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INDIANA UNIVERSITY
STUDENT PERSONNEL
ASSOCIATION

1999

EDITION

**INDIANA UNIVERSITY
STUDENT PERSONNEL ASSOCIATION**

INDIANA UNIVERSITY

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The *Journal of the Indiana University Student Personnel Association* is published annually by the Indiana University Student Personnel Association with support from the Higher Education and Student Affairs (HESA) Program. The *Journal* is produced expressly to provide an opportunity for HESA master's students to publish articles pertinent to the field of student affairs. The primary sources of funding for this year's *Journal* are alumni donations and student and departmental support. The important role that each of these contributors has played in the production of this edition is gratefully acknowledged and appreciated.

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EDITORS' COMMENTS

Nariah S. Broadus and Christopher R. Turner

Welcome to the 1999 edition of the *Journal of the Indiana University Student Personnel Association*. This year's edition represents the continued traditions of excellence, education, and commitment demonstrated throughout our program as well as, we hope, the desire and need for future endeavors.

Annually an outstanding graduate of the program is invited to share personal perspectives and experience in student affairs in a featured article. This year, Patricia Volp, Dean of Students at the College of William and Mary, discusses resilience in the student affairs professional. Her article, "Bad Things Happen to Good People: Can Student Affairs Professionals Benefit from Resilience Training?" provides particular insight into the need for additional preparation and reflection in order to maintain wellness, both personally and professionally. This year's selections demonstrate the varied interests represented by the students and future professionals. Two of the articles address issues of retention in very different ways. "The Effects of Membership in Freshman Interest Groups" studied the impact of involvement in a learning community on participants. "Factors Influencing Student College Choice Between In-State and Out-of-State Students" provides unique insight into the college choice process and its relation to student satisfaction and retention. "Asian Women and Academic Confidence" adds to the literature on underrepresented populations in the area of international student services and perceptions of the American academic community. We are especially proud to offer you the chance to gain insight into the perspectives of current master's students on the state of the program. "Reflections on the Graduate Experience" incorporates views from first and second year students in the HESA program. As alumni we all have a vested interest in the continued success of the program, and we hope that you view the *Journal* as one of your many connections.

We would like to extend our thanks to Joyce Regester for her continued support of not only the *Journal*, but the HESA department as well. Ms. Regester left the department this year after 10 years of dedicated service, and her expertise and support will be sorely missed. Thanks should also be given to our esteemed colleagues on the Review Board who offered their comments on each submission.

Finally, we would like to thank everyone who has contributed so generously to the *Journal* and to IUSPA. Each year the *Journal* is sent to approximately 2,000 alumni, students and professionals. The *Journal* is also to our knowledge the only student produced journal that is annually abstracted in *Higher Education Abstracts*. Unfortunately, as costs for publication rise it becomes increasingly difficult to fund the *Journal*, and your support is crucial to the survival of this IUSPA and HESA/CSPA tradition. Please help us keep you informed by making a contribution.

We hope you find this edition stimulating and thought provoking.

Nariah S. Broadus graduated with a M.S. in Higher Education and Student Affairs from Indiana University in 1999. She received her B. A. in Spanish from Moravian College in 1997. Her assistantship was with the Division of Residential Programs and Services. While at IU she completed her thesis on the experiences of peer instructors in Freshman Interest Groups.

Christopher R. Turner graduated from Indiana University Bloomington with a M.S. in Higher Education and Student Affairs. While at IU, Christopher held assistantships as an Assistant Coordinator in Foster Quadrangle and as the Assistant to the Vice President for Public Affairs and Governmental Relations. He earned his B.A. in Vocal Performance with supporting studies in Communications at Wichita State University in 1997.

STATE OF THE PROGRAM

Ada Simmons, Ed.D.

Master's Program Coordinator

I am pleased to offer you this edition of the *IUSPA Journal* and hope that you will find it informative and enjoyable. As you read, indulge yourself in a quick trip down Memory Lane to your graduate school days. If you are like me, the passage of time clarifies the things that are really important in life. I count among them the sharpening of intellectual skills, friendships with faculty and peers, and personal development that were all part of my graduate experience in the IU HESA program. I hope this was your experience as well. But before you delve into the papers authored by students, let me bring you up-to-date on the program.

The master's program continues to draw interest from students coast-to-coast. This year, we received over 500 inquiries about the program, resulting in over 100 applications. During our two recruitment weekends, approximately 70 students visited the campus to interview with assistantship providers, faculty, and current students. We continue to move toward a centralized scheduling process for assistantship interviews. Further refinements to the assistantship application process are expected for next year, making it even more convenient for applicants.

Several of our faculty received recognition from their peers for their scholarly accomplishments this past year. Deborah Carter was named an ACPA Emerging Scholar and was honored at the ACPA annual meeting in Atlanta. Fran Stage received the NSF/AERA Leigh Burstein Fellowship for a year of work in Washington, DC. George Kuh was awarded a Pew Foundation grant for a national study of student engagement, a topic that intersects nicely with his continuing work on the college student experience. At IUPUI, Gene Tempel was named by Non Profit Times as one of the 50 most influential people shaping the non-profit sector in the U.S., and Gilbert Brown completed the Harvard Graduate School of Education Management and Development Program.

We are also quite proud of the accomplishments of our students, who continue to take advantage of both in- and out-of-class opportunities to develop as student affairs scholars and practitioners. Through the publication of the *Journal*, students are able to showcase their writing skills, and for those on the *Journal* staff, to review the written work of their classmates. This year, both first- and second-year students presented at MMOGSISP, and two teams of first-year students participated in the NASPA IV East case study challenge.

A few changes in personnel associated with the master's program also took place this past year. Teri Hall, program coordinator for 1997-98, assumed a new post at Towson University (MD) and was replaced by Ada Simmons (M.S. CSPA '93; Ed.D. Higher Ed. Admin. '96). Last, but by no means least, Joyce Regester, who had been the program's administrative assistant for a decade, took on new responsibilities in the IU Bloomington Dean of Faculties office. As countless students and our faculty can attest, Joyce has been the proverbial glue holding the program together, and she will be deeply missed.

As always, we appreciate your referral of talented students to the program, particularly as we strive to increase the diversity of our incoming cohorts. Keep us in mind, too, as you make charitable contributions. As you know, the *IUSPA Journal* is funded in large part by alumni donations, and in recent years these have not kept pace with *Journal* publication costs. We depend on, and greatly appreciate, your financial support.

AWARDS AND HONORS

Congratulations to these members of the Indiana University family on the following recognitions:

- John Saddlemire
1999 Elizabeth A. Greenleaf Distinguished Alumni Award
- Elizabeth Whitt
1999 Robert H. Shaffer Distinguished Alumni Award
- Jennifer Herzog
1999 Elizabeth A. Greenleaf Fellowship Award
- Rick Montelongo
1999 August and Ann Eberle Fellowship Award
- Mark Giles
1999 Robert H. Wade II Fellowship
- Mark Connolly
1999 Holmstedt Fellowship
- Jean-Noel Thompson
1999 Holmstedt Fellowship
- Myrna Hernandez
1999 ACPA Outstanding Graduate Student, Honorable Mention
- Rob Andrews
1999 ACPA Outstanding Graduate Student, Honorable Mention
- Sarah Beth Thompson
1999 ACPA Outstanding Graduate Student, Honorable Mention
- Maggie Balch
1999 Kate Hevner Mueller Award
- Fran Stage
1999 NSF/AERA Leigh Burstein Fellowship
- Sarah Westfall
Teaching Excellence Recognition Award (School of Education)

Call for Nominations

Nominations of individuals for the 2000 Elizabeth A. Greenleaf and Robert H. Shaffer Awards are now being accepted. The Elizabeth A. Greenleaf Award is presented annually to a graduate of the master's degree program who exemplifies "the sincere commitment, professional leadership and personal warmth" of Betty Greenleaf, for whom the award is named. Previous Greenleaf Award recipients include Louis Stamatakos, Phyllis Mable, Deborah Hunter, Vernon Wall, Jamie Washington, Kathryn Goddard, and Helen Mamachev, to name a few. The Robert H. Shaffer Award is presented to a graduate of the Higher Education doctoral program who exemplifies outstanding service to the student affairs profession. Previous recipients have included "Sandy" McLean, Don Creamer, Alice Manicur, Donald Mikesell, and Gary McGrath.

Nominations for both awards close February 1, 2000. The awards will be presented at the 2000 NASPA and ACPA conferences. Please direct your nominations and letter of support to Ada Simmons, 4228 W.W. Wright Education Bldg., 201 N. Rose Ave., Indiana University, Bloomington, IN 47405. Thank you.

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BAD THINGS HAPPEN TO GOOD PEOPLE: CAN STUDENT AFFAIRS PROFESSIONALS BENEFIT FROM RESILIENCE TRAINING?

Patricia M. Volp

Individuals react differently to stressors in the work environment and in their personal lives. Some rebound and even demonstrate personal growth after such setbacks; others seem to become mired in the aftermath of difficulties. Those who do not recover quickly often cost the workplace in lost effectiveness. A growing body of literature exists identifying "resilience" characteristics and indicating that one can learn to be better at surviving and thriving after setbacks. The student affairs profession has made a commitment to professional and personal development, establishing a value in such activity. There is little in the student affairs literature to suggest that resilience skills are being taught in professional development. Yet the outcome could be an invigorated and productive staff.

Janet Jacoby was in her third year as dean of students at Modicum College when the president who hired her retired. Janet looked forward to the opportunity to work with the new president; however, in his first private conversation with Janet, the President told her he had no faith in her ability to supervise the division. He asked for her immediate resignation. Richard Farquar, vice president for student affairs at Middle American University, had a good relationship with the President to whom he had reported for seven years. One day the President suggested to Richard that he no longer was effective and ought to look for another position.

Both Janet and Richard were well-respected student affairs professionals, and faculty, staff, and students at their institutions were sad to see them leave. Janet reacted by getting angry, but soon began to focus her time to evaluate the opportunities she had available to her. She eventually decided to combine her first love, teaching, with her love of student affairs. Janet accepted a position teaching in a college student affairs preparatory program in a nearby state. She later referred to losing her job as the best thing that ever happened to her. Richard became depressed and lethargic, and his colleagues became increasingly concerned about his negativity. They were not surprised that Richard was not receiving job offers after interviews. Nor were they surprised when, after a period of unemployment, Richard began working in the portrait studio at Sears.

Student affairs professionals deal with stress regularly—for example, from high and often unreasonable expectations from constituents, financial constraints, and changing goals and personalities. Crises and setbacks happen in the workplace and in personal lives. While

many recover quickly, others may be slower or unable to return to 100 percent effectiveness, negatively affecting the workplace as well as their personal well-being. Work loss might be exhibited through drug/alcohol dependencies, depression, anger and negativity, excessive absence due to illness, or departure from the institution and/or profession. Resilience is "the ability to recover quickly from illness, change, or misfortune" (Morris, 1973, p. 1106). Why is one person able to rebound while another is defeated by hardship? Are there personal characteristics associated with surviving and thriving in difficult times? If so, can a person learn attitudes and skills that enhance resilience in adverse situations?

Personal growth and lifelong learning are values of the student affairs profession for student development (NASPA, 1997) and for professional development (Schwartz & Bryan, 1998; Volp, 1981). Staff development is a "planned experience designed to change behavior and result in professional and/or personal growth and improved organizational effectiveness" (Merkle & Artman, 1983, p. 55). Emphasis on the reflective practitioner has encouraged professional and personal introspection about successful behaviors (Brown, Podolske, Kohles & Sonnenberg, 1992; Nottingham, 1998) and the use of inventories to improve self-understanding (Bryan & Schwartz, 1998; Nottingham, 1998).

Concern has been expressed about attrition from the student affairs profession, possibly because of limited opportunities for advancement, role stress, and professional burnout (Evans, 1988; Lorden, 1998; Ward, 1995). Would enhancement of resilience skills reduce stress and burnout and add to one's portfolio for promotion? Ward (1995) asked similar questions:

Are there personality characteristics of student affairs professionals that allow them to maintain a rosy outlook about their careers, despite negative conditions? Are they better able to cope than their counterparts in other occupations and thus able to temporarily fend off the consequences of role stress? Do student affairs professionals reach a breaking point where these characteristics (perhaps, for example, their tolerance for uncertainty) are no longer enough to repel the forces associated with role stress? (pp. 42-43)

Job rotation has been recommended as a form of professional development to evaluate and improve skills, enlarge perspectives, and provide exposure of younger staff to seasoned professionals (Robinson & Delbridge-Parker, 1991). Personal "influencers" (Cooper & Miller, 1998), mentors and role models (Bryan & Schwartz, 1998; Komives, 1992) are

frequently discussed as facilitators of development. Clement and Rickard (1992) in their study of exemplary student affairs leaders found personal attributes, such as integrity, commitment, and tenacity, associated with success. They found successful leaders "act with the courage of their convictions to turn crises into opportunities" (p. 146). The authors also found that the student affairs leaders studied had a sense of perspective, versatility, a sense of adventure, confidence in their own ability, an expectation that things will work out, flexible problem solving skills, and a willingness to take risks while keeping failure in perspective.

Resilience Studies

Maslow (as cited in Siebert, 1996) said "stress will either break people altogether if they are in the beginning too weak to stand distress, or else, if they are already strong enough to take the stress in the first place, that same stress, if they come through it, will strengthen them, temper them, and make them stronger" (pp. 90-91). Those who do not thrive may blame others for the disruption and become angry. Others become overwhelmed and go numb. Some people take on a victim's mantle and never recover (Siebert, 1996).

Siebert (1996) studied survivors of life-threatening and life-changing circumstances (e.g., POWs and Holocaust victims) and identified a variety of qualities associated with high resilience. "It isn't what a person is like, it is how a person interacts with situations that determines survival" (Siebert, 1996, p. 14). Siebert is a strong believer that individuals can learn and practice the qualities to survive disruptive change and to thrive afterwards.

People who thrive after setbacks get upset but expect things to turn out well. They use humor, empathy and creative thinking to find a satisfactory outcome. Those who thrive are self-confident experimenters who remain flexible and open about resolutions. People who thrive follow a similar pattern after being knocked off balance by disruptive change: they "regain emotional balance; cope during the transition; adapt to the new reality; recover to a stable condition; and thrive by learning to be better and stronger than before" (Siebert, 1996, p. 91).

