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African Immigrant College Students Concepts of Sibling Relationships

Abstract
This research project qualitatively re-examines African college students’ concepts of sibling relationships guided by a Family Systems Theory framework (Bowen, 1985). Specifically, the purpose of this research is to examine and contextualize the nature and relevance of African sibling relationships in emerging adulthood. Data collection and analysis has been done on participants, consisting of African college students at SUNY Geneseo, in focus groups and individual interviews to help us phenomenologically investigate the phenomena of interest. The analysis provided on this poster will, however, only consist of data and analysis from the focus groups. Thematic findings will be carefully explicated and future work on this research project will be discussed. The results revealed salient themes of sibling influences, sibling parental roles, comparing upbringings, and family values. Emergent findings led to the understanding that older African college students influence their younger siblings in both academic and personal ways of life that shift over time across adolescence. This has lead to shared ideas of success and strong sibling comparisons due to the desire to be similar to the siblings that have set personal standards of achievement.

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This research project qualitatively examined African American college students concepts of sibling relationships guided by a Family Systems Theory framework. The purpose was to develop a theoretical lens in order to accurately reevaluate focus group data under a new theoretical lens. The significance of this research is to examine and explain the prevalence of African sibling relationships in emerging adulthood. Previous research on this topic has been done on participants, consisting of African college students at SUNY Geneseo. The main goals of the qualitative research and interviews help us phenomenologically understand the significant influence of sibling relationships. The analysis provided on this poster will, however, only consist of data and analysis pertinent to the focus groups. The findings will be carefully explained and future research on this research will be conducted. The results revealed salient themes of sibling influence, sibling conflict, sibling cooperation, sibling independence, and family values. Emerging findings led to the understanding that older African college students influence their younger siblings in both academic and personal ways of life that shift over time across adolescence. This has led to shared ideas of success and strong sibling comparisons due to the desire to be similar to parents and adhere to parents’ personal standards of achievement.

INTRODUCTION

A variety of research has been done on sibling relationships in emerging adulthood. While there are numerous researches on African sibling relationships, very few studies have been done on the cultural environment in which these sibling relationships develop (Mooy, 2015). Minimal work has been done with African American college students. Understanding the older child–younger child interactions and relationships is particularly important because of the lack of available research on African student sibling relationships. Research also lacks knowledge of how siblings influence each other and simultaneously assimilate into U.S. culture. African college students, therefore, are exposed to a new environment in terms of family systems structure and function. This research strives to explore how African siblings perceive and define their sibling relationships in both academic and personal ways of life that shift over time across adolescence. This has led to shared ideas of success and strong sibling comparisons due to the desire to be similar to parents and adhere to parents’ personal standards of achievement.

METHODS

Sampling and Demographics

Previous sampling and recruitment was done with 14 participants from SUNY Geneseo. Participants were chosen using snowball sampling and convenience sampling due to the limited nature of this research, which is to examine and explain the prevalence of African sibling relationships in emerging adulthood. This research has been conducted on a sample of 10 Black college students at SUNY Geneseo.

Data Collection

Four focus groups were video and audio recorded. Participants were accompanied by two of the research assistants, one moderator would read the questions and follow conversation, as well as another researcher who was taking notes and capturing the interview. The interview involvement was explained as voluntary and participation could have been rescinded at any time. To maintain focus group monetary compensation in the form of a gift card was given to each participant.

First-wave Data Preparation and Analysis

Previous work analyzed the first three focus groups following the process for thematic analysis posited by Braun and Clarke (2006) as a structure, in which to situate the inquiry of the previous research. The specific cyclical approach employed in this research was performed and guided by Multi-Systems Theory (Boyd-Franklin, 1989). The first-cycle of coding was exploratory in nature and researchers tested two theses for each focus group in the attempt to allow the participants to tell the researchers what their sibling relationships meant to them and how they were perceiving the relationship dynamics. As a result, initial coding was dropped and a layer of in-vivo coding was applied to the primary data set. Following the first cycle coding method and in following the outline for Thematic Analysis posited by Braun and Clarke (2006, pp. 86–93) all of the codes were collated into “potential themes,” the researchers refer to this as a thematic framework. Thematic categories were constructed during group session in which a minimum of four researchers evaluated and coded sorted codes into evolving categories. This was done to pull together and meaningfuly group data into units of analysis that would inform hierarchical theme evaluation. The most prominent of those themes were then able to be visualized in a conceptual model following a multi-level approach consistent with the theoretical paradigm by Multi-Systems Theory (Boyd-Franklin, 1989).

