Grit--First-Generation College Students (Murphy and Hicks cited)

Terence Hicks, East Tennessee State University
Grit in First-Generation College Students

Getting to college is not the easiest thing to do now a days. It has become one of the hardest things since its becoming more competitive every year. Grit is an important factor of college success. In the article “Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals” Angela L. Duckworth defines “grit as perseverance and passion for long-term goals. Grit entails working strenuously toward challenges, maintaining effort and interest over years despite failure, adversity, and plateaus in progress.” (Duckworth 2007) Just in the description of what grit is, we can tell why it is such an important trait for students to have to help them succeed in college. Graduating from a 4-year university can be consider a “long-term goal” in which grit is needed to besides intelligence only. Many people could be really intelligent in High School, but not survive in college. Unfortunately, first-generation and minority college students face more disadvantages while in college and may lack the development of grit in their academic life.

Grit vs. Intelligence in Success

Going from High School to college is a big change, there is more critical thinking involve and other skills to become successful can come in handy. Duckworth does mention about cognition and other skills such as how, “high-achieving individuals would likely include creativity, vigor, emotional intelligence, charisma, self-confidence, emotional stability, physical attractiveness, and other positive qualities.” (Duckworth, 2007). It takes more than being smart to achieve something which is where grit plays a big role.

Duckworth also talks about how “IQ [scores] may account for up to one third of the variance in some measures of success” (Neisser et al. as cited in Duckworth 2007). Intelligence is not the only thing people need to do better academically, “[t]he aforementioned reasoning suggests that grit may be as essential as IQ to high achievement” (Duckworth, 2007) Although someone may have a really high IQ score doesn’t mean they are set for success right away, grit can play a big part of their achievements and future goals. As Duckworth cites, “Perseverance is at least as crucial as intelligence. . . . The most crucial inherent differences may be ones of temperament rather than of intellect as such” (p. 15). (Howe, as cited in Duckworth, 2007) I believe having a balance between intelligence and grit during college is essential to graduate; yes you need the intelligence to understand new concepts, but grit can help you stay in task to pursue your goal and graduate from college.

Development of Grit in Students
Some people may have more grit than others. In the article “How Important is Grit in Student Achievement?” Emily Hanford explains Duckworth’s study, “Duckworth’s previous research shows that people who have “some college” but no degree are lower in grit than people who have college degrees.” (Hanford 2012). Hanford points out a characteristic of people who have higher grit do finish college. This can be interpreted as if people who go to college don’t have enough grit may have a harder time to graduate from college.

Duckworth states other different characteristics about gritty people such as, “The gritty individual not only finishes tasks at hand but pursues a given aim over years. Grit is also distinct from dependability aspects of conscientiousness, including self-control, in its specification of consistent goals and interests. An individual high in self-control but moderate in grit may, for example, effectively control his or her temper, stick to his or her diet, and resist the urge to surf the Internet at work—yet switch careers annually” (Duckworth, 2007). This shows how grit is more of “long-term goals” and being consistent with what you are trying to do. If people are more consistent with their work, especially if it will take a while to complete the task, it will give better quality to their work and will show the effort they put it. For example, if people are gritty in pursuing a career and going off to college, it will show if they graduate from college.

Grit can be develop if wanted, as Duckworth explains in her article, “In particular, grit, more than self-control or conscientiousness, may set apart the exceptional individuals who James thought made maximal use of their abilities.” (Duckworth 2007). Grit levels can increase if we use our abilities more efficiently to pursue “long-term goals” which first-generation students may have it more hard, especially in college.

Factors that could hinder First-generation students Grit Level

A first-generation student is a college student with parents that didn’t go to college (Belemian, 2013). Being a first-generation student is not easy, as explain her article Lexy Gross gives some background information about them. “According to a 2010 study by Melinda Gibbons and DiAnne Borders, students classified as first-generation are more than likely a minority, likely to be from lower income families and have lower academic achievement.” (Gross 2014). First-generation students may not be so successful pursuing a higher education since they have more disadvantages to overcome.