Siebert identified the following factors as highly correlated with resilience: a playful, childlike sense of curiosity about how things work and the ability to find laughter in our learning; the ability to assimilate information quickly, learn from new and unexpected experiences, and solve problems creatively; mental and emotional flexibility; and empathic understanding of others, even antagonists. Additional factors included acceptance of intuition and hunches as valid; strong self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-concept; optimism about the outcome of efforts and one's ability to influence them; a learning and coping response instead of a blaming or victim approach; and the capacity for

turning misfortune into good luck (Siebert, 1996).

Orsborn (1997) used ten stages of resilience to describe a recovery process that, like Siebert's, moves from the initial impact of difficulty, where avoiding suffering is the first inclination, through transcending pain to being profoundly changed. The themes in Orsborn's *The Art of Resilience* come from studies of people's response to painful experiences, and the recommendations mix Eastern mysticism with Western practicality. Developing an ability to embrace change rather than to fear it is Orsborn's underlying message.

Brammer (as cited in Hansen, 1997) described levels of response to ordinary and extraordinary life transitions. In the lowest and easiest level, adaptation, one adjusts and/or copes. Adjusting is a minimal response. Coping is a more active adaptation and involves such skills as "developing a positive view of change, building support, changing negative thoughts, solving problems, and appraising potential danger" (Hansen, p. 217). The renewal level involves identifying values, taking risks, setting new goals, and making plans. Transformation, the third level, is a shift in viewing the problem as a tragedy to seeing it as an opportunity. The transcendence level is experiencing not only the meaning of the upsetting event but the ultimate meaning of life.

"Failure makes everyone at least momentarily helpless," according to Seligman (1998, p. 45). However, his research suggested that one's explanatory style-how one thinks about events-can determine if the individual gives up easily or recovers quickly from setbacks. A resilient or optimistic explanatory style is characterized by believing setbacks are temporary rather than permanent, specific rather than pervasive, and externally set. Seligman said that a "pessimistic explanatory style is at the core of depressed thinking" (p. 58). Depressed thinking inhibits resilience.

The use of rational therapy techniques can help individuals "learn optimism" by focusing on the specific problem in the present and not perceiving it as a permanent and pervasive statement about one's abilities (Seligman, 1998). Seligman measured pessimism in the entering freshman class at the University of Pennsylvania and intervened with optimism training workshops for the most pessimistic of the class, resulting in significant decreases in depression and anxiety for those who attended workshops versus those who did not. Other resilience traits and responses can be practiced and enhanced. For example, one can practice finding humor in difficult situations (Siebert, 1999). Many authors recommend that people develop learning and coping habits in response to upsets rather than victim or blaming reactions (Orsborn, 1997; Seligman, 1998; Siebert, 1996, 1999). Viscott (1996) emphasized that to be emotionally resilient one must learn to accept one's self and others; deal with emotional baggage immediately, honestly, and directly; let go of the past and of false expectations, and take responsibility for one's life.

Implications for Student Affairs Practice

Certain traits have been identified with resilience; individuals strong in these characteristics rebound quickly and thrive after setbacks and adversity. In light of this evidence and the fact that people can enhance personal resiliency, what are the implications for student affairs practice?

Resilience training can be incorporated at many points along the continuum of professional practice. Student affairs preparation programs could intentionally incorporate resilience training into seminars, practica and internship experiences. Entry level professionals should look for influencers and mentors who demonstrate resilience in their work and seek to interact with them in ways they can learn such skills. Supervisors should help employees to experiment and to see the learning in mistakes and setbacks rather than where to place blame or make excuses. They also can provide opportunity for staff to develop problem-solving skills that will increase self-confidence. Senior student affairs officers can intentionally model exemplary traits and encourage questions and curiosity among staff.

Division-wide professional development programs might formally spotlight resilient skill development or informally provide financial support to allow staff to seek these skills in external seminars and conferences. Using Seligman's pessimism scale (1998) as a personal development instrument and applying cognitive restructuring techniques, staff can be taught "learned optimism" to increase resilience and decrease depressed thinking.

National organizations should include resilience programs in pre-conference and convention agendas. Editorial boards of student affairs literature may invite articles that address research into the development of practice that enhances personal and professional resilience.

ACPA President Greg Roberts, in his 1999 inaugural address, urged student affairs professionals to practice resilience strategies in the coming millennium. Although the authors were not looking for resilience traits, Clement and Rickard (1992) identified many such skills in the exemplary student affairs leaders they studied. The consonance between the longevity and success of these student affairs professionals and the resilience traits associated with them is apparent. Change, stress, and adversity will not be eliminated from our work and our lives: It behooves the student affairs profession to intentionally teach successful resilience strategies to its practitioners.

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Patricia Volp received her B.A. degree in journalism from the University of Minnesota (1972) and two M.A.s from Ball State University in college journalism (1975) and social psychology (1979). She holds an Ed.D. in higher education from Indiana University (1981). Dr. Volp is currently Dean of Students at The College of William and Mary in Virginia.

THE EFFECTS OF MEMBERSHIP IN FRESHMAN INTEREST GROUPS MEREDITH CURTIN, SARAH THOMPSON, MEG WIGGINS

This study focuses on the impact of membership in Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs) at a large, Research I, public university in the Midwest. FIGs are learning communities that strive to integrate formal and informal learning in a residential environment. The researchers found that membership in FIGs has positively impacted college students and their perceptions of personal academic achievement and social adjustment in their first semester of college.

Introduction

In recent years, there has been a significant amount of attention paid to the impact that learning environments have on college students. Students and their learning styles are changing and faculty, student affairs professionals, and university administrators need to respond to those changes in order to be effective and meet the needs of these students (Schroeder, 1993). A particular area of interest has involved student learning and achievement in connection with residential living. Research has found that residential students spend approximately 70% of their time within their residence hall (Schroeder & Jackson, 1987). Therefore, the residence hall is a crucial area in the lives of many students, particularly freshman, who are the highest percentage of students living in residence halls in most colleges and universities. The basic premise that has emerged from this research is that residential environments can be designed to enhance and foster student development for freshmen, particularly in terms of academic achievement and adjustment to college life. This can primarily be achieved by creating or restructuring optimal environments for academic success and achievement.

This study focuses on the impact that membership in a Freshman Interest Group (FIG) has on college students and their perceptions of personal academic achievement and social adjustment in their first semester of college. This study takes place at a large, Research I, public university in the Midwest and involves a combination of research on residence halls, the first year experience, and learning communities. A FIG is comprised of a group of approximately 20 first year students who take three general education requirement classes. These classes center around a central theme. The students of each FIG also live on a residence hall floor together and attend a seminar class once a week which is facilitated by a Peer Instructor (PI). The purpose of a FIG is to integrate formal and informal learning, and thus, enhance overall student outcomes.

Residence hall living and learning communities, such as FIGs, have been found to have positive effects on freshman students in terms

of academic achievement, satisfaction, intellectual development, involvement, and retention (Smith, 1991; Astin, 1993; Schroeder & Hurst, 1996). It is because of these emerging results that colleges and universities are working toward restructuring their learning environments and looking toward learning community models for their students (Smith & Hunter, 1988; Cross, 1988). This is a very important and timely subject and can possibly alter the meaning of learning and how it is developed at American colleges and universities.

This study will begin with a literature review of relevant literature from the field divided into two categories: residence halls, and learning communities. Each section discusses how these entities impact academic achievement and social adjustment in the first semester of college, and what specific elements have the greatest impact on these factors.

Literature Review

Residence Halls

Nowack and Hanson (1985) studied the differences in academic achievement between freshmen students who lived in the residence halls and freshmen students who did not. Their goal was to determine what factors affected freshman academic achievement and persistence on college campuses and if gender impacted this success. The results found that residence hall students had higher grade point averages (GPA) and less academic difficulty than non-residence hall students. Nowack and Hanson (1985) concluded that residence halls were positive environments for fostering academic achievement in freshman students and that there should be continued programmatic efforts to have an educational focus in the residence halls.

Astin (1993) found peer interaction, particularly in residence halls, to be one of the most valuable factors impacting college students in terms of academic achievement, retention, and satisfaction with the institution. He wrote that residence halls were underutilized in terms of peer and academic interactions and concluded that "the student's peer group is the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years" (Astin, 1993, p. 398). It is this peer element that constitutes many learning communities now found at colleges and universities across the country.

Learning Communities

Learning communities take many forms and structures, serve different purposes, and can refer to numerous approaches to learning. In its most basic form, a learning community can be described as "bringing together people with related interests and giving them the opportunity to learn from each other" (Hill, 1985, p. 1).

Matthews, Smith, MacGregor, and Gabelnick (1996) discussed the benefits of a rich learning environment that learning communities provide because of the high level of involvement, sense of community, and support. By connecting courses around a theme, learning communities provide students with an integration of material rather than disjointed classes experienced in isolation from one another. One type of learning community discussed was the FIG, not all of which have residential components. The main purpose of FIGs is to assist freshman students in their first semester adjustment to college, academically and socially, and to help them be successful. A case study examined by Matthews et al. (1996) involved FIG programs at the University of Oregon and the University of Washington, where all FIG classes fit students' general education requirements. In addition, students attended a seminar taught once a week by a PI, an undergraduate student who had been hired and trained to facilitate the course. They found this program to be successful in terms of helping students have a sense of community and connection when they need one most, therefore helping them be more successful academically (Matthews et al., 1996).

Student affairs professionals have the ability to create specific learning environments for students with the student learner as the focus (Schroeder & Hurst, 1996). An example of such an environment would be a FIG. Schroeder and Hurst (1996) attested that by using Blocher's (1978) theoretical base of optimal learning environments and healthy communities, learning communities could thrive because students are of primary importance and the environment is a close second. They give the example of a residential FIG program which integrates formal and informal learning (Schroeder & Hurst, 1996).

Wilcox and delMas (1997) recognized that the first year of the college experience is crucial to students' success and that packaging courses and building a sense of community through learning communities was an effective way to help academic achievement and retention. The students enrolled in the learning communities were found to be more successful overall, especially in the areas of credit completion, academic achievement and persistence (Wilcox & delMas, 1997). The students in the learning communities responded that the main factors impacting their experiences were frequent meetings with professors and peers, constant exchange of ideas, peer pressure to attend and be active in class, a sense of community, academic and personal support.

A growing body of research demonstrates that learning communities are successful because they help to build a sense of group identity and community among students academically and socially (Matthews et al., 1996). The researchers hypothesized that those students who participated in the FIG program studied, transitioned to college academic work more smoothly than non-FIG participants. In addition, the researchers also hypothesized that the FIG participants adjusted socially with more

ease than non-FIG participants.

Method

Sample

This study was conducted at a large, public, residential Research I institution in the Midwest. In the fall of 1998, this Midwestern university implemented a program of Freshman Interest Groups (FIGs). The program offered first year students the opportunity to join a community of students with similar topical interests. In the first semester of its operation, there were nineteen different FIG communities in which students could join. Within the context of a specific FIG, students enrolled in the same three academic courses, as well as a FIG seminar led by an upper-class peer instructor. Students who participated in the FIGs program were housed by theme, interspersed on residence hall floors with non-FIG participants throughout campus (personal communication, FIGS Director, September 17, 1998).

This study looked at the impact of FIGS on the academic and social adjustment of first year students to campus life. The researchers investigated the FIG and non-FIG students' perceptions of their academic and social transitions, comparing the two groups and analyzing the differences. By interviewing FIG and non-FIG participants who resided on two different floors in Nicholas Center (a pseudonym), the researchers assessed the impact that student participation in the FIGs program had on successful adjustment to life on campus. The sample for this study was not randomly selected. Both FIG and non-FIG students volunteered to be interviewed for research purposes. The researchers limited their study to the students of one specific residence center to control for the variations between the cultures evident in different residence halls.

Twenty-one students were interviewed for the study, all of whom were enrolled in their first semester of college and living in Nicholas Center. At the time of the interviews, FIG participants had been a member of their FIG for approximately 8 weeks. Of the 21 participants interviewed for this study, 9 were male and 12 were female. There were 4 male and 7 female participants from the FIG group of students and 5 male and 5 female participants from the non-FIG group of students. The sample population was comprised primarily of White students, with only one African American participant and no other racial/ethnic group represented.

Procedure

In order to interview the students, a survey instrument was developed consisting of 57 questions. The questions were separated into four categories: 1) general information; 2) academic achievement; 3) social adjustment; and 4) questions specifically for FIG members. The

questionnaire was utilized to measure the students' perceptions of their academic achievement and social adjustment to their first semester of college.

Interviews were conducted primarily in the participant's residence hall floor lounge or private room. In order to ensure confidentiality and privacy, no other students were present during the interviews, and participants were asked to supply a pseudonym for themselves. Each participant was involved in an interview approximately forty-five minutes to one hour in length. Each interview was tape recorded with the participant's consent.

Limitations

There were several limitations that may have affected the research study. A predetermining factor was that the project was conducted by three White female researchers. Another limitation in the study was that all of the participants volunteered to be interviewed. There is a higher probability that these students who volunteered are already more active, more involved, and therefore socially adjusted, serving as a confounding variable in the study. The response rate yielded only 21 participants, all of whom participated in the same FIG. This may not have been a large enough sample to gain an accurate depiction of the learning community experience, or the FIG seminar experience. Out of the 21 participants interviewed, only one was a person of color. This could show a very limited view of student social and academic adjustment, because our sample is not proportional to the student body as a whole. Finally, previous research has shown that residential learning communities in the form of FIGs are not as common as non-residential FIG programs. For this reason, this study will not be replicable for the majority of FIG programs at other institutions.

Results

The researchers evaluated the study using two main categories: academic achievement and social adjustment to the college campus. These categories, as well as their sub-categories were created as a result of the themes that emerged during participant interviews. Research has shown that student involvement and participation in a learning community during the freshman year has a significantly positive impact on their perceptions of academic and social success (Matthews, et al., 1996; Nowack & Hanson, 1985).

