

Perception of self as minority among young adults in a college setting: How does it transgress into academic success or failure

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Methods



- ▶ The purpose of the focus groups was to learn about the educational experiences of minority students at CCSU.
- ▶ Qualitative data were gathered from students in nine focus groups that took place from May 2014 to November 2014. Focus groups lasted 2-3 hours.
- ▶ Students were asked four questions related to factors that contribute to or hinder their academic success.
- ▶ All focus groups were audio recorded, transcribed and coded using ATLAS.ti software.

Sample

- ▶ Focus group participants were recruited through purposive sampling procedures.
- ▶ Participants included students listed as currently registered students who identified as being part of a minority group.

Focus group questions

- ▶ 1. What has helped you succeed at CCSU?
- ▶ 2. What resources outside of CCSU have helped you succeed (i.e. family, community)?
- ▶ 3. What has helped you succeed academically in your classes? What has hindered your success in classes?
- ▶ 4. Are there any ways in which CCSU can change to encourage minority student success?

Theoretical Applications: Reflected Appraisals and the Self

successful ones entirely satisfied with themselves, nevertheless, as William James ([1890] 1950, pp. 306–7) long ago noted: “One may say, however, that the normal provocative of self feeling is one’s actual success or failure, and the good or bad actual position one holds in the world. . . . he who has made one blunder after another, and still lies in middle life among the failures at the foot of the hill, is liable to grow all sicklied o’er with self-

distrust, and to shrink from trials with which his powers can really cope.”

James’s impressions are entirely consistent with Mead’s (1934) theory of reflected appraisals. If the essential characteristic of social class, in the Weberian sense of “status group” (Gerth and Mills 1946), is unequal prestige, then one would expect those looked up to by society to develop a high level of self-respect, and vice versa.

The Self-concept

tremely intricate, complex, multifaceted structure. The chief elements or components of the self-concept are dispositions (e.g., intelligence, kindness, morality, optimism) and social identity elements (e.g., race, sex, religion, age, social class). (For more elaborate and sometimes differing views, see

Social Comparison Process

In 1954 Leon Festinger set forth his theory of social comparison processes, holding that "there exists, in the human organism, a drive to evaluate his opinions and his abilities. . . . To the extent that objective, non-social means are not available, people evaluate their opinions and abilities by comparison respectively with the opinions and abilities of others" (p. 117–18). One could add that it is not only opinions and abilities but also social identity elements—groups, statuses, and social categories—that are evaluated. The individual compares his own group or position with that of other people.

Reflected Appraisals

REFLECTED APPRAISALS

Since the process of human communication obliges the individual to respond to himself from the standpoint of others (Mead 1934), it is generally assumed that people come to see themselves as they believe others—particularly significant others (Sullivan 1953)—see them. In this simplified

ocal: There is a strong and definite relationship between the “perceived self” (Miyamoto and Dornbusch 1956) and the individual’s own picture of what he is actually like. The Baltimore data showed that 62% of the

Findings: Data and Sample

- ▶ 7 of 9 focus groups
- ▶ 118 comments related to the self, identity, reflected appraisals, social comparisons, reference to self as minority
- ▶ 21 single spaced, 11pt pages

Findings: Themes

- ▶ Resources for minority students
- ▶ Presence of minorities in classroom/campus/diversity in classrooms
- ▶ Negative interactions with staff/faculty
- ▶ Group social support
- ▶ Self-motivation, self identity, reference to self and identity
- ▶ Suggestions

Resources for Minority Students

- ▶ I feel like Central provides minorities with so many resources, it's just the point of actually using them. I know several students don't really take advantage of them which is really unfortunate. And then most of them like to blame the university but I feel like if you use the resources that are provided then there is no room for failure....
- ▶ I'm not someone who really utilizes the resources here for minorities. Not that I know of any, but I know of other people who do as far as scholarships, and stuff like and like you know they're able to do things they wouldn't be able to do otherwise like take advantage of the programs and stuff like that, so but I still don't use them

Presence of Minorities in Class



- ▶ I know in a lot of my classes that I don't see a lot of minority students in the classes like besides (name) and one other boy that's in and that's it
- ▶ ...the only classes where's there's probably a lot of minorities is like the ones you know I've taken that are related to my minor African American studies...
- ▶ Last semester I took intro to African American studies and I loved it but there was a lack of African American students like primary the class was made up of Caucasian. Which I wasn't too sure about but as far as it goes I'm there to get my degree so I wasn't too concerned.

Negative Interactions with Faculty/Staff

- ▶ You know school is like a full time job in itself and I feel like sometimes professors don't understand that and I think sometimes they look at students like ok their slacking and ...we're just full of excuses.
- ▶ You know it happens I just completed it wrong, like I told her I was going to do it again and she made me cry because I got upset because she kind of just dismissing and ...I just feel like you know as professors even though she has an opinion you know about what she thinks I gave her she could probably conduct herself in a different way.

