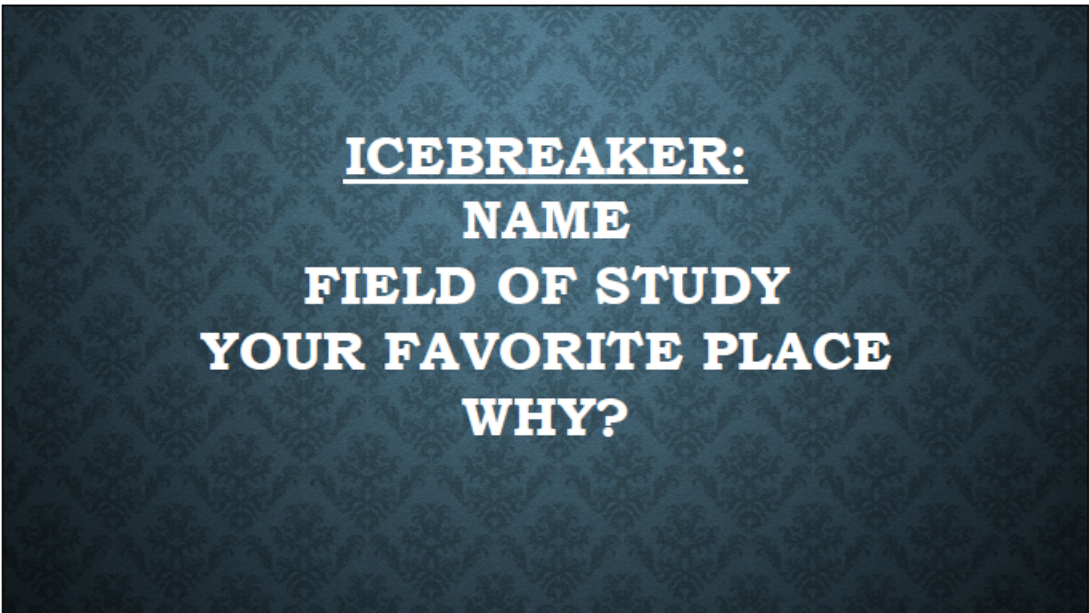


Agenda

1. Introductions and Icebreaker
2. Black men in higher education
3. Summary of the impact of culture
4. Scenarios of problem areas
5. Evaluation

Agenda slide


Figure 5. Icebreaker slide



ICEBREAKER:
NAME
FIELD OF STUDY
YOUR FAVORITE PLACE
WHY?

The purpose of this slide is to get participants to relax and begin forming a community.

Figure 6. Question slide



WHY ARE WE HERE?

The intent of this slide is to reinforce to the participants that the program is designed to help them succeed.

Figure 7. Degrees matter slide

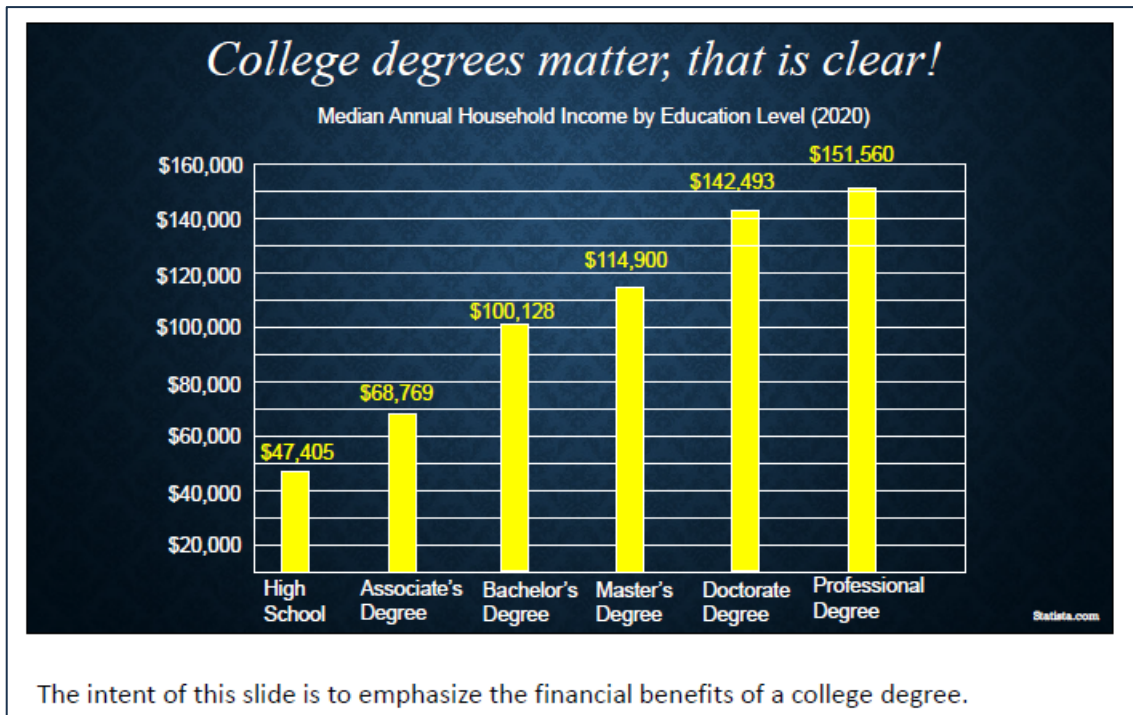


Figure 8. We underperform? slide



WE UNDERPERFORM?

The intent of this slide is to emphasize the fact that black males underperform, solidifying the importance of the program for participants.

Figure 9. Black men in higher ed slide




BLACK MEN IN HIGHER EDUCATION

- Black men have among the worst outcomes of the four major demographics for educational attainment
- Represent only 4.6% of all postsecondary enrollment
- Have the highest drop-out rate

The intent of this slide is to make participants aware of the dire statistics for black men in education.

Figure 10. Identity slide




This slide is designed to have participants “identify” with one of the images to better relate to the upcoming content.

Figure 11. Percentage of African American men with college degrees slide

Only 24.9% of African American men hold a bachelor’s degree or higher
Versus 41.9% of all adults

The above slide informs participants of the relatively small percentage of black men who hold bachelor’s degrees versus all adults.


Figure 12. Impact of culture, slide 1



The above slide shows the impact of culture, designed to garner a silent reaction when shown how few black men actually succeed in higher education.

- The white question mark on the green background exists for the participants to consider themselves in one of the two groups – those with a degree and those without (on following slide).
- Animation shows only 25% of the faces.

Figure 13. Impact of culture, slide 2



This slide is designed to garner a reaction when participants see how many black men fail in higher education.

- Animation shows 75% of the faces.

Figure 14. What is culture? slide




WHAT IS CULTURE?

- Inherited values, beliefs, behaviors.
- Passed on through language, music, art, stories, rituals, etc..
- Culture then shapes our attitudes toward life.

This slide is designed to introduce the topic of culture and to engage them in discussion to determine what their views are.

- "There are as many definitions of culture as there are theorists... For the purposes of this presentation, we will focus mainly on the attributes of a specific group of people.
- Some define culture as "the way we do things around here."

Figure 15. Discussion of culture slide



DISCUSSION

Is culture good or bad?
Is culture fixed, or can it change?
Should people choose to change their culture?
Should people always be proud of their culture?

This slide is designed to provide open dialogue between facilitator and participants and delve deeper into the topic of culture to explain that:

- Culture is formed by various social, political and economic factors
- Culture is not fixed, nor is it innate
- Culture should be changed when it is proven to be unproductive (i.e. Chinese people's historic view of female vs male births)
- Culture and identity must not be bounded by the other, but often are.

Figure 16. Transition to iconic ghetto slide

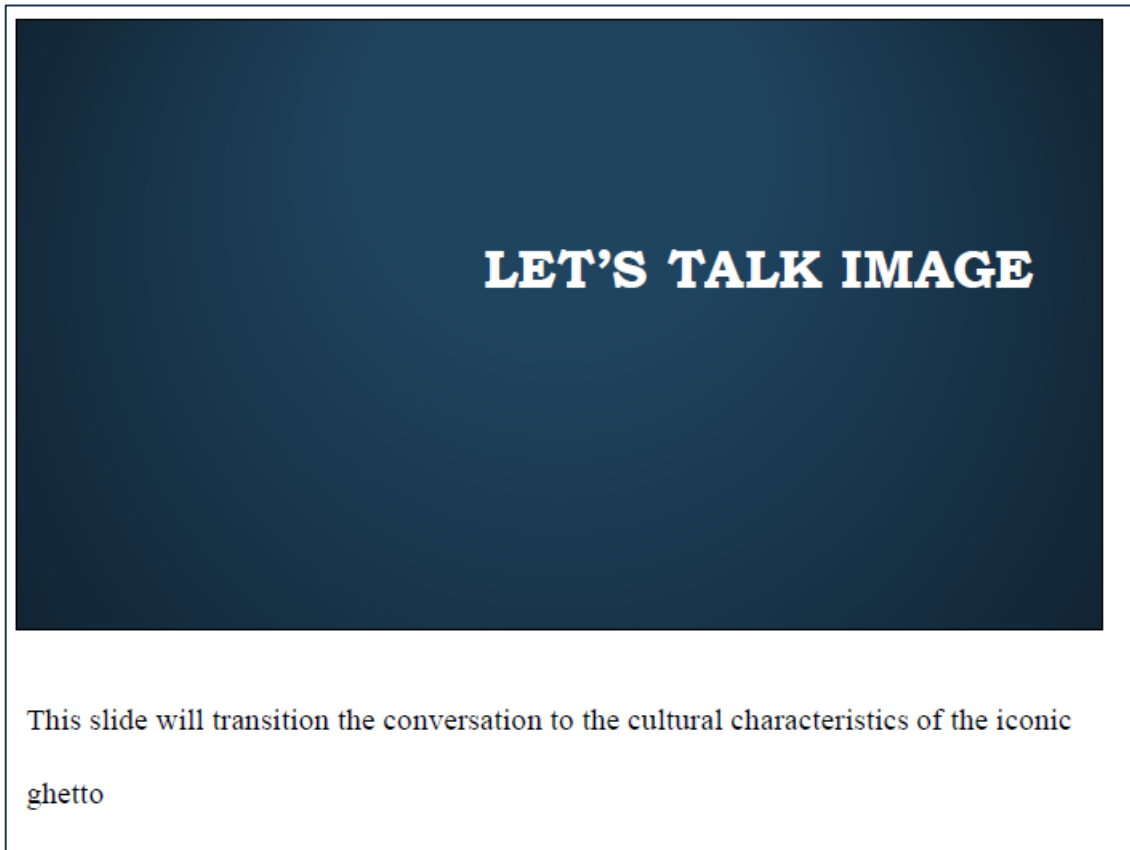
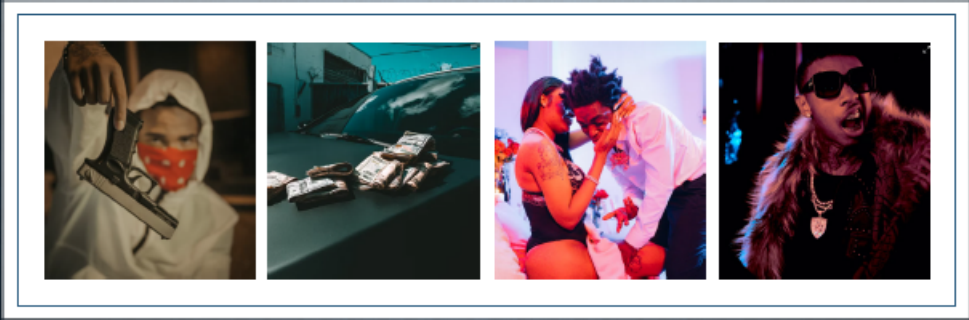


Figure 17. Negative images of black men slide



**WHAT ARE THE NEGATIVELY HELD
IMAGES OF BLACK MEN?**

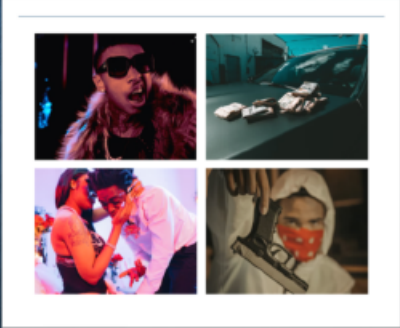
This slide, and the following two, are designed to expose some of the popularized negative aspects of black male culture.

- Participants will be asked to identify these characteristics based on their own perspectives and experiences.
- Pictures will be revealed as discussion ensues.
- Anticipate sentiments that this is not a fair assessment/overgeneralization of black men.

Figure 18. Are images justified, slide 1

ARE THESE IMAGES JUSTIFIED?

- Firearm homicide rates are 8–10 times higher for Black men than White men.
- Blacks spend up to 30% more of their income on items like clothing, jewelry and cars than whites with comparable households,
- Blacks spend 16% less on education.



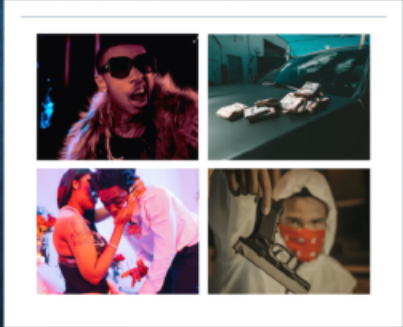
The intent of this slide is to demonstrate that, unfortunately, much of the negative imagery is accurate.

- These points emphasize the need for intervention.