Background Information of Participants

All of the participants in the study were 18-19 years old, and only three of the students' permanent residences were out of state. All of the participants stated that other students from their high school attended this university, half of the participants knew other students on

their floor before moving in, and only two knew their roommate prior to attending school. With one exception, FIG students lived on residence hall floors with other FIG students of the same sex, and were enrolled in three of the same classes. These classes also contained non-FIG students, who, in fact, composed the largest population of enrolled students. In addition, all FIG students attended the same weekly seminar class that was taught by a PI.

Academic Achievement

The first category we researched was academic achievement. The researchers identified four factors in determining the academic achievement of FIG and non-FIG students including 1) perceptions of academic achievement, 2) study habits, 3) academic support, and 4) academic interactions.

Perceptions of academic achievement

Students were asked how they defined academic achievement and what factors were involved in determining this term. FIG students defined academic achievement as setting a specific goal and working to achieve that goal to the best of their ability.

FIG member, Mary: I would describe academic achievement as doing your best and reaching your highest potential regardless of your actual GPA.

The majority of non-FIG students mentioned grades as the highest factor in determining whether or not they were achieving academically.

Non-FIG member, Jack: Achieving academically means 3.5 or above, no questions asked.

I mean, if you can't make the grades, why are you here?

Although some FIG students did mention grades as a factor, it was not as high a determinant as for non-FIG students. Overall, students in both groups (FIG and non-FIG) anticipated their semester grade point average to be between 3.0-3.5. Non-FIG students were happy with their academic achievement thus far, while FIG students often felt that they could be doing better and achieving more academically.

Study habits

Non-FIG students mentioned academics as a high priority in high school, whereas academics were not as high of a priority for FIG students, who reasoned that high school was often not a challenge for them. In their first semester of college, however, the majority of all participants interviewed stated that academics were a high priority. Participants generally stated that they attended class on a regular basis. Some FIG students mentioned that when they did miss class that they could easily get the notes and class assignments from other students in their FIG.

FIG member, Veronica: Because we're all mostly in the same classes together, it's really not that big of a deal to skip or miss class. Y'know

what I mean? It's so easy to get the work from someone else across the hall.

Some factors found to be related to the participants' study habits were class attendance, where they sit in class, and how much and in what location do they study. The participants stated that where they sat in class varied from week to week, but many FIG students did mention that it was typical to sit with other FIG members because they were in the same classes. However, one FIG member specifically stated that she wanted to sit with other non-FIG students so that she might have the opportunity to meet other people.

FIG member, Robin: I don't always like to just hang out with people in the FIG. They are together so much anyway that I like to get to know other people too. I also like to sit in the front so I can get to know the professor better. Other people in the FIG don't always do that.

The consensus was that FIG students study 10-15 hours per week and non-FIG students study 15-20 hours per week. The majority of the participants studied in their room or floor lounge, and FIG students were more likely to study in groups, whereas non-FIG students were more likely to study by themselves.

FIG member, Jordan: Every Monday night we get together to study because we have a geography lab the next day. It really helps me to be able to study with everyone else. I actually wish that people in the FIG were in my math class too. That is, by far, my worst subject.

Non-FIG member, Jenny: I study in my room, in the lounge, outside, and in the library, but I always study by myself. Um, my friends on the floor aren't in the same classes as me, and I think we would just talk anyway and not get any work done.

Academic support

Students overall felt very supported academically in their residence halls and on campus. Within the residence hall, FIG students perceived that their floor had academics as a high priority, and non-FIG students perceived academics as a medium to high priority on their floor. All participants mentioned that their floor had quiet hours, and although the hours were not strictly enforced by the Resident Assistant, all of the students stated they felt comfortable asking neighbors to turn down their music or lower their voices. In addition, the majority of participants had met with their advisor at least once, and they felt that the necessary resources were available to enable them to succeed academically.

FIG member, Robin: Oh yeah! I have been to a lot of math tutorial session things in other residence halls. I went to a writing one, too. There are computer clusters everywhere too which are really helpful.

Non-FIG member, Corey: There are a lot of services available in the

residence hall and on campus. I haven't taken advantage of any of them, but I know they're there if I need them and I have heard that they're helpful.

We found that FIG students were more often aware of these resources available to them than non-FIG students, and the FIG students mentioned that they learned about these resources in their FIG seminar. Although many resources are available to the students, some made recommendations for improvements.

FIG member, Fred: I wish my professors would encourage us to come to office hours a little more. I mean, they don't really encourage or discourage us one way or the other.

Academic interactions

Interactions with faculty, staff, and peers had an effect on how participants perceived their academic achievement. Most participants stated that they had very little or no contact with faculty outside of class, but two FIG students stated that they had very frequent interaction with faculty during office hours or after class. Based on their first meeting with their academic advisor, most students felt confident that they would have continued interaction with their academic advisor in planning their future at the institution. Whereas non-FIG students rarely spoke with peers about academic classes, we found that FIG students often mentioned regularly talking to their peers about classes as well as studying in groups with members of the FIG to complete class assignments or study for tests.

FIG member, Kelly: It's impossible not to talk about classes because the majority of the people that I hang out with are, you know, people in my FIG. We have pretty much the same classes and usually talk about those.

Social Adjustment

The second category researched was social adjustment. Four factors were identified in determining the social adjustment of FIG and non-FIG students including 1) perceptions of social adjustment, 2) residence hall living, 3) social interaction, and 4) campus involvement.

Perceptions of social adjustment

Students were asked how they defined social adjustment and what factors were involved in determining this. All of the students had different perceptions of what it meant to be socially adjusted on the college campus, but most felt that any student could fit in because of the diverse student population. This allows all students to find their niche. All of the participants felt that they were socially adjusted and all mentioned factors such as friendly and helpful people on campus and feeling comfortable on their residence hall floor. FIG participants mentioned that being a member in the FIG was a major factor in their social adjustment because they instantly had a peer group to associate

with at the beginning of the school year.

FIG member, Allison: Well, since I didn't know anybody on my floor before I came here, it was good to have an automatic like group of people that I knew on my floor and in my classes. Even though we're not all best friends or anything, it's still nice to have people to, you know, go eat with and sit with in class.

Non-FIG members also felt the sense of community on their residence hall floor, but because of limited interaction outside of the residence hall, it took more time for their level of comfort to equal that of FIG members.

Residence hall living

All participants interviewed were extremely satisfied with their experience in their residence hall. Many stated advantages such as: a central location on campus, a good variety of residents, ability to study in their room or floor lounge, being "homey," and feeling a strong sense of community. Some disadvantages were mentioned such as: absence of a food court, no elevator, desire for more first year students, and the long distance from class buildings. However, overall the participants found that the advantages of living in their residence hall far outweighed the disadvantages. When asked why the participants chose to live in the selected residence hall, most participants mentioned that they had visited the hall, or that the hall was referred to them by previous residents. Four FIG members specifically mentioned that they chose this FIG because they were guaranteed a spot in the selected residence hall.

In order to orient students to campus, the residence hall has an orientation program before the first week of school. All FIG members attended this orientation and felt that they attained valuable information, whereas none of the non-FIG members had attended. In addition, the majority of FIG members have attended residence hall programs this semester such as floor dances, speakers, or workshops, and, though they mentioned being aware of the on-campus programs, none of the non-FIG members have attended these types of activities.

Overall, the majority of the participants felt that there was a sense of community on their floor, and all of them stated that they felt comfortable living on their floor. Many FIG students found that there were distinct groups on the floor, usually between FIG members and non-FIG members. Women acknowledged these groups than the men did. The majority of participants felt that they had a good relationship with their roommate, but a few FIG members stated that they would prefer to live with a non-FIG member.

FIG member, Annie: Sometimes I think it would be nice to live with someone not in the FIG just because we are all together so much. I really like my roommate, but sometimes I just get sick of her because we live together, have most of our classes together, and eat together. You know what I mean?

Social interaction

All of the participants stated that they regularly interacted with other students on their floor. The participants also mentioned that they regularly socialized with students that did not live on their residence hall floor such as high school friends, students they met in class, and friends of friends. Non-FIG members mentioned that their social interaction is primarily with floor residents, and FIG members stated that much of their social interaction was with FIG students not living on their floor.

FIG member, Jordan: If I am studying, I always study with people in the FIG. But when I want to go out, I usually go out with friends from my high school.

Non-FIG member, Jack: When I got here, I really didn't know anyone, so I started hanging out with guys on my floor. They're all pretty cool, and we get along pretty well.

Whether socializing with residents on their floor or not, FIG members mentioned engaging in social activities such as watching TV, going out to eat, watching movies, and going shopping. Interestingly, not one of the FIG members mentioned attending parties or drinking as a primary activity. In contrast, the non-FIG students mentioned drinking and parties as their primary social activity.

Campus involvement

There was a distinct difference between the amount of campus involvement between FIG and non-FIG students. When asked if they were involved in any campus activities or student organizations, the majority of FIG students responded yes, and planned to be more active on campus in the future.

FIG member, Allison: Right now I am in the marching band. I think I want to be in some more clubs or activities, but since it is my first semester, I wanted to see how much time band would take and see what else is out there.

None of the non-FIG members mentioned involvement in any campus activities or had any concrete intentions of increased involvement in the future. Also, none of the non-FIG students had attended any campus wide programs, whereas many FIG members had attended campus lectures and major campus events.

Additional FIG findings

There was some additional information found about the FIG members that was not mentioned in previous findings. When asked why they chose to participate in this FIG, only three students stated that they chose the FIG because of the topic and because they truly desired to be in a FIG. The remaining FIG members mentioned a guaranteed spot in the residence hall, or a guaranteed spot in the introductory English course, or both.

FIG member, Jordan: When I first came here, I was in [name of residence hall], but I really wanted to be in [name of residence hall]. My advisor told me that if I joined this FIG, that I could live here.

Even though the majority of participants did not choose to be in the FIG for its intended purpose of social and academic adjustment, all of the FIG members found the overall experience to be very positive, and they felt that they had reaped those benefits.

FIG member, Jay: I would definitely recommend it to other freshmen coming here next year. Um, I didn't know much about it, and I agreed to get the classes I wanted, but it really has been helpful in terms of meeting people and knowing stuff on campus.

Although a few students felt that they had attained some valuable information from the seminar, all of the respondents were dissatisfied with the seminar class in general. Most felt that the Peer Instructor had little to no impact in assisting with their adjustment during their first semester at the university. All FIG members stated their extreme dissatisfaction with the class, and many even offered suggestions of ways the class could be improved.

FIG member, Fred: I like the fact that we have the same classes and everything, but the actual FIG class seems pretty pointless. I haven't gotten anything out of it.

FIG member, Karen: The Monday night class is totally unproductive. All it is is a hassle and a lot of busy work. It was nice at the beginning to find out about stuff on campus, but I think it should only be an eight week class instead of lasting the whole semester.

Discussion

The purpose for conducting this study was to determine if membership in a FIG had a positive impact on first year college students and their perceptions of personal academic achievement and social adjustment in their first semester of college. The findings of this study indicate that such membership had a positive effect on at least four aspects of the students' academic achievement and at least four aspects of their social adjustments to campus life.

Academic Achievement

In discussing their perceptions of academic achievement, FIG students spoke of setting a specific goal and working to achieve that goal to the best of their abilities. In contrast, non-FIG students defined such achievement strictly as the grades that they earned in their coursework. This implies that FIG members are more concerned with what and how they are learning than what they are earning in their classes. This difference could have developed as a result of the increased congruence

of their coursework. According to Matthews et al. (1996) and Wilcox and delMas (1997), students are more academically successful, persist to greater levels of education, and find their academic experiences more satisfying when their course material is integrated, rather than disjointed. In contrast, according to information gathered during the interviews, non-FIG members focus their perceptions of academic achievement more on the grades that they earn in their coursework rather than the content of what they are learning, as their earned grades are the primary way to tie together courses that are very different in nature.

As far as their study habits were concerned, FIG students seemed to study together more regularly with the members of their FIG than non-FIG members did with most of their classmates. This could be because having FIG members both in classes and in close proximity in the residence halls made it easier for students to talk about class work, share notes, and study together. As a result, FIG members were able to maximize the material that they took away from their classes, as they were able to share their learning with those around them. This ability is important for enhancing academic success while in college. In contrast, non-FIG students did not have such academic support as readily available, and therefore, spent more time studying, studied alone, and had few friends with whom they shared classes.

When talking about academic support, both FIG and non-FIG students felt supported academically, both in the residence hall and on campus. However, FIG and non-FIG students felt supported academically in different ways. The notable differences in their observations stem from their knowledge of campus resources. FIG students consistently seemed more aware of the academic resources available to them on campus than non-FIG students. FIG members attribute this knowledge to the content of their FIG seminar. Again, such findings are consistent with the arguments made by Matthews et al. (1996), and Wilcox and delMas (1997), who asserted that when students participate in learning communities, they are often more aware of and satisfied with the opportunities available on their college campuses.

Finally, FIG students consistently commented that they regularly talked with peers about their class work and studied in groups. As a result, FIG members were able to maximize the material that they took away from their classes, as they were able to share their learning with those around them. In contrast, the non-FIG students did not utilize such peer support, and therefore, spent more time studying and rarely studied in groups.

Social Adjustment

In discussing their perceptions of social adjustment, both FIG and non-FIG students mentioned that the diverse population of the

college allowed students to more easily find their niche on campus. All students mentioned that the friendly and helpful people on campus, as well as the comfort that they experienced in their living environments, helped to foster a strong sense of social adjustment for them, as well as the feeling that they "fit in" on campus. The interesting difference between FIG and non-FIG students, as far as social adjustment is concerned, is that FIG members were able to establish a peer group more quickly than non-FIG students, who took a bit longer to feel a part of the community on their residence hall floors. This finding runs in accordance with the findings of Hill (1985) and Matthews et al. (1996) who asserted that formalized learning communities help to foster social interaction and integration, as well as academic achievement.

As far as residence hall living is concerned, both FIG members and non-FIG members were happy in their residence hall. Interestingly, while FIG members attended their residence hall orientation and residence hall programs more often than non-FIG members, and were therefore more involved in the activities of the hall, more non-FIG members thought of their floors as holistic communities than FIG members (who spoke of cliques and distinct groups of students on the floor). In addition, more FIG students spoke of wanting a more expanded social circle than non-FIG students, as in many cases they lived, ate, studied, and socialized with their FIG peers. While these findings were not mentioned by Hill (1985) and Matthews et al. (1996) as consequences of being a member of a learning community, it is not surprising that students would want to expand their social and academic circles once they establish a level of comfort on campus.

