

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE GUIDANCE FOR MEN OF COLOR

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As an increasing number of campuses take on the critical work of designing and implementing supports for undergraduate men of color, defining and articulating a theory of action promotes clarity and consistency among practitioners within and across campuses. This brief is one of nine dedicated to various facets of the theory of action driving implementation of the UW Brotherhood Initiative. In this brief, we describe the BI definition of **Culturally Responsive Guidance** and highlight the research on this concept as it pertains to undergraduate men of color. We also provide some examples of the ways in which culturally responsive guidance is put into practice within the BI.

DEFINING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE GUIDANCE

As defined by the BI, **culturally responsive guidance** encompasses knowledge and practices that affirm the racial and ethnic backgrounds of students, with the aim to empower them in decision-making and connect them with supportive relationships, resources, and opportunities. Culturally responsive guidance builds on concepts of culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2020; Ladson-Billings, 1995) and culturally responsive advising (Mitchell et al., 2010), by extending the relevance and importance of cultural responsiveness to the entire campus community - mentors, counselors, advisors, and other campus community members - who may utilize this approach to support students in all facets of personal, social, and academic growth.

THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE GUIDANCE FOR MEN OF COLOR

Insufficient access to culturally meaningful academic and social integration opportunities often contribute to the barriers men of color face in reaching their academic goals (Lee & Ransom, 2011). Johnson et al. (2019) assert that in order to find success, black men specifically must often traverse the divide between their “culture of origin (i.e., language, values, and how things get done) and the dominant culture of higher education that may be more competitive, individualistic (vs. collectivist), and outcome-oriented (vs. process or person-centered)” (p. 7). To address these tensions, men of color can benefit from the culturally responsive guidance provided by faculty, staff, experienced peers, mentors and academic advisors who can support them in navigating the distinct cultural landscape of their campus (Strayhorn, 2015; Huerta et al., 2021).

Serving men of color in a culturally responsive way includes utilizing an anti-deficit framework - as opposed to a deficit perspective (Clark & Kalionzes, 2008). All too often, the skills and social capital that undergraduate men of color already hold are not recognized as having value in many higher education settings (Person et al., 2017). The environments of predominantly white institutions (PWIs) have been described as being particularly unsupportive and alienating for Black and Latino males (Harris et al., 2010; Brooms et al., 2018). Practitioners can challenge this deficit view by offering an asset-based approach - rooted in the concept of community cultural wealth¹ and practice of strengths-based advising² - to understanding the resilience and strengths of underrepresented minority students (Yosso, 2005). Culturally responsive guidance that acknowledges and promotes the strengths and capital that men of color bring to college is an important way to offer support that is informed and effective.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE GUIDANCE IN PRACTICE

Founded through the collaborative work of UW faculty, staff, and students of color, the Brotherhood Initiative is designed with the experiences and strengths of American Indian/Alaska Native, Black, Latino, Native

1 Community cultural wealth is “an array of knowledge, skills, abilities and contacts possessed and utilized by Communities of Color to survive and resist macro and micro-forms of oppression” (Yosso, 2005, p. 77).

2 Strengths-based advising uses student talents, aspiration, and motivation as the foundation for academic guidance and relationship building. Strengths-based approaches focus on helping students become more aware of their own talents and abilities, supporting students in creating personalized success plans, and empowering students as decision-makers and problem solvers (Schreiner & Anderson, 2005).

Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Southeast Asian undergraduate males at its center. Situated in a predominantly white institution, the BI is distinct because the approach to providing support and guidance is informed by, designed for, and delivered with the intersectional experiences of men of color in mind.

Supporting Students through Asset-Based Approaches

Culturally responsive guidance in the BI builds on the unique forms of community cultural wealth that Scholars bring to college. This guidance begins with the BI application, orientation, and pre-program surveys. The BI utilizes these information gathering strategies to learn about the ambitions, goals, and academic confidence of each Scholar before they even begin taking courses. More importantly, we ask Scholars about the level of belonging they feel, whether they have individuals they can go to for help, and their comfort in navigating discussions of race and gender. These early insights concerning the students’ aspirations and navigational capital assists BI support staff and faculty in connecting with new Scholars, anticipating organizational challenges, and providing guidance for men of color specific to a large, urban, predominantly white research institution. The BI works to ensure that Scholars develop relationships and discover campus environments where they can utilize and grow their pre-existing strengths and assets.

The BI also incorporates the familial capital of Scholars. They are encouraged to learn from the ways that their communities have supported them and to consider how they can model behaviors of care and trust within the BI family. BI alumni and seniors are regularly invited to engage with incoming cohorts as a way to

give back to the BI, but also as a strategy for younger Scholars to receive culturally relevant guidance from an ever-growing network of men of color who can speak to navigating the cultural landscape of the UW campus.

Building a Culturally Responsive Support Network

The BI network of staff, faculty, researchers, steering committee members, and campus partners are important contributors to the ways in which the BI understands and delivers culturally responsive guidance. Across this vast group of collaborators, many social identities are represented, including race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, and immigrant status. The combined professional expertise and lived experiences of this network help to inform the ways that the Initiative leverages relationships and resources to support the success of Scholars by offering additional insights and best practices related to serving men of color throughout the institution. As an example, the BI consistently partners with, and refers Scholars to, staff from units across campus who have explicitly demonstrated a culturally responsive approach to working with students, including various advising offices, the counseling center, the career center, and several academic support centers.

Using Culturally Responsive Evaluation to Improve Guidance Practices

The BI informs its culturally responsive approach with data gathered from a variety of touchpoints with BI Scholars. Whether it be through a BI summer interview, classroom-based oral history presentation, or case notes from quarterly check-ins with the BI Student Success Coordinator, the BI staff are continuously engaging in culturally responsive evaluation practices (see Yu et al., 2019 for a description) that are designed to

capture how cultural values and experiences are shaping the academic success and personal well-being of Scholars. As qualitative and quantitative data throughout the initiative is collected and synthesized, the BI faculty and research team regularly use the findings to increase our understanding of intersectionality and complex individuality (Celious & Oyserman, 2001; Harper et al., 2011). Findings are further used to refine the cultural relevance of BI supports, referrals, and resources for subgroups within the cohorts, whether by major or career interests, race, nationality, or other identities. For example, the BI continues to tailor its guidance and resources for students who are pursuing capacity-constrained majors such as computer science and business, and those who are considering graduate programs, medical school, or law school.

CONCLUSION

Honoring the multitude of cultural backgrounds and identities that men of color bring with them to college is central to promoting their academic and personal growth. Yet, even when students share identities as men of color, it is equally important to acknowledge, understand, and celebrate the vast diversity within this group by tailoring approaches to guidance and support accordingly. Higher education practitioners can promote comprehensive, culturally responsive guidance practices at their institutions by cultivating collaborative relationships with staff and units that intentionally recognize and honor students' multiple identities in their work. They can also provide campus-wide resources or trainings about asset-based approaches to working with students of color. By promoting culturally responsive guidance practices across campus, leaders and practitioners can create an institutional culture that supports men of color to thrive holistically and authentically.

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The nine briefs exploring the BI Theory of Action include:

- Introduction to BI Theory of Action
- Sense of Belonging for Men of Color
- Culturally Relevant Pedagogy for Men of Color
- Culturally Responsive Guidance for Men of Color
- Continuity of Support for Men of Color
- Academic Guidance and Support for Men of Color
- Psychosocial and Identity Development for Men of Color
- Career Development and Professionalization for Men of Color
- Community-Based Learning and Leadership Development for Men of Color

These briefs are available at <https://brotherhoodinitiative.org/research>

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