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Creating Safe and Brave Spaces on Gender and Sexuality via Autoethnography Assignments on Campus

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I. Introduction

- Discrimination is still a prominent and widely faced issue on college campuses across the United States, especially in the case of gender and sexuality. Many college environments are unsafe spaces for those whose identities fall outside of the socially accepted norms and can lead to dangerous isolation and feelings of invisibility.
- This study explores the use of autoethnographies as a method of improving campus environments and analyzes perception changes within autoethnographies as they relate to identities such as sexuality, gender, race, class, mental health, or religion. An autoethnography focuses on the exploration of one's own identities and experiences and how they relate to greater issues of society.

II. Methods

- We used data gathered by Dr. Mehmet Soyer. The data was collected from student essays about their perceptions on gender, sexuality, religion, race, mental health, and class. There were a total of 146 participants in the research study. The group of participants consisted of students from the Utah State University campus. Student essays were collected during May 2019.
- Participants were selected in college courses that involved subjects of sexuality, race, class, religion, mental health, and gender. The essays were separated into categories depending on the negative or positive perception the student had regarding the certain topic. They were to write about their experiences with sexuality, gender, race, class, mental health, or religion.

III. Results

- The creation of safe and brave spaces for gender and sexuality have proven:
- To strengthen understanding on certain topics on gender and sexuality
 - Changes students' perceptions on the following topics
 - Their perception has changed in a positive way
 - Helps educate others on gender and sexuality
 - Especially those who haven't experienced certain life events regarding gender and sexuality

Study conducted with data from Dr. Mehmet Soyer.

Student Essay Perceptions