In speaking about their social interactions, FIG members and non-FIG members mentioned that they socialized with residence hall floor and non-floor members, such as high school friends, friends of friends, and classmates. The notable differences between the two groups were the activities in which they participated. FIG students were more likely to watch movies, shop, or dine out, while non-FIG students were more likely to drink or attend parties. These differences, which distinguish the type of students that participate in FIG groups, may speak to the maturity and comfort level of students with themselves and their peers, according to the studies of such students conducted by Matthews et al. (1996) and Wilcox and delMas (1997). In other words, the students who are more likely to participate in FIG groups may have more self-confidence, and therefore, not feel the pressures to drink and attend parties common to many first year college students.

Finally, FIG members and non-FIG members demonstrated a sharp contrast in their involvement in campus life. Most FIG students were highly involved in campus activities, while most non-FIG students were not and did not plan to be in the future. These findings correlate with those of Matthews et al. (1996), Schroeder and Hurst (1996), and

Wilcox and delMas (1997), who all found that participation in learning communities fostered greater levels of campus involvement and satisfaction. Again, this could be due to the self-selection nature of FIGs members and their campus participation.

The findings of this study echo the results of research done by others on the topic of membership in learning communities. That is, learning communities based out of the residence hall, where students spend approximately 70% of their time (Schroeder & Jackson, 1987), have positive effects on freshman students in terms of academic achievement and satisfaction as well as social integration and involvement. For this reason, institutions of higher education would benefit by assessing their learning environments and considering learning community models (Cross, 1988; Smith & Hunter, 1988). As the residence hall is a central environment in the lives of many students, it would be an ideal location for programs that would enhance and foster student development. As this study has shown, this can be achieved by creating learning environments that will promote academic achievement and social integration.

Since the participants in our research were involved on a voluntary basis, future research on membership in learning communities may want to focus on a wider breadth of students, and thus, gain a more widespread depiction of the learning community experience. Also, due to the negative reactions of students to the PI seminar, future research could consider the format and content of the class to provide more useful instruction for participants. In addition, a longitudinal study would allow researchers the opportunity to view the impact of such membership on the total college experience, rather than that of the first semester of the first year. Finally, future research is needed on the topic of minority student participation in learning communities. The results of such studies could and most likely will impact the means through which college and university faculty members and administrators respond to the educational and interpersonal needs of all of their students.

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FACTORS INFLUENCING STUDENT COLLEGE CHOICE BETWEEN IN-STATE AND OUT-OF-STATE STUDENTS

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Student enrollment decisions are complex and involve a variety of issues that institutions can study to target prospective students; therefore, colleges and universities are paying greater attention to the factors that influence college choice (Chapman, 1981; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). What factors influence college choice? How do the influences of these factors differ between in-state and out-of-state students? Through the use of a survey instrument, this study explores the actions and attributes of institutions that students find desirable as well as identified populations that institutions can target through recruitment efforts. As a result, several implications for the student affairs profession, particularly marketing and enrollment management units, have been determined.

Introduction

To better address the needs of students, colleges and universities are paying greater attention to the factors that influence college choice (Chapman, 1981; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Student enrollment decisions are complex and involve a variety of issues that institutions can study to target prospective students.

Hossler and Gallagher (1987) present a three-stage model of college choice that is a developmental process of enrollment decisions. The first phase, predisposition, involves the decision to continue with education; search is the information gathering, application, and admission stage; and choice is the final stage when a student makes the decision to enroll. The purpose of this study is to explore the factors that contribute to first-year students' decisions to enroll at a large, public, Research I university in the Midwest. Additionally, the study looks at the influence of location and the differences in the influential factors of in-state students' and out-of-state students' decision to enroll at the institution. The study utilizes a survey instrument that measures selected background characteristics, institutional characteristics, and college recruitment efforts, as well as other factors that may influence the college choice process. The convenience sample consisted of first-year students enrolled at the institution being studied.

This study seeks to answer two research questions: What are the factors that influence college choice? How do the influences of these factors differ between in-state and out-of-state students? This study explores the actions and attributes of institutions that students find desirable as well as identified populations that institutions can target

through recruitment efforts to further influence the choice process. As a result, several implications for the student affairs profession, particularly marketing and enrollment management units, have been determined.

Literature Review

Student college choice is defined as: "a complex, multistage process during which an individual develops aspirations to continue formal education beyond high school, followed later by a decision to attend a specific college, university or institution of advanced vocational training" (Hossler, Braxton, & Coopersmith, 1989, p. 234). College choice is dependent upon an interactive set of factors involving student background characteristics and external influences which include significant persons, institutional characteristics, and communication from institutions (Chapman, 1981; Grace, 1989). As competition for college students becomes more intense for higher education institutions, college choice factors have gained interest as a way to assist marketing and admissions offices identify methods that might influence the decision of prospective students (Grace, 1989; Hossler et al., 1989; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

College Choice Models

Several college choice models view the decision-making process as developmental, moving students from a "broad conception of higher education and the opportunities open to them" (p. 31) to enrollment in a single institution (Dixon & Martin, 1991). Combined models of college choice that attempt to describe the process of student decision-making have been presented in multiple forms with stages ranging between three and seven categories. These models produce overlap in several categories, with the three-stage model identified as a "simplified" version of other models (Hossler et al., 1989). Hossler and Gallagher (1987) proposed a three phase model which has been the framework for many research studies surrounding the student choice process (Dixon & Martin, 1991; Martin & Dixon, 1991; Weiler, 1994). The model begins with the predisposition phase in which students determine whether or not to continue their education beyond high school (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). At this stage, student achievement and ability, level of educational aspiration, parental income, parental education, and parental encouragement are important influences (Chapman, 1981; Hossler et al., 1989). The second phase in which students gather information about institutions, decide to apply to certain schools, and are admitted is called search (Hossler et al., 1989; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). In the final stage of this model, choice, the students decide on a particular college or university to attend. The student choice process is strongly impacted by background characteristics such as ability, parental encouragement, and socioeconomic status (SES) (Hossler et al., 1989). Additionally, institutional characteristics such as financial aid, cost, academic quality, location, and

communication efforts from the college or university are influential in the choice process (Chapman, 1981; Hossler et al., 1989; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

Empirical Research

Methodologies in college choice studies have varied among researchers. Demographic studies, questionnaires, interviews, and instruments designed specifically to measure choice influences are prominent in the available literature. Research studies on college choice have focused on private institutions, public institutions, selective schools, colleges with open admission, differing student ability, religious affiliation, and racial or ethnic influences. With this variety of research, some conclusions have been drawn about influential factors in the choice process.

Student background characteristics

Hossler et al. (1989) and Chapman (1981) identify SES, ability, ethnicity, and parental levels of education as significant correlates of student choice. Past research has shown that gender differences are not significant in the choice process (Galotti & Mark, 1994; Stewart & Post, 1990). A student's SES has been shown to have a strong correlation with decisions in the choice stage, specifically in terms of institution selectivity (Hossler et al., 1989). Ethnicity, conversely, has been shown to have only a moderate influence on the choice process (Hossler et al., 1989). While research has shown that some significant differences may arise surrounding financial concerns in the choice process, overall "it seems that minority students attend [a college or university] for the same reasons that nonminority students attend" (Stewart & Post, 1990, p. 158). Student academic ability also strongly influences choice. Research indicates that higher ability students are often more selective, more autonomous in their decision-making, and have greater self-esteem about their success in institutions (Galotti & Mark, 1994). Parental levels of education relate moderately to choice and are shown to be more influential than race or gender among college choice variables; thus, influencing students to choose more selective or private institutions (Hossler et al., 1989). This level of influence may be related to the "significant positive correlation between parental education and family income" (Galotti & Mark, 1994, p. 605).

Influence of significant persons

In the choice stage, the influence of friends and family is important (Chapman, 1981). Parental encouragement is a strong correlate of college choice and often reflects student choices of four-year and more selective institutions (Hossler et al., 1989). Guidance counselors, coaches, teachers, and other adults have some influence on student choice, and friends, classmates, and peers are shown to impact a student's enrollment decision (Chapman, 1981; Galotti & Mark, 1994). Additionally,

research by Kellaris and Kellaris (1988) indicates that personal recommendations from respected individuals are important factors in the enrollment decision.

Institutional characteristics

Cost, financial aid, location, and academic quality are very influential in the student choice process (Chapman, 1981; Hossler et al., 1989). Costs and financial aid are often cited as considerations for student enrollment decisions. These considerations are more pressing concerns for students from underrepresented populations and a lower SES status (Stewart & Post, 1990); although in general, students "tend to enroll at the school with the lowest net costs" (Coccarri & Javalgi, 1995, p. 30). Location also has a moderate influence in choice with a majority of students attending institutions close to home (Chapman, 1981; Kellaris & Kellaris, 1988). Weiler (1994) noted that students' choice is based primarily on the "fit" with a desired institution, therefore, the location of an institution is often related to other institutional characteristics at which the student is looking (p. 644). Finally, academic quality is one of the characteristics that influences student choice. The academic programs of institutions are related to student perceptions of success after graduation and often have the largest influence on the choice stage (Chapman, 1981; Hossler et al., 1989). Academic quality is such a strong factor that it can impact other choice determinants. For example, if a student perceives an institution to be strong academically, then location can become a smaller part of their decision.

College recruitment efforts

College recruitment efforts are actions of the institution to communicate with students including campus visits, brochures and other written materials, telemarketing, and contact with admissions personnel or other university representatives (Chapman, 1981; Kellaris & Kellaris, 1988). Kealy and Rockel (1987) asserted that "there is an indirect but important link between college recruitment efforts and a student's college choice" (p. 701). The growing use of marketing approaches by institutions of higher education is a reflection of increased competitiveness for students (Chapman, 1981). Students note recruitment efforts by the institution as very influential in their choice process (Hossler et al., 1989). Galotti and Mark (1994) discovered that marketing materials are the most often consulted source of information with the exception of parents and friends. "The campus visit ranks first in perceived importance" and assists students in developing their impression of the institution which is extremely important in the choice process (Kellaris & Kellaris, 1988, p. 191).

Student college choice is a complex process that is comprised of a variety of factors (Dixon & Martin, 1991; Hossler et al., 1989). Hossler and Gallagher's (1987) model is a useful tool for understanding the stages of college choice. Problematic to the study of college choice is the

influence of individual student desires and characteristics which are not always prescribed into models of choice (Weiler, 1994). However, the conceptual models of college choice have allowed researchers to examine general factors that influence student enrollment decisions. Research seems to indicate that student background characteristics and external influences (including significant persons, institutional characteristics, and college recruitment efforts) are influential in student college choice (Chapman, 1981; Dixon & Martin, 1991; Galotti & Mark, 1994; Hossler et al., 1989; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). As competition for students continues to rise, further exploration into the choice process is necessary and can assist institutions in shaping their marketing and admissions strategies to meet student choice needs (Chapman, 1981; Hossler et al., 1989).

Methodology

Sample

This study was conducted at a large, public, residential, Research I institution in the Midwest. Approximately 30-35% of the student body, predominantly first-year students, resides in 10 residence halls. A convenience sample of 120 first-year students was used. The respondents were 35% male and 65% female, of which 96.7% were Caucasian, 1.7% African American, 0.8% Asian American and 0.8% Hispanic. Due to the demographic concentration of first-year students residing on campus, the sample was taken from various floors at a single residence hall. Smith Quadrangle (a pseudonym) was chosen because of the number of in-state and out-of-state students in residence. Smith houses approximately 1,400 students, over 90% of which are first-year students. This quadrangle has a high level of demand among entering first-year students, especially with out-of-state students from the East Coast and Greater Chicago area. Time constraints and the inaccessibility of university records required a convenience sample for this study. An application for human subjects approval was submitted and approved in order to insure that the methods in this research study adhered to the guidelines set forth by the institution studied.

Procedures

Participants in this study were given a survey that measured factors influencing student college choice. Likert scale items, multiple choice items, and open-ended questions for follow-up comprised the majority of the instrument. For Likert items, a scale of five to one was provided to allow respondents to determine the level of agreement or importance regarding an individual statement. A selection of five represented strong agreement or an important factor in college choice, while a selection of one represented strong disagreement or a low level of importance. The survey was used to examine: student background

characteristics, the influence of significant persons, institutional characteristics, college recruitment efforts and their impact on student choice. Further comparisons between in-state and out-of-state students were drawn.

The survey instrument was pre-tested by 10 students, demographically representative of the final sample population. The pretest was used to determine clarity, and the respondents' understanding of the instrument. The instrument was distributed to residents of various floors at a single residence hall. Each floor was surveyed separately at meetings coordinated by a student-staff member in Smith Quadrangle. At each meeting, procedural directions for completing the survey instrument were given followed by an opportunity for students to complete the survey individually. Students were informed of the confidentiality of their responses to the instrument, given contact information should questions regarding their participation arise, and allowed an opportunity to ask questions about the instrument. Additionally, students were notified that their participation in this study was voluntary. Upon completion, the researchers collected the surveys. The survey results were entered into Microsoft Excel databases and placed in the Statistical Package for Social Sciences program to compute a more sophisticated analysis. The measures of central tendency helped narrow the areas of inquiry through scores of unusual variance. Data were analyzed using independent t-tests at the $p < .05$ level.

Limitations

First, a convenience sample was taken from a single residence hall. The use of this convenience sample from one residence hall at one university prohibits the overall generalizability of results to other institutions. Second, the sample was predominantly (96.7%) Caucasian. This limited any insight to be gained concerning the college choice process for students of color. Third, a large percentage (72%) of the population was reportedly from households with income levels of \$80,000 or above. The low number of respondents from lower income levels and underrepresented groups may have skewed the results on questions related to financial matters, such as availability of financial aid and cost of tuition.

The high number of business students (47%) also created a limitation. This number may have influenced results regarding "Academic Quality", degree attainment expectations, and "Job Opportunities for Graduates." A final limitation concerned the instrument's ability to measure all factors that influence college choice. Weiler (1994) contended that the influence of individual student desires and characteristics were not always prescribed into models of choice. The survey used in this study could not address all of the factors that may influence a student's decision to enroll at a particular institution. The research team

wished to include the impacts of marketing efforts on the college choice process in the study, however, the body of literature available was not adequate to support and frame the research.

