
Research Learning Experiences (RLEs)

Student Works

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Belonging with Beavers

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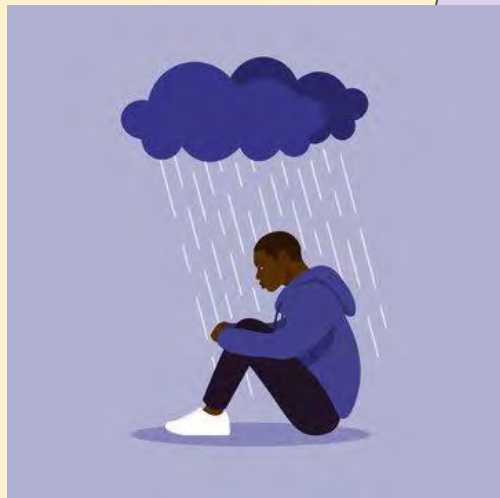


Belonging with Beavers

Study by PSY284

What is Belonging?

- Sense of Belonging
 - Fitting in
 - Feeling valued
 - Positive interactions
 - Sense that others care



Belongingness is IMPORTANT

Why? Students that may not feel as if they belong have a higher chance of dropping out (Hoffman, 2002).

When sense of belonging is low, people experience more mental and physical health issues, and are lonelier.



Study Details

146 UMF Students

Recruited by PSY284 class members and through PSY classes

Survey asked questions about: Students' residence, work, meals, sense of safety on campus, knowledge about campus resources, status as traditional vs non traditional, loneliness, satisfaction with grades, academic engagement, and thoughts of withdrawal/transferring.

How Belonging was Measured

Hoffman's Scale of Belonging

5 types of Belonging:

Peer support: I have met with classmates outside of class to study for an exam.

Peer Isolation: It is difficult to meet other students in class

Comfort in the classroom: I feel comfortable asking a question in class

Faculty support: I feel comfortable seeking help from a teacher before or after class.

Faculty understanding: I feel that a faculty member would take the time to talk to me if I needed help

Question 1

Is where you live related to belonging?

96 Students on campus, 50 off

Answer: **Yes**, *in part*.

Students who live **on campus** ($m = 3.14$) reported **higher peer support** when compared to students who live off campus ($m = 2.79$).

Where you live **was not** related to: Peer isolation, faculty support, faculty belonging or comfort in the classroom



Question 2

Does eating in the Dining Hall impact belonging?

Meals per week range 0-21

Average # meals in DH = 6.34



Answer: More meals in the dining hall was related to **more** peer support ($r = .17$) and **less** peer isolation ($r = -.25$).

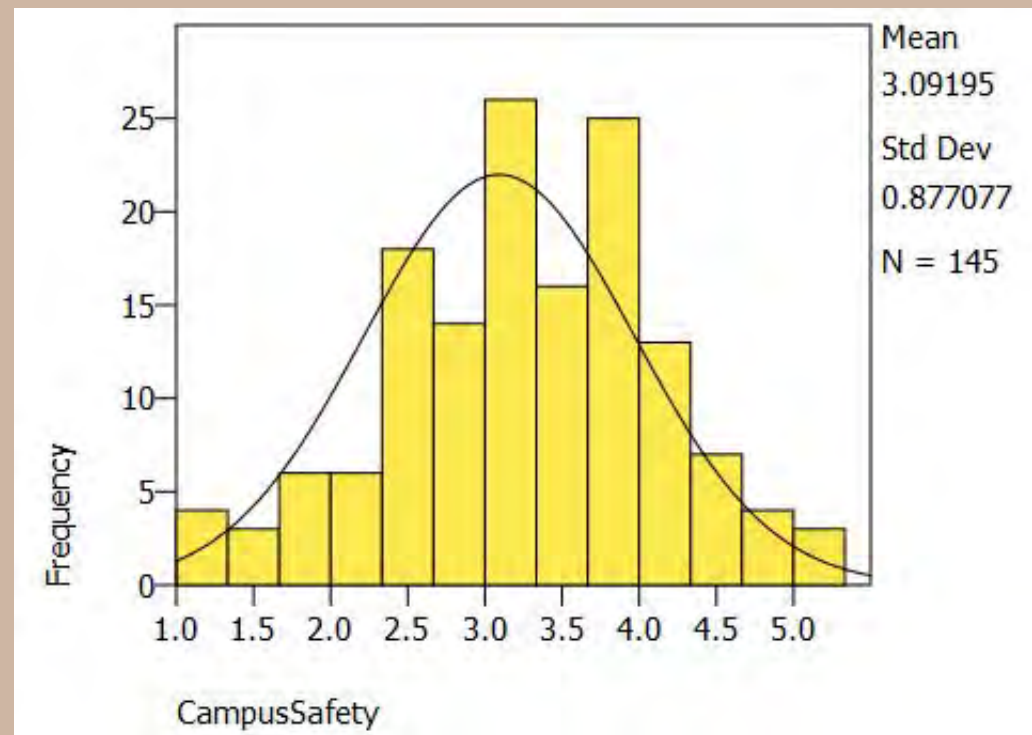
Dining hall meals were not related to faculty support, faculty understanding or comfort in the classroom.

