SUMMARY (WOOD, 2014)

Wood, J.L. (2014) Apprehension to engagement in the classroom: Perceptions of Black males in the community college. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education,* 27(6), 785-803. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2014.901575

Background:

While there are many factors (institutional factors, personal factors, academic factors, and psychological factors) that were identified as contributors to academic success, this paper focused on one of the particular psychological factors, academic disengagement.

Sociocultural forces have created negative experiences for Black male students that influence their perceptions and sense of belonging of and in academia.

In general, Black male students at two-year institutions have lower levels of academic and social integration than those at four year institutions.

Issue:

Qualitative study on Black males community college students' discussion of academic disengagement as a factor of their success. Faculty can often see disengagement as apathy, rather than understanding factors that can contribute to it. Understanding the contributors helps to change the focus from a deficit approach (blaming the student) to an institutional approach.

Nature of student disengagements:

Engagement is a key indicator of success; includes peer involvement, faculty-student interactions, academic support, and teaching and learning approaches. Students demonstrate a disengagement by reluctance to raise hand in classroom, participate in discussions, ask questions, etc. Often students that illustrated disengaged behavior did so due to a fear of being seen as academically inferior not because they did not value education.

Factors contributing:

- Engagement Apprehension: Protective mechanism resulting from perceived and actual messages of inferiority in prior and current educational experiences. (ex. experiences that lead students to feel disregarded and marginalized, as well as thinking they are perceived as stupid, ignorant, or dumb).
- Stereotype Threat: Fear of making an error that would reflect poorly on their race as a result of stereotypes that Black students have lower academic ability. Leeds to lower positive identity and a disidentification from achievements.
- Masculine Identity: Men socialized to be aggressive, competitive, and tough; see school as a feminine domain. Generally, men (men of color, in particular) are socialized to not seek help. Seeking help can be seen as being weak or inferior.

Implications for practice:

- Eliminate the "approach me first" or "prove yourself first" approach to student engagement.
- Initiate opportunities to have one-on-one conversations with students and to provide them with academic support.
- Proactively address potential concerns.
- Have an awareness of potential stereotypes and microaggressions from faculty and students that may be reinforcing engagement apprehension.
- Have authentic interactions with students and reassure them of their capabilities (listen, encourage, welcome, affirm).