Figure 19. Are images justified, slide 2

ARE THESE IMAGES JUSTIFIED?

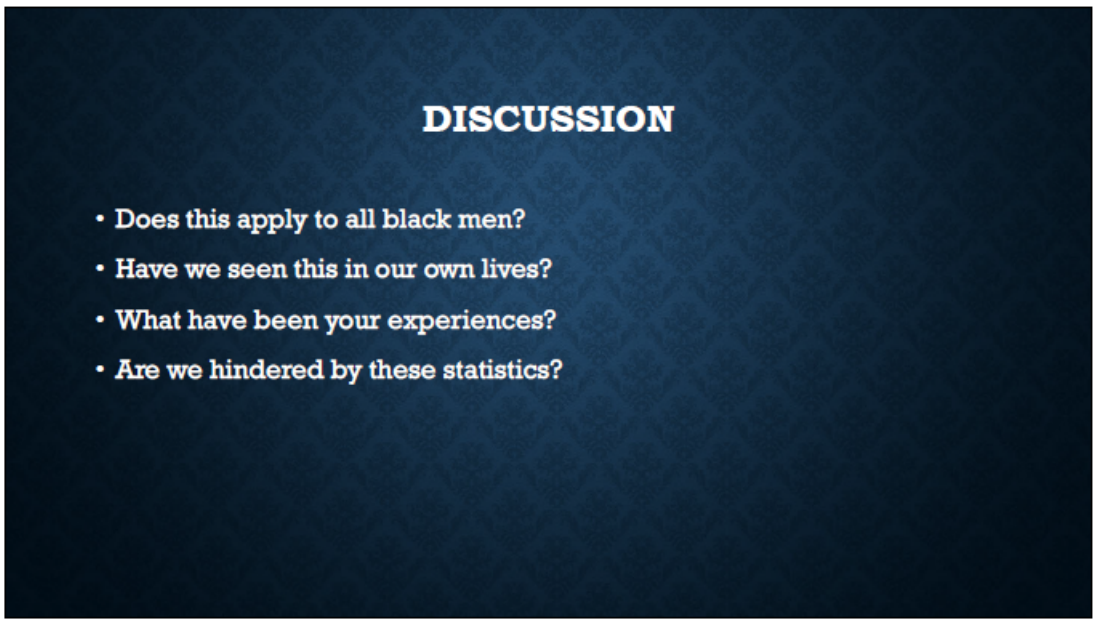
- By the 14th birthday, the likelihood of sexual debut was at 23% or less for all groups except African-American males (42%).
- The out-of-wedlock birth rate for blacks is the highest among the four major racial/ethnic groups at 69.4% nationally.



The intent of this slide is to demonstrate that, unfortunately, much of the negative imagery is accurate.

- These points emphasize the need for intervention.

Figure 20. Images discussion slide



DISCUSSION

- Does this apply to all black men?
- Have we seen this in our own lives?
- What have been your experiences?
- Are we hindered by these statistics?

The intent of this slide is to prompt discussion and allow participants to explain how they relate to the previous statistics.

- Participants are encouraged to express feelings and come to terms with what their experiences.
- Assure participants that the session will end well, and that they should be encouraged.

Figure 21. Why is culture important? slide



WHY IS UNDERSTANDING CULTURE SO IMPORTANT?

The intent of this slide is to begin transitioning the discussion to the influence of culture, generally.

Figure 22. Culture impacts entertainment slide



This slide demonstrates that culture strongly impacts how we entertain ourselves.

Figure 23. Culture impacts diet slide

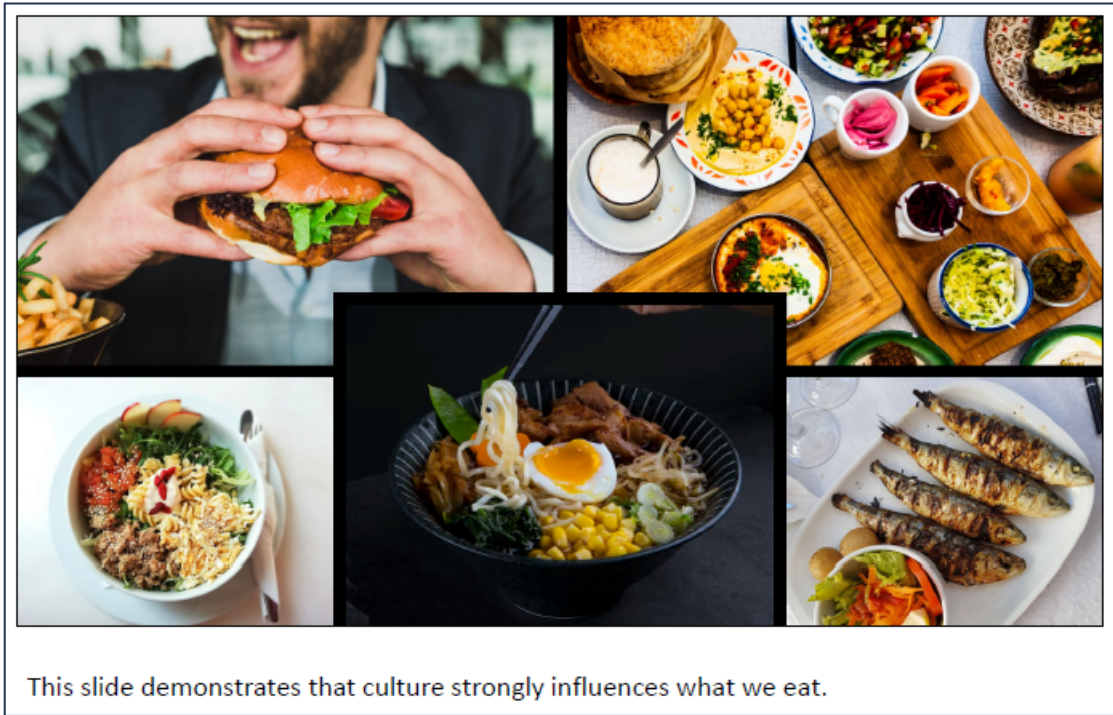


Figure 24. Culture impacts worship slide



Figure 25. Culture impacts feelings of education slide

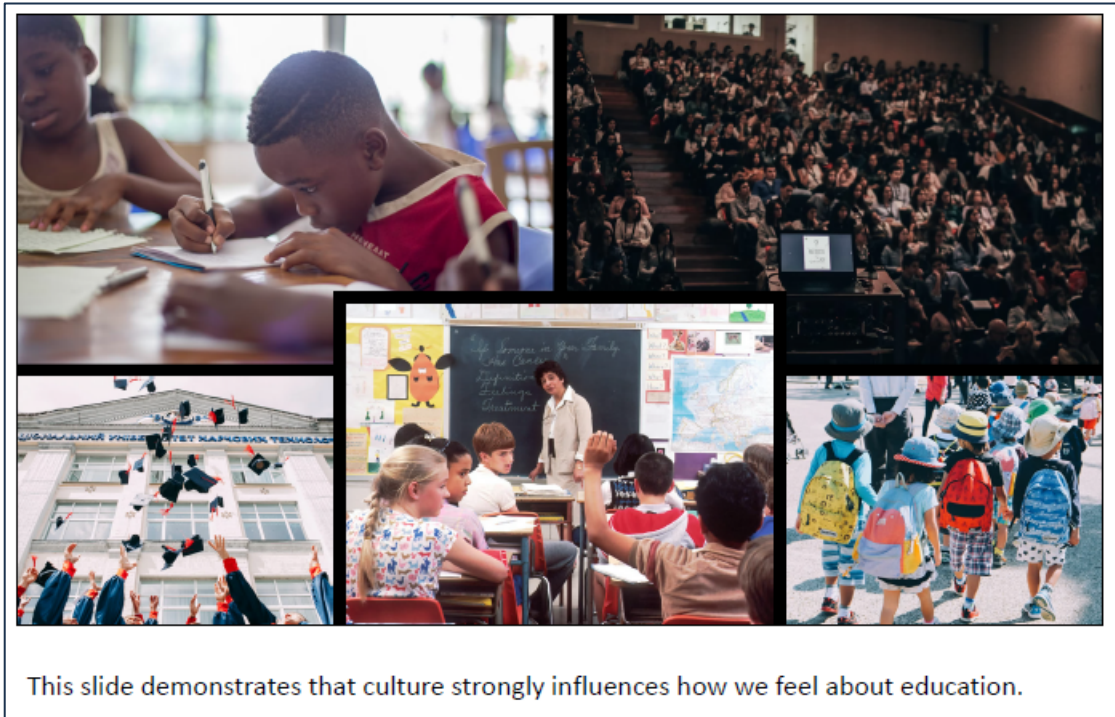



Figure 26. Where did culture come from? slide




DISCUSSION: WHERE DID OUR CULTURE COME FROM?

This slide transitions the discussion to the origin of the iconic ghetto culture in anticipation of upcoming slides regarding origin.

- Iconic ghetto: environments typically known for excessive violence, riddled with criminal activity, severely impoverished and socially isolated
- Participants are asked to attempt to explain how iconic ghetto culture became so engrained.
- Allow students to express their preconceived notions, if any, about why culture exists.
- Anticipate answers like racism, slavery, poverty, etc.

Figure 27. Origins of culture slide



The map, titled "ORIGINS", displays the United States and parts of Europe and Africa. The United States is shown with state abbreviations. To the east, the North Atlantic Ocean is labeled. To the west, the Gulf of Mexico is labeled. In Europe, the United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Spain, Portugal, Morocco, and Algeria are labeled. The map is framed by a black border.

The intent of this slide is to help participants begin the process of disassociating the negative characteristics of the iconic ghetto culture to something other than themselves.

- Focus on America then draw attention to Europe

Figure 28. Celtic culture slide



The image shows a map of the United Kingdom and Ireland with the title "CELTIC FRINGE" at the top. The map highlights several regions in green, including the Scottish Highlands, the Isle of Man, and parts of Ireland and Northern England. Major cities are marked with dots and labeled: Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dublin, Manchester, Birmingham, and London. The text "United Kingdom" is also present on the map.

The intent of this slide is to further help participants disassociate the negative characteristics of the iconic ghetto culture by focusing on specific areas in Great Britain.

- Highlight areas of Celtic Fringe
- Discuss the idea that people from the Celtic Fringe had very different values from those from southern Great Britain.

Figure 29. History of Celtic Fringe slide



HISTORY CELTIC FRINGE

The intent of this slide is to further help participants disassociate the negative characteristics of the iconic ghetto culture by showing why the culture developed in this Celtic Fringe region.

- Discuss history of warring people.
- Discuss the lack of transportation that kept communities isolated from other cultures.
- A culture of seeking fleeting pleasures was engrained
- Violent

Figure 30. People of Celtic Fringe slide



PEOPLE OF THE CELTIC FRINGE

The intent of this slide is to demonstrate how the culture differed from Southern neighbors.

- Separated from more aristocratic neighbors to the South.

Figure 31. Celtic Fringe vs. southern Great Britain slide



The intent of this slide juxtaposes the warring people of the Celtic Fringe with the aristocratic people of the Southern Great Britain.

Figure 32. Migration of Celtic Fringe slide



Figure 33. What culture resulted? slide

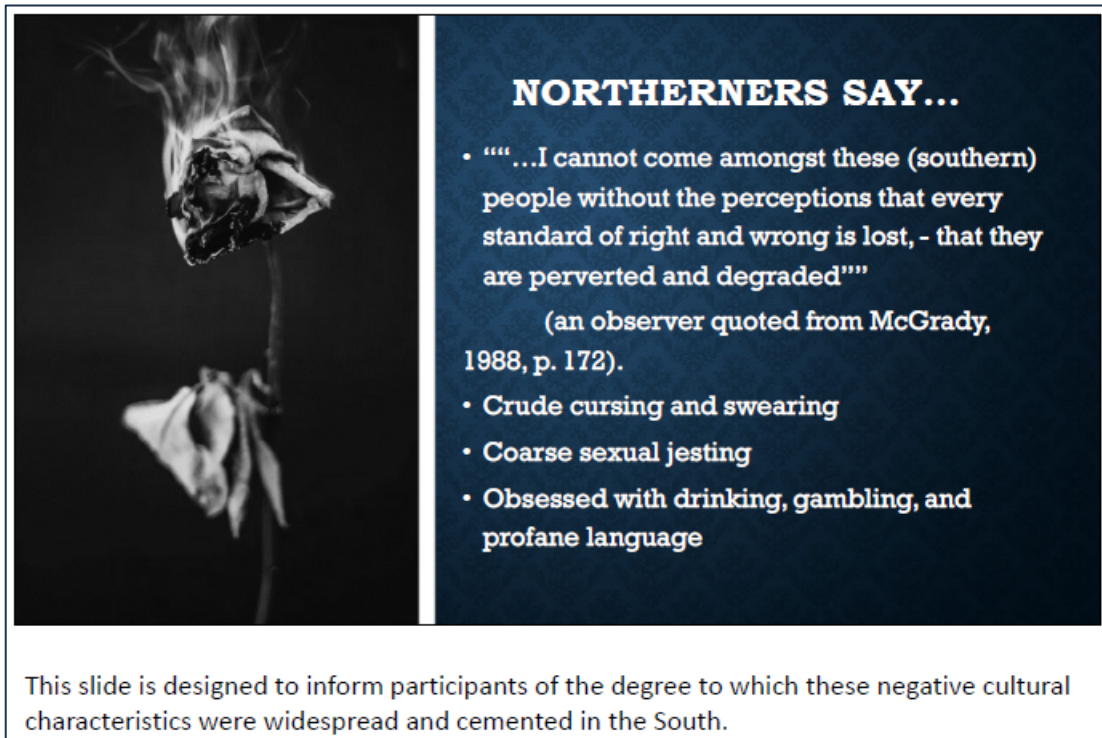
WHAT CULTURE RESULTED?