In the article “First-Generation College-Goers: Unprepared and Behind” by Liz Riggs, describes the story of Nijay Williams which he is a first-generation student “I wanted two degrees; that’s what I saw myself doing,” he said. ‘My mom stopped school in the ninth grade; my dad stopped in the fourth grade … It makes it harder for me, [and] most of the people I graduated with are not in college, but that’s what I see myself doing; I want to go to college. I just want to have a degree” (Riggs 2014). He explains how he wants a degree, but he never explains how because he doesn’t know how. He’s grit level may be low since he doesn’t know how to obtain a college degree, it may be harder for him to accomplish it and it may mean that he has a lower level of grit since it’s harder to pursue such a “long-term goal”.

Although first-generation students may face difficulties, there are programs that are available
for them to use as stated in the article “First Generation Students: College Aspirations, Preparedness and Challenges”, “There are a growing number of college access and success programs across the country that target low-income, minority, and first-generation test-takers (Engle, as cited in Belemian 2013) “the most well-known and long-standing are the federally-funded TRIO and GEAR UP programs” (Engle as cited in Belemian 2013). There are resources for students to accomplish their goals and to increase grit in them as they accomplish “long-term goals”.

In the article “First generation students face disadvantages, culture shock” by Lexy Gross, she shows some of the disadvantages that first-generation may face, “In the study by Gibbons and Borders, authors investigated middle school students who would potentially be first generation college students. In seventh grade, these potential first generation students already perceived barriers related to finances, family issues, racial and ethnic discrimination, and lack of college-educated role models, lack of college-planning guidance, negative educational role models and lack of preparation.” (Gross 2014). This may be the reasons why first-generation college students may have less grit than their peers; for example, not having a role model that can help them plan “long-term goals”. This can be crucial since they wouldn’t have the guidance of someone they trust and may be scare to achieve more.

In the article “Academic Characteristics among First-Generation and Non-First-Generation College Students” by Catrina G. Murphy and Terence Hicks describes what happens to many first generation students such as how, “[a] large number of the students enrolling in college in the twentyfirst century are first-generation college students, and they bring unique challenges to college. During the first semester of college, first-generation students have a higher risk of dropping out and not returning for the second year” (Inman, Mayes and Riehl, as cited in Murphy and Hicks, 2006). First-generation students may be lacking of grit and not being able to continue for long in college. It shows how first-generation students may lack in grit since some of them cannot even stay for a second year in college and pursuing their “long-term goal”.

Murphy and Hicks also give more disadvantages for first-generation students which may be more reasons why they are not so gritty. “First-generation beginning students differ from non-first-generation students in age and family background: They are older: 31 percent of first-generation students were 24 or older, compared to 13 percent and 5 percent, respectively, of students whose parents had some college experience or a bachelor’s degree; They have lower incomes: 42 percent of those who were dependent were from the lowest family income quartile (less than $25,000/year), compared to 22 percent and 18 percent, respectively, of the other 2 groups.” (Choy as cited in Murphy and Hicks, 2006) The lack of resources can be a big factor, since they may not know what will happen within the next month financially. This would make it harder to set “long-term goals “for themselves.

What to do?

We need to keep supporting firs-generation students so they can meet their goals and become grittier. Murphy and Hicks cite some really good advice to help these students, “concluded that academic integration includes: student’s satisfaction with faculty relationships; their
feelings that the faculty of the university are sensitive to the interests, needs, and aspirations of the students; the ease with which students feel they can develop close personal relationships with faculty members on campus; the perception of students that their faculty are good teachers; and the students’ satisfaction with the quality of instruction at their university (p. 90)” (Nettles as cited in Murphy and Hicks, 2006). Universities staff and faculty can also contribute to helping first-generation students stay on track to achieve their “long-term goal” which is to graduate and practice their career after college.

Bibliography


Leave a comment

Previous Cultural Discrimination
Next Cover Letter
Blog at WordPress.com | The Afterlight Theme.
Follow

Follow “claudiaangelporfoliouwp1”

Build a website with WordPress.com

https://claudiaangelporfoliouwp1.wordpress.com/2015/06/04/grit-in-first-generation-colleg... 8/26/2015