Results

Student Background Characteristics

Student background characteristic results coincided with Astin's (1993) assertions that out-of-state students attending higher education institutions have parents with higher income levels, more educated parents, higher educational aspirations, and higher academic achievement.

Parental income

In-state students' average parental income placed one income bracket lower than out-of-state students did; however, they received less financial aid than out-of-state students. Approximately 62% of in-state students and 80% of out-of-state students reported parental incomes of \$80,000 or above, which placed 72% of the overall sample in the highest two brackets. This is demonstrated in Table 1.

Parental education

Parental education levels were placed higher for out-of-state students. For mother's education, in-state students averaged lower attainment rates than out-of-state students ($M=0.72$, $SD=.83$, $M=1.32$, $SD=1.11$, respectively). Mothers of in-state students did not average attaining a Bachelor's degree, while out-of-state students' mothers averaged attaining at least a Bachelor's degree. The means of in-state students' mothers' attained education level were found to be significantly lower than that of out-of-state's ($\alpha=.002$, $p<.05$). In-state students responded that 52% of their mothers had attained only a high school degree as compared to 26% for out-of-state students. No mothers of in-state students attained a professional or doctorate level degree (e.g. Ph.D. or Ed.D.), while 11% of out-of-state mothers had achieved this level. The graphic representation in Table 2 illustrates the absence of high-level degree attainment for in-state mothers, as compared to the majority of degrees at the high school level.

For father's education, in-state students again reported lower levels of degree attainment than out-of-state students ($M=1.26$, $SD=1.32$, $M=1.84$, $SD=1.09$, respectively). An independent t-test found in-state students' fathers' educational attainment level means to be significantly lower than that of out-of-state students' ($\alpha=.011$, $p<.05$). In-state students responded that 39% of their fathers had attained only a high school degree as compared to .01% for out-of-state students. Only 13% of fathers of in-state students attained a professional or doctorate level degree as compared with 23% of out-of-state fathers. A graphical display of the results, as illustrated in Table 2, shows the disparity among in-state students' parental education levels.

Degree attainment

In-state students scored higher on the level of degree attainment aspirations than out-of-state students ($M=1.02$, $SD=.74$; $M=1.11$, $SD=.77$, respectively). Both groups expected to attain at least a Bachelor's degree, which is reflected by the median falling within the Master's degree range. Even though their parents attained such degrees at significantly lower rates, in-state students aspired to professional and doctorate degrees with an equal or higher frequency than out-of-state students. The median of this item fell squarely within the master's degree range.

Grade point average (GPA)

In-state students reported lower average GPAs during high school than out-of-state students ($M=0.84$, $SD=0.95$; $M=0.72$, $SD=.68$, respectively). Both of these averages translated to an "A" (3.5-4.0) average. Even though the scores were high, careful examination showed that 79% of in-state students reported grades in the two highest levels as compared to 91% of the out-of-state students.

Goals and Aspirations

Participants answered six questions about their personal academic goals and aspirations. Out-of-state students averaged slightly higher scores. The high mean is reflected in Table 1 with the other Likert scale ratings.

Influence of Significant Persons

Participants answered eight questions as to the influence of significant persons. Regarding the overall influence of significant persons, in-state students averaged higher scores than out-of-state students. When asked to respond to, "Other members of my immediate family attend or have attended [the institution]," comparing the means ($M=2.29$, $SD=1.82$; $M=1.52$, $SD=1.33$, respectively) was found to be statistically significant ($\alpha=.009$, $p<.05$). The higher scores from in-state students in this section signified a greater effect on the college choice process from the influence of significant persons than for their out-of-state counterparts as illustrated in Table 1.

Institutional Characteristics

Reputation

Participants answered six items regarding the institutional reputation and an additional item, "The fraternity and sorority system at [the institution] was an important factor in my decision to attend [the institution]." This item regarding the fraternity and sorority system was found to be significant ($\alpha=.000$, $p<.05$) as a comparison between the two groups. In-state students averaged significantly lower scores than out-of-state students ($M=1.79$, $SD=1.20$; $M=2.67$, $SD=1.40$, respectively) as shown in Table 1.

Importance of factors in college choice

Thirteen questions were used to determine the importance that different institutional characteristics played in the college choice process. Students were asked to rank twelve items from very high to very low importance: "Location, proximity to or from hometown," "Access to Faculty," "Diversity of the Student Body," "Recruitment Activities," "Cost of Tuition," "Variety of Majors," "Availability of Financial Aid," "Prestige of Degree," "Job Opportunities for Graduates," "Academic Quality," "Size of the Institution," and "Intercollegiate Athletics." The last question in this section asked the students to choose the two most important factors from the ranking items listed above. The four highest ranking factors for in-state and out-of-state students (as measured by a rating of 5 on the survey) were 1) "Academic Quality," 79% in-state, 68% out-of-state; 2) "Job Opportunities for Graduates," 59% in-state, 55% out-of-state; 3) "Prestige of Degree," 57% in-state, 52% out-of-state; and 4) "Variety of Majors" 46% in-state, 55% out-of state.

Ranked as one of the least important factors, an independent t-test indicated statistical significance for "Cost of Tuition." The mean of in-state students were much lower than those of out-of-state students, showing cost of tuition was less important for in-state students ($M=2.98$, $SD=1.48$; $M=3.80$, $SD=1.26$, respectively).

College Recruitment Efforts

Students answered seven questions regarding recruitment efforts by the institution. An independent t-test revealed statistical significance between in-state and out-of-state students for "A campus visit was important in my decision to attend [the institution]." In-state students averaged nearly a full quality point lower than that of out-of-state students ($M=2.98$, $SD=1.48$; $M=3.80$, $SD=1.26$, respectively).

Campus visit

Students were asked whether they visited the campus during their college choice process, how they visited, and what they did and did not like about the visit. An independent t-test for "Recruitment Activities" found statistical significance ($\alpha=.007$, $p<.05$) between the in-state and out-of-state means ($M=3.11$, $SD=1.15$; $M=3.65$, $SD=1.00$, respectively). Notably, 95% of out-of-state students and 93% of in-state students made a campus visit. Based on averages, 47% of out-of-state students visited through an admissions sponsored visitor program as compared with 41% of in-state students. In-state students reported visiting 31% of the time because of friends, while only 23% of out-of-state students visited because of friends. These percentages are represented graphically in Table 3. The aesthetics of the campus were overwhelmingly mentioned as an aspect that the students liked most about their campus visit. Both in-state and out-of state students mentioned aesthetics on approximately 63% of the surveys. Residence halls and food were frequently mentioned as aspects liked least.

Discussion and Implications

The results of this study demonstrate that many factors are influential in the decision-making process of both in-state and out-of-state students. The following discussion examines the results; draws conclusions from those results; and provides suggestions for various campus units. The implications mentioned throughout the discussion center around college recruitment efforts, enrollment management efforts, and forms of information produced by areas such as marketing services.

Student Background Characteristics

There is a great disparity among the average parental income levels between in-state and out-of-state students. Although, there are in-state students in some categories with higher incomes, the means show much higher income levels overall for out-of-state students. In fact, there were no out-of-state students in the lowest income bracket (below \$20,000) and less than 10 in the second two (\$20,000-\$39,999; \$40,000-\$49,999). This difference impacts mobility in terms of visits to and enrollment in the institution. There is greater mobility for out-of-state students to enroll in out-of-state institutions because they have the economic means and resources. (Astin, 1993; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). The results of educational achievement, as measured by high school GPA, also impact mobility. Out-of-state students averaged higher GPAs than in-state students; thus, giving the out-of-state students fewer restrictions and more selectivity in choosing an institution (Galotti & Mark, 1994).

When compared with out-of-state students, in-state students' goals and aspirations ranked slightly higher in terms of degree attainment. These results were surprising as the researchers expected out-of-state students to have higher degree attainment aspirations based on previous research. Hossler et al. (1989) also asserted that out-of-state students tend to have higher degree aspirations, because on average they come from higher income levels and their parents have higher levels of education. The overall results on this item may possibly be attributed to the potential misunderstanding of what a professional degree is, as some professional degrees may be viewed as equal to or offered in conjunction with bachelor's degrees (e.g. teachers certifications, R.N., etc.).

Institutional Characteristics

The results in the institutional characteristics section clearly show that "Academic Quality" is ranked highest by both groups of students. The results of out-of-state student rankings substantiate previous research, which states that academic quality is consistently ranked first among other institutional characteristics (Hossler et al., 1989). Surprisingly, in-state students also ranked academic quality as the

number one institutional characteristic, rather than issues of tuition and availability of financial aid, which are typically ranked highest by this group (Hossler et al., 1989). This is likely due to the number of high-income level students in our overall sample. It is worth reiterating that out-of-state students ranked cost of tuition just slightly above a three in importance, while in-state students ranked the same characteristics at almost a four, making the difference between the two statistically significant ($p < .05$). Cost of tuition received the lowest ranking of all 12 factors for the out-of-state students.

Another significant result is that the third highest ranking overall factor for both groups was job opportunities for graduates. This is important information for admissions and academic departments in recruiting prospective students. When selecting a college or university, students look at schools and assess the job placement rates, or at least look closely at the kinds of opportunities the institution may afford them in the job market after graduation.

The category, issues of reputation, consistently ranked the highest for both groups of students in the three choice stage categories measured: institutional characteristics, influence of significant persons, and college recruitment efforts. Along with the high rankings given by both groups of students for "Academic Quality" and "Prestige of Degree," these results show the importance students' place on the reputation and prestige of the institution as a whole. Enrollment management and marketing areas can use this data when assessing strategies for recruitment and retention.

As mentioned in the results section, there is statistical significance in the rankings of the importance of the fraternity and sorority system at the institution. Out-of-state students ranked this item more favorably than their counterparts. This may be a point for further analysis in Smith Quadrangle. Although out-of-state students ranked the importance of the fraternity and sorority system higher than in-state students, this factor still was ranked in the lower two quartiles for both groups.

Out-of-state students are shown to be more confident in their choice overall, and what they will accomplish in the future. This confidence is shown by the difference in rankings by out-of-state students on the following two statements: "If I could go to school anywhere I applied, I would still attend [the institution]," and "I am attending [the institution] while I figure out what I really want to do with my life."

Influence of Significant Persons

The category, influence of significant persons, ranked lower than issues surrounding reputation of the institution for in-state students. However, their visitation patterns suggest they underestimate the influence of significant persons in their college choice. More than half of

in-state student visits are with family or friends. The number of questions pertaining to others that attended the institution show that out-of-state students rank the influence of significant persons lower than any other Likert scale grouping. This may be attributed to out-of-state students' lack of familiarity with the institution. These students often do not have the connection of family tradition or friends at the institution. Chapman (1981) and Hossler et al. (1989) speak to the influence of parental modeling, which encourages students to attend more selective and four-year institutions.

College Recruitment Efforts

The results of the college recruitment efforts section illustrates several topics worth mentioning. First is the low importance level of the video for both in-state and out-of-state student groups. The results however, were slightly more positive when asked if students gathered important information through the World Wide Web. As the internet grows in its use as a source for college information gathering, institutions should consider the development of an interactive CD-ROM, which would allow students to access specific web pages directly. Enrollment management services may want to evaluate the cost benefit ratio of any new video or CD-ROM project for the future.

Another point of interest for enrollment management or marketing staffs is the importance of printed materials in the choice process, especially for out-of-state students. Both groups of students responded positively to the item, "The brochures, view books, letters, and printed materials I received were important in deciding to come to [the institution]." More important is the high level of agreement with the statement, "Compared with other institutions I was considering, I received all the information needed to make a decision to attend [the institution] in a timely fashion." This speaks positively to the institution's direct marketing efforts. This also suggests that printed materials continue to make more of an impact on choice, in spite of the multimedia resources available. Out-of-state students ranked the importance of the campus visit in their decision-making process significantly higher than in-state students, as stated in the results section. This disparity is most likely explained in the context of familiarity. Out-of-state students are less likely to be familiar with the institution and the region. The number of students who visit the campus, 93% for in-state and 95% for out-of-state, supports the research stating the importance of a campus visit in the college choice process (Kellaris & Kellaris, 1988).

With more than 50% of in-state students visiting the campus with friends or family, college recruitment areas should introduce new or strengthen existing programs which facilitate this form of campus visits. Such programs may include: sibling visitation weekends, host programs, and other activities on campus that provide visitation opportunities for

high school- aged friends of current students, especially those targeted at current first-year students. These visits also aid in the transfer of information about the institution to prospective students.

Conclusion

Despite its limitations, this research should provide enrollment management and marketing divisions useful information regarding the factors that influence college choice. Institutions can focus recruitment efforts on those factors that appeal to both populations, but train admissions personnel to recognize the differences between in-state and out-of-state student preferences. This effort leads to a more successful recruiting effort; meeting the needs and interests of prospective students, while allowing them to make an informed choice regarding their entrance into an institution of higher education.

Table 1. Frequencies and Means of Variables between In-State and Out-of-State Students

Variables	In-State Students	Out-of-State Students
	Mean/Freq.	Mean/Freq.
Parental Income		
Below \$20,000	1	0
\$20,000-\$39,999	3	1
\$40,000-\$59,999	2	5
\$60,000-\$79,999	11	5
\$80,000-\$99,999	7	10
\$100,00 or Above	21	33
Educational Achievement by GPA		
C (1.5-1.99)	1	0
B-/C+ (2.0-2.49)	2	1
B (2.5-2.99)	9	5
A-/B+ (3.0-3.49)	9	33
A (4.0-3.5)	25	25
Likert-type Scale Ratings		
Reputation	3.50	3.64
Greek Importance**	1.79*	2.67*
Goals and Aspirations	3.95	3.99
Influence of Significant Persons	2.68	2.40
Family Attendance Tradition***	2.29*	1.52*
Information Gathering/Recruitment	2.70	3.11

* $p < .05$, ** $\alpha = .009$, *** $\alpha = .000$

Table 2. Frequencies and T-test Results of In-State and Out-of-State Students

Variables	In-State Students	Out-of-State Students
	Freq.	Freq.
Parental Levels of Education		
Mother**		
High School	28*	16*
Bachelor's Degree	13*	21*
Master's Degree	18*	13*
Professional	0*	3*
Doctorate	0*	4*
Father***		
High School	21*	4*
Bachelor's Degree	11*	23*
Master's Degree	15*	21*
Professional	2*	7*
Doctorate	5*	7*

* $p < .05$, ** $\alpha = .002$, *** $\alpha = .011$

Table 3. Percentages of Visit Types Within Residency Groups

Variables	In-State Students	Out-of-State Students
Visit Type		
Admissions Sponsored	41%	47%
Family	22%	19%
Friends	31%	23%
Other	6%	11%

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ASIAN WOMEN AND ACADEMIC CONFIDENCE

Robert W. Andrews, Jennifer Herman, Jessica L. Osit

Through qualitative analysis, this study attempts to understand the perceived academic confidence among Asian, international, female, university students. Results revealed that perceived academic confidence is relatively high; however, multiple barriers are found to create unique challenges for social integration on campus, thus influencing the college experience for this population. Finally, implications for student affairs practitioners are discussed.

