

Rites of Passage as an Effective Tool for African American College Students' Academic Success

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~~3rd Annual Diversity Management Conference:~~
Transferring Theory & Research
Findings into Best Practices

May 14, 2010

Available at the Baobab Virtual Reference Desk link on <http://www.Afrocentric.Info>

Introduction - Rites of Passage

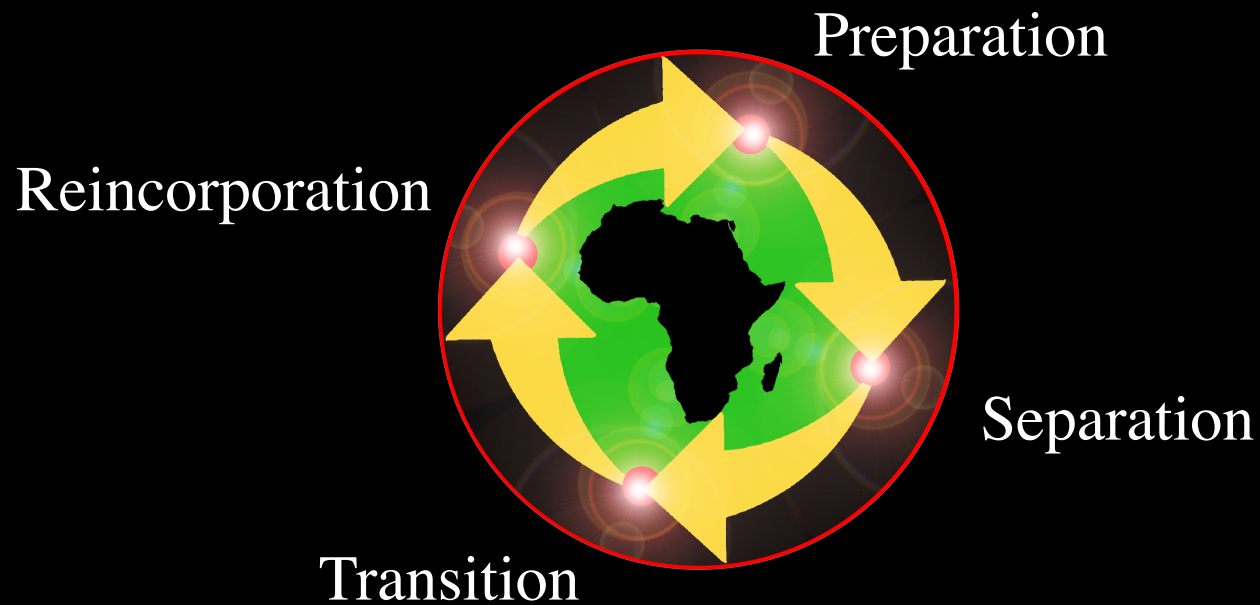
Arnold Van Gennep's 1906 publication of "Les rites de passage" coined the phrase rites of passage.

Mensah (1993) defined rites of passage as:

Those structures, rituals, and ceremonies by which age-class members or individuals in a group successfully come to know who they are and what they are about, the purpose and meaning for their existence, as they proceed from one clearly defined state of existence to the next state of passage in their lives. (p. 62).

Introduction - Rites of Passage

The Rites of Passage Process:



Introduction - Academic STARS (Students Achieving and Reaching Success)

- The Kupita/Transiciones Model was created to support their academic and social needs. The guiding principles of the Nguzo Saba (Kwanzaa) were used to ensure a holistic approach to the students' needs.

The Basic Assumptions of the Kupita/Transiciones Model

1. To increase the retention and graduation rates of minority students, a process is needed to equip minority students with skills and experiences that are consistent with academic success and retention factors;
2. Those factors include developing authentic sense of self, committing to a purpose, building meaningful relationships with peers, faculty and staff, and the ability to identify and utilize academic resources;
3. The development of healthy social networks and sense of self are rooted in positive identity development; and
4. Healthy identity development takes place within an “authentic” socio-cultural context.

