Campus Climate: Including Agricultural Identity as a Social Identity

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Background

Campus climate studies continue to be used by institutions of higher education to aid in creating safe, diverse, and productive environments:
- Measure (real or perceived) of an academic institution’s environment
  - Limited consensus on a single campus climate definition
- Related to interpersonal, academic, and professional interactions
  - Includes events, messages, symbols, core beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and more
  - Make the institution a welcome (or not) environment for everyone

Prior research suggests various social identity groups perceive the campus climate differently:
- Age, gender, race, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity
- These perceptions may adversely affect working and learning outcomes

Little understanding as to which social identity experiences ought to be included in campus climate studies
Purpose and Objectives

- To consider the inclusion of *agricultural identity* as a social identity group within campus climate assessment and studies
  - Land-grant institutions are unique because of their agricultural history and background
  - This institutional history may influence the climate

- Specific objectives of the study
  1. Explore the extent to which students in colleges of agriculture and three land-grant institutions identify agricultural identity as a social identity
  2. Explore differences in self-reported success outcomes of students with and without an agricultural identity
Methods and Procedures

- Three land-grant institutions with 12,600 undergraduate and graduate students in colleges of agriculture within the United States
  - 1,257 participants
  - 55.5% undergraduate

- 56-item online survey instrument
  - Included adaptations from Chen (2005), the Aspects of Identity Questionnaire (AIQ-IV), and Skyfactor Mapworks student retention and success system
  - Included researcher-developed questions related to agricultural identity
    - Operationally defined as the social and cultural meanings associated with rural and/or agricultural backgrounds
    - Administered via Qualtrics following the Dillman et al. (2009) Tailored Design Method

- Data analysis included descriptive statistics, ANOVA, and multivariate statistics
Findings – Objective 1

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics for Agricultural Identity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>To a great extent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The degree to which I identify with an agricultural identity</td>
<td>125 (17.5%)</td>
<td>91 (12.7%)</td>
<td>174 (24.3%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings – Objective 1

Table 2
Frequencies for Agricultural Identity in Top Three Social Identities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Tennessee</td>
<td>64 (55.7%)</td>
<td>51 (44.3%)</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Carolina State University</td>
<td>101 (51.2%)</td>
<td>96 (48.7%)</td>
<td>197</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Texas A&amp;M University</td>
<td>138 (50%)</td>
<td>138 (50%)</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>303 (51.5%)</td>
<td>285 (48.5%)</td>
<td>588</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings – Objective 2

- An initial MANOVA examined respondents who indicated agricultural identity in their top three social identities and their associations to sixteen self-reported success/retention outcomes
  - Success outcomes included questions such as:
    - “I feel like my university is a good fit for me”
    - “I am attending most of my classes most of the time”
    - “I feel I belong at my university”
    - “I am seriously considering leaving my academic college during or after this semester. Not due to graduation.”
  - There was a statistically significant difference in success outcomes based on an agricultural identity
    - $F (34, 302) = 1.571, p < .05; \text{Wilk's } \Lambda = 0.450, \text{ partial } \eta^2 = .15.$
Findings – Objective 2

Follow-up univariate ANOVAs showed that *agricultural identity* has a statistically significant effect on a respondent’s consideration to leave their:

- Academic department
  - $F(2, 167) = 3.35; p < .05; \text{partial } \eta^2 = .039$
- Academic college
  - $F(2, 167) = 3.35; p < .05; \text{partial } \eta^2 = .039$
- Institution
  - $F(2, 167) = 3.35; p < .05; \text{partial } \eta^2 = .039$
Conclusions

- Agricultural identity is an important social identity
  - 51% of participants included it in their top three social identities
  - Not unique to one institution but rather consistent across the three institutions

- There is utility in including agricultural identity in future campus climate assessments and studies
  - This may be particularly important at institutions with land-grant missions or a strong agricultural histories
Questions???