Introduction

Institutions of higher education are a part of the growing global community in which cross-cultural exchange has become commonplace. With increasing numbers of international students flooding American colleges and universities to pursue their education (Hayes & Lin, 1994), it has become imperative for these institutions to explore and understand the multiple stressors that exist in this population's experience (Adelman, 1988; Boyer & Sedlacek, 1988; Cross, 1995; Hayes & Lin, 1994; Lin & Yi, 1997). International students have unique adjustment and transition issues that impact their academic confidence and achievement (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1988; Hayes & Lin, 1994; Lin & Yi, 1997). The examination of international students from South and East Asian nations is particularly critical since they constitute approximately one-half of all international students in the United States (Lin & Yi, 1997). Perceived academic confidence has been shown to be a strong predictor of academic persistence and achievement, thus, it is essential to explore these perceptions among Asian international students in order to improve strategies to help them persist and succeed (Bennett & Okinaka, 1990; Boyer & Sedlacek, 1988; House, 1992; House & Prion, 1998; Smedley, Myers & Harrell, 1993).

This qualitative study examines the perceptions of academic confidence among female, Asian, international students at a large, Midwestern, public, Research I institution. The authors explore three research questions:

- 1) Does having an Asian international and female identity influence perceived academic confidence?
- 2) What are the cultural barriers and social adjustments involved in these students' transition to higher education in the United States?
- 3) What role do campus environments play in the support or development of their academic confidence?

Specifically considered are the perceived effects that an international center, residence halls, and the classroom experience have on this confidence.

Literature Review

Academic Confidence

According to House (1992), academic self-concept refers to a "student's perception of his or her academic abilities" and is influenced by the experiences that students have within the context of campus (p. 5). Recent studies have linked positive academic self-confidence and students' expectations for performance to college persistence (House, 1992; House & Prion, 1998). House (1992) found that student-expectation of grade-performance was significant in determining actual grades, this highlights the impact self-confidence can have on student achievement (see also House & Prion, 1998). When students experience conflict between perceived ability and actual achievement, stress can be the result (Smedley, et al., 1993).

Boyer and Sedlacek (1988) found that international students succeed at a higher rate when they demonstrate high academic confidence and can benefit from a strong support person. Moreover, research has found that Asian students who exhibit higher levels of academic confidence can cope more readily with the social demands of the college environment (Fuerters & Sedlacek, 1994). In sum, academic confidence plays a critical role in determining a positive college experience, both academically and socially for Asian international students.

Gender Influences on Academic Ability and Self-confidence

Despite the fact that women now attend college at a higher rate than men, research has consistently indicated that women express lower levels of academic confidence (Frieze & Hanusa, 1984, as cited in Astin & Sax, 1996). Women also tend to be modest when determining academic performance expectations (Daubman, Heatherington, & Aln, 1992). Women in college who perceive gender bias report lower expectations in their ability to be successful in their education (Ancis & Phillips, 1996). "Female international students place a greater emphasis on their academic concerns [and] question their self-efficacy [more]... than do men" (Lee, Abd-ella, & Burks, 1981; Manese, et al., 1988, as cited in Sheehan & Pearson, 1995). Despite Hayes and Lin (1994) found that female international students are more likely to utilize support services and seem to have a superior understanding of the support opportunities on campus. However, another study found that Asian women students were more likely to be dissatisfied with the university's support (Wang, Sedlacek, & Westbrook, 1992).

Asian International Student Adjustment Issues

Moving to another country results in the tendency for many international students to lose the shared identity that comes from being with family and peers, to feel less confident, and to become highly stressed (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Sheehan & Pearson, 1995). For these reasons, Zhang & Rentz (1996) found Asian students to be at particular risk for social adjustment issues. Adelman (1988) argues that the ability to cope with cultural change is linked to the social landscape and environment. The more that an international student's home culture is unlike American culture, the more difficult time she or he will have adapting to the American college or university environment (Surdam & Collins, 1984). These cultural mismatches result in stress, depression, frustration, fear, and pessimism among many international students (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Zhang & Rentz, 1996). The resulting experience is characterized by many as "culture shock" (Adelman, 1998; Cross, 1995).

This stress reaction to change acts as a "physical and psychological disorientation" which can undermine an international student's sense of mastery and self-esteem (Adelman, 1998). As a result of the sense of loss and tension that accompanies this transition, international students often experience a diminished sense of confidence (Hayes & Lin, 1994). Consequently, as reported by several researchers, academic success and persistence tend to be negatively correlated with slow adjustment to the university environment (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1988; Schram & Lauver, 1988).

Many academic problems experienced by international students are directly related to their efforts to adjust to the new environment both inside and outside the classroom (Hayes & Lin, 1994). Asian students are often misunderstood in the classroom environment because they fail to participate or share contradictory opinions, resulting in part from the typically Asian emphasis on harmony and respect for authorities (Lin & Yi, 1997; Selvadurai, 1992). Adjustment to American instructional style can be understandably slow for Asian students, since they are not accustomed to the discussion format (Selvadurai, 1992; Sheehan & Pearson, 1995). It is interesting to note that Yan and Gaier (1994) also found that East Asian students judged effort to be more important than ability in the determination of academic success and failure, whereas American students placed more emphasis on ability.

Most studies conclude that English language skills are a key "ingredient to success in college for international students" (Aper & Currey, 1996, p. 41). Research indicates that language proficiency is the most frequently encountered barrier to academic success for international students, despite the fact that most international students are required to pass standardized English-proficiency examinations (Selvadurai, 1992). Sheehan and Pearson (1995) noted that a lack of English proficiency was particularly prevalent among students from

Asia, as a result of fewer opportunities to practice English in their home countries. Many Asian students have difficulty articulating their knowledge in essays and research papers and often find test instructions difficult to comprehend because of insufficient English language skills (Lin & Yi, 1997). Language barriers often cause these students to be perceived as shy or passive when, in reality, they may be having a difficult time understanding questions, exams, and discussion expectations (Sheehan & Pearson, 1995). In addition to complicating academic demands, perceived English language inadequacies can also prevent students from forging social relationships (Hayes & Lin, 1994, Heikenheimo & Shute, 1986).

International students often develop a sense of alienation from the host environment due to feeling excluded based upon their alien immigration status (Selvadurai, 1992). A lack of understanding of the host country's academic norms or undergraduate culture also contributes to a sense of isolation in the academic setting (Lin & Yi, 1997). Heikenheimo & Shute (1986) found that international students who typically do not interact with host-nationals report more problems related to cultural, academic, and social adjustments.

Racial discrimination, language barriers, and dietary changes (Lin & Yi, 1997), which can lead to misunderstanding and loneliness also contribute to stress among international students. Smedley, et al. (1993) reported pressures related to minority status may exacerbate low academic confidence, as negative campus climate for ethnic minorities fosters feelings of social alienation and dissatisfaction. Feelings of isolation in both social and academic spheres have negative implications for international students' self-esteem and academic confidence (Heikenheimo & Shute, 1986; Lin & Yi, 1997). Despite these adjustment issues, Boyer & Sedlacek (1988) indicate that international students have been found to have superior academic skills and high educational goals. Support networks seem to be the best means to mitigate the effects of a difficult transition for international students.

Social Support Networks and Program Interventions

For international students, social webs operate as means to promote home values, reaffirm common experiences, care for homesickness, and work through adjustment issues (Adelman, 1988; Cross, 1995; Lin & Yi, 1997). Wan, Chupman, and Briggs, (1992) found that interventions to improve students' perceived English skills and social support networks proved the most promising in academic stress reduction. Cross (1990) found that "enclaves of co-nationals are common among Asian student groups in the US; they provide the student with friendships, a reference group, and support for his or her cultural identity and values" (p. 676). (A "co-national" is someone who shares the national origin of the individual(s) being referred to.) Adelman (1988) argued

that, in addition to the security it fosters outside the academic sphere, social support functions to bolster academic confidence and perceptions of control.

Boyer and Sedlacek (1988) reported that a variety of services such as counseling, mentoring programs, and educational workshops help persistence. Friendship networks, international student clubs, international coffee hours, social events (Selvadurai, 1992) and workshops on study skills or taxes are suggested as useful means to facilitate the involvement of international students and their interaction with American students (Hayes & Lin, 1994; Selvadurai, 1992). Student groups are seen as informal "self-help" groups, where common issues can be discussed and support can be given (Adelman, 1988).

This study attempts to understand the intersection of the identity of being female, Asian, and a non-citizen with a student's academic self-concept, and attempts to determine the role that these students perceive certain campus environments to play in their academic confidence. Based on previous research findings, the authors hypothesize:

- 1) Gender and ethnic identity will influence academic confidence.
- 2) Multiple barriers and social adjustment issues will exist for the participants.
- 3) Select campus environments will foster academic confidence whereas the classroom setting will mitigate such feelings.

The authors hope that the current study will encourage further investigation into the special needs of female, Asian, international students and, consequently, improve the quality of their college experience in the United States.

Method

Participants

The sample was composed of self-selected undergraduate (six) and graduate (five) female, Asian, international, degree-seeking students, for a total of 11 participants. Potential participants were identified and solicited through four channels:

- 1) the Office of International Student Services
- 2) international student groups
- 3) a residence hall which houses a high concentration of international students
- 4) graduate students in the School of Education

Undergraduate and graduate students from South and East Asia were included in the sample based on convenience and campus demographics. The participants' native languages included Japanese, Chinese, Indonesian, Mandarin Chinese, Taiwanese, Korean, Malay and English. The average age of these students was 24 (mode= 21). A diverse group

of academic majors was reported in the study, permitting a wide range of perspectives in regards to the classroom setting and curricular demands.

Procedure

The participants were interviewed on two separate occasions for a period of 30-45 minutes each. The interviews were conducted by a team of two researchers and were audiotaped. A broad range of topics including English language skills, adjustment and coping strategies, academic ability and confidence, perceptions of identity, support networks, and perceptions of campus environments were explored in the interviews. The interviews collected demographic information and inquiries into students' perceptions about previous experiences before entering the college environment. In addition, participants were asked specific questions about their perceptions of the international center, residence halls, and the classroom experience at the institution studied. Pseudonyms were used in the findings to protect the identity of the participants.

In order to best assure that the interview questions would be understood by a population which may not speak English as a native language, the researchers utilized a certified English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) instructor as a consultant in the construction of the interview instruments.

Institutional Environments

The International Center serves a number of social and administrative functions. The student's first experience with the international center is upon initial arrival to the campus. All students must participate in a mandatory international student orientation. Throughout the year, a number of other informational sessions are held on such subjects as study skills, tax preparation, and other special topics.

The residence hall system at this university consists of 10 residence centers which predominantly house undergraduate students. Housing is an option for students throughout their undergraduate career, but is not guaranteed. The population of each center ranges from 600-1300 students, and is comprised mostly of freshmen living in single-sex communities and floors.

The classroom environment at the institution varies in class size, gender distribution, and faculty-student contact. Undergraduate students frequently attend large lecture-style classes whereas graduate students study predominantly in a small, discussion-format class environment.

Limitations

Due to the nature, size, scope, and duration of the study, a number of limitations arose. Despite the rich and descriptive perspec-

tives presented, the small size of the sample precluded a comprehensive analysis. Furthermore, composition of the sample did not capture the full diversity of experiences present on the Asian continent.

Ideally, the sample would have included a more even distribution of participants by class year. Since development has been shown to occur between college entrance and graduation (Astin, 1993), it was difficult to control for the attitudes and perceptions of academic confidence which these students may have brought to their experience upon matriculation. Consequently, this limited the degree to which the researchers were able to determine how college environments affected these students' academic confidence. The study would have been greatly enhanced had it been conducted on a longitudinal basis, following students from entry to graduation. Moreover, the strict criteria under which graduate students are admitted to the university may also indicate higher academic confidence among these participants.

The self-selecting nature of the participant pool may have similarly affected the results. The participants' voluntary participation in the study may, in itself, have indicated high levels of confidence. Those students with low academic confidence, poorer English language skills, or less-assertive personalities may have been reluctant to open themselves to such a high level of self-disclosure.

The composition of the research team may have been a particularly strong factor in inhibiting participants' self-disclosure. Since all researchers are White, U.S. citizens, and one of the researchers is male, the dynamic this may have created could have affected the nature of participants' responses.

Results

Through the data analysis, six emergent themes were found critical to understanding the experiences of Asian, international women on campus. The following themes were discovered in 22 interviews: 1) the academically self-confident student vs. the "good" student, 2) the classroom (participation and professor interaction), 3) the language barrier, 4) awareness of stereotypes and differential treatment based upon gender and ethnicity, 5) making American friends, and 6) experiences and perceptions of the international student center and residence halls.

The Academically Self-confident Student vs. the "Good Student"

The average self-reported grade point average of participants was approximated at 3.57 on a 4.0 scale, with a median GPA of 3.68. This high achievement is congruent with the participants' purported confidence in academic work. The majority of women, when asked if they were confident in their academics, asserted that they were indeed confident. Mary, a Singaporean student, explained, "I'm pretty

confident...I think...if I really do have the motivation and I can be hardworking I'm sure I can do well." On the other hand, Rose, a Taiwanese student explained, "I don't think I succeed in my classes. ... Most of the time I feel bad, because I struggle with school work and communication." Rose, in particular, attributed her academic difficulties to her insufficient English language skills. 5 out of the 11 women in the study initially reported a high level of academic confidence.

