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Personal Narrative, Part I of the Research Project [Psychology]

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Instructor: Dušana Podlucká

Course name and code: First Year Seminar in Psychology - SYF 101

Assignment: Personal Narrative (part one of the Research Project)

This assignment is the first step in a semester-long project. It is a high-stakes assignment with a chance of revising the paper. It is a short (550-600 words) reflection paper. Students have one week to complete it and I assume it should not take more than 1-2 hours to complete. Included is also a brief description of all the steps of the project, including the link to the chapter that describes the project in more detail, and the second assignment (Conceptualizing College Readiness assignment) that builds upon Personal Narrative assignment.

Learning outcomes for assignment and course:

- Reflecting on personal experience and knowledge
- Assignment illustrates qualitative data

Core Competency/ies and/or Communication Ability/ies addressed:

- **Integration:** for instance making connections to personal, co-curricular knowledge and experience)
- **Communication:** writing

Some reflections on the assignment

1) What do students find the most challenging about the assignment?

This is not a very challenging assignment as it consists of reflecting on personal experience, however students occasionally fail to answer *all* of the questions.

2) How does the assignment build on students' earlier work and prepare them for future assignments?

Personal Narrative assignment is the first in a series of assignments of the semester-long research project. The main goal of this assignment is to introduce students into the project and its theme (Becoming a LaGuardia college student). In the next step (Conceptualizing College Readiness assignment, included below) students conduct a simple analysis of their personal narratives, i.e. data they generated using a simple analytical tool based on concept of college readiness developed by David Conley (2008). In the first step of the project students were prompted through a series of questions to explore and reflect on their motivation going to college, their future goals and aspirations, their experiences of transitioning from high school, and type of skills and knowledge they considered necessary for college, and what skills, knowledge, support they had or were lacking when enrolling to college.

3) Has the student work met your expectations?

Most of the students seemed to enjoy writing the self-reflections and share their experiences in Personal Narrative assignment. Based on (most of the responses) I felt they appreciated the opportunity of sharing their experiences, including critical views of their education and their own role in their learning. Specifically, the majority of students reported not being prepared for college, blaming the culture in high school for infantilizing them, having low expectations and thus enabling their low academic performance and motivation. I was struck to see how many students felt that their former high schools had practically zero academic expectations from them, and that they were often rewarded for just 'showing up to classes'.

While I had no way to verify the accuracy of these self-reported data, students' subjective impressions were significant to me. I also learned about students' high level of anxiety about being able to keep up

with the demands of college, especially working independently at a faster pace. One of the most striking themes in their reflections was the feeling of isolation, expected self-dependence in learning process and overall individualistic notion of learning. I found these epiphanies extremely valuable as they provided me with an opportunity to learn *about* students *from* students.

4) How have student experiences with the assignment contributed to revisions?

Given that this introductory assignment was based on personal experiences, revisions consisted mostly in elaborating on some points or answering previously omitted questions.

Research Project: Becoming a college student at LaGuardia Community College

In this FYS in psychology course students engaged in a collaborative, inquiry-based research project that facilitated their exploration of becoming a college student while becoming a researcher, and thus promoted integration of learning and development as students investigated college culture and life while mastering and authoring the tools and knowledge of their discipline.

1. Personal Narrative

Students explored and reflected on their future goals and aspirations, their experiences of transitioning from high school, skills and knowledge necessary in college, available (or not) support while preparing for college and after becoming a college student.

2. Conceptualizing College Readiness

Students read a scholarly article on the concept of college readiness (CR), and apply the four facets of CR as categories to reflect on their experiences as described in their Personal Narrative, their strengths, skills and knowledge they would like to further develop. Based on provided framework students thus analyzed data they produced.

3. Finding sources and creating a collection of relevant resources

After participating in two interactive library workshops students were asked to find a research paper using academic database on the topic of 'Becoming a College Student' (e.g. college readiness, learning in 21st century, college culture, etc.). Students posted the papers on BB and we created a collection of articles relevant to our research project.

4. Narrowing down a research topic, designing a research question

Students explored their research topics and designed their (preliminary) research questions.

5. Designing an interview

Students practiced designing and conducting interview, class collaboratively designed an interview focused on expectations and future goals; differences between high school and college; transitions, changes and adjustments in learning, as person, etc. (HS vs. college); college readiness; recommendations (for HS students and teachers, college students and faculty).

6. Data collection and data entry

Each student interviewed one LaGuardia student, took notes during the interview and wrote up field notes. Data for each interview were entered in a shared dataset (shared google document) that became accessible to all the students.

7. Revising a research question

Students examined the dataset and revised their research question in relation to existing data. They presented their research questions and received feedback in class. Students further examined the collective dataset if data were available to answer their individual research question.

8. Thematic data analysis and interpretation of data

Students were introduced into Thematic Data Analysis and had an opportunity to exercise data analysis in class and Studio Hour.

9. Writing a final paper

Students were provided with a detailed outline for writing a final paper (5 pages) and wrote their papers. They also had some time to work on their papers in Studio Hour.