This slide, and the following seven slides, are reserved for the reading of excerpts from McGrady and Sowell to vividly illustrate the cultures that existed in the American South.

- Always warring
- Honor to die in battle, not in bed
- Fight each other when no enemy
- Fleeting pleasures
- Sexual promiscuity
- Inconsequential spending
- Not industrious
- Did not prioritize education
- Contrast with Northern culture

Figure 34. Northerners say slide

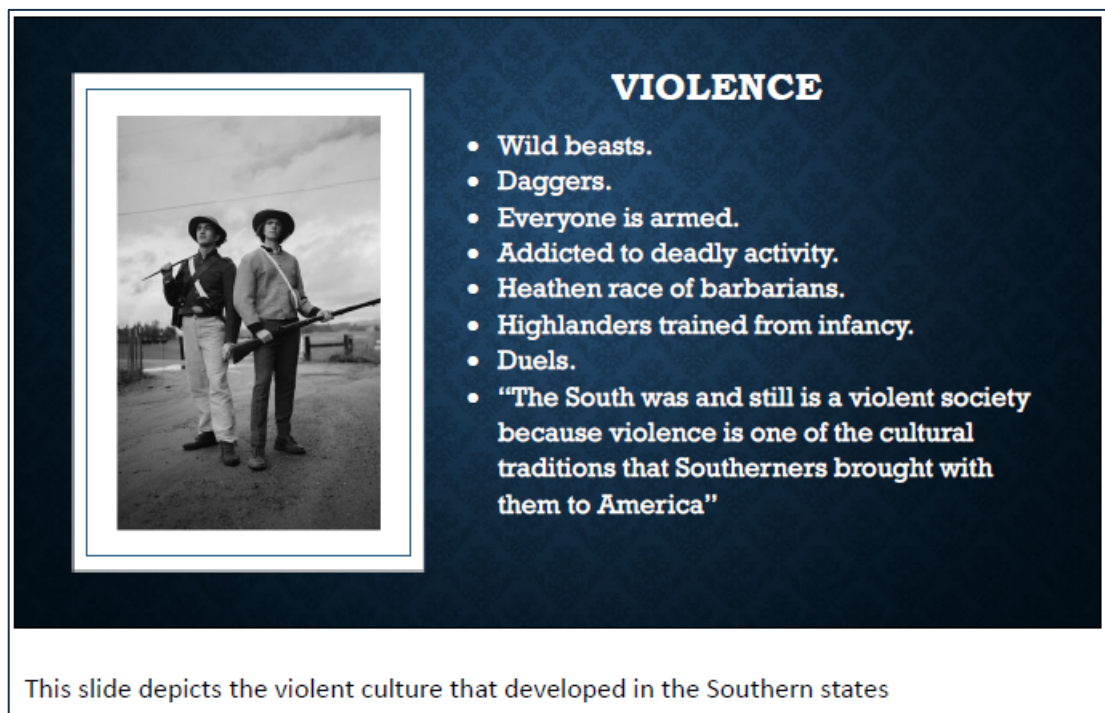


NORTHERNERS SAY...

- ““...I cannot come amongst these (southern) people without the perceptions that every standard of right and wrong is lost, - that they are perverted and degraded””
(an observer quoted from McGrady, 1988, p. 172).
- Crude cursing and swearing
- Coarse sexual jesting
- Obsessed with drinking, gambling, and profane language

This slide is designed to inform participants of the degree to which these negative cultural characteristics were widespread and cemented in the South.

Figure 35. Violence of southern states slide




VIOLENCE

- Wild beasts.
- Daggers.
- Everyone is armed.
- Addicted to deadly activity.
- Heathen race of barbarians.
- Highlanders trained from infancy.
- Duels.
- “The South was and still is a violent society because violence is one of the cultural traditions that Southerners brought with them to America”

This slide depicts the violent culture that developed in the Southern states

Figure 36. Sexual tendencies of southern states slide



PROMISCUITY / UNWED PREGNANCY

- Casual sex from the south and Britain where southerners came from.
- Nine-tenths of brides already pregnant.
- Rape less punished in more southern colonies.
- Gross and open, mistresses everywhere.

This slide depicts the sexual tendencies that developed in the Southern states.

Figure 37. Material excess of southern states slide



MATERIAL EXCESS

- Lie from day to day.
- Satisfy pleasures.
- No long-term security.

This slide depicts the financial deficiencies that developed in the Southern states.

Figure 38. Northerners' views of southerners, slide 1



Figure 39. Northerners' views of southerners, slide 2

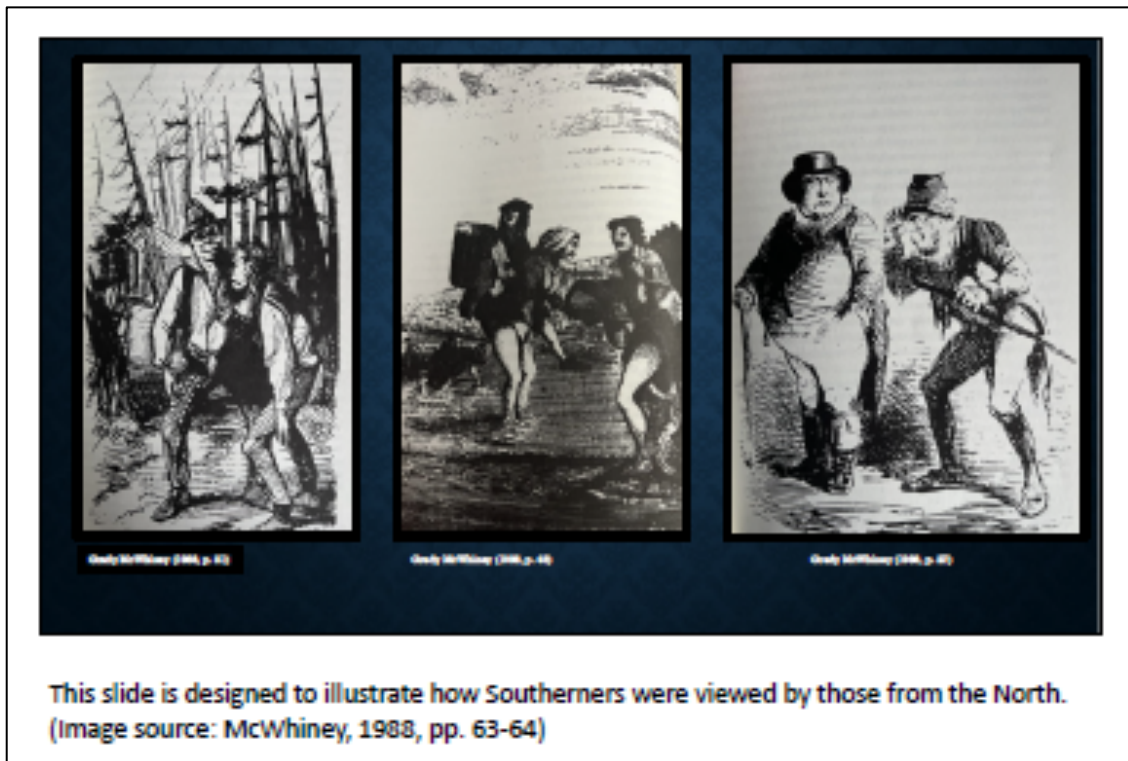


Figure 40. Northerners' views of southerners, slide 3



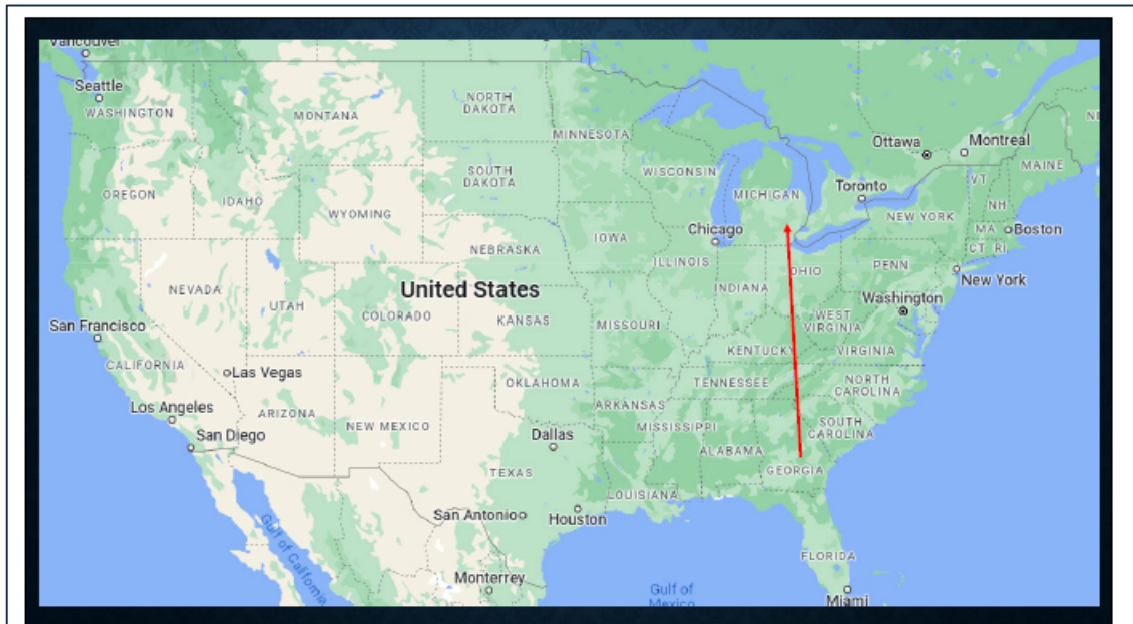
Figure 41. Slave trade and southern culture slide

SLAVE TRADE

The intent of this slide is to show the intersection of the slave trade with the existing culture in the South.

- The slave trade intersected with the cementing of Celtic Fringe influence culture in the South.
- Black slaves stripped of their culture and assimilated to dominant culture.
- 90% of Blacks lived in the south in the Antebellum era.
- Blacks were stripped of their culture and forced to assimilate to the existing culture.

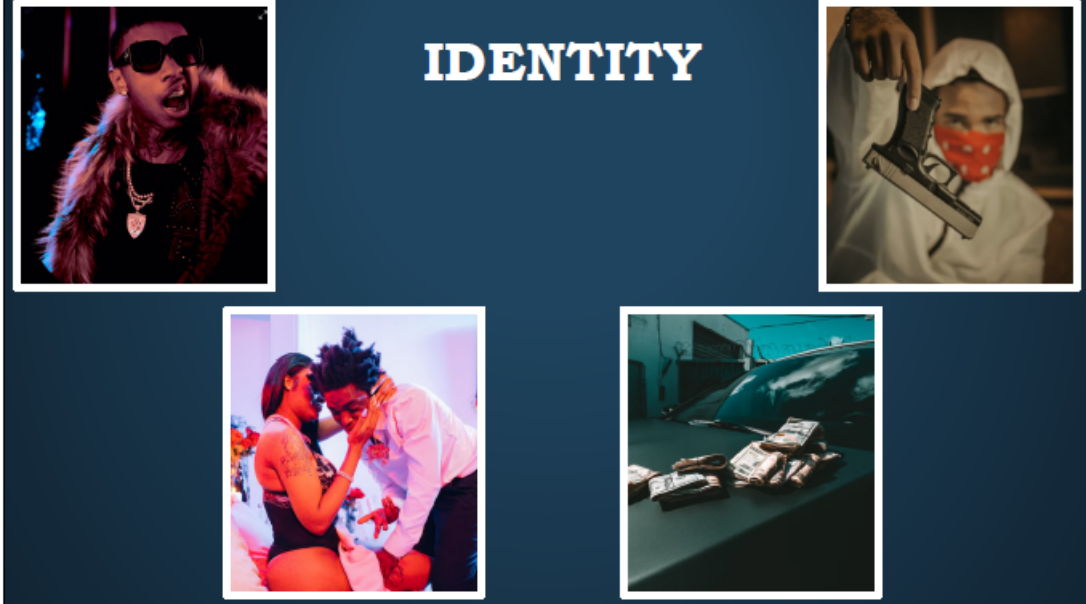
Figure 42. Migration of southerners to the north slide



This slide depicts the migration of Southerners to the North

- Culture is what Northerners resisted.
- They were unwanted due to the influence they brought.
- Both white and black Southerners were unwelcomed.
- Due to racist tendencies in society, blacks were relegated in big city ghettos.

Figure 43. Sources of identity slide



IDENTITY

This slide brings us back full circle to the reasons why the negative characteristics that are so prevalent in black communities.

- When black men look in the proverbial mirror, many identify with the culture as a legitimate part of who they are.
- Resulting from political, social and cultural influences.

Figure 44. Cultural characteristics and identity slide




The intent of this slide is to demonstrate that cultural characteristics can define the identity of a race of people.

- Asians are generally considered highly intelligent.
- Education is held in high esteem in many Asian communities as part of their culture.
- These cultural characteristics are not innate to Asians alone, rather they were adopted as a cultural norm in some communities.

Figure 45. What people don't say slide

WHAT PEOPLE TYPICALLY DON'T SAY



The intent of this slide is to contrast the previous slide with that of black men

- Black men do not have the reputation of being committed to education as a strong part of their culture.
- Not regularly ranked in the highest echelons of business and industry.

