A New Perspective on Persistence

Retention, Sense of Community, and Student Activities Participation

February 6, 2013

Sense of Community:

“a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members' needs will be met through their commitment to be together”

McMillan and Chavis (1986)

Sense of Community Components

(McMillan & Chavis, 1986)

MEMBERSHIP
- Sense of belonging
- Common symbols
- Sense of belonging, some belong, some don’t

INFLUENCE
- Bidirectional
  - Members feel empowered
  - Group has influence
  - Conformity, cohesionness

SHARED EMOTIONAL CONNECTION
- Similar experiences
- Time together
- Interaction is important
- Personal investment
- Members honored

INTEGRATION AND FULFILLMENT OF NEEDS
- Reinforcement
- Reward
- Shared values
- Help meet needs/goals
- Competent community
### Sense of Community Index

**Chavis, Haggie, McMillan & Wandersman (1986)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>SOC component</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item 1</td>
<td>I think my block is a good place for me to live.</td>
<td>Integration and Needs Fulfillment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 2</td>
<td>My neighbors and I want the same things from the block.</td>
<td>Membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 3</td>
<td>I can recognize most of the people who live on my block.</td>
<td>Membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 4</td>
<td>I feel at home on this block.</td>
<td>Membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 5</td>
<td>Very few of my neighbors know me.</td>
<td>Membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 6</td>
<td>I care about what my neighbors think of my actions.</td>
<td>Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 7</td>
<td>I have almost no influence over what this block is like.</td>
<td>Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 8</td>
<td>If there is a problem on this block people can get it solved.</td>
<td>Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 9</td>
<td>It is very important to me to live on this particular block.</td>
<td>Shared Emotional Connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 10</td>
<td>People on this block generally don’t get along with each other.</td>
<td>Shared Emotional Connection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Item 11</td>
<td>I expect to live on this block a long time.</td>
<td>Shared Emotional Connection</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Sense of Community (McMillan & Chavis, 1986)

**Examples of Application**

- **Neighborhoods**
  - McMillan & Chavis, 1988
  - Townley & Kloos, 2009

- **Health facilities**
  - Somerstein & Fols, 2009

- **Cohesion**
  - Power & McCarty, 1991

- **Gay Men**
  - Proescholdbell et al., 2006

- **Community Groups**
  - Hughey et al., 1999

- **Online Communities**
  - Sum et al., 2009
  - Cu, 2006

- **K-12 Education**
  - Fyson (1999, 2008)

- **Science Fiction Fans**
  - Obst et al., 2002

- **Higher Education**
  - Pretty (1990)
  - Urban campuses (Loomis, 2001)
  - Campus size (Lounsbury & DeNeui, 1996, Phillips, 2002)
  - Social networking (Thomas, 2009)
  - Distance education (Miller, 2007; Todacheene, 2009)
  - Persistence (Archie, 2006; Berger, 1997)

- **4-year Institutions**
  - Archie (2006)
  - Berger (1997)
  - Loomis (2001)
  - Lounsbury & DeNeui (1996)
  - McCarthy et al. (1990)
  - Phillips (2002)
  - Pretty (1990)
  - Thomas (2009)
  - Miller (2007)
  - Todacheene (2009)
  - Wright (2004)

- **2-Year Institutions**
  - Bengfort (2012)

### Sense of Community Studies in Higher Education

- **4-year Institutions**
  - Archie (2006)
  - Berger (1997)
  - Loomis (2001)
  - Lounsbury & DeNeui (1996)
  - McCarthy et al. (1990)
  - Phillips (2002)
  - Pretty (1990)
  - Thomas (2009)
  - Miller (2007)
  - Todacheene (2009)
  - Wright (2004)

- **2-Year Institutions**
  - Bengfort (2012)
Studies of Sense of Community and Persistence

Berger (1997)
- 4-year private univ.
- Residence hall students
- 3-component SOC

Archie (2006)
- 4-year public univ.
- First-year students
- 3-component SOC
- Identified contributing factors

Bengfort (2012)
- Replicated Archie (2006)
- First-year students
- Modified for community college relevance
- Student characteristics
  - Age
  - Gender
  - Race/ethnicity
  - Household income
  - Veteran/Military Status
  - Major
- Campus experiences
  - Clubs, newspaper, leaders
  - Student activities
  - Athletics
  - Service learning
  - HS seniors program
  - Orientation
  - First-year mentoring
  - Disability services
  - Learning community
  - Employment
  - Faculty Interaction

Intent to Return (Dependent Variable)

Sense of Community and Subscales
(Dependent and Independent Variables)

Student Characteristics & Campus Experiences
(Independent Variables)
- Demographics
- Campus Participation
- Use of Services
- Learning Community
- Employment
- Faculty Interaction

Sense of Community and Subscales
(Dependent and Independent Variables)

Student Characteristics & Campus Experiences
(Independent Variables)
### Community College Sense of Community Index

| Students at [college] generally get along with each other | Influence/Needs Fulfillment |
| If there is a problem at [college], students here can get it solved | Influence/Needs Fulfillment |
| Other students want the same things from [college] as I do | Influence/Needs Fulfillment |
| I feel at home at [college] | Emotional Connection |
| I care about what other students think of my actions | Emotional Connection |
| I have influence over what [college] is like | Emotional Connection |
| Students at [college] share the same values as I do | Emotional Connection |
| It is very important for me to be a student at [college] | Emotional Connection |
| I think [college] is a good place for me | Emotional Connection |
| I want to return to [college] next year | Emotional Connection |
| On a daily basis, I recognize people at [college] | Membership |
| On a daily basis, almost no one at [college] recognizes me | Membership |
Significance

- Further validation of McMillan and Chavis concept of sense of community
- More evidence of link with persistence
- SOC patterns vary in different settings
  - E.g. between 4-year schools and community colleges
- Fertile area for further research and exploration
- Potential for practical application

Higher Rates of Intent to Return:

- On-campus job
- Learning community
- Study, newspaper
- Mentorship
- Student activities
- Service learning
- Athletics
- Mentoring

Significant Predictors of Intent to Return:

- Influence/Needs Fulfillment
- Emotional Connection
- Membership

Significant Predictors of Sense of Community:

- Participation
- Use of services
- Faculty interaction
- Age

Student Characteristics & Campus Experiences

- Demographics
- Campus participation
- Use of Services
- Learning Community
- Employment
- Faculty Interaction

Sense of Community

Influence/Needs Fulfillment

Emotional Connection

Membership
Howard Community College
Columbia, MD

- Midway between DC and Baltimore
- Opened 1970
- Enrolls nearly half of county undergrads
- Enrolls 1 of 4 county high school grads
- 14,518 credit students (FY12)
- 16,406 noncredit students (FY12)
- Diversity (credit students)
  - Asian 13%
  - Black/African-American 28%
  - Hispanic/Latino 9%
  - White 45%
  - Other/unknown 5%
  - Students from 108 nations
Student Satisfaction with Activities

Fall-to-Spring Retention Rates

Student Satisfaction with Orientation
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Fall-to-Spring Retention Rates
Student Orientation Participants and All First-Time Students

- Orientation participants
- All first-time students

Practical Considerations
Practices relating to sense of community

Influence/Needs Fulfillment
- Mission, vision, values statements
- Dialogs with students
- Student surveys, comment cards
- Advocacy campaigns

Emotional Connection
- Investment mindset
- Honors and awards
- Social media

Membership
- Brand identity, mascot
- Orientation
- Get-acquainted sessions

The Role of Student Activities In Sense Of Community
A Student's Perspective

Howard Community College

Practical Considerations
Practices relating to sense of community

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Discussion & Brainstorming

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