10. Oral Presentation

Students developed 5 -7 minute power point presentation focused on a) research question; b) participants; c) findings and conclusions. Students had an opportunity to design and rehearse their presentation in Studio Hour before presenting in class. Each presentation was followed by Q&A and feedback from class.

The whole project is described in further detailed here:

Podlucká, D. (2017). Collaborative Inquiry Project in the First-Year Seminar in Psychology: Students' Agentive Authorship of Learning and Development. In R. Obeid, A. Schwartz, C. Shane-Simpson, & P. J. Brooks (Eds.) *How We Teach Now: The GSTA Guide to Student-Centered Teaching*. Retrieved from the Society for the Teaching of Psychology web site:

<http://teachpsych.org/ebooks/> Available to download here: <http://teachpsych.org/ebooks/howweteachnow>

LaGuardia Community College

Course: First Year Seminar in Psychology - SYF 101

Instructor: Dušana Podlucká

Research Project: Becoming a college student at LaGuardia Community College

Part 1: Personal Narrative

Write a short paper about your journey of **becoming a college student at LaGuardia Community College** focusing on how ready (or not) you think you are (were) for college.

Please address the following questions:

1. **Why** did you decide to go to **college? Why** did you choose to study **psychology?** Briefly describe your **future goals and aspirations**.
2. According to your opinion and experiences, what **skills and knowledge** (academic and other) do you think are **necessary for college** (including a successful transition from high school to college and succeeding in college)?
3. How well (or not) **prepared** you think **YOU** were for college? Describe what skills, knowledge, support etc. you think you had, and which you think you were lacking.
4. What kind of **support**, if any, you have had while **preparing for college** and **after enrolling in college?**
5. Anything else you would like to add.

Due: [Date] Please submit a hard copy and post on eportfolio.

Style and format: 550-600 words, Font Times New Roman size 12, double spaced, as seen in this document. Use APA format (see BB for more details)

Grading: 5 points

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Research Project: Becoming a college student at LaGuardia Community College

Part 2: Conceptualizing College Readiness

Researchers argue that one of the most important factors that determine students' success in college is their college readiness, i.e. "the degree to which previous educational and personal experiences have equipped them for the expectations and demands they will encounter in college" (Conley, 2008, p3). Conley proposes broader understanding of college readiness and conceptualizes it as multifaceted set of skills, knowledge and behaviors.

Goal of this assignment: a) Explore existing relevant concepts and categories around our topic of interest, i.e. "becoming a college student", including successful transition from high school to college, how to succeed in college, and student's learning and development; b) expand existing concept/s and categories.

For this assignment:

1) Read David Conley's article to learn about his conceptualization of college readiness (*David T. Conley (2008). Rethinking College Readiness. New Directions for Higher Education, Winter, 144, p 3-13.*

Available here: <http://www.csub.edu/eap-riap/day1/Rethinking%20College%20Readiness.pdf>

2) Design a table/matrix that would list **Conley's (four) Facets of College Readiness** (see an example below).

Then based on your **personal narrative** fill out the column titled, "**My Personal Narrative**" and list all skills, behaviors, knowledge etc. that you wrote about, using Conley's facets and specific skills, types of knowledge, etc. If you wrote about some behaviors, skills, kind of knowledge or experiences that are not included in Conley's list add additional row/s to include those traits. You might want to extend Conley's conceptualization and understanding of college readiness.

Fill the last two columns [i.e. **My Strengths** (list your strength, i.e. abilities, types of knowledge, skills, etc. that you already have or mastered), and **My Future Development** (i.e. what I want to/ need to develop in regard to college readiness and becoming a successful college student)] in based on what you have already written in your personal narrative or thought of as a result of learning Conley's facets of college readiness.

Conley's Facets of College Readiness	My Personal Narrative (identify items you wrote about using Conley's list)	My Strength	My Future Development (what I want to /need to develop, learn etc.)
Key cognitive strategies: a) ... b).... c) etc.			
Key content a) b) c) d) ...etc.			
Academic behaviors a) b) c) d)etc.			

Contextual Skills & Awareness a) b) c) ...etc.			
	Additional items (you came up with) a) ... b) ... etc.		

3) After designing your own table and filling it in, briefly answer the following questions (in about 400 words):

- a) What was/were the important lesson/s learned from Conley?
- b) Do you agree or disagree with Conley’s list? Explain why.
- c) Based on your own experience (e.g. support /or lack of support in your HS, access to services and support, etc.), is there anything else you would add to the list of knowledge and skills necessary for college readiness (these should be listed under My Personal Narrative column)?

Due: Date.... Please submit a hard copy and post your paper on ePortfolio.*

Required style and format:

APA style (for suggestions and tips see blackboard)
Font Times New Roman, size 12, double-spaced)

Grading: 10 points

*This assignment builds upon your Personal Narrative paper. Therefore, in order to complete this assignment you need to complete the Personal Narrative paper. In case you have not answered all the questions required for the paper you will need to complete them.