



*Evidence Summary*

***There is a Significant Relationship Between Computer Attitudes and Library Anxiety Among African American Graduate Students***

**A review of:**

Jiao, Qun G., and Anthony J. Onwuegbuzie. "The Impact of Information Technology on Library Anxiety: The Role of Computer Attitudes." *Information Technology & Libraries* 23.4 (Dec. 2004): 138-44.

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**Abstract**

**Objective** – To investigate whether African American students' computer attitudes predict levels of library anxiety.

**Design** – A user study in which two instruments were administered to a group of graduate students to measure computer attitudes and library anxiety.

**Setting** – The College of Education at an historically black college and university in the United States of America.

**Subjects** – Ninety-four, predominantly female, African American graduate students, ranging in age from 22-62 years old, and

enrolled in either a statistics or a measurement course.

**Methods** – Two instruments, the Computer Attitude Scale (CAS) and the Library Anxiety Scale (LAS) were administered to all the study participants. The Computer Anxiety Scale contains forty Likert-type items that assess individuals' attitudes toward computers and their use. It includes four scales which can be administered separately:

1. Anxiety or fear of computers
2. Confidence in the ability to use computers
3. Liking or enjoying working with computers
4. Computer usefulness

The LAS contains forty-three, 5-point, Likert-format items that assess levels of library anxiety experienced by college students. It also has five subscales as follows:

1. Barriers with staff
2. Affective barriers
3. Comfort with the library
4. Knowledge of the library
5. Mechanical barriers

**Main results** – There were twenty correlations between the library anxiety subscale scores and the computer attitude subscale scores. Four of these correlations were statistically significant. Liking or enjoying working with computers was statistically significantly linked to affective barriers, comfort with the library, and knowledge of the library. There was also a statistically significant association between an attitude of computer usefulness and knowledge of the library.

**Conclusion** – These findings suggest that in this group of students there is a medium to strong relationship between computer attitudes and library anxiety.

### **Commentary**

The study sample consisted of 94 African American graduate students. The authors point out that it is not possible to extrapolate the findings to other racial groups. The students were enrolled in either a statistics or a measurement course. These subjects do not lend themselves to particularly high levels of use of library resources, which may also affect the transferability of the results. No details are given in the paper about how, where, or by whom the instruments were administered. Lack of familiarity with the two instruments used in the study makes it difficult to judge either their appropriateness or reliability, but the authors quote other studies in the discussion that have used similar scales and produced consistent results.

It would have been helpful to have more specific data about the gender split in the sample. The paper merely states that the majority of the participants were women. It is possible that the generalizability of the results may be affected by the very wide age range in the sample. The authors give the mean age, but it would have been useful to know the median age also. The median age would illustrate whether it was primarily participants under 25 with a couple of outliers which increased the mean age. Further, how does the age range and gender split compare with the previous studies cited by the authors?

This paper is useful in confirming the hypothesis that students who are less confident with computers are more likely to experience library anxiety. This finding is not in itself surprising, but could be valuable evidence to support bids for more resources for the support and training of less confident students.