Figure 46. Trying to be white slide


“Look at him trying to be white?”

A young Black man is sitting at a wooden desk in a classroom or office setting. He is wearing a white t-shirt with a graphic and is looking intently at a silver laptop. A whiteboard with some faint writing is visible in the background. The image is framed within a dark blue slide.

The intent of this slide demonstrates that black men commonly have a negative view of education.

- Being educated is often eschewed
- Studious black men have often been made targets of aggression
- Often accused of “acting white.”

Figure 47. Culture influences views of education slide

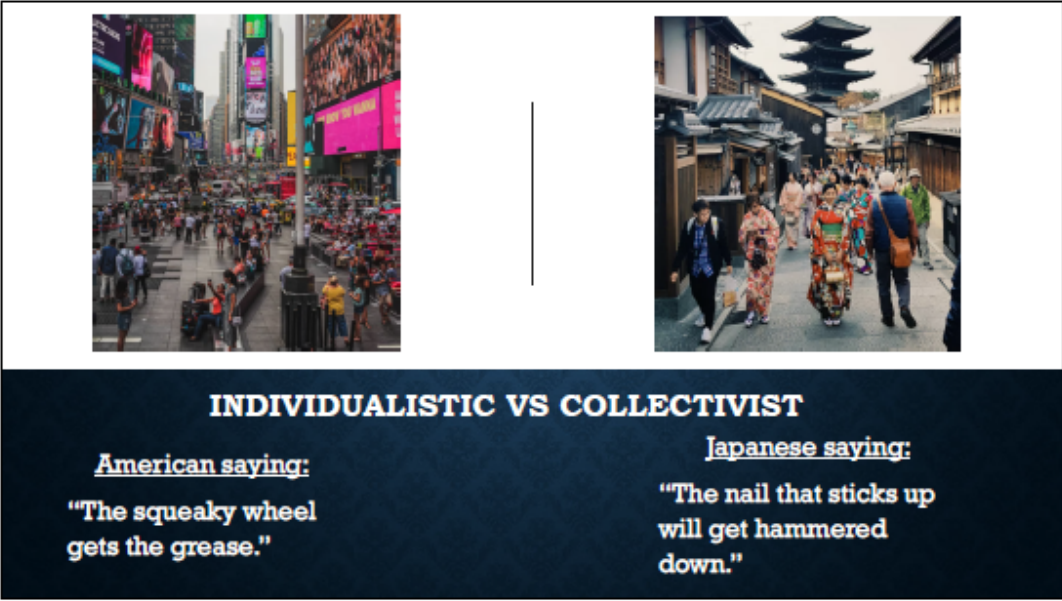


**OUR UNIQUE
CULTURAL
CHARACTERISTICS
AFFECT HOW WE
VIEW EDUCATION**

The intent of this slide is to transition to the topic of how cultural traits can affect how people view education

- To better understand why we do the things we do and consider them normal.
- Culture provides meaning to our actions
- We are rewarded and punished based on cultural values
- We see the world from our perspective of right and wrong
- We see ourselves as superior and others as inferior

Figure 48. Individualistic vs. Collectivist slide



INDIVIDUALISTIC VS COLLECTIVIST

American saying:
"The squeaky wheel gets the grease."

Japanese saying:
"The nail that sticks up will get hammered down."

The intent of this slide is to give an example of how a culture trait may negatively impact how well a person transitions from one culture to another.

- Provide an example of how this individualistic vs collectivist culture difference might be problematic.
- Discuss the type of training that may need to be done.
- What advice or knowledge might need to be imparted to help mitigate the issues?
- Explain how this type of culture training is commonly used around the world.

Figure 49. Culture shock slide

CULTURE SHOCK

Main Entry: Culture Shock
Function: *noun*
: a sense of confusion and uncertainty sometimes with feelings of anxiety that may affect people exposed to an alien culture or environment without adequate preparation.

Merriam-Webster Collegiate Dictionary

The intent of this slide is to introduce the concept of culture shock

Figure 50. Transition effect, slide 1

The Transition Effect

Adapted from U-curve (Oberg 1960) and extended by Oulibiorka and Oulibiorka, 1989

The intent of this slide, and the following five slides, is to depict the emotional stages a persons goes through during a transition to an unfamiliar environment.

- Describe initial anxiety phase

Figure 51. Transition effect, slide 2

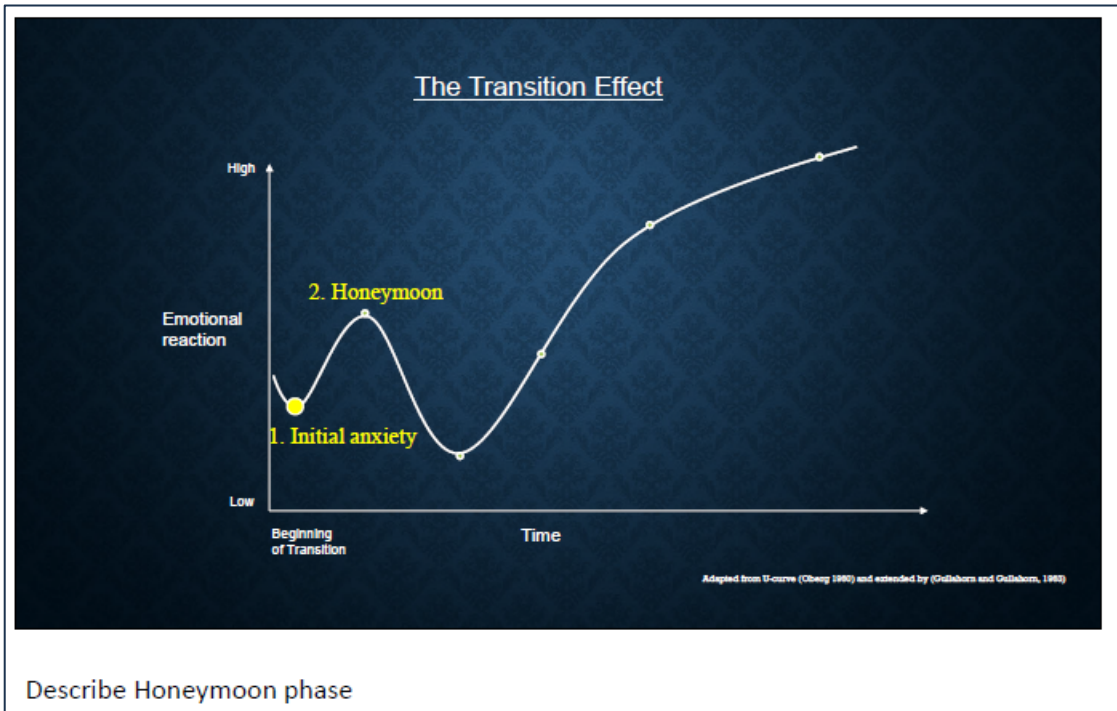


Figure 52. Transition effect, slide 3

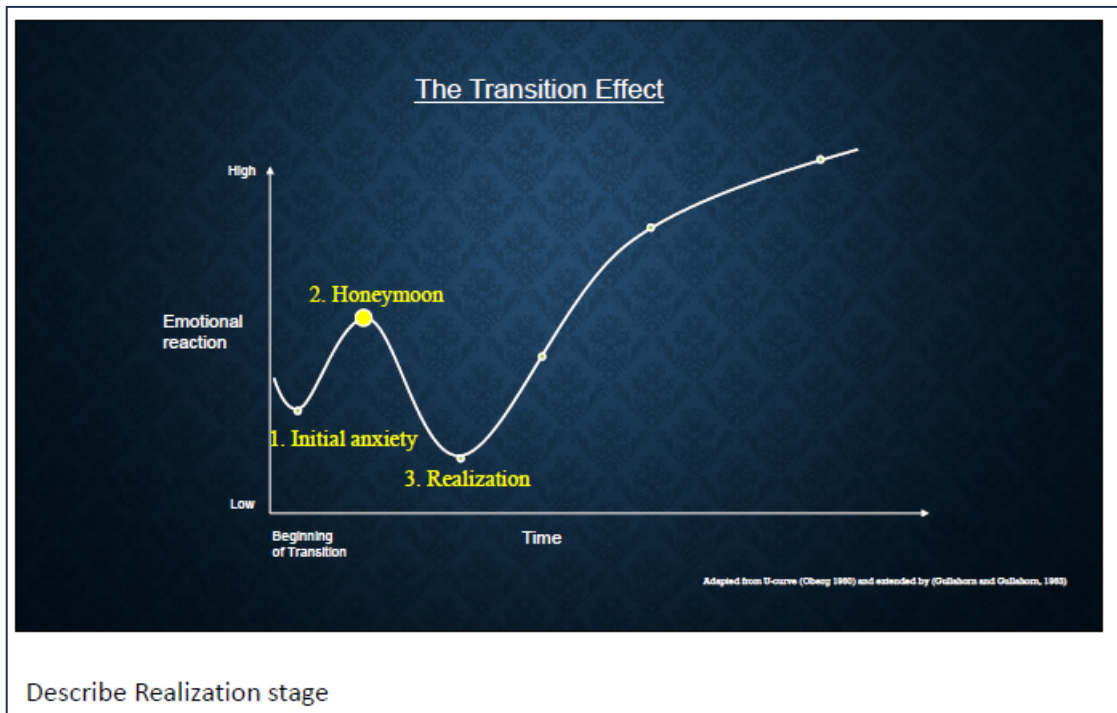
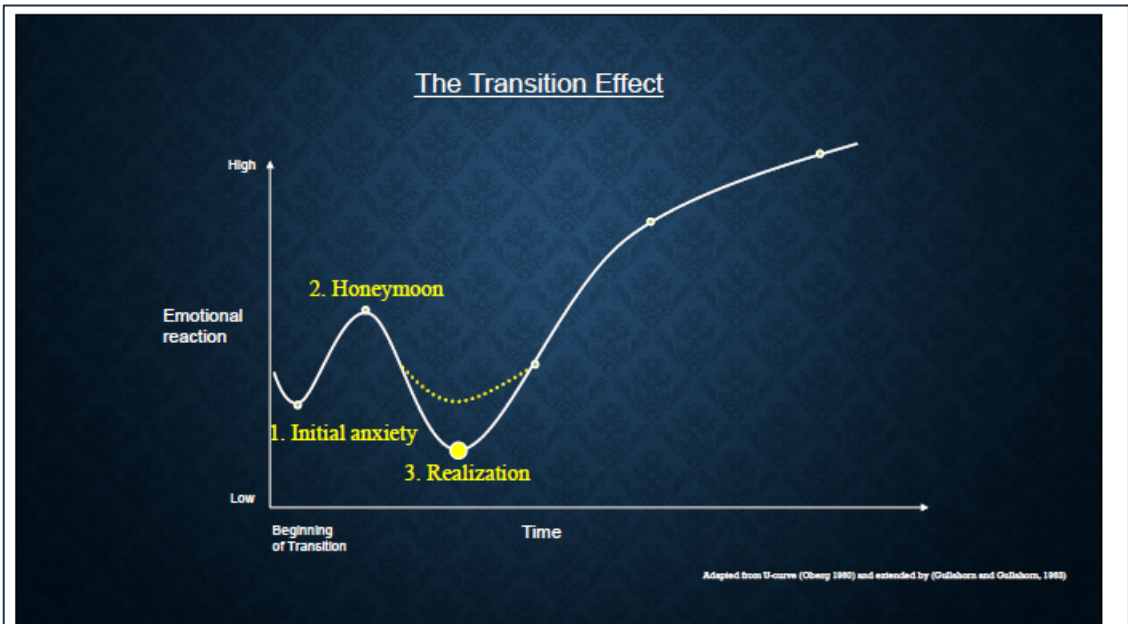


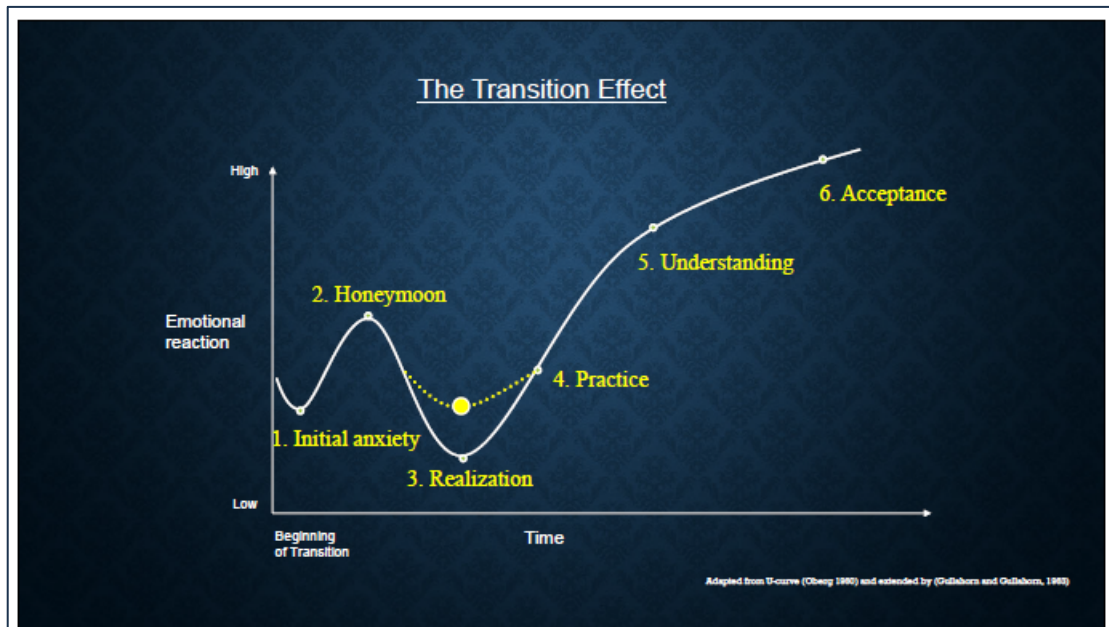
Figure 53. Transition effect, slide 4



Define the expected improvement of outcomes based on cultural training.