The espoused confidence of these women became less clear when asked if they were a "good student." About half of the participants said that they were not good students, and many of those same women attributed this to laziness. Hian-Kim, a Malaysian student, explains "[I'm] lazy...time management for me is a big problem. Trying to manage everything...I think I'm like all students— last minute work all of the time." Similarly, Jane, a Taiwanese student, when asked if she was a good student explained, "seriously, no. No. I'm a lazy student." The primary distinguishing factor between reported academic confidence and reported performance seemed to be based upon the difference between belief in ability and actual study practices. Some women who responded affirmatively to the question "Do you think you are a good student?", expressed this belief in tentative terms. For example Chikako, a Japanese student, responded coyly, "Oh? ... I think so." The participants made a clear distinction between academic effort and academic ability.

Some women, felt that being Asian directly affected their academic confidence. Wei-Li explained, *Asians always ask 'did I do something wrong?' first. We always do a self-reflection....Because the professor gave a low grade is that because I'm not good? Because I didn't think of those other kinds of issues like racial discrimination and gender discrimination. Now I ask other people what did you think...because previously I would just stay at home and just be very sad and cry and just try to work hard and which is not very healthy...psychologically.*

Similarly, Chikako stated, "I think I am most successful when I study well, but also when I am mentally happy." Within their discussions of student ability and effort, interactions in the classroom environment were shown to be important to the participants' experiences.

The Classroom: Participation and Professors

Most participants noted a distinction between the classroom participation of Americans compared to that of Asians, citing Americans as more talkative. Amy, a Singaporean student explained, "I think I talk [in the classroom]; I don't talk as much as Americans I think, but I talk." Furthermore, despite the fact that participants found their professors to be approachable, many perceived differential treatment in the classroom. Wei-Li explained, "Sometimes [in class] when Americans say something,

the professor will elaborate and open up questions, but sometimes when I say something, the professor just says 'mm, that's a good idea,' and the class go on. And I don't know if I didn't make the point." Mary stated that her professor "would go all out with American students to like tease them or like being harder on them...but, international students [the professor] just like whiz past...I think they don't want to be controversial." Some students believed that this difference in treatment could be attributed to miscommunication, perceived language barriers, or lack of knowledge of foreign cultures. Chikako explained, "I think sometimes they [professors] are afraid that I wouldn't understand them because of English problem. And sometimes they ask questions about 'in your country...?' so, they look at us differently, but they don't bother me." The theme of English mastery and communication difficulty emerged as a common thread for these students both in and out of the classroom.

The Language Barrier

The majority, 9 out of 11, of the participants spoke English as a second language. In fact, most did not begin speaking English until grade 7 or the age of 13. Mary explained:

Sometimes people don't understand me, that's true... I was in a bank recently and, she didn't quite understand me and she gave me this look, and [I'm]...not very happy with that. But, for the most part, people do try to take the effort to ask me to repeat myself.

Similarly, English language problems were reported to affect classroom participation, paper-writing, self-perceptions, and extra-curricular involvement. Mary reflected, "In our (international student group) committee meetings I will talk like nonstop because I feel comfortable with them...[but] when it comes to other people, especially those who are American, you feel kind of like they won't understand you." Many times other's perceptions of Asian students' ability to speak English translated into stereotypes about all Asian individuals.

Awareness of Stereotypes: The "Hardworking" Student and the "Passive" Woman

The participants were also aware of numerous other stereotypes, held by Americans, regarding Asian students and Asian women. Most participants believed stereotypes described Asian students as quiet, studious, non-aggressive and good at math. Asian women were stereotyped as meek, pure, passive, and sexually submissive. Similarly, Amy explained, "maybe they would think that Asian women are meek, sweet, more passive, more inclined to follow their man, less aggressive because of their culture, the males take care of you..." Several participants noted that many of the stereotypes were also widely held among Asian students themselves, specifically stereotypes about language. Amy related, "the biggest stereotype is that we don't speak English...I feel like I suffer

the same stereotype because I look at Asian and assume that person can't speak good English too; which is really horrible, because I am Asian, you know what I mean?" Stereotypes were just one of the mechanisms by which these students felt they were perceived differently by host-nationals, is someone from the country which hosts the international student. An American is a host-national to a Singaporean when a Singaporean visits/studies in the U.S.. Experiences concerning gender and ethnicity were examined to identify social adjustment and academic difficulty.

Differential treatment

Gender

Most participants believed that men and women in the United States are treated equally. A few suggested that differences may exist, but they had not personally experienced them. Many defended the equality of the United States based on the comparison with stringent gender roles in their home countries. Su-Yung, a Korean student, stated, *correct me if I am not [sic] wrong, but I thought American women are more equal treated, most equally to men compared to any other country ...[But] it's never going to be equal... it's just that Americans are just closest than other countries.*

The vast majority of the women in the study believed that gender did not influence their experience in the United States. In response to a question regarding gender equity, three of the participants believed that women received more positive attention and kindness than men did. Many believed that there was no gender difference, or that they had not thought about this issue at all. Wei-Li stated "when I got in some trouble, I always think the first, in terms of my ethnicity not in terms of gender." However, there were participants who were less certain about the influence, or lack thereof, of gender.

Some women believed that gender might be an influence upon an individual's experience. Amy explained "Well, I don't think so, but it seems like it with all this feminism...but, just like knowing people and seeing how they interact, it's not very obvious." Some thought that men's performances were subject to higher scrutiny. Chikako argued that, "I think sometimes ... they [professors] are more easy?... If I make mistake, it's ok, but if men make mistake they [professors] don't think it's ok." The aforementioned comparison of gender roles in the United States with the participants countries of origin is clear in Su-Yung's explanation,

they [Koreans] think the girls are outsiders, and then the men are insiders...because you are going to marry out. And when you move out your name moves out...so, they always think girls are not yours...That's why they always treat girls differently because they think they are not, never going to be your family.

However, Wei-Li felt that, in the United States, women were treated more poorly than men, noting, "in the Chinese world...women have higher rights than the women here." Clearly, the participants were not in agreement regarding gender issues and experiences. However, the majority of the women agreed that being Asian impacted their academic experiences more than being a woman.

Ethnicity

Many participants spoke of their ethnicity, not their gender, as influential in how others, particularly professors and American peers, interacted with them. Acts of both overt and covert discrimination were experienced by the participants. Chikako said, "I think ... sometimes [professors] do [treat Asian students differently than other international students]. Sometimes I think they are more friendly to Europeans and Africans." Kyungoh, a Korean student, explained, "Because I have some language problems, sometimes people treat me like I'm child or stupid." Similarly, Hian-Kim articulated,

International students from Europe are more accepted, I think. They are more accepted as one of ... the same clique...because of the culture of Europe and America, it is kind of similar, whereas the culture of like Africa or Asia is quite different...I mean people will make fun of Asians who can't speak proper English, but when a person with a French accent or an Italian accent, when they can't speak proper English, they don't make fun of them; in fact, they find it...something extraordinary.

These impressions were further reinforced by some of the participants' experiences with more overt forms of racism and bias. Kyungoh described, "I was jogging the other day and some...students, they were in the car driving, shouted at me 'go back to your country'...I was scared and upset...after that I quit jogging." These feelings of difference and discrimination created a sense of segregation with American students making it difficult to form close relationships with them.

Making American Friends

Participants made fewer American friends than they had expected and desired. Most found the greatest security in relationships with co-nationals. Mary stated,

When I first came to America, I thought, ok, I'll mix with Americans and I get...a feel of American culture and make American friends, you know, but after a year I realized that all my friends were Singaporean or international students...it's just difficult...all of us have preconceived notions of each other, so I guess it's hard for us to be good friends.

Kyungoh stated, "I want more friends, especially American friends, but I don't have a chance to make friends with them...it's difficult." Lastly, many said that friendships with Americans were hindered by a difference in goals and interests; they were particularly uncomfortable at

American students' parties and with the associated presence of alcohol. Amy responded, "Finding friends is not a problem, but finding friends you really want to click with...is a big problem, especially, if you want to mix with Americans."

International Center and Residence Halls: Indifferent and Expensive

Most participants expressed either indifferent treatment at, or negative feelings about, the international center, claiming a lack of services and outreach by staff. Amy, in speaking about her experience at the international student center suggested, "I don't feel like I belong...I never felt the need to go back again." Hian-Kim offered, "They [the international center] sometimes seem 'indifferent' if you don't approach them, they won't approach you...shy students may have difficulty." On the other hand, Chikako stated, "They have very good seminars for international students, like what kind of scholarships you can find in States as international student. So...it was very, very helpful."

In terms of campus living, many chose to leave the residence halls due to the unwarranted high-cost and dissatisfaction with food services. Amy, when asked why she did not live in the residence halls, explained that it was "too expensive...besides, I like to cook and eat my own kind of food." Chikako echoed, "[The dorm is] getting more comfortable than before, but I think the cafeteria is not very good. It's very expensive and they don't have good food...I don't eat there." Some participants felt living in the residence halls hinders academic focus due to noise levels and the subsequent lack of sleep, but Rose explained, "Sometimes my friends with better English who lived there could help...now we talk about class in the library." Most however, believed these indifferent and negative feelings towards the residence halls and international center, although frustrating, did not affect their perceptions of their academic ability.

Discussion

The intersection of the participants' Asian, international, and female identities presents complex challenges and adjustments for participants. The results of the study show that two of the three initial hypotheses were not supported. When considering their gender and ethnicity, participants did not perceive these aspects of their identity to influence their academic confidence. However, they did identify multiple barriers and social adjustments in their experience on campus, supporting the second hypothesis. Finally, the campus international center, residence halls, and classrooms were not perceived to foster a positive self-perception of academic confidence. Most participants perceived a high level of confidence in their academic ability, although this was not attributable to either identity or campus environments. A review of the data reveals a number of implications for this population's experience on campus.

Academic Effort and Ability

Participants clearly distinguished between academic effort and academic ability. Yan & Gaier (1994) found East Asian students to believe that their success depends on the amount of effort they invest in their studies. Most participants stated that they were confident, particularly when they contributed the appropriate effort and had the motivation to succeed. These students placed high academic demands on themselves in their definition of a "good" student. The participants who believed they were not "good" students attributed this to laziness and lack of effort. Since these students' perceived academic confidence hinged largely on the effort they invested, it is necessary to provide environments which will not mitigate their study efforts.

Classroom Participation and Faculty Interaction

Confidence in classroom participation and interaction with professors were impacted by the participants' perceived English language mastery. This was supported by Aper and Currey (1996) who claimed that strong language skills are key determinants for success among international students. The feeling that they were going to be misunderstood, not taken seriously, or ridiculed because of their English proficiency, kept many silent in class when they first arrived on campus.

Due to a lack of familiarity with an interactive classroom environment, many Asian students find it difficult to adjust to the instructional style of American higher education. Many participants indicated that they preferred to consult professors or teaching assistants after class, rather than asking questions during class time. In order to better meet the needs of this population, faculty need to be trained to understand cultural differences and why some students may fail to participate. Campus-wide cultural awareness efforts need to include concerns of international students, as many students who perceived themselves to have mastery over the English language still encountered experiences where they were uncomfortable speaking in class due to fear of ridicule or misunderstanding.

Perceived Gender Equity in the United States and Influences of Discrimination and Stereotyping

In light of the more stringent gender roles found in their home countries, participants believed American society was fairly gender equitable. According to Ancis and Philips, (1996) women who perceive bias report lower expectations in their ability to be successful both educationally and with the facilitation of their career. This finding represents challenges to faculty and academic fields that address issues of gender discrimination in the United States (i.e., Women's Studies, Sociology, Political Science, etc.) Student affairs practitioners may face

similar difficulties in diversity programming.

In spite of experiences of discrimination and stereotyping, these students did not believe their Asian identity influenced their academic confidence or ability. As supported by Boyer & Sedlacek (1988), Asian international students maintain high levels of achievement and persistence within higher education even in the face of discrimination and social adjustment. Although high achievement among Asian students exists in this study, we cannot assume an equitable and non-prejudicial environment. Many Asian international students may choose to transfer due to an unwelcoming campus climate. In fact, two participants stated they had transferred from other U.S. institutions for this reason. Program interventions that increase satisfaction and combat negative experiences for these students are still in order. Although discrimination may not directly affect academic confidence, it can influence students' mental well-being. At least two participants indicated that their mental well-being was the most influential factor in their academic success.

International Center and Residence Halls Not Meeting Needs

Although research has shown that providing a wide range of programming interventions increases international student success (Boyer & Sedlacek, 1988), participants found that the campus international center and the residence halls were not meeting their needs. The international center is a potential host for developing support networks, yet the participants were dissatisfied and unclear of its purpose and activities. International centers need to develop a clear mission and directly relate that to their constituent student groups. More importantly, administrators in these offices need to ensure a welcoming environment, as for most international students, it is the first point of contact at the university. Some felt that the center's programs were helpful in establishing connections such as host families and friends, but many others stated little need for, or satisfaction with, the programs offered by the center.

Like international centers, residence halls must also promote a welcoming environment if they are to retain Asian international women students. Dining services must work closely with international students to develop cuisine options that meet their needs. Many participants asserted that living in the halls was unjustly expensive and incompatible with this population's interests and academic needs. Numerous complaints about the noise level in the residence halls and excessive alcohol consumption and parties by American counterparts were voiced. Residence hall systems may wish to market quiet and academic communities to this particular population. If universities could more effectively attract Asian international women students into the residence halls, these women might experience less alienation, improved English, and a smoother and more efficient transition into higher education. Student

affairs professionals must help Asian international women to find campus organizations or residential settings that may better promote campus involvement (Hayes & Lin, 1992). The lack of effective campus programs and environments can magnify social and cultural marginalization from the broader student population.

Conclusion

Based on previous research, it was not surprising that the participants encountered difficulties adjusting to the American college environment. Contrary to our expectations, however, the participants' gender and ethnicity had little impact on their perceived academic confidence. Nonetheless, their ethnicity did influence their college experience in profound ways. Through racial stereotypes, differential treatment, overt and covert discrimination, and difficulty making American friends, these women experienced varying degrees of alienation from the college environment.

