The Power of Perception: The Study of a Person's Perceived Belongingness and its Effect on Campus Involvement

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RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How much do students feel as though they belong on campus as a result of involvement?
- How do students perceive their sense of belonging?
- Does having events on campus make students feel more involved?

INTRODUCTION

- Students who typically had a higher sense of belonging than their peers tended to also have higher emotional and behavioral engagement in college. (Gillen-O'Neal, 2019)
- Although it is promising that days of higher-than-typical sense of belonging tend to be days of higher emotional and behavioral engagement, this association also means that days of lower-than-typical sense of belonging tend to be days of lower engagement. (Gillen-O'Neal, 2019)
- While there is a growing amount of research on belongingness in relation to involvement, there is a lack of research that can claim causality.
- We are looking specifically at how belongingness can predict campus involvement. The relationship between the two is likely reciprocal, but the idea that feeling you belong causes you to be more involved has not been extensively tested, and this is what we seek to do.



METHOD

Participants

- 100 participants recruited through email
- Longitudinal study with sophomore students (in time 1), same students surveyed senior year (time 2)
- Minimum 1 year of college education
- $25 payment during time 1, $50 at time 2

Measures

Survey consisting of:

- **Demographics section:** age, gender, and race
- **Two-part Belongingness scale** (Sotardi et al., 2021)**:** 4 items in each scale measuring a person's perception of belongingness within their community, specifically peer belonging and institutional belonging.
- **Two-part involvement scale:** 4 items in each scale measuring informal involvement (time spent with friends, time in recreational areas with peers, attendance of non-school sponsored events) and formal involvement scale (clubs, sports, school-sponsored events).

Procedures

- Informed consent will explain the two phases, the segments of the survey, and anonymity
- Confidentiality for this survey will be maintained by tying data to the student ID number instead of the name.
- All participants will receive a debrief after the second phase, including the purpose of having two phases.

PROPOSED ANALYSES

- Series of bivariate correlations:
  - Belongingness time 1 (B1) → belongingness time 2 (B2)
  - Involvement time 1 (F1) → involvement time 2 (F2)
  - B1 → F2
  - B2 → F1
  - B2 → F2
- Belongingness scale
- Involvement scale





LIMITATIONS

- It is not guaranteed that all participants will return for the second trial
- Measures are self-report, so inaccuracies are possible
- Campus involvement could also be affecting sense of belonging

Conclusion

If the hypothesis that belongingness positively affects campus involvement is supported we can conclude that in order to increase campus involvement colleges need to foster a sense of belongingness and security within their communities. With these findings we can extend our research to see if the size of the school is a moderator of belongingness affect on campus involvement.

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Sample of Scale

Peer Belonging`

I know very few students in my classes.*

I am actively involved in Muhlenberg societies and clubs.

Institutional Belonging

I feel like I am "at home" at Muhlenberg College.

I feel safe on the Muhlenberg College campus.

*Note. * indicates that the item required reversed coding. Items are rated on a seven point Likert-style scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).*

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Informal Involvement

I often eat meals with my friends.

I prefer to study by myself.*

Formal Involvement

I am highly involved with clubs on campus

I avoid attending school-sponsored activities. *

*Note. * indicates that the item required reverse coding. Items are rated on a seven-point Likert-style scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).*

Resources

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