- The realization stage is not so low due to the anticipation of culture shock related challenges.

Figure 54. Transition effect, slide 5



Describe the Practice, Understanding and Acceptance phases.

Figure 55. Why not do the same for black men? slide



WHY DON'T WE DO THE SAME FOR BLACK MEN?

The intent of this slide is to highlight the fact that culture training is common, but not for black men in higher education.

- It is well documented that culture shock is often the result of cultural transitions.
- It is well documented that black men from the iconic ghetto exist in a subculture that differs from the mainstream.
- If culture training is provided for international students and expatriate managers to mitigate the impact of culture shock, why don't we provide it for black men?

Figure 56. What do international students learn? slide

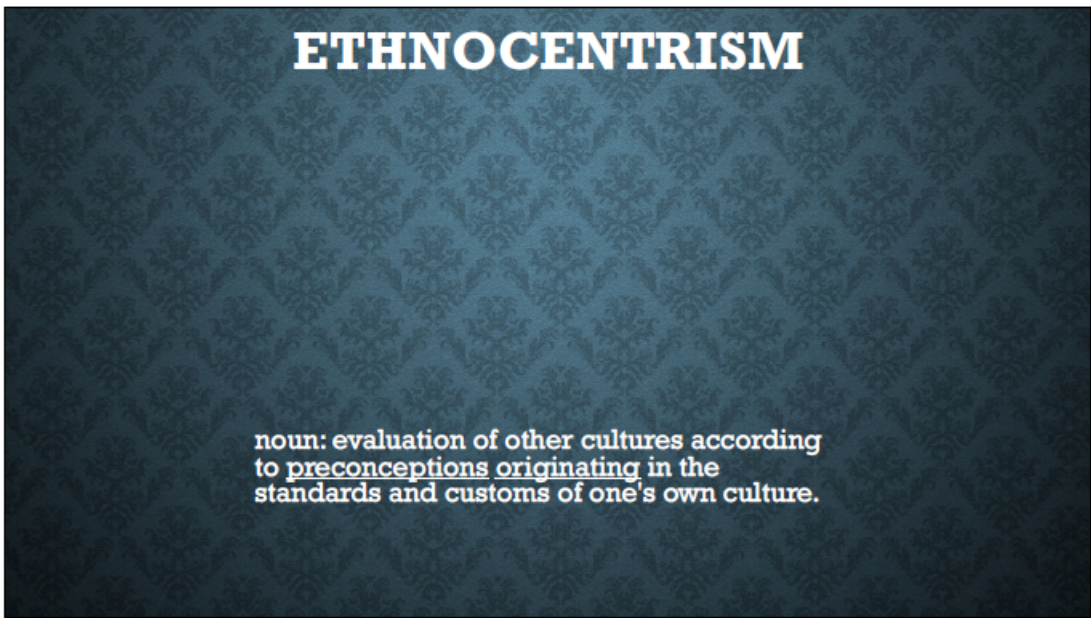
WHAT DO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS LEARN?

The slide features a dark blue background with the title "WHAT DO INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS LEARN?" in white, bold, uppercase letters at the top. Below the title, there are two images. On the left is a large American flag. In the center is a white "not equal" symbol (≠). On the right is a group of international flags, with the Japanese flag (white with a red circle) prominently displayed in the foreground. Below the images, there is a paragraph of text and a bulleted list.

The intent of this slide is to transition the discussion to the various topics that are often discussed during culture training.

- Students in culture training often learn about aspects of the new culture in relation to their own culture.
- This training is done objectively, without making judgments about one culture or another.
- Reiterate that culture is neither good or bad, it just exists due to the social, political and economic forces that mold it.

Figure 57. Ethnocentrism slide



ETHNOCENTRISM

noun: evaluation of other cultures according to preconceptions originating in the standards and customs of one's own culture.

The intent of this slide is to introduce the topic of ethnocentrism.

- Provide definition: noun: **ethnocentrism** - evaluation of other cultures according to preconceptions originating in the standards and customs of one's own culture.
- Discuss how this can be problematic

Figure 58. House hunt Germany, slide 1

HOUSE HUNT: GERMANY



The intent of this slide, and the following four slides, is to provide a cultural attribution about ethnocentrism.

- Participants try to guess what is going on.
- Participants will likely interpret based on their own standards of behavior, i.e. culture.

Figure 59. House hunt Germany, slide 2

HOUSE HUNT: GERMANY



Ethnocentrism cultural attribution

Figure 60. House hunt Germany, slide 3

WHAT'S HAPPENING?






Ethnocentrism cultural attribution

Figure 61. House hunt Germany, slide 4

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

**PITFALLS OF
ETHNOCENTRISM**




Ethnocentrism cultural attribution

- We can ascribe nefarious motivations to people from other cultures because we fail to see things from their perspective

Figure 62. Can ethnocentrism be confused with racism? slide



CAN ETHNOCENTRISM BE CONFUSED WITH RACISM?





Ethnocentrism

Figure 63. Low vs. high cultural distance slide

LOW VS HIGH CULTURAL DISTANCE

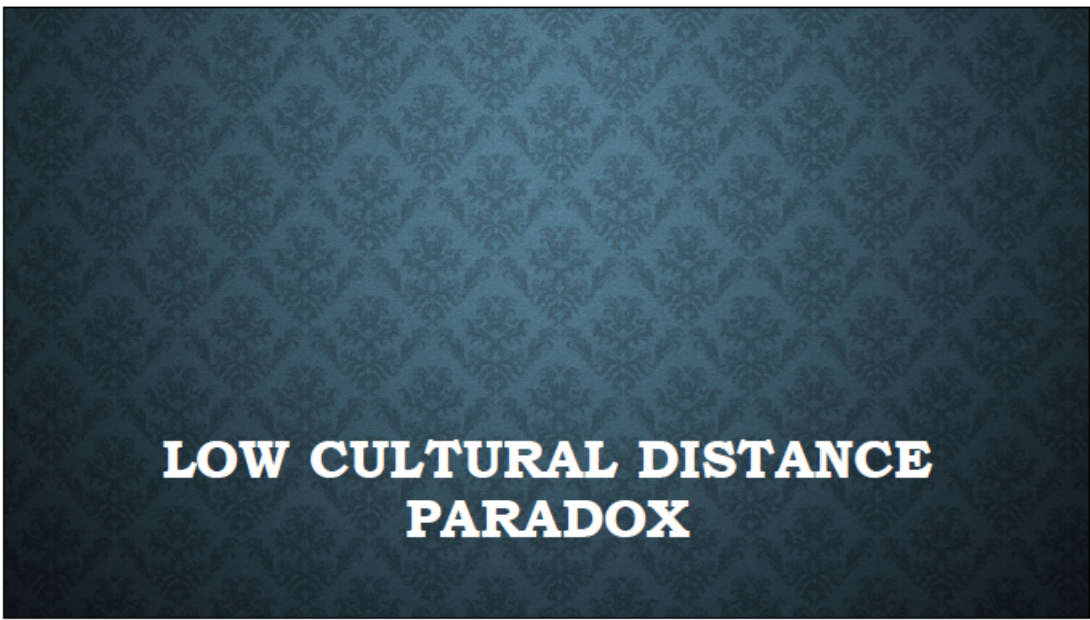



The intent of this slide is to introduce the topic of cultural distance and its impact.

- High cultural distance is a relatively large degree of difference between cultures.
- Low cultural distance is a relatively small degree of difference between cultures.
- Ask participants to choose which physical transition would be more difficult between Great Britain or Thailand.

Figure 64. Low cultural distance paradox slide



**LOW CULTURAL DISTANCE
PARADOX**

This slide introduces the low culture distance paradox using real-world example

- Individuals who make transitions to cultures that are similar can often fail to anticipate the differences and encounter problems
- Research from Selmer and Shiu

Figure 65. High vs. low context cultures slide

HIGH-CONTEXT VS LOW-CONTEXT CULTURES



The intent of this slide is to introduce the concept of high- and low-context cultures.

- High context cultures use more eye contact and body language to communicate.
- Low context cultures use more direct verbal communication.
- Mainstream Americans are considered low-context while African Americans are considered high context. The implications are significant.

Figure 66. Handshake slide



The intent of this slide is to provide an example of high-context interaction between black men in the form of a multi-faceted handshake.

- The handshake can communicate a lot of information and determine the level of interaction

Figure 67. Role play slide



ROLE PLAY

Communication

Verbal

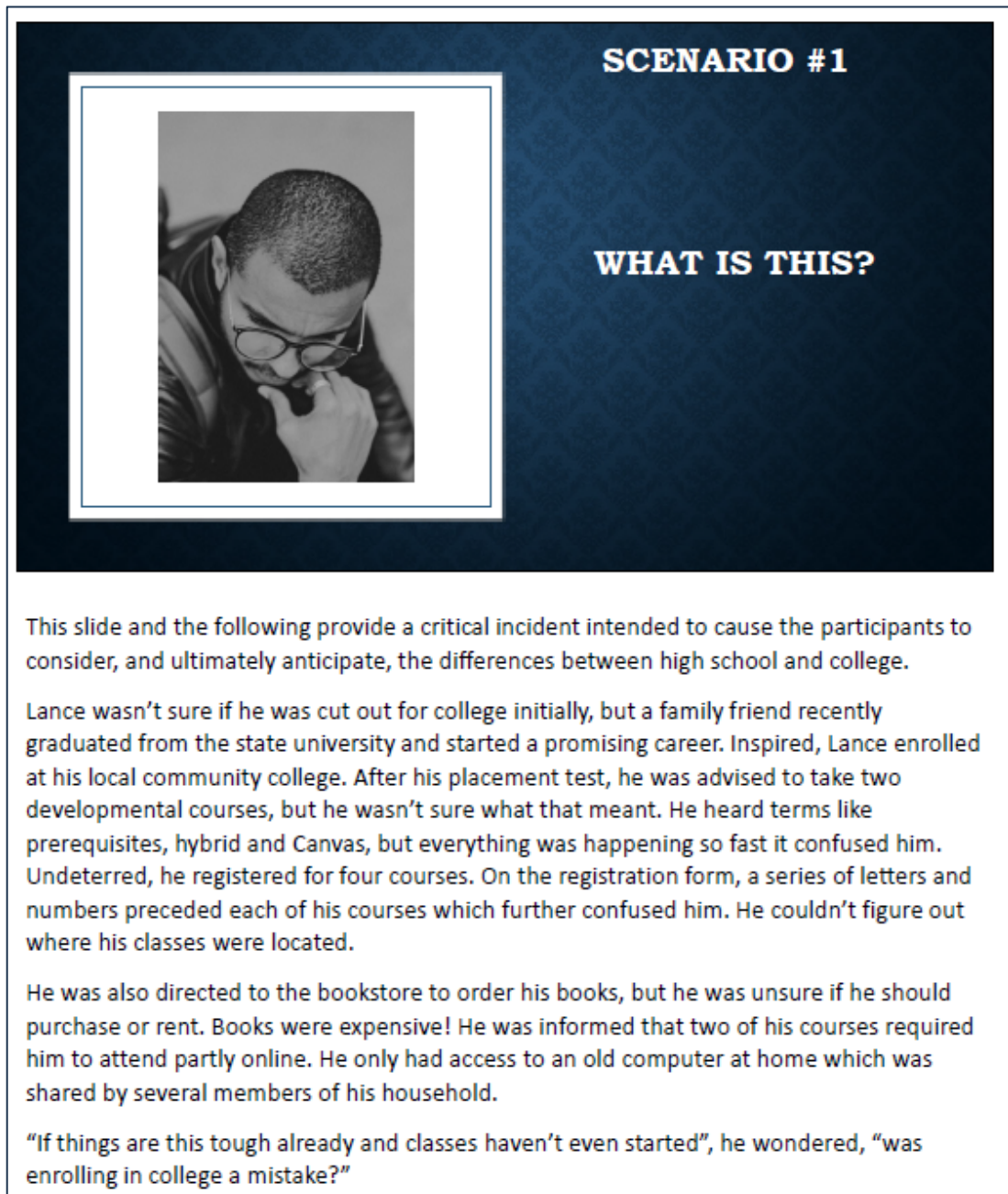
Body Language

Written

The intent of this slide is to have participants engage in a role play exercises

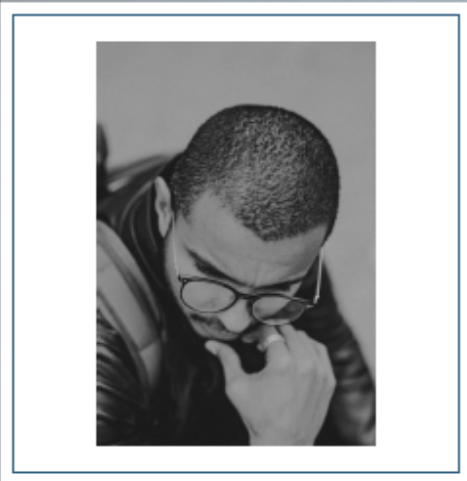
- Role play scenarios where black men must communicate with college staff, students and professors.
- Asking for help.
- Writing an email
- Interacting with classmates

Figure 68. Scenario #1 slide



SCENARIO #1

WHAT IS THIS?