Negative Interactions with Faculty/Staff

- ▶ I was supposed to meet up with him and you know like I waited and waited and after I went to his office and I finally went to his secretary and he just left for the day and he wasn't going to be back he wasn't answering his cell phone so I'm like are you kidding me we made an appointment and he just ditched
- ▶ so I just thought it was really unprofessional and hmm from there I actually met with her for my advising thing after I had signed up and she was 45 minutes late again without an apology or explanation and when I walked in the office her thing was am I forgetting something? Like are you supposed to be here?

Group Social Support

- ▶ R1: I also have a family that's very education driven. Um, on my dad's side of my family, everyone goes to school and does very well. Um, technically I'm the slacker...Everyone has, like, speaks five languages and does all these amazing things, ...a lot of them have their own businesses, so I come from a very, like, let's go get it, get it, family. So that's my support system that motivates me cause my family is really successful
- ▶ R2: Well, I would say the same, my support system is my family, cause growing up, they were, like, always there. My mom motivated me and she just always taught me to be, to try my hardest and be as successful as I can be. So I would say that's, I believe, like, my main core support system.

Group Social Support

Um, when I first came in, I got a lot of support from the Latino community, and I think it's one of the reasons that I've made it so far, and then, um, ever since then, also just friends...Just knowing that we're striving for the same goals, same major, and so I think that's also been a big component.

I did the University Success Program this summer, the Africana one, and it was really like a family...so we could connect with each other and learn from each other, and it really helped me and it taught me study skills, ...we had class all day and then we had a mandatory study session where they watched us and made sure we were doing our work, and then always, the center is always there for us to go if we want to study or talk to anyone, like, they're always available to us...they will help us with anything, I believe.

Self-motivation, the self, identity



- ▶ And just besides that, just me, just me being, just me pushing myself, as well, has gotten me this far.
- ▶ *I would say that you also have to support yourself sometimes. And kind of just have your own back, and kind of just say okay, this is where I'm starting and this is where I want to finish and I know there's gonna be hard work somewhere in the middle. So, I would say family also, definitely family, but also yourself.*
- ▶ I'm driven for myself, so like xxx was saying, having that motivation for yourself is really great,

Self-motivation, the self, identity



- ▶ I think you have to just kind of have to go out there and kind of search for yourself, like who is gonna help you with regards to, um, who's focusing on minorities on campus already and who's already doing work to better the campus. And then I learned about the different groups on campus, like BSU, and UCC, and so on, so, um... you have to just get out there and just look. They're not gonna come to you ... definitely just kind of go out there and see what the campus offers, and see where you could fit yourself in.

Suggestions

Yeah, I feel like there should be positive cultural topics, I don't know, a course that like makes you happy to be yourself, cause it's so easy to, like, be sad all the time, like I was in slavery, I was bounded for years, um, Latinos are just, they're just, in the, like, sweatshops and a lot of stuff like that... it's all you hear about, nothing good.

And, and also, just, um, another topic that should be done is just self-acceptance and teach that. It's mostly about the negative things we, um, know through the media....

Suggestions



But if there were more opportunities where faculty members made the effort to show the students that they're not just here to you know to show lectures and slides but they're here for our success you know and genuinely want to be involved in the process and I feel like students would care more about you know their homework or their tests.

Um a way to help the students at Central Connecticut State University Black community is by reaching out to those past African Americans that graduated and come back cause again from my personal experience that was the most powerful thing for me to see someone that looked like me.

Suggestions

This is probably, kind of, far-fetched, but I think having more minority professors would encourage us, cause if you see, okay, they made it, we can do this, it will help, cause like I said with the women, like, seeing them there, like, that motivates me, so I think if we see more people like us, then that will help us, like, want to reach their level and make us strive more to reach there.

One last thing I want to say is ah it's definitely nice to have everybody umh at this table and to get everybody's viewpoints. What I see is that everybody in this room is pretty much about to do great things ...although you may not have had it ...you're gonna be there for somebody...I just like yo like, I got this (laughs).

Final Quotes

um, definitely have more conversations like this.

Right so yeah basically let's just come together be for each other where Central is lacking and since we're identifying all these problems and all these instances where we feel like it can be successful ...let's be there for one and another so that you know going forward we won't have to solely rely on the faculty and their voice but we can come together and if we have an issue with something you know, absolutely address it to the university because without students there is no university. ... it's just a recognition of our power and how much voice we have and using that to say here are some of the things I don't like and here are some of the things that I think need to be implemented to fix it.

In Conclusion

One of the main overarching themes that emerged was on the role that self-concept played on academic self-efficacy, or belief in abilities to be successful in academics.

Findings from this thematic analysis on the self-concept reveal how important it is to acknowledge changing demographics of the college student population and the need to re-conceptualize how academia and teaching is structured in ways to meet needs of current and future student populations.

tionship among its components. In the words of Combs and Snygg (1959, p. 126): “The phenomenal self is not a mere conglomeration or addition of isolated concepts of self, but a patterned interrelationship or Gestalt of all these.” Some elements of the self-concept are at the center of attention, at the heart of the individual’s major concerns, others at the periphery; some self-values are critically important, others are of the utmost triviality.