

## Background

### Why is school belonging important?

- Social experiences are important when thinking about academic belonging (Hausmann et al., 2007).
- A sense of belonging relates to whom and how often students interact with peers (Locks et al., 2008).
- Connections with peers has social and cognitive benefits, and relates to greater academic performance (Blatchford, Pellegrini, & Baines, 2016).

### Why do we expect racial differences?

- In recent studies, first-year students of color (namely African American, Asian Pacific American, and Hispanic/Latino students) reported lower levels of belonging on their campuses than did white students (Johnson et. al., 2007).
- **Peers appear to be particularly important for Latinos/Hispanics students** (Johnson, et. al., 2007).
- **African-American** students experience relatively greater uncertainty about their belonging in school. These results suggest that members of ethnic/racial minority groups are uncertain about the quality of their social bonds in academic settings (Walton & Cohen, 2007).
- **African American** have been found to report lower sense of belonging on days of high stress (Walton & Cohen, 2007).
- **Black/African American and multi-cultural/multi-ethnic women** have reported a significant correlation between overall sense of belonging and positive perceptions of the campus racial climate.
- **White** women have reported stronger overall sense of belonging and fewer interactions with peers from different racial/ethnic groups (Johnson, 2011).

**Hypothesis: There will be a higher sense of academic belonging with peers, administrative personnel, and faculty members among white university students than among university students of color.**



## Methods

- The data we used were part of a larger study of college students at **two public universities located in AZ and NY** (during the November 2016 Election season).
- The sample consisted of 282 students ranging from 18 to 25 years old. These students were recruited both online and flyers distributed around campus and in classrooms.
- 72% of sample was female
- 57% White, 12% Latino, 11% Asian, 7% African American, 12% Multiracial/ Ethnic

### Academic Belonging Measure 3 items (Strayhorn, 2012)

- Rate your relationships with other students at your university from lowest 1=(competitive, uninvolved, sense of alienation) to highest=7 (friendly, supportive, sense of belonging).
- Rate your relationships with administrative personnel and offices at your university from lowest= 1 (rigid, impersonal, bound by regulations) to highest=7 (helpful, considerate, flexible).
- Rate your relationships with faculty members at your university from lowest= 1 (remote, discouraging, unsympathetic) to highest= 7 (approachable, understanding, encouraging)

## Conclusions and Implications

- Our findings indicated that race/ethnicity did play a role in academic belonging specific to peer relationships.
- **Latino, Asian, and Multiracial/Ethnic students** experienced the **lowest academic belonging** specific to peer relationships.
- Contrary to our hypothesis, however, students' race/ethnicity did not play a role in their relationships with faculty or administrators. Notably, across all groups, the overall mean for relationships with administrators was low.
- **Academic institutions should take initiative to increase academic belonging among peers with programs that target racial/ethnic minorities.**
- Recommendations for future programs might include an increase in academic belonging amongst all students by improving faculty and administrator relationships with students.
- Previous research shows that the development of strong student-faculty relationships can lessen the feelings of a negative campus climate and help to create a more inclusive campus community (Cress, 2008).

## Results

We conducted a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to examine mean-level differences in belonging by race/ethnicity.

	White (n = 161)	African American / Black (n = 21)	Latino (n = 35)	Asian (n = 31)	Multiracial (n = 34)	F Statistic
<b>Peers</b>	5.87 <sub>a</sub>	5.19 <sub>ab</sub>	5.00 <sub>b</sub>	5.00 <sub>b</sub>	5.06 <sub>b</sub>	$F(4, 281) = 7.52, p < .001$
<b>Administrators</b>	4.44 <sub>a</sub>	4.71 <sub>a</sub>	4.11 <sub>a</sub>	4.39 <sub>a</sub>	4.68 <sub>a</sub>	$F(4, 281) = .83, p = .51$
<b>Faculty</b>	5.27 <sub>a</sub>	5.05 <sub>a</sub>	4.74 <sub>a</sub>	4.90 <sub>a</sub>	5.26 <sub>a</sub>	$F(4, 281) = 1.88, p = .11$

Note: Means that do not share a subscript within a row are significantly different from one another,  $p < .05$

- The results indicated that there were significant race/ethnicity differences in academic belonging in regards to relationships peers.
- White participants reported greater belonging than Latino, Asian, and Multiracial/Ethnic participants.
- The results indicated that there were no significant differences by race/ethnicity in academic belonging in regards to relationships faculty and administrators.



## Acknowledgements

The authors acknowledge funding from the Frances McClelland Institute for Children, Youth, and Families. References are available upon request.