This slide and the following provide a critical incident intended to cause the participants to consider, and ultimately anticipate, the differences between high school and college.

Lance wasn't sure if he was cut out for college initially, but a family friend recently graduated from the state university and started a promising career. Inspired, Lance enrolled at his local community college. After his placement test, he was advised to take two developmental courses, but he wasn't sure what that meant. He heard terms like prerequisites, hybrid and Canvas, but everything was happening so fast it confused him. Undeterred, he registered for four courses. On the registration form, a series of letters and numbers preceded each of his courses which further confused him. He couldn't figure out where his classes were located.

He was also directed to the bookstore to order his books, but he was unsure if he should purchase or rent. Books were expensive! He was informed that two of his courses required him to attend partly online. He only had access to an old computer at home which was shared by several members of his household.

"If things are this tough already and classes haven't even started", he wondered, "was enrolling in college a mistake?"

Figure 69. Scenario #1 discussion slide

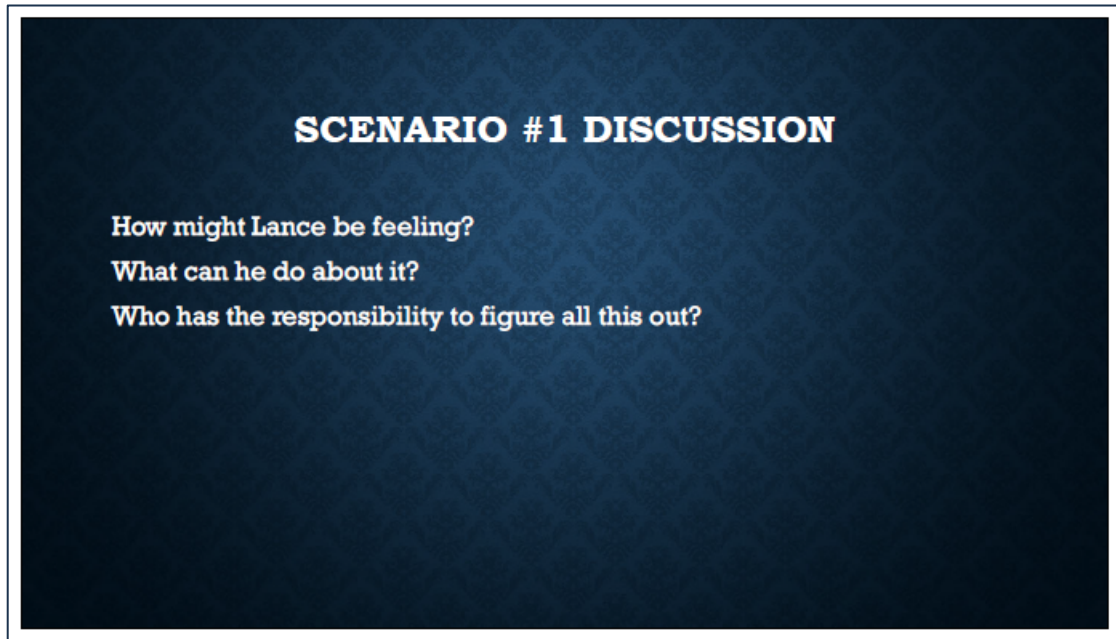



Figure 70. Scenario #2 slide



The slide is divided into two main sections. On the left is a photograph of a young man with a backpack, looking up at bright yellow autumn leaves. On the right is a dark blue background with white text. The text reads 'SCENARIO #2' at the top and 'IT'S ALL GOOD!' in the center.

This slide and the following provide a cultural attribution intended to cause the participants to consider differences between what they may have experienced and what they may experience in college.

Lance was confident about his prospects in college as he started his first Fall semester. The first two weeks of classes seemed easy enough. No one questioned him about his assignments or badgered him about his missed homework. 'College is easy!' he thought to himself as admired the Fall colors on campus, completely ignoring crowded library. Why wouldn't it be? High school always came easy to Lance. Although he rarely studied, often struggled with the classwork, and scarcely turned in assignments on time, he still managed to complete all his classes with a passing grade. In fact, he graduated high school with a strong C+ average.

Figure 71. Scenario #2 discussion slide

SCENARIO #2 DISCUSSION

Why didn't Lance's professors ask about Lance's progress in their course?

1. Professors take it easy on first year students and give them lots of grace because they are unfamiliar with college life.
2. Professors don't want to engage with Lance because of his race.
3. Professors are told to only spend time on the best students, so they are sure to make it to graduation.
4. The professors feel students should handle it themselves.
5. The professors purposely weed out underperforming students.

Cultural Attribution

1. Learn to anticipate differences between high school and college
2. Encourage personal accountability

Figure 72. Scenario #3 slide



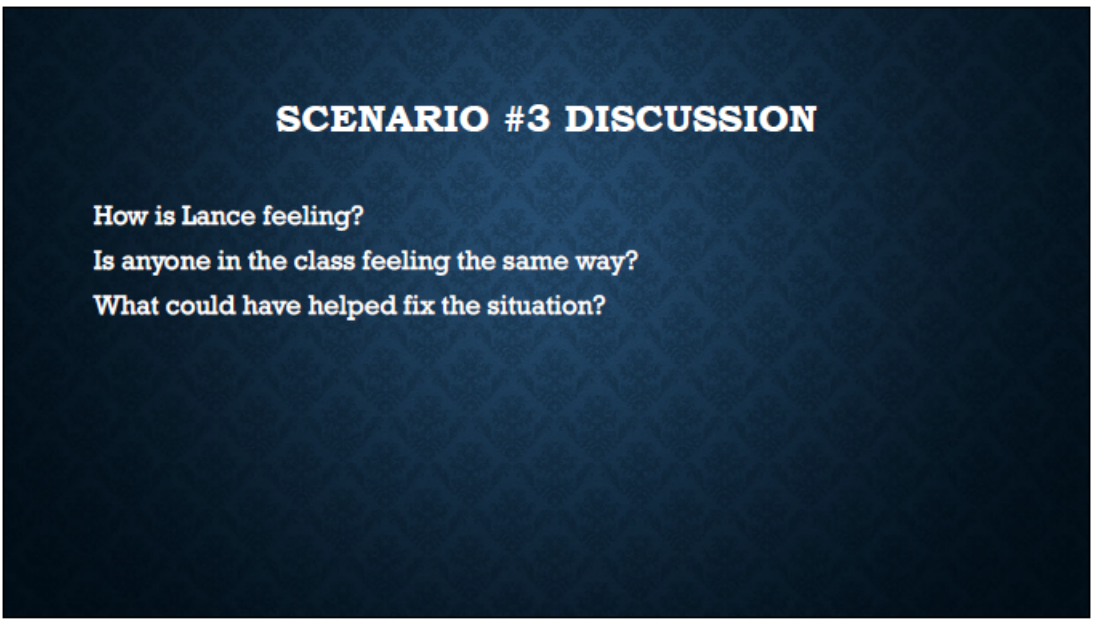
SCENARIO #3

OH, SNAP!

This slide provides a critical incident intended to elicit feelings of anxiety.

At the start of his first exam, Lance looked curiously at the furrowed brows of his fellow students as they immediately began writing. No one was smiling or laughing, no outbursts or audible sighs. After a few moments he turned his attention to his own test and read the first question. He read it a second time. Suddenly anxious, he nibbled at his thumbnail and began tapping his pencil on the desk. He skipped it and went to number two, but it was no easier. He shuffled through the stapled papers, briefly scanning each question, “Three pages?” he breathed, “and no extra credit!” He slowly surveyed the classroom again, hoping to find a sympathetic eye. He found none, although Professor Rabowski seemed keenly aware of his search. Lance quickly repositioned himself in his chair and refocused on the exam, feebly attempting to ignore her gaze. ‘What could all these people be writing?’ he wondered. Some of the information was vaguely familiar, but most was completely foreign. “Am I the only one who feels like this?” he wondered.

Figure 73. Scenario #3 discussion slide



SCENARIO #3 DISCUSSION

How is Lance feeling?
Is anyone in the class feeling the same way?
What could have helped fix the situation?

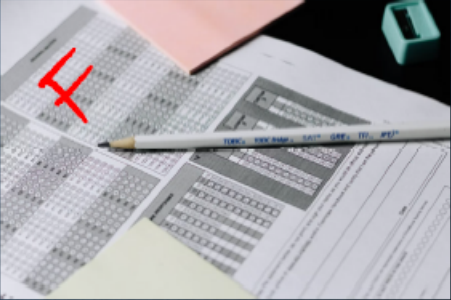
This slide is intended to discuss how Lance might feel and what could be done to mitigate feelings of anxiety and stress.

1. To combat feelings of isolation
2. To encourage studying and attendance

Figure 74. Scenario #4 slide

SCENARIO #4

STRONG, SILENT TYPE



Lance, whose seat wasn't even warm yet, stared at the big, red "F" scrawled at the top of the test Professor Rabowski had just returned to him. Under it was a handwritten note that read: "See me after class." Lance observed the expressions on his classmates' faces, some seemed pleased, others less so. At the end of class, he milled about acting as if he were fighting a stuck zipper on his backpack while the rest of the students finished speaking with the professor and exited the classroom. Once alone, Lance, expressionless, approached the instructor without a word and handed the test back to her. The instructor glanced at the test grade and then looked at Lance.

"Do you have any questions about your grade?" Professor. Rabowski asked.

"No." Lance responded flatly.

"Did you study for the exam?" she asked, already knowing the answer.

"Yes." Lance replied, lying.

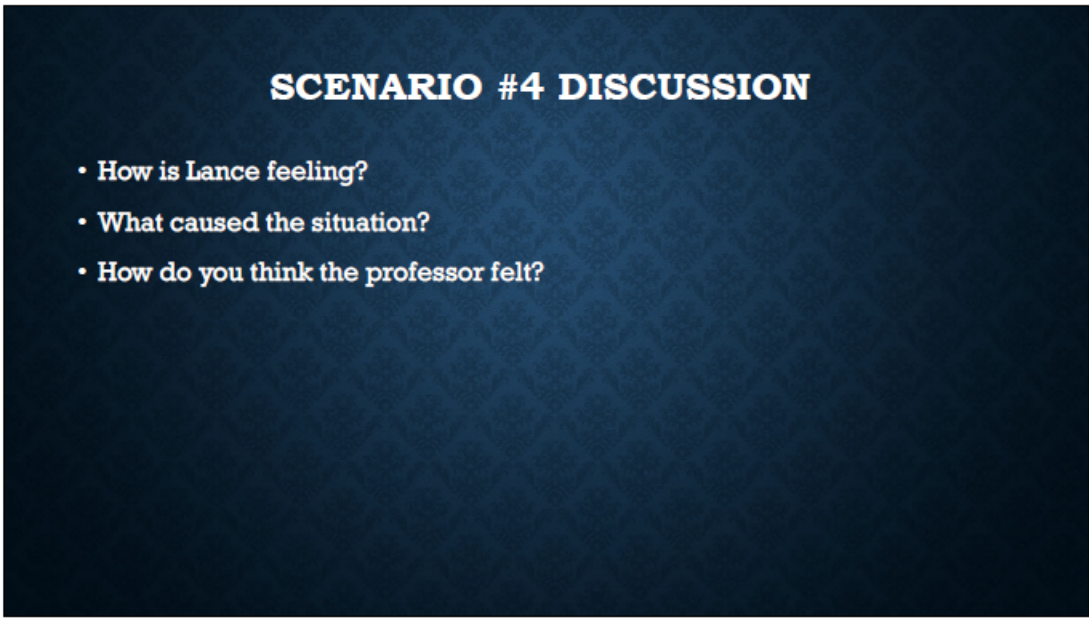
"Do you have any questions for me?"

"No."

After a brief silence, the instructor handed the exam back to Lance with a tentative smile and said, "You won't do well in the class if this continues. My office hours are on my office door. Feel free to drop by to let me know if I can do anything to help going forward."

Without a word, Lance took the exam and stuffed it into his backpack as he exited the classroom.

Figure 75. Scenario #4 discussion slide



SCENARIO #4 DISCUSSION

- How is Lance feeling?
- What caused the situation?
- How do you think the professor felt?