Academic STARS

- The Academic STARS (Students Achieving and Reaching Success) is the initiative to bridging African-American students into the university. The Academic STARS program is the central component of Kupita model.
- Only the students in Academic STARS participate in the African-Centered rites of passage summer bridge experience.

The “New” Academic STARS

- In 1995, the “new” Academic STARS students entered the selected institution through an African-Centered Rites of Passage process.
- In an interview conducted in 1995 with the Director and Assistant Director of the Office of Cultural Diversity (now the Student Multicultural Center), both stated that there was something “unique” about the new Academic STARS.

"It was like they [Academic STARS] went into a cocoon and emerged a different group of people; they're not the same group of kids we started out with... This group of students is not like any other that we've had."

"It's easy to tell which students are apart of the STARS program when they are among other freshmen groups...."

Research Question

- Are students who have experienced the KSU Academic STARS African-Centered Rites of Passage process performing better academically than their African-American peers who have not participated in Academic STARS as measured by final accumulative GPA, retention, and graduation, when controlling for gender, SAT, and high school GPA?

Rites of Passage in Higher Education

Butler and Glennen (1991) asserted that colleges and universities should recognize the importance of rites of passage rituals for marking the successful passage from one position in the social structure to another. In addition, colleges and universities should establish sanctioned, rigorous, initiation rituals for new students as rites of passage to increase the students' involvement and sense of belonging and responsibility in their new collegiate community.

Rites of Passage in Higher Education

Shere (1993) discussed a summer transitional program at University of Delaware. She found that students, who progressed through the rites of passage process (on their own), generally felt a high comfort level with the campus, and felt integrated both academically and socially to the campus.

Rites of Passage in Higher Education

Tinto's (1988) model of student departure (graduation) is based on Van Gennep's work on the rites of passage. Tinto stated:

We begin our development of a theory of student departure by turning to the field of social anthropology and studies of the process of establishing membership in traditional societies. Specifically, we turn to the work of Arnold Van Gennep and his study of the rites of passage in tribal societies. ... He saw life as being comprised of series of passages leading individuals from birth to death and from membership in one group or status to another. (p. 91)

Rites of Passage in Higher Education

Tierney (1992) expressed some serious concerns with its use for minority students. Tierney suggested that Tinto's use of the rites of passage concepts and ritual extracts them from their cultural foundation. Tierney states:

When Van Gennep developed his functionalist theory, he never anticipated that it would be used to explain one's culture's ritual to initiate a member of another culture. ... One cannot speak of ritual without first considering the cultural contexts in which that ritual is embedded. (p. 608)

Research Design

- Ex Post Facto Design
- According to Kerlinger (1986) the three major weaknesses of the ex post facto design
 - The inability to manipulate independent variables
 - The lack of power to randomize
 - The risk of improper interpretation

Hypotheses

1. The final accumulative GPA of the Academic STARS is significantly higher than the final accumulative GPA of Non-Academic STARS African-American students at KSU, when controlling for SAT score, gender, and High school GPA.
2. The retention of the Academic STARS students is significantly higher than the retention of Non-Academic STARS African-American students at KSU, when controlling for SAT score, gender, and High school GPA.
3. The graduation rate of the Academic STARS students is significantly higher than the graduation rate of Non-Academic STARS African-American students at KSU, when controlling for SAT score, gender, and High school.

Data Collection and Analysis

- Total Sample N = 943 (1999, 2000, 2001 Cohorts)
 - STARS = 79
 - Non-STARS = 864
- STARS
 - Female = 60
 - Male = 19
- Non-STARS
 - Female = 551
 - Male = 313

Data Collection and Analysis

- An F test was used to determine the R^2 of the various relationships are significantly different at an alpha of .05.
- Multiple linear regression was chosen because of its flexibility, as compare to traditional analysis of variance.
- Two-tailed test of significance was used to test the relationships, because the direction of the correlation was uncertain.