Second-wave Data Preparation

Following the presentation of the previous poster using the data from the three focus groups at an institutional research symposium, the fourth focus group was conducted and analyzed using the same procedure listed above. Researchers noticed that the fourth focus group did not have the same empirical themes discovered in the first three focus group categories were constructed during group session in which a minimum of four researchers evaluated and codes into evolving categories. This was done to pull together and meaningfuly group data into units of analysis that would inform hierarchical theme evaluation. The most prominent of those themes were then able to be visualized in a conceptual model following a multi-level approach consistent with the theoretical paradigm by Multi-Systems Theory (Boyd-Franklin, 1989).

Data Analysis

New Coding Procedure

After reviewing our prior research and exploratory findings, it was determined by the researchers that the fourth focus group fell into two thematic categories. To address these inter-familial findings, the researchers employed Bowen family systems theory (Murray Bowen, 1965) as a theoretical paradigm to guide the research.

The data set was re-coded at the thematic category level. This analysis was guided by the analytic plan from the earlier research. Emergent thematic categories that were revealed from the first cycle coding were used to guide the in-vivo coding. The researchers then utilized Bowen family systems theory and in-vivo coding to re-code the data. The thematic codes were then attached to burgeoning themes.

The thematic categories from all focus groups were evaluated individually and re-coded using the coding procedure in order to see how the different sibling relationships over time would change. Thematic categories that consistently emerged across the focus groups were then compiled into one dataset. The researchers then compiled theso codes and negative cases for each theme. The researchers then utilized Bowen family systems theory and in-vivo coding to re-code the data. The thematic codes were then attached to burgeoning themes.

The thematic categories are those that remain consistent on the original audio and video transcriptions. Researchers then referred back to the original audio and video transcriptions to find meaning and to pull together and meaningfuly group data into units of analysis that would inform hierarchical theme evaluation. The most prominent of those themes were then able to be visualized in a conceptual model following a multi-level approach consistent with the theoretical paradigm by Multi-Systems Theory (Boyd-Franklin, 1989).

RESULTS

1. Older African college students and younger siblings in both academic and personal ways of life that shift over time across adolescence. This has led to shared ideas of success and strong sibling comparisons due to the desire to be similar to parents and adhere to parents’ personal standards of achievement.

2. Family values are able to be preserved in the face of inter-cultural relations.

3. Positive African American sibling relationships are able to be preserved in the face of inter-cultural relations. This is represented in the bottommost circle entitled “caregiver” of the model.

4. Older siblings tend to hold internalized parental roles which can result in them being seen as a positive influence and role model by the younger sibling.

5. African parents follow child rearing practices that are influenced by the personal expectations of their children.

6. African college students have high expectations in their older siblings.

7. There is a struggle between the amount of control that older siblings have over younger siblings.

8. Older siblings tend to hold internalized parental roles which can result in them being seen as a positive influence and role model by the younger sibling.

9. My family expectations is like graduate get a job, you know take care of your children.

10. Within African families, there is a struggle between the amount of control that older siblings have over younger siblings.

DISCUSSION

This present study is a part of a larger research project examining the role of sibling relationships in the college transition (Bukuru, 2017). Although research on sibling relationships has a lot of potential in the education professional field, this study aimed to explore the role of sibling relationships in the college transition and how they affect students’ academic and personal success. Specifically, this study explored the role of sibling relationships in the college transition and how they affect students’ academic and personal success.

CREDIBILITY MEASURES

The researchers followed the criteria outlined by Patton (1990, p. 1195). The purpose was to ensure that the study was reliable and that the data was collected in a consistent manner. The following steps were taken to ensure reliability: focus group transcripts, results from post coding techniques, and other participants' responses.

REFERENCES

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ABSTRACT

The present study is a part of a larger research project examining the role of sibling relationships in the college transition. This study aimed to explore the role of sibling relationships in the college transition and how they affect students’ academic and personal success. Specifically, this study explored the role of sibling relationships in the college transition and how they affect students’ academic and personal success.