

CALS FACULTY PERSPECTIVES ON MENTORING UNDERREPRESENTED MINORITY STUDENTS IN RESEARCH

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sustainability
scholars
program

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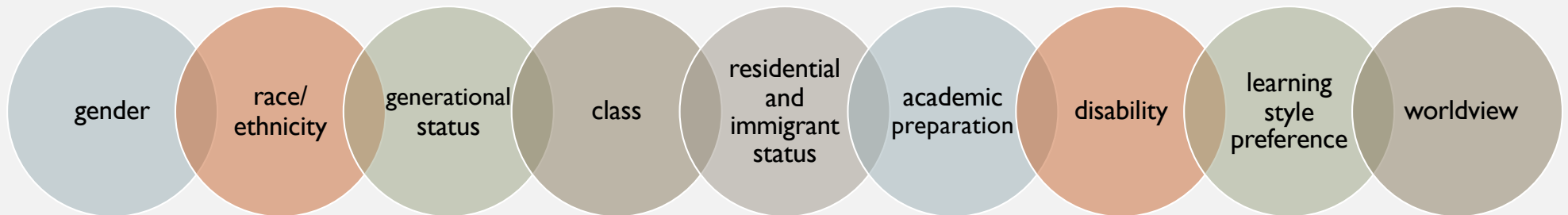
VIRGINIA TECH™

“Our society can no longer afford to reserve ‘islands of innovation’ for a select group of students while others, often students traditionally underserved, receive an education more suited to the industrial age.”


McNair & Albertine (2012)

Programs aimed at increasing student success must address issues related to the diverse nature of students who are entering higher education today

Student diversity includes multiple categories (Rendón, 2006)



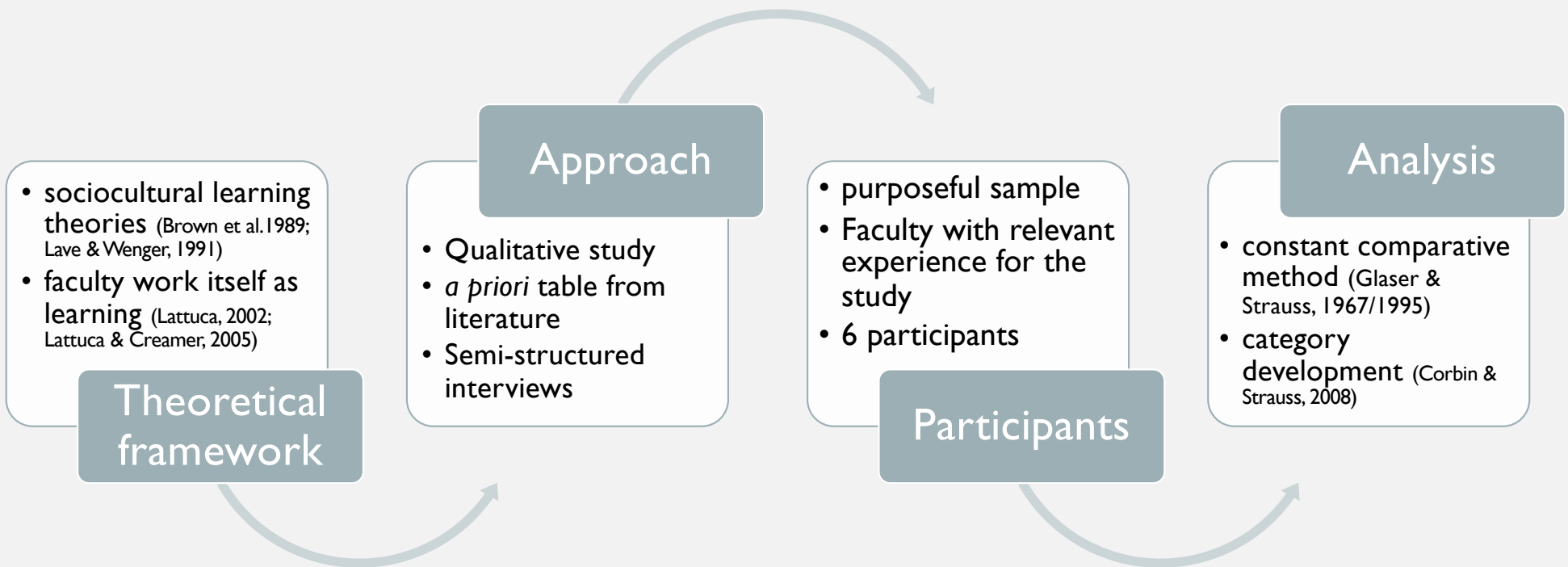
Programs aimed at increasing student success must address issues related to the diverse nature of students who are entering higher education today



race/
ethnicity

- At Virginia Tech, underrepresented minority (URM) students are underserved in agriculture
 - 40% of K-12 students nationally
 - 11% typically enrolled in Virginia Tech's Colleges of Agriculture and Life Sciences and Natural Resources and the Environment
- 1862 Land Grants are predominantly white institutions
- Majority (white) faculty in CALS were often trained at similar institutions

*We wanted to understand experiences of faculty members in an 1862
CALs when working with URM students in their research groups*



COMMON VIEWPOINT

Faculty did not want to ever have URM students think that they were not equal to other students in their laboratory.

STRATEGIES

Establish time and structure for one-on-one meetings with students to ensure confidence in their work and provide a space to ask questions.

STRATEGIES

Build relationships between
all laboratory students.

STRATEGIES

Treat all students equally, to ensure no distinguishing differences between groups.

GAPS

Few faculty are taking time to learn about the cultures of students different from theirs.

*A component of cultural competency
(Diller & Moule, 2005 as cited in NEA
Policy Brief, 2008)*

GAPS

Few participating faculty were encouraging URM students to have multiple mentors.

Recommended by Schlosser and Foley (2008)

Preparation of majority faculty to mentor and support URM students at PWIs is crucial

Mentors are likely replicating strategies they encountered during their training

Sociocultural perspective → what faculty learned about mentoring strategies reflects the cultural context and social structures of their discipline and institutions

Mentors may be unaware of the needs of URM students due to different lived experiences

Climate on a PWI campus favors white majority students → mentors need to attend to the array of potential needs that URM students may have due to their unique experience of climate

Preparation of majority faculty to work with URM students is crucial

Recommendations for continued professional education (CPE) experiences for college of agriculture faculty

1. Supporting student mentorship that engages multiple professional mentors who are able to support different aspects of URM student experiences.
2. Increasing individual appreciation for other cultures.

The Sustainability Scholars Program: Early
Successes from the Pilot Year

Hannah H. Scherer, Kayla Harris, Peter Ziegler, Curtis
Friedel, Donna Westfall-Rudd and Tiffany Drape
Friday, 10AM - 12PM, Poster Session 3

Cross-race Mentoring: Bridging the Gap

Kayla Harris and Hannah H. Scherer
Thursday 10:00-10:20AM, Fine Arts 133

Questions, thoughts, and ideas?

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