Findings

1. GROUP, independent of SAT score, high school GPA and gender, was found to be significant in predicting retention.
2. GROUP, independent of SAT score, high school GPA and gender, was found to be significant in predicting final accumulative GPA.
3. GROUP, independent of SAT score, high school GPA and gender, was found to be significant* in predicting graduation.
4. There was no significant interaction found.

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

- Conclusion - Less likely to have graduated from the university by the 2003 spring semester.
- Graduation Rates:
 - 1995 Cohort - 57% (STARS) / 42% (KSU Overall)
 - 1996 Cohort - 63% (STARS) / 46% (KSU Overall)

Based on the results of this study, it is concluded that students who have experienced the Academic STARS African-Centered rites of passage process have performed better academically, as evident by significant increases in final accumulative grade point average and retention, and increase graduation rate, than their peers who have not experienced Academic STARS

Conclusions, Implications, and Recommendations

Implications

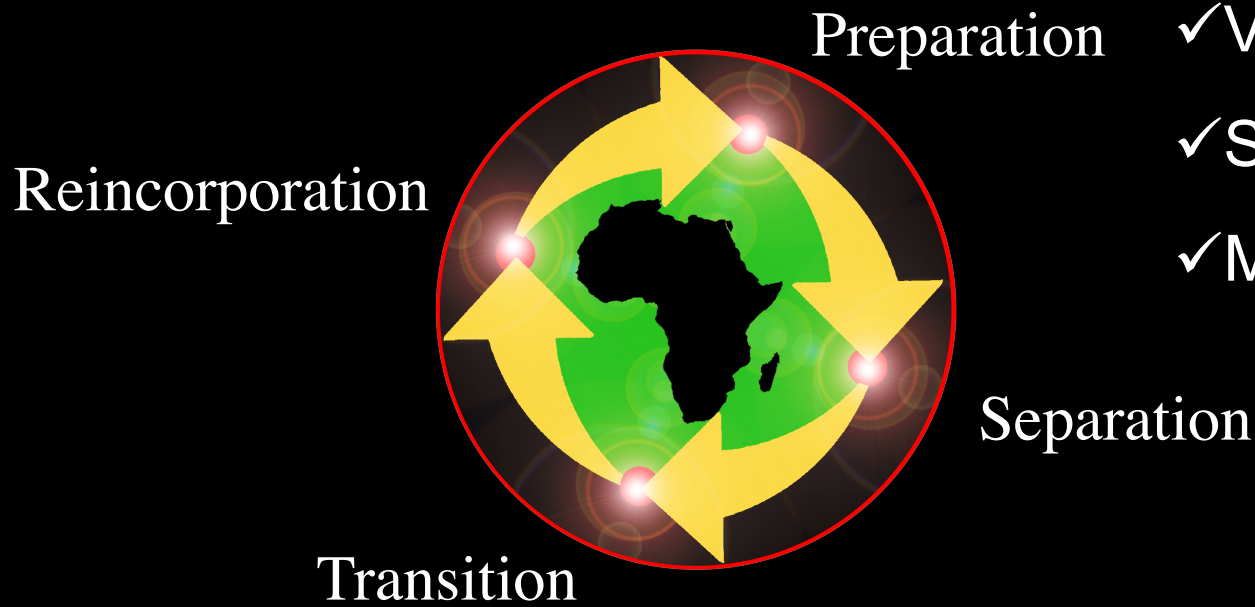
- The findings of this study indicate that the use of the Academic STARS African-Centered rites of passage model to deliver educative services and programs is effective.
- The results of this study support research that emphasizes the importance of providing African-American college students, particularly in predominantly white institutions, with opportunities to develop an authentic sense of self and social networking skills.

“To outsiders, the and symbols of any institution can look silly. But when they [rituals & symbols] are sincere and linked to the values of an organization, they fulfill a deep human need to be connected and appreciated.” David Novak (2007)

The Rites of Passage Model:

What's Needed:

- ✓Village
- ✓Sacred Knowledge
- ✓Matrix



THANK YOU!

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