The intent of this slide is to have a discussion on dealing with stressful situations and the impact of non-verbal communication

Goals:

1. To encourage positive communication and body language
2. To address fear and first impressions
3. To deal with feelings of inadequacy

Figure 76. Scenario #5 slide

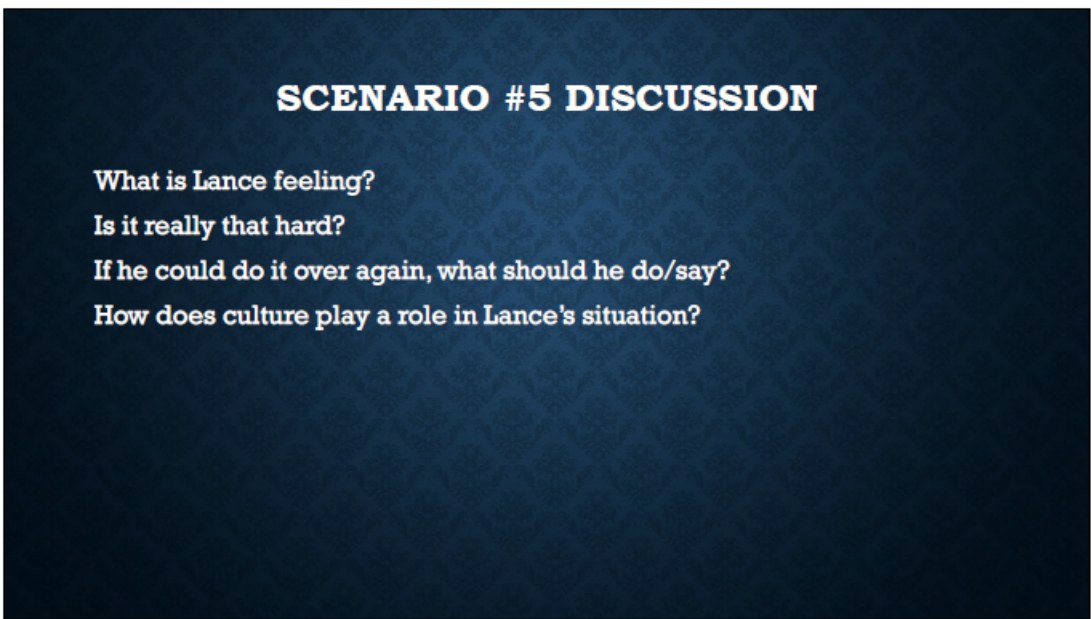


SCENARIO #5

I'M OUT!

Standing near Professor Rabowski's office, Lance watched several other students from his class come and go. He pulled the crumpled failed test from his backpack pondering what he would say. As time passed, he felt less and less sure about himself, and any questions that came to mind suddenly seemed foolish. Lance had never initiated a conversation with a professor before, in fact it had always been the other way around. The longer he waited the more embarrassed and self-conscious he felt. After a few more minutes he walked away.

Figure 77. Scenario #5 discussion slide



SCENARIO #5 DISCUSSION

What is Lance feeling?
Is it really that hard?
If he could do it over again, what should he do/say?
How does culture play a role in Lance's situation?

The intent of this slide is to address person to person communication.

1. To encourage initiating communication
2. To overcome fear and anxiety

Figure 78. Scenario #6 slide

The slide is divided into two main sections. On the left is a photograph of a young man with dark hair, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. On the right is a dark blue background with white text. The text reads "SCENARIO #6" at the top, followed by "WHO'S THE FOREIGNER?" in a larger font below it.

SCENARIO #6

WHO'S THE FOREIGNER?

This slide provides a cultural attribution to allow participants to view a different cultural perspective.

Lance met a classmate, Chen, from China, who is living in the United States for the first time and arrived only a few weeks ago. Chen had been preparing for this opportunity for over a year and was excited about studying in the United States. Chen's first semester was off to a good start. He's made friends, joined a Chinese student affinity group, is doing well in his courses, and seems as if he adapted easily to the college culture in the United States fairly easily.

"Chen is doing better than I am adjusting to college, and he's from a whole different country!" Lance thought. "Doesn't make sense!"

Figure 79. Scenario #6 discussion, slide 1

**WHY DID CHEN ADAPT SO EASILY
COMPARED TO LANCE?**

1. Chen has always been an excellent student, and college in the United States is much less rigorous than what he is used to.
2. As part of the exchange student program, Chen underwent culture training to prepare him for his time as an exchange student.
3. Chen has always watched a lot of American TV shows, so he knows what Americans are like.
4. Chinese culture and American culture are similar, so it was easy for Chen to adapt.

High cultural distance vs low cultural distance
Chen has been preparing for the cultural adjustment for a year. Lance has not prepared at all for the culture difference.


Figure 80. Scenario #6 discussion, slide 2

**WHY DID CHEN ADAPT SO EASILY
COMPARED TO LANCE?**

5. Chinese people are culturally outgoing and extroverted which makes personal interactions easier.
6. Chinese students handle stress better than the average American.
7. Chen was forced to adapt to the new culture, so he did.

High culture distance vs low cultural distance
Chen has been preparing for the cultural adjustment for a year. Lance has not prepared at all for the culture difference.

Figure 81. Scenario #7 slide



The slide has a dark blue background. On the left, there is a white-bordered rectangular frame containing a photograph of a young man with short hair, wearing a dark jacket, looking off to the side. To the right of the photo, the text "SCENARIO #7" is written in white, bold, uppercase letters. Below that, the word "SOLO" is written in the same style.

This slide provides a critical incident to help students anticipate a lack of diversity. Lance feels anxious since starting college but can't explain why. Lance doesn't laugh as much anymore, and his stomach is often in knots when he arrives to school. Today, he walked across campus to his next class and, again, he didn't see another person who looked like him the entire way. In fact, none of his instructors look like him either. Lance doesn't hang around after his courses end and is often eager to get home. Things were so much easier before college.

Figure 82. Scenario #7 discussion slide

SCENARIO #7 DISCUSSION

- How might Lance feel?
- What can he do to better engage in college life?
- What happens if things don't change?

Figure 83. Scenario #8 slide

SCENARIO #8



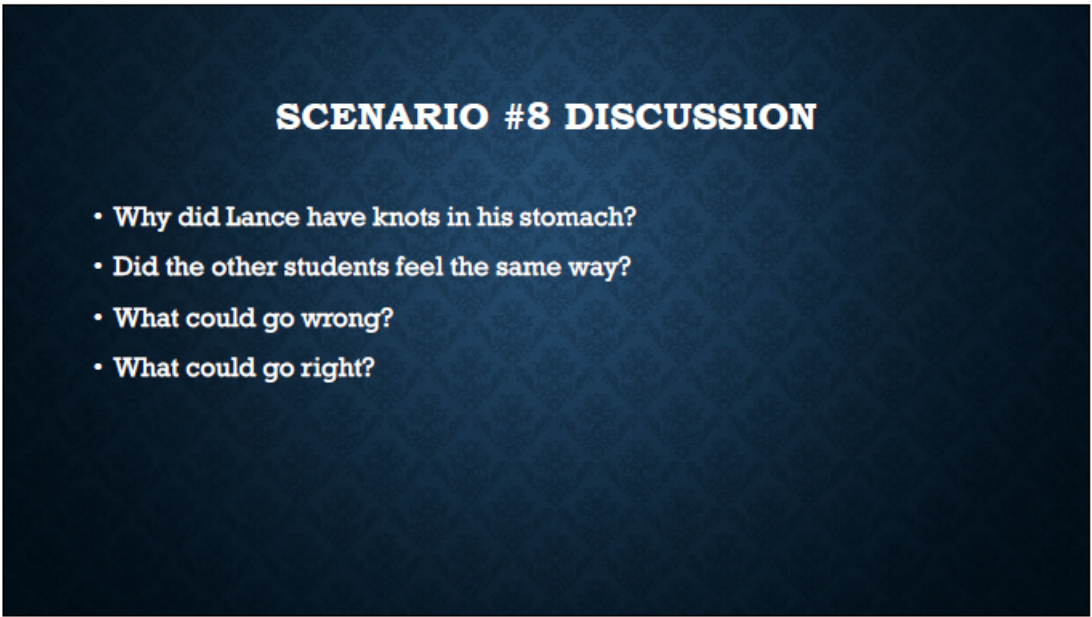
I DON'T LIKE COFFEE...

This slide provides a critical incident to address feelings of belongingness.

As Lance finds his way to his seat just before class starts, he overhears other students complaining about the poor grades they received on the last exam. One student stands and proposes to the class that a study group be formed for those interested in preparing for the next exam scheduled in two weeks. Several students immediately join the conversation and make plans to meet immediately after class at a coffee shop on campus.

After class, Lance walks into the coffee shop and sees his classmates already in friendly, boisterous conversation. His stomach is in knots.

Figure 84. Scenario #8 discussion slide



SCENARIO #8 DISCUSSION

- Why did Lance have knots in his stomach?
- Did the other students feel the same way?
- What could go wrong?
- What could go right?

This slide allows participants to address feelings of nervousness when meeting people from other cultures.

Figure 85. Scenario #9 slide

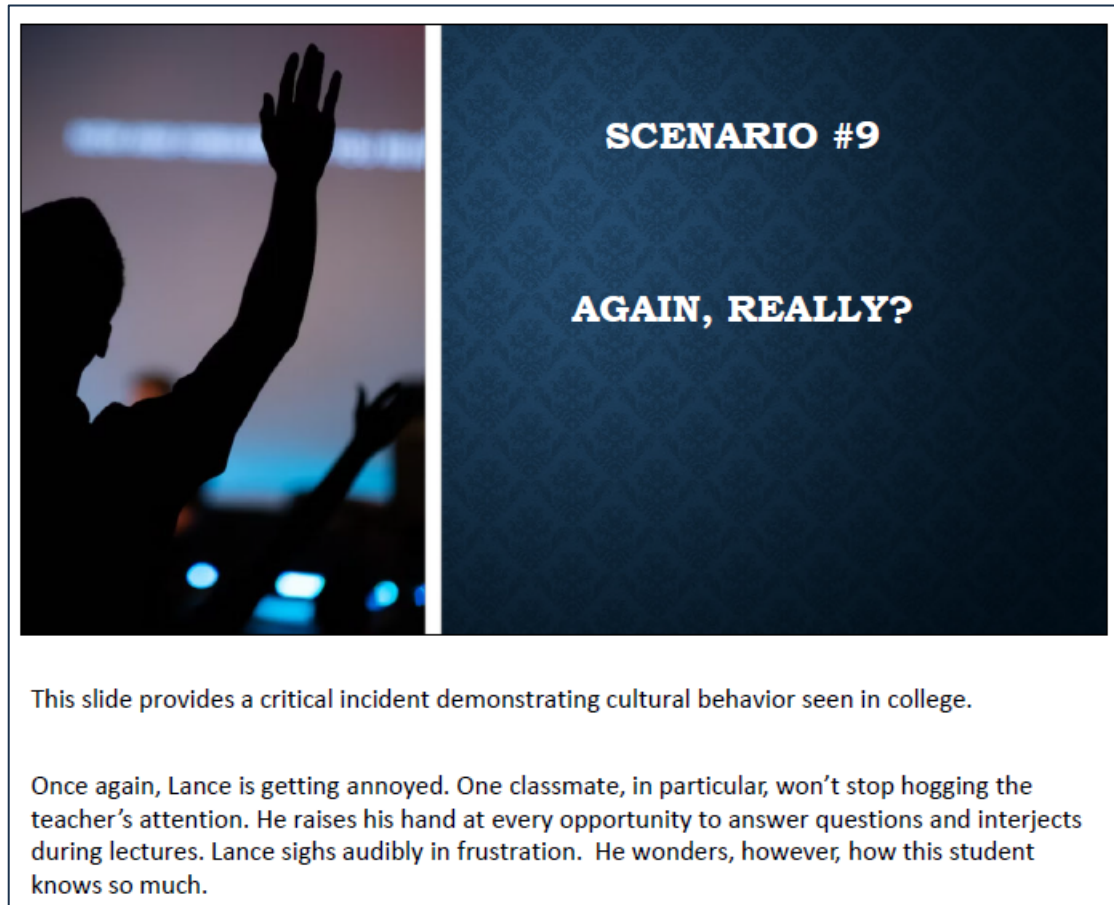
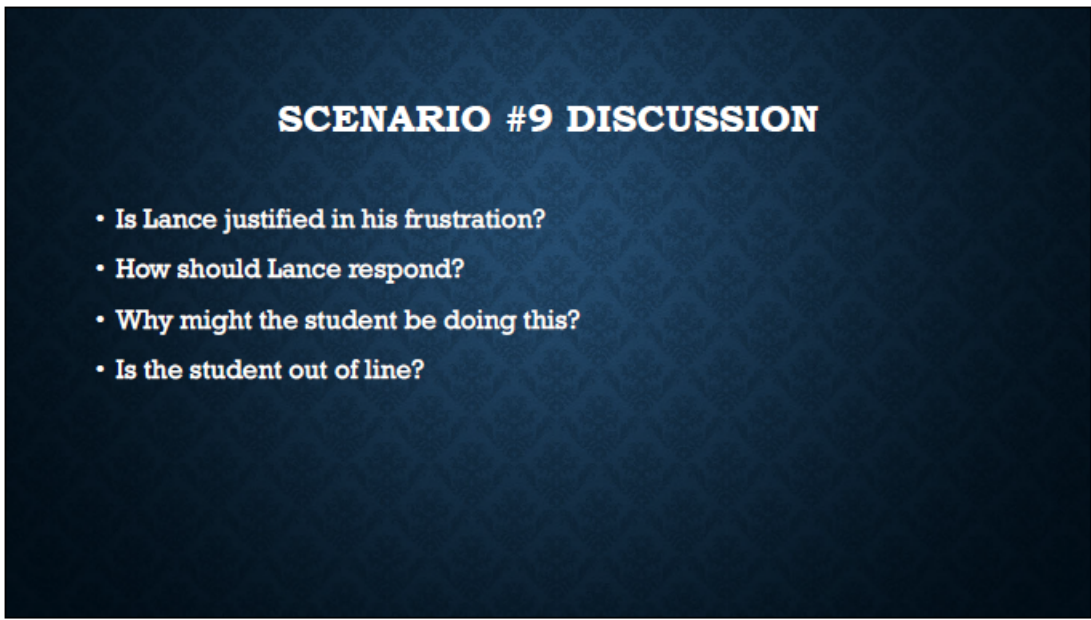


