Community and Belonging on College Campus Spaces

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Introduction

Our study: Our study is focusing on belonging on college campuses, focusing on specific social groups, such as sports, affinity groups, and dance, theater/art groups.

Background

- Within the college environment belonging refers to the extent to which students feel accepted, valued, and connected to their campus community.
- Individuals often build a sense of identity, and meaning through membership in social groups, which reinforces feelings of acceptance and community.
- While participation in social groups can foster belonging, the level of commitment to these groups can possibly play an important role in determining the strength of commitment and belonging
- Students who dedicate more time and effort to a particular group may develop a stronger relationship with other members, and feel a greater sense of belonging to the community.

Previous Research

- Research has consistently shown that social relationships and interpersonal connections with others contribute significantly to students' sense of belonging.
- Findings suggested that that the number of new relationships students form significantly predicts their level of school connectedness, and that instrumental support from these new relationships help navigate resources or adjusting to campus life further which enhances that connectedness. (Morris 2025).

Hypothesis

Higher levels of commitment to individual social groups increase the amount of perceived belonging within college campuses.



Methods

Our Main Question:

- Is there a correlation between perceived sense of belonging on campus and level of involvement/commitment in social groups?

IVs, DVs

- We had three independent variables being, total affinity, total sports and total dance/theater/arts. Our Dependent was the belonging score from the beloning scale taken on the survey.

Participants:

- Consisted of college students, predominantly from Muhlenberg college, who were recruited through convenience sampling
- All participation was entirely voluntary, there was no compensation for participating in the study.

Design:
Our study is a correlational research design examining the relationship between student commitment level to social groups and perceived sense of belonging on campuses.

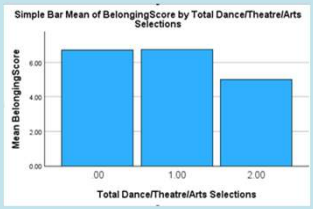
Independent variable: Level of commitment to social groups
- This was operationalized through participant self-reported commitment level on a scale of 1-10 and self reported amount of time per week dedicated to said social groups. The groups were broken down into three generalized subgroups: Arts, Affinity, and Sports groups.

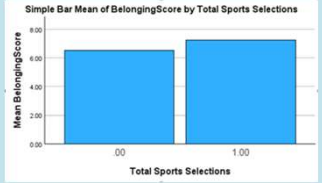
Dependent variable: perceived sense of belonging
- this was also operationalized through self reports in response to a belongingness scale that included items evaluating participants' feelings of connection, acceptance, and integration within their campus environment.

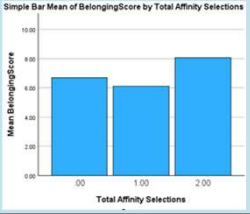
Materials:
- For the survey itself, data was collected using the qualtrics application.
- In addition to that, the scale we used to measure belongingness was adapted from *The impact of psychological needs, social support, and sport motivation on college students' sport commitment and sports participation.*

Graphs

On Average, how did the amount of groups students join contribute to how much they felt they belonged?







What's the take away finding:

- there are differences in the amount people belong between the groups
- more data is needed to find accurate results

Constraints and Considerations!

We had a lot of limitations within our study that may have affected our (lack of) results

Limitations

- VERY limited sample size: we only had 21 partipatents fully complete our survey which resulted in a significant reduction of the generalizability of our study along with very limited statistical power of the results
- Survey fatigue/carryover effect: Participants additionally had to complete three other surveys for other class studies which could have influence over their responses
- Convenience sampling: all of our participants attended Muhlenberg college and therefor there was limited variety of students or school size
- Self report measures: Our responses may contain bias because they were based on subjective interpretations
- Correlational design: cannot determine a casual relationship between the variables
- The "Other" Subcategories: Our analysis focused on three general subcategories of campus groups. This leaves out other important groups which may have contributed different results and other findings.

Discussion of your findings?

Our Findings

- There was no significant correlation between any of the variables so we were unable to determine if perceived campus belonging and commitment to social groups had relation.
- Students who prioritized their campus groups felt more belonging to the greater campus community, $r(19) = .544$, $p < .05$.

Future Research?

- to re-run this study with a larger participant body from a more diverse pool of colleges would be beneficial. This was our main limiting factor, and most likely contributed to the lack of significant results in our data. Leaving the survey open for a longer period of time, and potentially incentivizing participation further could contribute result in a larger number of participants.
- What else might contribute to belonging? It is likely that there may be more factors that contribute beyond campus groups, or potentially factors unique to this campus that contributed to the specific findings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it was not the specific campus groups that contribute to belonging but levels of prioritization. It would be wise to further research, or re-run the study with more participants and consider what else may contribute, and how campus groups play a role in belonging on campuses.

References (just a few key refs for poster)

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