Question 3

Is sense of safety on campus related to belonging?

Note: Sense of safety ranges from 1 to 5. Mean reported by students was 3.09.

We need to do better!



Question 3

Is sense of safety on campus related to belonging?



Answer: Students who reported feeling **safer** on campus were more likely to report **higher** faculty understanding ($r = .16$) and faculty support ($r = .27$)

Sense of safety on campus was not related to peer support, peer isolation, or comfort in the classroom. Thus, faculty seem to play a large role in whether or not students feel safe on campus.

Question 4

Does working on campus relate to belonging?

111/146 students work during school year

Of those, 39/111 work on campus jobs

Answer: There was **no difference** in any type of belonging between people who work on campus vs. off campus.

However, as number of **hours worked increased**, students reported decreases in peer support ($r = -.18$) and increase in peer isolation ($r = .17$).

Hours worked ranged from 0-45. Of those who worked, they averaged 15 hours a week (range 2-45 hours per week).



Question 5

Does being a traditional or non-traditional student impact belonging?

35/ 146 did not come to UMF straight from high school

Answer: Unexpectedly, **non-traditional students** report **more comfort in the classroom** ($m = 3.8$) than traditional students ($m = 3.3$).

There were **no differences** reported in peer support, peer isolation, faculty support or faculty understanding.



Question 6

Does knowing about resources on campus and how to access them relate to sense of belonging?

Answer: Knowing about resources ($r = .15$ to $.23$) and knowing how to access resources ($r = .19$ to $.33$) was related to higher belonging **in all 5 categories**. Actually utilizing the resources was not significantly related to belonging.

Question 7

Is belonging related to loneliness?

Answer: All 5 types of belonging were strongly correlated with loneliness. When students' reported less belonging, they reported more loneliness ($r = -.24$ to $-.55$).



Question 8

Is belonging related to academic engagement?



Answer: All 5 types of belonging were correlated with academic engagement ($r = .24$ to $.43$). Both Peer belonging and Faculty belonging matter for academic engagement. When belonging is high—so is engagement.

Question 9

Is belonging related to retention?

Answer: Higher satisfaction with grades was related to faculty support ($r = .29$), faculty understanding ($r = .31$), and comfort in the classroom ($r = .19$).

Students were more likely to consider withdrawing and/or transferring when they felt isolated from their peers ($r = .19$ & $.21$), uncomfortable in the classroom ($r = -.27$ & $-.24$), or when they felt faculty were not supportive ($r = -.25$ & $-.28$) or understanding ($r = -.22$ & $-.34$).



Limitations

- Didn't collect information about:
 - Sports, clubs, extracurriculars
 - Age, gender, year in school, major
- 11 participants omitted
- Single time point data means direction of relationships unknown



Implications

Both peer belonging and faculty belonging were related to important outcomes

Our findings were consistent with past research

Sense of belonging is related to sense of safety (Slaten et al., 2016)

Less belonging is related to more loneliness and higher dropout rates (Hoffman, 2002).

Factors that increase frequency of contact are related to more belonging: living in dorms, eating in dining hall, working fewer hours (Baumeister & Leary, 1995)

Moving forward...

Increasing students' sense of belonging on college campus is important.

Some evidence-based interventions have shown to help!



For example: CTC developed a 30 minute online program that aims to normalize how hard the transition to college can feel.

Data shows it can improve social and academic engagement, GPA and retention in at-risk students.

PSY284 Class

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- Slaten, C. D., Ferguson, J. K., Allen, K.-A., Brodrick, D.-V., & Waters, L. (2016). School belonging: A review of the history, current trends, and Future Directions. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 33(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1017/edp.2016.6>
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