Figure 86. Scenario #9 discussion slide



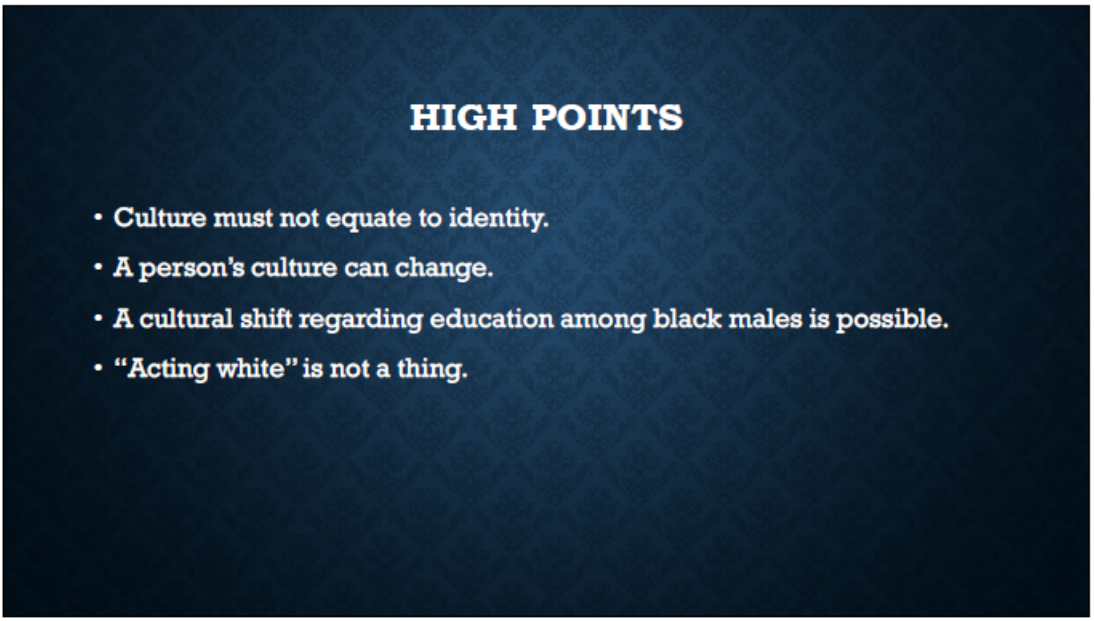
SCENARIO #9 DISCUSSION

- Is Lance justified in his frustration?
- How should Lance respond?
- Why might the student be doing this?
- Is the student out of line?

This slide allows participants to discuss cultural nuances.

- Discuss culture of individualism and competition.
- The student is obviously prepared and wants to demonstrate that to the instructor.

Figure 87. High points slide

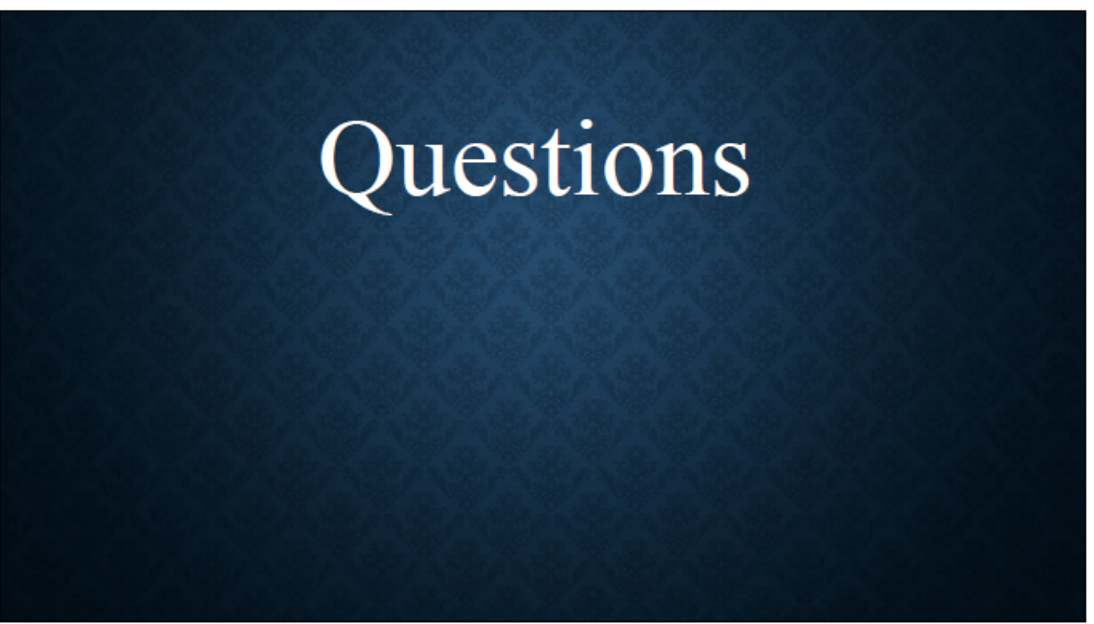


HIGH POINTS

- Culture must not equate to identity.
- A person's culture can change.
- A cultural shift regarding education among black males is possible.
- "Acting white" is not a thing.

This slide reiterates the important points of the session.

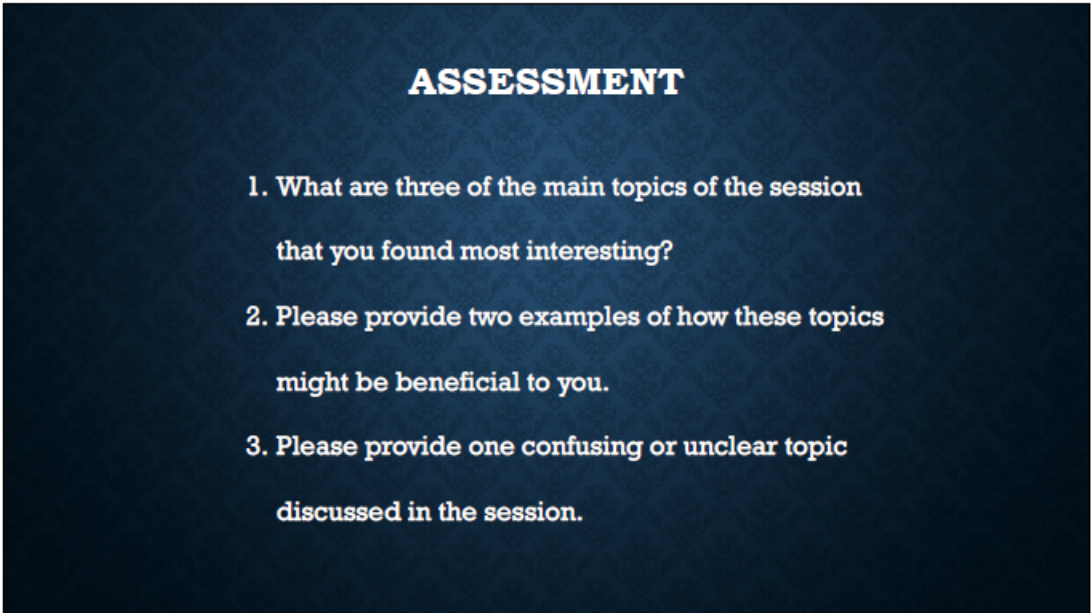
Figure 88. Questions slide



Questions

Questions

Figure 89. Assessment slide



ASSESSMENT

1. What are three of the main topics of the session that you found most interesting?
2. Please provide two examples of how these topics might be beneficial to you.
3. Please provide one confusing or unclear topic discussed in the session.

This slide instructs participants to answer the assessment questions provided on the handout.

CONCLUSION

The preceding slides represent the content of a four-hour presentation designed to support black men transitioning to higher education by directly addressing the cultural aspects of the iconic ghetto that often hinder academic success.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Motivated to improve the educational outcomes for black men in community colleges, BLAAC can help black men, especially those from the iconic ghetto, manage the cultural shock many of them experience when entering college. Various programs have been developed to assist black men in their pursuit of a college degree, many of which address mentoring, sense of belonging, tutoring and the like. However, few, if any, directly address the cultural characteristics that significantly impact how black men from the iconic ghetto view education and adapt to an academic culture.

Similar to programs for international students and expatriate managers, BLAAC uses a variety of formats to introduce participants to the concept of culture and the impact it can have on how they view the world; how “culture shock” causes negative emotional impacts on anyone who transitions to a different cultural milieu; ethnocentrism and how it causes us to judge others based on our own cultural standards; high- and low-context cultures which help define our communication styles; and high and low cultural distance which can play a role in the difficulty one may have when transitioning to a different culture. With this knowledge, participants should exit the programs with a greater anticipation of the challenges they may face in college, a broadened perspective of themselves and their place in education, and the skills, confidence, and commitment to successfully navigate the academic culture they will experience. The program is designed to shorten the time to acclimate and adapt to a higher education culture. By extension,

program participants should be able to avoid the pitfalls that commonly detract from the goal of obtaining a college degree resulting in more successful outcomes.

This final chapter will discuss the limitations of the program, acknowledge potential implementation challenges, and recommend additional research that should be considered.

DELIMITATIONS

BLAAC was developed based on existing literature regarding culture and culture shock, origins of the iconic ghetto culture and the perpetuation thereof in urban centers around the country, and programs designed to address challenges related to acculturation.

The author recognizes the various inherent limitations in the development of BLAAC, which are noted as follows:

- BLAAC was created specifically for the black male indigenous population.
- BLAAC does not include the practice and implementation from a college-to-student perspective.
- As developed for this dissertation BLAAC is not yet designed to measure the difference in efficacy between students who participate in such a program with those who do not. Rather, what the program brings to bear are the various already established techniques used to ease the transition of foreigners to new environments.

As discussed in previous chapters, black men rank toward the bottom of many educational performance metrics when compared with most other demographic categories in rates of college attendance and degrees awarded. Like black men, black women have also been marginalized throughout American history and suffer a similar educational fate. And although black women may benefit from the cultural information provided by BLAAC, to limit the scope of this dissertation the content was developed for black men alone.

BLAAC is designed to provide culturally relevant information to black male students to improve their chances of acculturating to college more successfully. BLAAC does not address

the institutional shortcomings of community colleges that contribute to the lack of success for black male students. The program is not designed to broaden the cultural perspective of college administrators, faculty, or staff, nor does it seek to change their behavior or recommend any modifications to college policy.

As discussed in Chapter 2, various programs currently exist to mitigate the myriad challenges faced by black male students in higher education, some of which focus on improving academic performance and remediation. BLAAC does not address academic coursework or a perceived lack of preparation directly. Rather, the program focuses on the impact that culture can have on how participants value education and their place in it, which can affect academic performance.

CHALLENGES

Community colleges may face varied challenges that make the implementation of BLAAC difficult. Many programs aimed at uplifting black men are adopted and sponsored by the institution offering it. These programs may rely on affinity groups to promote the opportunity, a well-established brand presence, or perhaps the status of a well-known public personality to drive student involvement. BLAAC may encounter challenges with enrollment if students have no impetus for participation.

Another challenge with the program is that, unlike international students who may come from a homogenous culture with common cultural characteristics in their country of origin, not all participating black men will have the same level of experience with the iconic ghetto or be able to relate to the stereotypical characteristics being discussed. Further, some participants may not immediately recognize the cultural characteristics deemed counterproductive by the author as negative and may take offense to the idea that any action to mitigate associated behaviors is

necessary. Others may have the preconception that any notion recommending assimilation to “white” culture is to be resisted.

Finding qualified facilitators may also be challenging. Due to the sensitive nature of the subject matter, the author recommends that the program facilitator be a black man with at least a bachelor’s degree and experience with the cultural characteristics discussed in the program. The facilitator must also be thoroughly familiar with, and committed to, the content of the program, especially the historical factors that led to the perpetuation of the iconic ghetto culture. It is also important that any facilitator be experienced enough to handle questions or comments from participants that threaten to derail the conversation, ultimately leading to a tense, unproductive environment. However, because it is likely that most black men attribute the characteristics of the iconic ghetto to factors other than influences that originated with people from the Celtic Fringe, it may be difficult to find individuals with the prerequisite knowledge to serve as facilitators.

RECOMMENDATIONS

BLAAC was developed specifically for black men based on the cultural traits that are common in large urban centers; however, black women would also benefit from similar cultural programs aimed at enhancing their success in higher education. Additionally, the development of programs for other minority groups with counterproductive cultural traits that hinder them from successfully transitioning to higher education is recommended. Especially rife with opportunity are those cultures whose unproductive traits can be traced to a definitive time in history.

The development of a cultural program for college administrators, faculty, and staff is recommended for two main reasons. First, such a program would help college employees better understand how culture impacts educational outcomes. Second, it may help employees recognize

biases based on the premise that black men are somehow naturally prone to perform poorly are inaccurate.

Training for facilitators is recommended to ensure that consistency in the training program and to ensure that important topics are covered in sufficient detail to obtain the desired outcomes.

Finally, research protocols should be developed to evaluate the impact of the program on the college success of program participants compared to national norms and those with similar cultural backgrounds who do not participate.

CONCLUSION

Black males consistently rank near the bottom of many measures of academic success in higher education. The issue is persistent and insidious, with deep roots going back generations. The associated cultural and social complexities require a multitude of solutions to fully overcome the problem. BLAAC is one of many tools that college administrators have at their disposal to combat these challenges. The program appropriates techniques used to assist international students and expatriate managers as they transition to a new cultural environment, directly addressing cultural traits that obstruct the efforts of black men from the iconic ghetto from their pursuing of college degrees.

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