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SOWK B556

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At first glance when looking at this study, and as a non-traditional student, I was curious about how this study of college students was designed and if all age groups were equally surveyed. Given the economic downturn over the last 8-10 years, and the return of many war veterans, many people of various ages and stages of life development and life experience have returned to school in an effort to acquire new or additional skills to be competitive in the job market. My premise being there may be a higher population of older students or those who by other life circumstances (exposure to combat), might have different perceptions of stress and mental health issues. In other words would mental health concerns be the same for a 50 or 60 year-old student as it might be for a 20 year-old student who has not retuned from the Middle East after one or more tours of duty?

The second question is, when during the year, was this survey taken? I wonder if there is a correlate to how I am experiencing the course of the year as having it’s own “shape.” For example, is it an artifact of the school year and the learning process that most students at the fifth or sixth week of the Fall semester might say that yes, within the last 2 weeks they felt things were hopeless, were exhausted (not from physical activity), lonely or overwhelmed by all you had to do?

In order to answer this question, I will assume then that information gathered was based within the range of traditional ages of the respondent student population. Still, I would be further interested about this within the context of the question asked because my answer might be markedly different.

I resonated with Kegan’s construct as a means for defining identity or meaning-making as “an ongoing process in which the boundaries between self and other become structured, lost, and reformed” (Kroger 2004). To address specifically the responses on page 13 of the ACHA 2013 summary, I view this from a social work perspective as a normative developmental process which may be endemic to any learning process. I think this also well describes how the skill is an ever expanding ability as one develops. So it would not be surprising to learn that this phenomenon (engaging the learning process) might be experienced as more emotionally laden for someone in their twenties as opposed to someone in their 50’s might experience. The difficulties inherent in learning new things, engaging with new people, and interacting with larger institutions as further presents opportunities for defining self and other is expected.

Kroger, J. (2004). Identity as Meaning Making. In *Identity In Adolescence: The balance between self and other* (3rd ed., p. 159). East Sussex: Routledge.