

## *Summary*

### Social representation – College – Success – Male – Humanities

The academic success of college-level males is worrisome. Dropping out and failure of college courses as well as the lack of persistence in school studies bring negative consequences in terms of social and occupational integration. One way of improving interventions aimed at helping these young men is to update our knowledge of their mental universe.

Social representations are key paths for understanding the significance of academic life for college students. The main objective of this study is to reveal these representations for males registered in the Humanities programme. The specific objectives are to describe the social representations of both college life and academic success, to show their evolution over three sessions and to compare the representations of academically stronger boys with those of weaker ones.

This exploratory and qualitative research is based on the structural approach of social representation. According to this approach all representation is organised around a central core which gives it its meaning. The data collection methods used in the research include three types of means recommended for locating and identifying the central core: group interviews, questionnaires and association techniques based on words lists, pictures with verbalisation and image representations of the notion of “college”.

The data was collected from males registered in the first session of the Humanities programme at Cégep Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu in the fall of 2004 and followed for three consecutive sessions. We have highlighted the convergences and divergences between stronger and weaker students for the social representations of the third session as well as the perspective of their evolution over the course of a year.

Data analysis shows, among other things, the existence of social representations of college life and of academic success which are articulated and evolving in boys at school. In addition to these boys’ enlightening remarks on their perception of pedagogy, a strong link was made between vocational choice and academic motivation. Similarities, as well as clear differences between stronger and weaker students were also brought out.

In conclusion we are establishing links with previous research and formulating methodological considerations, implications for teaching and learning, research paths and some recommendations.