

Ethnic Minority Student Usage of Career Services

EACE Research Grant & Application

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Abstract

The following research proposal describes a participatory research project in which ethnic minority students are included in interviews to determine how they use career services at their college or university. A symbolic interactionism framework is used in this proposal and the researcher expects to get rich qualitative data that will give intimate insight from the participant's viewpoint of ethnic minority usage of career services.

The University Career Center, the space on campus students are encouraged to visit to get assistance with career education, where career education takes place is a factor in changing the engagement levels of ethnic minority students. (Flores & Heppner, 2002) Since ethnic minorities underutilize campus services such as career centers, it's important to understand how they are referred to the career center, methods of outreach to get them to engage, the services they receive and some best practices that may alter this pattern. (Sue & Sue, 1990; Flores & Spanierman, 1998) The usage of nonacademic facilities such as the career center can have a significant impact on ethnic minority retention. (Mallinckrodt & Sedlacek, 1987/2009)

Referrals (Why & how the students come in)

Results from a study by Carter et al. titled "Seeking Career Services on Campus" reveals that students mostly visit the Career Center primarily for their academic majors and career exploration second (Carter et al. 2003). The major difference is in the third reason for visiting, as whites visit the Career Center for Psychological reasons and Blacks and Asians visit for academic purposes. Cultural differences are recognized as reasons this may occur. Some ethnic minority groups prefer listening to their friends and relatives due to their cultural viewpoints on counseling. This may suggest that ethnic minority student's favor being referred to the Career Center than being self-referred (Carter et al. 2003).

Ethnic minority students, particularly Blacks and Latinos had the lowest self-referral rates in the Carter study. Compared to Asians (52.3%) and Whites (46.4%), Blacks (44.4%) and Latinos (39.3%) were at the bottom, reflecting the aforementioned cultural differences with respect to counseling. (Carter et al. 2003) This could suggest that Blacks and Latinos understand the Career Center through a micro-lens where only transactions such as resume critiques occur versus through a macro-lens of career readiness, career exploration and career education.

Services Received

A study entitled “Client Perceptions of and Preferences for University-Based Career Services” by Victoria A. Shivy and Laura M. Koehly reveals that amongst all students, there is a preference for opportunities where there is direct interaction with employee representatives. Examples of these direct interaction opportunities are internship experiences, interviewing/shadowing people at their worksite and attending Career Fairs. Preferences are also given to receiving these opportunities outside of the Career Center. (Shivy & Koehly, 2002)

Results from this study showcase services in three Dimensions. Dimension I are services with limited duration. Dimension II services occur on campus and Dimension III services are characterized by greater degree of personal involvement. The preference of services for African American are in Dimension I; Asian and Latin America prefer Dimension II services. (Shivy & Koehly, 2002) These preferences of service likely reveal cultural perceptions that can affect career centers, suggesting career center staff may want to go out and educate students on available career assistance. (Shivy & Koehly, 2002)

With ethnic minority students preferring services that have limited duration and are on campus. Offering a mandatory career class for underclassmen would be an opportunity to promote awareness and understanding of career planning that is limited in time but yet still on campus. Integrating career planning issues into curriculum can be a great way to reach any student, especially ethnic minorities who would not pursue otherwise. (Falconer & Hays, 2006) It has been written that ethnic minorities likely terminate services early after one session due to lack of diverse staff in the career center, poorly trained career counselor and culturally biased practices but offering a mandatory career planning session would be an opportunity to further engage these students and increase their usage of services. (Flores & Heppner, 2002) A study entitled, “The Effectiveness of a Career Decision-Making Course” by Nadya Fouad, Elizabeth W. Cotter, and Neeta Kantamneni revealed that a career decision-making course did decrease

difficulties related to making career decisions and increased self-efficacy in the domain of career decision making. (Fouad, Cotter, & Kantamneni, 2009) These results show that a career decision-making course is a great career intervention. (Fouad et al. 2009)

Theoretical Framework

Symbolic interactionism assumes people can and do think about their lives and actions rather than respond mechanically to stimuli (Charmaz, 2014). This theoretical framework views human action as constructing self, situation and society. The assumption within symbolic interactionism is that language and symbols play a role in forming and shaping our meanings and actions.

The purpose of this study is to understand how ethnic minority students utilize the University Career Center. Previous studies have documented the use and awareness of services by students on college campuses, however there appears to be gap in understanding how ethnic minority students view the University Career Center and how these students utilize its' services (Fouad et al, 2006).

The symbolic interactionism theoretical approach will allow for broad open ended questions that will allow the students to give their perceptions and identify what the Career Center means to them and how they see it being used.

Methods

This study will be a phenomenological study which will consist of one-on-one interviews with ethnic minority students. Ethnic minority students are viewed as African-American, Latino, Asian and American-Indian. This study will focus on African-American and Latino students. Participants will be undergraduate students that have been randomly selected through the Office of Institutional Research. Participants will sign an informed consent form and participate in an interview which will consist of 8-10 broad-open ended questions that will

have been approved by the university's institutional review board. The study will allow for anonymity amongst the students if desired and the opportunity to withdraw from the interview process.

Conclusion

Findings in this study will be based on questions such as:

- How do you use the University Career Center?
- Where do you receive career education/information from?

Answers to these questions will aid in showcasing ethnic minority usage of career centers and where they receive career education from.

Implications

Some implications which can be drawn from this study to enhance future research include:

- The usage of other qualitative methodology.
- The need for longitudinal studies within the subject area and how it pertains to career readiness.
- There is a continued need to evaluate student usage of University Career Centers.
- University Career Center Directors need to be intentional about ensuring all students have the ability to connect to their services.

Limitations

- This study only reflected African-American and Latino students. The potential university site has a greater percentage of African-American and Latino students, thus making a random sampling achievable.

- This study if approved, will be performed at one public comprehensive master's level university. The researcher believes it less challenging to work with the university he is employed by.
- Since the study is done at one university, the finding will not be generalizable.

Timeline

October 1, 2016

- Created sample survey instruments
- Received IRB approval

January 1, 2017

- Data Collection complete

April 1, 2017

- Analysis & findings completed.

June 30, 2017

- Final report submitted to Awards & Research Chair

Budget

1. Personnel support = \$1000.00
2. Printing = \$300.00
3. Office Supplies = \$200.00
4. Incentives = \$500.00
5. Transcription Service = \$500.00

Total = \$2500.00

References

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8. Mallinckrodt, B., & Sedlacek, W. E. (2009). Student retention and the use of campus facilities by race. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice, 46*(4), 1116-1122.
9. Shivy, V. A., & Koehly, L. M. (2002). Client perceptions of and preferences for university-based career services. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 60*(1), 40-60.

