A Comparative Study of Student Behaviour in an Academic versus Non-Academic Environment

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Abstract

Through the collection and analysis of primary research data, a non-participant observational study had been used to conduct differences in student behaviours within a non-academic environment versus an academic environment. The locations consisted of the third floor in the Mills Library and the lounge area in front of the Starbucks at the Student Success Center. This study was done to examine social norms, how they are affected in different settings, and to study major themes that emerged from the analysis of these behaviours. The methodological approaches that had been taken was conducting a non-participant observational study resulting in a covert observation of the students, along with the process of a conventional content analysis consisting of an inductive coding approach of codes, themes, and specific categories from both the observed locations. The content analysis originates from my personal observations from the study, the use of theoretical frameworks such as Erving Goffman's theory of Dramaturgy, and the data collection methods utilized such as coding, and developing categories for all the observations and themes that have been covered within the paper. Some major themes that emerged from the research were the larger transparency for violation of norms and an increased demonstration of personal freedom within the Student Success Center as compared to the Mills Library. A violation of norms is any infringement of a normal behaviour, thus what counts as a violation is a behaviour seen as abnormal to the Student Success Centre social setting. In terms of increased personal freedom, students were able to voice out their opinions in a more casual and louder tone as well as have the freedom to choose to study, or socialize within the lounge as opposed to the Mills Library. Similarly, there were patterns of hidden behaviour and elevated pressure within the Mills Library to maintain the identity of an academic student. These themes were then examined through the lens of Goffman's theory of Dramaturgy Intensive analysis had displayed that the theatrical language used by Goffman to decipher human behaviours, such as front stage and back stage, seemed to correlate with the results of the emergent themes uncovered from the study (Khan, 2020).

The overall findings demonstrated how students put on a performance and displayed a certain persona when they were in the Mills Library, such as the performance of an academic student, known as the front stage, as compared to their other performances of being a peer and a socialized individual within other locations such as the Student Center (Khan, 2020). This theory along with the data results showed a link between students' actions and their fluid identities which relied upon the audience and setting which they were in (Khan, 2020).

Overall, the research paper further guides to inform the results and specific categorical

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themes which were derived from the study, demonstrating the link between an academic versus a non-academic setting and its behaviours which differentiated based on which environment the student was in.