These findings present important implications for student affairs professionals in light of the ever-increasing presence of Asian international students on American campuses. In order to provide a welcoming and supportive environment for international students, student affairs practitioners must make efforts to better understand the unique needs and challenges of these students. Campus environments and programs, therefore, need to be tailored to these students' differing academic and social expectations.

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REFLECTIONS ON THE GRADUATE EXPERIENCE

Tania D. Mitchell, Dana Umscheid

The Higher Education and Student Affairs (HESA) program at Indiana University, Bloomington has an established tradition of preparing students to enter the field of student affairs. Through questions posed on academic and practical experiences, peer influence and preparedness, students were encouraged to reflect on their learning in graduate school. This article serves as an assessment by students of their experiences in the HESA program and how enrollment at Indiana University Bloomington (IUB) has influenced their perceptions of a career in student affairs.

Introduction

The Higher Education and Student Affairs (HESA) program at Indiana University Bloomington has an established tradition of preparing students to enter the field of student affairs. For two years, on average, students are immersed in classroom study, assistantships, internships, and practica enhancing their skills and knowledge to best serve students in institutions of higher education.

For students in the program, opportunities to assess experiences often come through course evaluations or performance evaluations with supervisors in practical positions. In this form, evaluations often delineate what was accomplished rather than what was learned. Through questions posed on academic and practical experiences, peer influence and preparedness, students were encouraged to reflect on their learning in graduate school. This article serves as an assessment by students of their experiences in the HESA program and how enrollment at Indiana University Bloomington (IUB) has influenced their perceptions of a career in student affairs.

Method

Sample

Of the 58 students enrolled in the HESA program during the 1998-1999 school year, 30 students were solicited via electronic mail to answer questions regarding experiences in the masters program and perceptions of the challenging issues in the student affairs profession. The 30 students represent a selective sample; although, the data collected is representative only of the 24 students responding to the survey (80% response rate). The students surveyed were selected to provide the greatest diversity of experiences in the program. Assistantships, race, gender, marital status, sexual orientation, and undergraduate institution were all considerations in selecting the sample.

Of the participants, 15 (63% of sample) were members of the

1999 graduating class and 9 (38% of sample) members represented the class of 2000. Thirteen (54%) women, 4 (17%) students of color, 3 (12.5%) married students, and 4 (17%) students who openly identify in the classroom as gay or lesbian are included in this sample. The assistantships represent various areas of student affairs including: residence life (11 students), career development (2), multicultural affairs (2), greek advising (2), student activities (2), orientation (1), alumni affairs (1), union management (1), marketing (1), and admissions (1). While residence life experiences may appear overrepresented in this study, it is important to note that 31% of current assistantships in the HESA program are through residence life and nearly 45% of students in the program have graduate level practical experience in the residence hall system.

Procedure

Thirty students were contacted to participate in this study. Individual notices on electronic mail were sent to each student requesting his or her participation with the questionnaire included in the notice. The questionnaire posed 13 open-ended questions regarding academic and practical experiences, application and understanding of theory, peer interaction, preparedness, professional development, and issues challenging student affairs professionals. Solicited students were asked to respond with completed surveys via electronic mail or typed responses. A reminder message was sent to encourage maximum participation from the selected students.

Analysis

Student responses to the 13 questions posed represent the data collected in this study. Open-ended responses were reviewed and categorized into themes. When appropriate, percentages were calculated, however, the students' words were the primary descriptor used to assess experiences in the HESA program.

Limitations

There are limitations to this study that should be noted. First, because the study was conducted via email there was no way to determine if the survey was answered solely by the recipient of the email. Thus, answers have the possibility of reflecting others' perspectives. Email also can limit the length of the response and the ability of the researcher to interpret the answers or solicit more information. Second, due to the relatively small size of the program students may have felt some pressure to respond to questions in a particular manner or to participate in the study. Third, due to the importance placed on assistantships in the program some responses may reflect the experiences while in these offices, rather than solely on the academic program.

Results

Academic Experience

Students in the HESA program were asked two questions related to academic experiences: How has your classroom experience prepared you for the field? How have your academic assignments/projects best facilitated your development as a student and practitioner? Overall, (87.5%) students believed that through their classes they had developed both as a student and practitioner. Some of the themes noted in the student responses included:

Understanding of theory and its application to practice was enhanced	45.8%
Belief that oral and written communication skills were enhanced	37.5%
The roles of student affairs and units within the field were clarified	29.2%
Insight into issues of diversity was increased	29.2%
Classwork provided an opportunity to define and explore areas of professional interest	25%
Students received an introduction to new issues important in the field of student affairs	20.8%

While some first-year students noted that they could not determine if classroom experience had prepared them for the field because of limited exposure to work in student affairs (12.5%) and others in the second-year cohort did not believe that academic coursework had enhanced their development as professionals (12.5%), these students each noted that some of the other themes presented above were effectively enhanced through academic experiences. A student commented:

At times, I have felt that the work I was doing for classes...did not seem to apply directly to my career objectives. At the same time...I know that I have used much of my research to assist in shaping my ideas about the field...The classroom experience...has given me a foundation of theory from which to base my observations and interactions.

Practical Experience

Students in the HESA program regard their practical experiences, through assistantships, internships, and practica, as the most valuable component of graduate school for their entrance into the student affairs profession (91.6%). A first-year student wrote:

I think the practical experience is key to developing professionally. That is why I chose IU's program...it allows us to apply what we learn in the classroom to our work and has allowed us to better understand the course material through our hands-on experiences.

This statement is reflective of most of the participants' assessment of the practical experience. Students appreciated their practical experiences as a type of "laboratory" where classroom learning is applied and skills are

developed. The theoretical connections were made clear through practical experiences and further facilitated in experiences where HESA students directly supervised, advised, or counseled undergraduates (54.2%). Furthermore, through practical experiences second-year students noticed that they began to formulate informal and experiential theories in their work with students. Aside from practical opportunities helping students to understand student affairs, program members revealed that the practical requirement of the program provided skills and experiences that will be invaluable as they enter the job market (25%).

While practical experiences were viewed as a powerful and influential component of the graduate program, some students desired more opportunities to reflect on their experiences, intentional conversations in the classroom to bridge theory and practice, and greater resources to facilitate professional development.

In addition to the experience itself, supervisors at practical sites were credited as being influential in professional development (45.8%). Supervisors are recognized as mentors and role models, and often take time to provide students with experiences that are developmental and meet professional goals. The interactions with practitioners in student affairs helped HESA students to clarify values, goals, and expectations of their career in this field. In evaluating her relationship with supervisors, a student explained:

...the supervisors and the type of assistantship or practicum it is can really add or delete from your professional development. If you have a supervisor that makes that a priority, you will grow. If you have a supervisor who thinks you are an extra body to get work done then you will not grow.

Peer Interaction

When asked to reflect on how interactions with classmates have influenced their graduate experience, a student replied:

I have probably learned as much from my classmates as I have from my professors! Sharing individual practical experience with each other has been incredibly valuable-I can use what they have shared in my own work, or can call on any one of them for assistance, as we each have such varied strengths and knowledge.

Approximately 80% of student responses indicated that peer interaction was undoubtedly a rewarding and influential part of the graduate school experience. Student noted that their peers were a support network and that interactions with colleagues enhanced their development academically (39.1%) and professionally (30.4%). More than 60 percent of the respondents (66.7%) indicated that class discussions and group projects were a valuable way to learn from peers and their professional experiences. About one third of the participants remarked that the various

perspectives, identities, and experiences of graduate program members challenged them and encouraged growth around issues of diversity.

Another student summarized his relationships with peers:

They have challenged me, intentionally and not, in ways I never expected. They have been a tremendous support network personally and professionally. My peers have valued, challenged, and supported my perspectives, accomplishments and goals, and collectively have played a major role in my development.

In reviewing student responses, three students (13%) found their peer interactions to be lacking or to have little impact on their experiences in graduate school. One student felt that her peer interactions have been particularly negative to her experiences. She wrote:

My interactions with classmates have had no influence on my academic or practical experiences. Since day one in the program, I felt like I had no support group to rely upon. Everyone had their own agendas and through all of this I have felt like a total outsider. I remember when one classmate questioned my being qualified to be in the program and from that point on (which was the first day of class) I felt like maybe I had made a bad decision by coming to IU...I don't think anyone cares...to tell you the truth...there is no interest in a person like me in this program.

Preparedness

Students were asked if they felt prepared to enter the student affairs profession. In assessing their qualifications, 69.6% of participants felt very prepared to enter the field. A student reflected:

I feel that IU's program prepares students extensively in the theoretical arena. I also feel that the practical experiences we have both through assistantships and practica gives us the advantage of "real experience" ...I think IU's program develops the future "leaders" of higher education, not just higher education personnel.

Some students felt only adequately prepared (21.7%), and one student felt that the student-centered focus of the HESA program did not provide him the preparation needed to pursue other areas of higher education such as advancement.

The majority of the students surveyed intend to stay in student affairs (73.9%), one student plans to leave the field, and 21.7% of students may consider other options in deciding on a career.

Challenges

HESA program members were asked what challenges they would face as student affairs professionals. Answers ranged from institutional and societal problems, to challenges of self-esteem, confidence, and motivation. More than 66% of the students felt that understanding and meeting the needs of diverse populations would be the

greatest challenge as they enter the professional world. A student remarked:

Students are changing and the field is not...More and more students from all sorts of places and cultures with all sorts of identities are entering higher education, and we still rely on old models that simply won't apply in all but a handful of institutions.

A quarter of the participants noted technology, financial constraints, and achieving respect for student affairs as a part of the holistic college experience would be a professional challenge. Developing well-rounded students (10%) along with improving student satisfaction (5%) and student retention (5%) were mentioned as challenges that will be encountered.

"Assessing how I can make a difference and having the confidence to go out and do it" was a challenge listed by one student and reflected by most of the participants in the study. HESA program students pointed to fighting the status quo, avoiding institutional and departmental politics, and finding a niche in the profession as personal challenges. Adjusting to varying institutional cultures as professionals move from job to job was a potential concern for program members, as well as supporting students and their needs while upholding institutional policies.

Students remarked on a desire to be reflective in practice, continuing to learn from experiences and remaining well read on the field. Mostly, HESA students had a desire to "continually be challenged and motivated" in the profession and to "find satisfaction" in the integration of personal and professional lives.

Discussion and Implications

What is learned from this study provides opportunities for prospective students to consider what elements of a graduate program are necessary for a well-rounded experience and for graduate program coordinators to review components of the graduate experience and re-evaluate or redesign them.

What can be concluded immediately from this study is that it is not any one aspect, but the totality of the experience that dictates how prepared students feel to embark on a career in student affairs. The academic and practical experiences of students complement one another and are further developed through an opportunity to share those experiences with a cohort of other students interested in the field.

In reflecting on academic experiences, students found their experiences to be rewarding, especially in the introduction of theory, the enhancement of communication skills, exposure to issues of difference, and the clarification of student affairs and its role in higher education. Moreover, pedagogical practices that encourage classmates to interact and share experiences supplement the academic experience. To further

enhance academic learning and foster professional development, students point to a need for intentional conversations in the classroom to link theory and practice. Through experiences in which students are engaged in exercises that encourage collaborative decision-making and the sharing of ideas and perspectives, students' academic lives are improved. Faculty and students must be conscious of the practical experiences and making connections to what is learned in the classroom. Through these connections, students noted more developed professional and academic experiences. Additionally, in exposing students to issues of diversity and theory, the inclusion of diverse perspectives and experiences of underrepresented groups should also be included. Student affairs graduate programs should also recognize in the recruitment and admission phases, that the interests, experiences, and identities of students broaden the perspectives of everyone in the program. Creating opportunities to insure that diverse experiences are represented in the classroom is necessary to assist future student affairs professionals understand diversity and the needs of underrepresented groups.

Reflections on experiences show that the opportunity to effectively practice the work of student affairs is an invaluable element of the graduate experience. Students considered the practical experiences as the most beneficial aspect of development. Through practical opportunities, students can test classroom learning, discover individual strengths and weaknesses, develop skills, and explore the diversity of the student affairs profession. Multiple professional experiences in various areas of student affairs and higher education should be investigated and encouraged. Experiences in different departments, functional areas, and even institutions afforded students greater marketability during the job search, and helped students define goals for the future. In the practical experience, supervisors are encouraged to help students make connections between class and their work. Supervisors often serve as role models for these future student affairs professionals; the examples they are given in these work experiences may be emulated in the profession. Supervisors should model the best practices and provide students with opportunities to implement those practices in their own work. Graduate programs should work within the student affairs units of the institutions to formulate as many opportunities for practical experience as possible. To enhance professional development amongst graduate students, experiences that fit the varied interests and needs of program members are necessary.

The importance of peers in the graduate experience cannot be overestimated. In social, academic, and practical experiences, the presence of a peer group was an important element of the students' development. Students felt that opportunities where they could share experiences and perspectives enhanced their learning about higher education and student affairs. Formal and informal opportunities for

this dialogue to commence are needed to provide students with this developmental experience. In this survey, most of the participants felt that interactions with peers were positive and influential to their experience, however, this did not apply to all of the students. How can student affairs programs insure that all students are supported in the graduate experience? What role do the peers have in making others feel involved and accepted? In thinking about peer influence, faculty, practitioners, and students alike should incorporate all voices and experiences in the graduate program. These perspectives are valuable to the student experience and may represent the attitudes and feelings of students encountered in professional experiences.

Regarding preparedness, study participants felt strongly that the academic and practical experiences of this program provided the competencies necessary to be a successful student affairs practitioner. The graduate program exposes students to issues and experiences that are applicable and important to working with students. To meet the needs of students who feel they are more administrative focused or interested in other areas of higher education, graduate programs should consider what elements of the experience (whether practical or academic) might expose students to these areas and complement their interests.

Conclusion

Upon reflection of the graduate experience, students believe that it is the complete experience that makes a difference in their development as student affairs practitioners. Academic components, practical experiences, and peer influence when integrated afford students an education that fulfills their needs and expectations as student affairs practitioners. Responsibility for creating an experience that develops competent professionals lies with faculty, practical experience supervisors, and the students themselves. It is the faculty and practitioners who help students develop skills that will make them effective in the field, but it is the students whose drive and motivation create individuals who are leaders in the profession.

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